Implementation of Self-Assessment to Improve Paragraph Writing

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This action research aims to demonstrate how self-assessment training can improve students' written performance in an Ecuadorian private school. When asked to write paragraphs, my sixth-grade students to whom I applied this innovation struggled, mainly because they needed to learn how to structure paragraphs properly. Nevertheless, as Brown and Lee (2015) mentioned, "Successful learners extend the learning process well beyond the classroom and the presence of a teacher or tutor, autonomously mastering the art of selfassessment." (p.415). Reviewing one's self-work can considerably aid in the growth of writing abilities and the creation of influential writers. One potential solution for the issue of poorly written work and low writing grades is self-evaluation. In his study, Ross (2006) concluded that learning and implementing self-assessment could motivate students to enhance their motivation, confidence, and achievements (p.10).

I want my students to become the best they can be. Consequently, Self-evaluation may be beneficial in this case. Furthermore, self-assessment could improve critical thinking, originality, and self-responsibility, allowing students to reflect on the multiple ways they learn and promoting active learning.

Literature Review

This section discusses the fundamental concepts of the self-assessment strategy for writing skills, relevant studies, complexities, opposing viewpoints, and methods for improving learning to implement the strategy. It constitutes the main component of the research, elements that structure the innovative design, with the authors' and their research conclusion facilitating that.

McMillan and Hearn (2007) defined that self-assessment occurs "when students judge their work to improve performance as they identify discrepancies between current and desired performance "(p. 40). In other words, self-evaluation enables students to think about what they did well and what they might continue improving. In addition, it aligns with one of the educational aims, enabling students to be more responsible for their learning.

Advantages of Self-assessment

Schmidt and Wehmeyer (2016) asserted that self-assessment is a method for learners to gain authority over their learning processes and develop their voices within a target language. This view implies that students take control of their educational strategies and expand their perspectives in a chosen language.

There are numerous advantages to teaching students to self-evaluate their progress in writing in English. One of the advantages is that "students' self-assessment of their learning supports the development of their confidence and individuality" (Shriki & Lavy, 2018, p.178). Furthermore, self-evaluation assists students in taking action to change what is not progressing. It also aids in the development of their self-esteem and self-expression. Also, as stated by Muñoz and Alvarez (2006), "When students reflect upon their learning strategies, they become better equipped to make a conscious decision on how to improve their learning." (p.18).

Another advantage of self-assessment is stated by Kadri and Amziane (2021): "Self-assessment serves both learning and assessment purposes; students become constructors of their own learning and managers of their own progress." (p.277).

Disadvantages of Self-assessment

Harris and Brown (2018) observed that "Students who have not been taught how to realistically self-assess may also measure their work against unrealistic standards."

(p.9). The authors referred to how a student's lack of self-assessment training may cause them to question their own judgment.

As suggested by Liu (2021), "Without comprehensive criteria for assessing performance or an accurate judgment of one's own capability, it is nearly impossible for students to improve their weak points" (p. 11). The author referred to self-assess and how important it is for students to develop criteria when evaluating their performance to improve their disadvantages.

Self-assessment and Writing

Taufik and Cahyono (2020) observed that "Allowing the students to know their progress in developing their writing enables them to grow their own awareness about the aspects of writing they need to improve." (p. 172). The authors referred that letting know students how they progress in their work will help them to keep in track of their progress as they get better at writing.

As suggested by Saud (2019), "Self-assessment can identify the gap between the learners' knowledge and that of their teachers' criteria for their writing assessment." (p. 104). It means that the difference between what students know and what their teachers expect regarding their writing ability can be found through self-evaluation.

After discussing some of the advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment and how it relates to the writing process, it is necessary to investigate how self-assessment training affects the written performance scores of sixth-grade students from a private school in Milagro to meet an international standard.

Innovation

This innovation aimed to analyze the effect of self-assessment on students' writing performance in a paragraph written in the future tense. It was implemented in four synchronous sessions of forty-five minutes per week for four weeks.

Furthermore, the course unit was "The Future" (Big English Student Book 5, Unit 6). This innovation was intended to reinforce writing skills using self-assessment.

The first phase included an introduction and discussion of the significance of self-assessment using a video. Also, the teacher analyzed the unit's objectives and showed them an example of a blog about inventions. The teacher created a rubric based on the student's skills for the writing activity in collaboration with the students and explained it to them. Then as homework, students had to write a short paragraph about how life will be in the future.

The grammar that they needed to use was covered in the second phase. They watched a video to refresh their memory on the rules of will and will not. They were divided into groups to discuss the question, "What do you think about technology in the future?" The entire class was required to practice exercises in the future tense. Then as homework, students had to write a paragraph about plans for a weekend and self-assess using a checklist to practice.

Students had to learn about paragraph structure in the third phase. They did this by watching a video demonstrating how to write a paragraph. The class played an online game called tiny tap about paragraph order. The teacher and students discussed the game's mistakes. They had to write a short paragraph about their future vacations. Students applied the rubric given at the beginning of the Unit to self-evaluate themselves.

In the final phase, they started the class by watching a video about future inventions. Afterward, they discussed what kinds of inventions they like and what they would like to see in the future. During class, students were required to write a brief paragraph describing a potential job, and the teacher was required to provide feedback. They self-assessed using the rubric created at the plan's beginning. To finish, they had to

write a short paragraph of 50 words about a future invention they would like to see. They must submit a photo of that invention. They used the future tense and modal verbs (could or would). They self-assess with the rubric.

Research Methodology

The research method used in this work is Action Research. According to Saadet (2014), "Action research is a professional development model which involves teachers inquiring into their own practice, studying and reflecting on their own practice, and correspondingly changing their own practice" (p. 31). Moreover, action research occurs in the classroom and attempts to explain problems that may arise while teaching.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

What is the influence of self-assessment on the writing performance of paragraphs?

Which aspect of the written intervention will benefit from self-assessment?

Participants

Participants were 28 students recruited from the sixth-grade classroom at a private school in Milagro, and students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years old. Six students were absent, did not complete the pretest or posttest, and were thus excluded from the analysis. The school was in a significant urban area near the city's center. They were all Spanish native speakers of Ecuadorian nationality, and their English level as A2 according to the placement test results and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Instruments

The research questions determined the instruments used for data collection.

Written pre and post-test

To answer research question 1: What is the influence of self-assessment in the writing performance of paragraphs? The researcher used a pre and posttest instrument.

Each student was instructed to upload a picture of a future invention that they would like to see in the future, and they had to write a paragraph describing the invention with at least 50 words.

To answer research question 2: Which aspect of the written intervention will benefit from self-assessment? The rubric was used to determine the element that most benefitted after the implementation of self-assessment. (See the rubric in Appendix 2)

Data Analysis

To answer research question #1: What is the influence of self-assessment on the writing performance of paragraphs? a paired-sample *t*-test was conducted. The paired sample *t*-test compares the pretest and posttest results. The analysis was carried out in Microsoft Excel with the assistance of the Analytics Tools Pack.

To answer research question #2: Which aspect of the written intervention will benefit from self-assessment? The same pretest and posttest results were analyzed, but each rubric aspect was considered separately.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the investigation, the researcher followed all aspects of ethical considerations. The institution administration, parents, and students were informed about the project's content to understand the innovation's purpose and the advantages for their future. All sessions were conducted with integrity in a respectful and collaborative environment to assist students in improving their writing paragraph skills. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), "All steps of the research process, you need to engage ethical practices" (p. 23).

The research was conducted concerning ethics, acknowledging students' autonomy to participate openly. The activities were created to encourage their

participation equally, considering their viewpoints. For the benefit of the participants, the innovation in all sessions.

Students' representatives were asked to provide informed consent for this research project to avoid future issues. The research went as planned because of the students' cooperation.

Results

The first research question #1: What is the influence of self-assessment on the writing performance of paragraphs? It is addressed with the paragraph's Pre and Posttest grades, which evaluate progress to the standard writing structure. These are the results: Table 1:

|	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Sig (p)
Pretest	22	5.00	7.50	6.64	0.72	0,00
Posttest	22	7.00	9.50	8.28	0.77	

Note: N=Sample, Min=Minimum, Max= Maximum, M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, Sig (P)=Significance

Table 1 illustrates an improvement in the minimum and mean values when the pretest and posttest results are compared. The *p*-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the student's grades improved when comparing the pretest and posttest. In the pretest, the standard deviation is closer to the mean value than in the posttest.

The second research question #2: Which aspect of the written intervention will benefit from self-assessment? The same outcomes were obtained. This time, the grades were examined separately. There is a 12% increase in language, a 15% increase in vocabulary, a 48% increase in content, and a 55% increase in structure. The results revealed an overall improvement in all aspects of the rubric. Surprisingly, the aspect with the most significant impact was the referent to structure, with a 55% difference between the pretest and posttest. We can see the results in Figure 1.

Fig. 1
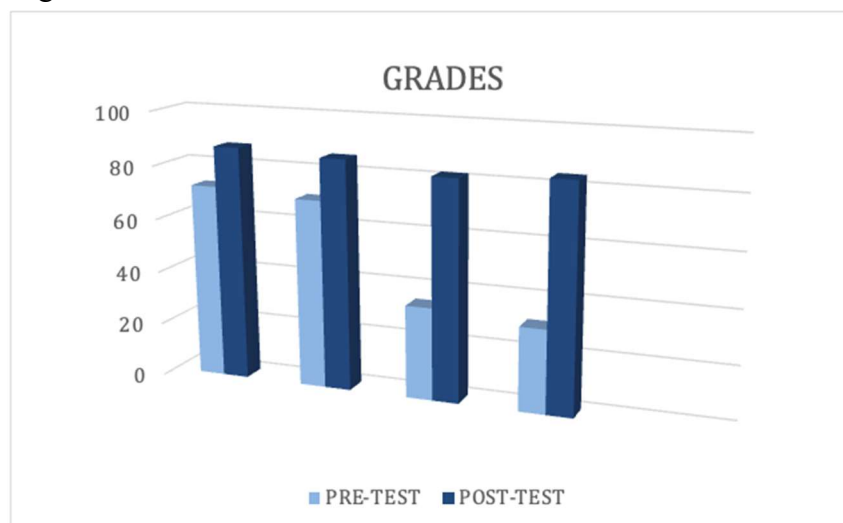
Discussion

For the first research question," what is the influence of self-assessment on the writing performance of paragraphs? "This study reports that using self-assessment improved writing skills and increased confidence. This is consistent with the findings of studies that have revealed similar outcomes. According to one of them, the innovation indicated that students' grades improved. This matches what Shriki and Lavy (2013) stated, that established self-assessment helped with their confidence and self-respect about their knowledge.

About the second research question, "which aspect of the written intervention will benefit from self-assessment?" Results show that the structure was the aspect that impacted the most progress from self-assessment. The improvement in this area was notorious because students could identify their weaknesses and correct them during the innovation. This matched the statement of Taufik and Cahyono (2020), who emphasized that "Allowing the students to know their progress in developing their writing enables them to grow their own awareness about the aspects of writing they need to improve." (p. 172)

Conclusions

The data analysis demonstrated that self-assessment considerably increased writing scores. This development is consistent with earlier research that suggests self-assessment encourages awareness of how students learn. Therefore, self-assessment enables students to raise their final grades consciously.

Students comprehended the rubrics and the idea of self-assessment regardless of their concerns. However, the parts they found most challenging were the language and vocabulary to write the paragraph. They were not used to writing formally, and some future-related grammar needed clarification.

According to the study, most students initially experienced at least one issue with self-assessment, but overall, they were willing to use it. They were used to prioritizing their grade over their education. Ultimately, they realized that learning could only occur by considering mistakes. Despite the difficulty they initially faced while reading and comprehending the rubrics, students could quickly rectify their errors. Due to poor self-evaluation habits, most students needed help to give fair evaluations. They tended to overestimate their effectiveness because they had no training in this method. Due to their lack of experience, they needed help to write a paragraph in the proper order, which led us to the structure, their biggest challenge.

Limitations

Twenty-eight students in total participated in the innovation. However, six of them were unable to do it for various reasons. They felt out of place because they felt removed from the research during the initial half of the project. Moreover, they took part in the remaining innovations. Although it would have been great to include all of them in the study, there were deadlines for this research, therefore the teacher had to act quickly to put the innovation into practice.

The systematic instruction in self-assessment was the most challenging part, because students needed to learn how to perform it. Although students found it a little challenging to remember the paragraph's structure. With practice and exercises, they could do so.

Recommendations

Starting comprehensive self-assessment instruction in the first years of school is essential to get students into self-assessment. The ideal situation would be for students to self-evaluate more spontaneously, but this can only be done with practice and purposeful instruction.

To achieve more accurate results on the entire class when gathering and analyzing the data, Future researchers are advised to apply the study to the whole group of students. Another recommendation is to schedule all the events with anticipation to prevent any delays in the process.

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Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Rubric for the teacher and student's self-assessment

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Checklist for systematic training

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Consent letters

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

e-Portfolio

Available upon request.