Universidad Casa Grande

Peer Assessment Using Blogs to Improve Writing Skill

Ramiro Gonzalo Benavides Guachichullca,

Guide: María Rossana Ramírez Avila

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Abstract

This action research was based on the peer assessment as a strategy to improve writing skills, which was developed during four weeks with the creation of paragraphs posted on a free blog site. Due to the pandemic and health measures for the presence of COVID-19, only eleven students of a public high school were the participants in the virtual sessions. They belonged to A1 – A2 level of English proficiency. The researcher implemented quantitative and qualitative instruments to determine their writing improvement. As a result, between the pre and post-test there was a remarkable mean difference (6.82). Likewise, Cohen's d= 0.77 reflects a large effect size which determines that with the creation of paragraphs published in blogs, the students developed and improved their writing skills. Besides, peer assessment increased their confidence, motivation, and persistence for learning. EFL teachers can find implications in this study to analyze and discuss its results for a possible implementation of peer assessment in their classrooms to improve their learners' writing skills.

Keywords: peer assessment, writing skills, blog, pandemic

Resumen

Esta investigación acción se basó en la evaluación por pares como estrategia para mejorar la capacidad de redacción, la cual se desarrolló durante cuatro semanas con la creación de párrafos publicados en un sitio de blog gratuito. Debido a la pandemia y las medidas de salud por la presencia de COVID-19, solo once estudiantes de una escuela secundaria pública fueron los participantes en las sesiones virtuales. Pertenecían al nivel A1 - A2 de dominio del inglés. El investigador implementó instrumentos cuantitativos y cualitativos para determinar su mejora en la escritura. Como resultado, entre la prueba previa y posterior hubo una diferencia media notable (6.82). De igual manera, Cohen's d= 0.77 refleja un tamaño de efecto grande, el cual determina que con la creación de párrafos publicados en blogs, los estudiantes desarrollaron y mejoraron sus habilidades de escritura. Además, la evaluación de pares aumentó su confianza, motivación y perseverancia en el aprendizaje. Los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera pueden encontrar implicaciones en este estudio para analizar y discutir sus resultados para una posible implementación de la evaluación por pares en sus aulas para mejorar las habilidades de escritura de sus alumnos.

Palabras clave: evaluación de pares, habilidades de redacción, blog, pandemia

Peer Assessment Using Blogs to Improve Writing Skill

Within the EFL teacher's professional performance, t is always considered the development of the students' four skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Between them, it is frequent to find the students' writing skills weakness since this is a mental process demanding continuity and persistent practice from the learner (Indriyanti & Prasetyo, 2018). In addition to how to write, students need to learn how to structure their ideas and create a paragraph. Thus, feeling discouraged, they prefer to pass over the writing tasks (Saputro, 2013 as cited in Guzmán & Moreno, 2019). Paradoxically, that lack of interest is in fact a lack of confidence for an absence of teachers' strategies to motivate them (Fareed et al., 2016).

That fact can be compared to what Ecuadorian learners live in classrooms, due to teachers' methods to teach English. Muñoz et al. (2018) mentioned those methods are based on grammar and translation, which have led to students do not desire to learn the language, labeling the English language as boring, and placing Ecuador "on the forty-eight positions among the countries with low level of English" (p.49).

A reality that is evidenced in 2nd Baccalaureate students specifically in a Guayaquil public high school, with results for the writing skill such as lack of confidence, fear to be assessed with bad grades, and, the worst ones: the confusion about how to start writing, how to reflect what they think, and the absence of coherence in order words to create sentences (spelling, grammar, and punctuation). With that background, it is pretty comprehensible that even though their ages around 16 and 17 years old, their English language proficiency is between A1 and A2 level and far from the B1.1 level (Independent users of language) expected from them according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

To answer how to improve writing skills building the learners' confidence simultaneously, Widyawati (2018) and Gencha (2018) underlined the use of peer assessment, a way to include students within the formative assessment. In spite of being just two of the few studies about peer assessment focused on improving writing skills, these authors stated that applying it, students develop their analysis capacity and remain motivated to continue practicing writing as well. Taking into account those improvements, Widyawati, with senior high school learners and Gencha, with college students, this work aims to research more about this strategy's effectiveness in Guayaquil public high school learners.

Likewise, to elicit and keep students' engagement in writing skill improvement, in opinion of Santos et al. (2018), the technology is required to be used by teachers principally to foster the students' socialization and participation in class. In particular, to improve writing skills, Zaghlool (2020) specified that technology offers online writing activities that students can really enjoy, while their confidence and responsibility keep stimulated at the same time. Within those online writing activities, Blake (2016) evidenced that digital stories ease the learners' engagement, promoting their social collaboration in writing using "discussion forums, blogs, wikis, shared documents", standing out social networks, Twitter or Facebook, as important tools where learners can have the sensation of having an audience which they need to keep engaged through their writing production. Blogs, especially, can support their progress and keep them motivated (Putra et al., 2018).

On the other hand, in Ecuador there are studies to improve writing skill with different learning strategies and technological tools such as Albán et al. (2019); Álvarez (2019); Bustamante (2019); Moreira (2019); Pineda (2019); and, Vega (2019) who has implemented peer feedback and blogger to make an action research study. However,

none of them have included the peer assessment as main strategy. The only study with peer assessment belongs to Perlaza (2020) who applied it but focused on reading comprehension.

Due to those facts, there is a research gap in the use of peer assessment facilitated by a virtual blog to improve writing skills at high school level. Consequently, the study expects to evidence how efficiently both of them can work combined to teach and learn the English language in Ecuadorian public high schools.

Literature Review

This research entailed peer assessment using blogs to improve writing skills. Peer assessment and the use of blogs were the independent variables, while, the writing skills, the dependent variable. In this section those concepts and theories are described to support this study.

Writing Skill

To Rao and Durga (2018) writing is "the system of written symbols, representing the sounds, syllables or words of language, with different mechanisms - capitalization, spelling and punctuation, word form and function" (p.1). Broadening this concept as part of four English skills in language learning, Indirayarti (2018) reported that writing skill stands out between other ones for allowing students deepen in their background to elaborate their communicative purposes. Thus, with that initial reflection they plan and mentally order their thoughts, experiences, feelings, and ideas, before to express them (Widyawati, 2016).

Therefore, to the purpose of this work, promoting that freedom to express naturally about what they prefer in reports, stories, or short essays, may motivate students to develop and improve their writing skills. The supportive assistance to get students to be engaged and focused on writing skill progress was explained by Putra et

al. (2018) through the use of the blog and its appealing advantages in applying fun activities.

The written production in this study is related to A2 level proficiency that evidences the creation of "simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and,' 'but' and 'because'" (Council of Europe, 2018, p.75). Characteristic having similarity with the Ecuadorian In Service English Standards of writing production in the Level A2, in order to "produce simple procedural and narrative texts with some detail and variety in sentence structure yet may contain some usage error " (Ministerio de Educación, 2012, p. 10).

Specifically, students have to structure those phrases and sentences following the main elements of one paragraph, which are described by Successful Writing (2012) as topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following terms:

Paragraph: set of sentences that properly communicates and develops a main idea about diverse topics.

Topic sentence: the first presentation of the paragraph that summarizes the writer's stance or viewpoints. Its responsibility is to catch the readers' attention, and motivates him to follow the reading.

Supporting sentences: shaping the body of the paragraph, they offer more explanations, deepen in reasons, providing examples and facts that support what was asserted or stated on the topic sentence.

Concluding sentence: summarizes what was communicated in the paragraph and ends reinforcing the main idea contained on the topic sentence.

Peer Assessment

On Panadero's work (2016), peer assessment is portrayed as the opportunity for students express their criteria and learn with confidence, autonomy, a sense of cooperation, and responsibility.

Furthermore, to Topping (2017), peer assessment is the evaluation in charge of learners where they analyze and grant a value to a specified task or performance developed by other learners, learning, at the same time they offer feedback and interchange opinions to get a result expected for both sides. As a positive result of that social interaction, the two participants, called assessor and assessed, reflect carefully in constant negotiation to build their own learning in cooperation (Alfaro et al., 2019).

Widyagati (2016) explained that using peer assessment allows students to enhance their writing skills in grammar and descriptive texts, increasing their responsibility degree for learning, as well. However, the teacher needs to be clear with guidelines and disciplinary rules at the moment to assess, anticipating confusions or possible disagreements.

Gencha (2018) asserted that peer assessment offers advantages for students and teachers at the same time. For students' writing improvement, confidence, and motivation, through the process of learning from each other, making multiple drafts, sharing their editing, comments, and assessing. For the teacher, alleviating his work and allowing him to interact and scaffold the students' progress, always with the use and guide of rubrics or checklists.

Blog

A blog in its proper name is considered an online software where people can easily create, edit, and publish their own content on the Internet without any complexity. Their components include the date of content, the access of all stored files,

the accessibility to allow comments, and post hyperlinks, text, pictures, videos, and visually appealing material (Alsubaie & Madini, 2018).

For educative purposes, Kuimova and Zvekov (2016) explained that a blog is a website, easy to be created and used for learning, keeping always available any kind of educative content to share.

The use of the blog evidences remarkable advantages to support learners' progress, with the teachers' monitoring, such as the easy availableness being part of one app into their cellphones, the fostering of their creativity to make appealing their reports, and the immediate feedback from their visitors' comments, allowing the social interaction as well (Putra et al., 2018).

Alsubaie and Madini (2018) remarked web blogs provide learners the feeling to be part of real-life activities, a great chance to practice and comprehend vocabulary acquired in different contexts, with different examples. Nevertheless, Akdag and Özkan (2017) recommended using constant motivation to avoid the advantages of using blogs becoming anxiety, burden of responsibility, consuming time and boredom.

In order to motivate students of 2nd Baccalaureate and improve their difficulties in writing skill, this study implemented the benefits of Peer assessment facilitated by blogs, to answer the following questions:

1. Will the writing skill be affected positively by peer assessment facilitated by blogs?

2. What will students' viewpoints be after the innovation?

Innovation

To carry out this innovation fifteen 2nd Baccalaureate learners of a public high school were enrolled to participate during 20 sessions of class spanned on 4 weeks to cover the whole unit. Finally, due to the pandemic season and lack of internet

connection, four of them dropped out of the course. The eleven students who remained from the beginning to the end, were encouraged to develop their writing skill through the creation of paragraphs with topic sentences, supportive sentences and concluding sentences. Topics related to earth resources and environmental problems were introduced every week to elicit their opinions, reports and proposals. Their drafts and final works were analyzed with peer assessment before being posted on Wix.com.

 Using virtual appointments in the Zoom platform, students started taking a pre-test to test their writing skills, how they reflect their ideas over the paper, and if they connect what they think with coherent sentences. After, they were conducted to the development of the lessons where they were motivated to hone not only the writing skill but their critical thinking about the earth's resources, environmental problems and its possible solutions. Each week, the participants received indications and examples about how to identify paragraphs' elements, how to use it properly in writing skills, and how to assess them following the rubric's guidelines. Thus, they worked individually with their own paragraphs about one topic but joined them with another three or five participants' to create one text subsequently posted on Wix.com, a blog site suggested, between other options, by the researcher.

 This process of writing and assessing was implemented on two separate days of each week to avoid confusion. One day to write their paragraphs, the other one to assess their works with each other. The topics were the touristic place to be visited by them after the quarantine, the environmental problems of those places, the real message of Michael Jackson's Earth Song, the Greta Thunberg's speech. Since their opinions were valued, the researcher kept available through the WhatsApp platform, even weekends, to motivate them and scaffold constantly their progress. Additionally, regarding the current measures of studying at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic, participants

were allowed to work in self-paced learning, with the support of apps such as Grammarly, Linguee, or online dictionaries.

The works were collected and randomly sent by the researcher to students for applying the peer assessment using the rubric. After that assessment, the teacher verified the grades, offered feedback, remarked the importance of trial and error, cleared their doubts about the paragraph`s elements, and emphasized that the meaningful goal of the peer assessment was not being judged but supporting each other in the same learning process. Finally, they went back to their works to hone and post them later in Wix.com. All paragraphs had the same process, except the one and the last paragraphs that were works completely individual, and were entirely assessed by the researcher and the second evaluator respectively with the rubric as well.

Each week, participants were invited to fill a Learning Log form to express their perspectives and feelings related to the present innovation. By the end of the innovation, this was complemented with interviews that revealed their satisfaction, engagement and willingness during the lessons. In the same way, the post- test was developed to contrast the initial results and find out possible improvements in these participants' writing skills.

Methodology

The methodology is based on action research using quantitative and qualitative instruments to depict the research questions. This includes the pre-test and post-test to make a comparison between both of them and determine a desirable improvement. Also, the qualitative instruments used were learning logs to stand out the participants' words about their own progress, and an interview to know students' perspectives and their experiences using blogs and peer assessment.

Participants

Due to the online teaching, conditions and hygienic measures implemented to restrain the COVID -19, eleven students from a Guayaquil's city public high school were chosen to implement this research. They were in 2nd Baccalaureate and their ages were between 16 - 17 years old. Six were female and five, male. As for their proficiency in English, according to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, they should have had a B1 level. However, after they took an online test from https://www.efset.org/, a site of Education First Institute, it was evidenced that they are between A1 and A2 level in fact. Besides, despite having received English classes from their first school years they do not show motivation and accuracy to express or write in English their opinions and ideas.

Instruments

With the purpose to achieve reliable information that answers the research questions, three data collection methods were implemented:

For the first research question: Will the writing skill be affected positively by peer assessment facilitated by blogs? a pre and post-test facilitated the assessment of learners' writing skills at the beginning and at the end of the pedagogical innovation procedure. To avoid possible bias, the pretest was graded by the researcher, while the posttest, by a second evaluator. Both of them comprised the learners' reports creating one paragraph that evidenced their writing skills' progress according to the components featured on the rubric of Moreira (2019):

   1. Topic sentence: Strong and clearly stated

   2. Body: Development of the main idea

   3. Concluding sentence: Complete, restates the main idea

   4: Organization/fluency: Logical flow, focus

5: Mechanics: Spelling, grammar, punctuation

The second research question: What will students' viewpoints be after the innovation about the writing skill?, the researcher carried out four learning logs (Appendix D) for each week that lasted the intervention. At the end and as a complement for this qualitative analysis, five students with high, middle and low scores were interviewed (Appendix C) to verify directly their viewpoints, feelings and opinions about peer assessment strategy, having assessed and having been assessed, their writing works, the use of blogs, and their future expectations for those writing skills as well.

Ethical standards

Ethical standards guided this action research in order to verify its integrity from the beginning to the end. The objectivity was assured between the pedagogical aims and actions taken in this study. Learners were provided with a confident online ambiance to develop their assessments, works, and opinions by themselves.

This study counted on the legal support of consent signed by learners' parents and with the principal's special permission. The researcher previously explained the pedagogical innovation's characteristics and kept them informed during the process of implementation.

The confidentiality was respected, keeping the learners' results and their names under anonymity. They knew about how the strategy, the activities, and lessons were carried out during specific times to improve their writing skills.

The implementation of the lesson plans, results of the data collection and the data analysis were reliable and true. For example, the post-test evidenced the final results because it was assessed, with the same rubric of the beginning, by a second

evaluator who stayed unknown by participants and who have never met with them before.

Results

To answer the research question: Will the writing skill be affected positively by peer assessment facilitated by blogs? It was necessary to make a comparison between the pre-test and post-test results. In pre-test, students evidenced a lack of clearness and accuracy. They revealed their total confusion to reflect their thoughts in sentences. Grammar mistakes, misspelling, poor vocabulary were quite discouraging to them. By the post-test, their results were significant since the peer assessment of writing works using blogs increased a better comprehension of the paragraph's structure, supported learners to develop and improve aspects of writing as coherence, the clearness and the quality of their ideas in their sentences.

Table 1.

Overall results of Pre-test and Post-test.

		PRE-TEST		POST-TEST			p value	
	N	M	SD	M	SD	MD	< 0.05	d
Total	11	8.82	1.40	15.64	3.61	6.82	0.00	0.77

Note: N= Sample. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD=Mean difference d=effect size

With the SPSS program's facilitation, the significant difference between pre-test and post-test are evident within Table 1, with the mean difference (6.82), which stands for an improvement of the learners' scores in the post-test. The Cohen's d =0.77 which means a large effect size. Moreover, since the p value is less than 0.05 it is asserted that the pedagogical innovation has contributed to improve the English learning in participants' writing skills.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the theoretical constructs

Construct	N	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		MD	p value < 0.05	d
		M	SD	M	SD			
Topic Sentence	11	1.46	0.52	3.64	0.67	2.18	0.00	3.64
Supporting Sentences	11	2.36	0.50	3.18	0.75	0.82	0.00	1.29
Concluding Sentences	11	1.09	0.30	3.00	1.10	1.91	0.00	2.37
Organization/ Fluency	11	2.18	0.40	3.00	0.89	0.82	0.01	1.19
Mechanics	11	1.72	0.79	2.72	1.00	1.00	0.01	1.11

Note: N= Sample. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD= Mean Difference. d= Effect Size

Table 2 indicates every component of the rubric implemented in the pre and the post-test. Every component has a remarkable improvement in their means, especially the first one, Topic Sentence, from 1.46 to 3.64. All components have their respective standard deviation closer to their means, from 0.52 to 1.00. Likewise, the difference of all components, between pre and post-test results, is verified as significant since their values are less 0.05. Results that are reinforced by the large effect size of each one, standing out the educative meaningful result of the present pedagogical innovation.

For the second research question: What will students' viewpoints be after the innovation? Learning logs (Appendix C) were applied during four weeks, and interviews (Appendix D) at the end of the intervention. Both of them revealed students' positive perspectives towards the peer assessment and the blogs to assess and create their works improving their writing skills at the same time. The analysis of data of some learning logs reflect that this process has improved their writing skills.

Q1. Do you feel that you can write better now? Why or why not? In this question students reflected about their own progress, making a comparison between what they did before and after the innovation. They expressed their willingness and motivation to improve their writing skills through the creation of their own paragraphs each week.

"Now it is not as complicated as before. The classes have improved my English writing"

"I think so because during all classes we learned the past, present and future tenses using -ed and will, which we can use them in sentences or letters"

Q3. I have gotten the following goals… With this sentence to be completed, students had the opportunity to internalize their progress. This allowed they have their own feedback, their own motivation to remark their advance in writing skills as well as their critical thinking

"A better development in the writing of a paragraph, and a greater knowledge with the vocabulary"

"Reasoning and writing about the damage of the environment, especially to create a solution with the work if I were a hero, what changes would it make to the world?"

Having analyzed the learning logs, the interviews let to know the peer assessment had been evidenced in students' opinions as a friendly favorable way to prompt them to improve their writing skills. The answers of the seventh question especially.

Q7. Which aspects do you consider having improved in writing skill? This interview question supported the real students' feelings expressed in the learning log.

"When I am going to write a paragraph I no longer feel overwhelming since I already know a paragraph's structure to be written"

"I improved the vocabulary. I have learned a lot of words in less time"

"In the structure because I know sentences require to have a sequence and order"

There are other remarkable questions of the interview that brought out their feelings of having been assessed by their peers.

Q2. How did you feel when you were assessed by your peers? Despite their initial reticence and negative expectations for assessing incorrectly and that the grades were going to be very well received by their classmates, the students finally expressed their following positive comments about if they would like to use peer assessment as a main assessment in daily English classes.

"At the beginning I felt a little nervous because I did not know if my classmates would assess me right but everyone needs to learn"

"I felt fine. It was a satisfaction due to the scores provided by their assessment. It encouraged me to continue improving for the score, no matter the score had been low or not"

Q3. How did you feel when you assessed your peers? Through this question students analyzed their experiences in the turn to be the assessors. The rubric played an important role to guide students in the correct way to assess and achieve they can participate without any type of favoritism. It demonstrated their responsibility to be in charge of their classmate's improvement as well.

"I was nervous. The first days using the rubric was a real innovation for not counting on the ability to use it. But, with practice I finally got"

"At the beginning I felt weird because for me it was the first time to assess

somebody. It was a great experience"

Q6. After the experience of practicing peer assessment, would you like

applying this type of assessment in English classes? Why? Normally, peer

assessment is not part of English classes in the public high school where this

implementation was carried out. Through this question students had the opportunity to

recommend this assessment as part of future lessons plans, and teachers, the option to

consider these students' reflections.

"Because it is a way to learn based on my own mistakes and the classmates'

ones".

"It helps me out with the process to improve my flaws and encourages me to

persist too"

"We can learn from our own flaws and the others' so, we have a reciprocal

support"

"It is very good to me because I need to learn more. I agree with being assessed

by other classmates because, as students, we notice our mistakes much more

than teachers. Teachers sometimes assess incorrectly due to their excessive

work"

Q10. After having used blogs as a public way to communicate your

opinions, would you continue using them? Within this same set of interviews, the

inclusion of blogs to develop their writing skills, was useful and creative for other

purposes than only writing:

"Blogs are useful. I told myself they are ideal when I want to start a small

business or advertise some product in other language"

"A blog is educative, very relaxing to share my ideas, works, projects"

Discussion

The results of this study have an agreement with the concepts found in the literature review. Considering the events due to the pandemic season, technology was the opportunity to be widely verified in virtual classes as a useful means to promote students' socialization and participation, as Santos et al. (2018) asserted. The writing skill and the motivation to make it progress were achieved with the use of blogs, following the same positive results of Putra et al. (2018). As Alsubaie and Madini's works (2018) asserted, students were involved in real-life activities, practicing and comprehending vocabulary of real contexts, with the lesson plan's activities focused on environmental issues and possible solutions.

Through the creation of weekly reports, students explore their backgrounds, internalize their conclusions, start and develop their writing skills on behalf of their communicative purposes, as was mentioned by Indirayarti (2018). In other words, before writing, they drew on a mental organization of their feelings, ideas, experiences, thoughts, which evidenced what Widyawati (2016) called as an initial reflection.

To motivate students' participation and persistence peer assessment was implemented as the opportunity for students to express their criteria and learn with confidence, autonomy, a sense of cooperation, and responsibility, confirming Panadero's findings (2016). The two participants' called assessor and assessed, worked together in social interaction, guided by the rubric provided by the teacher. Their weekly constant negotiation developed their own cooperative learning, demonstrating at the same time the accuracy of what was expressed in (Alfaro et al. 2019).

This work agreed with Widyagati (2016) because using peer assessment allowed students to enhance their writing skills in grammar and descriptive texts, encouraging the responsibility of their own learning. The researcher provided feedback, examples

and constant online communication. The rubric and rules were cleared from the beginning and during all classes to avoid confusions or possible disagreements with the scores obtained. It always stood out the group work, without no need to compete for being the best. In contrast, it was valued the trial and error process and their perspectives, opinions, and suggestions to create their own paragraphs.

As for Gencha's work (2018) the researcher found out peer assessment supported students' responsibility, motivation, confidence. Their multiple drafts, with their edition and comments, facilitated the learning from each other to acquire everyone a writing improvement. In parallel, the teacher's intervention reduced, letting him have extra time to interact with them and scaffold them, especially for the use and guide of the rubric (Appendix B).

Finally, it needs to clear this study does not consider that students' responsibility to assess each other replaces the teacher's labor. On the contrary, it values the teacher monitors, scaffolds, and provides through peer assessment the option to students can develop all activities in a confident ambience without the stress of being judged by their scores.

Conclusions

Within this study, it was validated the efficiency of peer assessment to foster, develop, and improve EFL writing skills. In this type of evaluation, students felt motivated to start and persist with their reports, without that typical anxiety to be judged by the teacher or competing for being the best in class. They liked to interact working in groups to write their reports and posting them. In the process of evaluating with each other, they demonstrated enthusiasm to post and share their paragraphs.

Students were led to develop critical thinking about the environment, a topic that drew their attention and made them feel comfortable to start writing. The researcher had

special care for underlining the trial and error importance. This trusty environment eased their virtual participation on the zoom platform and encouraged self-paced activities. It was allowed the use of applications to seek new words for their reports which increased their vocabulary.

Every week, once written their paragraphs, they interchanged those reports with the teacher's previously selected list of students to prevent the same student assessing and being assessed. They followed the rubric's items to practice their peer assessments and to learn, recognize and remember the paragraph's components at the same time.

Although peer assessment has not been a new strategy to evaluate activities in the high school, it is worth pointing out that peer assessment has been made in Spanish language. Practically, peer assessment in English lessons was a total innovation for them. For this reason, the researcher provided constant feedback to remind students how to use the rubric. To this purpose, he kept online even on weekends to remove their doubts. Also, this connection allowed students their punctual writing production. The use of blogs increased and kept their engagement, making them feel creative, valuable, and responsible. In addition, they became creative since they had to make their contents visually appealing in order to draw people's visits and comments.

The positive students' perspectives favored the implementation for having considered their opinions, thoughts, and their works using real-life environmental problems and fostering their critical thinking to solve them.

Consequently, the present work has demonstrated that peer assessment increased students' confidence, motivation to work without anxiety, in a friendly and cooperative way to develop and improve their writing skills.

Limitations

With the arrival of Coronavirus, the traditional face-to-face learning turned to an online learning environment, which compelled the use of technological tools more than ever before in public high school classrooms. However, that ended up revealing some limitations which this research had to deal with.

First, the low number of participants. The initial recruitment for this study considered the number of 25 students but at the moment of presenting the requirement of having access to Zoom, their writing parents' permission, and time to work on the internet, most of them withdrew without registering. The classes started up with fifteen students to finish with eleven who finally completed all the process.

Second, most students did not have the Internet. They argued that in spite of having cellphones and interest to participate in the study, they did not have a complete Internet connection. A neighbor, relative, or municipality's wi-fi enabled them to surf on the internet for a scheduled time but not for hours.

Third, students had non-appropriate technology to support online learning. Students used their cellphones to attend this and other classes. So, they put up with problems in following, downloading, and storing all didactic materials. Their cellphones with limited operations and a lot of information for storing made students delay their participation.

Recommendations

Since this study developed in pandemic season and struggling with lack or deficient technology in public high schools students, future researchers are invited to replicate this study in face-to-face learning classrooms where they will be able to directly monitor students' participation, which in self-paced learning was not possible.

To overcome the lack of deficient technology, researchers could combine writing activities in class, letting students create their drafts in class, and just going to

the virtual blogs for the final weekly presentation. Even this would be very useful for students in order to compensate for their lack or limited connection to the Internet, as well as their absence of smartphones.

In the same way, this work encourages other teachers to implement peer assessment to foster students' engagement and to provide them with the chance to become responsible for the whole class' progress. Students will notice their mistakes and will be confident to learn instead of being afraid to be judged for their results.

The use of blogs could be used periodically, weekly or monthly, as a helpful instrument to submit and present final works, considering that they elicit and promote the writing skills in students, as well as their sense of relevance for their ideas, thoughts and interests reflected in their works.

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Appendix A

Design from Your Goals [1]

Available upon request.

Appendix B

Paragraph Rubric

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Available upon request.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Available upon request.

Appendix D

Learning Log

Peer Assessment using blogs to improve writing skill

Available upon request.

Appendix E

Available upon request.

Appendix F

E-portfolio

Available upon request.

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C.I.: 0917637431

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