

**Peer-Assessment for the Development of Fourth Graders' Revising and Editing skills in the  
English Class**

Marcela González, Laura S. Urrego, Juan E. Aristizábal, y Juan P. Zapata

Facultad de Educación y Humanidades, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó

Mg. Erika M. Restrepo

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### **Abstract**

The current study describes the effects of the implementation of peer-assessment on writing skills, specifically editing and revising, of fourth graders at private institution in Medellín. It was conducted under the action research methodology. The data collection instruments used were student artifacts (pieces of writing), class observations, a questionnaire, and a research journal. Results evidence a positive impact on participants' revising and editing skills development, as well as the benefits of peer feedback for formative purposes in the English class.

**Keywords:** *Peer assessment, writing skills, EFL, revising, editing.*

### **Resumen**

Este estudio describe el impacto de la implementación de la evaluación entre pares en las habilidades de escritura, específicamente la edición y revisión de ésta, en estudiantes de cuarto grado de un colegio privado en Medellín. Se desarrolló bajo la metodología de investigación, implementado herramientas de recolección de datos como la producción escrita de los estudiantes, observaciones de clase, el cuestionario y el diario de investigación. Los hallazgos sugieren un efecto positivo en el desarrollo de las habilidades de los participantes para la revisión y edición de sus textos en inglés, además de otros beneficios de la implementación de la coevaluación con propósitos formativos.

**Palabras clave:** *Coevaluación, habilidades de escritura, ILE, revisión, edición.*

## Introduction

The current assessment practices performed in many Colombian educational contexts commonly portray the characteristics of a traditional assessment, which does not consider the student as an active participant in the process. The learner is seen as a mere recipient whose performance is observed and measured. Therefore, activities that promote the individual development of the student, that give strong importance to teamwork, recognition of others and different points of view are necessary to actively involve students in the assessment process.

Peer feedback implies a special empowerment and meaningful process to contribute to environments where teaching practices are done in the traditional way (Yu-Ju, et al., 2016). It has been proven that students might use their cognitive resources, and develop a deeper sociocultural ability while being assessed by peers (Yu & Lee, 2016). This invites teachers to strongly focus on teamwork and to consider learners' perspectives in assessment.

In the context of a fourth grade at a private school in Medellín, elementary students are not being motivated to reflect on and provide their perspectives about the writing tasks they are asked to carry out in the English class, since it is the teacher who makes decisions all the time regarding the assessment process. This can happen because children might be seen as unable to judge their own tasks as well as their classmates'. Therefore, as teacher researchers we felt strongly motivated to develop this study, with this research question in mind: How does 4th graders' involvement in peer assessment contribute to their development of revising and editing skills in the English class?

## Literature Review

### **Peer Assessment as the path that goes on with group work and possibilities**

Starting with the teaching of self-criticism and the acceptance of constructive observations from elementary school, students would be able to conceive themselves (in a long process thought for the future) as an autonomous being, aware of his academic strengths and weaknesses. The idea of giving students a useful role in class, so that they feel as important participants in their cognitive development, significantly promotes student autonomy while helping their peers with the same process (Kearney, 2019).

Peer Assessment can be the perfect tool to start creating autonomy in the student, since it does not only help to easily develop language skills such as learning, but also fosters a detachment from the teacher and his evaluative dependence (Shen et al., 2020). The teacher must understand himself as a provider of knowledge, visualizing his students (no matter how young they are) as participants in a community that must learn to live and learn together.

The implementation of peer assessment among students increases positive perceptions upon their capabilities, which reflects less dependence on the teacher. In fact, there is a study that finds that students' voices are indispensable for them and finding those voices makes them develop self-reliance and self-direction, which help students to become more effective independent learners (Harrison et al., 2015). Besides, students can improve their peers' work by providing feedback, while reducing teachers' workload without putting in risk their learning (Yuan & Kim, 2018). What the peer assessment proposes is to improve these situations (as well as in-classroom situations when there is a lack of fellowship) and even facilitate the detailed and individual observation of students to monitor their learning processes (Sridharan et al., 2018).

Although teachers' support is essential, learning should go further and should be an enriching experience for students to become autonomous towards their own learning, so they can achieve skills to learn independently by believing in their own capabilities. One positive way to encourage that development is by including feedback when working on those skills.

### **Feedback as the basis of the peer Assessment**

According to Ferris and Hedgcock (as cited in Kusumaningrum et al., 2019), in terms of writing pedagogy, feedback is one of the key components that is ever present in it. Peer feedback is commonly viewed as a learning strategy in which students are invited to work collaboratively in order to give out notes and observations on their peers' work with the intention of providing feedback on strengths and weaknesses, as well as giving suggestions (Loan, 2017). The considerations are critical, since peer feedback provides some significant improvements in students writing performance, allowing peers to learn from each other (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). Feedback can end up providing a significant contribution to student performance, starting from correction and going through sharing different points of perception.

Nonetheless, it is also important to consider the relevance and impact on which peer feedback depends: the variations of context in which it is applied (Qi & Shulin, 2018). The teacher must be aware of his students and their previous training from the different social academic characteristics that surround him, so that they will be able to know his disposition towards the work that peer feedback implies. For example, as exposed by Wang (2016), students might believe that this process could be completely useless, since they might not find their peers' opinions useful.

A possible problem in the classroom might be the way students behave with each other, conflicts caused by lack of fellowship. What the peer assessment proposes is to improve these

situations and even facilitate the detailed and individual observation of students to monitor their learning processes (Sridharan et al., 2018). The differences and current requirements in education are being recognized by well-prepared teachers, and they must focus on the students' intellectual capacity and its improvement. All those academic intentions or forms of teaching must always end with a focus on improving a specific language skill.

### **Peer Assessment as a response to the writing process difficulties**

In the case of writing, it is important to consider new assessment practices such as peer assessment which promotes a new vision and support for such learning. Since this kind of skill requires effort and attention from the learner, it is understandable why second language students might feel hesitant to put it into practice. For this reason, we offer peer feedback as a strategy to overcome these challenges and reluctance towards the writing process. It is possible to consider peer-assessment as a strategy that, when used correctly, can help the process of writing while promoting awareness and regulation of students' own learning process. The whole action of assessing others makes it easier for learners to increase their own self-evaluation skills which in turn causes students to reflect and self-direct their own learning journey (Carnell, 2015; Ubaque & Pinilla, 2016).

Writing involves the creation and recreation of ideas; it requires dialogue to develop and structure in a relevant way what you want to communicate to others. When it comes to the ramifications of writing in an ESL context at an elementary school level, little is known about such implications. Most research towards ESL writing is developed in higher education contexts where peer-assessment is commonly used, creating both a challenge to inquiry about and a wide-open area to focus on regarding peer-assessment at an elementary school setting. Nonetheless, previous research has indicated that peer assessment has promising advantages, such as

encouraging group work, connecting with students in class, decidedly influencing learning, and enabling students to assume responsibility for their own learning (Hung, 2018).

A number of studies found several problems regarding the lack of skill in writing activities and also the inability to give peer feedback (Astrid et al. 2019; Kuyyogsuy, 2019; Miliano et al., 2016; Campbell & Filimon, 2018). Therefore, before suggesting the use of peer feedback, it is proposed to consider the linguistic capacities of the group in terms of their writing. Teachers will then need to be prepared to train and guide their students with activities that have previously fostered their writing skills. In addition, they must propose activities that promote teamwork and peer contemplation (starting from unknown peers to actual classmates) and consider the other classmate as an equal.

The latter usually involves a problem; the most direct way to change this is by letting students conceive themselves not as passive recipients, but as active participants of the classes. Giving a younger student a meaningful voice and opinion can be seen as a great responsibility, and it is the teacher's duty to make children aware so that they see peer feedback as a stimulating and very positive process (Yu & Lee, 2016).

### **Advantages of Peer Assessment in the Writing Process**

The sole act of checking peers' work can have an impact on the improvement of students writing skills, especially the revising and editing aspect, this is due to the implications involved: commenting, checking for errors, and collaboration. For example, several studies have revealed that when a student makes comments on their peer's work, this leads her or him to recheck their writing, which allows them to focus on the issues they might have and revise and edit them (e.g. Yallop & Leijen 2018; Saeed et al., 2018).

Furthermore, in other similar studies, there was evidence that while making suggestions on organization, punctuation, wording, spelling, etc., students become skilled at recognizing these elements, improving their revising and editing skills and implementing them autonomously (Chen et al., 2011; Loan 2017). Overall, it has conclusively been shown that peer feedback is a good strategy that teachers should take into account in order to underline factors related to the language and its structure (Giraldo, 2019).

Peer assessment encourages students to develop their critical thinking skills. According to Berg (as cited in Uymaz,2019), students take teachers' comments without any hesitation, this being different from their peers' comments, which learners will take the time to question its validity and make comparisons. As students start to question the opinion of their peers, they can go further and question their teacher's too, and it activates their encouragement to learn more. Besides, peer discussion allows students to enhance critical thinking as well as reflective thinking. In fact, Kuyyogsuy (2019) proposes that the positive reflection towards peer feedback is the reason why students improve in writing efficiency. This process allows students to reflect and review, in order to focus on the quality of the tasks they do, rather than just the marking (Restiglian, 2019). Focusing on the quality rather than quantity is a strong signal of the growing sense of critical thinking; it also ensures the improvement of their writing skills as well as awareness of their responsibilities towards their learning. Fostering peer assessment leads to positive results for students in those aspects.

In conclusion, studies have shown that peer assessment can be considered a meaningful tool in classroom activities not only in terms of teamwork but also at the moment of assessing themselves and their written works and their classmates'. Nevertheless, there is not enough research on children being involved in peer assessment, thus this research will focus on the



implementation of peer assessment and its impact on revising and editing skills of elementary schoolers in the English class.

## **Methodology**

### **Context and Participants**

Participants of the study were fifteen 4th graders between 9-10 years old at a private institution in Medellín. The selection process was entirely voluntary, the research proposal was presented to the whole class and students' parents had the choice to let their children participate if they were interested in being involved. This grade was selected due to the fact that the learning objectives established for this population are highly connected to writing, requesting them to create and describe their family stories, finding information written and orally in different contexts.

Since this was action research, the intervention process lasted 6 weeks. Taking into account the research objectives, a step by step process was done; first, observing how participants proceeded towards their writing, considering their current writing level. This was done by checking their production in small sentences or a paragraph. After that, students were taught how to implement peer feedback tools, when revising and editing their written texts. In order to do the second step, an error correction format was provided to the participants to correct their classmates focusing on specific mistakes, which are related to what they are learning.

During this process, the participants had multiple chances to correct their own paragraphs with guidance from the teacher, observing both their own texts and their classmates', using the error correction format. Finally, an interview was conducted with the students in order to know their conceptions regarding peer assessment and what could have changed after the tasks.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to describe the contribution of peer assessment in the promotion of revising and editing skills in the English class, the instruments used to collect data in this study were student artifacts (pieces of writing), class observations, an interview and the research journal. Specifically, the information collected through these instruments allowed us to determine learners' ability to revise written texts in the English class; describe students' use of peer feedback to revise and edit self-made written texts in the English class; and identify students' perceptions of peer feedback relevance for revision and edition of written texts in the English class. Data analysis was conducted through the content analysis method, following the steps of coding and categorization suggested by Saldaña (2009).

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of fourth graders' involvement in peer assessment on their development of revising and editing skills in the English class. Data analysis allowed us to find that students possessed some background knowledge but did not have enough experience in writing tasks. It was also proven that students' reaction to peer assessment was positive and well received. There was also a meaningful change on their revising and editing skills after the implementation of peer assessment. The different themes that emerged from the study are described below.

#### **Students' experience and expertise in paragraph writing**

When students were asked to create the first writing task, they already had some preconceptions about writing. For example, during the first classes they expressed the importance of writing, some of them mentioned strategies they use at the moment of writing. However, they thought that seeing a word multiple times in different parts of a text was a mistake. Nonetheless (and even though they had several problems with verb tenses and word

placing) their paragraphs showed that they had the enough ability to propose writing elements such as phrases and sentences with coherence and correlation based on a topic.

The analysis of data showed that one of the main problems with their first writing attempt was that even though they were asked to make a paragraph, some of them did with the question provided by the teacher was a list of sentences (see Appendix 1). Grammatically speaking, students' main problems were quite simple: words such as "whit" "whatchin (and its variations)" were seen in a lot of their paragraphs, along with the indiscriminate use of upper and lower case; commas and periods were also commonly missing (see Appendix 2). Even though some students made the same mistakes during the second writing attempt, most of the students showed improvement: there were no longer lists and several grammatical mistakes were corrected. It was evident that some mistakes were no longer made (see Appendix 3).

The interview showed that students saw improvements in their writing skills after the revision from their classmates. In general, they expressed that they learned about orthography (specifically about punctuation marks). They also expressed that they improved and became aware that mistakes have to be revised and edited. Besides, they said that those improvements were because of their classmates and teacher's help. Those improvements were related to: how to write words, how to use upper and lower case, how to use punctuation marks and how to learn from what was revised.

### **Students' awareness of mistakes before and after the implementation of peer assessment**

At the beginning of the intervention, students had a hard time implementing the task at hand, which was to create a paragraph. Some of them felt comfortable doing a list instead. Even though students started with clear ideas, there was a moment where they felt sure of what they

were writing and they didn't find any mistakes. Peer assessment implementation worked as a path to instruct them on how to take a second look on their writing works.

It is also notable that as soon as they were invited to give the paragraph a deeper look (and a look to the correction chart as well) their perceptions on their paragraphs changed and they became more conscious of the errors they might have. Moving towards the second paragraph, students showed more acknowledgement in the task and what to do with their paragraphs. When asked about how they felt generally with the task, students' answers were not only positive but they also recognized that their orthography, group work and revision and edition skills were improved.

### **Students' feelings and response towards peer assessment**

Before the intervention, students were unbothered about who's paragraph was being corrected or what type of mistakes their own paragraphs had. However, after it, once they received their paragraphs back, students quickly began to take actions; they were positively descriptive in terms of the topic of their paragraphs, starting to gain certain confidence at the moment of creating paragraphs, claiming that they did not need a translator because they were smart enough. Later the interview provided deeper information on how they felt regarding the use of it.

Additionally, they became skilled at recognizing their mistakes, as well as their relation to the error correction chart. While at first, students did not have enough time to correct themselves or their classmates, later on they became more engaged in correcting and giving feedback, preferring to overdue their stay in the class and not going on break in order to continue. Moreover, students started relying less on the teacher and trusting in their capability to make their paragraphs.

Moreover, regarding students' perceptions of what they experienced in the classes, they had positive comments about peer assessment. One student expressed that the experience was fun, it felt good to correct and be corrected because it was helpful to be aware of their mistakes and learn from that. Other students agreed that peer assessment was a good experience and they liked it since they could "... correct the paragraphs and improve in the English writing" and also was "... super fun" "...we learned from everyone"

During the interview developed at the end of the project, students expressed different feelings and opinions, from nervousness and discomfort, to confidence and comfortableness, as well as a friendship development. These aspects turned out as academic skills, because they used those feelings and opinions to overcome the activities. Students also expressed that they preferred the idea of being corrected collectively instead of being just privately with the teacher.

### **Role of the teacher in guiding peer assessment**

The teachers' role throughout this whole process was to guide students on how to approach peer assessment. While being interviewed, learners expressed that they viewed the teacher as someone who was beneficial to their process, especially when it comes to recognizing when they have errors and how to correct them. Furthermore, they manifested that they are now more skilled at writing in English and have a higher level of knowledge concerning spelling, <sup>1</sup>estating that now they won't repeat some of the same mistakes they did before because the teachers' input helped to become aware of them.

Here are some relevant comments from the interview conducted, students answered the question Why do you think it was important to have the company of the teacher while revising the paragraphs?

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<sup>1</sup>Student's comments were translated from Spanish.

Student #1: Because in that way we could learn better words that we didn't know.

Student #2: It helps us to correct paragraphs and improve English writing.

Student #3: To learn from our mistakes and avoid making them again.

### **Discussion**

Findings from this study revealed that peer assessment works in elementary school as an effective revision and edition tool and also as a developer of different social academic skills. The results of the study prove that language use, organization of text and vocabulary was improved and reconsidered by students with the implementation of peer assessment.

As Chen et al. (2011) expressed, differentiating elements contributes to the development of revising activities, since students became skilled at recognizing elements such as organization, punctuation, wording and spelling. Taking this into account, it was important to implement the use of a chart in order to make clear the kind of mistakes that can be identified by students in the writing process. It would have been difficult to revise others' paragraphs if students had not known what they were looking for. The use of this tool was essential for students to identify mistakes and learn from them.

Elementary students could also be exempt from the development of the autonomy since they are commonly misunderstood as plain learners, what is shown in this study is that with the implementation of peer assessment, students can also participate by themselves and be aware of their position as active learners that can correct his classmates and himself as well (Shen et al., 2020; Uymaz, 2019).

As expressed by Yallop & Leijen (2018) and Saeed, et al. (2018) the practice of checking someone else's works can have a significant impact in students' learning processes. What is seen in the study is that students are led by their writing attempts, from how they felt with the first

attempt, when they had a lot of mistakes, to the second attempt where they felt safer and more confident about what they were writing. Students got closer together because they were seeing and correcting each other's works while they were developing bondages through sharing moments together. However, their feelings were positive even though there was also some nervousness and shyness that held still in them.

While the implementation of peer assessment contributed to students' progress, it is important to link this aspect to how the teacher intervened in class, their company throughout the whole journey enabled students to perceive writing, and the exercise of revising and editing, as a pleasant and enriching experience that made it possible for them to learn more and be aware of elements that they didn't notice previously. It is the teacher's job to make students see peer feedback as an appealing and nice experience by giving them a voice within the process (Yu & Lee, 2016; Cheng & Samuelson, 2016).

Due to the fact that this kind of assessment is seldom used among elementary teachers, the invitation is to research further and venture into its implementation, considering that changing up the role inside the classroom might lead to substantial development on students English writing skills.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to describe the contribution of peer assessment in the promotion of revising and editing skills in the English class. It was implemented with elementary students, since peer assessment has not been studied deeply in this sense. According to the general objective, what was found in the literature review sums up that peer assessment increases independence on students while making them part of their own cognitive development and learning. Peer feedback also allows to overcome negative situations in the class by promoting

collaboration. In that sense, it could become an enriching tool for students to improve in their writing processes while becoming the head of their own learning.

Findings from this study revealed that although students had previous background knowledge about writing, they also had lacks that were improved through the revision and edit processes. The mistakes found by students were specifically morphological (internal organization of words), lexical (capacity to use vocabulary) and orthographic (production of written texts symbols). At the beginning, students felt sure about what they wrote, but then they realized that their classmates could help finding mistakes to revisit and edit, making them recognize that their written texts were improved. Additionally, their feelings towards peer assessment were mostly positive, agreeing that peer assessment was a positive experience to learn. The role of the teacher and the use of the correction chart were essential to guide students' processes and help them identify mistakes.

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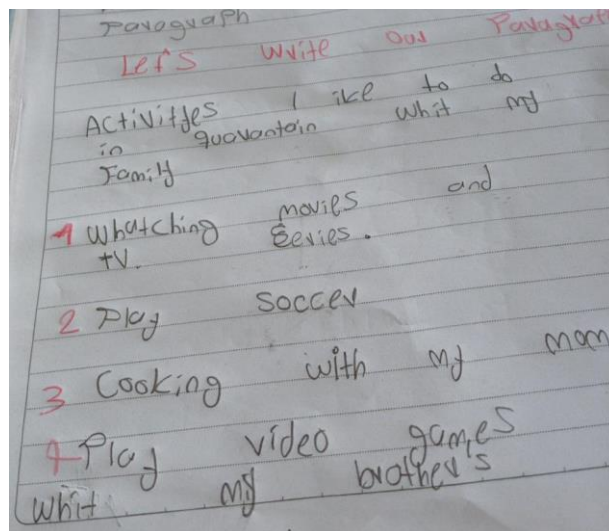
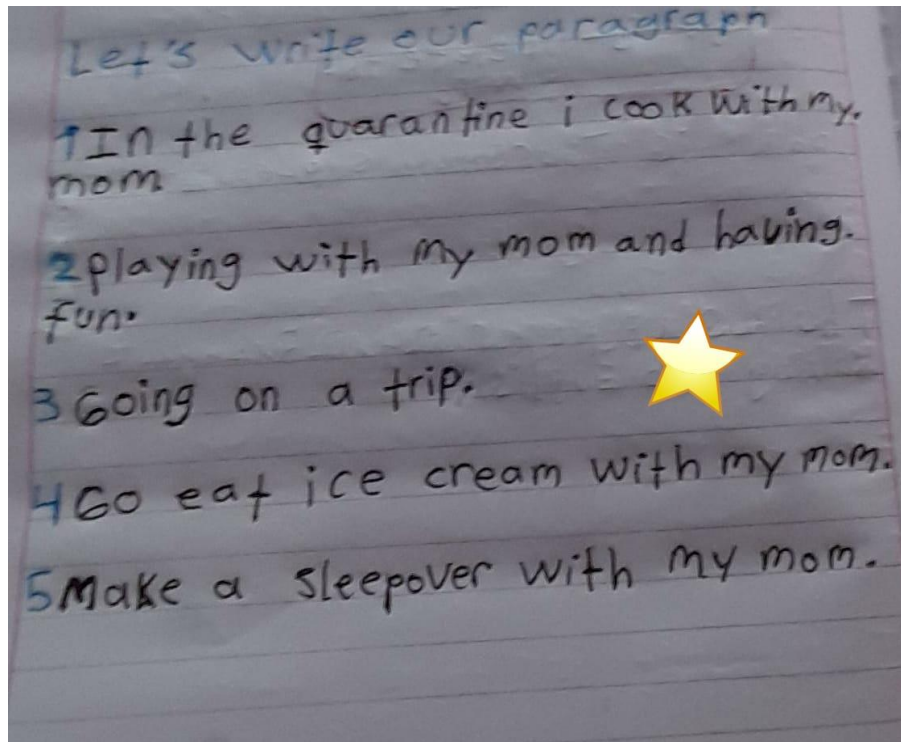


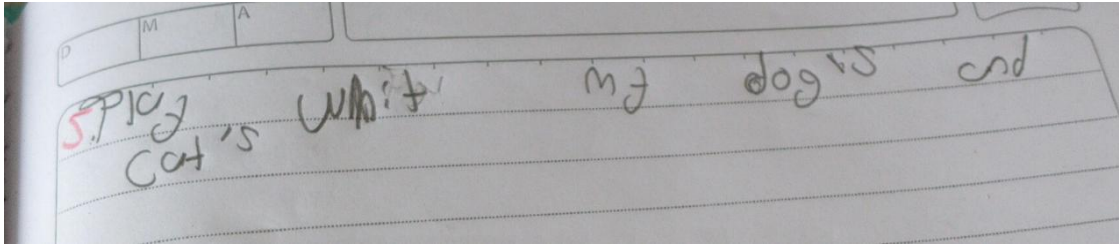
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## Appendix 1.





Appendix 3

