Improving Writing Skills through Peer Assessment

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Abstract

The study aims at finding out the impact of peer assessment to improve EFL learners' writing skills. This paper highlights the practical use of peer assessment and the significant challenges that need to be considered when applying it in the classroom. This action research used a mixed-method design to collect quantitative and qualitative data. It was conducted for five weeks on twenty-five students from a public high school in El Oro Province. The instruments applied were: a pre and post-test, a checklist, a pre and post-survey, and a semi-structured interview. The results showed an increase in the mean between the pre-test and the post-test of 4.72 with a medium effect size (0.362). The findings revealed that peer assessment improved students' writing performance. Likewise, they developed well-structured sentences, organized ideas appropriately, reduced word repetition, and had fewer mistakes in grammar and mechanics. They also became responsible for assessing their friend's tasks, which increased their positive perspectives towards peer assessment. Finally, the implications of using peer assessment in the classroom are significant as well as beneficial for EFL teachers and researchers who want to enhance the writing skills of their students.

Keywords: peer assessment, writing skills, EFL, writing process.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo descubrir el impacto de la evaluación por pares para mejorar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Este documento destaca el uso práctico de la evaluación por pares y los desafíos importantes que deben considerarse al aplicarla en el aula. Esta investigación de acción utilizó un diseño de método mixto para recopilar datos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Se realizó durante cinco semanas con veinticinco estudiantes de un colegio secundario público en la provincia de El Oro. Los instrumentos aplicados fueron: una prueba previa y posterior, una lista de verificación, una encuesta previa y posterior, y una entrevista semi-estructurada. Los resultados mostraron un aumento en la media entre la prueba previa y la prueba posterior de 4,72 con un tamaño de efecto medio (0,362). Los hallazgos revelaron que la evaluación por pares mejoró el rendimiento de escritura de los estudiantes. Del mismo modo, desarrollaron oraciones bien estructuradas, organizaron las ideas de manera apropiada, redujeron la repetición de palabras y tuvieron menos errores de gramática y mecánica. También se hicieron responsables de evaluar las tareas de sus compañeros, lo que aumentó sus perspectivas positivas hacia la evaluación por pares. Finalmente, las implicaciones del uso de la evaluación por pares en el aula son significativas y beneficiosas para los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera e investigadores que desean mejorar las habilidades de escritura de sus estudiantes.

Palabras clave: evaluación por pares, habilidades de escritura, inglés como lengua extranjera, proceso de escritura.

Improving English Writing Skills through Peer Assessment.

English is an essential communication tool in many parts of the world; it allows individuals to interact with others in another language. To learn a language like English permits us to be in contact with people from other countries. The main goal of educators in today's globalized world is to develop learners' English skills like writing, which is widely used for improving second language knowledge. This skill is essential for educational success, but it is very complex to be mastered (Buragohain & Wahdan, 2018; Tillema, 2012). The issues that non-native students generally face in writing is the overuse of the first language, development, and organization of ideas, sentence structure, lack or inappropriate use of vocabulary and grammar, and mechanics mistakes.

In Ecuador, the writing skills of the students are weak and deficient, taking into account that in EFL contexts, most learners are not exposed to English beyond the classroom (Fabre, Boroto, & Soto, 2015). To develop L2 learning skills, since 2012, Ecuadorian education authorities have adopted the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) English proficiency level A2 for the end of primary and B1 for the end of high school (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). The goal of the Ecuadorian curriculum for teaching English is that high school graduates acquire the linguistic competence to be independent English users. Despite the efforts, Ecuador is in position 81, which is a low level of English among 100 countries in the world, according to a study conducted by Education First (2019). To improve these low results, teaching English is mandatory from the second grade to the last year of high school in the whole Ecuadorian school system (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

The main purpose of teaching English in Ecuadorian schools is the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which should be included in the teaching and learning process. However, the EFL curriculum took special attention to

writing skills to guarantee students develop their aims as writers. This skill must be developed step by step throughout the school instruction years and on (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). One manner to develop this skill includes teaching by using Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards (Ministerio de Educación, 2012); in this way, the students could achieve the exit profile level B1 required in the Educational Ecuadorian system.

The Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2018) sustains that many students need to be empowered in their vision of learning languages to achieve the English proficiency level. The issue is that learners are not interested in developing the new knowledge or skills in the target language. Although the EFL curriculum was made with the purpose that students learn the English Language skills, the students are not acquiring these skills (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Writing is a skill that has not been developed in the correct form because students do not practice it regularly, or they use their first language most of the time. Under the Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards, teachers' should "...develop students' writing through a range of activities, from sentence formation to expository writing" (Standard 3.b.8) in order to make improvements in students' writing (Ministerio de Educación, 2012).

This action research with the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data addressed an authentic practice for improving writing skills peer-assessment. Peer assessment involves students making judgments and commenting about peers' work (Chen & Li, 2016). This kind of assessment offers the opportunity for students to learn with peers (McGarrigle, 2013), and it allows students to become more careful about their writing skills. It is essential to know that peer work increases the motivation of the students, which helps to improve writing skills (Chen & Li, 2016). Peer assessment allows learners to evaluate and give feedback to their

peers in a direct way or by using technology to correct mistakes to have clear and organized ideas while writing.

The use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), like blogs, influences progress since it encourages students' peer work through online communication. Technology makes it feasible to take peer-supported learning in and out of the class (Richards, 2014). Technology facilitates writing in social places, which lets students build meaning from their writing with peers, teachers, and other people (Blankenship & Mararella, 2014). Similarly, a blog is a tool that permits the multi-way exchange of written, visual, and multimedia content (Gomez & McDougald, 2013). Technology provides students with multiple opportunities to practice writing outside the classroom collaboratively.

Numerous studies demonstrate that peer assessment improves students' writing skills (Ayachi, 2017; Ndoye, 2017; Wride, 2017). This kind of evaluation is efficient in getting a good quality of writing (Alzaid, 2017; Kaufman & Schunn, 2010). In Ecuador, there are some investigations about peer assessment but for other skills. However, there is specific research that writing can be enhanced by applying collaborative work (Alvarez, 2019; Moreira, 2019). These studies indicated that most students found the experience of peer's work very helpful to improve their writing abilities. By working with peers, students fostered their critical thinking, increased their writing skills, and augmented their motivation to write better.

A key concern of this research was whether or not students could evaluate their peers in writing. Students need to work with peers because assessment makes them become more critical to reflect on their work (Ndoye, 2017), and promote peer development to improve this work (Spiller, 2015). Previous findings revealed that writing is indispensable to have ideas, put them together, and examine them carefully (Raimes, 2002). In this study, the problems of the high school students to improve their writing skills are the continuous use of L1, lack of

ideas to be confident when writing, fear of making mistakes in mechanics, lack of time to follow the process to produce good pieces of writing, a large class, and other minor issues.

This study intended to examine these problems, the aspects that generate them, meet the challenges that students face during the process of writing, and make improvements in learners' writing skills through peer assessment. Also, this investigation considered students' perceptions of peer work in which peer assessment attempts to fill a gap that exists between peer assessment given and peer assessment received by following a plan. Finally, the research aimed to increase the use of peer-assessment in teaching to write descriptive paragraphs by exploring the efficiency of peer-assessment inside and beyond the classroom.

Literature Review

Writing is an important skill that helps learners to write down their thoughts in a proper manner. It is demanding for students because they use their first language most of the time. This research intends to improve writing skills through peer assessment by defining and describing writing and peer assessment concepts, the writing process, use of technology, difficulties when writing a paragraph, the use of blogs, and perspectives of students towards peer assessment. Also, it sets theoretical connections of some researchers and pretends to give an overview of the different writing challenges that students face.

Writing Skills

Writing is the most challenging skill in learning the English language (Abas & Aziz, 2016). Improving writing skills is crucial for learning a second language because, through writing, students can develop their purposes as writers. According to the Ministry of Education (2016), thanks to writing, people express what they know and learn what they do not know. For the learners, the importance of writing goes further than a manner of communication; it supports the way they acquire knowledge (Soontornwipast & Tuvachit,

2018) to improve their English language proficiency. Moreover, writing is necessary to reinforce other skills (Yulianti, 2018) that students need to achieve their educational and professional requirements now and in the future.

By means of writing, learners can transmit views, ideas, feelings, and facts. Writing, however, demands higher thinking abilities (Alhosani, 2008). Learning to write means making suitable choices to transfer significance, answering to a communicative purpose, and considering the audience (Díaz, Ramos, & Ortiz, 2017). Producing a correct piece of writing is not an easy thing; it requires time and preparation. Writing skills cannot be developed spontaneously in a short period of time; it is an extended process even for L2 users (Abas & Aziz, 2016).

In order to develop writing skills, it is necessary to apply grammar rules, write the right structure in sentences, and avoid mistakes in mechanics like punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Grammar is a system of rules composed of many integrated components that confirm precision and significance that allows learners to form and interpret the words (Dalil, 2013). When learners focus on grammar, they acquire L2 more easily, have higher levels of accurate written production, and longer retention of forms (Ellis, as cited in Uysal, 2010). To plan a good writing text, it is recommended to pay attention to form, using changes effectively, and recognizing grammar in context (Byrd, as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 2018).

Likewise, sentence structure construction combines short or straightforward sentences into complex sentences to improve writing quality (Saddler & Graham, 2005). Also, having proper mechanics is essential to get a good composition. Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are essential for precisely the same reason as grammar; poor mechanics make poor communication (Ruetten, 2012). Punctuation clarifies the meaning of written sentences and the different texts by applying a set of marks such as periods, commas, semicolons, and other

symbols. Spelling, in writing, is the correct choice and organization of letters to form words. It means that effective ESL writing must be cohesive, logical, clearly structured, adequately organized with a wide range of terms, and mastery of conventions in mechanics (Jacobs & Hall, as cited in Ashraf, Bilal & Fareed, 2016).

Students must overcome many issues that impede the improvement of writing skills such as lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar understanding (Yulianti, 2018), which are the key to improve their writing skills. According to Krashen (2013), individuals pick up the language when they understand messages. Learners have to overcome their writing problems by combining what they have learned and put it into practice. Moreover, EFL teachers should work to improve their own writing skills, which could allow students to enhance their L2 knowledge. Teachers need to communicate well to the students (Buragohain & Wahdan, 2018) about errors they have made and give ideas to correct those errors to improve their writing abilities.

The Writing Process

Writing is a complicated process that implies different steps. To be a good writer, it is fundamental to follow the process because it increases the success of developing a good piece of writing. Many investigators focus on the performance of writing procedures in relation to the quality of writing (Tillema, 2012). Most investigators have used Hyland's Model (2003), which organizes the five-stage writing process:

1. Pre-writing: This stage relates to thinking and planning steps. Learners gather information and write down their ideas.

2. Drafting: This phase gives the students a chance to review their work, connect ideas, support, and change them.

3. Revising: This is concerned with telling learners what they know and think about the topic. Mechanical errors are found in the draft, and students can make changes in their writing.

4. Editing: This is the part where writers enhance the draft. The writer focuses on checking mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

5. Publishing: This stage centers on students' ability to share writing with their peers to improve their paragraphs. Researchers found that Hyland's model helped learners to have a good piece of writing because they spent more time drafting, planning, and organizing their work (Buragohain & Wahdan, 2018).

Peer Assessment in Writing

Teaching and learning writing skills is a challenge in the educational Ecuadorian system, but assessing writing is also a demanding process. Currently, peer assessment has been widely applied in high schools to engage students in learning to write correctly. Peer assessment is a reciprocal process between learners (Spiller, as cited in Wride, 2017). Investigations have shown the importance of involving students in their learning through peer assessment (Ndoye, 2017). Peer assessment can develop collaboration skills and stimulate active rather than passive learning (Topping, 1998). At the same time, evaluating peers' work and participating in peer editing effectively can enhance the learners' knowledge (Reppen, 2002).

Peer assessment can be described as an agreement for peers to consider the level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of others of similar status (Topping, 1998). Peer assessment might produce positive effects to enhance writing skills because it encourages students to take an active role to work in a cooperative way. As the students assess their classmates' writings critically, they become potentially aware of similar errors they make in their writings (Kasper & Spiller, as cited in Sotoudehnama &

Pilehvari, 2016). Peer assessment, like other kinds of assessments, helps to create a closer relationship among teachers and students; it also boosts critical thinking, communication, responsibility, feedback, autonomy, and it helps students develop useful skills academically and professionally (Peng, 2010).

Peer assessment involves students giving feedback to their fellow learners on the quality of their work (Spiller, 2012; Wang, 2016). Before providing feedback to peers, students need preparation for evaluation and following the guidelines. Students need the practice to gain confidence in peer assessment and to become more competent at it (Wang, 2016). Peer feedback on writing helps students to increase their learning because it gives them the chance to think critically (Bijami, Kashef & Nejad, 2013). However, before using peer assessment, many students are resistant to this kind of evaluation (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011) because they are not sure if their peers can enhance their writing.

Nevertheless, some researchers affirmed that peer assessment does not increase learners' skills. Sadler and Good (2006) carried out a peer assessment experiment in secondary school classes. They claimed that peer assessment does not reinforce scholars' skills. One problem is that many students can be reluctant to make judgments and comments on their peers and prefer that the teachers revise their peers' work. It generally occurs at the beginning of a study due to the students not fully trusting their peers. Students' reasoning for preferring the teacher's comments was based on their perception that the teacher was the expert (Altstaedter & Doolittle, 2014). Other results indicated that students were able to work with their peers and make judgments reasonably accurately (Alzaid, 2017). Most of the studies showed that peer assessment is an efficient tool for improving writing skills. Thus, the benefits of peer assessment could focus on the ability of peers to make a complete evaluation that is comparable to or better than that of a single evaluator (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011).

Peer assessment can be used as a supportive feedback tool for teacher assessment in EFL classrooms. Ecuadorian standards for in-service English teachers (2012) encourage teachers to use "….peer assessment techniques when appropriate" (Standard 4.c.5). It acts as a useful supplement for teachers' feedback, which will contribute to improving the learning of students. If students do not perceive peer feedback as a valuable and supportive process that can enhance their writing proficiency, they may not improve their writing skills in a new language (Altstaedter & Doolittle, 2014). To facilitate the peer feedback and peer assessment process, it is very convenient to use a checklist, which is essential to assess improvements during the development of activities related to writing.

Moreover, it is necessary to consider Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles to get good results in writing skills through peer assessment. CLT highlights interaction as the construction of knowledge. Learning in CLT is not an individual activity, but a social one that depends upon collaboration with others (Richards, 2006). Group activities and personal development are useful when CLT is included (Abe, 2013). These principles give learners the chance to focus on form, encourage learning by doing, promote cooperative and collaborative work, and provide error correction in the learning process to enhance their writing skills.

Similarly, the lesson plan implemented in the innovation applies the backward design to gather the attention of students and get the required knowledge to improve writing skills through peer assessment. By backward design, teachers decide which evidence they wish to attain before they plan what they teach and how (Wiggins & McTighe, as cited in Yurtseven & Altun, 2016). Successful teaching starts with clarity about desired learning results and about the evidence that will demonstrate that learning has occurred (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). This lesson plan has an integrated curriculum and instruction to implement learning

for understanding to enhance L2 knowledge. This backward design includes desired understandings and performance tasks that require to be transferred.

In addition, it was essential to know the students' perspectives about peer assessment. When this investigation started, learners were truly skeptical and worried about quality, effects, and procedures to evaluate peers' writing. Kaufman and Shunn (2011) specified that students' perceptions impact the work they do and allow for some generalizations about how their attitudes affect their performance. Such insights initiate students' lack of confidence in their peer assessment to their peers (Brammer & Rees, as cited in Ayachi, 2017). However, those perspectives change when learners trusted in their faculties to assess their classmates, making contributions to enhance their peers' writing abilities.

This study examined students' perspectives toward improving writing skills through peer assessment and other important factors that influence students by applying this kind of assessment. Because of the problem of students in their writing skills, this research explored the effectiveness of peer assessment on students by knowing their feelings and opinions about peer assessment to enhance their writing skills. Consequently, this study presented the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer assessment affect writing?

2. What are the problems faced by EFL students when writing descriptive paragraphs in English?

3. What are the students' perspectives about improving writing skills through peer assessment?

Innovation

This study allowed students to practice and improve writing skills through peer assessment in a collaborative way. Students were instructed about peer assessment and its

importance to improving writing skills to notice their peers' mistakes, their own errors, and make corrections. The class was elaborated based on the micro curricular unit by using a backward design plan (Appendix A), which lasted 30 teaching hours (5 weeks).

During this time, students developed writing skills through peer-assessment, peer work, and writing paragraphs (Appendix B) by applying a rubric (Appendix C) and a checklist (Appendix D) in order to assess peers and provide feedback. Learners elaborated an advertisement about touristic places in the province or in their hometown. Some examples were based on the textbook, but learners had to complete other activities, using the correct spelling, good word choice, and the right structure of sentences to complete the paragraphs.

The students had the option to comment on their classmates' paragraphs when they exchanged the writings of their paragraphs, and they elaborated an advertisement. To provide correct peer assessment and feedback to their peers, students used a checklist. The teacher provided comments and gave input to support students' peer assessment. In this way, learners could organize their ideas coherently into the paragraph, rectify errors using their peers' feedback, employ vocabulary accurately, and use correct grammar and mechanics.

In the following weeks, the teacher supported the writing process while students revised, edited, and rewrote their paragraphs, comments, and advertisements. Students did peer assessment twice a week from the second to the fifth week. To do this peer assessment, learners had to use the checklist on the back of their writings. Students continued working, developing not only writing skills but also listening, speaking and listening.

Finally, the teacher supported the transfer of knowledge by clarifying learning objectives. Students applied what they learned while the teacher assessed the learning of them. Students had the opportunity to work with peers by using ICTs like blogs to share the new information inside and outside the class.

Methodology

This is an action research study that analyzed qualitative and quantitative data. A study has stages in which participants analyze their formative process in their context by using research techniques (Ferrance, 2000). Practitioners-researchers conduct it in their places to solve a problem by researching it, making suggestions, applying the solutions, and assessing the efficiency of these results (Ravid, 2015). This section describes the participants, instruments, data analysis, and ethical issues of the innovation.

Participants

The population included a sample of 25 students ranging in age from 16-17 (13 males and 12 females) who studied in a public school in El Oro province. The study took place over the course of 30 hours (5 weeks) in an English class. The students had A1 (60%) and A2 (40 %) English proficiency levels according to a placement test taken before starting this study; it was based on the Common European Framework (CEFR).

Instruments

The instruments considered for this study were a pre and post-test, a checklist, a pre and post-survey, and a semi-structured interview. Due to students' English level, most of the instruments were in Spanish with the exception of the pre and post-test. To answer the first research question: *To what extent does peer assessment affect writing?,* a pre and post-test (Appendix B) was applied and evaluated by the researcher and another expert in the area. Students wrote a descriptive paragraph about a local holiday destination they had visited. To grade the paragraph, a rubric (see Appendix C) was used. This rubric contained the following components: Ideas and content, structure, word choice, sentence fluency, mechanics, and grammar. Each descriptor was scored over 5 points.

For the second question: *What are the problems faced by EFL students when writing paragraphs in English?,* the researcher and the students applied a checklist (Appendix D) to report on problems students continue having in writing. This checklist had twelve questions and was it was designed in a yes/no format that evaluated the student's work. Individual components were used to analyze the progress and improvement of writing skills.

For the third question: *What are the students' perspectives about improving writing skills through peer assessment?,* the researcher applied a pre-survey (Appendix E) and a post-survey (Appendix F) with twelve items to know the perspectives towards peer assessment to improve writing skills. The results were developed by using a questionnaire with 12 items, which had a Likert scale that went from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Cronbach's alpha determined the reliability of the survey.

Moreover, the researcher applied a semi-structured interview with four questions to six students who were chosen, taking into account the highest, middle, and lowest grades obtained in the pre-test. Semi-structured interviews (Appendix G), were used to collect qualitative data through open-ended questions. The answers to each question were written, recorded, and organized to gain insights, reasoning, and motivations to develop writing skills through peer assessment. The researcher interviewed the participants one by one to understand and get a well-described answer. These questions explore the subjective viewpoints (Flick, 2009) of the learner to gather significant evidence for the study (Evans, 2018).

There was the information of previous researchers that support this innovation to show validity and reliability in this study. By applying the instruments correctly for collecting data, the research increased validity, which determined how the research results are trustful in this study.

Data Analysis

For the first research question: *To what extent does peer assessment affect writing?*, the results were obtained after the codification of the compiled information in Excel. Then it was entered in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the descriptive statistics program to compare the results from the two tests (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation). Averages of the tests, overall grades, and individual components were used for analysis. The effect size was calculated on the Social Science Statistics web site to determine the impact of the innovation for learning.

For the second question: *What are the problems faced by EFL students when writing paragraphs in English?*, the data were tabulated in an Excel worksheet to get the frequencies of each component of the checklist. The results determined the problems of the innovation proposal.

 For the third question: *What are the students' perspectives about improving writing skills through peer assessment?*, the data collected from surveys were tabulated in Excel and entered in the SPSS software to obtain the frequencies of each survey and compare the results. Furthermore, the researcher applied a semi-structured interview to know students' perspectives to improve writing skills, feelings towards peer assessment received after each performance, and thoughts about the importance of peer assessment.

Ethical Issues

As this action research was conducted in a public school setting in a rural area, some ethical issues could appear. There are many unexpected situations when doing an investigation that can potentially have adverse consequences (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). But, the researcher acted with honesty, confidentiality, and respect for privacy. To apply this innovation, the researcher got permission from the principal of the school. Students and their

parents were previously notified to be part of this study to get their approval. It ensured that

the study met ethical guidelines and standards. The participants were protected at all times

during the research and after it.

Results

In this section, the researcher describes the results of the study. The data obtained in

this research were analyzed based on the three research questions established in this study.

The results are explained according to each question.

To answer the first research question: *To what extent does peer assessment affect

writing?,* basic descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations determined the results

of the post-test. It specified that peer assessment supported students' peer work, improved

their writing skills, and increased the quality of their paragraphs.

Table 1

Overall results of pre-test and post-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
PRE-TEST	25	16	23	18,84	1,572
POST-TEST	25	22	25	23,56	0,960

Table 1 shows the overall values of the pre-test and post-test. The mean difference is

4.72, which shows a growth in the scores of the post-test. The results of Cohen's *d* 0.362

demonstrate a medium effect size. It is to say, the difference between pre and post-test shows

a good effect in improving paragraph writing performance. The *p* value with an alpha of 5%

is less than 0.05, which indicates that the writing skills of participants have increased after

receiving peer assessment in the implementation of this innovation.

Table 2

Results according to the categories of performance: Pre and post-test

	PRE-TEST					POST-TEST			
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Ideas and Content	25	3	4	3,88	,525	4	5	4,88	,331
Structure	25	3	4	3,72	,541	4	5	4,72	,458
Word Choice	25	3	4	3,72	,458	4	5	4,84	,374
Sentence Fluency	25	3	5	3,84	,472	4	5	4,68	,476
Mechanics and Grammar	25	3	4	3,68	,476	4	5	4,44	,506

Table 2 shows an improvement in all categories after the implementation of the innovation. In terms of word choice, there was an in increment of 1.12 points between the two tests (from 3.72 to 4.84); it is the highest value among all categories. Regarding ideas and content, there was an increment of 1.00 point between the pre and post-test (from 3.88 to 4.88). Likewise, the structure category increased to 1.00 point (from 3.72 to 4.72). The sentence fluency category increased 0.84 points (from 3.84 to 4.68). The mechanics and grammar category increased by 0.76 points (from 3.68 to 4.44). It means that it is the lowest value in the post-test results. In conclusion, the results between the pre and post-test indicate that there was a substantial enhancement in writing paragraphs by applying peer assessment. Although some students lacked the facility to write well-structured sentences and made mistakes in mechanics and grammar, they improved the writing of paragraphs.

To answer the second research question: *What are the problems faced by EFL students when writing paragraphs in English?,* this study included numerous checklists that were filled out by students during the implementation of the innovation. The purpose was to identify the issues learners face when writing paragraphs and how they can overcome these difficulties through peer assessment. There were twelve questions whose results are shown in Tables 3 and 4 by using percentages.

Table 3

Frequencies of the checklist at the beginning of the innovation

N°	QUESTIONS	Yes	No
1	Is there a clear, focused topic sentence?	64%	36%
2	Does the paragraph have supporting sentences?	52%	48%
3	Is there a concluding sentence?	32%	68%
4	Is the message in the paragraph clear?	36%	64%
5	Is the paragraph easy to understand in spite of mistakes?	48%	52%
6	Are the ideas in the paragraph well described?	38%	62%
7	Are all the sentences complete?	52%	48%
8	Are there any words repeated too often?	38%	62%
9	Is it free of capitalization errors?	44%	56%
10	Is it free of spelling errors?	24%	76%
11	Is it free of punctuation errors?	32%	68%
12	Is it free of grammar mistakes?	20%	80%

This table shows that most students have negative answers for writing in the first checklist performed in the second week of the innovation. According to the data, the highest negative percentages were for question 12 (80%), which demonstrates that the paragraphs written for the participants at the beginning of the innovation had many grammar mistakes. Similarly, question 10 (76 %) shows that spelling errors were present in most of the paragraphs. Furthermore, questions 3 and 11 had the same percentage (68%); this demonstrates that participants did not write a concluding sentence and they did not apply punctuation in their pieces of writing. Finally, question 4 (64%) indicates that participants did not organize the paragraph correctly. Thus, results demonstrate that at the beginning of the innovation, the writing skills of participants were feeble in most of aspects described in each question.

Table 4

Frequencies of the checklist at the end of the innovation

N°	QUESTIONS	Yes	No
1	Is there a clear, focused topic sentence?	96%	4%
2	Does the paragraph have supporting sentences?	100%	0%
3	Is there a concluding sentence?	84%	16%
4	Is the message in the paragraph clear?	88%	12%
5	Is the paragraph easy to understand in spite of mistakes?	88%	12%
6	Are the ideas in the paragraph well described?	96%	4%
7	Are all the sentences complete?	100%	0%
8	Are there any words repeated too often?	8%	92%
9	Is it free of capitalization errors?	92%	8%
10	Is it free of spelling errors?	84%	16%
11	Is it free of punctuation errors?	96%	4%
12	Is it free of grammar mistakes?	84%	16%

This figure illustrates that all questions of the checklist filled by participants and revised by the researcher in the last week of the implementation got definite answers. The best percentages were for questions 2 and 7 (100%); they show that participants could write supporting and complete sentences correctly in the last paragraph. Questions 1, 6, and 11 (96%) indicate that most of the students could write correct topic sentences, describe their ideas well, and use punctuation to obtain a good piece of writing. Items 8 and 9 (92%) show that participants avoided the repetition of words because they used other words like synonyms and used capitalization to separate sentences. To conclude this description, question 12, related to grammar mistakes and which had a high negative percentage in the first checklist, increased to 84% in a positive way at the end of the innovation. The results of this instrument revealed the benefits of the implementation of this innovation to improve writing skills through peer assessment.

For the third question: *What are the students' perspectives about improving writing skills through peer assessment?*, this study included a survey to know the students' perspectives towards improving writing skills through peer assessment. There were twelve items, and the results are shown in averages in Table 5. Below the table is written the description of the results.

Table 5

Students' perspectives towards peer assessment (Pre-Post Survey)

N°	Items	Mean	
		Pre survey	Post survey
1	I think peer assessment is very beneficial to me.	4.44	4.64
2	I feel confident when I make recommendations to my peers' writing.	3.76	4.36
3	Peer-assessment makes me prepare my writing better.	4.44	4.64
4	I think my peers do a good job on providing me feedback.	4.40	4.68
5	I think peer assessment helps me to improve writing assignments.	4.48	4.64
6	Peer-assessment allows me to learn from my mistakes.	4.76	4.68
7	Peer-assessment allows me to view the learning of writing in a practical way.	4.52	4.60
8	Peer-assessment makes me add interesting information to the contents of the activity.	4.20	4.44
9	I think my peers are as demanding as the teacher in their assessment.	3.32	4.20
10	I like my peers' assessment because I learn from their recommendations.	4.00	4.48
11	I think peer-assessment means a lot of responsibility for us as students.	3.92	4.56
12	I have the necessary skills to take part in a peer-assessment.	3.20	4.32

Table 5 displays that there was a difference in students' perspectives with respect to the pre-survey and the post-survey. There was an increase in the means of all the items but more for item 12, whose mean increased 1.12 points. This denotes that students have the necessary skills to take part in a peer-assessment. The mean of item 9 augmented 0.88 points;

this signifies that learners are as demanding as the teacher while assessing their peers. In number 11, the mean growth 0.64 points that indicates learners think peer-assessment means a lot of responsibility for them as students. In item 2, there was an increment of 0.60 points; this shows that students feel confident when they make recommendations to their peers' writing. Finally, the mean of item 10 increased 0.48 points; this demonstrates that peers' assessment allows pupils to learn from their peers' recommendations. The only negative result was for topic 6, in which the mean decreased. The results confirmed that participants have more positive perspectives on the use of peer assessment to enhance writing skills at the end of the innovation than at the beginning of it.

Similarly, six students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6) described their perspectives by answering four open-ended questions through an interview. The first question was related to challenges to improve writing skills. The six students explained that the aspects of writing they found more challenging were organizing ideas articulately, having a correct structure of sentences, and using the exact words to give a clear view of the message to the reader. The second question was related to the feelings of participants about peer assessment received after each task and the actions they took to improve their writings. S2, S3, S4, and S5 manifested that at the beginning of the innovation, they felt terrible because they did not believe that their peers could evaluate their paragraphs and make recommendations to correct them, but during the implementation, they proved that peer assessment is a great tool to improve writing skills. S1 and S6 expressed that they felt very convinced that their peers could assess them appropriately from the beginning to the end of the innovation. Likewise, the actions they took to develop their writings in the next tasks were: follow the process of writing, correct grammar and mechanics, and write the paragraphs repeated times.

The third question was related to the peer assessment they gave to their partners. The six students agreed that the peer assessment they provided was helpful for their peers, and it increased their confidence to work by applying the new knowledge in each task. Question four highlighted the thoughts that participants had about the importance of peer assessment. All the students stated that peer assessment was very important for them because it really improved their writing skills to write paragraphs, comments, and recommendations correctly and that due to working with peers, the tasks were easier to perform.

Discussion

This study intended to improve the writing skills of the participants through peer assessment. After five weeks of implementation, the findings in this study confirmed the effectiveness of using peer assessment for writing development; these results are explained in the next questions with their respective answers:

Question 1: *To what extent does peer assessment affect writing?,* results mentioned above show the benefits of including peer assessment in EFL classrooms to improve writing skills, since it increases confidence to work collaboratively during the teaching and learning process. The results of the pre and post-tests scores indicate that peer assessment allowed an improvement in the writing skills of participants. The post-test mean difference is 4.72, with a medium effect size of 0.362, which means that peer assessment made improvements in the final piece of writing. These findings indicate similarities with other outcomes such as Alzaid (2017); Altsataeldter and Doolittle (2014); Kaufman and Schunn (2010); Peng (2010); and, Reppen (2002) who affirmed that peer evaluation helps learners to develop their writing abilities. These researchers proved in their findings that peer assessment is essential to improve writing aptitudes. Moreover, the section most enhanced in writing paragraphs was the word choice precision and efficiency (see Table 2). Yulianti (2018) stated that students'

lack of words is an issue that impedes making improvements in writing. However, the results confirm that peer assessment given by students was efficient and supported their improvements when writing paragraphs.

Question 2: *What are the problems faced by EFL students when writing paragraphs in English?,* the results showed that peer assessment by using a checklist improved the writing skills of the participants from the first to the last writing, especially in the supporting and structure of sentences, which rose 100%. This improvement is the effect that students assess their peers correctly during the implementation of the innovation. This statement coincides with Alzaid (2017) and Ashraf, Bilal, and Fareed (2016), who sustained that students were able to make accurate judgments to their peers. The mistakes presented at the beginning of the implementation were solved through peer assessment given by learners during the writing process. This process was crucial to increase the success of enhancing writing skills, as mentioned in Buragohain and Wahdan (2018); Hyland (2003) and Tillema (2012). Learners followed all the steps of the writing process. It allows learners to plan, organize, correct, enhance, and express their ideas better.

The authors Tsui and Ng (as cited in Sotoudehnama & Pilehvari, 2015) asserted that although students make mistakes in their writings, they are usually able to spot their peers' errors but not their own. Alvarez (2019); Ayachi (2017); Moreira (2019); Ndoye (2017); Topping (1998) and Wride (2017) indicated that peer assessment could develop collaboration abilities and encourage the active engagement of learners. For that reason, peer assessment is the key to correct those mistakes and, at the same time, improve writing skills. On the other hand, during the implementation of this study, students created a blog that was shared with peers who wrote comments related to the topic. It helped to continue working beyond the classrooms to get the desired results and complete the plan.

Question 3: *What are the students' perspectives about improving writing skills through peer assessment?,* these findings determined that the perspectives of peer assessment among participants were very positive because they gained confidence while assessing peers and saw excellent results in their writing skills. The means of the items in the survey indicate that peer assessment was beneficial for students because they prepared their paragraphs better, added interesting information, practiced writing with peers, and took responsibility for their peer' tasks. The results coincide with Abas and Aziz (2016) and Wang (2016), who stated that practice in peer assessment makes learners gain confidence in learning.

According to the results of the open-ended questions in the interview, the participants felt very well when assessing peers. Developing writing skills was not easy; however, during the whole implementation, learners' perspectives towards peer assessment were very positive. The students' answers demonstrate that their perceptions of peer assessment influence the quality of their work (Brammer & Rees, as cited in Ayachi, 2017; Kaufman & Schunn, 2010). These results and opinions of students display the positive effects of the implementation of the innovation.

To sum up, the results show that students improved their writing skills through peer assessment. Learners developed their knowledge in grammar sentence structure and mechanics. They were capable of keeping in mind the correct form to write well-structured sentences (Ellis, as cited in Uysal, 2010), which was an issue at the beginning of this innovation. Likewise, the percentages in the checklist, the mean in the pre and post-test, and in the survey increased at the end of the innovation, which confirmed the positive perspectives participants had towards peer assessment for improving their writing skills. The teacher-researcher gave little support in some misunderstandings, but the peer work was the key to get these results.

Conclusions

This research intended to determine how writing skills can be improved through peer assessment. The findings detail that students enhance their writing abilities after giving and receiving peer assessment during and after performing each task. It can be concluded that this kind of evaluation is a useful tool to boost writing skills in EFL students. Also, the findings of this study offer researchers and teachers evidence that high school students have the potential to assess their peers by following the correct process and having a suitable instruction. Preparation helps learners become competent evaluators and identify peers' mistakes accurately.

The results of this investigation show that students progressed in components such as the structure of sentences, organization of ideas, grammar, and mechanics, such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The outcomes indicate that peer assessment reduced students' mistakes in their paragraphs and in writing in general. By following the process of writing, learners improved their pieces of writing. For instance, in the first paragraph, they produced sentences with incorrect structure and unorganized ideas that prevented clear messages about the topic. In the end, they wrote well-structured sentences and the paragraph was easy to understand.

The use of a checklist made peer assessment more effective since students checked each activity autonomously during and after the implementation. Peer assessment provided students with the opportunity to improve learning in L2, taking actions in their peers' weaknesses to reinforce them, which allowed them to enhance their writings too. Subsequently, they found the right way to make well-structured sentences, and reduced word repetition and errors in mechanics as well as grammar mistakes.

By working collaboratively, students had the chance to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and they were able to develop the abilities required to generate ideas, edit, and revise their pieces of writings to give the reader a correct perspective of the topic. The results of the survey and interview show optimistic attitudes, feelings, and opinions of peer assessment during the entire implementation. Learners' positive perspectives were significant learning supporters during the whole implementation. They help students to improve their writing skills from the beginning to the end of the innovation.

This innovation took advantage of technology to work outside the class; it became a great tool to fulfill this innovation. The use of blogs allowed participants to comment and assess their peers online, permitting them to apply ICTs to develop their abilities in writing. Likewise, CLT principles motivated learners to join in on the learning process to build up meaningful knowledge while working in each task.

To conclude, peer assessment is an excellent tool to support students' improvement in their writing. The Ecuadorian standards for in-service English teachers were essential for teacher's feedback in each class. Thus, these findings have significant implications for the development of the teaching and learning process inside and beyond the classroom.

Limitations

The present study had certain limitations during its implementation. Some of them were: the lack of confidence of participants about their skills to assess activities and tasks of their peers, the lack of time to perform the innovation successfully, the students' limited knowledge of L2, the lack of access to technology; the lack of technological resources in the high school; and the lack of previous studies related to peer assessment in Ecuador. The first limitation was that participants did not feel confident about their skills to assess their peers. It

made their first peer assessments very poor, and the teacher-researcher had to revise and comment one by one each piece of writing, which took extra time.

The second limitation was the length of time determined to accomplish this innovation. The investigation was performed in 30 hours, which was not enough time to practice and develop students' writing skills. To write paragraphs in a correct form or with minor mistakes, learners need to practice more. For this reason, learners had to work extra time after each hour of class. Because of this, they had to perform some tasks at home; it reduced the motivation to do the activities on time.

The third limitation was that some activities and tasks incorporated in the lesson plan, as well as the creation of blogs, took a longer length of time. Thus, to finish with the whole lesson plan, the students had to work beyond the classroom by using technology. It was challenging to fulfill because most of the participants were not familiar with the technology to create blogs and use them properly. Many students did not have any ICT tools and the internet to work at home to comply with the whole assignments. The situation became more challenging because a lot of learners lived in the countryside, making it impossible to work together with their peers to share the ICT tools. For that reason, the tasks were completed in more time than expected.

The fourth limitation was that in our country, there is a lack of research studies related to peer assessment and ways to give and receive it accurately. There are investigations about peer assessment but focused on speaking, not for writing. Other studies are centered on collaborative writing, which is an advantage to develop writing abilities. That is the reason why the researcher is presenting this study to help other researchers and other teachers to have the bases to use peer assessment in our educational system. Finally, the last problem

was that students used Spanish most of the time, so the interview was accomplished in this language, confirming that students need to improve their writing skills much more.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends that peer assessment can be used as an alternative to establish new procedures of evaluation. It helps in the capacity of students to give their points of view to their peers and receive peers' opinions and corrections. Therefore, the students must be responsible for their developments in learning English skills to achieve the knowledge they want to acquire.

It is necessary to expand the time of the implementation; it will help students to write better and enable the reader to read a good piece of writing to understand it. The extra time will let students keep improving their paragraphs and will produce significant benefits for learners to enhance their writing skills. This time will permit students to keep practicing writing to correct grammar and mechanics mistakes, write well-structured sentences to organize their writings accurately.

Finally, before the implementation, a good option will be to develop a plan or some classes related to how to use technology and other ICTs in high schools to enhance the knowledge of students because many of them do not have the possibility to enhance it by themselves. Improving not only writing skills but also technology helps learners to be prepared for future investigations and other challenges related to education and professional development.

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Appendix A

Design from Your Goals

Instructional design of units for transfer of learning to real life contexts

Institution:	**Colegio de Bachillerato 6 de Agosto**
Year of study:	**2 BGU**
Student description:	**The population includes 25 students ranging in age from 16-17; A2 English level.**
(*include English Level*)	
Professor:	**Juana Tapia González**
Unit title:	**Getting Away**
Weeks:	**5 weeks**
Hours:	**25 hours of class/40 minutes each period**

I. Transfer Goal (Stage 1)

Standards the unit will work with:

- Produce simple procedural and descriptive texts with some detail and variety in sentence structure yet may contain some usage error.

Goal:

- I want my students to learn vocabulary related to holiday destinations by developing spelling correction, word and grammatical choice, so that, in the long run and on their own they can enhance their writing skills through peer assessment to create descriptive paragraphs demonstrating their communicative competence and the use of English language in authentic contexts.

Breakdown of transfer goal

A. If we see and hear them do this, they CAN transfer this learning.	B. If we see and hear them do this, then they CANNOT (yet) transfer:	C. What I will commit to doing differently in my classroom to ensure my results look like Column A.

• Write well-organized texts for the different tasks. • Write a clear topic sentence. • Write good supporting details. • Write a good concluding sentence. • Transfer their ideas in a simple and organized way. • Use vocabulary related to the topic. • Use transition words in the paragraphs. • Give correct peer assessment and feedback to their peers using a rubric.	• Students have a weak structure of sentences while writing. • Students cannot write a clear topic sentence. • The supporting details are confusing. • Students do not write a concluding sentence. • Students use only a few transition words. • Students show lack of vocabulary when expressing their ideas. • Students cannot provide peer assessment and feedback.	• Use authentic resources like pictures, magazines, internet, and background information of students. • Provide a model of the process of writing a paragraph in a correct way. • Use technology as a tool for providing feedback about their writing. • Help students give peer assessment and feedback in the process.

II. Summative Performance Assessment Task (Stage 2)

Goal	To promote holiday destinations to the appropriate audience, situation and purpose by communicating ideas effectively.
Role	Students are touristic guides who work collaboratively to create an advertisement.
Audience	Students, authorities, other peers and individuals from the community where students live and study.
Situation	Students are touristic guides who have to write and design an advertisement to share it with peers and other people to promote a holiday destination in the province.
Performance	Students create an advertisement to describe holiday destinations by using personal experiences, photos and other kind of material that support the final task.
Standards	Students can write a paragraph by using simple phrases and sentences to describe events, activities and personal experiences when visiting a touristic place.

III. Knowledge and skills the students need to succeed in the assessment. (Stage 1)

What students will need to know	The skills students will need to be able to do
• Vocabulary related to tourism. • Grammar tenses. • How to develop a topic sentence. • How to develop supporting details. • Correct organization of ideas in a paragraph, use of grammar and mechanics. • Provide peer assessment by using a rubric. • Use of transitional words	Students will be able to… • Demonstrate the ability to give and ask for information related to holiday destinations using an appropriate level of language in peer work classroom interactions. • Exchange personal experiences related to activities and attractions of touristic places in order to write a short paragraph. • Provide support for their opinions and ideas written into the paragraph. • Write to the appropriate audience, situation and purpose by generating ideas that readers want to read. • Work with peers collaboratively in order to give and provide peer assessment and feedback about holiday destinations. • Identify relevant information in the paragraphs in order to correct the spelling, grammar and mechanics.

IV. Essential Questions (Stage 1)

Essential questions support the transfer goal, signal inquiry, guide instruction, and can be asked over and over throughout the unit without reaching a final answer.

1. What makes peer assessment effective?
2. How does peer assessment develop writing skills?
3. How can peer assessment help to improve writing skills?
4. How can writers hook the attention of readers?
5. How good writers can provide peer assessment and feedback to peers?

V. Learning Activities (Stage 3)

Transfer goal: At the end of the unit the students will be able to use in an autonomous way their writing skills to communicate their ideas by using new vocabulary, correct grammar and mechanics to write a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding idea, so that, in the long run and on their own, they can produce well-organized descriptive paragraphs demonstrating accuracy and the use of writing skills in the English language.

Abbreviated Performance Task: Students will write a paragraph about holiday destinations. It has to include a topic sentence, at least three supporting ideas and a concluding sentence. Peer assessment and feedback will be provided from peers to reflect on mistakes and correct them.

Learning Activities (5 weeks)
Week 1
Lesson 1: Going on vacation (80 minutes) 🞢 Students take the pre-test (Appendix B) 🞢 The teacher introduces the topic going on vacation as introduction of the unit. 🞢 Students brainstorm vocabulary related to holiday destinations in Ecuador. 🞢 Students review the vocabulary related holidays destinations. 🞢 Students write a short description about the importance they have to promote the beauty of our landscapes, beaches and other interesting places of Ecuador. 🞢 Students have to work in small groups to answer questions related to touristic places in Ecuador by using the next questions: why do you consider this place worth visiting? What attractions does this place have? What activities could you do? What kind of food can you find there? Why do you like it? 🞢 Students have to fill out a pre-survey (Appendix C) about attitudes towards improving writing skills through peer assessment.
Lesson 2: Exploring touristic places in the province (80 minutes) 🞢 Students watch a video about holiday destinations around Ecuador. 🞢 Students discuss in pairs about which holiday destinations shown in the video they would like to visit and then write a comment about this place. 🞢 Students exchange personal experiences related to activities to do, attractions and landmarks of touristic places in El Oro Province and write down their peers' experiences in a piece of paper. 🞢 Students describe a holiday destination of El Oro Province in three sentences and share it with other classmate in order to share the ideas and correct mistakes.
Lesson 3: Amazing things to do (80 minutes) 🞢 The teacher presents specific vocabulary about holiday destinations in Ecuador. 🞢 Students complete a task about vocabulary to discover incredible things they can do while

they are on vacation in any place in Ecuador.

- Students describe important landmarks, transport, activities, attractions, food and cost of hotels of a touristic place they have visited.
- Students have to make a list about tourist places they would like to visit in the next holiday.
- Students listen to a dialogue between Beth and a travel agent and complete the conversation with words from previous exercises.
- Students discuss in pairs about the activities Beth can do while she is on vacation. They have to write a list about the activities she would like to do.
- Students search for information on the internet about a good place to visit, looking for pictures, facts and explanations that they can use for the task.
- Students state on a piece of paper the value and benefits of a tourist place.

Week 2

Lesson 4: Amazing things to do (80 minutes)
- Students listen to a radio advertisement which promotes Ecuador as a holiday destination.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQH0gpEPxJ4
- Students work in pairs to make a list about the characteristics of tourist places named in the radio advertisement.
- Teacher introduces students to peer assessment and instructs them to complete peer reviews of a paragraph by providing some examples to the class.
- Teacher models the process of organizing the ideas, supporting details and concluding sentence. Also, the teacher explains how to use those ideas in order to make a descriptive paragraph.
- Students read the checklist (Appendix D) to check if the paragraph has the guidelines like main idea, supporting details and concluding sentence.
- Teacher supports students with some examples during the process of drafting, editing and rewriting a paragraph.

Lesson 5: Feeling like getting away from the city (80 minutes)
- Students have to describe on a piece of paper some of the most important holiday destinations in the world that people love to visit.
- Students have to start writing a short paragraph by using personal information about touristic places in their hometown.
- Students provide their peers peer assessment and feedback by using the paragraph rubric (Appendix C).
- Students revise and make recommendations correctly when they discover mistakes by using the guidelines provided by the teacher.
- Teacher revises and provides written feedback for the paragraphs to improve peer assessment.
- Students improve their drafts based on the feedback from their partners and the teacher.

Lesson 6: It is worth visiting this place any time of the year (80 minutes)
- Teacher scaffolds the lesson by modeling peer assessment prior to allowing the students to

work collaboratively.

➕ Learners brainstorm and write the different reasons for making a trip, considering their personal experiences and knowledge.

➕ Students have to work in small groups to briefly research other places of tourism in Ecuador and its attractions.

➕ Students explain why this place is worth visiting and what things they recommend doing there.

➕ Choose the readers for each team to share the writings about tourism in Ecuador with the whole class.

➕ Reflect about the importance of working in a collaborative way by using peer assessment.

Week 3

Lesson 7: Holiday destination: Time for travel (80 minutes)

➕ Teacher presents some pictures a variety of popular holiday destinations in our country: Galapagos, Quito, Loja, etc.

➕ Students discuss about the pictures: where is this place? What is its importance for locals? What sort of thing you can do there? Have you ever gone to these sites? Which has been your best vacation? What activities you can you do there? Would you like to go there? Where?

➕ Teacher gives a brief description of each one and the impact that these places have for the economy.

➕ Students work with a partner to discuss the importance of jobs related to tourism area, how they improve the economy of people and why these jobs are essential for the community.

➕ Students create a mind map of the main points of tourism places. Use vocabulary related to holiday destinations.

➕ The teacher presents a blog related to Holiday Destinations in Ecuador and introduces it to the class to post comments and things related to the advertisement.

➕ Teacher show students how to create a blog, how they can use it and how they can post pictures and add new entries to the blog in order to use online communication technology to support interaction with peers.

Lesson 8 & 9: Holiday destinations: My Ecuador (4 periods of 40 minutes each one)

➕ The teacher gives the rubric (Appendix C) to work on a second paragraph about touristic holiday destinations in Ecuador you have visited recently. They have to start working in the paragraph by following the criteria in the paragraph rubric.

➕ Students must start writing by brainstorming some ideas and using these questions: What attractions does this place have? What activities can you do there? Which activities are the most popular? Why do you choose it?

➕ Students work on the paragraph with a peer in order to organize, share ideas and peer assess it. The paragraph must have a topic sentence, some supporting details and the concluding sentence, taking care with vocabulary, grammar and mechanics.

➕ The teacher reviews the paragraph of students by rereading it together with students.

- In small groups, students reflect on peer assessment and the advantages they have by working in a collaborative way.
- The teacher plays a video about peer assessment and how to provide effective feedback using the rubric. Students have to take notes and learn about it while the teacher explains.
- Students create a Gmail account or use one they have in order to comment on the blog.
- Students create a blog and ask peers to post comments on it about the topic related to holiday destinations.

Week 4

Lesson 10: Holiday destinations (80 minutes)

- The teacher presents a short advertisement piece about the Iguazu Falls.
- Students participate discussing in small groups: What is the purpose of the advertisement? How does it impact in readers? Does it encourage people to visit it?
- Students see, read and share some advertisements provided by the teacher.
- In pairs, students label the sections of the advertisement like location, what to do, when to go, what to eat, weather.
- Students watch two videos: one about Iguazu Falls and the other from a local holiday destination here in El Oro which will be a guide to create an advertisement about a local holiday destination they have visited.
- Students brainstorm some ideas to create promotional messages about the place they want to promote. It must include vocabulary related to food, landmarks, activities, and attractions of those places; also, they can include the part of their mind maps.
- The teacher teaches the processes of writing and how students structure it before creating the advertisement.
- Students sign up to the blog and start exploring different features and tools that the teacher shares with them in this blog.
- Students practice on the blog by writing the promotional messages about the local place they want to promote.

Lesson 11 & 12: Book your vacation today (4 periods of 40 minutes each one)

- Students work in pairs to brainstorm some ideas about touristic places and write them on a piece of paper or in a post it notes. They have to stick it up on the board to correct mistakes. Then, they have to post them on the blog.
- Students search information on the internet to look for pictures, facts and explanations that they can use to complete the advertisement.
- Learners have to work with peers to share the pictures and magazine cutouts.
- Rewrite the second paragraph to correct and describe the activities better and work with peers to review, edit and assess the paragraph according to the paragraph rubric and a checklist. Peers have to work by answering these questions:
  1. Is there a clear, focused topic sentence?
  2. Does the paragraph have supporting sentences?

3. Is there a concluding sentence?

4. Is the message in the paragraph clear?

5. Is the paragraph easy to understand in spite of mistakes?

6. Are the ideas in the paragraph well described?

7. Are all the sentences complete?

8. Are there any words that are repeated too often?

9. Is it free of capitalization errors?

10. Is it free of spelling errors?

11. Is it free of punctuation errors?

12. Is it free of grammar mistakes?

Week 5

Lesson 13, 14 & 15: A dream destination (6 periods of 40 minutes each one)

- The teacher asks students to share their paragraphs with each other in order to provide the last feedback. Students peer edit the final paragraph using the rubric.
- Students are encouraged to write their paragraphs on the blog and comment on at least two paragraphs of their classmates.
- Teacher asks students to react to their peers' posts. Then verify if they have commented on the other posts.
- Teacher reviews the paragraphs to verify if they have a good topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence.
- The teacher provides written feedback for the paragraphs by posting a comment to each student.
- Teacher develops a mini fair where students present their final advertisement which includes a blank page where their peers can write some comments about the advertisement.
- Students complete a post-test (Appendix B) and a post-survey (Appendix D): Attitudes towards improving writing skills through peer assessment.

Appendix B

Pre-test/post test

Level A2 of English/ nivel A2 de inglés.

1. Write a paragraph about a tourist place that you would recommend for a vacation. Keep in mind the following aspects:

- Description of the place
- Attractions
- Activities to do there

Appendix C

Writing Rubric for Paragraphs (pre-post test)

According to the official general guidelines of the CEFR, level A2 of English/ Según las pautas generales oficiales del MCER, nivel A2 de inglés.

2=A1.1   3=A1.2   4=A2.1   5=A2.2

CRITERIA	EMERGING 2	DEVELOPING 3	STANDARD ATTAINED 4	SKILLFUL 5
IDEAS AND CONTENT Description.	The ideas and the content of writing is unclear.	The ideas and the content of writing is somewhat unclear.	The ideas and the content of writing is focused on the reader.	The ideas and the content of writing is clear and well-focused on the reader.
STRUCTURE Topic sentence, supporting details, concluding sentence.	Lack of structure. The topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence are weak.	The structure is appropriate. The topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence are conventional.	The structure is strong. The topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence are satisfactory.	The structure is effective. The topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence are excellent.
WORD CHOICE Precision and efficiency.	Language is limited and repetitive. The message is too general.	Language is predictable but inaccurate. The message is general.	Language is functional and appropriate. The message is specific and clear.	Language is very appropriate for the audience. The message is specific, precise and interesting.
SENTENCE FLUENCY Patterns	There are many difficulties to read the sentences. Most of them are confusing.	There are many awkward sentences. The reader has to read again to understand.	There are a good variety of sentences. The reader understands easily.	The sentences have an excellent structure. The reader is impressed with the writing.
MECHANICS AND GRAMMAR	There are many punctuation, capitalization and spelling mistakes.	There are some punctuation, capitalization and spelling mistakes.	There are one or two punctuation, capitalization and spelling mistakes.	There aren't any punctuation, capitalization and spelling mistakes.

Appendix D

Paragraph peer assessment checklist for students

Use this checklist to evaluate the paragraph of your peers.

QUESTIONS	Yes	No
1. Is there a clear, focused topic sentence?		
2. Does the paragraph have supporting sentences?		
3. Is there a concluding sentence?		
4. Is the message in the paragraph clear?		
5. Is the paragraph easy to understand in spite of mistakes?		
6. Are the ideas in the paragraph well described?		
7. Are all the sentences complete?		
8. Are there any words that are repeated too often?		
9. Is it free of capitalization errors?		
10. Is it free of spelling errors?		
11. Is it free of punctuation errors?		
12. Is it free of grammar mistakes?		

Appendix E

Pre survey: The purpose of this survey is to measure students' perspectives towards improving writing skills through peer assessment. / Pre encuesta: El propósito de esta encuesta es medir las perspectivas de los estudiantes para mejorar las habilidades de escritura a través de la evaluación por pares.

Point out the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by putting a tick in the appropriate box using the scale given below. / Indique hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones marcando la casilla correspondiente en la escala que se proporciona a continuación.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think peer assessment is very beneficial to me.					
I feel confident when I make recommendations to my peers' writing.					
Peer-assessment makes me prepare my writing better.					
I think my peers will do a good job on providing me feedback.					
I think peer assessment will help me to improve writing assignments.					
Peer-assessment will allow me to learn from my mistakes.					
Peer-assessment will allow me to view the learning of writing in a practical way.					
Peer-assessment will make me add interesting information to the contents of the activity.					
I think my peers will be as demanding as the teacher in their assessment.					
I like my peers' assessment because I learn from their recommendations.					

I think peer-assessment means a lot of responsibility for us as students.				
I have the necessary skills to take part in a peer-assessment.				

Appendix F

Post survey: The purpose of this survey is to measure students' perspectives towards improving writing skills through peer assessment. / Post encuesta: El propósito de esta encuesta es medir las perspectivas de los estudiantes para mejorar las habilidades de escritura a través de la evaluación por pares.

Point out the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by putting a tick in the appropriate box using the scale given below. / Indique hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones marcando la casilla correspondiente en la escala que se proporciona a continuación.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think peer assessment was very beneficial to me.					
I felt confident when I made recommendations to my peers' writing.					
Peer-assessment made me prepare my writing better.					
I think my peers did a good job on providing me feedback.					
I think peer assessment helped me to improve writing assignments.					
Peer-assessment allowed me to learn from my mistakes.					
Peer-assessment allowed me to view the learning of writing in a practical way.					
Peer-assessment made me add interesting information to the contents of the activity.					
I think my peers were as demanding as the teacher in their assessment.					
I liked my peers' assessment because I learn from their recommendations.					
I think peer-assessment meant a lot of responsibility for us as students.					

I had the necessary skills to take part in a peer-assessment.					

Appendix G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

For the semi- structured interview: Perspectives towards improving writing skills through peer assessment.

<u>Part I:</u> Instructions

The interview aims to get your perspectives towards improving writing skills through peer assessment. There are no correct or incorrect answers, so please feel comfortable and be honest as you can be. Remember that the information is confidential and will be used responsibly. I will be writing a report which will contain your answers without any reference.

<u>Part II:</u> Questions

1. What aspects of writing in English do you find more challenging for you?

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2. Describe how you felt about the peer assessment you received after each task? Did it help you take some actions for improving the writing in the next task?

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3. What do you think about the peer assessment you gave? Was it useful to your peers?

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4. Why do you think peer assessment is important for improving writing skills?