Influence of Self-Assessment in the Writing Performance of Narrative Texts

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Modality: Research Report

Presented as Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Magíster en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros con Mención en la Enseñanza de Inglés. CES: RPC-SE-19-N˚.140-2020. Cohort 2021 - 2022. Author's email:

lissette.pino@casagrande.edu.ec Guayaquil, July 5th, 2022

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After insightful observation of the writing habits and performance of 22 students of 10th grade in Samborondón, Ecuador, it was noticed that when dealing with writing activities, most of the learners did not proofread their texts before sending them to the teacher as their main purpose was fulfilling the task given. This attitude was perceived by the teacher in different courses of the same grade level.

Furthermore, it was observed that students did not spend time self-reflecting about their work or questioning their performance; even though they have already been taught the writing process of brainstorming, drafting, and proofreading. Thus, self-reflecting about the quality of their work is an important step to produce high-level texts in writing classes.

Literature Review

This study focused on the usage of self-assessment checklists to improve the performance of writing in narrative texts. For this purpose, it was necessary to analyze the definition of self-assessment and how this concept is intertwined with the theory of self-efficacy. Moreover, the benefits and drawbacks of this assessment method in previous studies were analyzed. Lastly, the process of proofreading by applying checklists and rubrics for ongoing and final assessments was studied.

Self- assessment is an authentic assessment that has been implemented in EFL teaching and learning environments (Ratminingsih et al., 2018). It is a method that "is likely to foster growth in student writing ability and transfer to future writing tasks" (Fahimi & Rahimi, 2015, p.735). Also, it gives learners the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing well and what they could do better (Febriyanti et al., 2018). According to a study conducted by Rohim (2020), self-assessment showed effectiveness in encouraging students to judge more accurately their performance. Another benefit of

the self-assessment method is that it promotes learners' autonomy (Huda et al., 2020) and the sense of agency (Fathi et al., 2019). Sense of agency is defined as the "central aspect of human self-consciousness and refers to the experience of oneself as the agent of one's own actions" (David et al., 2008, p.523).

However, self-assessment also has its drawbacks. Indeed, students "might take advantage of this opportunity to assess themselves according to what they desire (e.g., crediting themselves full marks when it is otherwise) especially if they are not trained to assess their own learning" (Mohamed & Razali, 2019, p. 70). According to a study conducted on bachelor students in Brisbane, Australia, the general perception of self-assessment was that they did not get enough learning benefit by applying this method (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001).

Another important concept that affects the performance of students in self-assessment is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in education can be described as the mechanism used by students to regulate their motivation and learning process (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). An individual's self-efficacy is developed by mastering experiences. Thereby, applying self-assessment in several pieces of writing before summative tasks is beneficial in the overall students' performance (Bandura, 1994). This is also observed in the study conducted by Cömert and Kutlu (2018) where it was noticed that "self-assessment skills can be improved with practice" (p. 116). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Soleimani et al. (2020), it was demonstrated that the implementation of self-efficacy has a positive effect in the overall writing performance in EFL classrooms.

Moreover, it is not only important to give students the tools to self-assess their work, but it is also necessary to train them to reflect on their own performance. Arapah (2018) stated the importance of self-assessment as part of the development of

students' critical thinking skills, as well as an important tool to encourage self-reflection. Moreover, in a study conducted by Egodawatte (2010), he stated that "training of users to use any instrument improves its validity" (p. 82). The same author mentioned that previous training on the usage of grading instruments is an important step before applying self-assessment tasks.

Proofreading is the last stage of the writing process. It involves the language or stylistic editing (Conrad, 2019). This concept is intertwined with self-assessment . The importance of proofreading lies in the number of grammatical and cohesive errors that the first draft of a text can contain (Hyatt et al., 2017). As Smith (2019) stated, "it can actually become an effective tool for developing learner autonomy, writing ability, and overall language proficiency" (p.221).

Checklists are similar to rubrics in the sense that they both provide a list of expectations and criteria for students' work. However, checklists are designed to help students monitor their progress throughout an assignment or learning process rather than being used for grading purposes (Hosie & Schibeci, 2005). In a previous study, the implementation of self-assessment checklists showed positive results, as they guide students from "one stage to another and motivated them to write" (Vasu et al., 2018, p. 217). Furthermore, the same author mentioned that checklists helped students to "become more independent writers who have an enhanced understanding of argumentative writing".

Innovation

This innovation was focused on the development of writing abilities by applying self-assessment. It was carried out in a private school in canton Samborondón, the group of students selected was 10th graders with a CEFR B1 level. The unit title was "Why are emotions important?" It was implemented in two synchronous sessions

of forty-five minutes each and two asynchronous hours per week, for four weeks. This innovation was planned to implement backward design (See Appendix A). The transfer goal of the unit was adapted from the B1 creative writing standard from The Common European Framework of References for languages (Council of Europe, 2020). The 4-week-lesson plan was presented to the students via the school's platform "Its Learning" (See Appendix B).

At the beginning of the innovation, students received a model text exemplifying what it was expected of them after the four weeks. Peloghitis and Ferreira (2018) mentioned that model texts help learners "to develop an awareness of the structure and purpose of different text types, assisting them to analyze these features, and then replicating the features in their writing" (p. 18). As a class, they used the writing checklist (See Appendix C) to assess the content of the mentor text. In this checklist the following aspects were presented as "Do" statements: linking words, capitalization and punctuation, vocabulary, and past tenses structures.

Each week focused on a specific aspect that was going to be evaluated in the final text. The first week was focused on vocabulary, the second one on connectors of sequence, the third one on punctuation and capitalization. In the last week, students analyzed the structure of narrative texts and received the necessary tools to arrange their ideas using graphic organizers.

During each week students received different assignments where they had to use the self-assessment checklist to proofread their texts before sending them to the teacher. In fact, students self-assessed four texts in total. Additionally, they received feedback about the application of the self-assessment rubric to help them reflect on their overestimation or underestimation of their performance.

After the intervention, students wrote a final text where all the aspects of the checklist had to be included. They were also encouraged to follow the stages of writing such as brainstorming, drafting, and proofreading by including the step-by-step guideline in the school's platform. Moreover, they were given the same writing checklist that they have used in the previous weeks to proofread their texts.

Research Methodology

This study was developed as an action research. Action research is defined as a systematic inquiry conducted by individuals in the school, with the objective of gathering information about a specific issue in the educational setting; the main purpose of this type of research is to understand the issue and find a solution to it (Mills, 2018).

During this study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected to explore the following research questions: "To what extent does the usage of self-assessment checklists influence the writing performance of narrative texts?" and "What are the students' perspectives about using self-assessment checklists to proofread their narrative texts?"

In order to collect the quantitative data, a pre-test and post-test were assigned. Both of them were graded by the teacher with the writing assessment rubric, (See Appendix D) which was constructed with the same aspects as the students' checklist. The pre-test was assigned prior to the intervention and the posttest after the intervention. Moreover, for collecting the qualitative data a survey with open-ended questions was applied.

Rubrics are defined as "teaching tools that support student learning and the development of sophisticated thinking skills" (Andrade, 2000, p. 13). In this type of grading tool, the teacher creates a set of criteria that will describe the levels of quality of the students' production.

Participants

   This study was conducted in a binational private school located in an urban region of the canton Samborondón, province of Guayas, Ecuador. Pre-test and post-test results were assessed from 22 students from 10th grade with a B1 level; of which, 81% of them were boys and 19% girls. The average age of the students was 15 years. The students in this course have been taking English for 6 years prior to the study. The English level of the participants was verified after reviewing their diagnostic test results in the Cambridge Preliminary English Test.

Instruments

   In order to answer the first research question, an analytic rubric was constructed to assess the pre-test and post-test of the participants. In previous literature that evaluated the teachers' opinions about the implementation of rubrics for assessment, it was found that "rubrics not only help teachers improve their grading practices but they also assist students to overcoming their shortcoming through meaningful feedback" (Qasim & Qasim, 2015, p. 57).

   In the pre-test, students were asked to write a text describing their feelings of that week, whereas in the post-test, learners were required to write a narrative text about an event that has given them a life lesson. According to Wiseman (2012), analytic rubrics "provide more information about a test taker's performance than the single score of a holistic rating and permit a profile of the areas of language ability that are rated" (p. 60). This rubric included the following criteria: language, vocabulary, connectors, punctuation, and capitalization, which are interval dataset constructed with six bands of performance, 0 being the lowest band and 5 the highest. Besides that, the rubric was adapted from B1 Level Cambridge Assessment Scales.

a. In the language criterion, the highest band was defined as students could use a range of simple and some complex past grammatical structures with a good degree of control, while the lowest band was described as uses past grammatical forms incorrectly/ grammatical past forms have not been included.

b. In the vocabulary criterion, the highest band was defined as students could describe appropriately situations with a variety of vocabulary words about feelings, while the lowest band was defined as does not describe situations with vocabulary words about feelings.

c. In the connectors criterion, the highest band was stated as the text could be generally well-organized and coherent, using a variety of linking words, such as however, additionally, etc., while the lowest band was described as text is not connected appropriately.

d. In the criterion of punctuation and capitalization the highest band was stated as students could make no errors in capitalization and punctuation, while the lowest band was defined as there is not a correct use of capitalization and punctuation.

Each criteria was given a maximum of two points each, with a total of ten points. For scorer reliability, the English coordinator chose five random tasks from each pre-test and post-test submits. The final grades were compared and they showed a minor deviation of one point.

The second research question was focused **on the students' perspectives towards the use of self-assessment checklists to proofread their narrative texts**. To answer this question, a survey with open-ended questions was conducted with twelve students (See Appendix E). They were selected, choosing four students with outstanding scores in the post-test, four with average scores, and four with the lowest scores. This

was decided to analyze equally different perspectives and improve the innovation in the future. The questions focused on the students' experience using self-assessment to proofread their text and they were given the chance to reflect on their improvement comparing their pre-test and post-test performance.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the first research question about the influence of self-assessment checklists in the writing performance of narrative texts, students' grades in the pre-test and post-test were compared in Microsoft Excel using the Analytics Tools Pack. Descriptive statistics were run to obtain information about the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation. In addition, inferential statistics were analyzed with the paired sample t-test, as well as the p-value.

To answer the second research question about the students' perspectives on the usage of self-assessment checklists for proofreading, the answers obtained in the survey with open-ended questions. There were determined two main categories: self-assessment and writing.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) affirmed that "in all steps of the research process, you need to engage in ethical practices" (p. 23). In an action research, most of the ethical issues arise in data collection and the presentation of results.

The ethical considerations followed by the researcher in data collection are the ones related to the permission to conduct the research in a specific site, also to a specific group of participants. This is especially important when studies involve minor age participants. Researchers must seek permission from several individuals, such as the parents. Also, it is vital to keep confidentiality and transparency of the purpose of the study.

For this reason, in this research, an email was sent to each participant's parents describing the purpose of the study and pointing out the anonymity of the results (See Appendix F). The email included a survey of consent in Google Form (See Appendix G). Also, in the email and the survey, it was explained that the participation or the lack of it from their children would not affect their final grade from school, as the results were only meant to be used as data for the study. Gelling and Munn-Giddings (2011) mentioned the importance to "ensure that all those involved in the project know what to expect from a project and what will be expected of them" (p. 105).

The presentation of results was another ethical issue in consideration. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) mentioned that "data should be reported honestly, without changing or altering the findings to satisfy certain predictions or interest groups" (p. 24). For this reason, all the instruments, databases, and tools were included in the appendix section of this paper.

Results

The results obtained after analyzing the quantitative data (See Appendix H) for the first research question showed the following results:

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of each criteria

		PRE-TEST				POST-TEST				
Criteria	N	MIN	MAX	M	SD	MIN	MAX	M	SD	*p-value*
Language	22	0.00	2.50	1.20	0.81	0.50	2.50	1.73	0.57	0.00
Vocabulary	22	0.50	2.50	1.59	0.81	1.00	2.50	1.84	0.64	0.25
Connectors	22	0.50	2.50	1.64	0.77	0.50	2.50	1.93	0.60	0.09
Punctuation and Capitalization	22	0.50	2.50	1.57	0.81	0.50	2.50	1.80	0.61	0.17

Note: N= Sample MIN= Minimum MAX= Maximum M= Mean SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows the values of each criterion in the writing rubric in the pre-test and post-test. The first criterion of "Language" in the post-test had an increase in the mean of 0.52 points in comparison to the pre-test. There was a small increase in the other three criteria: vocabulary, connectors, punctuation and capitalization; with an increase of 0.25, 0.30, and 0.23 points respectively. The standard deviation indicated that for each criterion, the scores tend to be very close to their mean; in the post-test, the standard deviation decreased from 0.81 to 0.57 points. The p value showed that the criterion of language is statically significant, and the criterion "connectors" was marginally significant. On the other hand, the p value of the criteria vocabulary and capitalization is more than 0.05. Therefore, the results are due to the intervention especially in the criterion of language.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test total marks

	PRE-TEST					POST-TEST				
	N	MIN	MAX	M	SD	MIN	MAX	M	SD	*p-value*
Total	22	3.50	10	6	1.93	3.50	10	1.7	1.74	0.00

Note: N= Sample MIN= Minimum MAX= Maximum M= Mean SD= Standard Deviation

In table 2, the pre-test and post-test total rubric score were compared. The post-test had an increase in the mean of 1.0 point. However, the minimum and maximum score remained the same in both tests. Analyzing the descriptive statistics, it was found a statistically significant difference between both variables ($t = 4.72$, p < .001). This result differs from table 1, as only one of the criteria showed being statically

significant. Also, the standard deviation showed that in the post-test, the results were closer to the mean than in the pre-test with 1.74 and 1.94 points respectively. In conclusion, the results support the alternative hypothesis that self-assessment checklists influence positively the writing performance of narrative texts.

Regarding the second research question: "What are the students' perspectives about using self-assessment checklists to proofread their narrative texts?" The data gathered from twelve students revealed the students' positive perceptions towards the use of self-assessment to proofread their text. This is reflected in the following extracts:

"It was useful to reflect and review my work with a defined set of requirements, which helped me revise my own work objectively." (Participant #1)

"The checklist was very useful for my writing assignments; it helped me see what to improve …" (Participant #4)

"It really helped me develop new writing skills. I learned to connect my ideas and write sentences with the right punctuation." (Participant #8)

Moreover, learners were asked about their experience with self-assessment during the four weeks of the innovation. Students mentioned that self-assessing helped them to become autonomous in the assignment. Also, they mentioned that it was easier to spot errors in the text. The following extracts show this perspective:

"..with the opportunity to self-assess I could easily notice some mistakes in my writing which could then be modified accordingly." (Participant #5)

"I would describe it as a clever way to be responsible in your assignments, and also the experience with it was very nice…" (Participant #13)

In addition, one student found the self-assessing process difficult to perform, even though he recognized that it was a challenge with positive outcomes.

"It was difficult but it was a challenge that helped me learn to write better." (Participant #6)

Furthermore, one student mentioned that he did not use the self-assessment checklist in every writing task.

"I did not use the checklist that much" (Participant #12)

After the survey, the student was asked to elaborate more on his answer. He mentioned that the reason for not using the checklist in all of their written assignments was because he considered that the tasks were too basic for his English level. Therefore, he did not feel the proofreading process necessary with the checklist. In overall, the implementation of self-assessment in the lesson plans received a positive attitude by the students.

Discussion

The methods applied in this research were similar to a study conducted by Cömert and Kutlu (2018) as a pre-test and a post-test task results were analyzed. Also, the data collection tools were a scoring rubric and an interview form.

Regarding to what extent does the usage of self-assessment checklists influence the writing performance of narrative texts? The comparison between the final scores of the pre-test and post-test demonstrated that the implementation of self-assessment improved significantly the writing performance of the students. This, indicates similarities with the studies conducted by Cömert and Kutlu (2018); Fahimi and Rahimi (2015); Fathi et al. (2019); Febriyanti et al. (2018); Ratminingsih et al. (2018); Rohim (2020); and Vasu et al. (2018).

By analyzing the statistics from the writing rubrics it was concluded that the improvement of the criteria of language, connectors, vocabulary, punctuation, and capitalization did not increase equally, being the criteria of language the one with the highest improvement. This is also observed in the study conducted by Cömert and Kutlu (2018) where the percentage of improvement of the criterion content was higher than the rest of the criteria.

Concerning the second research question: What are the students' perspectives about using self-assessment checklists to proofread their narrative texts? The survey demonstrated that students perceived the usage of self-assessment as beneficial for them, as they found it advantageous to have the opportunity to identify errors in their work and correct them before sending it to the teacher. This result can be compared to the ones from Fahimi and Rahimi (2015); Febriyanti et al. (2018); Rohim (2020); and Smith (2019) where most of the students found beneficial the implementation of self-assessment to improve their writing performance.

Moreover, it was observed that at the end of the intervention, students were less anxious and felt more comfortable with writing assignments; this general feeling was the result of applying self-assessment as a routine in the classroom, which is connected to the theory of self-efficacy from Bandura (1994) as well as the study conducted by Fahimi and Rahimi (2015).

Additionally, as it was mentioned by one student, the implementation of this method enhanced the learner's opportunities to be more responsible towards their own learning process, developing independence and agency, which is connected to the studies from Fathi et al. (2019); Febriyanti et al. (2018); Huda et al. (2020); and Vasu et al. (2018).

However, there was a student who felt that the application of self-assessment was not extremely useful to apply it. This was also mentioned in Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001) study where students felt that the time-cost of applying self-assessment was sometimes not worth it. In addition, one student mentioned that the usage of self-assessment was challenging at the beginning, but useful to support his learning process, which is directly linked with the findings from Fahimi and Rahimi (2015).

Conclusions

In this study, it was expected to answer to what extent the usage of self-assessment checklists influences the students' writing performance. The paired-sample t-test provided evidence that self-assessment significantly improved writing performance on the participants. It is possible that the use of self-assessment checklists has encouraged the students' self-reflection process of their work; therefore, elements that were not proofread in the past, such as language, punctuation, capitalization, and connectors, were now taken into consideration before sending the final work, which lead to a better writing performance.

Furthermore, this study aimed to analyze and understand the students' perspectives about using self-assessment checklists to proofread their texts. The findings indicated that most of the students felt that the implementation of the checklist to self-assess their work helped them to be more aware about what it was expected from them in the task. Apart from this, it was observed that at the end of the innovation the

majority of students felt more comfortable with the use of self-assessment checklists to self-reflect about their work.

In addition, the implementation of self-assessment helped the students to develop a sense of responsibility towards their own work, encouraging an increased sense of independence and agency. However, there was one student who did not use the checklists much to proofread his writing tasks. This may be due to his belief in having the necessary English level to avoid the editing stage.

Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that the benefits of applying self-assessment to improve writing performance in EFL classrooms, surpassed the initial difficulties that students may have presented due to lack of expertise in this type of authentic assessment.

Limitations

Even though the 22 students had a CEFR B1 level according to the diagnostic test, they still had different levels of performance in writing. Therefore, some students found the task easier compared to their classmates and did not apply the self-assessment checklist to proofread their texts, as they felt overconfident in the task. This difference in English language level may be due to the fact that the students have been learning the language at the school since 5th grade.

Furthermore, it was noticed that some students struggled with the implementation of self-assessment. As sometimes they forgot to use the checklist at the end of their writing process. It was necessary that the teacher monitored the class to remind learners to apply the assessment tool provided.

Lastly, one factor that could have affected the motivation of the students to proofread their texts is the month when it was implemented. The last two weeks of the innovation were closed to the Christmas holidays. Hence, most students had a shorter attention span during the classes.

Recommendations

The current study could have been strengthened by giving differentiated tasks to the strongest and the weakest students in order to see the real possibilities of improvement by applying self-assessment to proofread the assignments. It is crucial to to give students the necessary training to apply self-assessment rubrics appropriately. It is valuable to notice that in order to achieve real understanding in the self-reflection process' importance, self-assessing must be a routine in the classroom.

In addition, it is recommendable that teachers who wish to venture into the application of self-assessment, start training their students from the beginning of the year to use rubrics, this was also mentioned in the studies conducted by Fathi et al. (2019); Rohim (2020); Arapah (2018); Egodawatte (2010); and Ratminingsih et al. (2018). Waiting until the last few months of school will mean that students will not have enough time to internalize this authentic assessment process appropriately.

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Appendix A

Lesson Plan with Backward Design

Available upon request.

Appendix B

Lesson Plan Resources Implemented

Available upon request.

Appendix C

Self-Assessment Checklist

Available upon request.

Appendix D

Self-Assessment Rubric

Available upon request.

Appendix E

Students' Survey

Available upon request.

Appendix F

Parents' Authorization Email to Conduct the Research.

Available upon request.

Appendix G

Parents' Authorization Form to Conduct the Research.

Available upon request.

Appendix H

Pre-Test and Post-Test Marks

Available upon request.

Appendix I

E-Portfolio

Available upon request.