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Post-Covid Pedagogical Innovations



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Prologue

Around March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly confined teachers and students to their homes. Education departments said school must go on. Some teachers were already using online applications in blended classrooms, but others resisted. All students were fascinated by socializing on the internet, but others had no access to Wi-Fi. The shift from learning in a classroom to learning online required teachers to be creative and willing to put in long hours to learn and support their students.

This book shares some innovative ways that teachers of English to speakers of other languages responded to the challenge. There are contributions from classrooms in Bolivia, Ecuador, the Philippines, and the United States. One of the challenges for teachers is giving timely feedback. Four of the chapters share action research related to peer and self-assessment to support remote learning. One chapter reflects on the humanizing effect of technology, and another shares the experience of a teacher training program. These experiences are still relevant today since teachers are continuing to use what they learned during confinement to enhance learning in the classroom.

Active learning strategies in EFL

Self-Assessment on Students' Oral Interaction and its Implications in the Development of Accuracy

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Abstract

Covid-19 led to an abrupt change to online education in all formal education levels worldwide. English B1 level students faced some difficulties such as lack of technology resources, deficiency in learners' autonomy development and the need of metacognition processes. To provide chances to use the target language, one option was teaching them to self-assess. The aim of this research paper is to study the influence that self-assessment has on the development of oral accuracy. The research process lasted four weeks and the participants were four students of two public universities in Riobamba, Ecuador. These students showed difficulties in language and communication accuracy in their oral interaction with others in online classes. To measure the results, an interview and pre and posttest were applied to the learners. Results disclosed improvement in oral accuracy after students learned how to evaluate their own progress. Thus, other EFL teachers and coordinators can find this report applicable in their contexts.

Keywords: Self-assessment, oral interaction, accuracy, interaction.

Introduction

Teaching practices in education have changed over the years. Covid-19 forced teachers and students to adapt their practices to a new situation in a record time (Bonal & González, 2020; Damşa et al., 2021). Around the world, many countries opted for online education to substitute face to face interaction and continue with the teaching- learning process.

In this context, there were significant challenges in the field of second language acquisition. From the lack of appropriate technological resources required to its development (To'ifah & Sari, 2022; Tokarieva et al., 2021) to some emotional difficulties that learners suffered. Ying et al. (2021) explained that absence of inner motivation and confidence, anxiety, or reluctant feelings to speak and interact with others in syn-

chronous encounters, along with not enough vocabulary, had affected the proper enhancement of their communicative skills during this period. Hence, Ying emphasized the necessity to create strategies to help learners to reinforce and upgrade their speaking' abilities.

Certainly, keeping in mind Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Azimova (2019) argued that teachers should provide students with chances to use the target language and on their own determine what to say according to the situation. One option was teaching students to evaluate their own performance.

Self-assessment has proved to be a worthy ally to assist college students in the enrichment of their speaking practices and interactions through making them aware of their merits and shortcomings (Alfianti & Aminin, 2022). In consequence, the current chapter describes the investigation developed with four university students who were taking online classes and had shown accuracy problems in their oral interaction with their teacher and peers.

Literature Review

Speaking skills

From the four abilities to be mastered in learning a new language, speaking is one of the hardest but desired to be learnt by the apprentices of English. Moreover, it is the usual way in which real world situations take place (Hussain, 2019). Therefore, educators should design their activities combined with their actions in furtherance of supporting their students to master this skill.

Self-Assessment and Oral Production

Tailab and Marsh (2019) observed in their study that learners' verbal presentations were improved after self-assessing their video re-

cordings. The activities done had contributed to the development of self-awareness, leaving apart their common anxiety feeling against being assessed.

Following the same line, Knonamhri et al. (2021) performed a quasi-experimental research. In the study, self-assessment had a positive impact on the development of oral fluency and accuracy. The results obtained through the application of pre and posttest to five students also showed the potential that this kind of assessment has to the development of critical thinking. Montero (2020) agreed with the earlier authors' utterances. After a training process on using self-assessment and mobile devices, the participants of the investigation reported favorable results in their oral performance. There were four volunteers in total.

However, what does Self-assessment mean? Panadero et al. (2019) defined it as "learners' engagement with a process or product of their own learning to describe their perceived progress or result" (p.147-148). The recognition of their own weakness grants the students the possibility to plan a variety of enhancement strategies focused on the achievement of the communicative goals expected (p.148).

Challenges for Self-Assessment

There are some challenges that self-assessment confronts in its implementation from teachers and students' perspectives. Mannion (2022) reported students were hesitant to put in practice self-assessment processes due to absence of self-confidence and required skills to evaluate their own progress. The learners were apprehensive about assessing their progress as a consequence of their inexperience with it. In addition, they did not understand the assessment criteria. Likewise, students expressed their nervousness about not being able to justify their scores. Some of the students preferred being assessed by an expert instead of performing it themselves, considering it as a responsibility of the professor.

Adachi et al. (2018) performed a qualitative study with 13 academic volunteers. The individuals involved, based on their standpoints, reported some benefits and challenges of the application on self and peer

assessment in face-to-face interactions and online environments. Regarding the difficulties of the application of self-assessment, participants mentioned: lack of time and the necessity of constant motivation to understand why students should do it. Lastly, they added the risk of superficial learning and poor feedback.

From the teachers' perspectives, Mohamed and Razali (2019) said that the main purpose of training students to enhance and self-direct their process of learning could be affected when the learners do not assess themselves consciously and change their mentality. Indeed, poor guidance and lack of clear criteria to perform improvements negatively influences the achievement of the desired results.

How to train students to self-assess?

With the constant enhancement of modern technologies, information is available to everyone. Though, they still need teachers' help to scaffold and interpret unfamiliar topics. The teachers, as facilitators, should allow students to go beyond and make up new concepts and ideas from what they already know. In this form, learners perform processes of metacognition including critical thinking by consciously taking on their hands the process of learning (Fitzmaurice, 2018; Sackstein, 2015).

Sackstein (2015) emphasized that clear expectations and individual plans would assist in self-assessment. In the light of this, the same author highlighted some important keys to train and motivate students to judge their development that could be summarized in 5 steps: 1. Provide enough time to make students reflect on the main purpose of the activity and its relevance, 2. Present to the learners the general purpose of the lesson, and then create and establish actionable short-terms goals based on it, 3. Adjust instruction based on students' goals and reflections, 4. Help them to understand the criteria they will be judged, 5. Allow them to document and analyze their progress in class, and use the information gathered from the students' reflections to assess learning.

Research Methodology

The present study is an action research report. The investigator performs the study and practice to produce meaningful changes regarding the problem investigated (Burns et al., 2022). In this case, participants had limitations in their oral competence; and, self-assessment was the strategy explored to help participants improve their speaking limitations. The data collected in this study will allow teachers to understand how to train students to enhance their speaking accuracy by self-assessment. The techniques and instruments that were applied to measure and describe improvement were an interview and a pre and posttest.

The participants were four students (three males and one female) between 18 and 20 years old. They were registered in two higher institutions in Chimborazo. They had experience in the usage of platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The specific research questions planned are:

1. What are the students' perspectives about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy?
2. What are students' difficulties with self-assessment?
3. How much can students' self-assessment improve their oral accuracy?

To answer the research questions, the following instruments were applied:

1. To obtain data about the first and second question, a structured interview was applied. Students were asked to take notes each time they self-assess. These notes disclosed meaningful information too. The interview took place on Zoom. The instrument has four questions related to self-assessment.
2. To answer the third question, a pre and posttest were used. They were recordings self-assessed by the learners using rubrics, before and after the application of the strategy. The only difference

between them was the inclusion of the "Interaction" criteria to self-assess the posttest. The rubrics were made up taking in consideration the essential features of accuracy and self-assessment.

Classroom Procedures

The innovation was applied for four weeks. Each session lasted two hours (45 minutes each hour) per week through Zoom. During the first week, self-assessment and the rubrics were introduced. The teacher-researcher shared the standard and objectives. Afterwards, the students created their own short-term objectives list.

In the second part of the lesson, rubrics were introduced. The teacher-researcher using a pre-established rubric, created by herself, modeled how to assess two students' videos. Next, the students performed a guided practice. At the end, the participants reflected on the activities they did. Students self-assessed their work in four different practices and received feedback during the process.

Results

The qualitative results were taken from notes of the interview applied to answer the research questions N° 1 What are the students' perspectives about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy? And N° 2 What are students' difficulties with self-assessment?

Concerning the students' perspectives about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy, students mentioned their Lack of knowledge about self-assessment itself. It refers to the absence of adequate instruction on the concept, the possible strategies and uses of self-assessment and its use to improve speaking accuracy. Their replies included phrases such as "The word self brings an idea, but the concept is not clear".

Next, and after a brief explanation about the definition of self-assessment by the interviewer, the interviewees were asked about the

process, and the kind of methods of self- assessment they used. The students answered they did not know about the process to self-assess. Keeping in mind the situation presented, two questions planned for the interview previously were halted and replaced to ask why they did not self-assess.

The new question let participants talk about their difficulties on self-assessment. The learners answered in general *Lack of time, lack of evidence of the helpfulness of self-assessment and Lack of knowledge* as the main setbacks. Student 1 said "I don't know how to do it neither find it useful because of that. For me , it seems like a waste of time, and I don't have enough time".

After the application of the innovation, students communicated a positive perspective about self-assessment. Learners spontaneously shared their thoughts and points of view. First, the students were able to define self-assessment and identify keys to its process in their words. Student 2 described it as "The way in which I can evaluate my performance and achieve goals, correct my mistakes following an objective and work on it". These new findings brought to light the favorable perspective about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy that the learners have developed. They also mentioned interaction.

- Student 3: "It was interesting due the new content and also the possibility to interact as well as knew new people and I could learn by correcting others and help them to achieve their goals".

Besides, the participants of the research mentioned have showed improvement by using the rubric, following the recommendations, have appropriate amount of time to self-assessing and identify their errors. They also highlight the importance of interaction with their partners and being conscious of their own mistakes. Regarding to it Student 4 ensured "I consider that I improved too, especially because the interaction with my classmates. In the university, normally I don't have opportunities and I like to practice. I believe that I have improved because I could correct my mistakes. The reflection part was significant to realize how to correct ourselves analyzing our errors" These answers contrast with students' difficulties with self-assessment expressed at the beginning.

To answer the last research question: How much can students' self-assessment improve their oral accuracy? The quantitative results are presented in the following tables:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	4	7.998	.997	.498
	Posttest	4	9.202	.671	.335

Results shown in table 1 indicate that students improved from the pre to the posttest. Indeed, along with the intervention, it was observed a progressive enhancement of the learners' oral accuracy due to the interaction, practice and constant feedback received.

Discussion

The results are similar to the authors' outcomes mentioned in the literature review. For research question N° 1: *What are the students' perspectives about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy?* The lack of knowledge about self-assessment and strategies to self-assess students' oral interactions caused indifference and reluctant feelings among the learners. Therefore, their beliefs before the application of the innovation were negative. Previously, Mannion (2022) observed that the lack of the essential knowledge and abilities to apply self-assessment deviated on hesitancy, boringness, and no-sense usage from the students' perspective.

In reference to the research question N° 2: *What are students' difficulties with self-assessment?* The participants agreed that the lack of knowledge about self-assessment was one of their most significant difficulties. Lack of time, lack of evidence of the helpfulness of self-assessment and the interference of distractors that impeded a conscious

self-assessment were pointed out as well. The answers suited Adachi et al. (2018) and Mohamed and Razali's (2019) results. The authors reported lack of time, lack of motivation and lack conscious and mindful self-analysis as factors that could affect the process.

On the other hand, after the application of the innovation, the learners' answers varied. The perspective of the learners against the use of self-assessment shifted for a favorable one. The students emphasized that knowledge, interaction with peers, proper attention to teacher' feedback, enough time to self-assess and practice assisted in this change. They also mentioned reflection as an important step for error correction, identification of aspects to improve and plan strategies to do it, as Sackstein (2015) and Panadero et al.(2019) mentioned in their studies.

The students' application of self-assessment to improve their oral accuracy was described in table 1. This responded to the research question N° 3 *How much can students' self-assessment improve their oral accuracy?* The results displayed improvement between the pre and posttest. Along with, Knonamhri et al. (2021) and Montero (2020) reported satisfactory findings of the use of self-assessment on speaking accuracy likewise.

Conclusions

In this technological era, learning how to self-assess our process of growth should be included in our learning paths. Thus, after this research report about Self-assessment on Students' Oral Interaction and its Implications in the Development of Accuracy with the participation of four students these are some conclusions.

Before the application of the innovation, the learners had a negative perspective about the use of self-assessment to improve oral accuracy, mainly from the lack of knowledge and methods to do it consciously. After the training on how to do it, their perspectives switched to positive. This mindset change was possible due to the new knowledge acquired, interaction with peers, proper attention to teacher' feedback, enough time to self-assess and practice.

The difficulties with self-assessment were: Lack of knowledge, time, evidence of self-assessment usefulness, and the interference of distractors that impeded a conscious self-assessment. The application of the innovation helped to overcome these challenges.

The students' application of self-assessment to improve their oral accuracy were evaluated through the application of tests and the scores disclosed improvement of students' oral accuracy. They realized and understood the accuracy features of speaking and this leads to reflection of their own progress.

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Peer Assessment of Students' Role-plays to Improve Their Speaking Skills

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Abstract

The lack of motivation to practice English in everyday conversations is common. Most of the students are shy and afraid of participating in discussions with their peers in English. Thus, this research aimed at improving the speaking skills of English A2 students by using peer assessment as a learning strategy. Participants were 8 boys and 22 girls aged between 18 and 24 years old. This action research collected quantitative and qualitative data through pretest and posttest to determine if there was a change before and after the intervention; and, a questionnaire related to peer assessment and speaking skills. Findings show that the use of peer assessment in the class has a positive effect on students' speaking skills. The mean increased from 2.31 in the pretest to 7.87 in the posttest. Moreover, students considered that peer assessment provided them with opportunities to improve their speaking skills because of the vocabulary retention and interaction in class. This research provides more information and resources on how peer assessment works in the process of teaching English. Therefore, this research will assist in future investigations that focus on solving classroom issues in the English language teaching process.

Keywords: peer assessment, students' perspectives, speaking skills.

Introduction

English is a language that offers diverse opportunities because it is a universal language spoken in many countries. Kishen (2021) stated that it helps in communication, broadens students' minds, develops emotional skills, and improves the quality of life by providing job opportunities.

The Ecuadorian English curriculum includes Communicative Language Teaching as its basic principle because students must develop communicative skills by simulating real contexts during the learning process. Sepahvand (2014) affirmed that students need to practice the

language in speaking activities. The lack of opportunity to interact using the language makes students feel fear of making mistakes and being harassed by their classmates in class.

As suggested by Richards (2006), teachers must make decisions based on their class needs, adapting the book's lesson in different ways to address students' difficulties. Besides creating a friendly environment, when teachers adapt their teaching they promote spontaneous communication in class and students are engaged to exchange ideas and opinions. This can be achieved by integrating peer assessment in English classes.

This research study pretends to measure the impact of peer assessment of A2 English students' role plays to improve their speaking skills. Participants have shown problems communicating what they want to say fluently. When they had to participate orally, they frequently hesitated. Hence, the following questions were posited: How much does peer assessment of students' role-plays improve their speaking skills? and, what are students' perspectives on the use of peer assessment to improve speaking?

Literature Review

Speaking Skills

Developing speaking skills is one of the main goals of teaching English as a foreign language. For effective communication, students should be able to speak English intelligibly. A few grammar mistakes may appear here and there in oral interactions, but utterances should be delivered in a way that is easy to understand and shows how confident students are with the language. Thus, students must be able to communicate and share their ideas, opinions, and explanations using the language (Rokhman, 2020). However, speaking is not precisely instructed but somewhat expected of learners to acquire by practicing and using language (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012).

To communicate effectively, speakers should observe factors like fluency, pronunciation, and intonation (Savvidou, 2004, cited in Pard-

ede, 2011). In this sense, the correct use of sounds when speaking helps others hear and understand even more clearly. If students are good at grammar, can control a wide range of vocabulary, and hold good pronunciation, they will very likely be understood.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is a broad term for a range of activities in which students evaluate and provide feedback on the work of their peers. It can be formative, which means students give feedback on each other's drafts before a final product is submitted; or, summative in which case students use a rubric to grade final submissions. Peer assessment is commonly used with written work, but can also be used with presentations, performances, posters, videos, and other types of assignments (Nicol et al., 2014).

Schuldt (2019) highlighted that peer assessment is also regularly used as a strategy for students to assess the contributions of their fellow students to group work and assignments. Students benefit from peer assessment in several ways: receiving more frequent and timely feedback than when the instructor is the only one providing it, getting feedback on drafts and being able to make improvements, and engaging in the critical analysis and reflection associated with assessing the work of their peers. Faruk and Eda (2021) suggested that peer assessment consolidates and reinforces the students' personal and teamwork abilities by engaging students in cognitively demanding tasks such as reviewing, summarizing, clarifying, and giving feedback.

Hasnani and Mubarak (2020) stated that peer assessment encourages students to reflect on their own learning progress and performance critically. Therefore, peer assessment helps students to become autonomous learners because they are responsible for assessing their peers based on their knowledge. It also provides a structured learning process for students to critique and allow feedback to each other on their work. It helps students develop lifelong skills to self-assess, improve their own work and raise their self-confidence (Zayet, 2017).

The implementation of peer assessment implies informing students about the use and achievements of peer assessment. Teachers must train

students and give them practice on how to assess and provide feedback (Panadero & Romero, 2016). In addition, students should be motivated to be responsible in assessing their peers (Kaya et al., 2020).

Although peer assessment can provide a range of benefits, such as promoting self-reflection, developing critical thinking skills, and enhancing learning outcomes, it also has several limitations. One limitation of peer assessment is the potential favoritism and subjectivity in the evaluation process. According to Sadler (1989), students may not have the necessary expertise or knowledge to provide accurate and reliable assessments of their peers' work. Additionally, peer assessment can be influenced by personal opinions, such as liking or disliking a particular student, which can affect the accuracy of the evaluation (Topping, 1998).

Another limitation of peer assessment is the potential for disagreement and inconsistency among raters. Studies have found that there can be significant variability in the scores assigned by different raters, which can lead to unfair evaluations (Falchikov, 2005). This inconsistency can also be influenced by factors such as the descriptors of the assessment criteria, the complexity of the task, and the quality of the feedback provided (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). To mitigate these limitations, instructors can provide clear assessment criteria, offer training on how to evaluate peers' work, and monitor the evaluation process to ensure consistency and fairness (Panadero & Romero, 2016). Despite these limitations, peer assessment remains a popular and valuable approach in educational settings.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

This research work was conducted at a public university in Loja, and the participants were selected using convenience sampling. This type of sample is based on the fact that participants are chosen based on the availability for the research. For this reason, the researcher requested permission from the university to carry out the intervention. In

this case, the sample was 30 students of cycle 1 who were expected to reach the A2 English level. They were 8 males and 22 females and their ages were between 18 - 24 years old during the 2022 academic period. All of them were attending classes in a virtual modality. Due to this fact, the researcher used the Zoom platform to deliver the lessons. This group provided their consent to take part in this research.

Research Design

The objective of this study was to improve speaking skills by peer assessment of students' role-plays. This study is action research, defined as an inquiry conducted by educators in their settings to advance their practice and improve their students' learning (Findlay, 2017). The research followed the action research cycle proposed by Susman (1983), which is a problem-solving method that empowers educators to create, implement, and propose solutions to enhance students' learning. Moreover, to solve the problem, the researcher followed the five steps of the action research cycle model: Diagnosing, Action Planning, Taking Action, Evaluating, and Specifying Learning.

Data Collection Sources and Techniques

According to Kabir (2016), data collection is a process that involves gathering and measuring information related to specific variables of interest. This process was carried out in an organized way to obtain answers to the research questions. The researcher applied qualitative and quantitative instruments to collect data about how much peer assessment of students' role-plays (independent variable) improves speaking skills (dependent variable) as well as to know the students' perspectives in this intervention.

First, the researcher used the pre-test and post-test which included three different activities: description of pictures, open questions about personal information, and a semi-scripted role-play in which stu-

dents filled in the gaps to create a dialogue in pairs. The teacher used a rubric to evaluate speaking skills like grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction that was adapted from the A2 Flyers level of Cambridge. It had a rating scale between 0 and 5 (Appendix 1). Then, the researcher engaged students to use the rubric to peer assess their classmates' performance, the rubric was socialized to get students' familiarized with its use after each role-play that they performed in each class. The intervention lasted about twelve classes.

A posttest was applied based on the topics taught. Students interacted in pairs through the role-play using the vocabulary learned. For this assessment, the teacher applied the same rubric as in the pretest to analyze and contrast students' speaking skills improvement. To answer the quantitative question, the individual student performance was graded and categorized according to the national grading scale (Appendix 1).

Additionally, the researcher applied a survey at the beginning and the end to obtain information about the student's perspectives of the implementation of the peer assessment to improve speaking skills. Cohen et al. (2018) defined survey research as the collection of information from a sample of participants through their responses to questions.

Data Analysis

Kaur et al. (2018) claimed that descriptive statistics is an analytical process that helps researchers summarize the data obtained in an organized way, thus obtaining the relationship between the variables of the research being conducted. The authors also mentioned that descriptive statistics is a step in research because they help researchers establish the logic associated with quantification.

Quantitative data was tabulated and shown in tables. The results gathered allowed the researcher to measure the central tendency of the results in the pre and post-test. On the other hand, the data gathered from the survey was organized and analyzed into categories. Students' answers were focused on the questions related to peer assessment and speaking skills. Each item is presented in frequency.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the results gathered from the quantitative and qualitative instruments are described to reveal the improvement in students' speaking skills as a result of the peer assessment intervention. To measure participants' progress and answer the first research question: How much does peer assessment of students' role-plays improve speaking skills? The data collected was systematized to provide the results from the pre and post-test.

Table 1. Results of the pre and post-test

Indicators	Interaction (5/5)	Grammar/ vocabulary (5/5)	Pronunciation (5/5)	Total mean difference (15/15)	National Grading scale (10/10)
Pre-test	1.13	1.20	1.13	3.46	2.31
Post-test	4.07	3.93	3.80	11.80	7.87
Difference	2.94	2.73	2.67	8.33	5.56

Table 1 shows the results gathered from the pretest administered to A2 English-level students before the intervention process. It illustrates that students had a low level of speaking performance in almost all the indicators on each criteria. Moreover, the mean score that students obtained was 2.31 which revealed that they were below the average score of 7 out of 10.

The pre-test and post-test results provide important insights for the researcher, who can determine the impact of peer assessment in the improvement of speaking skills. The mean score of the pre-test was 2.31 while, in the post-test, it was 7.87, which indicates an improvement of the 5.56 related to the national grading scale.

Respecting to "grammar and vocabulary", most of the students struggled with language control and frequently repeated words and phrases. Only 4 or 5 out of 8 of the objects on the card their teacher dis-

played to them were familiar to them. As well as a few students misidentified some of the items on the card by using different words in place of the proper ones.

Concerning "pronunciation", it was difficult for the teacher to decipher what students were reading because almost all of them had issues with word sounds. Furthermore, students had problems regarding intonation and stress since they were not aware of what they read. This was because the positions of articulation were not taken into consideration by students in reading.

About "interaction" some students' answers went beyond simple sentences, despite their reservations. Likewise, it was noticeable that students' responses were more fluent and with rhythm; moreover, they used some new words and connected them coherently making their answers easier to understand. On the other side, the results revealed that 5 out of 30 students made no progress, which may have been due to their fear of making mistakes and sentence structure. However, they tried to respond despite these facts but their responses were not clear enough.

These findings show that peer assessment helped students to improve their speaking skills. One explanation can be students' interaction and participation. Ndoye (2017) reported in his study that peer assessment encouraged students to participate actively, besides developing their speaking skills significantly as a result of the interaction with others.

Additionally, during the implementation of peer assessment, students identified their strengths and weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. Musfirah (2019) manifested that the implementation of peer assessment in his study had a positive impact on their learning outcomes because it allowed students to discuss and assess their classmates' speaking performance in a friendly environment.

The research used a questionnaire to identify the students' perspectives about peer assessment to develop speaking skills. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2. Results of the questionnaire

N°	Questions	Yes	No	Total
1	Did you like the peer assessment activities done in class?	26	4	30
2	Do you think the peer assessment activities help you to be more participative in class?	28	2	30
3	Do you think that peer assessment activities helped you to improve your interaction with your classmates?	30	0	30
4	Did you feel confident and entertained during the development of the peer assessment activities?	23	7	30
5	Did the peer assessment activities developed in class help you improve your fluency?	28	2	30
6	Did the ludic activities help you improve your vocabulary and pronunciation?	24	6	30
7	Do you think that your speaking skills have improved by the use of peer assessment activities?	30	0	30

As it is shown in the table above, all of the students thought their speaking skills improved by using peer assessment activities. All of them affirmed that peer assessment helped them to improve their interaction with their classmates. Many of the students recognized that peer assessment was very useful to practice vocabulary and pronunciation. Besides, peer assessment increased the students' fluency because of the interaction among them in class. Thus, students' attitudes favored the application of peer assessment because this activity raised their participation, motivation, cooperation, and interaction.

Conclusions

Literature and results have shown that peer assessment helped to improve the speaking skills of students who are in cycle 2, English level A2, in a public university. In the same way, the results evidenced that students changed their perspectives after the innovation. In the beginning, most of them felt unsure about the effectiveness of the peer assessment in improving their speaking skills. However, at the end of

the innovation, they were positive. Additionally, this innovation helped students to communicate their ideas and thoughts in class, besides encouraging their interest in achieving their learning goals. Therefore, this study shows that different strategies of assessment strengthen students' learning.

To conclude, some implications were found during the intervention plan. First, the time because with a longer application time of peer assessment, the results would be better for students' speaking skills. In addition, the researcher should have a control group to show the benefits of the intervention. For further research, it is recommended to apply peer assessment since it is easily adaptable to all language skills. The study should be expanded to include other language skills because of the positive effect which may inspire teachers to investigate how to use peer assessment to improve reading, writing, and listening as well.

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Peer Assessment of Students' Role-plays to Improve
Their Speaking Skills

Appendix 1: Grading scale

Qualitative scale	Quantitative scale
Master the required learning	9.00-10.00
Achieves the required learning	7.00-8.99
Almost close to achieving the required learning	4.01-6.99
Does not achieve the required learning	-4

Influence of Peer Assessment to Improve Writing Communication by Emails: An Action Research Study

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Abstract

Peer-assessment has been investigated and proven to have a positive impact in developing English language writing as well as enhancing learners' cognitive and social abilities. This is an Action Research study which collected quantitative and qualitative data through pretest-posttest that aims to improve the writing skills of ten graders EFL (English as a foreign language) students with A2 level from an Ecuadorian public high school in a virtual classroom. The study included "The Backward Design" lesson planning that was implemented along the investigation period. The results showed positive students' perceptions in using the tool with a great effect on the students' writing abilities. This research concluded that peer-assessment constitutes a useful strategy for the formative process and a rich source of data for the researcher.

Keywords: Peer-assessment, writing skills, formative assessment, English EFL, action research.

Introduction

Promoting the enhancement of writing skills on EFL learners (English as a Foreign Language learners) may be one of the most arduous endeavors for teachers. International research studies have reported positive impact of interventions using peer-assessment. Zanzan et al. (2020) concluded that peer-assessment implementation improved writing skills in different contexts, and supported its use as a formative assessment practice. Greece (2021) pointed out that peer-assessment promotes collaboration and quality writing. In Indonesia, Salsabila (2020) reported that peer-assessment made students revise their work more than once and raised their engagement in the task. Some difficulties in the process were mentioned as well.

Despite the efforts of the Ecuadorian government in improving the English proficiency of students, teachers report students' low participation and performance in productive skills like writing. That is the rea-

son why some local studies have been carried out to improve students' writing. Tapia (2020) reported that peer-assessment enhanced learners' writing skill and they were responsible when they assessed their classmates' work. Intriago (2021) mentioned in his study that after the implementation, moderate improvement was reported. Prior to the intervention, students mentioned that they struggled in writing and participating in class.

This paper explores how peer-assessment application impacted students' written production during four-week virtual classes with ten-graders of a public high school in Ecuador. Another objective of this study was to determine students' perspectives after the implementation.

Literature Review

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment eases the development of reasoning and learning abilities in L2 students due to the interaction in an authentic practice. Under this perspective, they are exposed to understanding new knowledge through the experience of assessing their peers (Craig & Kay, 2021; Ramasamy & Aziz, 2018). De Brún et al. (2022) stated that peer assessment prioritizes the learners' roles while they appraise and comment on their peers' work. Furthermore, peer review is considered a type of alternative assessment and is a topic of investigation (Ebrahimi et al., 2021; Sambell et al., 2012, as cited in Fathi & Khodabakhsh, 2020).

Educators seek to form long-lasting and responsible learners in the endeavor of shaping their own learning while interacting with their co-peers (Meletiadiou, 2021). Moreover, peer assessment involves dialogues during the process about performance and standards; and the use of relevant criteria (Ebrahimi et al., 2021). As a result, this type of assessment assists the shift from abilities to performance (Segers & Dochy, 2001, as cited in De Brún et al., 2022). Likewise, Dewi et al. (2019) reported that peer assessment supplies positive exchange among writers with different levels of oral and written communication through questions, answers and instructions.

Many advantages arise from studies of peer assessment fostering writing skills. For instance, Dewi et al. (2019) pointed out that students enjoyed the interaction and felt free to ask about what they did not know. They engaged in finding solutions to issues in writing academic articles. Salsabila (2020) reported that students enhanced their writing by the suggestions from peers, they also learned to accept recommendations and were confident and motivated to learn more when peers praised their work.

Other positive reviews indicate that learners gain more knowledge and develop competencies in gathering, acquiring, synthesizing, reading, and writing when they peer-assess and edit their partners' work (De Brún et al., 2022; Zafrin, 2018). Besides, Lozano (2021) highlighted that active learning instead of passive learning is remarked with peer-assessment practice. Lastly, being assessors resulted in more advantages in their own writing than being assessed by a peer (De Brún et al., 2022; Double et al., 2020).

Craig and Kay (2021) mentioned that "in a study, 74% of students perceived that they received a broad depth of insight from peer feedback and the process afforded them an ability to enhance their work through reflection" (p.1836). Students improved different types of drafts with style, methods, and abilities and were encouraged to learn from the accomplishments and failures of their partners' production (Meletiadiou, 2021). Another positive insight from the use of peer-assessment is that it is delivered more timely and extensively (Topping, 1998, as cited in Lu & Law, 2012). Additionally, peer assessment promotes students becoming the owner of their learning leaving behind traditional practices of repetition and memorization (Alzaid, 2017, as cited in Ramasamy & Aziz, 2018).

Nevertheless, authors have reported some challenges and limitations. Jalal Farahani and Azizi, (2012, as cited in Meletiadiou, 2021) stated that among a sample of 126 members, peer response was not effective in improving neither high nor low participants in terms of grammar accuracy; however, the facilitator comments benefit on low achieving learners. Moreover, teachers and students must be well informed and trained in using the peer assessment method (Meletiadiou, 2021; Misiejuk & Wasson, 2021). Dewi et al. (2019) concluded in their study that

the difficulties appeared when they did not know how to answer the questions proposed by their peers; however, it encouraged them to critically think and lookback on the material read previously. Salsabila (2020) argued that some participants of the investigation felt anxious to be wrong in doing the task on Facebook and confused about how to accomplish the assignment. In another study, it is stated that not all participants perceive peer-assessment positively and argued that it may depend on its characteristics such as quality or detail (Alhassan et al., 2018, as cited in Double et al., 2020).

One of the limitations above-mentioned was related to training. Depending on the study type, some ways of training in the use of peer assessment arise. For example, Dewi et al. (2022) highlighted that peer assessment occurred in several meetings in which students established questions about difficulties in writing academic articles, and they agreed to explore solutions with peers instead of the instructor. Besides, Double et al. (2020) cited that the more exposure to peer assessment the better they perform. Hadzhikoleva et al. (2019) pointed out that the peer-evaluation process should be explained by the researcher. Among other aspects, it should include: place, time, ways of performance, and technical issues.

Writing

It is believed that the most difficult skill of language is writing since writers must be careful that each word and sentence is presented logically (Ebrahimi et al., 2021; Zafrin, 2018). In addition, mechanical features of writing such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and format are mandatory to master by writers; nonetheless, it can turn more complex in a foreign language like English (Khalim, 2020).

One type of writing format is emails. They constitute tangible and natural networks of communication that offer authentic context, motivate interaction and facilitate independent learning which is necessary for writing (Warschauer, 1995, as cited in Mahmoud, 2014). Adding this format in language learning can reinforce learners' reading and writing skills showing logical thinking when answering a coherent email

(Campbell, 2008; Mabuan & Ebron, 2017, as cited in Lin, 2020). Emails have the following elements: subject line; appropriate expressions of salutation and closing; an interpersonal dimension which expresses clearly why they are writing and what type of response is expected from the addressee; content that reveals the situational circumstances and allows the communication; and, appropriate register and style of language (Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008; Hallet, 2016, as cited in Keller, 2023).

On the whole, this investigation aims to make students interact when communicating through e-mails and enhance their writing skills with the implementation of peer-evaluation as a method of formative assessment.

The following research questions were answered with this study.

- 1) What is the impact of peer-assessment on the written production of emails by students?
- 2) What were students' perspectives regarding peer-assessment in improving writing skills?

The following chart summarizes the authors' works who have implemented peer-assessment in different contexts.

Table 1. Authors who applied peer-assessment

Author	Title / Method	Result
De Brún, A., Rogers, L., Drury, A., & Gilmore, B. (2022)	"Evaluation of a formative peer assessment in research methods teaching using an on-line platform: A mixed methods pre-post study"/ Qualitative and Quantitative.	Students initially expressed apprehension, perceiving the task as daunting, and doubting their ability to provide feedback to peers. However, through providing instruction and tools to support students in the activity, high levels of satisfaction with the process and the experience were reported. It was a valuable learning experience as part of research methods training and critical skills development.

Double, K. S., McGrane, J. A., & Hopfenbeck, T. N. (2020)	"The Impact of Peer Assessment on Academic Performance: A Meta-analysis of Control Group Studies" / Quantitative	Results suggested that the effectiveness of peer assessment was remarkably robust across a wide range of contexts. Also, it provides support for peer assessment as a formative practice and suggests several implications for the implementation of peer assessment into the classroom.
Ebrahimi, M., Izadpanah, S., & Namaziandost, E. (2021)	"The Impact of Writing Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Autonomy and Metacognitive Awareness" / Quantitative	Results from the tests indicated that both self-assessment and peer assessment are effective ways to improve autonomy and metacognition awareness of EFL learners in the completion of writing tasks.
Intriago Cañizares, F. (2021).	"Peer - feedback for Improving English Writing in Higher Education" / Qualitative- Quantitative	Results show students improved their own writing at a Cohen's d of 0.39, moderate improvement achieved after five peer feedback sessions. Students' views reported difficulties when they wrote in English and participated in the sessions; nevertheless, they regarded this strategy as beneficial for improving writing.
Khalim, A. (2020)	"Implementing Peer Assessment to Improve the Writing Ability of the Second Year Students of SMP Negeri 44 Muaro Jambi" /	The findings showed that the appropriate strategy of peer assessment in writing instructions to improve the students' ability in writing a descriptive paragraph requires teachers to follow procedures; telling the purpose of conducting peer assessment, encouraging collaborative work, encouraging impartial assessment, giving clear and detailed guidelines, building students' self-confidence to write and assess, encouraging students' self-confidence to write and assess, and ensuring follow up tasks.
Misiejuk, K., & Wasson, B. (2021)	"Backward evaluation in peer assessment: A scoping review" / Qualitative	This scoping review makes a significant contribution to PA research as it is the first literature survey to address BE in PA, and in particular the use of BE data in empirical study analysis.

Salsabila, S. (2020)	"Facebook assisted students' peer assessment in writing descriptive text" / Qualitative	Findings show positive results, those are: (1) the use of students' peer assessment through Facebook had an impact on raising the students' revised drafts, (2) the students expressed an optimistic response towards using Facebook for peer assessment, and (3) the students' difficulties on peer assessment through Facebook, and (4) the students' involvement during peer assessment activities on Facebook.
Tapia González, J. E. (2020).	"Improving Writing Skills through Peer Assessment" /	The findings revealed that peer assessment improved students' writing performance. Likewise, they developed well-structured sentences, organized ideas appropriately, reduced word repetition, and had fewer mistakes in grammar and mechanics. They also became responsible for assessing their friend's tasks, which increased their positive perspectives towards peer assessment.

Source: The authors

Innovation

The innovation was developed to improve the writing skills of a tenth-grade class under the principles of backward design. It focuses on student-centered activities and establishes a transfer goal to be reached at the end of the unit (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The transfer goal was taken from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) writing specifications for level A2, and it led the whole teaching-learning procedure to get the desired outcome.

The intervention lasted four weeks and had two 80-minute virtual classes per week and one asynchronous task to practice the content of the week. Students had to write an email according to the topic as the final outcome of the lesson.

The material and the actions involved listening and reading tasks to support writing development. The teacher shared the worksheets

created for this purpose through Google Classroom. Students connected to class through the Zoom platform. .

The instructor created a checklist to assess writing production in the aspects of grammar, vocabulary, email structure, and punctuation. This tool facilitated the process of the peer assessment. During the virtual class, students were grouped in pairs and joined breakout rooms to ask and respond to emails that were displayed on a slide assigned for this purpose. Then, they were taught how to peer assess others' work and how to provide feedback. After twenty minutes, they shared their comments and fixed their emails which were uploaded to the virtual learning environment..

Their routine in virtual class consisted of completing different interactive tasks to activate their prior knowledge such as brainstorming, open-ended questions, activities on Mentimeter, videos to introduce the topic or descriptions of the pictures related to the topic. To construct and reinforce new learnings and develop writing skills they did interactive work through digital tools such as Liveworksheets, Wordwall, Nearpod, Edpuzzle, and watched videos from YouTube. In an asynchronous environment, they reinforced the content covered in class with more interactive digital exercises, and the analysis of examples that helped them to write the weekly email.

Research Methodology

This is an Action Research with a quantitative and qualitative design and instruments. Norton (2009) indicated that action research is a reflective procedure that identifies an educational issue. It methodically processes the issue through a series of steps to deal with and investigate the teaching-learning practice in order to improve it.

This study was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze how peer assessment (independent variable) enhanced students' writing skills (dependent variable).

Participants

The sample was thirty-nine students in a public high school located in an urban area of Loja, Ecuador. They were ten graders with A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Their ages range from fourteen to fifteen years old. Although the whole class participated in the implementation, only eighteen parents signed the consent. Female volunteers represented 83.33% and male volunteers meant 16.67%. All of them are mestizos and belong to different social levels.

Instruments

Pre-test and Post-test. In order to collect data and answer the quantitative research question: What is the impact of peer assessment in students' written production? In the pretest, students wrote an Email message to a friend about their last weekend, it was a class assignment, and they responded to one of the messages. In pairs, they joined randomly breakout rooms to complete the task. The posttest was a similar task with the difference in the content, they wrote about their last holiday.

A rubric was used by the teacher to grade the tests. According to Popham (1997), "A rubric has three essential features: evaluative criteria, quality definitions and a scoring strategy". It included the following criteria: content, organization, and language focused on English level A2 of the CEFR, and each criterion had 5 bands to score the three descriptors. Being 5 the highest and 1 the lowest score. It was designed based on the Cambridge A2 level writing scales and it was vetted by an expert in the field at Universidad Casa Grande.

Data Analysis

To answer research question one: What is the impact of peer-assessment on students' email written production? Grades from pre and

post-test were uploaded in an Excel document to facilitate the procedure. Descriptive statistics were run to analyze in detail the pre and post-test. In answering the qualitative research question: What were students' limitations on peer-assessment during the implementation? The researcher's notes and students' perspectives gathered in a brief survey at the end of the study were organized into the categories of limitations, challenges, benefits, and improvements.

Ethical Considerations

According to Head (2020), matters of concern in Action Research constitute privacy, anonymity, consent, and power, and the applicants must exhibit control over these aspects to satisfy research view committees. In this regard, students' guardians provided the consent for the participation in this study. An important characteristic of consent is that it is voluntary, and the participants can abandon the study at any time (Connelly, 2014). The researcher guaranteed responsible strategies to collect data adhering to a professional code of conduct ensuring safety to all participants.

Results

To explore the first research question: What is the impact of peer assessment on students' email written production? The pretest and posttest were analyzed and graded through a rubric adapted from the Cambridge A2 level in written production. The results are shown in tables 2 and 3. Table 2 reflects the results of the email students wrote as assignment and table 3 summarizes the scores of the response email.

Table 2 indicates that the mean of the pretest and the posttest increase in the final score. The minimum and the maximum scores were improved as well. The standard deviation was not closely clustered around the mean of the tests.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Writing
Pre-test and Post-test – Homework Emails

	Pre-test					Post-test			
	N	MIN	MAX	M	SD	MIN	MAX	M	SD
Total	18	1	13	8.22	3.58	3	15	10.39	3.73

Note: N= Sample. MIN= minimum. MAX= maximum. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD=Mean difference.

Regarding the data collected from the responses that the participants wrote in class to their classmates' email messages, these were the findings: the average of the pre-test and the post-test showed improvement. Likewise, the minimum and the maximum grades for the tests evidenced a positive difference. The standard deviation marks were not closely clustered around the mean of the tests. Table 3 demonstrates the information.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Writing
Pre-test and Post-test – Response to an Email in Class

	Pre-test					Post-test			
	N	MIN	MAX	M	SD	MIN	MAX	M	SD
Total	18	1	13	7.33	2.99	3	15	8.94	3.57

Note: N= Sample. MIN= minimum. MAX= maximum. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation. MD=Mean difference.

In answering the qualitative research question: *What were students' perspectives regarding peer assessment in improving writing skills?* Participants' opinions from a four-question survey was categorized and analyzed considering the question order from one to four. The analysis includes some quotations to exemplify the interpretation.

Related to the aspects of the innovation, some students mentioned that the mutual review of their written work grabbed their attention during the innovation. For example, student 2 mentioned "*Work in*

pairs evaluating our pieces of writing" (S.2), this perspective was shared by student 6. Others pointed out the structure of an email and the use of a Google Slide template to write a response to a friend's email message. Student 13 stated *"The letter to a friend caught my attention because that's how I got to know the parts of the letter"*.

Regarding how peer assessment helped them improve their writing skills, some students indicated that identifying their peers' mistakes using the checklist helped them to correct their mistakes and avoid them in their own writing. Some quotes about this are: *"I became aware of my peers' mistakes so I wouldn't make them"* (S.11) and *"My classmates' recommendations helped me fix my email using the correct structure, vocabulary, and past tense of the verbs"* (S.9). Besides, students added other factors like their peers' feedback and the immediate correctness of their emails.

In addition, they were asked about the actions they performed to improve their writing skills during the study. Some participants pointed out they interacted with peers and exchanged questions and answers about the tasks which let them feel comfortable while learning. One of the student shared: *"Working with my classmates, I exchanged ideas and doubts freely and I could understand better"* (S.8)

Lastly, students talked about the issues they faced during this process. The main difficulty reported was to understand and write an email using the appropriate vocabulary and past tense of the verbs as well.

Some notes taken during the intervention indicate that peer-evaluation was new for the participants. This novelty caused apprehension among them. However, continuous practice and supportive tools helped students to continue and improve. At the end, high levels of satisfaction with the process and the experience were reported. Altogether, after the innovation, the participants' writing skills improved. They were aware of theirs and others' mistakes and were able to go over their drafts to edit them considering their own learning and their peers' feedback.

Discussion

The quantitative research question tested the impact of peer assessment on students' written production. Hence, the results disclosed in this study show that the peer-evaluation method helped the participants improve their writing abilities. These positive findings displayed some similarities with previous studies (De Brún et al., 2022; Zafrin, 2018). They indicated that although initial lack of confidence in assessing and giving feedback to peers, after appropriate support participants reported high levels of satisfaction and motivation. Other researchers with positive findings when implementing peer-evaluation remarked that it can become an alternative assessment tool into classroom leading students' excellence in academic writing at any field (Dewi et al. 2019; Double et al. 2020; Hadzhikoleva, et al. 2019).

This investigation was carried out on virtual classes through Zoom platform. Participants assessed their peers in breakout rooms. This digital interaction represented a motor of motivation to write and get viewers of their work as well as having several opportunities to review drafts. This is consistent with Salsabila (2020), Ramasamy and Aziz (2018), and Zafrin (2018) papers that implemented peer assessment to improve writing skills facilitated by social networks (i.e. Facebook, Frog VLE, and Google Classroom).

In this study, learners used criteria through a checklist to assess their peers' work and provided feedback. It underlines what Ebrahimi et al. (2021) indicated about peer assessment involving dialogues during the process which are led by performance and standards. Besides, they were able to transfer the acquired writing skills to produce an email to communicate in a real context. Peer assessment approach bridges transfer into practice (Segers & Dochy, 2001, as cited in De Brún et al., 2022).

The suggestions and positive comments were accepted and canalized by the students to develop their writing skills. This is consistent with the Salsabila (2020) that reported that students enhance their writing by the suggestions from peers. They also learn to accept recommendations and feel confident and motivated to learn more when peers praise their work. Another consideration is the training in using peer as-

essment. The general aspects were taught during the first week and it was reinforced along the process of the innovation. This finding showed similarity with Double, (2020) investigation, who cited that the more exposure to peer assessment the better they perform.

The unstable bandwidth that some students faced, determined a lack of understanding in using peer assessment during the first week of the implementation; however, it was overcome with a second explanation on the part of the teacher, and as they get self-confidence while practicing it. Hadzhikoleva et al. (2019) highlighted that the peer-evaluation process explanation is overseen by the researcher which includes place, time, performance styles, and technical aspects.

Conclusions

The impact of the peer assessment on EFL students' writing skills were analyzed in this action research. The findings have drawn conclusions and answers to the research questions. The peer assessment strategy implemented in a standard English class became a useful tool for the formative process and a rich source of information for the researcher about the students' writing production. Besides, it assisted learners in developing problem-solving abilities and self-reflection when they realized their strengths and weaknesses in writing.

The peer assessment gave fresh and motivated nuances to the teaching-learning routines fostering active participation of the students in collaborative work while they assessed and learned from their peers' pieces of writing. This practice allowed them to be autonomous learners as well. The strategy widened the participants' perspectives. They became aware of the fact it is possible to learn from their peers and not only their teachers. They started appreciating and trusting peer's feedback to enhance their writing skills.

During the implementation, participants found plenty of opportunities to peer- assess several pieces of writing about familiar topics in their lives. They wrote electronic messages as homework and responded to friends' emails in class. They used all patterns of grammar, vocabulary, and email structures when writing. Comparing the results of pre

and posttest, the effectiveness of peer assessment as an active learning strategy in improving writing skills was clear. Levels of understanding and interest increased, determining students' engagement in writing.

Even with the positive findings, there were some limitations related to the virtual environment and digital applications as well as with the use of the checklist. First, unstable internet connection of some of the participants prevented them from following the instructions and explanations which affected their performance. Second, the lack of expertise using Google slides collaboratively interfered while they were writing their emails, leading to issues such as deleting other learners' texts accidentally, and not being able to use the tools to write a text on the slides. They got over this inconvenience as they became familiar with it. Lastly, students were unwilling to give any opinion about their classmates' writing using the checklist. They also overcame it with practice and interaction with peers.

Hence, to avoid discomfort and anxiety, it is advisable to be sure all resources and tools required are available for participants. Since the number of participants was limited (18), interpreting the data involves caution. The results required to be tested with larger groups and longer time exposure. Likewise, it can be tested to improve the other language skills (reading, listening, and speaking) and subskills (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation). Implementing this study would highly contribute to getting the benefits of the peer assessment approach in enhancing writing skills at any level of EFL learning. The researcher hopes the findings and the entire process of this study may be a reference for future implementations.

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Impact of Graphic Novels in an Online EFL Class

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Abstract

The use of graphic novels in language education has gained popularity in recent years. However, comprehensive studies exploring students' perspectives on their use in an online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading and writing class are lacking. This study aimed to fill this gap. A total of $N = 40$ high-school students with a B2 level were divided into a control ($n = 20$) and an experimental group ($n = 20$). The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, and the results indicated that the use of graphic novels had a positive impact on student's motivation. This paper is relevant to language educators, specifically those interested in using graphic novels as a teaching tool, and to researchers in the fields of language education who are interested in assessing the effectiveness of graphic novels in promoting student motivation and engagement.

Keywords: graphic novels, online EFL, reading, writing, engagement.

Introduction

The use of graphic novels in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has been increasing in popularity in recent years. This study aimed to explore students' perspectives on the use of graphic novels in an online EFL reading and writing class. The study was conducted with 40 EFL students at a high school in Ecuador.

Several studies have explored graphic novels as a teaching tool in language education. There are already in-service teachers from around the world who have found that graphic novels help students develop their reading comprehension skills and could be used to teach vocabulary and grammar. However, the present study differs from previous research in that it focuses specifically on the perspectives of high-school students with a B2 level of English who are participating in an online EFL reading and writing class. Furthermore, the study employs a

mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of graphic novels on student motivation and engagement in this context.

Literature Review

The readers of this paper might wonder about the nature of graphic novels and how they differ from traditional novels. To answer this question, it is important to note that graphic novels are a unique form of storytelling that combines the visual elements of comics with the narrative structure of a novel. Unlike traditional novels, graphic novels use illustrations, panel arrangements, and visual cues to narrate the story and enhance the reading experience. Moreover, graphic novels often tackle more mature and complex themes compared to traditional comic books, making them a valuable tool for exploring in-depth social and cultural issues in a more engaging and accessible way.

Well-known examples of graphic novels include "Watchmen" by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, "Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi, "V for Vendetta" by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, and "Sandman" by Neil Gaiman. These graphic novels are known for their use of sequential art, or comic book-style illustrations, to tell stories that can range from biographical to fictional, from serious to comedic. They offer a unique combination of visual and textual elements that can engage and captivate readers in a way that traditional novels may not.

Some experts recommend the use of graphic novels as instructional tools. Jaffe (n.d.) recommends using graphic novels to support critical literacy skills such as close reading, interpretation, and evaluation, as well as cultural and historical understanding. Additionally, the National Council of Teachers of English, or NCTE, (2019) recognized graphic novels as valuable instructional tools, particularly for their ability to engage students, promote literacy, and support cultural and historical understanding. The NCTE has even created guidelines for teaching using graphic novels, which provide recommendations for selecting graphic novels and implementing them in the classroom.

Studies have shown that graphic novels can enhance students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Aldahash and Al-talhab (2020) found that the use of graphic novels in an EFL class increased students' interest in the course material and improved their reading comprehension. Similarly, Chun (2009) concluded that the use of graphic novels in a high school EFL class improved students' motivation and engagement in reading activities.

Research has also demonstrated the potential benefits of graphic novels for improving writing skills. For example, Summerfield (2017) found that the use of graphic novels in an EFL writing class improved students' writing fluency and creativity. In a similar vein, Johnson (2016) found that the use of graphic novels in college EFL writing made a positive impact on the participants' ability to write cohesively, a trait that also allowed them to develop their ideas more effectively.

The effect of graphic novels on reading comprehension has been studied and is defined as the process of comprehending meaning from text (Woolley, 2011). The relationship between text presentation and reading comprehension was investigated by Cook (2017) regarding its effect on EFL high school students. Vocabulary development is an aspect of language learning, and a rich vocabulary leads to better language acquisition (Darsalina et al., 2016). Using multiple delivery methods can help develop vocabulary, as suggested by Williams (2013), and expand it since they present words and expressions with meaning (Wood, 2015). Other studies support these findings, adding the use of graphic novels as instructional material also results in incidental vocabulary acquisition (Ahmadi et al., 2017). In another study, teaching idioms using comics or graphic novels was found to be more effective than traditional exercises (Başal et al., 2016).

Furthermore, research has indicated that the use of graphic novels can have a positive impact on the overall language-learning experience. Öz and Efecioglu (2015) found that the use of graphic novels in an EFL class improved students' confidence in speaking and their overall language proficiency. In an interesting project that involved creating graphic novels, Miller (2019) claimed that her students used this technique to express themselves more openly as individuals, something which they would not have accomplished by using just prose.

James (2016) stressed that teachers must acknowledge the value of comic books as a teaching tool to maximize their effectiveness since the use of graphic novels in language learning has been shown to have a positive impact (Crawford, 2004). Studies indicate that even though there are benefits of comic books, teachers do not integrate them in their lessons. Lapp et al. (2011) who reported 77% of the participating teachers had limited exposure to graphic novels and did not incorporate them in their classrooms despite having positive perspectives of them. This aligns with the findings of James (2016) and McGrail and Dowdall (2017), who also noted that despite teachers recognizing the advantages of using comic books in teaching, they rarely use them.

Methodology

Before beginning this study, the following research question was formulated:

Is there a significant difference in the reading and writing abilities of students who use graphic novels in an online EFL course compared to those who do not?

The present study utilized a mixed methods approach to investigate the use of graphic novels in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education and used a combination of pre-tests and post-tests and a survey to collect data. The survey consisted of 5 Likert-scale questions asking students about their perspectives on the use of graphic novels in the class, including their opinions on the use of graphic novels as a reading and writing tool and their level of engagement with the material. The survey was conducted after the completion of the course, and students were asked to discuss their experiences with using graphic novels in class and any challenges they faced.

The questionnaire asked the respondents to rate their level of agreement with each statement and the scale ranged from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). Respondents were instructed to indicate their response by placing a checkmark (✓) in the appropriate column for each question. The questions covered topics such as the overall quality of the graphic novel, the ease of reading an electronic version,

the effectiveness of illustrations and graphics in conveying the story, and whether the story helped improve reading and writing skills and engagement with the story.

Approved by the school's review board and with the informed consent of all participants and their parents, the study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of graphic novels on students' motivation, engagement, and language skills in an online EFL course. To protect the privacy of the participants, the data collected was kept confidential and anonymous.

The study was conducted with two equal-sized groups, a control group, and an experimental group, consisting of 14-year-old students primarily in *Décimo de Educación Básica* which is equivalent to the 9th grade in the U.S. education system. The study was designed to assess the effectiveness of graphic novel reading by administering a Reading-oriented pre-test and post-test to both groups.

The pre-test and post-test examinations included a passage with vocabulary and grammar appropriate for a learner who has reached the B2 level, according to the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2008), and twenty multiple-choice questions based on each passage. Both groups took the tests on the same dates with each test having a duration of sixty minutes.

The experimental group read graphic novels, while the control group read narrative texts without illustrations. After the intervention, participants of the experimental group were asked to complete a survey questionnaire comprising five Likert-scale questions, which aimed to gather insights into their perspectives on using graphic novels, their motivation and engagement in reading and writing activities, and their overall language skills. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using a bar graph to summarize the students' points of view.

The graphic novel used in the study was "The Dragonslayer", published in 2006. It is a fantasy-oriented narrative by U.S. author, Jeff Smith. The participants were instructed to read chapters one to four over four weeks. The rationale behind using this material resides in the absence of themes that may be considered inappropriate for the participants' age (13–14-year-olds all of them). Smith created a character called Bone drawn as a bald cartoonish character that lives in a medieval-styled vil-

lage in a fantasy world. Bone has adventures that are told in a humorous tone but keep subagent messages about good and evil and occasionally adopt a dark tone.

The researcher and the experimental group worked together in daily one-hour online sessions which began the week after the pre-test was conducted and the results had been tallied. Each session was devoted to analyzing the story through different activities that varied from one session to another; some of those activities included:

- Character Analysis: the participants analyzed the main characters, and explored their motivations, personality traits, and relationships with other characters.
- World Building: students created a map of the fantasy world depicted in the graphic novel, including important locations and landmarks.
- Plot Development: the participants created a timeline of the events in the graphic novel.
- Themes and Symbolism: the participants identified and analyzed themes and symbols present in the story, discussing how they contributed to the story.
- Comparative Study: the participants compared Bone's reality to other fantasy worlds such as Narnia, or Westeros.
- Art and Illustration: students were encouraged to create their versions of Bone and other characters.
- Change the Ending: Students changed the endings of each of the chapters and tried to imagine how the story would evolve from that point.

The students did little or no reading at all during these sessions and were asked to read a certain number of pages at home before each session. The actual reading of the graphic novel material took place at their homes, thus allowing the sessions to be entirely devoted to understanding the text through different activities. They were also encouraged to share what they could make out of those pages.

Results

The results of the study showed that most of the students had positive perspectives on the use of graphic novels in the online sessions. At the end of this study, most of the participants agreed that graphic novels helped them to improve their reading and writing skills, and they also agreed that they were more engaged with the material when it was presented in the form of a graphic novel, even though the novel was accessed through electronic form.

One of the main challenges that students faced when using graphic novels in class was the difficulty of understanding the context of the story without the help of the teacher. This was particularly true for students with lower English proficiency levels (most of the participants had a B2.1 level, but some were lower). However, students also reported that the visual elements of graphic novels helped to make the story more understandable and engaging.

The results of the pre-test and post-test, along with the mean and standard deviation, are presented in Table 1. The answers to the survey are collected and interpreted in a bar graph in Table 2 and the 5 Likert-scale questions for the experimental group can be seen in the Appendix section.

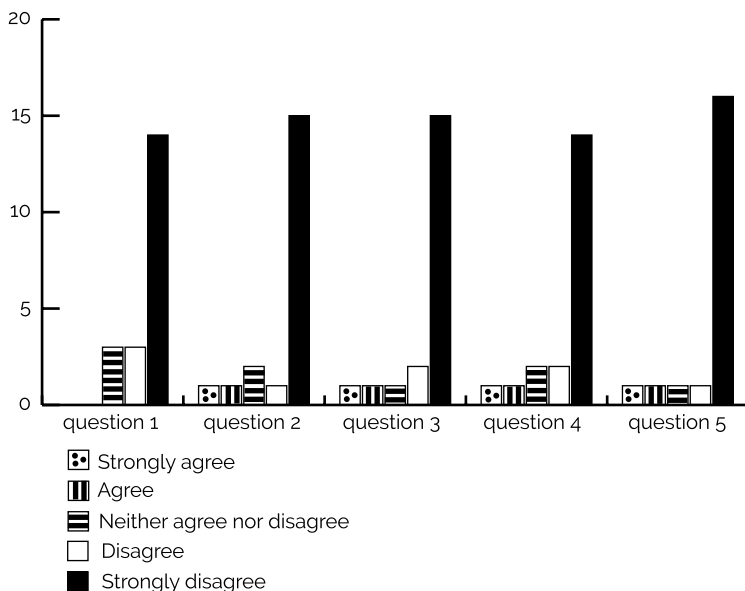
Table 1. Control and Experimental Groups' Pre-test and Post-test scores

	N	Min.	Max	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test (Control Group)	20	5	7.25	1.75	6.10	0.50
Post-test (Control Group)	20	5.5	8	2.5	6.7	0.44
Pre-test (Experimental Group)	20	5.5	7	1.5	6.37	0.31
Post-test (Experimental Group)	20	6.5	10	3.5	8.27	1.21

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for pre-test and post-test scores of a control group and an experimental group. Each group consists of 20 participants. The range is calculated by subtracting the minimum value from the maximum value. In this case, for the pre-test of the control group, it would be $7.25 - 5 = 2.25$. This indicates that there is a difference of 2.25 points between the lowest and highest scores in this group.

These results disclosed that both groups had similar pre-test scores with means of 6.10 and 6.37 for control and experimental groups respectively indicating that both groups started at a similar level before the intervention was applied. However, after intervention (post-test), there was a difference between the two groups with a mean score of 6.7 for the control group and 8.27 for the experimental group indicating that there was a positive impact after the intervention.

Figure 1. Bar graph with survey results



Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of *The Dragonslayer* by Jeff Smith. Out of 20 respondents, 14 strongly agreed, and 3 agreed that they were pleased with the graphic novel. Most respondents did not report any difficulties reading an electronic version of the graphic novel. The visuals aided in the comprehension of the narrative. The graphic novel features a distinctive style of art that contrasts the cartoonish appearance of the main characters with realistic and detailed backgrounds. The responses regarding whether the story enhanced their reading and writing skills were diverse. However, overall, most respondents indicated that the story had a positive impact on their literacy skills.

The story involves themes such as destiny, identity, and war, as well as elements of humor and mystery. The respondents were engaged with the narrative, as 16 out of 20 strongly agreed that they were interested and read the story. The data implies that the respondents had a positive experience reading the graphic novel, and the visuals played a significant role in their understanding and engagement with the story. Additionally, most respondents suggested that reading the graphic novel had a positive influence on their literacy skills.

Discussion

The results of Summerfield (2017) study support previous research that suggests using graphic novels can have a positive impact on language learning. The literature review highlighted the potential benefits of graphic novels for improving reading and writing abilities, as well as vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency (Aldahash & Altalhab, 2020; Jaffe, n.d.; Öz & Efecioglu, 2015; Summerfield, 2017). Summerfield's study specifically examined the use of graphic novels as a tool to support the writing skills of fifth-grade boys and found that the use of graphic novels led to an increase in the boys' engagement and motivation, as well as improvements in their writing abilities.

The findings of the present study indicate that the experimental group, which used graphic novels in an online EFL course, had higher

post-test scores than the control group, which did not use graphic novels. This suggests that the use of graphic novels may have contributed to the improvement of the experimental group's reading and writing abilities. In addition to improving language skills, graphic novels have been found to increase students' motivation and engagement in the learning process (Aldahash & Altalhab, 2020; Chun, 2009; Summerfield, n.d.). The responses of the experimental group suggest that they found the graphic novel to be engaging and helpful for their comprehension of the narrative. Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of the graphic novel, even though it was a standard edition with no other special features, but good graphics and effective storytelling, and did not report any difficulties reading an electronic version of it. Furthermore, 15 out of 20 respondents strongly agreed that the illustrations and graphics were helpful, indicating that the visuals in the graphic novel aided their comprehension.

The literature review also suggests that the use of graphic novels can lead to incidental vocabulary acquisition and the development of critical literacy skills (Ahmadi et al., 2017; Cook, 2017; Williams, 2013). While the responses of the participants in this study did not explicitly address these areas, it is possible that the use of graphic novels contributed to their overall language proficiency and critical literacy skills.

Conclusions

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of incorporating graphic novels into EFL education, further emphasizing the importance of using a mixed methods approach in conducting educational research. Principally, the results suggest that the use of graphic novels in an online EFL reading and writing class can be an effective tool for improving students' reading and writing skills and increasing their engagement with the material. However, it is important to note that the use of graphic novels alone may not be sufficient, and additional support and guidance from the teacher may be necessary to help students develop their skills fully.

In case of future interventions, it is advisable to follow up with these lower-rating respondents to gather more information about their experiences. This could be achieved by using research tools with a qualitative approach like personal interviews that allow us to understand why there were students who did not like using this kind of material. We may not rule out the possibility that the problem was not with the material used, but on how it was accessed since not everyone is obliged to feel comfortable with online instruction.

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Developing Peer Assessment and Collaboration in the Remote and Hybrid EFL Classroom

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Abstract

When teachers forcibly shifted to online instruction due to the Covid-19 pandemic and quarantine measures, teachers had to adapt methodologies and strategies proven effective in face-to-face classes to make them work in the virtual environment. For many English Language teachers, this meant embarking on a trial-and-error journey, where they needed to find appropriate solutions to serve the best interests of teachers and students. An Action Research (AR) project developed over various cycles seemed the most appropriate form to achieve those goals, evaluate the results, and give systematicity to the process. In this AR study, students were trained to work collaboratively during writing activities and give and receive feedback via recorded messages. The data was collected from three sources: teacher's notes, students' opinions given regularly after each module, and semi-structured interviews. The results show that when Collaborative Writing is joined with Peer Assessment and Audio Feedback, and students receive appropriate training, all stakeholders can get the most out of these strategies since the learning-teaching experience becomes more personalized, complete, and enjoyable, bringing benefits for students and teachers alike.

Keywords: action research cycles, collaborative writing, peer assessment, audio feedback

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic forced teachers from all over the world to teach online, bringing with it various challenges for instructors and students. For example, in English Language Teaching (ELT), teachers were concerned about how to help their students develop their oral and written communication skills as effectively as they did in face-to-face classes. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors looked for ways to accomplish these goals by testing various strategies and techniques, which was the case for this teacher. This endeavor encouraged this re-

searcher to find appropriate solutions for the online environment that, in time, could also be adapted for the onsite and hybrid classrooms as schools and universities slowly return to the physical classrooms. The adaptation process began with modifying in-person activities to be effective in the virtual classroom, such as working in teams and empowering students through providing opportunities to use their voices. Another challenge was to make the writing process less isolating, for which various changes had to be performed. Finally, to involve students in the writing process, the teacher concluded that peer assessment, giving and receiving feedback to other classmates, would be beneficial. In this sense, the guiding research question that this action research project tried to respond to was: What is the effect of collaboration and peer assessment in developing academic writing in an online, onsite, and hybrid EFL classroom? At the beginning of each research cycle, the researcher's focus was first on teamwork, collaboration, and communication; then, on giving and receiving feedback; and, lastly on the participants' preference regarding written or audio feedback. These aspects were also used to guide the semi-structured interviews.

This chapter describes the journey and results of an action research project comprising various cycles which were developed to improve teamwork and writing in online classes. Students were introduced to Collaborative Writing, Peer Assessment, and Audio Feedback leading to a meaningful learning experience.

Literature Review

Collaborative Learning

According to Saleh (2019), collaboration refers to students "working together to achieve a shared goal" (p. 63). This means everyone is responsible and accountable for everything happening within the group and the class, ensuring everyone's participation. Active participation can be achieved if everyone understands that "collaboration involves deciding goals together with others, sharing responsibilities, and working together

to achieve more than could be achieved by an individual on their own" (Barfield, 2016, p. 222). When working in teams, students maintain their individualities while they accept responsibility for their contributions as well as for their learning and their teammates' learning (Barfield, 2016; Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Saleh, 2019); such social responsibility with the group creates a friendly environment that can enhance the learning experience.

Collaboration is also the basis for various forms of active learning (Saleh, 2019). One of them is Collaborative Learning (CL). In the EFL classroom, CL helps students interact in a friendlier context, with more opportunities to practice the target language comprehensively (Roskams, 1999). Saleh (2019) described some essential elements for the success of teams involved in any learning experience. One was "individual accountability" (p. 63), meaning students were responsible for helping their team members to learn and succeed in the task. The second element is "positive interdependence" (Saleh, 2019, p. 63), described as group members understanding that they were part of a small community where everyone's needs were meant to be satisfied through building consensus and avoiding competition (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). In this sense, CL is not just having students working together in groups; it is an understanding of the learning experience and a sense of belonging. Students may also develop critical thinking and other social skills, such as meaning negotiation and active listening, which constitute the basis for peer assessment within a flexible and adaptable experience.

Collaborative Writing using Google Docs

According to Kitjaroonchai and Suppasetseree (2021), Collaborative Writing (CW) is part of the EFL classroom because it improves the quality of the writing produced by students. Students share ideas and knowledge during the CW process (including pre-writing stages, drafting, and revising). At the same time, they navigate the process in a communicative environment where they can use the target language. Because students work together during the writing process, they are all responsible for the final product (Widodo, 2013), and together they own it. To complete the task, students have to think and re-think their ideas,

and while saying them aloud, they can give form to what they will write (Smith & MacGregor, 1993). This "sense of co-ownership" (Widodo, 2013, p. 199) motivates students to get more involved and cooperate with all team members.

The appropriate use of Google Apps, especially Google Docs, contributes to developing CW projects in online, onsite, and hybrid classrooms. This interactive tool can provide appropriate features for students to collaboratively work on writing projects (Woodrich & Fan, 2017) because they can discuss their ideas to enhance their writing, share knowledge, and strengthen their social and cognitive skills (Nabhan & Sa'diyah, 2021). In their study, these authors found that high school students reacted positively to using Google Docs; their motivation and digital literacy also increased. A relevant benefit of using Google Docs is its accessibility; students can access their writing projects at any time (Oxnevad, 2012) and use any portable device with internet access. In their study, Woodrich and Fan (2017) mentioned that students feel less anxious when using Google Docs because they could easily communicate with their teammates and because it increased the participation of students whose fluency in the target language varied, making this tool appropriate for collaboration.

Peer Assessment

Peer Assessment (PA) is a collaborative practice where students give and receive feedback from their peers, either in written or oral form (Chien et al., 2020). PA is a process that can enhance language learning (Saito, 2008) and that helps students develop life and learning skills, reflective learning, critical thinking, metacognitive strategies, and learner-shared responsibility (Saito, 2008; Mok, 2011; Miao & Koper, 2007). PA also "increases motivation" while "motivates students to be more careful in their work and amplifies their voice in the learning process" (Ubaque & Pinilla, 2016, p. 112), it also increases the quality of students' work, their self-confidence, and their involvement in deeper learning. Besides, when it is well developed, PA creates more opportunities for students to receive feedback (Widodo, 2013), reflect, and improve their work. This

positive change results from more meaningful interactions with their peers, adopting a responsible attitude to judge other students' work, and learning how their classmates learn (Nawas, 2020).

Students can review their own and classmates' work using appropriate assessment tools the teacher should provide. To guarantee an appropriate process, the teacher should train the students in using such tools and how to give and receive feedback, which should not be focused on the individual but on the work (Oxford University Press, 2014), providing them with a clearer understanding of PA's purposes (Roskams, 1999). Such training should also include supporting students to become more independent and to positively perceive their learning (Mok, 2011), to enhance their engagement in the learning process, and to make the assessment process more explicit and more meaningful for the students (Ubaque & Pinilla, 2016). Ubaque and Pinilla (2016) explained this supplementary merit of PA as "intended to empower learners to appraise the quality, value, and level of learning when they value their classmates' interventions" (p. 116), in addition, they felt compelled to reflect on their writing and learning (Widodo, 2013). Saito (2008), however, warned that long periods of training might reduce the development of some of the desired skills mentioned above. For that reason, Widodo (2013) suggested following a step-by-step training process so students could learn to evaluate each stage of their writing and critique their classmates' work. Widodo (2013) also indicated that PA training could be used as a scaffolding strategy that could produce a positive attitude to peer feedback, even though the process may take time to succeed.

Among other advantages, PA has an impact on student's autonomy (Roskams, 1999; Ubaque & Pinilla, 2016), inspiring them to work hard because they hold a sense of pride when they perceive they are doing a better job through their classmates' observations (Chien et al., 2020). Furthermore, since PA happens within a CW, this transforms the writing event into a mix-ability activity, where students improve their listening, reading, and speaking skills (Chien et al., 2020) as well as their knowledge of the language and evaluation skills (Miao & Koper, 2007; Mok, 2011; Nawas, 2020). Furthermore, Miao and Koper (2007) pointed out that PA gives learners "the opportunity to develop skills for working in a team" (p. 1). In addition, since PA can be seen as a type of CL, it enhances

students' self-confidence because their ability to assess others' work strengthens. Besides, when students accept "that teachers are not the sole sources of authority that can provide valuable feedback for students' writing improvement" (Widodo, 2013, p. 203), their autonomy and value of their peers' observations increase.

Even though PA has numerous advantages, there are some disadvantages to be aware of. Chan (2010) pointed out that students' friendships could negatively influence their feedback reliability because they may tend to provide the same superficial comments to all their classmates. Another negative aspect is that gaining experience in PA may take time, so the strategy may not be valuable enough (Chan, 2010) which can add to students' feeling that they are not prepared for the task. Among the challenges of receiving feedback, it can be mentioned that students may not take their peer feedback seriously or feel it is simply inappropriate. To avoid these difficulties, teachers should ensure that students "have clear guidelines for what to look for in each piece of writing" and comment from the reader's perspective (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Audio Feedback

Traditionally, feedback on written work is given in writing (comments, notes), but it could also be given orally. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this researcher turned to giving students recorded or Audio Feedback (AF), which is also helpful in face-to-face and hybrid classes. AF can help the teacher to make a positive impact on her students' learning since the communication with them becomes personalized, and the feedback is more detailed than written feedback (Gould & Day, 2013; Olesova, 2011; Voelkel & Mello, 2014), as well as more meaningful (Johanson, 1999). Some studies have also mentioned that students could better understand their teacher's comments and improve their listening and speaking skills with AF. However, comprehension may depend on students' target language proficiency. Olesova (2011) found that students with lower proficiency benefitted the most from AF. This may be explained by the fact that students pay attention to the tone

and inflections of the teacher's voice (Kouklatzki, 2019). In online courses, AF helps to establish the teacher's presence (Kouklatzki, 2019; Olesova et al., 2011), which is appreciated by the students who seem to enjoy the recordings because they feel AF is clear, complete, and personal (Gould & Day, 2013; King et al., 2008; Kouklatzki, 2019; Voelkel & Mello, 2014; Olesova, 2011). Therefore, AF seems more effective than written feedback (Alharbi, 2021).

There are other positive aspects to AF, such as students perceiving that the teacher's AF is more complete because they also receive some suggestions to improve their writing work (Gould & Day, 2013). AF also benefits the teachers since they can make their feedback more student-centered (Bless, 2017) because "it allows teachers to provide more details without consuming much effort and time" (Alharbi, 2021, p. 1150). AF meets students' expectations (King et al., 2008). Moreover, when PA is given orally, students can explain their ideas better and expand their explanation while developing their critical thinking skills and engaging in collaborative and enriching conversations (Keane et al., 2018; Widodo, 2013). AF also has an advantage over face-to-face feedback sessions: recordings are permanent (Keane et al., 2018), so they can be accessed anytime, leading to a more enriching learning experience (Kouklatzki, 2019). Finally, when teachers and students get involved in AF, their social presence in online courses is more evident (Keane et al., 2019), a benefit that can be extended to onsite and hybrid courses.

An appropriate tool to provide adequate feedback was Kaizena, created for teachers to give high-quality feedback (Pearson, 2021) while "fostering social learning" (Kouklatzki, 2019, p. 19). Kaizena means "continuous improvement" in Japanese (Kiliçkaya, 2017, p. 7) and was a Google Doc extension that could be added on by students as well (Lindsay, 2020). The extension was supported with a dashboard webpage which provided more tools for teachers. The extension had been designed to facilitate giving personalized feedback in different forms: audio, text, rubrics, and lessons (Kouklatzki, 2019). Teachers and students could involve themselves in multiple interventions using audio and text messages, called "conversations" (Pearson, 2021, p. 2), in pair or group participation. The theoretical principles behind Kaizena's design are "behaviorism, social constructivism, connectivism, and cognitive constructivism" aimed

to promote learning progress (Kouklatzí, 2019, p. 20) because AF can be accessible anywhere and anytime, and allows students to involve in reflective and insightful conversations with their instructor and peers, thus increasing their self-regulation. Furthermore, Kılıçkaya (2017) emphasized the clarity of AF, which will give students a better picture of what they have to do with the feedback they receive. Bless (2017) reported that teachers and students found this tool beneficial because their confidence and self-efficacy increased as writing instructors and writing learners. Other benefits provided by Kaizena are less time-consuming for teachers to provide detailed and timely feedback as well as reduction of grading workload (Bless, 2017).

Methodology

Context

This action research project was developed over five semesters from 2020 to 2022 in two different sites in La Paz, Bolivia, where this researcher works as a teacher. Site A corresponds to a public higher education institution where students have their subjects in English. During each five-month course, students worked collaboratively and got involved in various writing activities ranging from reflective essays, lesson planning, summaries, and reports. Site B corresponds to a private higher education institution where students take EFL courses, from level A1 to B1 in the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) scale. As part of their courses, students took part in various projects related to writing newspaper articles, summaries, short stories, formal and informal emails, and anecdotes. In the first term of 2020, the two institutions adopted a hybrid online teaching model, with synchronous sessions via Zoom and asynchronous activities developed in an LMS platform and other technological tools. In 2022, a different hybrid model was adopted, where asynchronous activities still happened. However, the synchronous sessions gradually moved from online to onsite, combining both to finish the academic year with in-person classes. Students worked collaboratively

during all the synchronous and in-person classes and various asynchronous assignments. At first, students received feedback only from the teacher; nonetheless, the task became overwhelming and time-consuming, so she decided to train the students to give and receive feedback from their peers, in written and oral form, using checklists and rubrics first, and Google Docs, Google Slides, and AF at the end.

Research design

Action research (AR) is considered a type of qualitative research that is cyclical in principle (Burns, 2005). Its main purpose is for the teacher to reflect and find a solution for an issue happening in her classes over a systematic process (Wipperfurth & Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2022), in this case, students working collaboratively in writing projects, and giving and receiving feedback to improve their final products. There are four phases in an action research project: plan to change, act, observe, and reflect (Burns, 2015); these phases constitute a complete cycle that may be repeated as many times as necessary. The present AR project consisted of five complete cycles, all of which had the same structure and the same data collection tools. Based on the reflections of the previous cycle, the researcher designed the next one. The first cycle and its corresponding phases are described below:

- **Cycle 1:**
 - Plan to change: Students felt disconnected, especially when working on writing projects. The teacher decided to implement collaborative writing procedures.
 - Act: Students were organized into teams of 4 or 5 members to work on a writing activity. The teams were shuffled every class.
 - Observe: The researcher collected the data from three different methods. The teacher/researcher noted how students responded to the writing tasks. At the end of each module, during the reflection stage, students gave their opinions regarding their work and performance. A semi-structured interview with two questions was developed at the end of the term.

- Reflect: The teacher/researcher triangulated the data, comparing her observation notes and students' opinions, categorizing them, and reaching conclusions.

The 'observe' and 'reflect' phases were similar in the following cycles. Thus, only the first two are detailed below.

- **Cycle 2:**

- Plan to change: Students mentioned that working effectively with different people every session or task was challenging.
- Act: Based on students' observations, the teacher decided not to shuffle the groups in every class but to maintain the same groups for a complete module.

- **Cycle 3:**

- Plan to change: The teacher provided written feedback, but students felt more was needed to improve their work as much as they needed.
- Act: Students were instructed to work on Google Docs and Google Slides to work collaboratively on writing projects. They had to provide feedback to their classmates using rubrics and checklists, sometimes in groups and others individually. Because students felt it was challenging to give and receive feedback, the teacher trained them to do both with mock practices and examples; after the training, students seemed more willing to perform the task.

- **Cycle 4:**

- Plan to change: Students had commented that written feedback was time-consuming and primarily focused on negative aspects of the process and the product, to which the teacher agreed.
- Act: The teacher introduced AF to the students, and they used it to record their comments on their classmates' work and respond to their opinions and the teacher's. There was no minimum time to record, so the teacher and students could explain their feedback in more detail.

Participants

In both sites, the total number of students per class of the same subject participated in five cycles of the action research project. All the participants were young adults aged 19 to 32 years old and had a lower intermediate to a higher intermediate level of English, A2 to B1, on the CEFR scale. Table 1 presents their distribution during the four cycles of the project:

Table 1. Number of students per cycle research in Sites A and B from 2020 to 2022

	Term	Site A	Site B
Cycle 1	2/2020	32	11
Cycle 2	1/2021	17	25
Cycle 3	2/2021	44	22
Cycle 4	1/2022	30	10

Data collection

Data was collected from teacher observation notes, students' reflection, and semi-structured interviews. The teacher kept notes of each writing activity in her lesson plans, registering what went well and what needed to be improved; they were included next to specific steps and activities of the writing strategies developed in synchronous activities and asynchronous tasks. Students worked collaboratively and provided feedback at one or more points of the writing activity. Those observation notes were classified into positive comments, questions, and future ideas. Regarding students' observations, after each writing activity was completed, students working in teams were asked to reflect and discuss what they have learned during the process, how they felt, what

they liked or disliked, and whether they had any suggestions for future projects. The teacher recorded their opinions in a Google Slide presentation that all students could access for future reference. The researcher collected all comments referencing written and audio feedback, giving and receiving feedback, collaboration and communication, and how it affected their individual and group work. They were classified into two categories, in favor or against.

At the end of the term, which corresponded to the end of a research cycle, a group of 6 students, randomly chosen, were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interviewees were asked to comment on their experiences working collaboratively and giving and receiving feedback. The interviews were performed in Spanish, so students could share their opinions fluently and confidently without the fear of making mistakes. Table 2 shows the reference questions students had to discuss during the interview. Questions 1 and 2 were used at the end of cycle 1; questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were subsequently included in the semi-structured interviews after the following cycles.

Table 2. Semi-structured interview questions used in every cycle of the action research project

Question	
Cycle 1	1 How did you feel during the writing activities?
	2 Do you prefer individual work or teamwork?
Cycle 2	3 What did you think of working with the same classmates over a complete module?
Cycle 3	4 How did you like giving and receiving feedback from your classmates?
Cycle 4	5 Do you prefer written or audio feedback?
	6 Did you like using audio feedback?

Data from the teacher's observations and students' responses and comments were analyzed, compared, and subjected to conclusions, a procedure called data triangulation. Data triangulation (Burns, 2005), referred to "multiple perspectives on the situation being studied (p. 163)," gave validity to the present study. This validity was also reinforced from another perspective, 'time triangulation', since the information was collected every cycle using three different methods. This triangulation strengthened the study results (Stern, 2014). In addition, it did not affect class activities but motivated students to reflect on their learning experience (Burns, 2005).

Results

The first results came from the teacher's observation notes in lesson plans or a notebook. The teacher's observation notes were categorized into positive, questions, and future ideas. Those notes referred to students' performance when working collaboratively, receiving feedback from the teacher and their peers, and giving written and audio feedback. The teacher's positive notes included adjectives or simple sentences. They were related to the teacher's perspective of how collaboration and the written and audio feedback impacted the process and final product of the writing activity. Some examples are presented:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| • <i>Great.</i> | • <i>As expected.</i> |
| • <i>Good.</i> | • <i>I like it.</i> |
| • <i>Nice.</i> | • <i>Do it again.</i> |
| • <i>Well done.</i> | • <i>Students like it.</i> |

The second group of notes, questions, was represented by complete questions, words, or question marks next to a specific task. They meant something had not worked as well as expected:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| • <i>Why did this activity fail?</i> | • <i>Motivation?</i> |
| • <i>Were my instructions unclear?</i> | • <i>Why?</i> |
| • <i>Again?</i> | • <i>Really?</i> |

Notes regarding future ideas were intended to introduce something new in the following research cycle. Some examples are:

- *Improve rubric.*
- *Add a new skill.*
- *Record only two minutes.*
- *Explain again.*
- *Create a lesson to support students.*

In all categories, notes could also be small paragraphs, such as, *Students are involved in the activity but need help performing it adequately. They require extra explanation or something else.*

These notes helped the researcher understand the evolution of the changes introduced to the writing activities and what she should pay more attention to (Burns, 2005). They resulted from her reflection on the teaching experience, where she compared what she planned and expected and how the activity developed. As Bradbury and Reason (2015) explained, AR's primary purpose is to add reflection to the action while the teacher tries to solve a problem in the classroom. Therefore, the process and the solution should produce knowledge that enriches the teaching experience and is practical (Bradbury & Reason, 2015). This new knowledge constituted the basis for the teacher/researcher to plan other changes in the collaborative writing strategy.

From the Google Slide presentations, students' opinions and reflections after completing a writing project about collaboration, communication, and oral and written feedback were selected and separated into two groups, in favor and against. From students' comments regarding collaboration and communication, it was possible to infer that the change was daunting because of their preferences. However, once they understood the purpose and adapted to the process, students enjoyed sharing their ideas, cooperating, and overcoming difficulties while solving problems, which was pointed out by Chen (2018). It was also identified what Barfield (2016) described as essential qualities of collaboration: meaningful negotiation, critical thinking, the ability to make decisions as a team, and being accountable for others' participation. As for meaningful negotiation, students of the present study had to give and concede ideas to reach a consensus. This led to analyzing the process and its result, a stage to giving and receiving feedback. Next,

they proceeded to review the feedback, compare it to their objectives, and decide on appropriate changes, which required high-order thinking skills, and to decide on the following steps. This critical analysis was also evident when students attended sessions unprepared, hindering the writing process and their classmates' learning, pushing each team member to ensure that everyone collaborated on the project.

Giving and receiving appropriate and timely feedback became the most relevant element of collaboration, communication, and peer assessment. It became evident that providing feedback would have been extremely difficult if students had not learned to work collaboratively first. The process improved since students received training and understood that they had to focus on improving their work (Oxford University Press, 2014; Saito, 2008) because the instructor provided principles to work collaboratively and to perform PA effectively. In addition, students emphasized that they preferred AF over written feedback because it allowed them to provide and receive better feedback. They had fluent interaction with their classmates and the teacher. AF produced better writing pieces, as Alharbi (2021) also found. This author also concluded that students "perceived audio feedback more efficiently than written feedback concerning sufficient details of feedback" (Alharbi, 2021, p. 1150), which participants from the present study mentioned, too. Furthermore, participants revealed they felt like they were conversing with their classmates (Kouklatzi, 2019; Pearson, 2021), which helped them feel more engaged in the synchronous and asynchronous activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Olesova et al. (2011) presented similar results. Participants in their study found AF to be "personal, interesting, and motivating when they participated in the online course" (Olesova et al., 2011, p. 39). During the mixed classes, AF became a supportive tool of this bond.

Students' opinions during the semi-structured interviews at the end of each term were also classified as in favor and against. As for the first question, students mentioned that, in general, they liked working collaboratively once they understood the process because everyone did their part. Kitjaroonchai and Suppasetseree (2021) suggested that this understanding could lead to creative ideas, make meaning of the process, and help students develop leadership. By contrast, students

felt nervous and under pressure because of the timing or when the writing activity was too long. Although some students felt satisfied with their learning and that the activities were helpful, they also mentioned disliking it when students did not attend classes or needed help knowing what to do. However, in general, they developed a positive attitude toward collaborative writing.

Regarding the interview's second question, most students describe working in CW as rewarding because they felt they learned more, especially when giving feedback to their classmates' and other groups' writing pieces. They also agreed that some teams worked more efficiently than others. In addition, some students mentioned that working in groups taught them to understand their classmates better, communicate patiently, and use those values even outside the classroom with friends and family members. In other words, this is a student-centered process where students concentrate on working and reflecting on their learning (Smith & MacGregor, 1993) and not only on what the teacher explains. Nevertheless, after the first cycle, students mentioned that working with different classmates in every class did not help them collaborate. Furthermore, a few students mentioned they preferred to work individually since not all their classmates were responsible, which led to a new change in the CW process.

Answers to the third question reflected a more positive attitude towards CW. Students mentioned they could develop some bonds with their classmates, which was helpful, especially during the last part of each project. As Widodo (2013) explained, students received "social support" (p. 200) when they committed to the CW process. On the other hand, some students said that not all group members seemed very committed to their work and did not read the teacher's feedback comments; thus, because they were unprepared, their work got affected, and it became difficult to work with some teammates. As a social act, Widodo (2013) clarified that students required time to get involved and embrace the goal of becoming better writers.

After the third cycle, question 4 was added, and the answers generally were cautiously in favor of giving and receiving feedback from their classmates. Students were quite clear that they found the task daunting at the beginning because they were not sure of what they had

to do. However, participants felt more confident after the teacher trained them to use the rubrics or checklists, and they could provide helpful and timely suggestions regarding language issues and redaction, meaning that students may not have noticed some mistakes, forcing them to “learn from one another” (Widodo, 2013, p. 202). That also helped them to analyze and reflect on their work and improve it. As Widodo (2013) pointed out, when involved in PA, students act as an audience who will develop a critical opinion of what they read, as it happens in real life. Participants also mentioned that giving feedback implied more responsibility but that some classmates sometimes forgot to provide timely feedback or that their comments were unclear. Despite those difficulties, participants clarified that they would continue that practice since they also received moral support from their classmates when they referred to their achievements, which motivated and helped them feel better, as Lu and Law (2011) highlighted.

Regarding the fifth and sixth questions, most students mentioned they liked AF better than written feedback, either to give or to receive it, especially after the teacher explained how to use the rubrics or checklists for assessment purposes and introduced them to give PA via AF. Students who had classes during the most rigorous period of the Covid-19 pandemic mentioned that listening to the recordings helped them identify their classmates and feel more connected to them and the teacher, which made their social presence relevant (Keane et al., 2019; Kouklatzki, 2019). Olesova et al. (2011) reported that this presence and the quality of the instructional and constructive feedback they received make AF essential for learning, as was also revealed in the present study. Those who transitioned from online to onsite classes emphasized that they liked practicing their listening and felt free to record their voices because their grammar was not evaluated. Participants also mentioned that discussing the content of the recordings with their teammates added to their knowledge because that helped them better understand how they had to improve their work; from this perspective, it is possible to understand the value of PA as a formative assessment. Finally, they all agreed that using AF with their Google Docs and Google Slides assignments was easy to achieve.

Conclusions

This action research study has revealed that the participants preferred working collaboratively in teams in writing projects, where they can produce better products once they understand the process well. During the writing process, they appreciated learning from their classmates, exchanging opinions, and receiving feedback to improve their writing pieces. This information is a good reference point for EFL teachers to design manageable writing projects where students can collaborate and develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Once students learn to work as a team, their feedback was more productive, making the writing more fruitful. AF produced better results, and provided more opportunities for teachers and students to create a sense of community and make their sense of presence more evident during the online and asynchronous activities. The frequency of the data collection provided the teacher/researcher with enough information to design each new cycle and a comprehensive view of how the problem evolved until finding an appropriate solution.

One limitation of this project was its length, which could be discouraging for other practitioners who want to do action research to find appropriate solutions for issues happening in their classes. However, this is also a strength since the new changes introduced after each cycle may produce better results. As presented in this research, the first change was using the Google Docs features to give and receive feedback; the following was introducing AF; the final one was training students to give and receive feedback. Therefore, teachers/researchers can decide how many cycles they need to perform until they and their students feel satisfied with the results.

This researcher understands that there are other aspects of CW and giving and receiving AF that require to be studied, such as the reshuffling frequency of the teams, team roles, types of training provided to the students, rubric design, and more. As a result, the present study could be the basis for other AR projects, especially in Bolivia and Latin America.

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Professional Development

Redefining Digital Pedagogies During Confinement: A Shifting Perspective Through Critical Participatory Action Research

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Abstract

This chapter presents an online learning action-research study conducted with doctoral students in educational technology and second language acquisition. The study aimed to redefine the effectiveness of digital pedagogies during confinement, utilizing various digital technologies to enhance student empowerment and engagement. The study employed the Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy framework (Liontas, 2021), focusing on Discursive Spaces, Digital Storytelling with a Twist, Language Teacher Identity, Theoretical-Practical Knowledge Constructs, and Communities of Practice. These precepts were explored to support pre-service and in-service teachers, promote curriculum development, and foster identity development in online settings.

Keywords: Digital Learning; Pedagogical Innovations; Confinement; Action Research; Identity Development

Introduction

This much is still true today. The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc around the world both literally and figuratively. Tens of millions of people in every corner of the world got sick, millions died. Businesses shuttered, schools closed, mental health and wellbeing declined to levels so low, alarm bells went off every corner you turned. Six feet apart and social distancing dominated the news cycle daily. On the radio. On the television. On the internet. Footsteps signs led the way. This way. That way. Masking all the way. No U-turns allowed. Obey or "Hit the road, Jack!"

Almost overnight, instruction had to transition from in-person learning to online learning. School curricula had to be reconceptualized, syllabi rewritten, technology repurposed. Many questions were asked. Few answers given. And yet, new lines of communication had to be redrawn, delivery of instruction reimagined, digital pedagogies during confinement redefined. The rest is history, or so they say.

This chapter presents insights acquired through efforts to redefine the effectiveness of digital pedagogies employed during confinement. Situated within an online learning action-research study with doctoral students specializing in educational technology and second language acquisition, the chapter illustrates the productive application of digital technologies to enrich student empowerment and engagement. The Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy (Liontas, 2021) were employed as the study's organizational scaffold: Discursive Spaces, Digital Storytelling with a Twist, Language Teacher Identity, Theoretical-Practical Knowledge Constructs, and Communities of Practice. These five precepts were explored anew for the benefit of pre-service and in-service teachers alike. To this end, the chapter puts forward a line of arguments that favor the judicious utilization of those precepts as research exemplars. Following a brief literature review, it then appraises the study's purpose, process, and findings. Those pertaining to Digital Storytelling with a Twist (DS+) are highlighted and instructor-student samples are contextualized within the constraints of the online curricular structure which impacted identity development and agency assertion. Pedagogical implications and new lines of research conclude the exposition of the study's *modus operandi*, that is, to redefine the efficacy of digital pedagogies employed during confinement for the benefit of everyone involved in higher education.

Literature Review

Limited literature exists on doctoral students' perceptions in the fields of educational technology (ET) and second language acquisition (SLA). However, their beliefs and practices will inevitably impact teacher education and research, particularly in relation to digital technologies. Digital pedagogy in second or foreign language teacher education is expanding, with diverse perspectives and research emphasizing the influence of digital technology (Balaman, 2023; Burns et al., 2023; Carlson & Serrano, 2023; Ene, 2023; Li, 2023; Liontas, 2020, 2023a, 2023b; Meniado, 2023). The significance of digital technology on language teacher education is supported by theoretical frameworks on Language Teach-

er Identity (LTI) development and dialogic discourse (Lontas, 2021). Research with second/foreign language learners and participants from diverse backgrounds further strengthens this support (Farrell, 2011; Martinez, 2017). Researchers have explored LTI in digital storytelling studies, investigating social, gender, ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic issues. Topics examined include social and racial inequality or injustice (Gachago et al., 2014; van Galen, 2017) and teacher attrition and resilience (Ng & Nicholas, 2015). Notably, Community of Practice Theory (CoP; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) is an established framework in research and digital practice, facilitating teacher education (Breen, 2015) and promoting community among language teachers via Twitter (Lord & Lomicka, 2014), collaboration (Patton & Parker, 2017), and online professional development (Moodley, 2019). Studies have explored the sustainability of CoP through multimedia technology in pre-service teachers' development (Chigona, 2013) and multiliteracies and online discussions (Cumming-Potvin & Sanford, 2015). CoP has been used in online courses to encourage online discussion and digital storytelling (Lontas, 2020, 2021; Lontas & Mannion, 2021; Mannion & Lontas, 2022).

Method

Under the guiding principles of critical participatory action research (CPAR), course participants and instructor endeavored to solve two overarching research questions:

1. How do we create viable research with digital technologies centered on our own online lived experiences?
2. In what ways specifically could we reconceptualize and redefine the efficacy of digital pedagogies to create a cohesive community of learners?

The pedagogical process we envisioned centered around the creation and co-creation of knowledge constructs and meaning-making processes in the realm of *digital pedagogy* (from Greek παιδαγωγική, pedagogy “the

science of teaching"). We recognized the crucial role played by digital technologies and multimedia resources in second/foreign language instruction, making them the desired learning outcome of our research. To align with our shared principles of *exploration*, *discovery*, and *creation* of epistemological knowledge, we systematically integrated these principles into our CPAR model. This model comprises three stages and ten sequential research steps:

Stage 1—Planning for Research and Problem Solving: Diagnosing the problem, generating alternatives, and designing action plan.

Stage 2—Implementing Actions and Assessing Results: Implementing action plan, collecting and analyzing data, and dialoguing about process.

Stage 3—Evaluating and Reflecting on Results: Evaluating outcomes, reflecting on results, deciding on next steps, and communicating results to stakeholders.

Stage 1 laid the foundation for Stage 2, which in turn prepared the ground for Stage 3. The personal actions and insights from these stages were integrated into participants' self-designed digital stories.

Context and Participants

The CPAR took place in a six-week summer doctoral seminar during confinement. It involved 11 (1 male, 10 female) doctoral students (3 from the United States, 3 from Saudi Arabia, 2 from Egypt, and 1 each from Indonesia, Spain, and Venezuela) studying Second Language Acquisition and Technology in Education (SLATE), with six of them working as teachers. Meeting online for eight hours per week, they applied the CoP framework to address workplace challenges in digital pedagogy through qualitative and reflective methods. Participants (hereafter *research-practitioners*) devised their own research-driven applications and continuously revised their plans based on outcomes (Xu, 2017). In order to safeguard their privacy, individuals are denoted here with numbers (RP1, RP2, RP3, ... RP11) instead of using names. Participation was

voluntary and had no impact on course grades or remuneration.

The Rationale

To provide context for the CPAR conducted during confinement, the course "FLE 7700: Applications of Technology to SLA and FL Education" included various course devices and purposes. These devices consisted of the syllabus, online posts, and DS+ projects, which were used to monitor student learning. The syllabus contained important information about the course, while online posts (Introductions, Weekly Blog Posts, and End-of-Course Reflections) were conducted on the

Table 1. Digital Storytelling with a Twist (DS+)

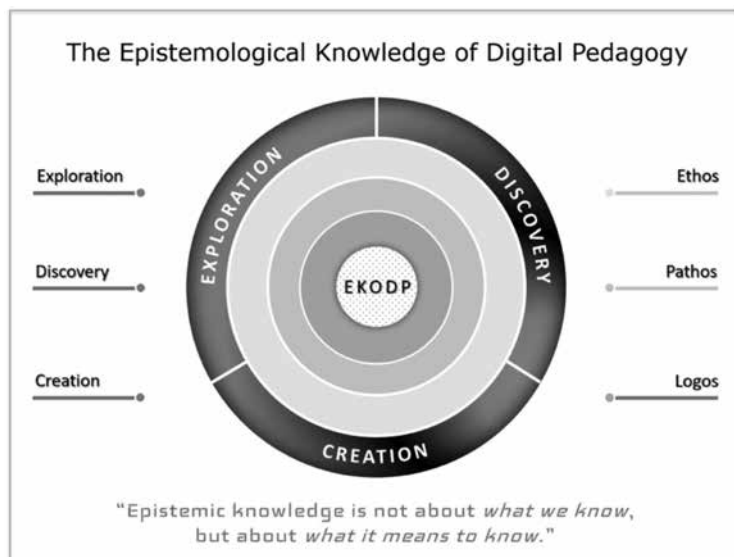
DS+
Goal and Objectives
The goal is to create an 8-10 minute digital story demonstrating the impact of CALL/MALL technologies on SL/FL education. Use a narrative style and include various print/digital materials and tools like audio/video recordings, music, animations, graphics, photographs, texts, and pictures. Treat the story as a targeted academic commercial for teacher professional development events.
Instructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create an 8-10 minute digital story using the CDDC process.- Form groups of 3-5 members and choose technology suitable for K-12 professional development.- Plan and deliver a full-day summer workshop on digital pedagogy for K-12 language teachers.- Showcase your DS+ creation as a piece that actively demonstrates the potential of professional development workshops for in-service and pre-service teachers.- Base your DS+ on research-driven findings and relevant digital pedagogies.- Include narration, graphics, transitions, music, animations, and interactive features.- Incorporate the ART of Persuasion and rhetorical appeals (Ethos, Pathos, Logos).- Emphasize Kairos, Decorum, and Telos in your proposed actions.- Prioritize knowledge-seeking before appeals to credibility, emotion, or logic.- Ensure your digital pedagogies align with truth, reality, and practicability.

university's learning management system (LMS), *Canvas*, for discussions. The DS+ projects focused on participants' conceptions, values, beliefs, and theories of computer-assisted and mobile-device assisted language learning (CALL/MALL) practices. The process of creating DS+ projects followed the *Conception-Design-Development-Completion* (CDDC) approach, which was explained in 18 bulleted points, with more details available in Liontas (2020). Table 1 provides a summary of these details for convenience.

The Pedagogy

An epistemological approach based on egalitarian dialogic learning principles (i.e., reason, discussion, argument, questioning, explanation) guided the procedures. Research-practitioners created spaces for agency and critique, fostering a sense of belonging and community (Breen, 2015; Clarke, 2008; Mercieca, 2017; Meniado, 2023). They explored and selected innovative digital technologies for language education based on reflective examination of research. Their analysis and critique focused on FL/ESL learning tools within a 3,000-word limit. Thematic sections and a technology list guided the Exploration phase of their epistemological knowledge inquiry (Phase 1), covering various topics related to technology in language education. Research-practitioners engaged in problem-posing participatory praxis, shared reflection, and action to raise critical consciousness. They presented their analysis and critique of technologies in a 10-minute oral presentation, representing the Discovery phase of their epistemological knowledge inquiry (Phase 2). Thereafter, research-practitioners discussed DS+ projects with authenticity and digital etiquette, respecting diverse perspectives and assigning design roles. Teams showcased collective agency in 8-10 minute informercials/containments, employing the canons of rhetoric and the appeals of Ethos (ἦθος credibility, disposition, or character of authors), Pathos (πάθος, emotion or passion), and Logos (λόγος, argument or discourse, the use of logic to persuade the audience). Action research assessed the effectiveness of chosen digital technologies for language learning. CPAR methodology was integrated throughout

Figure 1. The Epistemological Knowledge of Digital Pedagogy



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the CDDC progression, with the Creation phase (Phase 3) in the Epistemological Knowledge of Digital Pedagogy (EKODP) framework (Lontas, 2020, 2021; Mannion & Lontas, 2022). Figure 1 visually represents the EKODP framework.

Data Collection and Thematic Analysis

To gather participant insights and beliefs (Yin, 2014), three types of data were collected: (1) asynchronous online discussions and peer responses (251 posts or 56,471 words), including introductory student-made videos and weekly synchronous chat postings (over 300 messages or 1,800+ words) in the course's LMS, (2) critical analysis reports on edtech tools/apps (30,000+ words), and (3) a DS+ project. The data exceeded 204 printed pages (excluding spoken words in presentations, videos, and dialogues). The collected data underwent a thematic

analysis to ensure triangulation (Guest et al., 2012). This analysis yielded 220 lexemic entries organized into categorical themes for efficient analysis (Plešec Gasparič & Pečar, 2016). The entries capture the thoughts, ideas, emotions, and professional dispositions of the three domestic and eight international research-practitioners regarding digital pedagogies during confinement, offering valuable material for analysis and interpretation. The collected data underwent thematic analysis using descriptive (What happened?), diagnostic (Why did it happen?), predictive (What is likely to happen in the future?), and prescriptive analytics (What is the best course of action to take?). Iterative discussions, readings, and notations were conducted to identify similarities, differences, and relationships among thematic groupings and data patterns. Hermeneutic analysis, drawing from the works of Heidegger (1962), Gadamer (1975), and Schön (1983), was applied to uncover deep understandings and interpretations of the produced meanings. Interpretations were analyzed and redefined within the Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy framework (Liontas, 2020, 2021), utilizing hermeneutic phenomenology.

The Discoveries

Hermeneutic phenomenology unveiled valuable insights into research-practitioners' experiences, beliefs, perspectives, and identities in digital pedagogy and language education. These "discoveries" contribute to identity formation, critical reflection, professional practice, and the development of theories, methods, values, and beliefs. Discursive digital learning analysis highlights EKODP insights such as "innovation," "awareness," and "immersive learning." Excerpts exemplify consistent digital technology use:

RP8: Without advances in technology, none of the above would have been possible. Technology is here to stay. If we take the time to listen and reflect upon the current state of academia and care about its future, then we will learn from what has worked, from what has not worked, propose alternative and innovative solutions as needed, and ultimately strive to make it better. We will continue to evolve. This cannot be accomplished without intentional reflection.

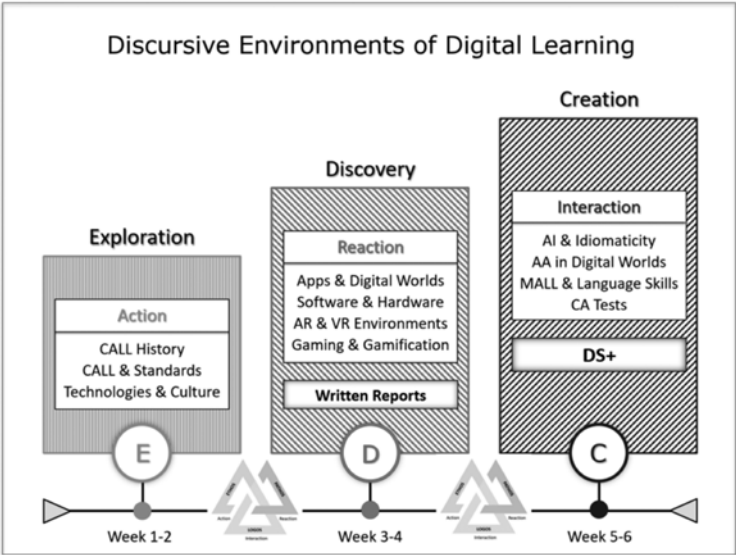
RP7: The role of technology is essential these days, and most language students have at least one part of their instruction/learning journey facilitated through it. The future is now, and technology is absolutely one big part of the accessibility in language learning that users have today.

RP2: [T]echnology has become a central part of our daily life. People use technology to share their thoughts through social media and they use mobile applications to socialize and stay in contact with other people. The influence of technology has expanded from socializing into a prominent learning tool in academia, research, and business.

RP1: I believe that with the evolution of technology in classrooms, educational capabilities are growing and changing. A lot of resources are now easily available to both teachers and students through a click of the mouse. With these new advances come new responsibilities to teachers and therefore increase the value of learning design and technology in education.

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Figure 2. Discursive Environments of Digital Learning



It bears repeating that the course was intentionally structured into three stages (The Past, The Present, The Future) to support the learning cycle of digital pedagogy. The discursive interactions on theoretical-practical knowledge constructs and digital technologies can significantly transfigure the evolving nature of LTI (Figure 2).

Teacher identities thrive in reflective and professional learning environments. Discursive digital learning is vital for capturing perceptions and addressing real-life challenges. Effective digital pedagogy involves dialogue, digital skills, strategies, and processes. Optimal outcomes come from "reimagining," "co-constructing," "exploring," and "experiencing" learning. Here are four research-practitioners voices:

RP6: As Lontas (2020) pointed out in the *New Media Technologies 3* presentation, shifting instruction from teacher-centered to a new student-centered format, the incorporation of new strategies, the reimagining of our designs to include multisensory stimulation, multipath progression, and the use of multimedia-rich inquiry-based, collaborative learning are key points to take into consideration... learning that fits this description is co-constructed to build digital literacy that strives to meet the future needs of modern-day citizens.

RP6: Digital literacy is not about the truth of technology; it is as Lontas (2020) describes in *Tomorrow's Digital Literacies Today*, about '*Decoding, Meaning-making, Using, Analysis, and Persona*' (Slide 9). Positive exploration experiences into these categories are as important as understanding specific technologies. As Life-Tech advances, it will be perspective, growth mindset, critical thinking skills, and analyzation alongside affective strategies and life-hacks learned in previous tech experiences that inform thoughts and actions.

RP9: I believe digital literacy is the trend now... it is not just about technology but more about meaning-making, analyzing, and understanding how specific technologies work, how each piece serves our purpose in educating our students, and getting them engaged in the learning process.

RP10: Internet = fire hydrant. I absolutely love this analogy... that makes us educators the fire hose and the myriad of information we must sift through is the fire...perhaps. :o)

RP7: As some of my classmates and our dear professor Dr. Liontas states in class and in his PowerPoint (NMT1), getting information from the internet is in fact like taking a drink from a fire hydrant (Mitchell Kapor). What does this mean for us, educators, and learners? That we must be cautious, selecting materials effectively, and most importantly, that we need to be critical with all the information that is out there.

Frequently mentioned digital technologies included *Google Docs*, *Google Sheets*, *Google Slides*, *Google Sites*, *FlipGrid*, *Kahoot!*, *Padlet*, *Quizalize*, *Quizizz*, and *Quizlet*. Additionally, Short Message Service/Social Media sites and web-based social networking services (e.g., *Facebook Messenger*, *Google Voice*, *iMessage*, *Instagram*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Pinterest*, *Skype*, *Snapchat*, *Twitter*, *WeChat*, *WhatsApp*, *Zoom*), career/employment-oriented social networking services (e.g., *LinkedIn*, *Monster.com*), video sharing sites (e.g., *Vimeo*, *TikTok*, *YouTube*), and blog sites or open-source content management systems (e.g., *Blogger*, *WordPress*) were commonly used. Here are three illustrative remarks underscoring the significance of fostering novel digital learning environments within language learning classrooms:

RP8: Some of the most gratifying digital experiences are those that encourage learner autonomy, exploration, creativity, critical thinking skills, and diverse modes of learning. Minecraft is a great example.

RPg: I found fun educational games are essential in the language classroom. Considering learners' styles, I find gaming is one of the most [viable] approaches that could fit all learners' styles. As Liontas (2018) mentioned, the game has to be well constructed and meet the primary components covering the developmental framework of a well-designed [game]. *Jeopardy* is a useful game to teach vocabulary. *Kahoot* was always fun to play, and what I love about *Kahoot* is that it is easy to alternate when it is not accessible to every student.

RP1: I played *Scrabble* a lot when I was learning English. I found it effective to improve my vocabulary list and there are many decent online scrabble applications available for free. Additionally, I used *Quizlet* and *Kahoot* several times, and I think they are great tools for reviewing or quizzes.

Beliefs in the benefits of "gaming," "gamification," and "emerging virtual technologies" in language learning emphasized "engagement," "connectivity," "collaboration," "socialization," "multimodality," "interactivity," and "investment." The following are six statements made by five research-practitioners, highlighting their beliefs and perspectives:

RP1: Lontas (2018), said it best, 'Games that are adaptable to any content, learner level, or age can easily accommodate multiple learning styles and lend strong support to developing students' motivation, attitudes, intelligence skills, and intellectual development' (p. 3). I agree that the power of gaming in language learning enables educators to accommodate different learning strategies as well as the three main learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, which improve students' engagement.

RP8: Gaming can be very effective in connecting and reaching students through multimodal opportunities that incorporate all learning modalities—audio, visual, reading/writing, and kinesthetic.

RP8: Gamification encourages collaboration and socialization. Working with others promotes a community of learning where ideas are shared and students learn from one another.

P7: Gamification is inevitably increasing and has quickly become one of the tools of choice in many instructional settings, therefore, neglecting it or not reinforcing its use would be a mistake.

RP2: I personally tried Augmented Reality tools called 'Metaverse' for teaching the English language as a second language. AR affords the designer the ability to bring together text, images, sound, animations, simulations, computer games, and video in a highly interactive way.

RP6: In my professional career and even in higher education, I regularly see educators who are simply unwilling, unmotivated, or just too lazy to take it upon themselves to discover new technology, learn it, and utilize it in their classrooms. We are currently in the middle of a cultural and technological shift where there are still educators in the classroom, leading teacher training programs, and making impactful curriculum changes, that don't connect them-

selves to readily available educational technologies even though it would save them time and are emerging as a norm in their field. The quickly advancing realm of CALL/MALL/RR/AR/VR/MR/XR technology more than justifies the investment in 'harnessing the power of gaming in language education.' Technology isn't going anywhere.

Emerging technologies and gamification tools, combined with culture and social interaction, enhance purposeful engagement, leading to collaborative exploration and critical reflection. This enriches learning experiences by incorporating multiple dimensions (Davidson & Coombe; 2023; Dooly, 2023; Gu & Benson, 2015; Lam et al., 2023; Lontas, 2020, 2023a, 2023b). Verbal and non-verbal communication shape *self-presentation* (perception of image) and *self-completion* (display of the ideal self), influenced by discursive spaces. Egalitarian dialogic learning affirms individual cognitions and beliefs, fostering a bias-free sense of self. This process influences *self-evaluation* and how others perceive an individual in various contexts. The research-practitioners' *self-concept*, including *self-image*, *self-esteem*, and *ideal self*, is not fixed but evolves through the introduction of new knowledge systems in discursive digital learning environments. This aligns with Martel's (2015) view that identity negotiation and pedagogical progress are fluid and dynamic (see also Lontas, 2020, 2021). How research-practitioners perceive themselves directly influences personal growth and professional progress. The conceptions and expectations others hold of their professional selves, both real and perceived, play a significant role in their development. Emotions invested in critical self-reflection and assumed responsibilities as *digital pedagogues* contribute to growth, even if unplanned. Significant reflections, thoughts, and interpretations from 35 submitted postings were identified in the analysis of End-of-Course Reflections, indicating the influence of emotions on the development and transformation of personal and professional identities (Song, 2016). It is important to note that the *Week 6 Poem Blog* served as the final discussion blog for the research-practitioners. The prompt for the blog, consisting of 477 words, is excluded here due to space constraints, but the instructor's poem, "Without a Story," is available in the Appendix:

RP6: The poem *Without a Story*, by John Liontas, is the second poetic piece we have seen from this author, poet, artist, and all-around renaissance man. It is a story about the absence of a story which in essence is the recognition of every story. It begins with the lines, 'Without a story, the world's a stage fast asleep, dreaming of tomorrow, of dreams to come, a lonely place sans players, sans costumes, sans acts to play, sans songs to sing.' From there stanzas broken by the line 'Without a story...' and detail an extensive list of metaphors for unfulfillment, unsatisfaction, and unacted statuses to detail a world without a story. This world without a story is one of a vessel gone undecorated by the valor of history, actions let undone by life, the infinite potential of the universe left to lie in wait. The author involves us all in this deep dive into the depths of life as all the color drains and we must recognize that without stories we ourselves do not exist, are broken, forgotten, and lost. There is also a call to action, to the cherishing of a legendary eternal fire smoldering in the ashes that can set us free from the heels of the past and on to a future of twists, turns, ups, downs, zigs, and zags. In a Carol-esque fashion, Liontas has taken us down a rabbit hole and into a world detailed and heady enough for Dickens to feel at home. The prisoner, the feeble whisper, and the forlorn lost child of glory dying alone on their vines; the metaphors describing the digital storytelling plus vision are painted with words of giant icicles melting in the desert. Dali would be proud. The final line is one of hope, hope that now is the time, hope for the new, hope that fate may have damned stories in the past but that they are still there to be seized, explored, written, and rewritten by the brave.

RP10: I looked at each slide while listening to calm reggae music. As I looked at the images, I was inspired to write some lines of my own as a representation of my interpretation of the poem....

rocketing through space and time, we create
our world
with the energy in our minds,
we keep our fingers on the pulse of the times, which happens
to be made up of binary code and fluctuating vivid color - for
now
time
space
speed
what are we here for?
we are here to create the future,

to paint the landscape of our children, brightly
we all have a story to tell,
to contribute to the intricate tapestry we co-weave

The underlying theme of 'Without a Story' is that we construct our own realities and engage with these narratives in order to then construct our own 'future.' One of the standard misconceptions of history is that it is the study of facts and events; rather, it is the union of scientific endeavor with myth and legend that is continuously reinterpreted and embellished upon using a lens of modernity. These narratives, collective 'stories' of humanity, influence future perspectives and realities. In short, in studying history, we craft history. These same principles can be extended to our conception of the future: as with the past, the future is not written in stone. We have to actively engage with it in order for it to become reality.

RP7: Without a story aid[s] us in remembering why we are taking this course, why we are pursuing this PhD and what is the role of personal identity, individuality, context and background knowledge in our field. Probably all of us in the class will have a different interpretation of this poem and its hidden meaning, ... this reminded me of how essential is for us to have the ability to use language to shape our worlds... This course [helped] us see many different aspects of language learning and teaching, how technology can be a second language learner's best friend, why is it important to be critical and discern what works and what doesn't, why do we stand as 'experts' in the field and where we are going to be in 20 years from now in regard to technology use in the classroom... and a multitude of other interesting points. We have been able to see the past, present and future of CALL in FL/L2 teaching, and now, with all that knowledge, it is our job to make the best out of it, as educators, as learners, as storytellers. Our story depends on each one of us and it is important to make sure it is one worth sharing! I think this poem is an excellent ending for an excellent class, thank you Dr. Lontas and thanks to all my classmates as well for making this class so wonderful.

RP8: "Without a Story" begins with vibrant images that remind me of the Big Bang Theory. No, not the television show, but the theory on how the universe began:) Similar to the Big Bang is the evolution of technology throughout the years, the fact that technology continues to expand, and its enduring effects on SL and FL instruction. There is still so much about technology that is

unknown and yet to be explored. "Without a story" highlights the importance of giving life to our experiences by providing a cogent narrative. Storytelling dates back to cave drawings, the Egyptian hieroglyphs, and oral traditions where stories have been passed down from generation to generation through spoken language. Stories are used to communicate an experience and hopefully to understand and learn from them. This class has taught us how to incorporate ethos, pathos, and logos in our own storytelling. Storytelling is an art, something that we do naturally, and when done well has the potential to enact change. Storytelling is powerful. As an educator, I am constantly thinking of ways to reach my students. My students may not remember everything I tell [them], but if I frame it in a story, the likelihood that they will recall it increases... This is why I write my story... a story filled with resilience, love, and hope for a better future.

Research-practitioners' identities as doctoral candidates in SLATE transform rapidly. The CPAR study showcases the evolution of their teacher identities and self-perceptions as English language learners through the development of new understandings of agency in interaction with others (Peercy, 2012; Yazan, 2017; Liontas, 2023a, 2023b). As conveyed by RP3,

The poet is telling us about his story of storytelling. Without a story, who are we, actually? Our stories begin even before we were born. In our stories timeline, there is a point where we start writing our own story. As teachers who deal with students and technology in this ever expanding and advancing space, it is important to not just adapt to the changes, but to innovate as well. The poet expressed that without the art of storytelling, we are just physical objects devoid of any meaning or purpose. As we reflect on our journeys, we learn, we grow, we mature, and we write our next chapter. So what does that mean to me as someone who is a [SLATE] advocate? It means that I need to write my own story for myself, my colleagues, and my students. My story has to be both inspiring and intriguing so that my readers are engaged and encouraged to learn and advance. In other words, my story should give my students an incentive to carry on and when I pass the torch. Much like a relay race, What I know, learn, and develop should be transferred to my students. In turn, they need to transfer what they learned and innovate and transfer that to the next generation. It is a never-ending relay race.

RP5 stressed the poem's plea for equal educational opportunities for all learners:

The poem is a reaffirmation of the needs laid out by second/foreign language organizations. There is a stress on the importance of cultural identity and inclusion as we move forward in our profession, as well the need to provide equal opportunities to all learners. To be able to do so, instructors must be aware of the personal stories of their learners so that the instruction is personalized and conscious enough about their individual differences and needs. Knowing our learners allows us to deliver instruction that is relevant, pertinent, interesting, and respectful of the spectrum of learners in the language classroom. This will intrinsically lead to increased motivation and better students' performance when learning a second language.

Echoing this interpretation, RP7 contributed the following viewpoint:

I agree with you that Dr. Liontas' beautiful poem is a reaffirmation of the significance of a story. As language instructors, it is imperative for us to understand our students' stories so that we can connect our instruction with their learning needs relevantly and meaningfully. Additionally, we may utilize storytelling purposefully as a powerful means of instruction to teach and inspire our students. By sharing a story, we expect our students to interpret and make sense of our ideas, and through the shared understanding, we hope to understand everything better.

Yet another research-practitioner (RP11) highlighted "shared understanding," underscoring the value of "shared experiences" and the integration of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in meaning-making across three distinct responses to others:

Sharing stories is greatly valuable for both the storytellers and listeners. In order for storytelling to be sound and compelling for the listeners, teachers should not forget to integrate the essential elements of a great story which involves *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. By sharing great stories, we hope to understand human experiences and find ways to relate to and connect with one another because after all, we are all storytellers.

In my opinion, being well-connected through shared experiences with students is essential for the success of any instruction, and that may be built on sharing great stories.

A story is an indispensable part of any human's life. It is an authentic tool of meaning-making in which human beings try to understand and make sense of the self, life events, experiences, viewpoints, and the like. A good story connects people and ideas through cultural and historical values that it conveys. Those values are imperative for SL/FL education since learners' histories and cultures are strong resources that students bring to the learning processes. By utilizing the students' resources... learning experiences are... more relevant and meaningful to them.

Analyzing the language used by doctoral research-practitioners when sharing DS+ projects online during their final reflection reveals the impact of collaboration on their positioning within "communities of practice," suggesting a shift in their perceptions and roles (Clarke, 2008; Wenger, 1998). One research-practitioner described this experience as a "wonderful journey" within a CoP:

It has been a wonderful journey learning with you, sharing opinions and ideas. I love your interpretation that 'Without language, we are voiceless. Language allows us to live, to share, to express, to feel and to build our world.' Someone once said, 'The difference between messing around and Science is writing it down.' Language permeates all things. I feel fortunate to be in this field with you all as my colleagues. I am excited to see what comes from us.

Another research-practitioner expressed her belief in making a difference through her six-week learning experience so:

The poem *Without a Story* by John Lioy is an inspiring journey... The poem opens an interesting historical and cultural window for us as students, storytellers, and teachers to think about our journey and how to make a difference and use tech tools for the world language classroom. This course [helps us] understand that technology is just a tool and we should use it 'with a purpose, for a purpose' to improve teaching outcomes and increase student achievement. The application of technology allows the teach-

er to be creative in delivering content knowledge and allows the students to learn via fun and accessible methods whenever they need it.

Digital storytelling emerged as a recurring theme in dialogic exchanges and online discussions, showcasing its purposeful application as a “rewarding resource,” an “effective method,” and a “powerful communication technique that forges connections among people.” Here are three statements orally expressed by three different research-practitioners:

The use of digital storytelling software is a rewarding resource to enhance the purpose and foundation of a well-engrained, culturally-responsible instruction for second language learners. Some stories might be difficult to disclose for our learners but they are still ‘a story worth sharing, a story worth living, one story at a time’ (taken from Dr. Liontas’ poem). The use of technology and student-centered instruction allows for these stories to be heard, acknowledged, and respected to form some common ground of cultural understanding in the language classroom.

Telling stories using digital tools may become an effective method for SL/FL instruction. It is undisputed that in this digital age, technology has undergone unprecedented rapid changes. However, the technological advances will not improve our instruction unless we use them thoughtfully and purposefully for our instructional purposes to motivate and engage our students like in the digital storytelling. Teachers should leverage technology’s great potential for instructional purposes to make learning more relevant to students who are digital natives. By doing so, teaching and learning activities are hoped to make more sense in today’s technologically advancing world.

While I was reading the poem, I remembered a quote that I once read but do not remember by who, ‘Those who tell the stories rule the world.’ Storytelling has a great power of capturing people’s attention, helping understand a particular concept, aiding memories, and eliciting emotions. As a teacher, I believe that storytelling is a skill that must be developed and used as an effective tool that has the ability to shape students’ perception, thoughts, characters and mold their memories like no other form of communication. Storytelling does provide both educational benefits and psychological benefits to learners/listeners. Language teachers with

good storytelling skills can inspire, influence, and teach students culture, history, and essential values that unite people from different parts of the world. I use storytelling to bond with my students because storytelling is a powerful communication technique that forges connections among people.

Research-practitioners experienced a transformative shift in learning practices and roles, requiring a reconsideration of contextual factors and DS+ project design. They encountered challenges with evolving ideologies, beliefs, perceptions, and limited digital skills, leading to a sense of starting anew. One research-practitioner described this experience as an "evolution witnessed" inspired by the instructor's poem, *Without a Story*:

One more thing I wanted to reflect on is the evolution we witnessed. In this era, we live in, painters don't need a brush to express their ideas, actors don't necessarily need a stage to have their voice heard. With technology, everything changed except the need to have a story and to have a vision!

The dialogic interactions of theoretical-practical knowledge constructs in DS+ creations, aligned with the Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy (Liontas, 2021), led to identity negotiation and a deepened understanding of the ever-evolving nature of learning, technology, and instruction. Research-practitioners reflected on their constructions and reconstructions of identity, embracing personal "agency," "investment," and "commitment." They expressed the transformative power of storytelling and the limitless potential it holds (Beijaard et al., 2004). The "investments made" in creative epistemic knowledge and digital tasks/projects have a significant impact on the self-perception of research-practitioners and shape the nature of discourse mediation in online communities of practice (Liontas & Mannion, 2021; Mannion & Liontas, 2022). These investments also affect the competence and adoption of new digital practices within the community (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The return on investment includes collaborations with various parties, such as educators, instructional designers, and administrators, forming a network for future progress. RP3 summarized his position, stating,

Now that things have changed (for the better hopefully), I am now able to engage different parties with what I believe would lead to great instruction and learning experience. First off, it should give learners a considerable degree of freedom of what they study based on their needs and interests. The old 'one size fits all' notion of education does not work anymore. It, as a matter of fact, never worked. Second, the teacher would play more of a facilitator role and act as an agent of success, rather than an arbiter who would just rely on benchmark numbers to measure students' success. Finally, a network of educators, instructional designers and administrators also need to get involved in the process. By working together throughout the academic year, they make sure that all elements of successful CALL instruction are met, and are able to overcome any challenge that may arise as the year progresses.

The 5C's of Epistemological Knowledge Creation (*creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, community, communication*) are inherent in the CDDC process of DS+ projects, fostering pedagogical implications. Identity development and negotiation are cultivated through increased agency assertion in online settings with advanced digital practices. As one research-practitioner eloquently stated, "Without a story, no one hears my voice, shares my excitement, or feels my pain. Without a story I am left by the wayside, pushed aside, forgotten."

Discussion

The 11 doctoral students aimed to establish an online CoP while improving their technological competence. The CPAR approach prioritized ongoing learning and reflection to enhance digital practice. The research-practitioners' philosophical assumptions about digital pedagogy demonstrated their growth and understanding, examined through peer dialogues and data analysis. Their evolving assumptions shaped the theoretical frameworks employed in data analysis (Carr, 2007; Fox & Green, 2007; Meraz et al., 2019).

The foundational elements of research design—reality (ontological), knowledge (epistemological), values (axiological), and methods (methodological)—shape planning, reflection, and action. They guide

research initiation and advanced thinking in specific fields or schools of thought (Heikkinen et al., 2007; Lofthouse et al., 2016). Assumptions in specialization fuel reflective thinking and foster new ideas in digital technologies. *Reflective thinking* creates awareness of one's knowledge and experiences, while *reflexive thinking* deepens epistemological understanding. Reflexive thinking involves self-critical reflection on oneself as a "researcher." This transition is facilitated through discursive exchanges, driving the research process to new levels of analysis and reinterpretation.

Transitioning from *reflective thinking* to *reflexive thinking* avoids flawed expectations and rigid thought models in research judgments. It ensures validation of information "explored" (i.e., epistemological knowledge of concepts, ideas, frameworks, models, and theories closely associated with digital technology use), "discovered" (i.e., epistemological knowledge of how various digital tools, equipment, and peripherals can be used productively in education and training to accelerate development and acquisition of a second or foreign language), and "created" (i.e., epistemological knowledge of self-selecting the tools and resources that best exemplify *creativity*, *critical thinking*, *collaboration*, *community*, and *communication*) in digital pedagogy—the core of the EKODP framework (Liontas, 2020, 2021). Epistemology (ἐπιστήμη *epistēmē*), derived from the Greek words for knowledge (ἐπιστήμη *epistēmē*) and study (λόγος *logos*), focuses on understanding what it means to know, rather than solely on knowledge itself, what we know.

In digital pedagogy, the dimensions of Exploration, Discovery, and Creation (Figure 1) intersect with rhetorical appeals (Ethos, Pathos, Logos). The *axiology* of digital pedagogy, derived from Greek (ἄξια, *axia*: "value, worth"; and -, -logia: "study of"), is shaped by rhetorical appeals and elements of Kairos (καιρός, the critical appeal to timeliness), Decorum (dignified propriety) and Telos (τέλος, the rhetorical appeal to Purpose). Language in digital pedagogy during confinement exemplifies a vast network of thoughts, ideas, and emotions related to learning. The EKODP framework synthesizes epistemological knowledge in *exploration* (Phase 1), *discovery* (Phase 2), and *creation* (Phase 3). Social and contextual factors influence the learning environment in all phases of epistemological

inquiry (Figure 2). Voices in digital pedagogy represent digital values and technological resources in action—"action lived," "action experienced," and "action taken." (Refer to Lontas, 2021, pp. 22-25 for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic network in digital pedagogy.)

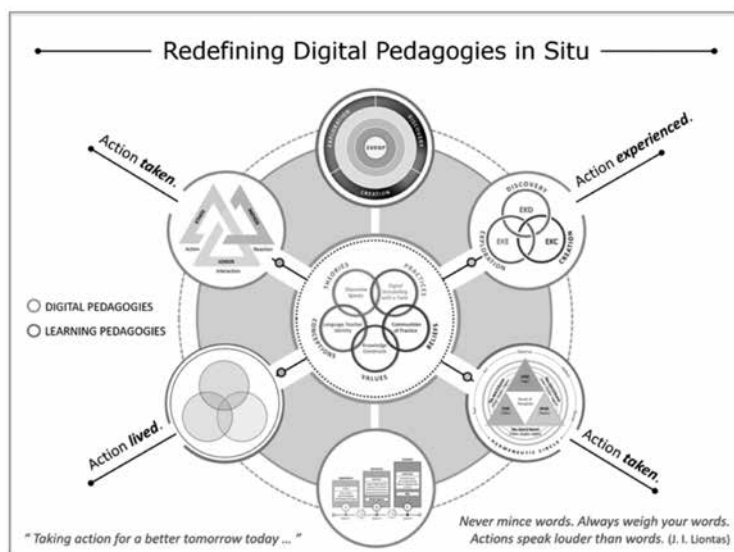
Research-practitioners employ their own evaluation heuristics (from Greek *εὐρίσκω* "discover, find") in collaborative digital projects to enhance digital pedagogy. These heuristics, along with other epistemic observations, inform decision-making in the CDDC process. Heuristic findings ("discoveries") are grounded in empirical evidence and practical effectiveness. Critical self-reflection and self-practice are essential within the broader context of research-practitioners' work. In short, reflective/reflexive thinking is crucial in interpretive research, where multiple realities are socially (re)constructed (Chen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Niemi, 2019; Niemi et al., 2010; Poon, 2008).

Table 2. Redefining Digital Pedagogies During Confinement

Redefining Digital Pedagogies During Confinement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identity (re)construction is shaped through social and professional discourse. - Interaction and collaboration influence agency positioning. - Teacher cognition informs practice and theory. - Epistemological knowledge expands self-concept. - Self-concept evolves through critical examination. - Self-perception affects personal growth. - Self-evaluation refines self-perception. - Reflective thinking promotes self-awareness. - Reflexive thinking guards against biases. - Communication shapes self-presentation and self-completion. - Others' conceptions impact professional development. - Online agency fosters identity development. - Online CoPs foster learner growth. - Dialogic Circles empower learners. - Egalitarian dialogic learning supports individual cognitions. - Social context shapes digital pedagogy. - The 5C's characterize digital storytelling. - EKODP dimensions inform interpretive research. - Realities are socially constructed. - Evaluation heuristics enhance digital pedagogies.

Student empowerment and engagement arise from applying the five precepts in Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy: Discursive Spaces, Digital Storytelling with a Twist, Language Teacher Identity, Theoretical-Practical Knowledge Constructs, and Communities of Practice (Liontas, 2021). These precepts merge theories, practices, conceptions, values, and beliefs, leading to inquiries into values that recognize the dynamic link between digital technologies and learners' pedagogical experiences. *Taking action for a better tomorrow today* is the guiding principle embraced by many research-practitioners. Table 2 presents 20 discoveries, and Figure 3 depicts the interaction between learning pedagogies and digital pedagogies in situ.

Figure 3. Redefining Digital Pedagogies in Situ



Conclusion

This study aimed to redefine the effectiveness of digital pedagogies in confinement. Dialogic Circles of Digital Pedagogy empowered SLATE doctoral students to explore teaching self-images. Identity development and agency assertion in online settings were emphasized through knowledge constructs and meaning-making processes. CPAR stages facilitated epistemological knowledge. Egalitarian dialogic learning fostered critique. Problem-posing praxis enhanced critical consciousness. Thematic analysis and hermeneutic phenomenology yielded new interpretations aligned with LTI notions. Future research can validate these findings and explore digital practices frameworks. Redefining Digital Pedagogies During Confinement contributes to literature and encourages further exploration and knowledge creation. Social communication enhances collaboration and technology discovery. But collaboration sans knowledge and communication is as ineffective as a drop of water on a hot stone ("Tropfen auf dem heißen Stein" in German), thermodynamic processes need not be mentioned here. Reflection on identity formation is essential. The study highlights SLATE doctoral students' growth mindset. Purpose (the clarity of why), process (the discipline of how), and results (the discipline of how) promote curriculum development, including identity development and agency assertion in online settings. And looking back informs looking ahead. The journey continues.

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Appendix

Without a Story

Without a Story

by John I. Liontas

Without a story, the world's a stage fast asleep, dreaming of tomorrow, of dreams to come,

A lonely place sans players, sans costumes, sans acts to play, sans songs to sing.

Without a story...

Without a story, the world's a blank canvas, a colorless palette, a stretched sailcloth

of brushstrokes not taken, of portraits not named, of landscapes not yet painted.

Without a story, the world's a crumpled paper tossed into the dustbin of history,

waiting to be found, to be smoothed, to be read.

Without a story...

Without a story, no heroes would fall, no poems composed, no songs remembered.

Without a story, the road ahead never bends on the horizon, a distant line, fading in the sands of time.

Without a story, lines are drops of ink, falling like dew, in the morning sun.

Without a story...

Without a story, I am nameless, a barren land, an empty ocean, a ship sailing the seven seas, no anchor to drop, no port to call home.

Without a story, I am faceless, a broken mask, an actor without a stage, a painter without a brush, a writer without a pen.

Without a story, I am homeless, a forgotten wanderer, a traveller without a map, a pathfinder without a trail, a storyteller without a campfire.

Without a story, I am hopeless, a shrunken pharos, a foolhardy Icarus, a future riding the coattails of times past, no echo to sound, no memory to set free.

Without a story...

Without a tale to tell, a song to sing, an act to play, a story without a story is a ring of fire, a fire long gone cold in the time before time, when myths died alone in the midnight hour, and, from the ashes smoldering still, legends shall rise again.

So I keep writing a story, a story worth dreaming, a story worth sharing, a story worth living, one story at a time. For as every player on that world stage now knows, it is a story of twists and turns, of ups and downs, of zigging and zagging when drawing to an inside straight.

It is a story with a twist, a lone story yet to be freed from the shackles of time, the pleonastic cacophony of a sea of voices soon forgotten in the echoes of time.

It is a story with a twist, a story of prisoners of hope, of feeble whis-
pers in the dark, dying on the vine, alone, forevermore a forlorn lost child
of glories waiting to be awakened, a mere plus sign branding its side
ever so gently.

It is a story with a twist, a story of giant icicles melting in the desert
sun like footprints in the east wind, their feats dying in the stars above
written they are not... until now.

Philosophy in Education

Hybrid Education: Technology's Humanizing Effect through Postmodernism

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the humanizing effect of technology in the context of postmodernism, which operates through popular culture and its technological mechanisms to address social challenges and meet human needs for the welfare of society. It challenges the notion that technology is a tool for dehumanization. To explore this concept, social constructivism is employed, supplemented by Schumpeter's Creative Deconstruction Theory to characterize the postmodern way of endless recreations that give rise to hybrid education—one of the major reinventions of the present era, capitalized in this study. Jacques Derrida's literary concept of deconstruction is also utilized to scaffold Schumpeter's concept and to emphasize the truth derived from a deconstructed reality. This study further contextualized hybridity in terms of how the pandemic has given rise to compelling lessons that everyone can learn from, including the adaptability of learners and teachers to the latest norms of the teaching-learning process, evidenced in how online and offline interactions are combined. The hybrid modality provides an environment where one can be trained for adaptability, which is seen as significantly contingent upon the majority of society fixated on recreating things in finding more ways toward humanity.

Keywords: creative deconstruction, hybrid education, humanity, postmodernism, technology

Introduction

Over the last few years, technology's presence in modern life has grown remarkably, influencing various areas of life, from communication to education, business, healthcare, and entertainment (Anderson & Perrin, 2017; Bauer et al., 2017; Selwyn, 2018). This has resulted in scholars giving significant attention to investigating its effects on human society, with a particular focus on how innovation affects human interactions, behavior, and well-being (Hampton & Wellman, 2018; Wang &

Chen, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). Despite the significant attention given to probing the effects of technological innovation on society, there is still a gap in understanding how technology can have a humanizing effect in certain contexts (Geist, 2018; Hricko et al., 2019; Ifinedo & Kankaanranta, 2021; Proenza & Urzúa, 2019).

This paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the humanizing effect of technology in the context of postmodernism by challenging the common belief that technology leads to dehumanization. Schuler et al. (2019) demonstrated that cultural values play a crucial role in shaping technological acceptance, for example. Hence, social constructivism (SC) is employed, which is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of social interactions in determining knowledge and reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). SC, in application, stresses that the humanizing effect of technology is not inherent in itself but rather constructed through various ways of experiencing technology. Thus, it is not a fixed entity but shaped by human interactions and cultural contexts. SC, as a critical lens, highlights the dynamic and contextual nature of technology's impact on human lives, as it draws on postmodernist ideas to understand how individuals create their own subjective realities. Postmodernism, with its emphasis on popular culture, irony, and self-referentiality (Lyon, 2019), has become a prominent feature of contemporary society. Moreover, it promotes the subjective and context-dependent nature of reality, and it has been influential in shaping critical perspectives in various fields, including sociology and cultural studies (Bernstein, 2018).

Additionally, the study utilizes Schumpeter's Creative Deconstruction (CD) Theory, which posits that innovation is driven by the destruction of existing systems and structures (Schumpeter, 1942). CD refers to the process of innovation and technological advancement that replaces old industries and economic structures with new ones, creating disruptions in the economy and society, but it also generates new opportunities and growth. CD does not explicitly argue that technology has a humanizing effect, but it implicitly suggests that technological progress ultimately benefits humanity. Schumpeter believed that technological progress and innovation were the driving forces behind economic growth and development. He believed that entrepreneurs and innovators were the

key agents of change in the economy, creating new products, services, and markets that improved people's lives. Moreover, Schumpeter's view of the role of the entrepreneur conveys that technological progress is a humanizing force. The entrepreneur is an individual who is willing to take risks and create something new. In this sense, CD indicates that technology enables entrepreneurs to amalgamate strategy and creativity for people to live fulfilling lives (Manyika et al., 2018).

Schumpeter's concept on innovation resonates with postmodernism, which, as a movement that emerged in various disciplines, is characterized less by a specific timeline and more by its foundation on acknowledging the past, evolving to signify a particular approach. Architect and critical theorist Charles Jencks saw it as a particular manifestation of cultural resistance; hence, it functions as a communicative system of principles aimed at responding to the societal requirements (Krasny & Slattery, 2021). In contemporary culture, the renewal of plurality, partiality, and multiplicity was made possible through postmodernism (Wheatley, 2021). The 'no-reference-point' principle through which postmodernism operates is what Badulesco (2014) understood as hybridization, being one of the many aspects of pluralism. She added that hybridization is closely associated with indeterminacy, ambiguity, dream and imagination. Thus, all types of ideas are accommodated and cultivated to benefit the 'creators'---individuals who strategically find value in what they have come up with to serve whatever purpose they deem worth exploring. Primarily, it is galvanizing higher education through hybridization that is central to developing the human capital (Wheatley, 2021; Yuskovych-Zhukovska et al., 2022).

Within this context, this paper argues that postmodernism and its technological mechanisms have a humanizing effect by addressing social challenges and meeting human needs for the general welfare of the society. To this end, the study explores the concept of endless recreation, a defining characteristic of postmodernism that gives rise to hybrid education.

Literature Review

The widely accepted notion of postmodernism is articulated by Zeeman et al. (cited in Campbell, 2018) that underscores the breaking down of traditional ideas about how to interpret meaning and understand reality. Instead of accepting established frameworks or structures, it seeks to challenge and question these concepts, suggesting that they are not fixed or universal but rather contingent on various factors such as culture, language, power dynamics, and historical context. By constantly reinventing itself, society can accommodate deaths for multiple rebirths in the technological side of things and move forward towards innovation and progress. In the absence of absolute value, as purported in postmodernism, everything can be created (Badulesco, 2014; Hutcheon, 2003). Jacques Derrida's 'deconstruction' is used to scaffold this major concept and highlights the truth derived from a deconstructed reality (Derrida, 1967). Endless recreation is a characteristic of postmodernism that allows for constant innovation and change in society as well as questioning and deconstructing established ideas and structures. Derrida's concept emphasizes the need to critically examine and question established beliefs and structures, which can lead to a better understanding of reality and the creation of new ideas and perspectives. "The Innovator's Dilemma" by Clayton Christensen (1997) lends credibility to this idea of constant reinvention. Christensen argued that companies that focus too much on sustaining innovation can become vulnerable to disruptive technologies that arise from new entrants in the market. Thus, companies must be willing to constantly reinvent themselves and embrace disruptive technologies in order to stay competitive and succeed in the long run. Similarly, in order to create a more humanizing and equitable education system, it is important to constantly innovate and embrace new technologies that can help achieve these goals. Just as companies can become vulnerable to disruptive technologies if they focus too much on sustaining innovation, the education system can become stagnant and fail to adapt to changing societal needs if it does not embrace new technologies and pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, the use of technology in education can be seen as a way to disrupt the traditional power structures that exist within the educa-

tional system. By providing access to educational resources and opportunities for marginalized groups, technology can help to create a more just and equitable education paradigm. However, as Christensen suggested, this will require a willingness to constantly reinvent the framework and embrace disruptive technologies. Ultimately, the humanizing role of technology in education requires a commitment to ongoing innovation and a willingness to challenge established ideas and structures in order to create a more just and equitable education system. Foucault (1977) argued that power is not something that is possessed by individuals or groups, but rather a force that is distributed throughout society and embedded in its institutions and practices. By deconstructing established ideas and structures, individuals can gain a better understanding of how power operates in society and work towards creating a more just and equitable system. His idea promotes a just society that values diversity and promotes equal opportunities for all.

In terms of the impact of COVID-19 on education and technology, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) highlighted the challenges that the pandemic has posed to traditional education systems and the opportunities that have arisen from the increased use of technology in education. It noted that the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital learning tools and has emphasized the importance of adaptability and flexibility in education. The hybrid modality of education, which combines online and offline interactions, has emerged as a promising approach to education that can cater to individual needs and promote lifelong learning. Such a platform is seen as significantly contingent upon the majority of society fixated on recreating things in finding more ways toward humanity. The modernization of the education system in the postmodern era primarily includes the discussion of the role of open educational resources in the development of e-learning (Yuskovych-Zhukovska, 2022).

The studies on hybrid education provide strong evidence for its benefits. Students in hybrid courses perform better than those in traditional face-to-face courses (Johnson et al., 2016; Means et al., 2013). The flexibility and adaptability of hybrid education promote self-directed learning, which is a skill for lifelong learning (Kim & Bonk, 2020). Hybrid education also has the potential to promote social justice and democ-

ratization of education, as shown in the studies by Schreurs et al. (2014) and Hew and Cheung (2014), by providing greater access to educational resources and opportunities and allowing learners from different backgrounds and with different learning needs to participate in the same course. These studies collectively suggest that technology can have a humanizing effect on education, enabling learners to engage in a more personalized and inclusive learning experience.

There are some examples of countries that have implemented hybrid education successfully, suggesting that the benefits can outweigh the drawbacks. For example, Finland has been praised for its use of technology to support personalized learning, with a focus on individual student needs and strengths (OECD, 2019). Similarly, Singapore has implemented a comprehensive strategy to integrate technology into education, including the use of blended learning approaches and digital tools to support teaching and learning (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020). In addition to Finland and Singapore, the United States has also seen success with hybrid education in certain contexts. For example, the Florida Virtual School, a public institution, has been recognized for its success in providing students with individualized learning opportunities and flexible scheduling options (Florida Virtual School, 2024.). Another example is the Khan Academy, a nonprofit organization that provides free online educational resources and has been used by millions of learners worldwide (Khan Academy, 2024.). These institutions demonstrate the potential benefits of hybrid education, particularly in providing access to education for learners who may not have access to traditional in-person learning opportunities. Moreover, these benefits can be realized when there is a strong emphasis on a well-planned strategy for integrating technology into education. The holistic and ecological approach of a postmodern curriculum in education seeks to eliminate the artificial divide between the external community and the classroom. Instead, it aims to acknowledge and appreciate the interrelatedness of knowledge, experiences, international and local communities, the natural world, and life itself (Krasny & Slattery, 2021).

Constant reinvention, as emphasized by Derrida, is crucial in society's progression, as evidenced in the impact of COVID-19 and the success of hybrid education in various countries. The studies on hy-

brid education indicate that it can promote personalized, inclusive, and self-directed learning, and has the potential to democratize education. The success stories of Finland, Singapore, and the United States serve as examples of how well-planned strategies for integrating technology into education can yield significant benefits. Ultimately, the humanizing effect of technology on education cannot be overlooked and should be used as a tool to empower learners and promote lifelong learning.

Methodology

Qualitative exploratory research is used to navigate and gain a deeper understanding of a topic or phenomenon using non-numerical data (Creswell, 2014). It is generally flexible and open-ended, allowing researchers to adjust their approach and methods based on emerging insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To obtain relevant data, a systematic search was conducted using keywords such as "hybrid education," "post-modernism," "technology," "humanization," "pedagogy," "society," and "cultural context" on various databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate. The studies were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and their contribution to understanding the humanizing role of technology in shaping hybrid education within the context of postmodernism. Thematic analysis was then used to extract and synthesize data related to the three identified themes: Instant Gratification and Endless Recreation in Hybrid Education, Hybrid Education: Index of a Humanized Society, and Technology's Humanizing Effect for Posterity through Postmodernity. Essentially, it is a valuable approach for acquiring a more profound comprehension of the subject. Its key strengths include characterizing the social, cultural, and historical context in which the phenomenon is occurring, providing a more nuanced understanding of the topic of interest and uncovering new insights which can generate new research questions and areas of inquiry. Scholars generally regard qualitative exploratory research as an important research method in the social sciences, particularly in fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education.

Results and Discussion

A. Instant Gratification and Endless Recreation in Hybrid Education

The ability to engage in constant entertainment and leisure activities has created a culture in which individuals are often seeking instant gratification (IG) and immediate satisfaction (Kasser & Sheldon, 2002). With the culture of endless recreation and constant stimulation in postmodern society, students are used to receiving immediate feedback and rewards. Hybrid education (HE) can provide this instant gratification through the use of technology, such as online quizzes and interactive learning modules, which can provide direct response and reinforce learning. IG can be seen as a way to address the needs and expectations of today's students who are accustomed to receiving information quickly and efficiently. Schreurs et al. (2014) and Hew and Cheung (2014) highlighted the importance of understanding learners who have distinct schedules, for instance. By leveraging technology and offering flexible and diverse learning pathways, it is possible to enable learners to participate in the same course regardless of their time and location constraints.

The culture of endless recreation has influenced the way in which education is approached in postmodern society (Hill, 2017). As a result, there has been a growing interest in HE, which combines traditional in-person instruction with online or virtual learning experiences (Means et al., 2013). This approach to education acknowledges the importance of digital media and technology in contemporary society, while still providing opportunities for face-to-face interaction and instruction. There is some debate among scholars about the relationship between constant stimulation and critical thinking in education. Qian and Clark (2016) and Shin and Kim (2020) suggested that a moderate level of stimulation and entertainment can actually facilitate critical thinking and analysis. The use of entertaining digital media can enhance cognitive functioning and promote critical thinking skills in children and adolescents (Carretti et al., 2018; Sitzmann et al., 2016). They argued that the use of digital media, particularly in a gaming context, can promote problem-solving, decision-making, and reasoning abilities. Similarly, Ma and Lin (2017) found

that integrating game-based learning into traditional classroom instruction helped to increase student engagement and motivation, leading to improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The researchers noted that games provide an immersive and interactive learning environment that promotes active cognition templates.

Engaging learning materials can help to motivate students and enhance their ability to think critically and reflect on their learning (Arts et al., 2019). Akçayır and Akçayır (2017) examined the use of educational videos in the classroom and found that they can enhance student engagement and promote deeper understanding of complex concepts. They noted that videos provide a visually stimulating and entertaining way to present information, which can help to sustain students' attention and reinforce analytical behavioral patterns. However, while excessive stimulation and entertainment may be detrimental to critical thinking, a moderate level of stimulation and engagement can actually be beneficial for promoting intellectual processes in educational contexts.

HE can also be more flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual students, allowing them to access learning materials and engage in coursework on their own schedule and at their own pace (Conrad & Donaldson, 2012). This can be particularly beneficial for students who may not thrive in a traditional classroom setting or who have other responsibilities or obligations that make it difficult to attend in-person classes. Needs and expectations of students are important considerations in the design and delivery of education. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 92% of teens report going online daily, and 24% report being online almost constantly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). This high level of digital engagement has created a culture in which young people are accustomed to having instant access to information and entertainment.

This culture has also influenced the way in which young people approach learning. A study by Barnes and colleagues (2013) found that students who regularly engage in digital media are more likely to be motivated by opportunities for active learning and participation, as well as opportunities to collaborate and interact with peers. By providing opportunities for active learning, collaboration, and digital engagement,

HE can help to create a more engaging and motivating learning environment. This approach has been shown to be effective in a variety of settings, including higher education (Dziuban et al., 2018) and K-12 education (Chen & Chen, 2018).

B. Hybrid Education: Index of a Humanized Society

According to some scholars, hybrid education (HE) represents an index of a more humanized society, in which education is more accessible, flexible, and tailored to individual needs. Gobbo and Togni (2019) argued that HE can promote social justice and democratization of education by making it more accessible to a wider range of learners, as barriers to access are broken down, caused by factors such as geography, disability, and socio-economic status.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote and online learning modalities are necessarily conducted. According to a report by HolonIQ (2021), the global market for online and blended learning is expected to reach \$350 billion by 2025, driven by the growing demand for flexible and accessible education. The global blended learning market will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.5% from 2021 to 2026, fueled by the need to adapt to changing learning environments and the increasing availability of digital learning tools and platforms (Research and Markets, 2021).

In a more humanized society, education is not a one-size-fits-all model, but rather an inclusive and adaptable system that empowers individuals to learn and grow in ways that align with their interests, abilities, and aspirations. This approach to education prioritizes the needs of the learner and acknowledges the importance of tailoring educational experiences to suit individual needs and goals. According to UNESCO (2019), an education system that promotes inclusivity ought to value the distinctive needs and dissimilarities of every learner, and guarantee an equal chance for all to learn and achieve success. This includes considering factors such as learning styles, cultural background, and socio-economic status.

A culture of lifelong learning needs to be fostered, which is essential in a rapidly changing and evolving society. As noted in a report by the

OECD (2019), lifelong learning can help individuals to adapt to changing labor market demands, improve their employability and career prospects, and contribute to their personal and social development. The use of technology and blended learning approaches can promote a more student-centered approach to learning, which can enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills (Bawa, 2016; Seaman & Allen, 2018). This positively affects, in particular, learners from under-represented and marginalized groups, who may face barriers to access and success in traditional classroom environments. For instance, the creation and dissemination of open educational resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are designed to be accessible to a wide range of learners, especially those from low-income backgrounds, who may not have the resources to pay for expensive textbooks and course materials.

In Kenya, the government has launched initiatives to provide free laptops to primary school students and to expand internet access in schools, with the goal of increasing access to digital learning resources (World Bank, 2019). This has led to the development of open educational resources and digital platforms, which provides low-cost mobile learning solutions to students in remote and low-income areas (UNESCO, 2017). Similarly, in Ghana, the government has partnered with organizations to develop open educational resources and online courses that are accessible to students in remote and underprivileged areas (Open Education Global, 2020). These initiatives demonstrate how technology can contribute to a more humanized society by promoting more inclusive and adaptable approaches to education.

Furthermore, HE can promote a more personalized and student-centered approach to learning, as students can access learning materials and engage in coursework on their own schedule and at their own pace. Personalized learning interventions were associated with improved academic achievement and motivation among students (Hattie et al., 2017; Hew & Cheung, 2013). Jaggars and Xu (2016) found that hybrid courses were associated with higher retention rates and lower withdrawal rates compared to traditional face-to-face courses. A meta-analysis by Means et al. (2013) found that blended learning approaches were more effective than traditional classroom instruction in improving stu-

dent achievement, especially in STEM subjects. These trends indicate potential benefits for learners and educational institutions alike.

C. Technology's Humanizing Effect for Posterity through Postmodernity

Hybrids are fabulations which fundamentally define postmodernism (Badulesco, 2014). Technology existentially locates man's efforts to offer change as his natural tendency to design and utilize artificial outputs and outcomes. Hutcheon (2003) pointed out that postmodernism operates through "repairs" that are essentially "human constructs" (p. 7). These "repairs", she added, are subject to limitations which in turn lend strength to another "repair." According to Deakin et al. (2021), "technology has the potential to bring about positive change and improve human society for future generations" (p. 2). The authors argued that technology has the chance to be used in ways that align with human values and principles, such as fairness, justice, and inclusivity. In other words, technology can be humanized by ensuring that it is developed and used in a way that benefits people and contributes to their well-being. This perspective acknowledges that technology is not inherently good or bad, but rather its effects depend on how it is used (Hamelink, 1995). By using technology responsibly and ethically, it is possible to create a better future for all. The authors provide examples of how technology can be used to promote education and learning opportunities, improve healthcare access and outcomes, address environmental challenges, and promote social justice and equality (UNESCO, 2013).

However, it is important to recognize that technology can also have negative impacts if it is not developed and used responsibly. Technology can exacerbate social and economic inequality, perpetuate biases and discrimination, and contribute to environmental degradation (Oostveen, 2017). Therefore, it is important for individuals and organizations to be mindful of the potential negative consequences of technology and take steps to mitigate these risks. In the context of responsible and ethical technology development and use, the dynamic landscape of postmodernism can have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, postmodernism's emphasis on individual experience and subjective truths---framed in partiality and multiplicity-- as Wheatley (2021)

observed, can help raise awareness of the social and cultural impact of technology and encourage more diverse and inclusive approaches to technology development. This can benefit future generations.

On the other hand, postmodernism's rejection of grand narratives and objective truth can also lead to a sense of relativism and skepticism about the value of ethical and responsible behavior (Giroux, 1994; Rachels, 1986). This can make it more difficult to build consensus around ethical and responsible technology development and use, and may lead to a more fragmented and individualistic approach that does not necessarily benefit the broader community. The impact of postmodernism on responsible and ethical technology development and use is complex and multifaceted, and depends on a variety of social, cultural, and political factors (Johnston & Warkentin, 2010; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990). While postmodernism can offer new perspectives and insights that may be useful in promoting responsible and ethical technology development and use, it is important to approach these issues with a critical and reflective mindset that considers the diverse perspectives and values of different communities and stakeholders.

As argued by Zeeman et al. (as quoted in Campbell, 2018), postmodernism dismantles conventional notions of reality. This makes hybrid education a fertile ground for applying the essence of 'unconventionality,' allowing for the accommodation or rejection of elements as long as they benefit the decision-maker. This reflects empowerment, residing in one's choice to attach meaning to an object, action, will, and vision.

Conclusion

Technology's prevalence in postmodern society can lead to a culture of instant gratification and constant stimulation, yet it can also humanize society through endless recreation and innovation. The need to sustain motivation marks active learning reflective of opportunities to collaborate and engage with peers. Since Hybrid education (HE) merges in-person instruction and digital media, inclusive learning environments are created where flexible and adaptive learning experience democ-

ratizes education for a wider range of learners. This entails the values of critical thinking and social justice embedded in the system, as the demand for accessible education increases. Following the COVID-19 pandemic's catalytic effect on education delivery modes, learners can now access resources at their own pace and schedule, creating personalized learning experiences. Such a libertarian mode of education reinvents adaptation to the extent of strengthening individual capabilities to become more productive. HE empowers individuals to reach their full potential and make informed decisions about how to best steer learning paradigms in the technological landscape. Embracing innovation to create inclusive learning environments can promote lifelong learning, making HE a promising approach to education in a postmodern world. Consequently, diverse social, cultural, and political factors become essential motifs in the humanizing process within learners, who are ultimately responsible for envisioning the best outcomes that benefit them.

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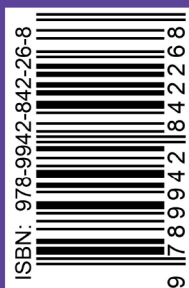
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Education had a major change in 2020. The World Health Organization declared Covid a pandemic. Far from stopping normal life, people had to adapt to a new normal which, among other things, included education. Classes had to continue facilitated by technology. The first periods of work in this new modality assured the learning process; however, many limitations were experienced. Some were lack of internet access in rural areas and lack of computers for each student in the urban area.

The chapters shared in this second book of innovations in the EFL area report interventions and reflections done in online and hybrid modalities. They were conducted post-pandemic. At this time, researchers had more experience in these new contexts and thus made constant improvement in their teaching methodologies. Other teachers may find the chapters useful in their context and are encouraged to innovate in their classes to benefit the learning of their students and education in general.



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