



Peer Assessment of Online Posting to Improve Writing Descriptive Paragraph

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First, learning a second language like English is an essential feature worldwide due to its role as a common language in international relations in technology, education, science, business, and tourism (Rao, 2019a). In today's globalized world, educators' primary aim is to improve students' English skills, such as writing, which is everyday use to enhance second language awareness (Tapia, 2020). Thus, writing is the crucial language skill learners need for their personal development and academic success (Mukululu, 2006 as cited in Rao, 2019b).

However, this skill is recognized as the most difficult language one for students to learn (Buragohain & Wahdan, 2018; Tillema, 2012; Yahwang, 2010; Yusuf, 2019). Ariyanti (2016) described in his research that EFL students' difficulties in writing are differences of L1 and L2 like structural and grammatical terms and styles. Therefore, learners have to translate in order to maintain the sense of the text. In a like manner, White and Hall (2014, p.1) highlighted that "writing is often neglected in the early grades, even though data consistently show that many students struggle in this area". Consequently, it results in having learners who present complications to perform their writing skills in the future.

Also, Fareed et al. (2016) stated that some of the problems which arise in writing are "incompetence in syntax, coherence, idea expansion, content selection, topic sentence, rhetorical conventions, mechanics, organization, lack of vocabulary, and inappropriate use of vocabulary" (p. 84). Previous studies pointed out some factors that affect students' writing, such as teacher's incompetence (Haider, 2012; Harmer, 2008), students' lack of interest (Harmer, 2008; Mo, 2012), methodological inappropriacy (Ahmad et al., 2013; Javed et al., 2013) and writing anxiety (Dar & Khan, 2015; Ho, 2016).

Peer assessment strategy in the writing process allows learners to possess more chances to receive and give feedback than when they are by themselves (Trautmann,2009). Also, it affords learners opportunities to analyze their learning process, initiate and employ their preconceptions, make inductions, integrate ideas, recompense for inadequate understandings, and convey info and simplify their understandings (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). Thus, this work's proposal variables will be writing (dependent) and peer assessment (independent).

Previous studies indicate the efficacy of using peer assessment for L2 writing (Ayachi, 2017; Fathi & Khodabakhsh, 2019; Ndoye, 2017). Liang and Tsai (2010) demonstrated in their case study that biology students involved in an online peer assessment activity improved their science writing skills. Likewise, Shih (2011) confirmed that the integration of peer assessment using Web 2.0 technology boosts English writing and meaningfully enhances students' interest and motivation.

In the Ecuadorian context, there are comparable studies to advance writing supported with technology (Benavides, 2020; Cedeño, 2019; Galarza, 2020; Moreira, 2019; Tapia, 2020). One study was action research that promotes online clustering (Cedeño, 2019). Some of them applied collaborative learning through Padlet (Moreira, 2019) and Google Docs (Galarza, 2020). Finally, two have used peer assessment via blogs in face-to-face classes (Benavides, 2020; Tapia, 2020).

Regardless of few academics have enlightened studies on peer assessment over Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve writing skills, there is no research about the use of Facebook for this objective. In this proposal, participants are young adults who study in a language training center in Guayaquil. They face problems when describing in English writing. Besides, evidence shows that some of their difficulties are spelling problems, L1 interference, L2 grammar

and poor vocabulary. Consequently, this study's primary goal is to upgrade writing skills and students' performance by peer assessment with ICT.

Literature Review

This section covers the major topics of this proposal. It consists of theoretical support about studies related to the dependent variable writing skill and the independent variable peer assessment.

Writing

According to Brown (2007), writing is a mental process that can be prepared and granted an infinite number of revisions before publication. It is a system of written symbols representing the sounds, syllables, and words of a language, using various structures such as capitalization, spelling, punctuation, function and word structure (Durga & Rao 2018). Writing can be perceived not only as a means to communicate but also as a means to learn a second language. (Tuvachit & Soontornwipast, 2018).

Several academics have found that writing enhances learners' intellectual capacities and that written language increases cognitive processes of the brain (Cer, 2019; Mehler, 2001; Obler & Gjerlow, 1999). In general, writing is used to transfer information more than any other medium. As a result, students demand efficient writing abilities to suit their academic and occupational needs.

Spelling.

Spelling in English requires the accurate connection of spoken sounds (phonemes) and written symbols (graphemes);(Ghandi & Maghsoudi, 2014). It is a complex language skill at every level of education (Al Bulushi & Al Seyabi, 2016). This process should be taught methodically and explicitly (Turbill, 2000). If L2 writers know to spell, they will improve their writing ability.

Grammar.

Grammar is the structure of phrases and sentences in a language by evaluating their sequence (Yule, 2006 as cited in Effendi, 2017). Harmer (2001) stated that "the grammar of a language is the description of how words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language" (p. 12). In that sense, grammar rules exist to give a sense in language structure, so its presence ensures effective communication in both oral and written forms.

Vocabulary.

The meaning and knowledge of words are considered vocabulary (Diamond & Gutlohn, 2006 as cited in Ali, 2016). Likewise, vocabulary refers to terms that provide a short description of their meaning (Simpson & Weiner, 1989 as cited in Ali, 2016). Thus, the process of building vocabulary is essential for second language writers.

Vocabulary has two varieties: active vocabulary and passive vocabulary. Passive vocabulary is solely utilized for recognition, whereas active vocabulary is used for production. Students frequently struggle while developing this field in meaning, form and probable word structures (Miller, 1984 as cited in Farroq et al., 2012).

Organization.

Much writing adheres to a predefined discourse organization. For example, a standard English paragraph structure includes a topic phrase, exemplification, maybe exceptions or more exemplification and a conclusion (Harmer, 2004). According to Noonkhan (2012), the conventions of connecting texts or paragraphs together using the idea of a rhetorical organization refers to as discourse organization. This

component of writing is going to be recognized in the assessment criteria for this work.

Descriptive paragraph.

A descriptive paragraph uses words to generate pictures in readers' brains, allowing them to visualize the thing or location described (Rojiyah, 2017). Similarly, Sanjaya (2013) claimed that people who read this type of paragraph could have a clear image through the vivid description of people, places, or objects and comprehend the writer's point of view. Thus, although all types of paragraphs are important, descriptive is the emphasis of this research.

Peer Assessment

In the Ecuadorian educational system, teaching and mastering writing skills is challenging, assessing writing is equally difficult. The practice of peer assessment in an online class boosts learners' motivation, participation, and collaboration. (Liang & Tsai, 2010; Shih, 2010; Warschauer, 1996). Nowadays, educators have to integrate online peer assessment to ensure a correct writing performance. Izgar and Aktur (2018) pointed out that peer review is a technique that consists of pupils evaluating each other's work to determine its level, value or quality.

Many advantages can be gained from peer evaluation. For example, one study reported that students who applied it had a better comprehension of assessment criteria (Logan, 2009). Another study informed that this type of assessment had shown to improve students' confidence, and critical thinking abilities (Ruegg, 2015 as cited in Elfiyanto, 2020). Also, peer assessment can help to improve collaborative skills like interaction and promote active learning rather than passive learning (Topping, 1998).

Nonetheless, some challenges might arise in the application of this technique. Considering the learners' perspective in some circumstances, they tend to believe their classmates are not prepared to assess their work and may distrust their suggestions (Kaufman & Shunn 2010). Another situation that may occur is the students' bias, whose purpose could be offering negative or excessively favorable feedback due to friendship ties (Azarnoosh, 2013).

Wride (2017) outlined several measures that instructors must take in peer assessment, such as discussing the best or most appropriate assessment technique with students, describing the advantages of peer assessment, doing an assessment exercise, and finally monitoring the assessment completed by students. The appropriate conditions to engage students in peer assessment are during the formative stage when students become aware of learning gaps, and discover and use more ways to close these gaps (Ndoye, 2017). In this study, students will be trained and become familiar with the role of assessors by using rubrics during formative assessment.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The main aim of CLT is to involve learners to master the target language by communication, construct communicative competence or "the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning" (Savignon, 1991 as cited in Astuti & Lammers, 2017, p. 237). CLT is considered a social learning approach that relies on cooperation among students rather than an isolated one (Richards, 2006). Thus, it is crucial to consider the principles of this approach when using peer assessment to improve writing skills.

Backwards Design

This lesson plan model is based on the framework of Understanding by Design, developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. Teachers use backward

design to select which evidence they want to get before planning what they will teach and how they will teach it (Wiggins & McTighe, as cited in Yurtseven & Altun, 2016). An exclusive feature of this framework is that it ensures learning from the student's point of view due to teachers have step outside their expert role and assess what it will take for a beginner learner to understand the content (Guillot et al., 2020).

Social Media

In the recent decade, information and communication technology (ICT) has become increasingly widely employed in language learning and teaching; ICT is a framework for human-human and human-machine communication and an environment for information generation, presentation, distribution and exchange (Al Arif, 2019). Social media is one type of ICT that has emerged due to technological advancement (Liu, 2010).

Social media integration in the classroom has also been found to increase student motivation (Ellison et al., 2007). Alsaleen (2014) indicated that social media could help students enhance their writing, speaking, vocabulary and diction. According to Chen and Bryer (2012), social media improves the long-term retention of information and generates a profound comprehension of class content.

To conclude this section, this study aims to improve the writing skills of a descriptive paragraph through peer assessment using Facebook. Students' perspectives will be examined in order to prove the effectiveness of this type of assessment. This proposal includes the CLT approach, concepts of writing, writing components, peer assessment to solve the student's writing problems before mentioned in its introduction.

The following research questions are going to be answered with this proposal:

To what extent does peer assessment improve writing a descriptive paragraph?

What are students' perspectives of peer assessment with Facebook to improve writing skills?

Innovation

This pedagogical innovation was created to enhance student's writing skills by peer assessment using a rubric on a Facebook group. This study will last four weeks, and its development consists of three lessons per each week. The classes will be online due to the pandemic situation. The researcher will explain the instruments used for the innovation to students from the first day of classes. Students must perform a variety of activities, alone and in pairs. They will be completed with the teacher's assistance in order to become acquainted with the techniques and criteria for the writing exercises.

The teacher will implement a detailed plan (Appendix 1) using the Backwards design. Then, a pre-test (Appendix 2) will be applied to obtain data from students so that the researcher will use an analytic writing rubric (Appendix 3). Similarly, at the end of the innovation, a post-test will be used (Appendix 4). The teacher's role consists of providing the necessary reinforcement on grammar, vocabulary, and spelling through games and activities in order to grasp student's language skills.

Also, the teacher will make the application of modelling and integrating examples of Facebook posting since week one. By week two, the teacher will show videos on how to provide peer assessment and quality feedback. In addition, students will join the Facebook group to upload their writing tasks, and they will provide peer assessment through a rubric (Appendix 5). On week three and week four, students will keep practicing writing tasks. Students will write a Facebook post of a descriptive paragraph about their and someone's favorite leisure activities in the summative task.

Research Methodology

This study is action research. The research design is mixed. For the experiment, quantitative and qualitative data, as well as instruments, will be used. According to Clark (2020), the main goal of action research is to provoke teachers' reflection and critical self-reflection of their daily development. A pre-test (see Appendix 2) and post-test (see Appendix 3) will be used as quantitative instruments with the application of one rubric only for the researcher (see Appendix 4). Another rubric for student's peer assessment is also included in the study (see Appendix 5). An interview will be applied to collect qualitative data to know students' perspectives in English (see Appendix 6) and Spanish, (see Appendix 7).

Participants

In order to conduct this research on the pandemic scenario and its conditions, eleven young adult students from a Guayaquil English Academy will be recruited. They are between 20 – 25 years old. Eight are female, and three are male. Learners are native Spanish speakers. They have an A1 English proficiency level according to a placement test taken in the academy.

Instruments

The following instruments were created to collect data and respond to the research questions listed below:

- 1) To what extent does peer assessment improve writing a descriptive paragraph?

The pre-and post-writing tests will be graded using a writing rubric to address the first question. Another instructor will assess this portion of the study to eliminate bias in the research. The instruments are in English. Students will write a descriptive paragraph about a typical morning in their homes as a pre-test (see Appendix 2).

Similarly, at the end of the experiment, they will write a descriptive paragraph about their role as students as a post-test (see Appendix 3). To obtain the grade of the tests, a writing analysis rubric (see Appendix 4) will be used. The following descriptors are in the rubric: Spelling, grammar, vocabulary and organization. One reviewer validates the rubric. The range of each descriptor is from 1 to 5.

Rubrics allow to develop both teachings as well as assessment (Andrade & Du, 2005). The writing rubric for peer assessment between students will be introduced in the experiment's second week (see Appendix 5). The researcher will train students to provide correct feedback.

2) What are students' perspectives of peer assessment with Facebook to improve writing skills?

The purpose of this question is to link students' perspectives of peer assessment with Facebook to improve writing skills. Six participants will be chosen in the following order taking their posttest scores into account: Two students with the highest writing scores, two students with the middle writing scores, and two with the lowest writing scores. This interview will last 15 minutes. It is written in English (see Appendix 6) and Spanish (see Appendix 7). In order to maintain the accuracy of the information and avoid difficulties and due to the learner's level proficiency, the interview will be in Spanish. The academy will provide all facilities to carry out the study. It will be in an online session through Zoom. It will be recorded and programmed at the end of the study on week four. Learners will be aware of the entire process.

Data Analysis

From the first research question: *To what extent does peer assessment improve writing a descriptive paragraph?* the results will be organized in charts in Excel to facilitate the procedure. Then, the researcher will use the SPSS statistics program to

obtain the descriptive statistics. This analysis will include the detail of the two tests (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation).

The second question: *What are students' perspectives of peer assessment with Facebook to improve writing skills?* The researcher will transcribe and review the interview results to conduct an inductive analysis. Learners will answer five questions in the interview.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research, ethical standards will guide the study to ensure its integrity. They are starting from the collaboration of the academy. According to Banegas et al. (2015), collaboration must be optional, and if participants wish, they may withdraw at any time without any consequences. A permission letter will be sent to the principal's academy. Considering that all learners are adults, the researcher will ask for their voluntary participation before developing the innovation. All the qualitative data (interviews) will be recorded and transcribed to avoid bias in coding. Finally, the researcher will maintain anonymity by not revealing any names, scores of tests or interviews.

Limitations

Having an unstable internet connection could be a difficulty in the implementation of the study. Some of the students might have a limited internet connection. Another challenge that could arise is the student's non-appropriate technology devices. Consequently, they may use their phones, which can be distracting and not suitable for comfortable online learning.

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Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Pre-test

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Post-test

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Writing analysis rubric only for teacher.

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Writing analysis rubric for student's peer assessment.

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Interview for student's perspectives.

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Interview for student's perspectives in Spanish concerned of Appendix 5.

Entrevista para las perspectivas de los estudiantes.

Available upon request.

Appendix 7

Cristhel Lozano e-portfolio

Available upon request.