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FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

**The Effect of Peer Assessment on Development of University Students'
Writing Skills in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

(Case of Universities in Georgia)

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to differentiate the significance of different university-related skills and to determine which of them is more important than others. Composition is considered to be very complex skill to acquire due to various reasons, students are not very good at it, neither are they very motivated. Various researches in the last decade have revealed significantly poor writing abilities of learners of English (Giridharan, 2012; Haiyan & Rilong, 2014; Weiquang, 2015). In order to help the learners to overcome the difficulties they encounter while writing there has been a growing interest in developing learners' writing skills.

It is assumed that nowadays students have very little interest in writing and one of the reasons why they have no inclination to write is their poor composition skills resulted in low self-confidence, lack of motivation and enthusiasm (Holmes, Waterbury, Baltriic, & Davis, 2018; Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017). It is suggested that learners' conditional disappointment due to their failure to express themselves well in writing may lead to the loss of creativity (Muslim, 2014). The majority of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners around the world including Georgia face various challenges while communicating their ideas effectively not only in a foreign, but also in the native language. The problem might be caused by the lack of practice and experience, the lack of adequate stock of vocabulary and of interest and creativity in composition. The challenges encountered in the process of writing may be conditioned by the writers' attitudes and perception of composition, their culture, priorities, values, etc. It is posited that students do not write very often and most of what they write is classroom-bound (Adas, 2013). As a result, it can be assumed that one of the factors that make writing daunting for students is the lack of authenticity of the writing tasks given to them.

Peer assessment is the basic assessment approach that creates learner-oriented and effective classroom environment within which the learners can improve their composition skills (Pueghprom & Chiramanee, 2011). Giving / receiving a peer grade, expressing opinions and providing certain guidelines to improve the writing can be metaphorically compared to a mirror reflecting the ability of the reviewer and the reviewed.

Providing peer feedback and evaluation is not commonly practiced in Georgian education. Furthermore, no researches have been conducted so far on investigating the influence of PA in Georgian EFL classes. The absence of research makes it difficult to solve the problem. The present

study will be the first attempt in Georgian context to find out the effectiveness of PA in general and the effect of peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading in particular. It will also present a novel model for implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes.

Goal statement

The present dissertation aims at:

- examining the effect of peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading on the development of undergraduate learners' composition skills in teaching EFL;
- finding out which method of assessment is more effective for enhancing EFL learners' performance in writing – peer feedback without grading or peer evaluation with grading.

Significance of the problem

The government of Georgia puts the primary emphasis on the development of education system and gives a special significance to the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, whose skills are highly-demanded on academic and professional setting. Graduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) need to possess these skills to enable them fulfil their professional duties. However, the level of writing skills is not satisfactory. Among the reasons is ineffective – teacher-centered - assessment of writing skills applied in the process of teaching. To improve the situation a study on the application of peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading as the assessment method of EFL students' writing skills is needed. However, there are no such studies conducted in Georgia. Besides, technologies are minimally integrated in assessment of composition skills in Georgia. Owing to the aforementioned, the topic of the present doctoral dissertation is significant for higher education.

Novelty and actuality

There has been a growing number of literature examining the various educational tools that can contribute to enhancement of EFL students' composition skills (Eady & Lockyer, 2013; Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, &Hui Sun, 2013; Al-Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014). Besides, large number of researches have been investigating the effect of integrating Google Docs in EFL writing classes (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Sharp, 2016); however, there is the lack of research in that

particular direction in Georgian context. Furthermore, the integration of peer assessment has been investigated by many researchers abroad(Bound & Falchikov, 1989; White, 2009; Praver, Rouault, & Eidswick, 2011; De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012; Siow, 2015; Kılıç, 2016), but there is no literature anout the effecct of peer assessment that would take into consideration the Georgia context (culture).

It should also be noted that the present dissertation is original in the point that it compared the effectivness of two peer assessment methods - peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading, which is the novelty of the present research. As a result, it can be stated that the present research provides the new experience and practice of assessemt of EFL writing classes.

Based on all that, the novelty of the present doctoral dissertation deals with the application of Google Docs for the assessment of writing skills and the comparison of two leading forms of assessment (peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading) in enhancing EFL learners' writing performance in Georgian context.

Theoretical and practical value

It is undoubtable that integration of educational technology is of vital importance for pursuing various educational objectives and for creating the educational environment that will be in relevance with the technological and educational advancements. What is more, the search for the latest and the most effective methods of assessment is of paramount importance. In order to equip educators and writing tutors with all the necessary knowledge and experience, the research in the aforementioned fields should grow and hence, it should serve creating new knowledge. As a result, the present research has both practical and theoretical value.

The **theoretical basis** of the dissertation is constructivism and social constructivism as a learning theory, since the integration of peer assessment in writing classes creates the sociocultural context of the learning environment, within which the learners collaborate, review each other's writing, give feedback and grade each other's compositions. It is also based on sociocultural approach of learning and knowledge construction (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and guided participation that implies interaction, observation and collaboration within activities of the learners' culture (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff, 1991). In this regard, the learners develop their abilities through collaboration and

interaction with peers (Amineh & Davatagari, 2015; Batista, 2015; Olusegun, 2015; Lin & Matthews, 2005; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997; Ultanir, 2012).

The current study analyzes linguistic and psychological aspects of writing and the metacognitive processes of writing providing various models, processes and sub-processes of writing that come handy in understanding the psychological and mental processes encountered while writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Repovs & Baddeley, 2006; Galbraith, 2009). The dissertation also addresses the issue of implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes (Siow, 2015; Bound & Falchikov, 1989; Kilic, 2016; De Grez et al., 2012; White, 2009; Praver, Rouault, & Eidswich, 2011). It analyzes the literature in the aforementioned field focusing on the comparison of the effectiveness of peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading on enhancing EFL learners' writing proficiency (Afrasiabi & Khojasteh, 2015; Ayachi, 2017; Cheng & Warren, 2005; Clark, 2003; Ferris, 1997; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Huang, 2016; Lin & Yang, 2011; Nunan, 1999; Rollinson, 2005; Topping, 2009).

The current research discusses the issue of integrating technology in assessing writing skills and analyzes the implementation of Web 2.0 (Google Docs in particular) in EFL writing to enhance the learners' motivation and inclination to write (Peterson-Karlan, 2011; Board, 2003; Warschauer, 2010; Sharp, 2016; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2004).

The **practical value** of the dissertation addresses the practical strategies and a model of implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes through Google Docs. The model of integrating peer assessment through Google Docs for enhancing EFL learners' writing skills which has been designed by the researcher and has a great practical value, since the current dissertation contains many useful peer assessment activities utilized throughout the study, feedback and evaluation rubrics; procedures and practical strategies. The materials in the appendices (activities, feedback and evaluation rubrics, etc.) are of practical value for the teachers of EFL. It will increase educators' awareness of peer assessment, technology role in it, teaching methods and practical strategies for renovating the writing lessons and enhancing the learners' inclination to write. The findings of the current research may encourage EFL teachers to integrate into their practice peer feedback without grading, peer evaluation with grading or a combination of both through Google Docs. Hence, it can be posited that the reader will raise not only the theoretical awareness, but also the practical knowledge about integrating the combination of Google Docs and two peer assessment

methods (peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading) for enhancing EFL learners' performance in writing.

Research questions

The current doctoral dissertation intends to answer the research questions as follows:

- Does peer assessment application have an impact on the development of undergraduate students' writing fluency and accuracy in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- How effective is peer assessment for enhancing undergraduate students' writing fluency in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- How effective is peer assessment for enhancing undergraduate students' writing accuracy in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- How effective is peer feedback without grading for enhancing undergraduate students' writing fluency and accuracy in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- How effective is peer assessment with grading for enhancing undergraduate students' writing fluency and accuracy in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- Does the classroom and community culture have an influence on peer assessment in English as a Foreign Language classes?
- Is there any bias while implementing peer assessment in English as a Foreign Language classes?

Hypothesis

The **hypothesis** of the present research is formulated as follows:

- Using peers for providing feedback and grading each other's writing assignment will contribute to the development of their writing skills.
- Using peer feedback without grading is more effective and influential for enhancing Georgian learners' writing skills compared to peer evaluation with grading.

Research methods

In order to assess the hypothesis of the present study mixed research methods were applied including the quantitative methods (executed in questionnaires, pre- and post-testing in the process

of an experiment and the statistical analysis of the data) as well as qualitative methods (executed in interviews and the researcher's introspection). The tools for obtaining the valuable data were as follows:

- Analyzing the significant body of the literature on the present field;
- Pre- and post-experimental questionnaires with teachers and students made up by the researcher;
- Experiment;
- Post-experimental interviews with research participants;
- The researcher's introspection;
- Assessment of student-participants' performance in writing through pre-, while-1, while-2 and post-test;
- Statistical analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires and test results of the experiment via SPSS 22.0.

Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation involves four chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical background behind teaching and learning writing, namely, constructivism as a learning theory; the importance of teaching and learning writing; psychological aspects of writing; difficulties in teaching and learning writing; methods of teaching in relation to writing, and types of assessment in writing. Chapter 2 overviews the literature on peer assessment and concentrates on implementing effective peer assessment in teaching and learning writing. It also represents the practical strategies of integrating peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading through digital tool namely, Google Docs. It provides the reader with the practical strategies for designing the model of implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes. Chapter 3 of the present dissertation represents the design, findings, discussions and limitations of the research. The dissertation ends with concluding remarks, recommendations, references, and appendices. The dissertation involves 31 tables, 10 figures and 21 appendices.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WRITING

Writing has been regarded as one of the most complex cognitive activities from all four skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing). Therefore, the learners' conditional disappointment and failure to express themselves in written speech leads them to lose motivation, enthusiasm and consequently, lose creativity while performing writing tasks.

The complexity of composition is conditioned by various linguistic and psychological aspects, since it is the process of building internal representations and involves sub-processes, such as generating ideas retrieved from long-term memory; grouping them; forming new concepts; identifying different categories and setting the procedural and substantive goals. Another difficulty that has been reported while dealing with writing may be conditioned by the fact that teachers are not familiar with the ways how to facilitate writing instruction. They may also lack the practice and training. Their belief system also shapes the way they teach writing. Furthermore, it has been echoed that EFL learners often struggle with translating thoughts and ideas from L1 into foreign language, especially when both language systems differ. Apart from that, the complexity of composition can also be conditioned by the learners' poor linguistic competence, or psychological factors, such as self-efficacy and anxiety. Though, it should be noted that regardless the complex cognitive nature of writing, it is one of the strongest ways to communicate the ideas and demonstrate one's personality. Besides, it is one of the most essential competencies in many occupational fields and job market.

In order to scaffold the learners on the difficult path of acquiring writing skill, teachers should be aware of various teaching methods in order to be able to opt for the right one in relation to the contemporary needs of the millennials – 21st century learners. In this regard, in order to equip students with the necessary communicative skills to deliver written message properly to the audience, flexible teaching style is of vital importance for utilizing various teaching methods according to teaching objectives. Apart from opting for the most effective teaching methods and taking into consideration the fact that any individual's writing ability is conditioned by a variety of skills employed in a diversity of context, the assessment of writing should also have an eclectic and flexible form.

CHAPTER 2. IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE PEER ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING WRITING

Throughout the years there has been conducted a significant number of studies in search of effective strategies and methods of teaching and learning writing and still there is high interest towards the aforementioned issue. Owing to the fact that one of the primary objectives of Higher Education is to promote lifelong and autonomous learning, peer assessment is echoed to be one of the most effective assessment methods that contributes to pursuing the aforementioned objectives. Besides, the theoretical background behind peer assessment is constructivism and social constructivism learning theories, within which the social interaction in the sociocultural context is promoted. Integration of peer assessment in EFL writing classes creates the cooperative learning environment, where the learners collaborate, review each other's writing, give feedback and hence, develop metacognitive skills through deepening the knowledge about their own abilities.

Integration of peer assessment in EFL writing classes helps the learners think critically and take control of their own learning. Peer learning, that is incorporated in order to enhance learning, can be utilized in different forms, such as peer assessment that involves grading one another and peer feedback without grading, both of which have benefits as well as challenges. Peer feedback can be seen as all kinds of comments including advice, praise or suggestions. It provides verbal information about how the peer is doing in efforts of reaching goals. One of the benefits of peer feedback is the learners' positive attitude towards it. It is also believed to contribute to the increase of the learners' motivation and inclination to write, since they know that their writing will have the authentic reader. It is suggested that peer feedback equips learners with plethora of lifelong skills, promotes critical thinking and develops reviewing abilities. Though, one of the challenges of peer feedback is the fact that it is sometimes referred to as a time-consuming assessment method. It is also suggested that the learners' culture can influence the quality of peer feedback. Another challenge may be the learners' inexperience that may lead them to be blind to errors.

Advantages and limitations of peer evaluation with grading can also be discussed. One of the benefits of peer evaluation with grading is the fact that it can increase the learners' autonomy. It also promotes a learner-oriented environment increasing the learners' awareness of the audience and not only their own abilities but also their peers'. As seen from the discussion of both peer assessment practices, it can be assumed that in point of benefits, both peer feedback without grading and peer

evaluation with grading can have number of similarities. Though, like peer feedback without grading, peer evaluation with grading has some limitations that are not very different from the challenges of peer feedback. The difference in limitations is that the learners have more negative attitudes towards peer grading and would prefer giving feedback rather than grading their peers.

Regardless the benefits of peer feedback and peer grading, teachers and learners encounter various challenges while implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes. There is always the concern about the reliability and validity while incorporating peer assessment in writing. There are different factors that may influence the validity of reliability of peer assessment, such as the learners' lack of experience and writing quality. It is also suggested that the latter are prone to group packs and inflate their grades and hence, they are prone to bias, such as friendship or cultural ones. The latter has a very influential role in language acquisition, since it is believed that one sees and interprets the world throughout the culture. As a result, language acquisition is connected with the principles, beliefs, and values of culture they belong to. Community and classroom culture play the significant role in shaping one's thoughts, approaches to life, language and cognition. Classroom culture is referred to the teaching and learning environment, which has various features, such as educational values, beliefs concerning teaching and learning methods and approaches, teacher and learner responsibility, forms of socialization, assessment and knowledge acquisition. Consequently, the learners' engagement in peer assessment of EFL writing can also be conditioned by their culture with the help of which they create the classroom atmosphere, climate and classroom culture. Two main cultural characteristics are discussed in contemporary cross-cultural psychology – individualism and collectivism. Based on the literature review, it can be posited that Georgian culture is related to small groups, such as family, relatives, friends and have characteristics more of collectivistic culture. Hence, it can be assumed that collectivistic mindset and strong ties with family and friends, the learners may be prone to friendship bias. It may be conditioned by the fact that they may worry not to spoil friendship by giving rather negative feedback or low grades to the peers with who they have developed friendly relationships. Though, it can also be notes that the cultural issues need further investigation and research is needed to analyze the impact of culture on implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes in Georgia.

Implementation of peer assessment in EFL writing classes requires careful planning from the teachers' side since it is a complex task. The latter should find effective strategies to incorporate

peer assessment practice in teaching and learning process. The first stage of incorporating peer assessment is to carefully select the writing forms and activities that will be relevant to the curriculum, syllabus and teaching objectives and at the same time, will have the practical value. Next, the teacher should create feedback and grading rubrics.
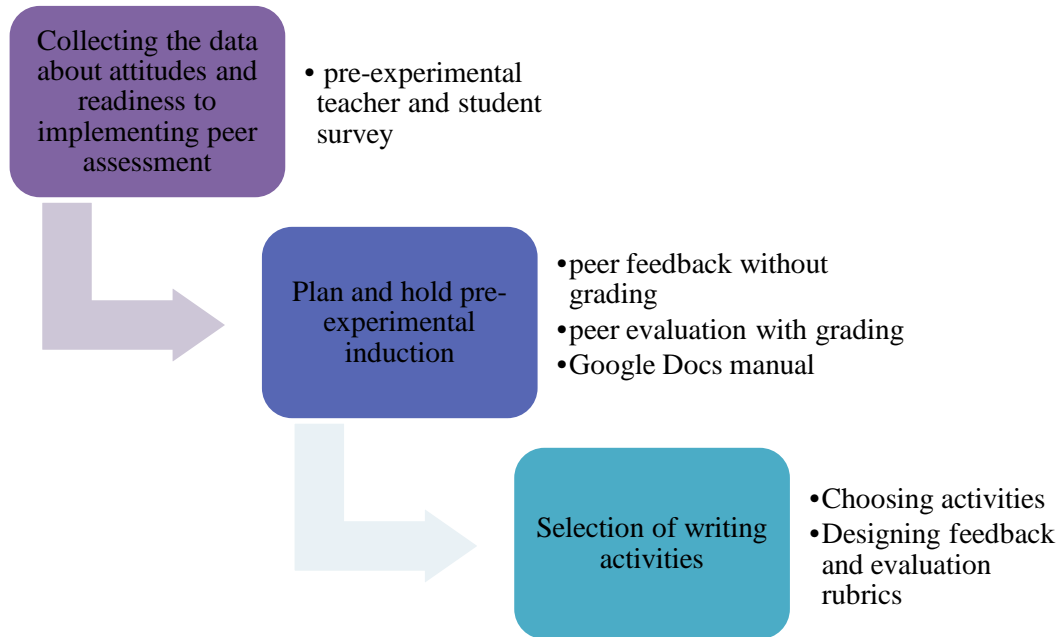
Table 1. Criteria for choosing writing forms and activities

Criteria	Indicators
Relevance	The content and the form is current and up-to-date. It is in relevance to the study program, objectives and the curriculum. It is also in relevance to the learners' age and development.
Practical Value	The content and form of writing activities are authentic. The learners are able to utilize them in real-life situations.
Teaching Objectives	The content and form of writing activities meet the teaching objectives. The assessment criteria are valid and reliable

The content and the types of writing activities should meet the objectives of the study program and at the same time they should be valid and reliable. The feedback and evaluation criteria should measure what it is supposed to measure.

Since the learners of 21st century are digital natives and are updated to each technological advancement, the educators have to put upon the responsibility of keeping up with the various digital tools that can be incorporated in teaching and learning process. Within the current research, Google Docs was utilized to conduct peer assessment due to the various reasons. Firstly, it is reported to be easy to use and free of charge. Secondly, because the research participants already had Google accounts provided for them by Ilia State University that would make implementation of Google Docs easy for the researcher as well as for the research participants. Thirdly, Google Docs gives users plethora of opportunities to share, edit, modify and revisit the documents anytime and from any place with access to internet. Figure 1 provides the visual representation of the strategies of implementing peer assessment in EFL writing among undergraduate university students. It illustrates the experimental study design.

Figure 1. Experimental study design

Collecting the data about attitudes and readiness to implementing peer assessment
- pre-experimental teacher and student survey

Plan and hold pre-experimental induction
- peer feedback without grading
- peer evaluation with grading
- Google Docs manual

Selection of writing activities
- Choosing activities
- Designing feedback and evaluation rubrics

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The current doctoral dissertation consists of five major studies. Table 2 illustrates five studies, their objectives and tools for obtaining data through each study.

Table 2. Research design

Study	Objectives	Tools for obtaining data
Study 1: Attitudes towards writing and peer assessment	To determine the teachers' and students' views about writing and peer assessment; To determine the teachers' and students' readiness for the experiment.	Survey on Google Forms.
Study 2: Experimental study	To investigate the effect of peer assessment on the development of students' writing skills; To investigate which method (peer feedback or peer evaluation) was more effective.	Students' results from pre-experimental test; while-test 1; while-test 2 and post-experimental test.
Study 3: Post-experimental student survey	To determine the student participants' impressions about peer feedback and peer evaluation; To compare which method was more appealing to students	Survey on Google Forms.

| Study 4: Post-experimental student interview	To gain inside out knowledge about their impressions and attitudes towards writing, peer feedback, peer evaluation and Google Docs after participating in the experimental study.	Semi-structured interview questions.
Study 5: The researcher's (teacher's) post-experimental introspection.	To investigate the researcher's impressions on the experiment, its effectiveness and further considerations.	The researcher's introspection.

Before setting the experiment, pre-experimental survey was administered with 66 EFL teachers from thirteen private and public Higher Education Institutions both from Tbilisi and the regions of Georgia. The number of students who took the survey was 84. It was revealed from pre-experimental survey that teachers had rather positive attitudes towards peer assessment. Though, they were concerned about the possible friendship bias and the learners' inexperience. Similar to teachers' pre-experimental survey, the students also expressed the concern about feelings if they received negative feedback. Overall, pre-experimental surveys revealed the learners' readiness to take part in peer assessment activities.

The participants of the present study were 79 students from Ilia State University from different faculties. Based on the research objectives, the research participants were randomly put in one control and two experimental groups (peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading). The research participants' level of English proficiency was A1 (Elementary) defined via placement test that was administered and assessed by English Book in Georgia LTD – Ilia State University, Admissions Office. The total number of students in control group was 26 (15-female, 11-male; 3 – Azeri and 1 – Turkish). The total number of the research participants in Experimental group 1 (peer feedback without grading) was 27 (16 – female, 11 – male; 24 – Georgian, 2 – Azeri. 1 – Armenian). The number of participants in Experimental group 2 (peer evaluation with grading) was 26 (10 - female, 16 – male; 25 – Georgian, 1 - Armenian).

The duration of the study was fall semester of the academic year 2017-2018. The total number of the writing activities was 17 (the research participants received writing practice once per week during the study). The research participants received 39-hour writing practice in both experimental groups, excluding 4 hour of four academic writing tests and one final test. It should also be noted that the research participants from both groups received an intense practice, that increased the reliability of

the results in pre-, while 1, while 2 and post-tests. In control group the learners received the traditional method of teaching and learning writing. Besides, the assessment at Ilia State University where the study was carried out did not include peer assessment. Therefore, the learners from the control group were not exposed to peer assessment during the experiment. The teacher was choosing the forms of writing, the activities and the assessment rubric and the learners received only the teacher's assessment of their composition. Unlike the control group, in experimental group 1 peer feedback without grading was integrated and the research participants from experimental group 2 took part in peer assessment writing activities implying reviewing and grading the peers' compositions. Figure 2 below represents the model of implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes.

Figure 2. Peer assessment implementation model in EFL writing classes (designed by the researcher)
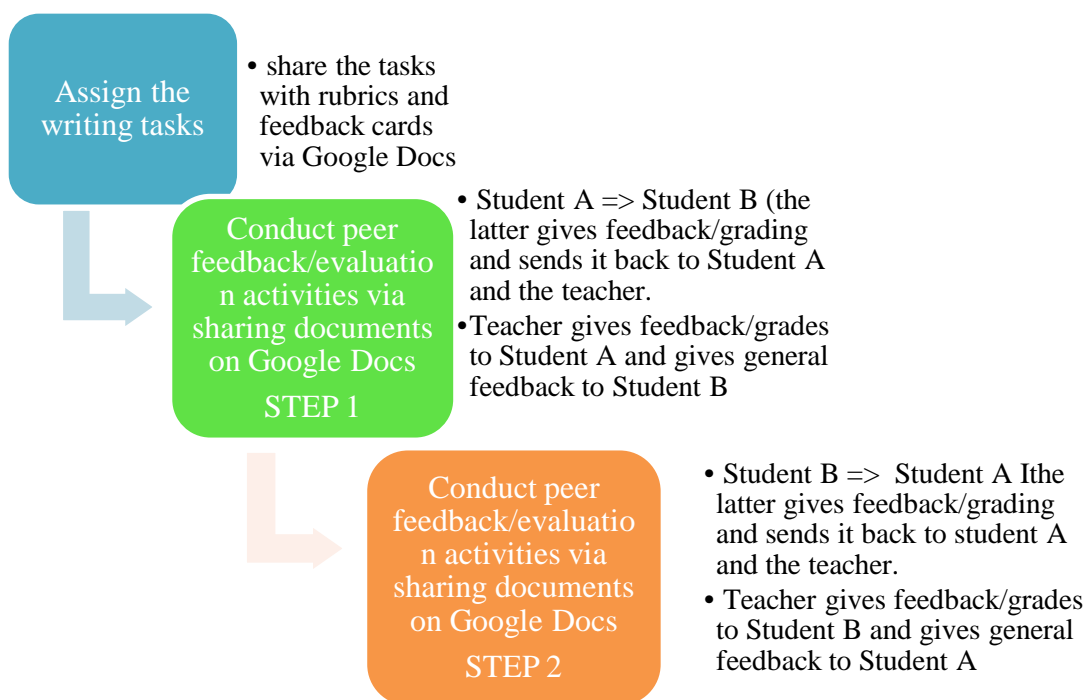
The primary objective of the current doctoral dissertation was to investigate the effect of peer assessment on developing EFL learners' writing skills. It was aimed at investigating which form of peer assessment (peer feedback without grading or peer evaluation with grading) contributed more to developing undergraduate EFL students' composition skills. In order to measure the results, pre-, while 1, while 2 and post-experimental tests were administered within the research period. For

analyzing the quantitative data obtained from all four writing tests Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) was used.

Table 3 below represents the performance data of control and both experimental groups in all four tests. As shown in table 3 the results from pre-test increased in post-tests, since the mean of pre-test was .36731 and it increases in while test 1 by 3.45768 and in post-test it sharply increases making up 4.5577. Table 3 also shows that Std. Deviation in control group's pre-test is 1.33373 and it is .74936 in while test 1 that shows the decrease by 0.58437 meaning that the results were becoming more homogeneous in while test 1 than in pre-test. Std. Deviation of control group in post-test is the lowest of all four tests (.49653) illustrating the homogeneity of the research participants' results. It can be concluded that since the mean of the marks was the highest and the Std. Deviation was the lowest in control group's post-test during the study period the learners developed their writing proficiency and improved their marks. Table 3 depicts that the learners writing performance developed during the fall semester regardless the fact that they received the traditional teaching method.

As shown in Table 3 Std. Deviation of the test results in peer feedback group decreases gradually in pre-, while 1, while 2 and post-test and in the latter it is the lowest (.09623) showing the homogeneity of marks. Furthermore, the mean score of the test results increase and in the post-test it is 4.9815. According to table 3 it can be assumed that the learners from peer feedback group increased their level of writing proficiency during the fall semester within the experiment.

Table 3 also presents the Std. Deviation and mean of test results in experimental group 2: peer evaluation with grading. It shows that the mean increased by 0.6154 between pre-test (3.6154) and while test 1 (4.2308) Table 5 also shows that mean results increase in while test 2 as well and it is 4.5192. Mean of post-test results is 4.8654 that shows that the research participants' mean results increased by 1.25 and is the highest in all four tests. Furthermore, Std. Deviation of the marks in post-experimental test is .09623 that depicts the homogeneity of test results and therefore, the effectiveness of incorporating peer feedback without grading in EFL writing classes.

Table 3 illustrates that mean of the test results in both experimental groups gradually increase, though it shows that the increase is higher in peer feedback group than in peer grading group. As depicted in Table 3, mean of pre-test results in experimental group 1 (peer feedback without grading) is 4.5185 is higher than the mean of experimental group 2 (peer evaluation with grading)

that is 4.2308. Table 3 shows that mean score in post-tests in both experimental groups increase, though mean score in post-test in experimental group 1 is 4.9815, while it is 4.8654 in experimental group 2 that depicts that the increase in marks is higher in feedback group than in grading group. It shows that peer feedback without grading is more effective than peer evaluation with grading. It reveals that peer feedback contributed to the development of undergraduate EFL learners' writing skills and improved their performance.

Table 3. Representative performance data of Control and Experimental groups in all tests

Participants		Pre_experimental_test	While_test_1	While_test_2	Post_Experimental_test
Control group	**Mean**	3.6731	4.1923	4.0769	4.5577
	Std. Deviation	1.33373	.74936	1.11079	.49653
Peer feedback without grading	**Mean**	3.2963	4.5185	4.9259	4.9815
	Std. Deviation	1.55204	.46989	.22802	.09623
Peer evaluation with grading	**Mean**	3.6154	4.2308	4.5192	4.8654
	Std. Deviation	.69725	.62017	.55643	.33340
Total	**Mean**	3.5253	4.3165	4.5127	4.8038
	Std. Deviation	1.24782	.63133	.79653	.38744

Two different post-experimental surveys were administered with students from two experimental groups. The total number of research participants in both experimental groups was 53. With the respect to post-experimental student survey, it was revealed that research participants from both experimental groups had positive attitudes towards peer assessment, since they believe peer feedback and peer grading was useful for them, since both assessment practices raised their awareness of their own writing performance and improved the writing fluency as well as the accuracy.

The post-experimental interviews with the research participants from both experimental groups revealed that implementation of peer assessment contributed to the improvement of the research participants' grammar, mechanics, structure and organization of different forms of writing. Though, both surveys and interviews revealed that peer feedback without grading was more comfortable and

appealing for the research participants. Some students stated they would avoid grading peers since it was a very uncomfortable experience and big responsibility that they would not take themselves. The lecturer's (the researcher's) monitoring in the peer assessment process was of vital importance for avoiding any bias and scaffolding the learners on their learning path. Google Docs was also a very positive experience, since the research participants from both groups shared their experience with others and promoted utilization of Google Docs in other subjects and activities, such as Academic Writing, group projects and presentations.

The current study also applied the researcher's (the lecturer's) post-experimental introspection that revealed the researcher's own experience, described some limitations, benefits and challenges encountered by the researcher during the experiment. It also provides the recommendations for implementing peer assessment in EFL writing classes and has the practical value for the readers and especially educators and writing tutors.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

- The significant body of the literature analyzed in the current dissertation depicts the importance and value of the writing skill in academic setting as well as in the job market. Writing can be considered to be one of the most vital skills to possess in order to guarantee academic and professional success in the rapidly growing and changing world. It was also analyzed that writing is a complex, cognitive skill that includes multiple psychological and linguistic aspects that should be taken into consideration while teaching EFL writing.

- The present doctoral dissertation also demonstrates the analysis of the theories behind the implementation of peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading constructing the main postulates of implementation of peer assessment on Vygotsky's and Dewey's philosophical and psychological theories.

- A considerable amount of literature analyzed in the current research proves that the implementation of peer assessment in EFL writing classes creates the learning environment that incorporates collaboration and construction of new knowledge, skills and concepts. The meticulous review of the literature proves that peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading can enhance the learners' motivation and engagement in EFL writing activities that can ensure the development of learners' writing proficiency as well as the development of metacognitive skills.

- The current study suggests that Higher Education Institutions should encourage the students to take more responsibility for their own learning and develop metacognitive skills. A large and growing body of literature has investigated that the integration of peer assessment in the teaching and learning process of writing is one of the most effective ways to pursue the aforementioned objectives. The literature review of the present study revealed that both peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading enhance the autonomous learning, develops the learners' metacognitive skills through developing their critical reading and reviewing skills. They both increase the learners' awareness of various aspects of writing as well as about their own language proficiency and writing skills. Peer assessment grows the potential to learn. It develops the individual's awareness of one's needs. It is the pro-active approach to learning tasks and keeps the balance between accuracy and

appropriacy. It develops the willingness and ability to construct, maintain and revise language models and frameworks.

- The considerable amount of literature presented in the current study discussed the limitations and challenges encountered while implementing peer feedback or peer grading in EFL writing classes. One of such limitations may be the learners' negative attitudes and reluctance to be engaged in peer assessment activities. Another challenge may be the learners' mistrust and doubt in their peers' proficiency and qualification that may contribute to their preference of teacher feedback or teacher grading. Some researchers also discussed the complexity of ensuring the learners' objectivity of the grades given to their peers (Ozogul & Sallivan, 2009). Other studies have reported that learners prefer only feedback and avoid grading their peers' writing (Medocca & Johnson, 1994; Cheng & Warren, 2005; Brammer & Rees, 2010). The findings of the current dissertation are in correspondence with those studies that reported the learners' preference of peer feedback and avoidance of peer evaluation reported in aforementioned researches. Numerous studies have referred to validity and reliability as the limitations of peer grading and peer feedback, stating that the learners are prone to bias, especially when they group packs and inflate their grades (Fletcher & Batley, 1999; Gielen, Peters, Dochy, Onghena & Stryven, 2010; Cho, Schunn & Wilson, 2006; Heywood, 2000; Dancer & Dancer, 1996; Mathews, 1994).

- The literature review of the present dissertation analyzed the influence of classroom and community culture on the learners' engagement in peer assessment. It also shed the light on some characteristics of Georgian culture revealing the students' strong parental ties and close relationships with family, friends and relatives that are characteristics more of collectivistic countries according to the literature analyzed. The literature reviewed in the present study suggests that these characteristics may be one of the reasons why the students may feel uncomfortable, reluctant or nervous while grading their friends or giving feedback on their peers' writing fearing not to spoil their friendship. The examples of friendship bias are provided in the analysis of the post-experimental interviews with the group of peer evaluation with grading. One student confessed that she would correct and grade the peers' writing with more attention if the latter was just her classmate, while another student from the same group echoed that he would evaluate his friends' writing with more responsibility and attention rather than the writing of his peer with whom he had not developed friendly

relationships. They also confessed that in these occasions, they started to become more objective only because of the teacher's (researcher's) monitoring. One of the research questions of the current study was whether the classroom and community culture had an influence on peer assessment in English as a Foreign Language classes. Another research question referred to any bias while implementing peer assessment in English as a Foreign Language classes. Therefore, after the meticulous study of the literature combined with the findings obtained throughout the present study both of the research questions were responded. It can be assumed that classroom and community culture influences peer assessment in English as a Foreign Language classes and there may occur friendship bias conditioned by the reviewers' cultural characteristics.

- The research participants from peer feedback group stated that they improved vocabulary through the feedback rubrics and the comments they received from their peers since they had to search for words to understand the meanings of the peers' and teachers' comments. In the post-experimental interviews the research participants from feedback group reported that they developed not only the vocabulary but also the spelling, grammar and relevant structure. Consequently, it can be concluded that peer feedback without grading contributed to the development of the research participants' fluency and accuracy and in this regard, it responded to the third research question whether peer feedback without grading was effective for enhancing undergraduate university students' fluency and accuracy.

- The students from peer evaluation group stated to have raised their awareness of their own writing skills as well as writing in general. Their majority also reported to have developed their accuracy in terms of writing mechanics. In this regard the current study responded to the fourth research question whether peer evaluation with grading was effective for enhancing undergraduate university students' fluency and accuracy. Although, the learners' perception of peer evaluation of grading and their feelings were quite controversial to their results, since their majority reported the negative attitude towards giving grades to peers and preferred to be responsible for giving feedback without grading.

- The literature review regarding the integration of technology as the tool for teaching and learning writing together with the research findings obtained from the post-experimental student survey, post-experimental student interviews and the researcher's (teacher's) introspection revealed that the use of Google Docs as a tool for writing was not only

appealing and practical for the research participants, but also very effective, user-friendly and time-saving. Therefore, the multiple data obtained throughout the study revealed that undergraduate university students have high level of readiness to utilize Google Docs in their writing classes. Furthermore, the research participants also reported that they had a successful attempt to use Google Docs in other subjects as well, such as Academic Writing, group projects and presentations and in this regard, they share their knowledge and experience obtained throughout the study with other peers from other subjects as well as promoted utilization of Google Docs in teaching and learning process.

- A peer assessment implementation model in EFL writing classes was designed by the researcher. It involves the following steps: 1) developing the assessment rubrics together with students; then giving the writing tasks to students, dividing them in pairs; 2) The students in pairs assess (with or without grading) each other's writings, then send the assessed writings to the teacher via Google docs; 3) the teacher gives his/her assessment to both students, after which the final versions are again sent to the teacher.

- The designed, implemented and tested model provided in the present dissertation, supported both the research hypothesis that using peers for providing feedback and grading on each other's writing assignment will contribute to the development of their writing skills and using peer feedback without grading is more effective and influential for enhancing the learners' writing skills compared to peer evaluation with grading. The assessment of experiment results reveals the gradual increase in students' academic achievement in English as a Foreign Language writing. Besides, it should also be noted that the learners developed the reviewing skills as well. Initially, their assessment was not very similar to the teacher's assessment, but time by time their grades and feedback coincided with teacher's grades and feedback. They also were receiving teacher's feedback on their reviewing skills that also contributed to the development of students' reviewing and critical reading skills.

- The statistical data analyzed through SPSS 22.0 revealed that the learners' writing skills from the experimental group 1 (peer feedback without grading) increased significantly, which reveals that the mean score of the post-experimental test was the highest from all four tests and ensured the maximal grows (by 1.6887), making up 4.9815. The results also showed the homogeneity of research participants' grades, since the standard deviation of the post-test in peer feedback group was the lowest -0.09623 (decreased by 1.45581). The

statistical results illustrated that, though both experimental groups showed an increase in writing, the mean of post-experimental test in peer feedback group (4.9815) was higher by 0.1161 than the mean score of post-experimental test in peer evaluation group (4.8654). Although the difference between the two groups' final results is minimal, the growth difference is more impressive (by 1.6852, compared with the second experimental group's 1.25 points' growth). Accordingly, the following concluding remarks can be made: though both assessment methods (peer feedback without grading and peer evaluation with grading) contributed to the development of the research participants' writing skills more than the traditional method, the increase is higher in peer feedback group, which gives the researcher an opportunity to conclude that peer feedback without grading can be seen as a more effective and more appealing assessment method for undergraduate students for developing English as a Foreign Language writing skills.

➕ Based on the research findings, valuable insights and recommendations can be provided. Firstly, the research findings reveal that the use of Web 2.0 and Google Docs in particular meets with the expectations of today's students - the digital natives contributing to their high engagement in learning process. In this regard, the utilization of Google Docs in EFL writing classes is highly recommended. Secondly, the findings of the current study that were obtained from various data support the integration of peer assessment in EFL writing classes for enhancing the learners' writing abilities. The research findings also revealed the vital importance of the teacher's clear instructions and his or her monitoring while conducting peer feedback without grading or peer evaluation with grading. Therefore, the teacher's role, based on the research findings, is to monitor the peer assessment process through checking the feedback and grades that the learners assign to each other. In this case, the teacher can reduce friendship bias that may occur while conducting peer assessment activities in EFL writing classes. It is also recommended to give feedback to the reviewers as well in order to ensure the development of their critical reading and reviewing skills. Although it seems daunting and time-consuming, through the utilization of Google Docs peer assessment becomes less time-consuming and more effective. And last, but not least, it is recommended that peer feedback can be implemented without grading, but peer grading should be followed by the feedback as well to provide learners with the thorough evaluation of their written

works. Besides, based on the research findings (questionnaires and interviews), learners preferred giving feedback rather than grading their peers' writing.

List of publications

Merkviladze, M. (2018). Peer Feedback in Writing through Georgian EFL Undergraduate Students' Eyes. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region, 3*(2), 2-9.

Merkviladze, M. (2018, March 31). Theoretical Analysis of Digital Tools for Promoting Peer Assessment in EFL Writing Classes. *SEPIKE, 19*, 42-48.

Merkviladze, M. (2017, December 31). Peer Assessment of Writing throughout EFL Teachers' Eyes: Case of Higher Educational Institutions of Georgia. *SEPIKE, 18*, 51-55.

Merkviladze, M., & Chkotua, M. (2016). Psychological Aspects of Teaching and Learning Writing. The 7th International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature (pp.458-470). Tbilisi: International Black Sea University.