

## The Impact of Oral and Written Feedback on EFL Writers With the Use of Screencasts

El impacto de la retroalimentación oral y escrita sobre los escritos de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera con el uso de videos en pantalla

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This article, based on an action research study performed at a Colombian middle-sized private university, proposes specific strategies to provide feedback to English as a foreign language learners and uses a Web 2.0 tool called *screencasting*. The findings of the study suggest that the use of coded, written, and oral feedback is widely accepted by students and yields positive results in the improvement of their writing skills at the paragraph level, and that the use of screencasting is a promising strategy that is motivational to students and increases the quality of their uptake.

*Key words:* Feedback, screencasts, screencasting, writing skills.

Este artículo, basado en un estudio de investigación-acción realizado en una universidad colombiana privada de tamaño medio, propone estrategias de retroalimentación con el uso de *screencasting*, una herramienta Web 2.0. Los resultados muestran que la retroalimentación directa, oral y escrita, acompañada de códigos, es aceptada por los estudiantes y ayuda a desarrollar habilidades de escritura, y que el *screencasting* es una estrategia promisoría, motivante, que ayuda a mejorar su nivel de escritura.

*Palabras clave:* habilidades de escritura, retroalimentación, videos en pantalla.

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## Introduction

This study attempts to establish the impact of coded, oral, and written feedback with the use of screencasts, within the context of process writing, using approximately 150-word paragraphs on the improvement of paragraph writing of B1 level English as a foreign language (EFL) students at university level. The subjects of the study were students enrolled in different academic programs at a private Colombian university.

The increasing importance that writing has for university studies, for the development of higher thinking skills, and for language development (Graham & Herbert, 2011) makes it necessary to develop strategies to give feedback appropriately and in such a way that it helps students to consistently improve their writing skills. A growing body of research has found a relationship between poor writing skills and university dropout in Colombia. Olave-Arias, Rojas-García, and Cisneros-Estupiñán (2013) address this problem and relate it to the level of development in reading and writing, and focus on reading and writing practices that generate learning difficulties. On the other hand, Córdoba, Grinstajn, and Suárez (2009) refer to the lack of student literacy as the cause of student dropout.

Feedback on writing plays an important role in the teaching of writing skills as it does in all educational fields. Feedback is vital in just about all learning contexts (Race, 2001). The web 2.0 tool used in this study permits the teacher to provide feedback by using a video of the students' writings and to make a voice recording to help in the provision of feedback. The use of this strategy is the main contribution of this study to the discipline and it offers promising possibilities for teachers in all EFL and English as a second language (ESL) contexts for significantly improving the quality of their teaching practice in terms of the provision of feedback on writing.

The question that guided this study was: What is the impact of coded written feedback, within the context of process writing and with researcher-student short

oral feedback using screencasts, on the improvement of writing narrative and descriptive paragraphs?

## Literature Review

The theoretical constructs of this research study are as follows: writing skills, the teaching of writing, feedback on writing, and screencasts.

### Writing Skills

Writing can be defined as the use of graphic marks to represent specific linguistic utterances (Rogers, 2005). The need for writing goes far beyond the need for immediate communication, for it is a keystone of intellectual development.

The value of being able to write effectively increases as students progress through compulsory education on to higher education. At the university level in particular writing is seen not just as a standardized system of communication but also as an essential tool for learning. . . . Writing and critical thinking are seen as closely linked, and expertise in writing is seen as an indication that students have mastered the cognitive skills required for university work. (Weigle, 2002, p. 5)

In the academic world, the need for honed writing skills is felt even before being immersed and engaged in an English speaking environment, when EFL students have to present international examinations that require a certain level of writing skills such as the TOEFL test. Once in an academic context, the students find that their actual needs in terms of writing go way beyond the minimum entrance requirements. At this point, the student has enough information about the needs in terms of writing in order to establish his or her own goals. Cumming (2006) conducted a research study about the goals for academic writings of EFL students. His findings were related to different aspects; initially about language (the vocabulary and grammar of English, ranging from clauses to morphemes or punctuation), where the components of the writing process are depicted. Another aspect was related to rhetoric or genres (including conventional

discourse or text structures along with their elements). This includes paragraph and essay structure. The next aspect had to do with composing processes (planning, drafting, editing, and revising a text). Here are the steps of the writing process. Next are ideas and knowledge (concepts and information for written texts). This is related to the background knowledge of each writer and the preparation activities as well.

The emphasis given in the EFL and the ESL classrooms was primarily focused on the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. As Reid (1993) points out, “writing was regarded as a tool to learn the other skills” (p. 22). This was justified since the goal of language learning was “to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 5). For this reason, J. Williams (2012) still insists that “writing is often seen as having a minor role in second language learning” (p. 21).

The situation seems to be changing. The role of writing in second language development has been gaining ground. Cumming (1990) hypothesized that “composition writing elicits attention to form-meaning relations that may prompt learners to refine their linguistic expression—and hence their control over their linguistic knowledge—so that it is a more accurate representative of their thoughts and of standards usage” (p. 483). Leki (2009) also claimed that using writing to develop second language may be a central objective in second language learning. This new perspective has been called “writing-to-learn-language (WLL)” and emphasizes the role of writing as a medium for language development as has been supported by studies as recent as that of Adams, Alwi, and Newton (2015). There are several traits of writing that have led prominent authors to argue that writing plays an important role in language learning. One is the problem-solving characteristic of writing. The other is the availability of time at the moment of writing, which is usually lengthy at the moment of speaking. Also, as J. Williams (2012) states,

(1) [writing’s] slower pace, and (2) the enduring record that it leaves, both of which can encourage cognitive processes and interactive moves thought to promote language acquisition, and (3) the need for along with the opportunity for greater precision in language use, which may encourage learners to consult their explicit knowledge as they plan, monitor, or review their production. (p. 321)

Adams (2006) points out the facilitative role of writing to memorize recently learned syntactic structures and Ravid and Tolchhinsky (2002) highlight that writing leads learners to pay attention to linguistic forms and puts higher demands on writers for more precise linguistic forms and usage both during the production of their texts and after they have finished writing. Its cyclical nature facilitates focusing on linguistic elements (Kim, 2011) while writers engage in the iterative process to make meaning in which feedback plays a crucial role (Swain, 2006).

### The Teaching of Writing

The study of writing has been done from various perspectives. Probably the best-known are the product approach, the genre approach, and the process approach. Given the nature of this study, which intends to measure the impact of feedback on the development of writing skills, the approach that best fits our need is the process approach.

The first influential model of the process approach was proposed by Flower and Hayes (1980) and later revised by Hayes (2012). This model has helped to identify writing sub-skills and to understand composition teaching holistically and it also includes motivation, which is a topic that did not play an important role in the original model, but that stands out in Hayes’ last revision of the model. As explained by Hayes (2012), “because motivation appears to be intimately involved in many aspects of writing, I included it as a major component of my revision of the 1980 model (Hayes, 1996) and in the current model” (p. 373).

Melgarejo (2010) considers that this approach focuses on the process of writing which aims at the final product of writing. It helps student writers to understand their own composing process, to build repertoires of strategies for prewriting, drafting, and rewriting; it also gives students time to write and rewrite, highlights the process of revision and allows them to discover what they want to say as they write. It also provides them with timely feedback as they attempt to bring their expression closer and closer to intention, encouraging feedback from both the instructor and their peers.

The process writing approach contains traits of the product-based approach since the learner has to bear in mind where he or she is heading. In fact, Nunan (1999) argues that there is no reason why a writing program could only focus on one approach overlooking the advantages of the other. This is the context we are going to consider in the subsequent identifiable stages that compose the process as stated by Meriwether (1997):

1. Prewriting (selecting a topic and planning what to say)
2. Writing (putting a draught version on paper)
3. Revising (making changes to improve the writing)
4. Evaluation (assessment of the written work)

In this research study feedback is embedded in the revision stage, and includes the feedback given on one or two of the writings, depending on the level of quality the writing of each student has.

### Feedback on Writing

Feedback can be defined as the information given to the students as to how their writing skills can be improved. Teacher feedback is probably the most common way to support students during the critical period of application of their recently acquired knowledge, a moment when they lack enough understanding to know if they are executing it correctly (Borup, West, & Thomas, 2015).

After years of an intense debate—initially sparked by Truscott (1996) about the possible harmfulness

of feedback on form, and contested mainly by Ferris (1999)—the importance of feedback in ESL/EFL writing is generally accepted, although the way of providing it remains under discussion (Nelson & Schunn, 2007).

The situation with feedback on content has also been problematic, maybe even more than the feedback on form. Research has demonstrated that teacher comments on feedback on content are usually vague, contradictory and sometimes provide no guidance to the student (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fregeau, 1999; Leki, 1990). The outcome of this situation is that students often become frustrated and discouraged and consequently ignore the comments, a situation which reduces the possibility of students improving their writing skills (J. G. Williams, 2003).

For feedback to be effective, it has to comply with some features. These features were depicted by Hartshorn (2008) as manageability, meaningfulness, timeliness, and constancy. As for manageability, this is a key point because if teachers are burdened with too much work, this practice would be abandoned. Therefore, how much time the teacher spends on giving feedback becomes a key factor of good feedback on writing. In terms of meaningfulness, according to McGarrell and Verbeem (2007), feedback on writing should prioritize content over form in order to have students focus on the communicative purpose of writing. The third trait, timeliness, refers to the promptness of feedback, for instance, the sooner a text is commented on and corrected, the better. The fourth trait, constancy, takes an educational keystone into consideration; if not practiced, knowledge can be forgotten, hence improvement in writing could not be attained (Leki 1990).

It is also important that feedback should be focused in order to avoid overwhelming the students with too much information (Alghazo, Bani Abdelrahman, & Abu Qbeitah, 2009). We also favor a blend between direct and indirect feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996), beginning with direct outright feedback on mistakes and

moving on to indirect feedback as soon as the learners are familiar with the names and the nature of mistakes.

A useful strategy of a good feedback methodology is that of a short teacher-student conference (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Having a person-to-person conference might sound ideal but given the constraints addressed above, it is not always possible; most of the time it will not be. For this reason, this study relies on screencasts, which allow for asynchronous feedback with the support of video images and voice.

### Screencasts

Screencasts are digital recordings of the activity on a computer screen, accompanied by voiceover narration. The use of screencasts to provide feedback on writing is in its starting stage, with still few studies reporting on its use. Screencasting can be used by teachers to respond to any assignment that is submitted in an electronic format (Thompson & Lee, 2012).

Séror (2012) performed a study with ESL learners in Canada intended to raise awareness of screencasting as a readily available tool. A study with EFL students was conducted by McGarrell and Alvira (2013) and concluded that students overwhelmingly preferred the use of screencasts over conventional feedback. Another study was performed by Harper, Green, and Fernandez-Toro (2015). The findings indicated that both students and tutors liked the tool because hearing the tutor's voice engaged the students affectively and the explanations were considered clear and easy to retain. These four previous studies take the topic to a point where they could demonstrate that it is worth using screencasts, but do not get deeper into how to use them intertwined with sound pedagogical strategies about feedback on writing. The present study intends to take a step forward and propose a more comprehensive approach on this matter.

Other studies address the use of screencast in contexts different from ESL/EFL settings. Thompson and Lee (2012) found in their study developed in a first language

context, in an online learning environment, that student reaction to feedback with screencasts was highly positive and students preferred this form to traditional written comments. Vincelette and Bostic (2013) researched writings of language students and analyzed their feedback preference and improvement in performance. Again, the conclusions are positive in favor of screencasts.

A common characteristic found in the literature review was that the research subjects expressed their preference for the use of screencasts over traditional feedback, and this motivational predilection was also found in this study where students overwhelmingly favor its use. Another factor is the multisensory aspect of screencasts that students prefer due to its multimodality, where the instructor relies on various types of media to give feedback (Crews & Wilkinson, 2010; Greivenkamp, Stoll, & Johnston, 2009; Ice, Swan, Diaz, Kupczynski, & Swan-Dagen, 2010; Oomen-Early, Bold, Wiginton, Gallien, & Anderson, 2008; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2011; Vincelette, 2013).

Outside of the field of feedback on writing, there is a growing body of research that supports the use of screencasts in education. An example of that is the study of Soto and Ambrose (2015), in which they highlight how screencasting can be used as a formative assessment tool in the teaching of mathematics in elementary school.

Nonetheless, highlighting the importance of instructional methods over the media that deliver them is of paramount importance, as stated by Clark (1983, 1991). This author claims that the choice of feedback methods—not media—impacts learning, without downplaying the importance of the media used, which play an important role in the process. In the case of this study, the benefit of the use of screencasts lies in their capacity to strengthen the methodological traits of the feedback process.

### Method

The characteristics and purposes of the study fall within the realm of qualitative action research which is

a form of investigation designed for the use of teachers in order to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms (Parsons & Brown, 2002). As Kemmis and McTaggart (1992) state, “action research is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of changes. It is participatory: it is research through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices” (p. 22). This was exactly the case of this study that was aimed at improving the way feedback on writing was being given to the subjects of the research study to help them improve their writing skills but it also relied on the participation of the research subjects. At the same time, this research project can be useful to other practitioners interested in feedback on writing. Also, the way the study was performed, where there was a cyclical repetition of the steps of process writing (see the steps in the Procedure section) in every new writing, matches a key characteristic of action research, which, according to Kemmis and McTaggart (1992), “develops through the self-reflective spiral: a spiral of cycles of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting, and then re-planning, further implementation, observing and reflecting” (p. 22). Every time a needs analysis was carried out it led to reflection, then implementation, data collection, and then again back to analysis and the implementation of changes throughout the process.

All this research work is in line with the state of the art theory about feedback on writing such as that proposed by Ferris (2003) and McGarrell and Verbeem (2007).

### **Procedure**

Three forms were designed to be used as instruments: a pre-study and a post-study questionnaire, and the students’ writings. The research subjects comprised a group of 18 university students who were majoring in different academic programs and who had a B1 level of English. The study was performed throughout

16 weeks. The students wrote a diagnostic paragraph about their childhood at the beginning of the semester and a post-test paragraph about the same topic at the end of the semester.

The screencasts used in the study are called JING® and are made by TechSmith ([www.techsmith.com](http://www.techsmith.com)). The use of these screencasts has been free and the producer asserts in its website that it will continue being free. To use this tool, it has to be installed on the teacher’s computer but it is not necessary that the students do the same, and the time limit for each screencast is five minutes. Besides the teacher-researcher, another teacher also participated in the project as a second and independent evaluator.

The feedback provided by the teacher-researcher to each student followed Ferris (2003) and took these steps into consideration:

- a. The students would send the teacher-researcher their writings by e-mail. The teacher would read the whole writing in order to assess understanding. If the conveyance of ideas needed little work, then the teacher would write error conventions next to each mistake and would write brief observations at the end of the paper. Otherwise, the teacher would focus the comments exclusively on content.
- b. The teacher would start the oral feedback with the screencasts by giving general and encouraging remarks such as “you’re improving your level of writing.”
- c. Continuing with screencasts, the teacher would comment orally on the weaknesses of the writing and would give recommendations to improve those aspects.
- d. In many cases, the teacher would recommend, in writing or orally, that students develop some exercises intended to help them improve their writing within a time limit.
- e. Finally, the teacher-researcher would upload the audiovisual file into the software’s platform using the screencasts in order to extract the link to the

video of the writing and would send it to the student by e-mail along with the file of the writing in order to have the students develop their second version of the text. It was useful for them to continue their work on the file containing the teacher's comments. Because the teacher's feedback was also written, there were some remarks in each student's file.

- f. Once the students had submitted their final version, both the teacher-researcher and the other participating teacher graded the writings independently, based on the following criteria: (1) Students had to be able to write coherent and cohesive paragraphs, including all their components: a clear topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a closing sentence. (2) The grammar and the vocabulary had to be applied in accordance with the course objectives.

The types of paragraphs students wrote were narrative and descriptive. Every time the students engaged in writing, various pre-writing activities were performed with the idea of preparing the students. Both the pre-writing and writing activities were accomplished in a two-hour, face-to-face session. Students wrote their first draft in this session and the teacher sent the feedback to them after the session and then had the students do their final writings by themselves. Finally, the teacher gave feedback on the final writing. The same process was repeated up to four cycles addressing the features described in Table 1. The grammar points, the types of paragraphs, and the topics students worked on in the four cycles are described below.

Students filled out the pre-study questionnaire and provided the draft and revised version of the three writing tasks. Also, they had to hand in a final version of their writings based on the teacher's feedback and, finally, they had to fill out the post-study questionnaire. The students did all the writings in class sessions and the teacher was always present. To maintain participants' anonymity, each participant was assigned a number.

**Table 1.** Topics, Types of Paragraphs, and Grammar Points in Each Cycle

Cycle	Grammar Points	Type of Paragraph	Topic
First	Passive voice and ed/ing adjectives	Narrative	Technology
Second	Using modal verbs to make predictions	Narrative	Trip to the desert
Third	Second and third conditionals	Descriptive	Colombian culture

### Data Analysis

A blend of content analysis and grounded theory was used in order to reduce the amount of written data to make it more manageable and understandable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) and to facilitate the building of a valid theory from the data analyzed.

### Findings

The way in which autonomy was fostered is shown through a number of reasons given by students in the instruments used. As a result, concepts such as motivation, independent work, writing improvement, awareness of mistakes, motivation, usefulness of feedback, and personalization of feedback were encountered. These are only ways of how and why autonomy was fostered. For this reason, the analysis made does not delve deeply into each one of them but they are only treated up to the extent where they serve the purpose of highlighting the way in which autonomy was fostered. There are ways in which the guidance provided to students left room for their own initiative after being trained in choosing additional sources of information to further consolidate the feedback given by the teacher.

Here is an example of how the teacher left room for students' own initiative to search for additional feedback sources:

At the bottom of the ms Word file in which Student 9 had written her draft of the writing about a trip to the desert, the teacher wrote:

- Interesting story!
- Do some sentence structure exercises.
- Make your own vocabulary list

As for students' perceptions about the usefulness of the feedback provided, the largest number of students perceived that it was very helpful to improve their writings.

When triangulating students' opinions (see Table 3) with the grades they achieved on the writings (see Table 4), the conclusion is that the two pieces of information show coherence and this is supported by the quality of students' writings, as seen in Table 2, where samples of a student's diagnostic and final writings are presented.

The aspects of grammar and mechanics that students received feedback on were spelling, word order, missing words, missing subjects, sentence structure, use of definite and indefinite articles, use of plural and singular,

use of prepositions, use of countable and uncountable nouns, use of comparatives/superlatives, use of the passive voice, use of ing/ed adjectives, and lastly, use of zero, first, second, and third conditionals.

The improvement on paragraph structure is evidenced in the average grade of students. In the diagnostic writing, students had an average grade of 3.22/5.0 for paragraph structure, and in the final writing the grade for the same aspect was 4.44/5.0. An example of this can be seen in Table 2 where it can be observed that the student's development of his writing skills improved in different aspects. To begin with, in the first writing, he wrote a list of facts or events without paragraph structure; there was not really a concluding sentence and the whole writing lacked coherence devices to make the story flow. In addition, there are several grammatical mistakes and the student tended to mostly use basic structures. On the other hand, in the final writing, improvement on the paragraph structure, coherence and cohesion can be seen. For instance, with regard to the paragraph structure, the student improved

**Table 2.** Diagnostic and Final Writing of Student 1

Diagnostic writing: February 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2012	Final writing: June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2012
<p>In 2007 I travelled to Germany 1 year as exchange student, I chose this country because my grandmother was German and in my childhood she talking every time in German. From this moment I was interest for this language, them when I had the opportunity to made a travel I chosen Germany.</p> <p>The first mount was very difficult because I don't speaking very gut German in this moment and the communication betting my German's family and me was difficult because they don't spoken English but in school was more simply because the all people in the school speak English, after the 3 mount I canned a little German spoken the necessary for a basic communication.</p>	<p>When I was five years I hated go to the doctor. One day my mom had taken an appointment for the dentist. While my mom was talking with the secretary, I started to cry, because I was very scared. In that moment the doctor called me and my mom took my hand we entered into the doctor's office. The doctor helped me to sit in the reclining chair; my mom was signing some documents and the face of the doctor made me feel more nervous, he had realized that so he went out of the office and talked with other patients. As no one was watching me, I started to run out of the office and my mom and the doctor ran after me, I did not want go back to that office so I ordered the elevator but my mom had arrived in first place. She was really angry and stated to yelled at me. In the end the dentist examined me and gave me a candy.</p>



in the use of topic sentences, supporting ideas (and there were many ideas exemplifying his description), and the concluding sentence. As for the coherence and cohesion the reader can see how the story flows in such a way that it is easy to follow the description. Finally, as far as grammar is concerned, the basic structures are better used and the student is also using more sophisticated grammatical structures.

In this case, the improvement was in all the topics mentioned above. However, the majority of the improvement can be seen in the grammatical aspect. In the first writing, it can be seen that the student made many mistakes of different types: subject-verb agreement, wrong conjugation of verbs in the past tense, wrong use of basic structures, and wrong use of adverbs. However, in the final writing, the student corrected many of these mistakes and even used more complex grammatical structures. Also, his story has more details that make it easier to read.

The aspects taken into consideration in order to analyze students' progress in coherence and cohesion were: use of connectors and punctuation problems that interfered with the flow of the story (run-on sentences).

The final conclusion was that feedback on writing is a tool to enhance writing because it increases motivation and also leads to scaffolding and this improvement can be evidenced in grammar, coherence, and cohesion.

The finding related to the surprising motivational effectiveness of screencasts as tools to provide oral feedback was an important spin-off of this research work which makes further research on this point worth carrying out. Table 3 is a summary of the students' opinions about the feedback received. The percentage indicates the level of acceptance.

### Discussion

The main finding after the implementation of this study was that students' autonomy increased. It was made evident by the high level of motivation shown by the students in their comments in the post-study questionnaire and confirmed with the grades awarded in their writings. In the case of this study, where students were supposed to perform activities not necessarily on a whim, but for their own selves, we saw the logic behind Little (2007), who said they need to be highly motivated in order to act autonomously. When students made the decision of undertaking the writing of a text and to develop the revision of the same writing based on the teacher's feedback, it was because they were fired by the motivational mood of the teacher's commentary. The feedback was based on the assumption that writers can create their own communicative purpose beyond the purpose of the assignment and this option needs to be taken advantage of in order to motivate revision and then

**Table 3.** Answers From the Post-Study Questionnaire

Written and oral commentary is easier to understand than only written commentary.	70%
Overall, the oral commentary received was helpful.	84%
<b>The feedback received on my texts:</b>	
Helped me improve my writing.	80%
Increased my motivation to revise my texts.	77%
Made it easy for me to revise my texts.	74%
Was helpful for the way I like to learn English.	77%

improvement (McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007). Also, the content of the teacher's comments, which could be understood by the learners, also played the role of scaffolding as stated earlier. These instructions from the teacher were understood by the learners and helped them to develop the writing tasks and confirm Farahani's (2014) assertion that "autonomy is materialized through the cooperation of both the teacher and learner" (p. 109); also, the students seemed to be within Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development<sup>1</sup> as can be inferred in students' comments which acknowledged their having been helped by teacher commentary to improve their writings.

It is necessary to highlight the fact that the writings were graded by a trained and experienced teacher different from the researcher and also double checked by the researcher.

About paragraph structure, it can be said that the written and oral feedback provided for the students helped them to improve their paragraph writing skills. As mentioned above, the aspects analyzed in paragraph structure were the following: inclusion of a topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a concluding sentence. Also, number of words was considered.

Paragraph structure was an aspect on which the teacher-researcher insisted on when dealing with the students in order to have them improve their writings and this effort yielded good results as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Average of Grades of Students in the Diagnostic and Final Writing

	Diagnostic	Final
Paragraph structure	3.22	4.44
Coherence and cohesion	3.55	3.77
Grammar	1.11	2.88
Final grade	2.62	3.7

Note. Maximum grade = 5.0

<sup>1</sup> The distance between what the learner can do on her/his own and what he or she can do under adult guidance (Vygotsky, 1978).

Some students referred to paragraph structure in the post-study questionnaire expressing their awareness of the improvement they had experienced. It is clear that the use of connectors was increased and improved upon as seen in the students' writings and reflected in their grades; the mistakes in punctuation decreased and the presence of run-on sentences almost disappeared.

Regarding grammar, this was the aspect most frequently mentioned by the students and the one in which they showed significant progress.

There were cases where improvement in the writing performance was remarkable. There was a student that received a grade of 1 of a possible 5 (highest) in the diagnostic writing and a grade of 4 in the final composition. In the case of this student, the feedback from the teacher was detailed and abundant. The student understood it and was able to use it for his benefit as his outcome at the end of the course shows. No doubt that many factors could be involved in the students' progress, such as help from other people, but the purpose of feedback provided was precisely aimed at having the students work with all their resources available in order to improve their writings. What is interesting to note is that it was the specific guiding remarks provided by the teacher in the feedback that sparked the students' interest to improve and also to search for help when necessary, inside or outside the classroom. In the case of Student 3, he seemed to ignore what a topic sentence was, at the beginning of the course. When he handed in the third and the final writings he had polished his writing skill on a point on which he had received feedback from the teacher.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, coded, written, and oral feedback with the use of screencasts helped students to improve their paragraph writing skills.

Consequently, it is coherent with the research results to say that the research objective was accomplished satisfactorily to the extent of having improved students'

performance. At the same time, these outcomes open doors for further applications and research on this topic.

In summary, we can say that feedback on writing is a tool to enhance writing because it increases autonomy and also leads to scaffolding and this improvement can be evidenced in improved motivation and grammar, paragraph structure, coherence, and cohesion.

First of all, second language teachers should consider giving students coded written and oral feedback on their writings, with the use of screencasts, as it has been demonstrated that if applied judiciously, it can yield significant benefits for the students' learning process. The use of screencasts to provide feedback on writing is highly recommended due to the benefits for the students. An aspect that should be considered in the training of teachers to use this tool is that of the benefits in terms of quality and time. Teachers who work in the Colombian context, where time constraints are a problem, could avoid the use of this tool due to the idea that it can be too time consuming. Therefore, it should be a priority to train them in the efficient use of the tool.

Whatever the tools teachers decide to work with, as Lakarncchia and Wasanasomsithi (2014) recommend in the case of microblogging, it is advisable that students get trained before they start to develop their writing process.

It is important to consider that the writing skill should be given more importance in the EFL classroom due to its potential as a tool to benefit students' academic performance and to the growing awareness of the beneficial impact of writing skills on language learning as a whole (Graham & Herbert, 2011).

Finally, since feedback must be manageable, timely, and meaningful (Hartshorn, 2008), it demands a continuous effort from the teacher, and also the student, in terms of number of papers to be done and corrected and in terms of organization that permits the teacher to keep track of students' progress and to make meaningful remarks that suit the needs of every student. On the other hand, the need to be focused on

priorities (Zamel, 1985) poses a continuing challenge for teachers as students' drafts contain numerous types of errors that force the teacher to make continuous decisions about which points to work on and which to ignore, at least momentarily. In the implementation of this research project it was easy to be focused on the program objectives, but it was not as easy to focus on students' needs since they can be varied and differ significantly from one student to another and they can also vary over time.

One of the limitations of this study was that some of the students were absent from some of the sessions and it caused the writings of nine students to be collected partially. Nonetheless, all of them responded to the post-study questionnaire and could express their feelings about the process.

On the other hand, no similar studies in the Latin American context have been found. Previous studies would have helped to understand ways in which screencasts could be used in different settings of the Colombian and Latin American contexts.

A valuable research possibility lies in the development of adequate blended feedback (i.e., written and oral) when using screencasts. What is best to be said through writing? What through oral comments? What in both ways? The effectiveness of each solution should be demonstrated through research in order to improve the quality of the teaching of writing.

Finally, research on the relationship between the level of writing of the students in two languages, their native language and in English, is needed for both the teaching of writing and for the purpose of improving feedback on writing strategies. One of the many benefits a study of this type could yield is that it would help to establish a clear distinction between surface errors and deep-level errors and to shed light on efficient ways to treat them. It would be interesting if more studies of this type were undertaken in order to assess the impact of the use of screencasts at different levels of English and where the number of students is bigger.

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