

# Enhancing Research Productivity Through Journal Reviewing: A Qualitative Inquiry In The Context Of Vietnam

Nguyen Anh Thi<sup>1</sup>, Le Thanh Thao<sup>2\*</sup>, Phuong Hoang Yen<sup>3</sup>,  
Pham Trut Thuy<sup>4</sup>, Nguyen Huong Tra<sup>5</sup>, Huynh Thi Anh Thu<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,5,6</sup>: Can Tho University, Vietnam.

<sup>4</sup>: Nam Can Tho University, Vietnam.

## Abstract:

This study investigates the potential benefits of serving as a journal reviewer on one's research productivity. Grounded in constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, a qualitative research design was employed to gain a nuanced understanding of this relationship. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six Vietnamese academics experienced in journal reviewing in the field of language studies. The findings revealed that the reviewing process deepens understanding of academic publishing, promotes critical thinking, enhances methodological proficiency, fosters ethical awareness, and cultivates a constructive feedback mindset. Moreover, in the Vietnamese context, benefits such as nurturing a globally competitive mindset, promoting a culture of excellence, and strengthening English language skills were highlighted. These insights suggest that the role of a journal reviewer extends beyond the gatekeeping of academic quality, offering significant potential to boost research productivity. The study underscores the need for greater recognition and support for this crucial role, especially in developing countries like Vietnam.

Keywords: Journal reviewing, research productivity, academic growth, qualitative study, Vietnam.

## 1. Introduction

Peer review forms the bedrock of academic publishing, playing an instrumental role in upholding the scientific integrity of the body of knowledge within various disciplines. A journal reviewer undertakes the vital task of assessing the quality, novelty, and relevance of submitted manuscripts. Despite the importance of this role, the

benefits of becoming a journal reviewer remain under-explored. Specifically, potential advantages such as improvements to one's research productivity have not been substantially investigated, with most existing research focusing on the altruistic or societal benefits of peer review (e.g., Smith, 2006; Tumin & Tobias, 2019). Research productivity is a key measure of academic performance and influence, often encompassing factors such as the number of publications, citations, and successful grant applications. The potential correlation between involvement in journal review activities and enhancement in one's research productivity thus warrants systematic investigation. The present qualitative study seeks to address this knowledge gap. In exploring the potential benefits of being a journal reviewer, this study hinges on the proposition that the review process exposes reviewers to novel ideas, diverse methodological approaches, and evolving research trends, possibly enhancing their understanding and thus their own research proficiency. Furthermore, by analyzing errors and pitfalls in others' works, reviewers could potentially improve the quality of their own studies, leading to better acceptance rates and higher impact publications. Given the pivotal role journal reviewers play in the scholarly community, understanding these benefits could serve as a driver to encourage more academics to undertake this crucial role. By shedding light on this uncharted territory, this study aims to underscore the importance of journal reviewing not just for the collective good of academia, but also for individual researchers' professional development and productivity.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Role of Reviewers**

Journal reviewers serve as independent assessors of manuscripts submitted for publication in academic journals. Their primary role is to scrutinize these submissions for quality, novelty, and relevance to the discipline (Smith, 2006). In this capacity, reviewers are expected to evaluate the methodology, data analysis, interpretation of results, and presentation of findings to ensure the research is valid, reliable, and worthy of publication (Lee et al., 2013). The role of the reviewer goes beyond simple gatekeeping. As Weller (2001) points out, reviewers also play a key role in mentoring authors by providing constructive feedback, enabling authors to refine

their arguments and present their research more effectively.

## **2.2. The Review Process**

The journal review process varies across disciplines and journals but generally follows a standard sequence (Nicholas et al., 2015). Following initial screening by the editor for suitability, manuscripts are sent to two or more reviewers, who provide detailed feedback and a recommendation on whether to accept, revise, or reject the manuscript (Ware, 2008). The editor then makes the final decision, considering the reviewers' comments. Most journals employ a double-blind review process where neither the author nor the reviewer know each other's identities, to minimize bias and protect the integrity of the review process (Ross, 2006; Ross et al., 2006). However, some journals use a single-blind process, where the reviewers know the authors' identities but not vice versa, or an open review process, where both parties' identities are known to each other (van Rooyen et al., 1999). Each of these processes has its advantages and drawbacks, as detailed by various studies (Blockeel et al., 2017; Walsh et al., 2000).

## **2.3. Challenges and Criticisms of the Review Process**

While peer review is an essential aspect of academic publishing, it has faced criticism. Concerns have been raised about potential bias, subjectivity, and lack of transparency (Lipworth et al., 2011). Other criticisms include inconsistencies in the review process, slow turnaround times, and the lack of formal training for reviewers (Squazzoni et al., 2017). In response, some journals have introduced measures to improve the process, such as providing training for reviewers, adopting open review processes, or publishing review reports alongside articles (Bornmann et al., 2010).

## **2.4. The Reviewer's Perspective**

Much of the research on journal reviewing has been from the perspective of editors or authors. Fewer studies have focused on the reviewers themselves. Existing research suggests that reviewers are driven by a sense of duty to the academic community, the opportunity to contribute to their field, and the chance to stay up-to-date with the latest research (Tite & Schroter, 2007). However, reviewers often

work voluntarily and face considerable time pressures. Some researchers have argued for better recognition of reviewing work, such as academic credits or other forms of compensation (Warne, 2016). In conclusion, while the importance of journal reviewers and the review process is well-acknowledged, several aspects remain under-researched. Particularly, there is limited research on the benefits and incentives for reviewers themselves, an area that this study intends to delve into.

### **2.5. Benefits of Being a Journal Reviewer**

As previously mentioned, research into the field of peer reviewing is plentiful, though it predominantly focuses on aspects such as the reliability, validity, bias, or effectiveness of the peer review process itself (Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2006). Studies assessing the personal benefits accrued to the reviewers themselves are noticeably less prevalent.

Some studies have suggested that serving as a peer reviewer contributes to skill development, particularly critical appraisal skills, the ability to provide constructive feedback, and editorial skills (Lee et al., 2013). Reviewers often delve deep into the mechanics of research methodology, statistical analysis, and argument construction while reviewing a manuscript. This could potentially lead to the improvement of their own research and writing skills (Black, 2008). Reviewers gain early access to novel research findings, innovative ideas, and evolving trends within their field, potentially enhancing their knowledge base (Hoffman, 2022). Ware (2008) suggested that this exposure can lead to the generation of new research ideas, which may enhance their own research productivity.

A reviewer's involvement with reputable academic journals can contribute to their recognition and status within their field (Bowman, 2014). Some researchers posit that this recognition might indirectly lead to increased research productivity, though empirical evidence is sparse. There is a potential feedback loop where researchers who are also reviewers might produce better research, which leads to fewer revisions and quicker acceptance of their manuscripts (Bornmann et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that this feedback loop is speculative, and empirical evidence is limited.

Most researchers agree on the societal and altruistic benefits of being a peer reviewer – contributing to the quality of published research in their field, giving back to the

academic community, and helping authors improve their work (Ross et al., 2006). However, the relationship between these benefits and research productivity is unclear and under-researched. In summary, while there are proposed mechanisms through which being a journal reviewer might benefit one's research productivity, empirical evidence remains scarce. There are currently almost no studies that directly examine this relationship in a systematic and in-depth manner, hence necessitating the present study. This study probes the following research question: "How do Vietnamese academics perceive their role as journal reviewers to enhance their research productivity?"

### **3. Materials and Methods**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative research design was chosen to uncover the nuanced ways in which serving as a journal reviewer could potentially enhance one's research productivity. This design choice allowed for the collection of rich, detailed, and complex data. The theoretical frameworks underpinning the qualitative research design of this study are primarily grounded in Constructivism and Interpretivism. Constructivism posits that individuals construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experiences and reflection on these experiences (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The constructivist approach, thus, supports the idea that the experiences and reflections of journal reviewers regarding their role and its impact on their research productivity are unique, complex, and constructed through their individual interactions with the reviewing process. Interpretivism, on the other hand, stresses the understanding of social phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Schwandt, 2000). This framework aligns well with the study's aim to explore the individual and subjective experiences of journal reviewers, as it asserts the necessity to understand phenomena from the participants' point of view. These two frameworks inform the study design by focusing on individual experiences, enabling a deeper understanding of the social reality of being a journal reviewer. They recognize the value of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, in capturing the richness and complexity of these individual experiences and subjective realities. Moreover, these frameworks endorse the iterative process of qualitative data analysis, allowing themes to

emerge organically from the data. Therefore, the combination of constructivism and interpretivism provided a robust theoretical underpinning for the exploratory, qualitative nature of the study. It guided the data collection and analysis processes, allowing for the nuanced exploration of the potential benefits of serving as a journal reviewer to one's research productivity.

### 3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were six academics hailing from the discipline of Language Studies, all with significant experience in serving as journal reviewers. The decision to focus on individuals within this specific academic field was guided by the understanding that discipline-specific cultures and practices could impact experiences and perceptions of the reviewing process. To qualify for participation, each individual was required to have a minimum of five years' experience as a journal reviewer. This criterion was set to ensure that the participants had sufficient reviewing experience to offer in-depth insights and personal reflections. A brief demographic breakdown of the participants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Brief demographic breakdown</b>
A	An Associate Professor with ten years of experience as a journal reviewer, specializing in Second Language Acquisition.
B	A Doctor's degree holder with eight years of experience as a journal reviewer, whose primary focus is on Sociolinguistics.
C	A Senior Lecturer with six years of experience as a journal reviewer, specializing in Psycholinguistics.
D	A Senior Lecturer with twelve years of experience as a journal reviewer, with a research focus on Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis.
E	An Associate Professor with seven years of experience as a journal reviewer, concentrating on Language Pedagogy.
F	A Senior Lecturer with nine years of experience as a journal reviewer, with a research focus on Applied Linguistics.

Participants varied not only in terms of their years of reviewing experience but also in their specific areas of research within the broader field of language studies. This diversity allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits of being a journal reviewer across

different sub-disciplines. In terms of gender and career stage, the sample was diverse, representing various levels of seniority within academia and both genders. This diversity further ensured a broad range of experiences and perspectives in the data. Prior to their participation, all individuals were briefed about the study's purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained. They were also assured that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. Ethical guidelines for confidentiality and data protection were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, designed to elicit in-depth information about the participants' experiences and perceptions as journal reviewers. This flexible instrument allowed for the exploration of emerging themes while also ensuring that the key research question was addressed. The interview guide comprised of open-ended questions, designed to encourage participants to reflect on their experience as journal reviewers. Questions covered a range of topics, including their motivations for becoming a journal reviewer, their perceptions of the role, and specifically, how they believe this role has influenced their research productivity. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into certain areas as and when required. Prior to the commencement of the main study, a pilot study was conducted with two experienced journal reviewers who were not part of the main study. This was done to test the relevance and clarity of the interview questions. Based on the feedback received, minor adjustments were made to the order and wording of some questions to improve their comprehensibility and flow. In addition to the interview guide, note-taking was another crucial instrument used during data collection. Detailed notes were made during each interview to capture non-verbal cues, interview dynamics, and the researcher's initial reflections, which later assisted in data interpretation. Finally, a digital voice recorder was used to record each interview, ensuring an accurate representation of the participant's responses. The recorder was tested prior to each interview to ensure it was functioning correctly. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, providing the primary dataset for subsequent analysis. Participants were informed about the recording at

the outset and their consent was obtained before starting the interview.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

The data collected through the interviews were thoroughly analyzed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun et al. (2023). This process started with a comprehensive familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading each interview transcript, during which initial thoughts and potential patterns were noted. Subsequently, initial codes were generated by examining the transcripts line by line, identifying and coding interesting and relevant features in the data in an inductive and deductive manner. These initial codes were then organized into potential themes, with the relationships between different codes and potential themes visualized using mind maps and thematic networks. The identified themes were then reviewed, refined, combined, or broken down as necessary, ensuring they accurately represented the data. Once the themes were solidified, they were clearly defined and named, each representing a unique aspect of the data. The analysis was then compiled into a detailed report, providing a compelling account of the data with each theme being thoroughly explained and supported with quotes from the participants. To ensure trustworthiness, the coding process was cross-verified by multiple researchers (triangulation), and the participants were given the opportunity to confirm the interpretation of their experiences (member checking).

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

The analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with the six experienced journal reviewers from the field of Language Studies resulted in the identification of 13 primary themes, each shedding light on a distinct aspect of how serving as a journal reviewer could potentially enhance research productivity.

### **4.1. Enhancement of Critical Reading Skills**

A significant finding in the context of Vietnam was the improvement of critical reading skills among the participating academics serving as journal reviewers (n=6 out of 6). Participants testified that consistent exposure to manuscript reviewing had a profound impact on their ability to critically analyze and evaluate scholarly work. This sharpened critical thinking was further reflected in their research, as it nurtured their ability to dissect their work

critically and anticipate potential criticisms. Participant B, for instance, offered an insightful remark: “Reviewing others’ works made me more critical and analytical, not only when I read research papers but also when I write my own. It is like I can anticipate the potential criticisms and address them preemptively.” Similarly, Participant E echoed this sentiment by stating: “Through reviewing, I have honed my critical reading skills, and this has spilled over into my own writing. I am now better at spotting weaknesses in my own research and addressing them before submission.” This enhancement of critical reading and analytical thinking aligns well with the constructivist perspective, which emphasizes the role of experience in knowledge construction (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In line with this perspective, participants’ involvement in manuscript reviewing has served as a platform for them to refine their understanding of critical reading and writing (Howe, 2018). This active construction of knowledge has, in turn, indirectly but substantially, boosted their research productivity. Additionally, within the Vietnamese context, where rote learning has traditionally dominated educational practices (Phu, 2019), this development of critical reading skills presents a particularly valuable progression. This transition towards critical thinking and analysis can foster a culture of inquiry and intellectual rigor in the Vietnamese academic landscape. Thus, the role of journal reviewing could be pivotal in driving this shift, enhancing not only individual research productivity but also contributing to the broader academic advancement within Vietnam.

#### **4.2. Keeping Abreast of Latest Research Trends**

Another recurring theme among participants was the notion of staying abreast with the latest trends and developments in their academic fields through their roles as journal reviewers (n=6 out of 6). The continual exposure to fresh ideas, methodologies, and research findings offered a consistent source of inspiration and intellectual stimulation for their research pursuits. Participant D underscored this benefit by stating, “As a reviewer, I am regularly exposed to the latest research in my field. This not only keeps me updated but also provides inspiration for my own work.” In a similar vein, Participant A noted, “Reviewing keeps me in touch with the latest studies and methodologies, which I often find useful for my own research. It sparks new ideas and opens up interesting research avenues.” These responses reflect the interpretivist perspective, which

emphasizes understanding phenomena based on participants' interpretations (Schwandt, 2000). In the context of this study, the participants' role as reviewers enables them to interpret and assimilate new trends, methodologies, and ideas within their research practices. This process of interpretation, inherently personal and subjective, enriches their research productivity by instilling fresh perspectives and insights into their work. Moreover, these findings are aligned with previous research (Ware, 2008; Mulligan et al., 2013) that has identified journal reviewing as a pathway for continuous learning and staying updated with field advancements. This study further emphasizes this benefit within the Vietnamese context, where resources for academic development may be limited (Truong et al., 2021). The role of journal reviewer thus serves a dual purpose of gatekeeping academic quality and fueling the professional development of the reviewers themselves, thereby contributing to the overall advancement of academic research in Vietnam.

#### **4.3. Enhancement of Methodological Proficiency**

An essential benefit of serving as a journal reviewer highlighted by many participants was the exposure to a plethora of research methodologies, resulting in a marked improvement in their methodological proficiency (n=6 out of 6). Their critical examination of diverse methods used by other researchers empowered them to validate and challenge their methodological choices, leading to the enhancement of their own research practices. Participant A remarked, "Each time I review, I encounter various research methods – some familiar, others novel. This continuous exposure has definitely expanded my methodological toolkit and made me more confident in adopting and adapting research methods for my studies." Participant D echoed this, stating, "Reviewing broadened my perspective on research methodologies. I have been inspired to experiment with different methods in my own research, leading to richer and more diverse outcomes." Interpreting these insights through the lens of constructivism, it is evident that the participants' continuous engagement with various methodologies allows them to actively construct a more comprehensive and refined understanding of research methods (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This exposure not only enriches their methodological toolkit but also impacts their approach to research, potentially enhancing their research productivity. In the context of Vietnam,

where research methods may often follow traditional patterns (Meyer, 2006), the exposure to varied and novel methodologies through the process of journal reviewing can be particularly beneficial. This can encourage Vietnamese researchers to experiment with and adopt diverse methods, fostering innovation and creativity in the research landscape and subsequently enhancing research productivity.

#### **4.4. Deepening Ethical Awareness**

Participants also shed light on an often underappreciated advantage of serving as a journal reviewer - the enhancement of ethical awareness (n=4 out of 6). Through their critical examination of the ethical considerations of various research studies, the reviewers became more conscious and vigilant of the ethical dimensions in their own work. Participant B reflected this understanding by stating, "Seeing how others address ethical considerations in their research has made me more vigilant. It has emphasized the importance of being ethical not just in theory, but in practice." Participant E, having experienced papers with inadequate ethical considerations, added, "Such encounters have been learning experiences, emphasizing the importance of stringent ethical practices in my own research." Through the interpretivist lens, these experiences as reviewers equip the participants with a deeper understanding and interpretation of the nuances of ethical considerations in academic research (Schwandt, 2000). This awareness, in turn, refines their ethical practices, enhancing the integrity of their research. In the Vietnamese context, where ethical guidelines might be emerging and developing (Vuong, 2019), the heightened ethical awareness gained from the reviewing process is of immense value. It not only improves the ethical standards of the individual researchers' work but also contributes to the overall ethical rigor in the Vietnamese academic community, thereby indirectly enhancing the quality and credibility of the research output.

#### **4.5. Fostering a Constructive Feedback Mentality**

An interesting perspective brought forward by the participants is that the act of reviewing cultivates a mindset of giving and receiving constructive feedback (n=6 out of 6). They found that this mindset was not confined to their reviewing duties, but also positively influenced their interactions with peers, students, and collaborators,

leading to more productive dialogues and collaborations. Participant C shared, "Reviewing trained me to provide feedback that is constructive, clear, and objective. I have noticed that I now adopt this approach even when discussing research with colleagues or guiding my students." Participant F found this beneficial in collaborations, noting, "The feedback culture I have cultivated as a reviewer has greatly benefited my collaborations. Our discussions are more fruitful, with a focus on constructive criticism and collaborative growth." In the context of Vietnam, which traditionally may not emphasize open critiques within the academic culture (Pham, 2019), these insights are especially meaningful. The role of a journal reviewer could serve as a catalyst for academics in Vietnam to foster a culture that values and practices constructive feedback. This culture is indispensable for academic growth, leading to the enhancement of research practices, the quality of academic output, and overall research productivity.

#### **4.6. Improved Writing Skills and Article Structure Understanding**

An additional benefit of the role as reviewers reported by the participants was the improvement in their writing skills (n=6 out of 6). This enhancement came as a by-product of their engagement with a range of writing styles, structures, and argumentations in the papers they reviewed. Their critique of other scholars' works helped them identify common mistakes and recognize effective writing techniques, which they could then incorporate into their own writing. Participant E expressed this learning experience as, "By reviewing different papers, I see a range of writing styles and structures. I have identified common mistakes and noticed effective argumentation, which I then try to incorporate into my own writing." Participant C found this particularly beneficial for understanding the structure of a good article, stating, "Reviewing helped me understand the structure of a good article better. I now apply this understanding when writing my own papers, which has significantly improved my writing skills." This active engagement with diverse academic texts aligns with the constructivist framework, where learning occurs by actively constructing knowledge from experiences (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In the Vietnamese academic context, where exposure to varied and sophisticated writing styles might be limited (Nguyen & Buckingham, 2019), this finding

underscores the crucial role of reviewing in honing academic writing skills, thereby indirectly boosting research productivity.

#### **4.7. Augmentation of Writing and Argumentation Skills**

Participants also pointed out that their role as reviewers had significantly enhanced their academic writing and argumentation skills (n=6 out of 6). They attributed this improvement to their repeated exposure to diverse writing styles, arguments, and logical structures present in the manuscripts they were tasked with reviewing. Participant D noted, "Reviewing papers from various authors has helped me see the diversity in writing styles and argumentation. Over time, I have learned to adapt and incorporate some effective strategies into my own writing." Participant E further substantiated this view, stating, "I have observed and learned different ways of presenting arguments through the papers I have reviewed. This has greatly enhanced my ability to construct stronger arguments in my own research." These insights can be interpreted through the lens of constructivism, where the reviewers actively built their knowledge of effective writing and argumentation techniques through the hands-on experience of reviewing (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This constructivist learning journey aligns well with the study's theoretical framework and has significant implications for the Vietnamese context. With opportunities for diverse academic exposure potentially limited (Le et al., 2022), the participants' reported enhancements in argumentation skills underscore the value of the reviewing process in fostering critical thinking and improving academic communication, consequently boosting the quality of research output.

#### **4.8. Strengthening of the English Language Skills**

Given the predominance of English as the language of academic discourse and its status as a second language in Vietnam, participants identified the enhancement of English language skills as a significant fringe benefit of serving as a journal reviewer (n=6 out of 6). The incessant interaction with English language manuscripts, they suggested, positively impacted their language proficiency, indirectly contributing to their research productivity. Participant C shared their experience, stating: "Being a journal reviewer has undoubtedly honed my English

language skills. This is particularly valuable in Vietnam where English is not the first language, as it helps me articulate my research more effectively in English.” Similarly, Participant E conveyed the improvement in their writing proficiency: “Reviewing English language papers helps me continuously engage with academic English, which has led to significant improvement in my English writing skills. This has greatly improved my ability to publish in international English language journals.” This finding underscores the multidimensional benefits of serving as a journal reviewer, extending beyond enhancing research productivity to also boosting language competence. Given the linguistic challenges faced by non-native English-speaking academics (Nguyen et al., 2018), the value of this benefit in the Vietnamese context should not be underestimated. The enhancement of English language skills through the reviewing process could potentially facilitate Vietnamese researchers’ engagement with the global academic community, thereby further driving their research productivity and global impact.

#### **4.9. Increased Networking and Collaboration Opportunities**

In addition to the previously discussed themes, participants also reported an increase in networking and collaboration opportunities as a result of their role as journal reviewers, indirectly bolstering their research productivity (n=5 out of 6). The opportunity to interact with other academics in the course of their reviewing duties led to fruitful collaborations and expansion of their academic networks. Participant C remarked, “Being a reviewer has expanded my academic network. I have been able to collaborate with other academics, which has in turn led to joint publications.” This sentiment was echoed by Participant F who stated, “Reviewing has allowed me to make connections within the academic community. These connections have sometimes led to collaborations, enhancing my research output.” These findings resonate strongly with the interpretivist perspective, which underscores the significance of social interactions and experiences in shaping individuals’ understanding of the world (Schwandt, 2000). Through the lens of this perspective, the social interactions inherent in the reviewing process can be seen as platforms for networking and collaboration, indirectly contributing to the enhancement of the participants’ research productivity. Considering the sociocultural context of Vietnam, where a

strong emphasis is placed on community and collaboration within the academic culture (Pham, 2019), these networking opportunities gained through the reviewing role can have a particularly pronounced impact on research productivity. In a community-driven academic landscape such as that of Vietnam (Vuong et al., 2021), journal reviewing can therefore serve not only as a gatekeeping mechanism for academic quality but also as a conduit for fostering collaboration and collective growth, thus indirectly enhancing the research output of academics.

#### **4.10. Increased Research Motivation and Commitment**

Another emergent theme from the interviews was the increased motivation and commitment towards their own research that participants attributed to their reviewing duties (n=5 out of 6). The exposure to fresh, innovative research ideas frequently served as a catalyst for inspiration in their own work. Participant A reflected on this, stating, "Seeing the novelty and impact of others' work in the reviewing process often ignites my enthusiasm and motivates me to make similar valuable contributions through my research." Similarly, Participant C commented on how being a reviewer provided an influx of new ideas, expressing, "The role of a reviewer constantly exposes me to fresh ideas and research passion from around the world, which kindles my dedication to my own research work." When viewed through the lens of the interpretivist framework (Schwandt, 2000), it becomes apparent that participants are attributing personal meaning to their reviewing experience, which they perceive as a potent source of motivation and dedication. This underscores the role of their subjective experience in shaping their research commitment. In the Vietnamese context, where external motivational factors may vary (Dang & Chou, 2020; Huynh, 2016), the internal motivation and commitment derived from the reviewing process could significantly influence the drive for research, thereby enhancing productivity.

#### **4.11. Boost in Confidence**

An interesting theme that emerged from the interviews was the participants' shared perception that being selected to review others' work led to an increase in their confidence in their own research expertise (n=4 out of 6). This newfound confidence often resulted in a more proactive approach towards their research activities. Participant B reflected on this, stating, "Being recognized as a reviewer boosted my

confidence in my expertise. This has led to me being more assertive in my research decisions.” Similarly, Participant F noted, “The reviewing role has instilled in me a sense of acknowledgment for my expertise, which has translated into greater confidence and decisiveness in conducting and presenting my own research.” Given the communal and collective nature of Vietnamese culture, as outlined by Woodside (2018), this personal confidence boost could have far-reaching implications. In a context where individual assertion may be less prevalent, this enhanced self-confidence can foster a more proactive approach towards research, thereby potentially improving research productivity of Vietnamese academics.

#### **4.12. Nurturing a Globally Competitive Mindset**

A salient benefit mentioned by the participants, which holds specific relevance in the Vietnamese context, is the cultivation of a globally competitive mindset (n=3 out of 6). By reviewing research conducted across various global contexts, participants reported heightened awareness of the international research landscape, which significantly influenced their research approach. Participant D provided insight into this by stating, “The reviewing experience made me more conscious of the international standards in research. This has encouraged me to strive for similar standards in my own work to be globally competitive.” Similarly, Participant A noted the global impact of the reviewing process, mentioning, “Reviewing international research papers gave me insights into global trends and challenges. It has driven me to orient my research to have global relevance and competitiveness.” These findings suggest that the reviewing process can play a crucial role in elevating research practices to international standards, particularly in contexts such as Vietnam, where researchers are increasingly seeking to assert their presence in the global research arena (Vu, 2021).

#### **4.13. Promotion of a Culture of Excellence**

One notable finding that emerged, and that appears to resonate particularly within the Vietnamese academic environment, is the cultivation of a culture of excellence facilitated by the reviewing role (n=2 out of 6). Participants suggested that their exposure to high-quality, international research via their reviewing responsibilities significantly motivated them to aspire for comparable excellence in their own research endeavors. Participant B provided insight into

this by saying, “Witnessing the depth and rigor of international research through reviewing has inspired me to aim for the same level of excellence in my own work.” Mirroring this sentiment, Participant F emphasized the influence of excellent work on their own research efforts: “The high standards I see in the works I review constantly remind me of the importance of maintaining a similar level of rigor and excellence in my own research.” This finding signifies the transformative potential of the reviewing role in nurturing a culture of excellence within research practices. Particularly in the Vietnamese context, where the academic landscape is progressively gaining momentum, this drive for excellence catalyzed by the reviewing process may be pivotal in fostering a globally competitive research culture (Cordova & Yaghi, 2019; Than et al., 2019).

## 5. Conclusion

The current study endeavored to explore the multifaceted benefits of serving as a journal reviewer and its potential impact on research productivity, within the unique cultural and academic context of Vietnam. Grounded in constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, this qualitative investigation captured rich, complex, and nuanced data from six Vietnamese academics with experience in serving as journal reviewers in the field of language studies.

The findings have illuminated several distinct ways in which the role of a journal reviewer can foster academic growth and boost research productivity. This includes a deepened understanding of the reviewing process, improved critical thinking skills, enhanced methodological proficiency, heightened ethical awareness, and the development of a constructive feedback mentality. Moreover, the study revealed benefits specifically tailored to the Vietnamese context, such as the nurturing of a globally competitive mindset, the promotion of a culture of excellence, and the strengthening of English language skills. It is worth noting that the study also revealed that serving as a reviewer leads to improvements in academic writing and argumentation skills, increases in research motivation and commitment, as well as boosts in self-confidence. These are notable elements that can significantly contribute to enhancing research productivity.

This exploration not only underscores the richness of the reviewing experience but also its profound implications for individual academic growth and enhancement of research

productivity, especially in sociocultural contexts like Vietnam. The intertwining of constructivist and interpretivist frameworks with the backdrop of Vietnam's unique sociocultural landscape allowed for a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of these findings.

## **6. Implications**

The theoretical implications of this study are multifaceted. Firstly, by incorporating constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, the study significantly contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge by showcasing the utility of these frameworks in deciphering the complex experiences of journal reviewers. This elucidation provides a more nuanced understanding of how academics, acting as journal reviewers, construct their understanding and interpret their experiences within a specific socio-cultural milieu, such as Vietnam. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of context in the interpretation of individual experiences, thereby contributing to a broader understanding in fields like cultural psychology and sociology of education. Furthermore, by shedding light on the often overlooked role of journal reviewing, the study adds a new dimension to the literature on research productivity, providing a more holistic view of the factors influencing academic productivity.

The study carries noteworthy practical implications for various stakeholders in academia, including academics, journal editors, and policymakers. Given the multiple benefits identified, it is crucial for academic institutions and journals to extend formal recognition and support to the reviewers, which could manifest as professional development opportunities or the incorporation of reviewing duties in tenure considerations. For developing countries like Vietnam, capacity-building measures, such as the enhancement of English language skills and nurturing of a globally competitive mindset, are essential to amplify the international visibility and competitiveness of their research output. Policymakers should consider the insights from this study to incentivize journal reviewing, possibly incorporating it into academic progression criteria, or embedding training for this role in academic development programs. For individual academics, especially those in the early stages of their careers, the study serves as a beacon, enlightening them about the personal and professional advantages of serving as a journal reviewer, which could

guide their career decisions and approaches towards this role.

### **7. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

While this study has contributed valuable insights to the field, it also comes with some inherent limitations. First, as a qualitative study with a relatively small sample size, the findings cannot be generalized to all academics or across all research disciplines. The participants in this study were six academics with experience in journal reviewing in language studies, which may limit the range of experiences and perspectives captured. Second, the study was set within the unique cultural and academic context of Vietnam, which means that the findings might not be directly transferable to other cultural or academic contexts. The impact of serving as a journal reviewer on one's research productivity might vary in different settings due to varying academic practices, cultural norms, and systemic factors. Third, the study relied on self-reported experiences of the participants, which might introduce bias in the data. Participants' recollections of their experiences might have been influenced by their personal biases, beliefs, or current circumstances.

Given these limitations, the study presents several opportunities for further research. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future studies could involve larger and more diverse samples. This could include academics from different disciplines and different stages of their careers, as well as those from different cultural and academic contexts. Moreover, future research could employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data with quantitative measures of research productivity, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between serving as a journal reviewer and research productivity. Lastly, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of serving as a journal reviewer on research productivity. Such studies could capture the changes in research productivity over time and could shed light on how the benefits of serving as a reviewer evolve and materialize over the course of an academic's career.

### **References**

Black, E. W. (2008). Wikipedia and academic peer review: Wikipedia as a recognised medium for scholarly

- publication?. *Online Information Review*, 32(1), 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14684520810865994>
- Blockeel, C., Drakopoulos, P., Polyzos, N. P., Tournaye, H., & García-Velasco, J. A. (2017). Review the 'peer review'. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online*, 35(6), 747-749.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2017.08.017>
- Bornmann, L., Mutz, R., & Daniel, H. D. (2010). A reliability-generalization study of journal peer reviews: A multilevel meta-analysis of inter-rater reliability and its determinants. *PloS One*, 5(12), e14331. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0014331>
- Bowman, J. D. (2014). Predatory publishing, questionable peer review, and fraudulent conferences. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 78(10), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7810176>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Hayfield, N. (2023). *Thematic analysis: A reflexive approach*. SAGE Publications.
- Cordova, K. E., & Yaghi, O. M. (2019). Building a Global Culture of Science—The Vietnam Experience. *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 58(6), 1552-1560. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anie.201812076>
- Dang, V. T., & Chou, Y. C. (2020). Extrinsic motivation, workplace learning, employer trust, self-efficacy and cross-cultural adjustment: An empirical study of Vietnamese laborers in Taiwan. *Personnel Review*, 49(6), 1232-1253. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-10-2018-0427>
- Hoffman, A. J. (2022). A modest proposal to the peer review process: a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach in the assessment of scholarly communication. *Research Ethics*, 18(1), 84-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470161211051230>
- Howe, R. C. (2018). Peer review, critical review and writing of manuscripts. *Ethiop Med J*, 56, 87-92.
- Huynh, T. (2016). *Vietnamese Academics' Research Capacity in Tertiary Contexts* (Doctoral dissertation, Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington).
- Le, V. H., Maor, D., & McConney, A. (2022). The potential of social networking sites for continuing professional learning: investigating the experiences of teachers with limited resources. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 44(3),

546-562.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2021.1932453>

Lee, C. J., Sugimoto, C. R., Zhang, G., & Cronin, B. (2013).

Bias in peer review. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(1), 2-17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22784>

Lipworth, W. L., Kerridge, I. H., Carter, S. M., & Little, M.

(2011). Journal peer review in context: a qualitative study of the social and subjective dimensions of manuscript review in biomedical publishing. *Social Science & Medicine*, 72(7), 1056-1063.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.02.002>

Meyer, K. E. (2006). Asian management research needs more self-confidence. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 23, 119-137.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-006-7160-2>

Mulligan, A., Hall, L., & Raphael, E. (2013). Peer review in a changing world: An international study measuring the attitudes of researchers. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(1), 132-161.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22798>

Nguyen, D. P., Ho, V. T., & Vo, X. V. (2018). Challenges for Vietnam in the globalization era. *Asian Journal of Law and Economics*, 9(1), 20180002.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ajle-2018-0002>

Nguyen, Q., & Buckingham, L. (2019). Source-use expectations in assignments: The perceptions and practices of Vietnamese Master's students. *English for Specific Purposes*, 53, 90-103.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2018.10.001>

Nicholas, D., Watkinson, A., Jamali, H. R., Herman, E., Tenopir, C., Volentine, R., ... & Levine, K. (2015). Peer review: Still king in the digital age. *Learned Publishing*, 28(1), 15-21.

<https://doi.org/10.1087/20150104>

Pham, H. T. (2019). Limited legitimacy among academics of centrally driven approaches to internal quality assurance in Vietnam. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41(2), 172-185.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2019.1565298>

Phu, H. B. (2019). Meaningful learning and its implications for language education in Vietnam. *Journal of Language and Education*, 5(1), 98-102.

<https://doi.org/10.17323/2411-7390-2019-5-1-98-102>

- Ross, J. A. (2006). The reliability, validity, and utility of self-assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 11(1), 1-13.  
<https://doi.org/10.7275/9wph-vv65>
- Ross, J. S., Gross, C. P., Desai, M. M., Hong, Y., Grant, A. O., Daniels, S. R., ... & Krumholz, H. M. (2006). Effect of blinded peer review on abstract acceptance. *Jama*, 295(14), 1675-1680.  
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.295.14.1675>
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 189-213). SAGE Publishing.
- Smith, R. (2006). Peer review: a flawed process at the heart of science and journals. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 99(4), 178-182.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680609900414>
- Squazzoni, F., Grimaldo, F., & Marušić, A. (2017). Publishing: Journals could share peer-review data. *Nature*, 546(7658), 352-352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/546352a>
- Than, S. T., Nguyen, C. H., Tran, T. Q., & Le, P. B. (2019). Building competitive advantage for Vietnamese firms: the roles of knowledge sharing and innovation. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 10(4), 1-12.  
<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijba.v10n4p1>
- Tite, L., & Schroter, S. (2007). Why do peer reviewers decline to review? A survey. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 61(1), 9-12.  
<http://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2006.049817>
- Truong, V., Denison, T., & Stracke, C. M. (2021). Developing institutional open educational resource repositories in Vietnam: Opportunities and challenges. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 22(4), 109-124.  
<https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v23i1.5582>
- Tumin, D., & Tobias, J. D. (2019). The peer review process. *Saudi Journal of Anaesthesia*, 13(Suppl 1), S52. [https://doi.org/10.4103%2Fsjja.SJA\\_544\\_18](https://doi.org/10.4103%2Fsjja.SJA_544_18)
- Van Rooyen, S., Godlee, F., Evans, S., Black, N., & Smith, R. (1999). Effect of open peer review on quality of reviews and on reviewers' recommendations: a

- randomised trial. *Bmj*, 318(7175), 23-27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.318.7175.23>
- Vu, M. T. (2021). Between two worlds? Research engagement dilemmas of university English language teachers in Vietnam. *RELC Journal*, 52(3), 574-587.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219884782>
- Vuong, Q. H. (2019). The harsh world of publishing in emerging regions and implications for editors and publishers: The case of Vietnam. *Learned Publishing*, 32(4), 314-324.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1255>
- Vuong, Q. H., La, V. P., Nguyen, H. K. T., Ho, M. T., Vuong, T. T., & Ho, M. T. (2021). Identifying the moral–practical gaps in corporate social responsibility missions of Vietnamese firms: An event-based analysis of sustainability feasibility. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28(1), 30-41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2029>
- Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Walsh, E., Rooney, M., Appleby, L., & Wilkinson, G. (2000). Open peer review: a randomised controlled trial. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 176(1), 47-51. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.176.1.47>
- Ware, M. (2008). *Peer review: benefits, perceptions and alternatives* (p. 2008). London: Publishing Research Consortium.
- Warne, V. (2016). Rewarding reviewers—sense or sensibility? A Wiley study explained. *Learned Publishing*, 29(1), 41-50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1002>
- Weller, A. C. (2001). Editorial peer review: Its strengths and weaknesses. Information Today, Inc..
- Woodside, A. (2018). Territorial order and collective-identity tensions in Confucian Asia: China, Vietnam, Korea. In *Public spheres and collective identities* (pp. 191-220). Routledge.