



Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου
University of Cyprus

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**PEER ASSESSMENT: A DYNAMIC LEARNING-ORIENTED TOOL FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

ELENI MELETIADOU

2017



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**PEER ASSESSMENT: A DYNAMIC LEARNING-ORIENTED TOOL FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS**

ELENI MELETIADOU

A Dissertation submitted to the University of Cyprus in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Τις τελευταίες δυο δεκαετίες, καθηγητές, ερευνητές και εκπαιδευτικές αρχές εκφράζουν την ανησυχία τους για την κακή επίδοση των μαθητών/-τριών και την αποτυχία τους σε επίσημες τελικές εξετάσεις (Lee, 2009; Meletiadou, 2013; Pανιου & Ιοαννου-Georgiou, 2005; Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015). Η έρευνα έχει δείξει ότι η ΕΑ (έτερο-αξιολόγηση) μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί με επιτυχία σαν εργαλείο για να βελτιώσει την γραπτή ικανότητα των μαθητών/-τριών και να προωθήσει την σύνδεση της διδασκαλίας με την αξιολόγηση της μαθησιακής προόδου τους (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Παρόλ' αυτά, η χρήση της ΕΑ και της αξιολόγησης του καθηγητή/-τριας (ΑΚ) στην δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση δεν έχει ακόμη ερευνηθεί ευρέως (Tsivitanidou, Zacharia & Hovardas, 2011).

Ειδικότερα, η παρούσα διατριβή ερευνά την χρήση της ΕΑ σαν ένα δυναμικό εργαλείο μάθησης που μπορεί να βελτιώσει τον γραπτό λόγο των μαθητών/-τριών που διδάσκονται την Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα στην δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση. Η παρούσα μελέτη έχει ως στόχο την ανάπτυξη ενός μοντέλου ενσωμάτωσης της ΕΑ στη διδασκαλία στην πρωτοβάθμια και τη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση και να ερευνήσει την επίδραση της ΕΑ στη μάθηση που περιγράφεται με τον όρο επακόλουθη εγκυρότητα από πολλούς ερευνητές (Boud, 1995; Sambell et al, 1997). Στόχος της είναι να συμβάλει στη προσπάθεια των καθηγητών να βελτιώσουν την επίδοση των μαθητών/-τριών και τις στάσεις τους, ειδικά στον τομέα του γραπτού λόγου κατά την εκμάθηση της Αγγλικής ως ξένη γλώσσα.

Η παρούσα διατριβή επικεντρώνεται σε μια έρευνα που υιοθέτησε μια ημι-πειραματική προσέγγιση και εστίασε στην ΕΑ γραπτού λόγου κατά την εκμάθηση της Αγγλικής ως ξένη γλώσσα στη Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση στην Κύπρο. Είχε ως στόχο να εξετάσει: (α) την επίδραση της ΕΑ και της ΑΚ στην γραπτή επίδοση των μαθητών/-τριών της Αγγλικής όπως αυτό καταδεικνύεται στην βαθμολογία που έλαβαν πριν και μετά την χρήση της ΕΑ και της ΑΚ αντί της ΑΚ μόνο, (β) την επίδραση της ΕΑ και της ΑΚ στην ποιότητα του γραπτού λόγου των μαθητών/-τριών στις πειραματικές ομάδες σε αντίθεση με τις ομάδες ελέγχου (γ) τις στάσεις των μαθητών Αγγλικής απέναντι στην ΕΑ, και (δ) τις στάσεις των καθηγητών Αγγλικής απέναντι στην ΕΑ.

Τα άτομα που συμμετείχαν στην μελέτη ήταν: (α) είκοσι ομάδες δέκα εφήβων μαθητών/-τριών που διδάσκονται την Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα (200 μαθητές/-τριες συνολικά) μέσου επιπέδου (B1 με βάση το Κοινό Ευρωπαϊκό Πλαίσιο Αναφοράς για τις Γλώσσες); (β) 20 καθηγητές Αγγλικής, και (γ) ένας βοηθός. Όλοι οι συμμετέχοντες εκπαιδεύτηκαν κατάλληλα στις μεθόδους ΕΑ. Τα αποτελέσματα αναλύθηκαν χρησιμοποιώντας μια πλειάδα ποιοτικών και ποσοτικών μεθόδων. Τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης υπέδειξαν ότι η ΕΑ και η ΑΚ μπορούν να έχουν μια μέτρια θετική επίδραση στην γραπτή επίδοση των μαθητών/-τριών Αγγλικής επηρεάζοντας όλες τις πλευρές του γραπτού λόγου (μηχανική, οργάνωση, περιεχόμενο, λεξιλόγιο, κειμενικό είδος και χρήση της γλώσσας). Η επίδραση ήταν πιο σημαντική στους 'αδύναμους' μαθητές/-τριες που χρειάζονται περισσότερο τα οφέλη που μπορεί να τους παρέχει η ΕΑ.

Οι διαθέσεις των καθηγητών και των μαθητών έναντι της ΕΑ ήταν θετικές και όλοι εξέφρασαν την επιθυμία να χρησιμοποιήσουν την ΕΑ στο μέλλον. Τα αποτελέσματα αυτά μπορούν να συμβάλουν στην διαμόρφωση γλωσσικής θεωρίας εφόσον εισηγούνται ότι η εκμάθηση μιας γλώσσας και η ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων μπορούν να βελτιωθούν στο κατάλληλο μαθησιακό περιβάλλον που συμπεριλαμβάνει την ΕΑ σαν δυναμικό εργαλείο μάθησης. Η ΕΑ αναμένεται να συνεισφέρει σημαντικά στην εκπαίδευση αν: (α) δοθεί επαρκής εκπαίδευση και υποστήριξη σε όλους τους συμμετέχοντες, (β) προσεκτικά σχεδιασμένα εργαλεία χρησιμοποιηθούν για να εξοικειώσουν τους μαθητές/-τριες με την διαδικασία της ΕΑ, (γ) η ΕΑ εισαχθεί σταδιακά και χρησιμοποιηθεί σε τακτική βάση όσο το δυνατόν πιο νωρίς, ακόμη και στην δημοτική εκπαίδευση, και (δ) η έμφαση είναι στη διαμορφωτική χρήση της ΕΑ σαν ένα δυναμικό εργαλείο προσανατολισμένο προς την βελτίωση της μάθησης που μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί από τους καθηγητές/-τριες για να βελτιώσει τις ικανότητες τους. Η μελέτη παρέχει εισηγήσεις για την εκπαίδευση των καθηγητών/-τριων και μαθητών/-τριων που διδάσκονται την Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα στις δεξιότητες που συνδέονται με την χρήση της, για τη διεξαγωγή έρευνας στην ΕΑ και σε άλλες εναλλακτικές μεθόδους μάθησης και για την εφαρμογή της στις τάξεις εκμάθησης του γραπτού λόγου στην δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση. Επίσης προτείνει κατευθύνσεις για περαιτέρω έρευνα.

ABSTRACT

In the last two decades, teachers, researchers and educational authorities express their concern for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' poor writing performance and failure in formal tests (Lee, 2009; Meletiadou, 2013; Pavlou et al., 2005; Tsigari & Meletiadou, 2015). Research has indicated that peer assessment (PA) can be successfully employed as a tool for improving writing skills and supporting a better integration of teaching/instruction with assessment of progress in learning (Falchikov et al., 2000). However, the use of PA and teacher assessment (TA) in secondary education has not yet been widely investigated (Tsivitanidou et al., 2011).

More specifically, the present dissertation investigates the use of PA as a dynamic learning tool which can enhance EFL students' writing skills in secondary education. It aims to develop a PA implementation model for secondary school classes and investigate into the effects of PA on learning, which is often characterized as consequential validity, (Boud, 1995; Sambell et al, 1997). The overall aim is to enable teachers to improve students' performance and motivation, particularly in the field of EFL writing.

The present dissertation focuses on a study which employed a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design and focused on PA of EFL writing skills in the Cypriot secondary education. It aimed to explore: (a) the effect of PA and TA on EFL students' writing performance as this was indicated by their pre-test and post-test essay marks in contrast to TA only; (b) the impact of PA and TA on EFL students' writing quality as opposed to TA only; (c) EFL students' attitudes towards PA, and (d) EFL teachers' perceptions of PA.

Participants of the study were: (a) twenty groups of ten Cypriot intermediate adolescent EFL students (200 students in total); (b) 20 qualified EFL teachers, and (c) an external assistant. All participants received adequate training in PA methods. Data were analysed using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. The study outcomes indicated that PA and TA can have a moderately positive impact on students' writing performance affecting all aspects of writing (mechanics, organization, content, vocabulary, genre and language use) and a similarly significant impact on EFL students' writing quality (lexical complexity,

fluency, accuracy, grammatical complexity). The impact was more profound on low-achievers who are in greater need of the benefits that PA can provide them.

These results contribute to linguistic theory by suggesting that language learning grows and skills may be adequately developed in the appropriate learning environment in which PA is used as a dynamic learning tool. PA is anticipated to make a significant contribution to the field of education if: (a) sufficient training and support is provided to all participants, (b) carefully designed tools are employed to familiarize learners with the PA process, (c) PA is introduced gradually and used on a regular basis as early as possible that is even in primary education, and (d) the emphasis is on the formative use of PA as a dynamic learning-oriented tool employed by teachers to enhance students' skills. The study provides recommendations for training teachers and students in PA skills, for conducting research in PA and other alternative assessment methods and for implementing PA successfully in secondary EFL writing classes. Directions for further research are also discussed.

To my family and my mentor,
who have been supportive without reservation

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List of Abbreviations

Adv	Advantages
AfL	Assessment for learning
C	Content
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CG	Control group
CT	Clause per T-unit
Dadv	Disadvantages
DA	Dynamic assessment
DCC	Dependent clauses per clause
Descr.	Descriptive
DCT	Dependent clauses per T-unit
EFL	English as a foreign language
EFT	Error-free T-units
EFTT	Error-free T-units per T-unit
EG	Experimental group
ESL	English as a second language
ET	Errors per T-Unit
EA	Ετερο-αξιολόγηση
EU	European Union
F	Focus
FL	Foreign language
G	Genre
IS	Independent sample
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LAD	Language acquisition device
LOA	Learning-oriented assessment
LU	Language use
MC	Mechanics
O	Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Peer assessment
Pr. A	Prior achievement

Qr	Questionnaire
Q	Question
R	Research
SA	Self assessment
SLA	Second language acquisition
Ss	Students
T	Teacher
TA	Teacher assessment
TbS	Tests between subjects
TL	Text length
V	Vocabulary
WC	Words per clause
WEFT	Words per error-free T-unit
WQ	Writing quality
WT	Words per T-Unit
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

- Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Student learning relies not only on assessment for quality but on the quality
of the assessment”
(Hinett, 1995)

1.1. Aim of the study

Peer assessment (PA), as an alternative form of ‘assessment for learning’ which promotes learner-centred assessment, has drawn a lot of attention lately worldwide (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, 2002). It is an educational arrangement where students judge a peer’s performance quantitatively, e.g. by providing a peer with scores or grades, and/or qualitatively, e.g. by providing a peer with written or oral feedback (Topping, 1998; 2010). PA has significant pedagogical value because it enables learners to take part in the evaluation process. It also enables learners to participate in and evaluate their peers’ learning process and products (Brown & McNamara, 2004; Brown, Irving, Peterson, & Hirschfeld, 2009).

An understanding of language testing and assessment is critical for applied linguistics and teachers (Davies, 1982). Linguists recognize its central role in research and learning and claim that its use in the wider world has become endemic (Fulcher & Davidson, 2013). The assessment focusing on teaching and learning has become of interest to the research world (Turner, 2012). The argument that validation focuses on interpretations and uses of tests/assessments rather than on tests/assessments themselves has been prominent in the measurement literature for a long time (Moss, 2007). Research on the quality of new modes of assessment, addressing the consequential validity, is needed to justify the widespread use of new modes of assessment (Gielen, Dochy & Dierick, 2003).

One of the main tendencies of current European and international education is to develop more active and responsible life-long learners who can effectively interact with their co-learners in their effort to shape their own learning (European Communities, 2004). However, the process of PA, which promotes learner-centred

assessment (Birjandi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2012a; Tudor, 1996), is not documented in a manner that translates to application for student implementation (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011). Also, PA is associated with vague and abstract language and is not consistently applied or understood instructionally in working with high school students (Black & Wiliam, 2010; Taras, 2001).

Furthermore, there is a general lack of support in current mainstream education for a cooperative learning environment in a high school English taught as a foreign language (EFL) classroom (Berringe, 2009). Lack of information on what exactly the “peer” part of the assessment process even is, discourages students from engaging in the practice of PA. In Cyprus, for example, both students and teachers seem to have limited previous experience of alternative assessment methods in the EFL language classroom (Meletiadou, 2011; Meletiadou, 2013; Meletiadou & Tsagari, 2013), as assessment has traditionally been teachers’ sole responsibility (Pavlou et al., 2005). Nevertheless, students, teachers and parents complain that most students face considerable problems in formal tests of writing and have a negative attitude towards writing and the assessment of writing (Meletiadou, 2011; Meletiadou, 2012; Meletiadou & Tsagari, 2012).

In addition, international trade and tourism in Cyprus has had an indirect influence on EFL language education. Increasingly, companies are requiring their prospective employees to have a certain level of English proficiency, with an emphasis on writing, since most communication is done through emails and most official documents in Cyprus are in English. The focus on writing in the teaching of EFL was chosen because English is the language most students in Cyprus learn, and writing has become more important in foreign language teaching than it used to be (Hamp-Lyons, 2014; Oscarson, 1997) . The fact that writing is an essential part of most EFL external examinations (i.e. IGCSE) has created a backwash effect which in turn has motivated English learners and teachers to improve their writing skills (Hamps-Lyons, 2014). As the role of writing in EFL learning increases (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014), students’ ability to peer-assess their EFL writing skills also becomes progressively more important.

Curriculum and syllabus goals in the Cypriot school system encourage, and in some areas even demand that students work more independently, collaborate and take responsibility for their own learning (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011). PA promotes the development of students' autonomous, collaborative and self-regulating study skills (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Oldfield & MacAlpine, 1995). Consequently, PA practices need to be investigated if the implementation of 'learning how to learn' skills is to become a reality. There is also a need to understand the role and use of PA in the language learning process (Zhao, 2010). Finally, although literature on PA is expanding in higher education (Carless, 2015; Falchikov, 1986; Landry, Jacobs, & Newton, 2014; McGarr & Clifford, 2013), little is known in the field of PA in the EFL context (Cheng & Warren, 2005) and in the context of secondary education (Hovardas, Tsivitanidou, & Zacharia, 2014; Tsagari & Pavlou, 2008; Tsivitanidou, Zacharia, Hovardas, & Nicolaou, 2012).

The present study intends to add to the existing literature related to PA of writing in secondary education. The aim of this study is to:

1. explore whether PA of writing can be successfully implemented in the EFL classroom;
2. evaluate the impact that PA and TA may have on learners' writing performance over time;
3. evaluate the impact that PA and TA may have on learners' writing quality over time, and
4. gain a deeper insight into students and teachers' attitudes towards PA.

To sum up, the aim of the present study is to contribute to an understanding of whether the use of PA of EFL writing together with TA in Cypriot State secondary schools can help develop lifelong language learning skills and further the development of more comprehensive and, in this sense, fairer assessment practices which promote learning. Moreover, the current study intends to investigate the consequential validity of PA and reveal whether PA can contribute towards Ss' ability to learn, not venture or undermine learning.

1.2. Significance of the study

It is widely recognised that one of the main goals of education is to help students reflect on their own role in the learning process (Chen, Wei, Wu & Uden, 2009; Van den Boom, Paas, & van Merriënboer, 2007). The need for lifelong learning in modern society is also increasing since learning has to be a process continuing throughout one's entire life (Council of Europe, 2001). Traditional testing methods may not fit goals like lifelong learning, reflective thinking, developing critical skills, evaluating oneself and problem solving (Dochy & Moerkerke, 1997; Strijbos, Narciss, & Dünnebier, 2010a). The existing assessment approaches can have effects contrary to those desired. Eisner (in Boud & Holmes, 1995) identified features of the new assessment in education:

- ❖ Assessment tasks need to reflect the tasks that students will encounter in the world outside schools, not merely those limited to the schools themselves.
- ❖ Assessment tasks should not be restricted to the solutions that students formulate, but also reveal how students go about solving a problem.
- ❖ Assessment tasks need not be limited to solo performance.

The present study targets one new dimension of assessment innovation, that is the changing place and function of the assessor. It questions if the assessor must be only the teacher, and whether students can be introduced as assessors in different settings. It aims to broaden the knowledge of PA by exploring the attitudes of adolescent EFL students and their teachers in secondary education. It focuses on writing skills since relatively few studies were devoted to examining this facet in an EFL context related to secondary education (Tsivitanidou et al., 2011). Finally, it promotes the idea of involving students in the assessment process and encourages educators to collect multiple sources of language samples by using methods such as PA.

According to the literature, PA is a viable option to enhance independent and autonomous learning (Peng & Jui-Ching Fion, 2009). PA skills are important in the development of responsible and reflective individuals (Hu & Lam, 2010; Sambell & McDowell, 1998). The present study intends to provide a promising alternative assessment method for EFL teachers at the secondary level. It proposes using PA as a way to raise a more open assessment culture and empower adolescent

students by assessment involvement (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 2013). Finally, it assists in generating an evidence-based argument regarding the quality of PA as a tool for enhancing L2 writing skills (Birenbaum, 2007; Cronbach, 1988; Messick, 1989).

This study, which concerns adolescent EFL students' PA of their writing performance, is important for our deeper understanding of students' own role in assessment, as well as for the elaboration of assessment procedures. There has been little research done on the conditions that govern adolescent students' participation in assessment (Oscarson, 2009). Much of the previous research done on formative assessment and PA in L2 learning has been concerned with adults learning a second language and not adolescents learning a foreign language (Topping, 1998, 2009). In the long term, findings can be used to improve the quality of learning not only in EFL, but also in a variety of subjects where PA can be implemented to promote learning through assessment in secondary education.

Finally, studies conducted in the primary sector have indicated that PA can also be employed successfully with younger students (Nikolaou, 2013; Scruggs, 1998). Therefore, findings from the current study can contribute to the understanding of the impact of PA in the Cypriot educational context where little research has been conducted in the field of PA in secondary and primary education (Meletiadiou, 2011; Tzagari & Meletiadiou, 2015) to the knowledge of the present researcher. In the following section, a brief description of the chapters of the current thesis is going to be provided to facilitate readers' understanding of its structure.

1.3. Organization of the thesis

This thesis comprises nine chapters. More specifically, the first chapter of this thesis explains its aim and refers briefly to its significance. The chapter concludes by highlighting the organisation of the thesis. In chapter two, the context of the thesis is presented. First, the current situation of language education in Cyprus and Greek-Cypriot's learners' assessment in the curricula for primary and secondary schools are described. Directions provided by the Council of Europe regarding the assessment of writing skills are also reviewed to examine how they promote the use of alternative methods of assessment in secondary education.

These situate the research in its educational context, and facilitate understanding for readers who may not be familiar with SLA in the Cypriot educational system.

Chapter three deals with the theoretical background of the study, that is the background theories of learning which are closely related to PA. These are theoretical and historical background issues pertaining to language education and assessment, such as: (a) the concept of the social constructivist theory, (b) important theories that underpin collaboration in learning, (c) the cognitive constructivist theory, (d) the interactionist theory of L2 acquisition, (e) the theories of cooperative learning, (f) self-regulation, and (g) process writing which underpin the interpretation of the findings of the current study. Chapter four presents major L2 writing theories and assessment practices as well as discusses classroom assessment and the methods of alternative assessment in EFL. It also explores the use of PA in secondary education.

Chapter five introduces PA and reviews research related to the four research questions of the current thesis. It continues with a brief account of summative and formative assessment, both of which have a bearing on PA. Chapter six describes the type of study undertaken, the setting, the participants, the instruments, the materials, the sampling and collection of data, the overall procedures and rationale for the different methods used as well as methodological, ethical and quality considerations. It also gives an overview of the sequence of events, deals with validity and reliability issues, and discusses the limitations of the different quantitative and qualitative methods employed.

Chapter seven elaborates the findings of the study, discusses the findings of the current study and links them to previous research conducted in the field of PA of writing. It also triangulates all data provided by this implementation, interprets the findings of this study and discusses its limitations. Chapter eight discusses the implications of the findings in the Cypriot educational context to promote the alignment of assessment, teaching, and learning goals. Suggestions for possible further research areas are provided. This chapter also presents a summary of the thesis, a synthesis of results and its main conclusions. Finally, it discusses the overall significance of the thesis.

- Chapter 2 - Context of the study

“Assessment should try to get the best performance out of pupils”
(Gipps, 1994, p. 165)

2.1. Introduction

This chapter situates the current study in its educational context to familiarize the readers with Cypriot language education system. For this reason, it briefly describes the situation of L2 education in Cyprus, which is a member state of the European Union and is thus greatly influenced by the Council of Europe. It also presents the EFL curricula of the Cypriot primary and secondary education before discussing learner assessment in these curricula. Finally, it explores the place of assessment in the EFL classrooms of the Cypriot State schools. The aim is to pinpoint some of the problems related to EFL assessment in that context. Namely: a) there is a discrepancy between theory and practice regarding EFL teaching and assessment in the Cypriot State schools and Institutes; b) the Cypriot secondary education is exam-orientated, and teachers mainly use summative methods of assessment in their classrooms; c) although PA included in the curricula of the Cypriot primary and secondary education, instructions as to how teachers can implement it in L2 classrooms are not provided, and e) EFL students have developed a negative attitude towards the assessment of writing skills. Consequently, new methods of assessment should be introduced in the Cypriot educational context. These need to promote learning and improve the teaching, learning and assessment of EFL.

2.2. The Council of Europe and the Cypriot educational system

One of the goals of education in Europe is to promote peaceful co-existence, mobility and understanding between all European countries and cultures (European Communities, 2004). The Council of Europe further states that education and, in particular language learning, is a lifelong activity. Consequently, coherent and user-friendly systems and structures for lifelong language learning need to be in place (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 46).

The increase in workforce mobility - which brings about a need for tolerance, mutual understanding, co-operation, and the need to prevent prejudice and discrimination - means that language learners have to be able to understand and use written and spoken language functionally (European Communities, 2004). In an ever-growing and more diverse European Union (EU), the emphasis must be on effective communicative ability: active skills rather than passive knowledge. 'Native speaker' fluency is not the objective, but appropriate levels of skill in reading, listening, writing and speaking in two foreign languages are required, together with intercultural competencies and the ability to learn languages whether with a teacher or alone (European Communities, 2004b, p. 18).

The Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR), an influential document published by the Council of Europe (2001), also emphasizes the need for Europeans to be able to master their mother tongue plus two other languages. It intends to improve "the quality of communication among Europeans of different language and cultural background" and provide "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (ibid, 2001, p. 1). The CEFR, which is considered controversial in some respects, has a strong influence on the way in which national language education documents are being devised, as well as language learning and practical assessment, in most European countries (Alderson, 2007; Bonnet, 2007; Hulstijn, 2007; Little, 2007).

The impact of global and European educational discourse together with modern language research on the curricula of both secondary and primary education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011) in Cyprus is more than evident. According to both curricula, learning foreign languages is a basic precondition in a competitive, modern and dynamic European society. This changes continually and aims at the empowerment of the communication among the European citizens, the promotion of European unity, linguistic equity and multilingualism. Cyprus is a multicultural country. Learning foreign languages especially from a young age is not only a means of promoting professional success and mobility, but also a basic need for the development of the modern citizen of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011).

Both curricula also promote democratic and humanitarian education through recycling of languages, repeated opportunities for learning and 'personalised learning' which has emerged as a major focus for schools in England (Deakin-Crick, Sebba, Harlen, Guoxing, & Lawson, 2005). The latter comprises five key components: assessment for learning; effective learning and teaching; curriculum entitlement and choice; school as a learning organisation, and 'beyond the classroom' (Pollard & James, 2004).

In conclusion, the Council of Europe and the Cypriot EFL curricula encourage language learning because it guarantees provision of the necessary skills in the future world. In the next section, a brief description of the EFL curricula in Cyprus follows to facilitate understanding of the research context of the study.

2.3. The current situation of language education in Cyprus

The underlying philosophy of the English language curricula in Cyprus points towards a humanistic and learner-centred orientation (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011), since it is the development of independent and autonomous learners that the foreign language programmes aim at. The tuition of the foreign language in the Cypriot primary and secondary schools aims principally at the gradual development of learners' communicative skills, which should enable them to participate successfully in various classroom activities as well as in real-world exchanges outside the classroom (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011). To this end, the progressive development of their receptive, productive and interactive skills as well as communicative strategies is promoted.

In Cyprus, EFL is studied from the first grade of primary school until the last class of the Senior high school. Students are also taught a second language, mostly French, starting from the first grade of high school. English is taught as a foreign language in Cyprus and not as a language that citizens in Cyprus must have a command of to be able to function with administrative, legislative or educational bodies. However, English language should be earmarked as the predominant language of communication and business. This explains the profound requirement for certification to verify the different levels of linguistic competence.

Moreover, the programme of studies for the secondary education has been developed on the basis of the language levels of CEFR to empower the intention for a common approach to teaching and learning foreign languages (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010). Following primary school, at the secondary level, there are three successive levels: (a) English for the first and second grade of Junior high school is deemed to be at the CEFR level A2, (b) English for the last grade of high school and the first grade of Senior high school is estimated to be at the CEFR level B1, and (c) English for the second and the third grade of Senior high school at the CEFR level B1 - B1+. EFL is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011).

According to the Curricula for the Cypriot State primary and secondary schools and public EFL Institutes, the main aim of teaching EFL to students is to promote communication, socialization and develop positive attitudes towards other languages (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011). The society of the 21st century requires that citizens possess a variety of skills such as self-awareness and collaboration. Moreover, they should be able to manage their own learning by learning how to learn (Council of Europe, 2001). This will ultimately foster the development of lifelong learning skills (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011).

Among the most important aims of language education in Cyprus is the gradual improvement in comprehension skills and the production of written and oral language so that on completing their secondary education, students should be able to understand and generate English in a communicative way. Teaching is focused on the learners and initiative, independence, interaction and co-operation among students is encouraged. The aim is to promote learners' individual, cognitive, social and emotional development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011).

Overall, these are the curricula specifications concerning the pedagogical aims of the English language programme for the primary and secondary education. Quite understandably, it is within this framework that all teaching decisions, including the selection of specific assessment procedures and tasks, should be made. The

following section will present and discuss learner assessment issues, as proposed in the official curricula, to better comprehend the theoretical background the Cypriot learners' assessment is based on.

2.4. Learner assessment in the curricula

Teaching methodology in the language field is constantly being reviewed and modified to meet the demands of a changing society, which values meta-cognitive skills and individual thought and expression more than just the ability to perform well at a pencil-and-paper test (Barabouti, 2003). Testing methodology, however, has remained surprisingly consistent and seems to rely more on sharp memory than intellect and sound judgement, with the unfortunate side effect of emphasizing 'students as objects of assessment', as Genessee (1994) argues, regardless of their particular educational experiences.

Moreover, there is often a tension between traditional practices and the new aims and demands of the European community (Krumm, 2007; Shohamy, 2007). The "language policies appear to follow the rules of pluralist democratic societies, including advocating that all citizens should have the opportunity to use a variety of languages" (Shohamy, 2007, p. 120) but many authorities and practitioners override the aims by using contradicting assessment methods.

The aim in the steering documents is consequently for more authentic and direct language assessment (Council of Europe, 2001). The goal is to involve students in communicative performance tasks that they would normally be occupied with at, for example, a future workplace, such as expressing opinions, giving information, writing reports, and so forth. New formats and tools of assessment are now becoming more widely adopted in classrooms to support a better integration of teaching/instruction with assessment of progress in learning (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). These are mainly formative in nature and help to develop insight, on the part of the students, into their strengths and weaknesses within different areas of knowledge (Brown & Hudson, 1998) and follow up with actions to improve their work (Boud et al., 1995; Shute, 2008).

On the whole, the suggestions for learner assessment, as these appear in the curricula, are in compliance with its learner-centred philosophy and with

current views on what constitutes effective assessment (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010). The description of the proposed assessment procedures and methods, however, is lacking in details and explicitness, failing thus to offer a complete framework for their successful implementation in the classroom and calling for further study and elaboration on the part of the teacher, if they are to be put in practice (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011; Taras, 2001).

The section that follows reveals the degree to which the assessment practices employed by Cypriot EFL teachers correspond with the curricula suggestions and, therefore, how likely they are to promote the achievement of its learning goals and objectives. It also focuses on the field of EFL writing skills in secondary education which is the specific context of the current study.

2.5. Assessment and classroom reality

When it comes to the reality of the classroom assessment of the Cypriot learners' performance in the foreign language does not fully reflect the curricula specifications (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010), as the technique which is predominantly employed is traditional paper-and-pencil tests (Pavlou et al., 2005). Like most traditional paper-and-pencil tests, however, they fail to assess performance skills, creating thus a mismatch between assessment practices and curricula specifications (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011; Tsagari, 2012).

Teachers are advised to consider various types of alternative assessment such as PA, self assessment (SA) and portfolios (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p. 158). In Cyprus, as part of wide-ranging reforms intended to promote lifelong learning and improve students' writing skills, educational authorities should promote the development of a new culture of assessment that is less reliant on traditional one-off examinations (Tsagari & Meletiadou 2015). Included in this agenda should be calls for more PA to promote reflective thinking, self-improvement, and independent learning (Curriculum Development Council, 2004). In contexts where excessive testing negatively impacts on motivation by reinforcing student failure and lack of control over the learning process (Black et

al., 2003), PA can counter these forces through involving students in the assessment process (Bryant & Carless, 2010).

The value of this thesis lies in exploring the potential and challenges of implementing PA within the Cypriot educational system where examinations are prevalent. What characterizes the assessment of writing skills, in particular, is a teacher- and product-oriented approach serving mainly summative purposes (contribution to students' final grades) emphasizing accuracy at the expense of self-expression with limited positive impact on teaching and learning (Meletiadou, 2011; Tsagari, 2012) .

Moreover, no further guidelines, special seminars or training are provided to the EFL teachers who do not know how to reliably assess their students (Pavlou et al., 2005; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). The importance of teacher literacy in Language Testing and Assessment (LTA) has been recognised lately (Hasselgreen, 2008; Taylor, 2009; Yin, 2010). Assessment literacy (AL) has been defined as an understanding of the principles of sound assessment (Popham, 2004). Teachers with a solid background in this area are well positioned to integrate assessment with instruction so that they utilize appropriate forms of teaching (McMillan, 2001). Sound assessment and grading practices help teachers to improve their instruction, improve students' motivation to learn, and increase students' levels of achievement (Pilcher, 2001).

Without the appropriate feedback, Cypriot learners continue to make the same mistakes, become more and more reliant on the teacher, and their writing does not necessarily improve as a result of teacher feedback (Lee, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, the majority of these learners have poor writing skills, a negative attitude towards writing and the assessment of writing, and face considerable problems in formal tests (Meletiadou, 2011; Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015). Therefore, the Cypriot Ministry of Education needs to find new ways to improve the teaching and learning and more specifically the assessment of EFL writing skills.

The failure of traditional testing to provide an accurate picture of learners' developmental abilities has led educators to search for new, alternative ways of assessment to counterbalance such limitations (Cunningham, 1998, p. 124; Kuo,

2015). According to Genesee and Hamayan (1994), these encourage student ownership of assessment and enthusiasm for learning, since learners become active agents in identifying their needs and setting their future goals of improvement by cooperating with their teachers and other learners. Importantly, such practices have potential for improving students' subsequent performance in summative assessments (Becker, 2016; McDonald & Boud, 2003). In classrooms featuring formative assessment, teachers make frequent, interactive assessments of student understanding. This enables them to adjust their teaching to meet individual student needs, and to better help all students to reach high standards. Teachers also actively involve students in the process, helping them to develop skills that enable them to learn better (OECD, 2005; Panadero, Jonsson, & Strijbos, 2016).

Many teachers incorporate aspects of formative assessment into their teaching, but it is less common to find it practised systematically (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). If formative assessment is used as a framework for teaching, teachers change the way they interact with students, how they set up learning situations, and guide students toward learning goals, even how they define student success (OECD, 2005).

Schools which use forms of formative assessment, such as PA, show not only general gains in academic achievement, but also particularly high gains for previously underachieving students (Black, 2015). Attendance and retention of learning are also improved, as well as the quality of students' work. Several countries, i.e. England, Norway and Sweden, have introduced or are about to introduce PA in their curricula (OECD, 2007).

PA involves the learners themselves, raising their awareness, building their confidence, and ultimately increasing their autonomy and independence (Oldfield et al., 1995; Tsivitanidou & Constantinou, 2016). It concentrates on realistic performance tasks requiring collaborative work, which can help the teacher assess whether and to what extent the learners have attained basic communicative skills in the FL. Although it is time-consuming and demanding, PA enables the evaluation of students' social behaviour and skills which should

also be assessed as part of their development as democratic citizens (who can work as part of a team, are polite, and sensitive towards other people's feelings and appreciate their peers' efforts) (Council of Europe, 2001). Finally, it encourages student ownership of assessment and enthusiasm for learning, since students become active agents in identifying their needs and setting their future goals of improvement by closely collaborating and cooperating with their teachers and other learners (Genesee et al., 1994; Lee, 2016).

PA makes use of metacognitive functions in learning, such as planning, monitoring, reflection, revision and SA (Black & William, 1998a; Falchikov, 2005). These processes are also of vital importance for independent and autonomous learning (West & Tsagari, 2004), and at the foundation of lifelong learning skills. The development of these skills in language education is, as shown previously, stressed in both global and European policy documents (Assessment Reform Group, 2002) as well as being reflected and encouraged in the Cypriot language curricula (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011).

Consequently, teachers should be encouraged to use PA since it places emphasis on the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment (Cummins & Davidson, 2007) and hence "assessment for learning" (i.e. using assessment to promote learning) rather than "assessment of learning" (i.e. using assessment for primarily administrative purposes) (Lee, 2009).

As an international language, English is used daily by millions of people worldwide. Its importance cannot be underestimated. To compete globally, the Cypriot government strives for enhancing citizens' EFL ability. This is seen in the inclusion of mandatory English instruction starting from the 1st grade of primary school. Schools of all levels in Cyprus lay special emphasis on the study of the English language. The productive skills of speaking and writing are naturally at the heart of communicative language learning. Writing especially has seen its role change from merely supporting and reinforcing the internalization of language patterns to being a worthwhile enterprise in itself (Weigle, 2002, 2007). As its role in EFL learning has changed, assessment practices of EFL writing also become progressively more important. This is supposed to be a good thing, a chance to

develop English learners' capacity. However, the examination system and the amount of pressure that comes with it has changed the nature of the Cypriot secondary education from being enlightenment-oriented to examination-oriented. As a result, students have developed a negative attitude towards assessment, while their performance, especially in writing, has deteriorated, and a high percentage of these learners fail at the end of the year formal tests (Meletiadou, 2011). Consequently, the Cypriot Ministry of Education should include new methods of assessment in its curricula, train its teachers and students in using them, and encourage its use in the Cypriot EFL classrooms.

2.6. Summary

European policy documents and the discourse they represent influenced language learning and language assessment in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011). According to these, classroom assessment practices are considered very important in promoting autonomous, lifelong learning (Council of Europe, 2001) as language learning, teaching and assessment are closely related. The assessment focusing on teaching and learning has become of interest to the research world (Turner, 2012). Assessment should involve a wide range of methods including alternative methods of assessment. The curriculum for teaching EFL employed in the Cypriot secondary schools theoretically supports the use of 'alternative' methods in informal assessment as it promotes learner autonomy and integration of instruction and evaluation (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p. 158). However, PA, one of the most promising methods of 'alternative' assessment is not actually used in the EFL classrooms (Meletiadou & Tsagari, 2013; Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015). This is probably due to lack of research and AL, among other things, which may prove the suitability of employing this method with Cypriot adolescent EFL learners. Further research needs to be conducted to explore the possibilities of PA of EFL writing in the secondary education in Cyprus. It is, therefore, necessary to examine what PA really is, the learning theories which provide a rationale for its use in the EFL writing classrooms, the kind of research related to this method which has been conducted so far, and areas that need yet to be investigated.

- Chapter 3 -

Theoretical background

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

‘Benjamin Franklin’

3.1. Introduction

PA is rooted in some of the most popular theories which describe and explain how learning and especially L2 learning can be effectively combined with assessment. Before referring to these theories, it is necessary to provide a definition of PA of writing. ‘PA of writing’ is an innovative classroom-based assessment method in terms of which learners evaluate their peers’ written work and provide both marks/grades (Topping, 1998; Falchikov, 2013) and comments (peer tutoring), that is some kind of peer feedback. ‘Peer feedback’ can be defined as "a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards." (Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280) while ‘peer tutoring’, is a far more instrumental strategy in which advanced students, or those in later years, take on a limited instructional role (Boud, 20013). This feedback promotes peer (collaborative) learning and leads to revisions which enhance students’ writing performance. PA also enhances learners’ metacognitive skills and ability to self-regulate since students learn how to assess their peers’ work but also their own work (Hansen &Liu, 2005).

Six theoretical stances support the use of PA activities in the writing classroom from both cognitive and psycholinguistic perspectives: a) process writing theory, b) collaborative learning theory, c) social cognitive theory, d) interaction and second language acquisition (SLA), e) cognitive constructivist theory, and f) self-regulation. These in fact complement and to some extent overlap each and other. Research based on these theoretical stances has provided substantial evidence that PA activities help second and foreign language learners develop their L2 writing abilities and their overall L2 language abilities through the negotiation of meaning that typically takes place during peer response (Liu & Hansen, 2002; Topping, 2009). Finally, there is a variety of L2 writing theories which also

underpin the use of PA in L2 writing classrooms. These will be presented in the next chapter.

3.2. Process writing theory

The process approach to writing emerged as an innovation in a product-oriented culture (Cheung, 1999; Hyland, 2015) in the late 1960s and early 1970s in L1 writing (Diedench, 1974). It heavily influenced L2 writing theory and practice (Harlow, Cummings, & Aberasturi, 2006) viewing writing as a dynamic, nonlinear, and recursive process. Instead of treating L2 writing as a mere transcription of pre-formulated ideas, the process approach involves the discovery and transformation of the author's ideas and the reader's reactions, as well as the linguistic means necessary to accomplish the writing task at hand (Graham & MacArthur, 2013; Susser, 1994).

Leki (1991) states that it places more emphasis on the stages of the writing process than on the final product. It is "interpretational, learner-centered and not specifically related to examinations" (Pennington, 1995, p. 707). According to Zamel (1983), writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts, constructing meaning and assessing it at the same time. Attention is paid first to the content and meaning and then to the form (Badger & White, 2000, p. 154). In this approach, students are taught planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing strategies at each stage of the writing process to help them write freely and arrive at a product of good quality (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Stewart & Cheung, 1989).

In the past two decades, several researchers have expressed their concern regarding students' attitudes towards writing. Stemper (2002) and Watson (2015) point out that students have learned to hate writing and revising because in the traditional method of teaching writing, messing up is considered a form of failure. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) and Brown et al. (2013) also argue that foreign-language students are less motivated to revise and correct their work since their language classes do not focus extensively on multiple-draft process-oriented instruction.

Many educators are positive towards the process approach and think that students benefit greatly from this approach (Candlin & Hyland, 2014; Graham, Gillespie, & McKeown, 2013; White & Amdt, 1991). Research findings from most studies on the effectiveness of the process approach show that it is in general an effective approach in helping students improve their writing skills and attitudes towards writing at the tertiary, secondary and primary school levels (Graham et al., 2013; Graham, McKeown, Kihara, & Harris, 2012; Jacob & Talshir, 1998).

Within this approach to writing, PA has been viewed as an important component of L2 writing instruction (Kroll, 1991; Lee & Coniam, 2013; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Schunn, Godley, & DeMartino, 2016). PA combined with TA is said to support process writing with a focus on drafting and revision and enables students to get multiple feedback (e.g., from teacher and peer) across various drafts (Strijbos, 2016). Additionally, it builds audience awareness, helps make reading-writing connections, and builds content, linguistic, and rhetorical schemata through multiple exposures to a text (Lee, 2016). As Kennedy-Kalafatis and Carleton (1996) point out, writing is communication, and, without an audience, communication cannot occur. Thus, the purpose of writing is lost without peer interaction which is an essential component of PA.

PA is supported by the Flower-Hayes cognitive model which suggest that composition instructors need to consider showing students how "to explore and define their own problems, even within the constraints of an assignment" (477). They claim that "writers discover what they want to do by insistently, energetically exploring the entire problem before them and building for themselves a unique image of the problem they want to solve. It is also supported by the social model of writing process which suggests that "the aim of collaborative learning helps students to find more control in their learning situation" (Trimbur, 2009). However, it has also been expressed that PA is a time-intensive process as it requires students to engage in non-trivial cognitive tasks, that it is intellectually challenging and that it creates a socially uncomfortable environment (Topping et al., 2000; Hanrahan & Isaacs 2001).

PA stands at the center of a fortuitous convergence of theories of language development and theories of language learning and teaching in second language (L2) classrooms. The use of PA has increased with the shift to the process approach to writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graham & Perin, 2007) and the consequent emphasis on helping students to acquire strategies "for getting started ... for drafting ... for revising ... and for editing" (Silva, 1990, p. 15). The process approach to writing has, at its heart, evaluation (Hilgers, 1986; Samway, 1993). When writers re-read and change text, they evaluate their work. Finally, PA provides an opportunity for peers to develop criteria for evaluation and to practice evaluating their own written text and that of others. Peer response is seen as an important support for the drafting and redrafting of process approach to writing (Mittan, 1989; Pham & Usaha, 2016; Rahimi, 2013; Zamel, 1985). This creates opportunities for collaboration, another important learning theory which supports the use of PA in the EFL classroom, as it will become evident in the next chapter.

A central tenet in collaborative learning theories is that learning, as well as knowledge itself, is socially constructed (Slavin, 2011). Bruffee (1984), a leading proponent of collaborative writing, defines collaborative learning as the type of learning that takes place through communication with peers and states that there are certain kinds of knowledge that are best acquired in this manner.

3.3. Collaborative learning theory

Collaborative learning theories have had a major impact on L1 writing instruction and more recently have begun to have an impact on both theoretical and pedagogical aspects of L2 writing. Research in L1 writing has found numerous benefits of employing collaborative learning techniques in the classroom. Studies have found that in writing groups, students negotiate meaning as they help each other revise their papers (Gere, 1987; Slavin, 2015) and that learning in writing groups is reciprocal and improves students' work (Bruffee, 1984; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009a; Søndergaard & Mulder, 2012; Sun & Chang, 2012). As Bruffee (1984, p. 644) states, while students individually may not have all the knowledge or resources available to successfully complete a task, "pooling the resources that a group of peers brings with them to the task" may enable the group to complete a task that individuals may not be able to complete on their own. L2 writing group

researchers have also found that there are several linguistic gains of collaborative writing and revising (Cho & Schunn, 2007; Olson, 1990; Sung, Lin, Lee, & Chang, 2003).

According to Johnson and Johnson (2005, p. 285-286), cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students can work together to maximize their own and each other's learning". Johnson et al. (2005) also clarify what the process of cooperative learning accomplishes. Through experiencing cooperative learning in all subject areas and grade levels, students gain a cognitive understanding of the nature of cooperation of mutuality, procedural competencies of how to initiate and maintain cooperative efforts, and the emotional commitment to attitudes and values underlying cooperation and mutuality (e.g., valuing the well-being of collaborators and one-self, promoting the common good) (Sharan, 2015).

In theory, the educational support of student interaction in the process of writing and PA is found in the understanding of cooperative learning. The work of Johnson and Johnson has been instrumental in this area of educational research and theory. The authors' basic premise around cooperative learning can be found in a quote from Montagu (1965): 'Without the cooperation of its members society cannot survive, and the society of man has survived because the cooperativeness of its members made survival possible.... It was not an advantageous individual here and there who did so, but the group.' In human societies the individuals who are most likely to survive are those who are best enabled to do so by their group (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Pugach & Johnson, 2002).

Johnson and Johnson (2008) bring clarity to the idea that cooperative learning has lifelong benefits and practical uses. It involves several benefits for a high school student to practice these skills for their preparation in an engaged adult life. Beyond the connections that cooperative learning makes to one becoming a life-long learner, Johnson and Johnson's observations (2009) have also shown immediate benefits for students and their learning community. Research has indicated that cooperative learning increases student achievement, improves how

they feel about school and the teacher, fosters a positive relationship with self and peers, and develops self-esteem (Johnson et al., 1994; O'Donnell & King, 2014) .

Researchers have also found that collaborative writing groups can lead to decision making, allowing learners to compare notes on what they have learned and how to use it effectively. They also provide learners increased opportunities to review and apply their growing knowledge of second language (L2) writing through dialogue and interaction with their peers in the writing group (Hirvela, 1999, p. 8). This is not surprising and in fact echoes the findings of research on interaction and SLA, as outlined later in this chapter, since PA activities are one kind of collaborative group work that may lead to greater opportunities for students to negotiate meaning as they work with peers in improving a written text (Panadero et al., 2016; Topping, Smith, Swanson, & Elliot, 2000).

Consequently, PA, also conducted under such names as peer response and peer review (Caulk, 1994; Li, Liu, & Zhou, 2012a; Orsmond, Maw, Park, Gomez, & Crook, 2013) in process-oriented instruction, is theoretically supported by both learning and rhetorical theories (Min, 2005). In the literature, the following key terms and definitions are used interchangeably: peer feedback, peer evaluation, peer assessment and peer review (Van den Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2006a). Carr (2008) refers to peer review as an important teaching technique in which students read and make comments about their peers' written work. As Min (2005) and Lundstrom and Baker (2009) points out, writing is a learning activity that can be best learned through interacting with peers. Min notes that peer review can provide opportunities for writers with different strengths, preferred modes of expression and levels of competence, to interact positively in oral or written communication, including questioning, providing elaborated responses, and instructing. However, students also tend to be disinclined to assess their peers by just assigning marks, and think they should provide and receive detailed and constructive feedback (Sluijsmans et al. 2001). Liu and Carless (2006) also report that issues of reliability of peers and their perceived expertise arise when using peer assessment in a summative manner, and that most students and faculty view this as ineffective.

Bruffee (1984) and Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012) argue that the collaborative environment which is formed in peer response groups can address high-order composition issues such as focus and idea development. Min (2005) emphasises that students should be provided with opportunities to immerse themselves in constructive conversation about writing. A number of researchers, such as Tsui and Ng (2000) and Hu and Lam (2010), have also recommended peer review as a collaborative activity to secure immediate textual improvement and, in the long run, to develop writing competence through mutual scaffolding. Finally, Lindblom-Ylänne, Pihlajamäki, and Kotkas (2006) note that PA can be considered as a learning tool, which helps students develop skills required for professional responsibility, judgement and autonomy by getting involved in giving and receiving feedback.

3.4. Social cognitive theories

A third theoretical stance that supports the use of PA in the writing classroom is based on Vygotsky's (1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010) belief that cognitive development is a result of social interaction in which an individual learns to extend her or his current competence through the guidance of a more experienced individual. Simply stated, "social interaction is a mechanism for individual development, since, in the presence of a more capable participant, the novice is drawn into, and operates within, the space of the expert's strategic processes for problem solving" (Donato, 1994, p. 37). The space between the person's actual level of development (i.e., what can be done independently) and the potential level of development (i.e., what can be done with the help of someone else) is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Ingold & Crawford, 2015). Higher cognitive processes are hypothesized to emerge as a result of interaction, resulting in the individual's independent completion of the task, with the language use within the interaction serving as the "critical device for mediating cognitive development" (DiCamilla & Antón, 1997, p. 614). Lightbown and Spada (1999; 2013) favour communicative teaching environments and claim that successful transition from exposure to assimilation, in terms of the Interaction Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) is facilitated by collaborative and social efforts in the target language such as the ones undertaken by learners when peer-assessing their

classmates. Ellis (2000) also supports scaffolding and mediation in learning and Cummins (1991) remarks that learners do not get sufficient feedback because the instructor is ultimately just one sample of the speech community he/she represents.

While Vygotsky originally developed the notion of the ZPD to account for child development and considered the novice as a child and the more experienced individual as a guiding adult, his work has since been further developed by L1 researchers such as Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), who employ the term “scaffolding” to describe the supportive conditions that occur within the ZPD. Scaffolding is defined as the assistance provided by a teacher/adult or a more capable peer to the child or less capable peer so that the two together could accomplish the task they have been set (Cazden, 1988; Grabe et al., 2014; Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015). Vygotsky’s theoretical framework has been employed by L2 researchers such as Donato (1994) and Lantolf and Appel (1994) to investigate interaction in group work and by L2 writing researchers (DiCamilla et al., 1997; Grabe et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2016; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1998) to examine how peer response activities, i.e. PA activities, during group work in the L2 writing classroom influence language learning. Results of the research (DiCamilla et al., 1997; Khaliq & Khaliq, 2015; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996) indicate that collective scaffolding occurs in group work, wherein the learners are at the same time individually novices and collectively experts, sources of new orientations for each other, and guides through this complex linguistic problem solving (Donato, 1994, p. 46). Long-term language development was also found as a result of this collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994). In addition, peer response activities foster a myriad of communicative behaviors that benefit all members of a group (Ho, 2015; Villamil et al., 1996, p. 69).

In the communicative language classroom, the focus is on student-centered learning as opposed to the more traditional teacher-fronted class (Chang & Chen, 2009; Savignon, 1991). PA allows the writing instructor to move toward an equitable balance between teacher-centered instruction and student-centered activities. Moreover, when correctly structured, PA provides increased opportunities not only for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Bland,

2014), but also for comprehensible output (Saito, Webb, Trofimovich, & Isaacs, 2015; Swain, 1985) and for "negotiated interaction" (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 217), which are considered crucial factors in L2 acquisition. Negotiation requires attentiveness and involvement, both of which are necessary for successful communication. Additionally, PA is a form of cooperative language learning, the benefits of which are well researched (McGroarty, 1989; Sharan & Shachar, 2012). These benefits include academic achievement and language development as well as improved social relations and increased self-confidence (Coelho, 1992; Li & Lam, 2013), to name a few.

Finally, theories of learning maintain that learning comes about as a result of social interaction (Lantolf et al., 2015; Vygotsky 1986); PA affords an opportunity for such interaction. Members of a group, through providing feedback: a) help each other generate ideas; b) support and encourage each other during the composing process, and c) provide an increased sense of audience for each other (Urzua, 1987; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012) . Through interaction, writers become aware of the reader for whom the text is composed. Writing thus becomes the focus of conversation for a community of peers in the classroom. Properly structured, PA creates opportunities for scaffolding and develops students' metacognitive skills as it will become evident in the next section.

3.4.1. Metacognition

According to Rivers (2001) and Rivers and Golonka (2009), researchers in disparate fields see metacognition as essentially different from cognition, and describe metacognition as consisting of two functions: SA, being able to assess one's own cognition, and self-management, the ability to manage further cognitive development. Rivers (2001) and Oscarson (2009) speaks of SA as the most salient skill for self-regulation and self-directed learning to take place. Self-directed learning requires the learner to accurately assess learning outcomes, and in a review of the literature, Wenden (1999) and Benson (2013) drew the conclusion that self-directed and good language learners exhibited metacognitive behaviours.

Rivers (2001) even goes so far as to say that, the accurate use of metacognitive, affective and social strategies to control the language learning process and the

learning environment is the hallmark of self-directed language learning (also in Benson, 2010). For such learning to occur, learners must be able to determine accurately what their needs are, and have the freedom to plan how to meet those needs. In the absence of either accurate SA or genuine autonomy, self-directed language learning will not occur (Rivers, 2001, p. 287; Rivers & Golonka, 2009). It has been suggested that classes where students mark a peer's assignment can initiate an ability to self-evaluate and reflect on their own work. This can lead to a greater understanding of what is required by tutors for assessments (Stefani, 1994).

Min (2005) trained some students to become successful peer reviewers in EFL writing classes through producing relevant and specific comments on their peers' writings. Having analyzed students' comments after training, he found that as reviewers, students benefited from this training in skill improvement, confidence build-up, language acquisition, and metacognitive strategy use. It seems that providing learners with the opportunity to self- or peer-assess will help them improve their metacognition, which, in turn, leads to better thinking and learning (Birjandi et al., 2012a). According to Miller, Imrie, and Cox (1998), PA is clearly a variation on SA with the potential to add value in various ways, i.e. two students sharing each other's assessment can be more objective when basing the assessment on a shared set of criteria (Kulkarni, Wei, Le, Chia, Papadopoulos, Cheng, & Klemmer, 2015).

Moreover, the metacognitive function plays an important role in the construction of new knowledge, as it has to do with planning, understanding, and the control of learning (Allwood & Jonsson, 2001; Cotterall & Murray, 2009). Both general strategic metacognitive knowledge, as well as domain-specific knowledge is essential. Strategies such as procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge are often referred to as metacognitive (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 31). Many researchers (Ellis, Bond, & Denton, 2012; Gardner, 2006; Gipps, 1994) believe that these strategies can be taught and, when used extensively, become automated. The role of the metacognitive function can be related to Vygotsky (1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010) notion that the learner's capacity for

independent strategic functioning can evolve through social interaction with an expert (e.g. mediated by the teacher).

This was developed further by Wertch (1998) who asserted that the student may be coached through a task that is slightly too difficult to be done independently but within student's "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010). Qualified learning can thus be seen as learning in advance of actual development. "What children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone" (Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010). The mediated learning a student experiences this way actually influences his or her further development. According to Falchikov (2005) and Ng (2016), PA improves the quality and effectiveness of learning by developing learners' critical appraisal and problem-solving skills.

Metacognitive strategy training has been reported to be effective in EFL (Cohen, 2014; Nakatani, 2005; Wenden, 1999). Aiding students to become aware of their own mental learning processes and giving them an opportunity to become more independent and autonomous learners helps both teachers and students regulate their planning, monitoring and assessing (Teng, 2016). When monitoring and assessing, constructive feedback, such as helping students understand why they are wrong so that they can learn from their mistakes, either in the form of individual errors or patterns of errors, seems most effective (Hartman, 2001, p. 153). It may seem self-evident, but "mistakes are part of learning". According to Garner (1987, p. 105) and Nicol (2010), there is great potential for the improvement of student performance, especially in the case of the so-called "poor" students. Attendance and retention of learning are also improved, as well as the quality of students' work (OECD, 2005). To be able to peer-assess the learner has to use metacognitive skills, to become aware of what has to be learned, how it may best be learned, and to what degree it is possible to fulfil these requirements.

According to the literature (Topping, 2009), PA develops students' metacognitive and professional transferable skills (Liu, Lin, Chiu, & Yuan, 2001). Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans (1999) and Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin (2014) found that PA

activities engaged students in judgement making and helped them to learn about learning. According to Kim (2009), peer feedback which is an important component of PA, serves an affective and metacognitive function. It gives learners essential information about themselves. Based on this information, the learners establish self-efficacy about the learning task, develop learning beliefs and are more aware of their own learning (Mok et al. 2006). However, Cheng & Warren (2003) reported their students as having misgivings about awarding grades to peers with some regarding it as “unfair and risky” (p.268) because of doubts about the seriousness and objectivity of their classmates. Another reason for resistance to PA using grades is that it disrupts power relations. Students also often dislike having power over peers or peers having power over them (Falchikov, 2001).

Most studies on PA have been considering the activity of providing feedback (Cho & Cho, 2011). However, metacognitive skills are not sufficient learning tools in themselves. Metacognition is only one facet of the self-regulated learner, where also issues such as learners’ beliefs especially in relation to language learning, play a part (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 217) as it will become evident in the next sections.

3.4.2. Learner beliefs

The individuals’ beliefs about their ability to produce desired results in a particular area, or “students’ beliefs about their capabilities to apply effectively the knowledge and skills they already possess and thereby learn new cognitive skills” (Shunk, 1989, p. 129), are thought to influence learning. PA has proved to have an impact on affect, increasing motivation raising the affective filter (Gass & Selinker, 2008) through the sense of personal responsibility and improving self-confidence (Topping, 2010). According to Pintrich (1999, p. 465), learner beliefs are “positively related to self-regulatory strategies such as planning, monitoring, and regulating”. Low beliefs of one’s own abilities are generally associated with poor strategies (Lemos, 1999; Schwarzer, 2014). There are also research studies that have found that “beliefs, which are highly task and situation specific, correlated with school performance” (Pintrich, 1999, p. 548). Studies of skilful, self-regulated learners have shown that they perceive themselves more capable according to Zimmerman (1998) and Effeney, Carroll, & Bahr (2013). According to Brown & Knight (1994),

PA assists in the development of self-reliant and self-directed learners (also in Harrison, Joe, & McNamara, 2015; Oldfield et al., 1995).

The motivation to self-regulate involves positive beliefs about the capability of the self and expected goals (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 20) and the success is dependent on the accuracy of self-observation as it provides information for further self-regulation efforts. It has been maintained that self-regulated learners are more often intrinsically motivated, more metacognitively aware and have a higher general level of belief in their own capabilities, and, as a consequence, these students may also achieve higher grades (Bernardo, 2003; Kember, 2016).

Earlier studies by, for example, Shunk and Swartz (1993, p. 337) and Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997, p. 95) found that students' beliefs were highly predictive. Feedback is a form of self-efficacy information to the learner, by suggesting that the learner is competent and progressing in learning. The findings of Shunk et al. (1993) support the suggestion that learner beliefs are not merely a reflection of performance but that performance also influences beliefs about one's own capacity to learn (also in Bjork, Dunlosky, & Kornell, 2013).

The process approach to writing, emphasizes the cyclic feedback loop where writers monitor the effectiveness of self-regulating strategies, continuing or changing writing strategies depending on its success (Zimmerman et al., 1997, p. 77). Learners who have a strong belief in their writing competence, will set higher goals and persist longer when faced with difficulties, as well as achieve higher results than students with lower expectations of themselves (Zimmerman et al., 1997, p. 80). PA which yields detailed qualitative feedback information, not simply a grade can maximize success (Topping, 2013; Topping et al., 2000) and enhance students' motivation by allowing learners to see similar problems and weaknesses in their own writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hwang, Hung, & Chen, 2014). This reduces writing anxiety and increases writer confidence. However, Falchikov (2001) also reports that both instructors and students report that PA can be time-consuming. The time factor may act as a discouragement, particularly as PA is generally more complex (Langan et al., 2005) than tutor only marking.

There seems to be ample research support for the fact that learner beliefs affect school performance in different ways. According to Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007), students with high academic self-efficacy, such as learners who are involved in PA, self-regulate better and have greater intrinsic interest in school subjects. Consequently, they achieve higher grades, and learners' positive beliefs of their own capabilities are often said to predict success better than actual capacity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Mills et al., 2007; Schunk & Mullen, 2012).

3.4.3. Learner beliefs and language learning

There are few studies on learner beliefs and language learning (Wesely, 2012), but Hsieh and Schallert's (2008) findings suggest that students' beliefs about their results reflect their general beliefs about their capability to learn languages (Abedini, Rahimi, & Zare-ee, 2011), that is, learners' belief that success or failure is within their control, due to, for example, lack of effort. Students' beliefs in their language learning capability "can be sustained at a high level even for unsuccessful students when failure is attributed to internal, controllable, and unstable factors" (Hsieh et al., 2008, p. 16). The study points out that "even when students report having low self-efficacy, helping them view success and failure as an outcome that they can control may increase their expectancy for success and lead to actual successful experiences" (Hsieh et al., 2008, p. 17). Learners' beliefs about language learning are not unexpectedly thought to influence students' self-regulatory learning, their language learning strategies and their ability to peer-assess their classmates' learning and self assess their language learning (Ellis, 2008). If learners believe that there is a best way to learn a language, they will quite likely be positive towards the type of teaching that endorses this strategy (Benson & Lor, 1999, p. 459; Loewen, Li, Fei, Thompson, Nakatsukasa, Ahn, & Chen, 2009).

According to the literature, PA increases adolescent EFL learners' interest in the English language lesson by helping them reflect upon and improve their writing performance (Meletiadou, 2013). Several studies also report on students' satisfaction with PA (Liu et al., 2001; Venables & Summit, 2003; Xiao & Lucking, 2008). As a result, students believe that they should learn more about PA and experience it for longer periods of time (ibid, 2013; van Zundert, Sluijsmans, & van

Merriënboer, 2010). This clearly indicates that PA can have a positive effect on adolescent students' attitudes towards EFL and themselves as learners, and helps them improve their performance especially in the field of writing.

3.5. Interaction and SLA

Over the past 20 years, researchers (Doehler, 2010; Long, 1985; Long & Porter, 1985; Porter, 1986) have begun recognizing that there are several psycholinguistic rationales for using group work. The findings of the research on interaction and SLA provide clear evidence that engaging learners in group activities that require students to negotiate meaning, such as PA activities, enables learners to gain additional practice in the target language. Group work increases opportunities for students to engage in the negotiation of meaning, and the increased opportunities to negotiate meaning may lead to increased comprehension, which leads to faster and better acquisition (Dobao, 2012; Imai, 2010).

Furthermore, group work pushes learners to produce comprehensible output, which some researchers (Pica, 2013; Swain, 1985) believe is necessary for SLA to take place. Long (1985, p. 221-222; 2009) list a number of other psycholinguistic reasons for group work: (1) increased quantity of practice, especially in two-way communication tasks; (2) increased range of language functions utilized; (3) similar levels of accuracy in student production as in teacher-led activities; (4) increased error correction in group work (students almost never miscorrect), and (5) increased negotiation of meaning.

While not directly driving interest in PA, interactionist perspectives offer an important theoretical foundation for it by suggesting how opportunities to negotiate meaning through group work are a means of encouraging more effective acquisition of the language (Long et al., 1985; Purpura, 2016). Effective PA is a key element of helping novice writers to understand how readers see their work. Interactional modifications can assist acquisition by making input available and comprehensible, while providing students with important opportunities for practice, and for revision and writing in response to peer feedback (Lestari, 2015). It is therefore not surprising that the peer remains a popular source of feedback in the L2 classroom and a continuing area for research. PA itself is one of the most

popular forms of peer response which has been widely researched in the past two decades (Falchikov, 2004; Topping, Walker, & Rondrigues, 2008). However, a problem that teachers may encounter while implementing PA is that students sometimes prefer teacher response so much that they will not be willing to use the feedback that they get from peers (Hu & Lam, 2010).

Feedback has long been regarded as vital for the development of EFL writing skills, both for its potential for learning and for student motivation. In process-based, learner-centred classrooms, for instance, it is viewed as an essential developmental tool moving learners through multiple drafts towards the capability for effective self-expression (Lee, Mak, & Burns, 2016). From an interactionist perspective, it is regarded as an important means of establishing the significance of reader responses in shaping meanings (Probst, 1989). Feedback is a key element of the scaffolding provided by the teacher to build learner confidence and the literacy resources to participate in target communities (Xu & Carless, 2016). In fact, over the past twenty years, changes in writing pedagogy and insights gained from research studies have transformed feedback practices, with teacher written comments now often combined with PA, writing workshops, oral-conferences, or computer-delivered feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; O'Flaherty, 2015).

For those espousing an interactionist view of SLA (Lantolf, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1999), there is an assumption that L2 acquisition is facilitated by learners' interaction in the target language, thereby providing opportunities to comprehend message meaning. Following an interactionist view of SLA, the discussion above highlights the desirability of collaborative group work, in the form of PA activities, in the creation of opportunities conducive to promoting writing quality.

3.6. Cognitive constructivist theory

Constructivist models of learning transform educators' thinking about teaching and learning (Cobb, 1994; Johnston, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010). Thus, the following idea is gaining acceptance in the reform movement: an individualized rather than a mass approach to learning is necessary for high achievement, because each individual constructs meaning in his or her own way (Laveault & Allal, 2016; National Research Council, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 1993).

A great number of educators are realizing that, to strengthen and enrich all students' educational experiences, assessments should provide students with an understanding of their learning processes (Birjandi et al., 2012a; Falchikov, 2005; National Research Council, 2005). New perceptions of assessment practices are emerging within educational systems (Gardner, 2012; Shepard, 2005). National educational reports have placed a great emphasis on classroom-based assessment as part of continuous learning (National Research Council, 2001a, 2005). The popularity of assessment as a tool for educational reform is not limited to national reports. Educational research literature has also extensively covered classroom-based assessment as one of the fundamental driving forces of meaningful learning and as a support system for curriculum objectives (National Research Council, 2001b).

In light of reform efforts, assessment may be defined as an activity that engages both students and teachers in judgments about the quality of student achievement or performance, and inferences about the learning that has taken place (Black & William, 2012; Sadler, 2005). PA as an 'alternative' method of assessment which promotes 'assessment for learning' is student-centred. It helps students to direct their activities to what is needed for learning and carry out learning tasks that are educationally engaging (Falchikov, 2004; Topping et al., 2008). Schwartz (2014, p. 2) described assessment as "the set of routine tasks that students undertake to receive feedback on their learning". Usually this set of routine tasks is geared toward fulfilling the requirements of curriculum objectives; it is important that assessment provides feedback on students' performance.

As mentioned before, constructivism is in favour of the idea that knowledge is constructed, rather than passed on, by somebody else. Constructivist view takes into consideration learners' intentions, experience, and metacognitive strategies (Reeves, 1997; Roberts, 2016). Learners who bring their ideas, feelings, and beliefs with them are given the opportunity to relate these to new information and reconstruct their existing knowledge (Stetsenko & Arieviditch, 2014; Wang, 2014).

Children's direct experience and how they interact with the environment to move to the different stages was emphasized in the early constructivist views. These views

are no more supported by recent constructivists, yet they still argue that learning is constructed by an interaction of the individual with a rich learning environment. Constructivism espouses that knowledge is within the bodies and minds of human beings. It does not have an existence on its own. Individuals construct the knowledge and this construction is based upon their prior knowledge, their experience, their reflection, or their schemata (Kwan & Wong, 2015). It cannot be, as it is stated in the objectivist view, measured and evaluated but rather observed and discovered through communication of any way. Piaget (1978 [1934]) proposed that understanding developed in children through the processes of assimilation and accommodation, associated with the construction of internal schemas for understanding the world. This has been termed cognitive constructivism.

Further support of the writing process, cooperative learning and content acquisition can be found in the works of Jean Piaget (Carpendale, 2014; Harlow et al., 2006). His ideas focus on the active part of learning, specifically actions with the environment. Piaget found that learning is more effective when a student is actively engaged in the construction of knowledge rather than passively receiving it (Burr, 2015; Harlow et al., 2006). It is in the students' interest to participate in their learning environment, and by engaging in content as part of a process, students can move from cognitive disequilibrium to accommodation of a new schema (Beilin & Pufall, 2013; Harlow et al., 2006). Piaget believed that this type of environment supported real acquisition of knowledge, as opposed to a teacher-centered one. PA fosters active learning and allows students to take part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. This promotes commitment to learning goals since learners understand the criteria on the basis of which they are assessed by taking active part in the assessment process (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). However, Matsuno (2008) showed that students may show bias towards the low-achieving students, being stricter when they give feedback to high-achieving student.

Moreover, despite the apparent differences between Vygotskyan (see Section 3.4) and Piagetian peer learning theories it has been reported that both require peer interaction (Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines, & Galton, 2003). Although peer-peer, rather than pupil-teacher are the dominant forms of interaction in the classroom

(Gu & Day, 2007; Tizard, Blatchford, Burke, Farquhar, & Plewis, 1998), teachers often fail to plan effectively for peer-peer interactions (Gardner, 2010; Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002). In Piagetian peer learning, the adaptation of cognitive structures takes place when assimilation and accommodation are in balance. This balance should be more easily established between peers than between child/teacher resulting in cognitive structures more open to adaptation and less prone to conservation (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999; Fosnot, 2013). Peer relationships can be a motivating context for pupils. In contrast to adult-peer relationships, power is distributed more horizontally and is more likely to be shared (Blatchford et al., 2003; Nicol et al., 2014). Piaget (1932/1965) noted that 'the very nature of the relationship between child and adult places the child apart, so that his thought is isolated'.

According to Jonassen (1997) and Duffy and Jonassen (2013), constructivist models of pedagogy aim to create a rich environment for the learners where they have the opportunity to engage in interpreting the world and reflecting upon their own interpretations. Jonassen also suggests that if learners are led to build their own interpretation, they will have more ownership over their thoughts. Duffy and Bednar (1991) suggest the following classroom practices which provide appropriate learning experiences for construction of meaning to occur:

- ❖ The emphasis should be on reflective thinking and productivity for the students to be able to perform relevant tasks. This approach takes into account that students perform tasks in different ways and may acquire different skills.
- ❖ Learning contexts should be rich in authentic activities allowing learners to work collaboratively and explore alternative perspectives and ideas (also in Duffy & Jonassen, 2013).

According to the above suggestions, PA provides an appropriate learning environment to EFL students, since it enhances reflective thinking, productivity and collaborative learning through authentic activities (Curriculum Development Council, 2001, 2004). Consequently, it can be assumed that PA is supported by the cognitive constructivist theory.

3.6.1. Self-regulation

The cognitive constructivist view of self-regulated learning is based on the work of Piaget, among others, who advanced the notion of a cognitive schema underlying all bases for human learning and recall, and ascribing logic and conceptual coherence as the basis for these schemas (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 29). The constructivist view presupposes the active role of the learner and that it is inherent in man to construct meaning from experience. Self-awareness develops when the child reaches the level of what Piaget calls the cognitive level of “formal operations”, that is the age of adolescence. Flavell (1979) describes this level as metacognition to describe the level where the cognitive functions are monitored and controlled. The constructivist view of learning implies that the learner actively construes knowledge from the surrounding world and in interaction with others, because as von Glasersfeld (1995, p. 177) writes “all knowledge is instrumental [...] and meaningless in isolation”. PA is an ‘alternative’ form of assessment which helps learners develop their autonomy and self-confidence as writers through interaction among each other (Boud, 2012; Cotterall & Cohen, 2003; Curtis, 2001; Kearney, 2013). As Oscarson (1997) points out, helping people become aware of each other’s and one’s own learning fosters better, autonomous life-long learning.

The social environment, but also language, was emphasized by Vygotsky who believed the development of self-regulation was dependent on social interactions through the mediation of inner speech. McCaslin and Hickey (2001, p. 234-235) point out that there is “considerable common ground between the inherently social nature of learning in a Vygotskian perspective and the social modelling features of social learning theory”, but the essential difference is collectivism versus individualism. In other words, self-control is “Vygotsky’s path to socially meaningful activity; while in contrast, socially meaningful activity is social learning theory’s path to self-control and personal freedom”. The individualistic constructivism is rejected by Paris, Byrnes, and Paris (2001, p. 254-256). They refer instead to the second wave of constructivism, which sees cognitive development as dependent on mediating constructs. The learner is “object as well as subject, shaped by others as well as an agent of self-regulation”. This is also a key feature of PA

during which learners assume the dual role of both assessor and assessee and gain considerable benefits (Topping, 2010).

Different forms of constructivist theory, in particular social constructivism, understand knowledge as something that grows and develops in the encounter between the learner and the teacher in a social environment (Oscarson, 2009; Wang, 2014). The teacher can only mediate and guide the learner on the road to learning. In the constructivist theory, there is a need for the learner to be aware of his or her own learning and develop his/her metacognitive skills so that the learner can regulate and assess the learning process himself or herself. The social constructivist perspective on learning puts the student at the centre of the learning process, and the metacognitive functions are accorded an important role in individuals' building of new knowledge (Allwood et al., 2001; Pritchard & Woollard, 2013).

The construct of self-regulation is a form of empowerment to 'free' the individual (Beck, 1986/1998; Harris & Brown, 2013). Self-regulation also helps individuals cope with challenges of accelerating change by generating individuals who 'control' themselves. The description of modern society as a risk-society, or a risk-culture has been put forth by both Beck (1986/1998, p. 50) and Giddens (1991, p. 3) as the notion of the capacity of the welfare state to take care of the individual has become questioned. Thus, the political and social importance of knowledge and education as a means for the individual to cope with these surrounding conditions increases (Beck, 1986/1998, p. 65).

Wain (2009) also points out that self-regulation can be a way of combining young adults' education with the working population's need of further education for, among other values, increased employability. Another position brought forth by several researchers (Andrade & Brown, 2016; Pontgraz, 2006; Tuchling & Engeman, 2006) is the notion of voluntary self-control, or 'governmentality' to describe and explain why lifelong learning and the self-regulating learner have recently become focused.

Many theories of self-regulation focus on the question of how students sustain learning both individually and socially. Bandura's (1986) social learning theory,

most recently called social cognitive theory, subscribes to the notion that individuals have a system of beliefs about themselves that enable them to control their actions. It has been influential in research on social factors in self-regulation, which focuses on interdependent personal, behavioural and environmental influences. Effective other-regulation as provided by adults or more expert peers can lead to self-regulation, or the capacity for independent problem solving (see Wertsch, 1985 for an elaboration of Vygotsky's notion of regulation). In language learning, Foster and Ohta (2005, p. 144) defined the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer”. The ZPD, therefore, suggests that EFL learners could potentially facilitate the development of their peers’ EFL proficiency (Zhao, 2010).

Whereas traditional interpretations of the ZPD clearly pose the presence of a more expert partner (a teacher, a tutor, or a more advanced peer) and suggest that assistance is unidirectional (from expert to novice), L2 researchers within sociocultural theory (DiCamilla et al., 1997; Donato, 1994; Li, 2016; Panadero et al., 2016) have been investigating the effects of mutual help in novice-novice interactions. The crucial question is whether L2 learners at similar stages of development can help each other advance through their respective ZPDs (Ellis, 1997). As Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) point out, effective feedback in the ZPD should be contingent on, and tailored to, learners' specific needs and potential level of development. According to Villamil et al. (1998), peer revision offers a formidable opportunity to observe the effects of such intervention and growth in the L2 writing classroom.

Nicol and Milligan (2006) propose principles for effective formative feedback which is intended to “accelerate learning”. They argue that formative feedback should be directed toward self-regulation (students’ abilities to monitor their learning, to set goals and plan strategies to achieve those goals, to manage resources, and to exert the needed effort to achieve the goals). They also place a greater emphasis on students’ regulation and control of their learning (Peterson & McClay, 2010) such as development of critical appraisal (Gibbs, Habenshaw, & Habenshaw,

1986; Nicol, Thomson, & Breslin, 2014) , metacognitive (Ballantyne, Hughes, & Mylonas, 2002; Kim & Ryu, 2013) and problem-solving skills (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Hwang, Hung & Chen, 2014).

PA, one of the most prominent forms of formative assessment, helps learners develop various learning strategies by fostering co-operative learning (OECD, 2005; Strijbos, 2016). Peer tutoring, which is a feature of PA, is cognitively-oriented, and is geared more towards self-management when it is taught effectively (Medcalf, Glynn, & Moore, 2004; Topping, Dehkinet, Blanch, Corcelles, & Duran, 2013). Self-management is a hidden benefit of having a student engaged in the writing process. As Medcalf et al. (2004) point out, there is a host of social benefits that comes with using peer interaction with teenagers in a school setting. However, Rollinson (2005) suggested that students sometimes feel that only a writer better than themselves could possibly assess their own writing, making peer response difficult to implement as students in the same class often are more or less on the same level of language proficiency.

Finally, peer revisions, another component of PA, suggest a pattern of behavior conducive to self-regulation among writers (Reinholz, 2016; Villamil et al., 1998). The writers' reformulation of the changes made in sessions and all other revisions made on their own could be indicative of the effect that other-regulation (peer assistance) had on self-regulation (independent performance). Through other-regulation, certain linguistic or rhetorical processes which were in a state of development or instability may have had an opportunity to mature and consolidate, and new knowledge may have been generated (Allal, 2016; Villamil et al., 1998).

3.7. Summary

Research based on process writing theory, collaborative learning theory, social cognitive theory, interaction and second language acquisition (SLA), cognitive constructivist theory, and self-regulation (Ghanizadeh & Alishahi, 2016; Liu et al., 2002) indicates that there is ample evidence that language learners need to be engaged in interactive activities that create opportunities for them to negotiate meaning and to learn from and implicitly teach peers to promote second language learning, including L2/EFL writing development. PA activities, which involve

problem-solving tasks, focus on improving the quality of a written draft, provide learners with the opportunities necessary to test their knowledge, learn from their peers, and negotiate meaning - all of which have been shown to be important in the development of second/foreign language skills. Rather than forcing students to compose alone, students should be introduced to the social construction of knowledge (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Bruffee, 1986; Yang, 2016). PA is an important part of writing as a social activity since it is associated with improvements in the effectiveness and quality of learning (OECD, 2005; Wong, Tee & Goh, 2016). In the next chapter, the background to current assessment practices will be described briefly to better comprehend the place that PA holds as a classroom-based formative assessment method in secondary education.

- Chapter 4 -

L2 writing theories and assessment practices of writing

“All assessment is a perpetual work in progress”

(Suske, 2005)

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four provides a brief overview of L2 writing theories and assessment practices and the development of writing assessment to place PA in its historical context. The development of different assessment practices is coupled to different language learning methods and L2 theories. Critical language theory and its importance and role for the development of alternative assessment practice are also briefly accounted for. Terms such as classroom, alternative, formative and dynamic assessment - which are closely related to PA - are also discussed in detail with the aim of underlining its intrinsic qualities and substantiating its high relevance to children and adolescents' development as well as to current methodological approaches.

4.2. A brief critical review of L2 writing theories

This section provides a brief historical overview of major L2 writing theories. Research on second language writing (L2 writing) has been widely acknowledged as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry in L2 studies and applied linguistics for around half a century (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014). The growing field of L2 writing still expands theoretically and pedagogically. A critical analysis of the different theoretical directions in L2 writing lays the grounds for a comprehensive conceptualization of the area, which in turn leads to pedagogical implications that address different L2/FL writing concerns.

L2 writing theories

L2 writing theories and pedagogies have been influenced by the theoretical directions in L1 composition: the positivistic view, the subjective view, the cognitive view, and the social constructionist view (Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 2015; Johns,

1990; Raimes, 1991; Raimes, 2010; Silva, 1990). A review of these theories and pedagogies shows that each one of them focuses on some aspects of L2 writing.

The structural approaches

In the sixties, L2 writing was taught within the general framework of the audio-lingual method, which was influenced by structural linguistics and the behaviorist learning theories of second language teaching (Johns, 1990; Raimes, 1991). In this method, speech was primary and writing was used to reinforce grammar (Raimes, 1991). The goal was grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use. Writing development was viewed as a result of habit formation and of imitation of models the teacher provides (Hyland, 2003; Raimes, 1991; Silva, 1990).

In the seventies, another approach, referred to as the current traditional rhetoric, appeared (Hyland, 2003; Silva, 1990). As a response to the critiques against the audio-lingual method, this approach called for more extensive L2 writing that bridges the gap between controlled writing and free writing (Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 2015; Raimes, 1991; Raimes, 2010; Silva, 1990). It combines the principles of current traditional paradigm in L1 writing and Kaplan's theory of contrastive rhetoric (Silva, 1990).

In 1966, Kaplan wrote an influential article that introduced the concept of contrastive rhetoric. From the perspective of this version of current traditional rhetoric, writing is basically a matter of filling sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. Kaplan's article has led to compensatory exercises that offer training in recognizing and using topic sentences, examples and illustrations (Raimes, 1991; Raimes, 2010). Since this approach focuses on form, choosing a topic does not constitute an issue (Hyland, 2003; Raimes, 1991). These two approaches present a lot of challenges as drilling and imitating patterns lead to fragmentary writing, which confuses the learners when writing for real-life purposes. Writing in real-life is contextually variable and does not possess universal features. Emphasizing form decontextualizes writing and detaches it from the purposes and the personal experiences of the writer (Hyland, 2015). PA opposes the structural approaches as it emphasize the active engagement of students in their own learning, learner responsibility, metacognitive skills and a

dialogical, collaborative model of teaching and learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Boud et al., 2014).

Process writing

The Process writing approach entered into the field of L2 writing as a reaction to the current traditional rhetoric (Silva, 1990). Zamel introduced process writing to the L2 field in 1976. She was the first one to call for the application of L1 research to L2 composition (Susser, 1994). Focus on the writer developed, where process, making meaning, invention and multiple drafts became the pedagogical target (Raimes, 1991).

Since the expressionists' view of writing has not affected L2 composition in significant ways (Silva, 1990), the current review focuses on the cognitive direction in the process movement. The cognitivists' perception of writing as a problem-solving activity in which writers use mental operations and strategies to achieve their goals has marked L2 writing instruction (Silva, 1990; Silva & Matsuda, 2012). These complex cognitive processes include planning, drafting, revising and editing (Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 2015; Raimes, 1991/2010; Seow, 2010). The cognitivists believe that classroom tasks like peer collaboration, revision and attention to content before form would encourage students to employ the strategies that they need to arrive at a good product. Teachers working within this theoretical framework allow students to select topics, to generate ideas, to write, to revise, to rewrite and provide feedback (Raimes, 2010).

A prominent model of the process writing approach is the Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981) model which focuses on what writers do when they compose. It examines the rhetorical problem in order to determine the potential difficulties a writer could experience during the composing process. The "problem-solving activity" is divided into two major components: the rhetorical situation (audience, topic, assignment), and the writer's own goals (involving the reader, the writer's persona, the construction of meaning, and the production of the formal text). However, the social dimension is important too. Indeed, writing "should not be viewed solely as an individually-oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as much as an acquired response to the discourse conventions . . . within particular

communities" (Swales, 1990, p. 4). In more recent studies, Flower and her colleagues (1990) analyze the task of reading-to-write to establish the interaction of context and cognition in performing a particular writing task.

The view that writing is typically a socially situated, communicative act is later incorporated into Flower's (1994) socio-cognitive theory of writing. In the social cognitive curriculum students are taught as apprentices in negotiating an academic community, and in the process develop strategic knowledge. Writing skills are acquired and used through negotiated interaction with real audience expectations, such as in peer group responses. Instruction should, then, afford students the opportunity to participate in transactions with their own texts and the texts of others (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; 2014). By guiding students toward a conscious awareness of how an audience will interpret their work, learners then learn to write with a "readerly" sensitivity (Kern, 2000).

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) also propose the knowledge-transforming model, which involves reflective problem-solving analysis and goal-setting. The knowledge-transforming or intentional writing model involves setting of goals that are to be achieved through the composing process, and the purposeful achievement of those goals. In fact, Bereiter and Scardamalia criticize formal schooling that encourages the more passive kind of cognition by "continually telling students what to do," rather than encouraging them "to follow their spontaneous interests and impulses . . . and assume responsibility for what becomes of their minds" (p. 361). They also argue that the ability to wrestle with and resolve both content and rhetorical problems calls upon a dialectical process for reflection. If students rarely practice the kinds of writing tasks that develop knowledge-transforming skills, they are not likely to be able to perform those skills easily.

Both the Flower and Hayes, and the Bereiter and Scardamalia writing process models have served as the theoretical basis for using the process approach in both L1 and L2 writing instruction. Attention to the writing process stresses more of a workshop approach to instruction, which fosters classroom interaction, and engages students in analyzing and commenting on a variety of texts.

Despite their implications for classroom instruction, not all the components of these models are appropriate in an L2 context. The Flower model, in particular, does not recognize cross-cultural differences and issues related to sociocultural variation in the functions of the written language (Kern, 2000). L2 writers, however, are in the process of acquiring these conventions and so they often need more instruction about the language itself. Limited knowledge of vocabulary, language structure, and content can inhibit a L2 writer's performance. In addition, the models do not account for growing language proficiency, which is a vital element of L2 writing development.

Similarly, composing, especially in the revision stage, challenges L2 writers. In his research on how L2 writers revise their work, Silva (1993) observes that learners revise at a superficial level. They re-read and reflect less on their written text, revise less, and when they do, the revision is primarily focused on grammatical correction.

In sum, social-cognitive theories of writing show us how social contexts for writing operate together with the cognitive efforts of the writer, just as they do when a person is acquiring a new language. However, the problem with applying L1 theories and subsequent models of instruction (such as the process approach) to L2 instruction is that L2 writing also involves the cognitively demanding task of generating meaningful text in a second language. As a result, L2 students generally want more teacher involvement and guidance, especially at the revision stage. Consequently, in order to provide effective pedagogy, L2 writing instructors need to understand the social and cognitive factors involved in the process of second language acquisition and error in writing because these factors have a salient effect on L2 writing development. Moreover, they need to realize that assessment processes in which the teacher holds all the power and makes all the choices limits the potential for learner development (Boud, 1995; Boud & Molloy, 2013) and promote alternative assessment methods such as PA.

Although the process movement still plays an influential role in L2 writing classes, both of its directions have drawbacks. Expressionists claim that writing as an individual act empowers students to resist domination. However, writing is a social

act in which writers communicate with the readers who share with them common interests (Silva, 1990; Silva & Matsuda, 2012). The cognitive orientation in the process movement has drawn attention to cognition as an important factor in writing, but we cannot reduce writing to cognitive strategies only. The process model claims to be objective and neutral, unaffected by forces outside the writer. However, shaping texts are influenced by complex social forces outside the writer. In addition, critics of the cognitive approach stress that we do not know yet whether or not there are universal cognitive strategies (Bizzell, 1992; Faigley, 1986). Moreover, this approach neglects to seriously consider variations in writing processes, due to differences in individuals or writing tasks (Silva, 1990, p.16). However, the Process Movement mainly fails to account for the social dimension of writing (Myles, 2002). For instance, it does not account for how the purposes of EFL/ESL students as well as their social, economic and political contexts affect their writing proficiency in EFL/ESL.

Contrastive rhetoric and the static model of writing

Contrastive rhetoric researchers study the discourse level structures observed in different languages. Traditionally, many of them have attributed the apparent lack of coherence in L2 texts to negative transfer and interference (Zamel, 1997). From the perspective of contrastive rhetoric, the students' L1 as well as their educational and cultural backgrounds influence, if they do not determine, the L2 organizational structures. There is a determinism in this argument, an attribution of students' attempts in another language to these students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which are viewed as problematic and limiting (Matsuda, 1997; Zamel, 1997). Zamel (1997) puts it this way: "Although cross-cultural research has now acknowledged that an array of factors may account for student writing in another language, recent work continues to raise the specter that teachers and researchers who see students as bound by their cultures may be trapped by their own cultural tendencies to reduce, categorize and generalize." (p. 341). The reader in this view is a decoder of texts, and any discrepancy between the writer's and the reader's schematic expectations leads to failure in understanding them. The static theory presents a mechanistic view of the L2 writer, in which he is programmed to write in a certain way. The lack of appropriate organizational

structures in L2 texts reflects the lack of proper programming. The prescriptive nature of the pedagogical approaches founded on this theory has rendered them the L2 versions of current traditional rhetoric (Matsuda, 1997; Silva & Matsuda, 2012).

Raimes' balanced approach

Raimes (1991; 2010) introduced the balanced process approach to ESL and hypothesized that if we want to move away from composition as colonization, we need to foster the alternative rhetoric that the L2 students bring to our language. According to her, student L1 serves as an important resource rather than a hindrance in decision making in writing. Raimes (1997; 2010) explains that alongside its focus on the individual writer, this approach pays attention to form, content and reader's expectations, and by extension, to the social context of composing. According to her, it allows students and teachers the time and the opportunity for exploratory activities. Raimes believes that "through the generative process of writing about themselves and the world around them, about society, culture, language and literature, students can discover and resist any hidden curricula imposed upon them, including those informed by the teacher's political agenda" (p. 420). While Raimes' balanced process approach assumes a dynamic relationship between the writer and the reader and constitutes a milestone in writing pedagogy, it fails to address the social and ideological dimensions of L2 composition. Raimes herself says that her approach only addresses the social context by extension.

The social constructionist view of writing

A third group of theories, alternately called "the transactional theories", "the new rhetoric", and "the social constructionist theories" (Berlin, 1982), have emerged as a reaction to both the objective and the subjective theories of writing. The social constructionists base their theories of writing on the views that knowledge and reality are probabilistic, dynamic and dialectic. According to them, audience, author, reality, and language make up the elements of dialectic and shape the communication process. They believe that the interaction among these elements and the circumstances that exist in a certain community at the time of this

interaction create reality (Berlin, 1982/1987/1988). Hence, this interaction influences how people write (Bruffee, 1986). The Social Constructionists critique the objective theories for their deterministic views of reality and for their prescriptive approach to rhetoric. They also critique the subjective approach for its failure to face and change the prescriptive nature of the current traditional rhetoric. Several orientations of social constructionism have emerged, ranging from those that call for more attention to the immediate circumstances in which a text is produced to those denying the existence of an individual author (Faigley, 1983; 1986). Faigley identifies four lines of research guided by a social view of writing: poststructuralist, sociologist, ethnographic and Marxist. Although these lines of research overlap, having affinities with diverse disciplinary traditions makes it hard to extrapolate a comprehensive social view of composing. This is also fostered by PA which encourages teachers to see dialogue and the co-construction of knowledge as a core part of their teaching conceptions (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Boud et al., 2014).

Canagarajah's perspective

Canagarajah (1993) suggests that we must challenge an explicitly mandated reality and develop local forms of knowledge. He calls for deconstructing the dominant pedagogical prescriptions that characterize ESL writing programs and to capitalize on local forms of knowledge in shaping ESL instruction. He believes that, in addition to integrating form, content, the writer and the reader, any approach should situate writing in its social context.

The dynamic model of writing

Matsuda (1997) develops the dynamic model of writing as an alternative to the static model. He explains that while in the static model, the L1 reader's background alone constitutes the context of writing, in the dynamic model, both the reader's and the writer's backgrounds constitute this context. According to him, in the dynamic model, the background includes more than the cultural, linguistic and educational experiences; it encompasses factors like knowledge of the subject, past interaction with the reader and so on and so forth. Matsuda (1997) emphasizes that the backgrounds of the writer and the reader are complex and

flexible. He posits that the context of writing is dynamic and bidirectional and that the discourse community is shared by both the writer and the reader. Teaching L2 students to organize L2 writing then, does not mean imposing on them the cultural values of native English speakers or prescribing patterns. Rather, it should be considered as a way of raising L2 students' awareness of various factors that are involved in structuring the text, including readers' expectations and certain organizational patterns" (Matsuda, 1997, p. 56).

The social constructionists have pointed out significant drawbacks in the cognitive approaches to ESL/EFL writing, particularly the dissociation of the composing act from its social context and their claims to neutrality (Nystrand, 1989; Nystrand et al., 1993). They rightly theorize for the social and ideological nature of composition. For instance, Canagarajah highlights the role of ideology and identity in composing and calls for integrating the social context with other aspects of writing. Matsuda's dynamic model departs from the static view that ESL writing is determined by the ESL writer's cultural background, educational experiences and their L1 rhetorical structure. The model represents the L2 writer as an intelligent human being who is capable of developing new skills and of acquiring new knowledge. Within Matsuda's model, not only does the writer acquire new knowledge, but the reader also changes his expectations. Thus, social constructionism explains the complex social and ideological construction of the writer and of the text he/she produces, illuminating the dialectical interplay between the social constraints placed on composing and the agency of the writer (Flower, 1994). However, many social constructionist views entail some contradiction and leave us with many unanswered questions.

Furthermore, many social constructionist views seem to de-emphasize the language and needs of ESL/EFL students (Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). These students need to acquire the language elements and rhetorical structures that help them produce clear and rich texts that communicate effectively with the target audience, and these should be tackled in ESL/EFL writing theories and pedagogies. In addition, in their reaction to the cognitive models, many social constructionist scholars downplay the role of the cognitive processes of writing. Matsuda talks about "the text as a medium of communication", but his model does

not explain how students produce this text (1997). In this model, a writing pedagogy is one that raises the writer's awareness of the reader's expectations not in order to meet those expectations but to negotiate with the reader in order to arrive at a new social reality (Matsuda et al., 2003; Silva & Matsuda, 2012).

The genre approach

Genre pedagogies are grounded in various theoretical traditions. The following review is based on Hyland's conceptualization of the genre approach. Hyland (2003; 2015) defines genre as a set of texts that share the same purpose, and consequently the same structure. According to him, these texts use language in specific ways to get things done. Thus, in the genre approach, teachers focus on how texts use certain linguistic patterns that represent social choices and constraints (Hyland, 2003; 2015). "Writing instruction (from this perspective) begins with the purposes for communicating, and then moves to the stages of a text which can express these purposes. Teachers can help students to distinguish between different genres and to write them more effectively by a careful study of their structures" (Hyland, 2003, p. 20). Thus, the teacher starts with an emphasis on direct instruction. Students are guided to produce typical rhetorical patterns needed for the functions in question. These patterns are learned through analyzing "expert texts" rather than through experiment and exploration (Hyland, 2003; 2015).

The genre approach places emphasis on structure (Flowerdew, 2005). The idea that students learn through model analysis and explicit instruction rather than through exploration takes us back to the static conceptualization of writing. It is true that students should write for different purposes and should be aware of the rhetorical patterns that help them achieve these purposes. However, the emphasis should be on reading and writing different genres for transactional and intellectual purposes, in the context of which explicit instruction and model analysis are used to raise the students' awareness of the possible patterns they can employ. Thus, meaning, and not genre analysis, should be the focus of instruction (Swales, 1990).

Grabe and Kaplan's taxonomy of writing

Grabe and Kaplan's taxonomy of writing (1996; 2014) offer "a taxonomy of writing skills, knowledge basis and processes" (p. 217) which, they argue, integrates all the aspects of writing, social, cognitive and linguistic. They base their taxonomy on Delhyme's and Canal and Swane's notion of communicative competence, developed primarily to account for oral communication. Grabe and Kaplan hypothesize that one of the best ways to attempt a first ethnography of writing is to ask the basic question: Who writes what to whom, for what purpose, why, when, where and how? According to them, providing a taxonomic answer to this question will lead to an initial approximation for an ethnography of writing. The authors present their taxonomy in four pages, in which they list different elements in the form of points and questions. These elements include cognitive factors, contextual factors, and linguistic factors.

The first concern with Grabe and Kaplan's theory is that writing does not involve a hierarchy of structures or processes and cannot be explained taxonomically. It is a complex, cyclical process in which the different elements of the rhetorical situation interact dialectically. The writer, the context, the reader and the rhetorical purpose influence each other in various ways, for which a taxonomy cannot account. The second concern lies in that the different writing elements in the Taxonomy are not linked in any way. Grabe and Kaplan refer to each element as an "independent contributor" to writing. This may indicate that they approach the ethnography of writing without a clear theoretical stance. However, any meaningful explanation of composing should be grounded in theory. In addition, The Taxonomy includes many points irrelevant to a theory of writing. Linguistic knowledge - "sound-letter correspondences, syllables" (p. 220) - exemplifies these points.

To sum up, most of the previous L2 writing theories support the use of PA in the L2 classes because they acknowledge the importance of the existence of a social context for L2 students in order to develop their writing skills as well as their autonomy as learners. Moreover, it is indispensable for L2 writing to take fully into account the issue of EFL. Since primary research on L2 writing dominates the aspects of ESL learners rather than EFL, the number of studies of EFL writing is

virtually limited (Richards, 2002). The L2 writing theories discussed in this section indicate possible ways of explaining the act of composing in FL/SL, of understanding and respecting FL/SL writing students, of placing those students in suitable learning contexts, and of evaluating them fairly. In the following subsections, a brief description of the evolution of writing assessment is going to be presented to show how much - or how little - assessment practices have changed over time and how PA has emerged as an 'alternative' classroom-based assessment method which fosters 'assessment for learning'.

4.3. A brief historical perspective on writing assessment

Assessment of writing has been around for thousands of years. In the Chou period (1111–255 B.C.), writing was a prerequisite for imperial, governmental or feudal service (Hamp-Lyons, 2002, 2014). The establishment of a national university during the Han period (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) formalised the system of written examinations. However, it was during the Sung period (960–1280 A.D.) that a national school system was established and common people could progress in life through education. Education, notably memorisation, rote repetition, and written analysis and literacy, became the mark of the successful man (education for women was rare). Impartiality in the examination process was ensured through a rigorous, indeed traumatic sequence of increasingly-demanding exams in which candidates and examiners were locked away together (Hamp-Lyons, 2002). However, in practice these ideals were marred by bribery and cheating (Cleverley, 1985).

4.3.1. Writing assessment in Europe

DuBois (1970) reports that it was the Jesuit order that pioneered the use of written tests in the West, publishing a statement of writing test procedures in 1599 (op. cit., p. 8). In 1858, written examinations became the simple solution to the need for a relatively quick and dependable way to judge the literacy skills and the intelligence of would-be civil servants (Spolsky, 1996). Latham (1877, p. 1) complained that examinations were an "encroaching power" that was blurring the distinctions between liberal and technical education, narrowing the range of

learning by forcing students to 'cram' for exams, and making examinations the master rather than the servant of teaching by exerting control over curriculum.

In 1988, Edgeworth (1888) claimed to have discovered a method of "true judgement" of the "intellectual worth" revealed by a written examination text. His proposed method, which involved the use of several "competent critics", such as literary scholars and textbook authors, whose judgements were then pooled and reported as a mean score, is not so very different from most of the methods commonly used now. His work presaged a host of other attempts to reduce the complexity of the judgement of writing to a task that could be routinised and made objective (Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Hartog (1910), himself an educational psychologist, sums up the issues in a 1910 entry for the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

"It can scarcely be doubted that in spite of the powerful objections that have been advanced against [written] examinations, they are, in the view of the majority of English people, an indispensable element in the social organisation of a highly specialised democratic state, which prefers to trust nearly all decisions to committees rather than to individuals. But in view of the extreme importance of the matter, ... intellectual interest and initiative seem to diminish in many cases very markedly during school and college life . . . , the whole subject [of written examinations] seems to call for a searching and impartial inquiry." (p. 49)

4.3.2. The modern period

Yancey (1999) identifies three 'waves' of writing assessment: the first wave (1950–1970), when writing assessment was done through 'objective' testing; the second wave (1970–1986), when holistic scoring of timed essays was the preferred practice; and the third wave (1986–present) with its interest in portfolio assessment (p. 484). Hamp-Lyons (2001) argues that the first two 'generations' of writing assessment were (as more or less illustrated in the preceding parts of this chapter) the opposite of Yancey's characterisation: direct assessment of written texts came first, and multiple-choice testing second.

In the early 20th century the Direct method became popular in Germany and France (Oscarson, 2009; Weigle, 2002). It was based on the belief that foreign and second languages were learned in much the same way as one's first language, or mother tongue. To achieve language learning goals, only the target language was used in the classroom. Understanding without translation, and thinking directly in the new language was the ultimate aim. Then, followed a modified direct method, where translation of, for example, vocabulary was allowed in the classroom and this method became fairly common.

The reading method was used in the United States during the 1930s where the majority of American students only studied foreign languages for two years. Students were taught to read the new language with direct comprehension, inferring meaning without the use of translation, while the other language skills were deemed rather less important. During this period, teachers as well as language testing experts constructed their own tests from general principles of testing taken from the humanities or social sciences, and depending on the particular method they were using (Birjandi & Sarem, 2012b; Brown, 1987, p. 227). The assumption behind this practice was that regarding assessment one can and must rely on the judgment of the teacher.

Psychometric-structuralist language testing became common in the early 1950s to the late 1960s, largely influenced by the work of Lado (1961) and Carroll (1961; 1965; 1968). Following Lado (1961), discrete-point testing assumes that language knowledge can be divided into several independent facts: elements of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, pronunciation, intonation and stress. Language learning and teaching had during this time been influenced by structural (or descriptive) linguists such as (Bloomfield, 1933/1984), Sapir (1921/2004), Hockett (1960) and Fries (1945) as well as behaviourists such as Watson (1930) and Skinner (1948/1976; 1957) in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Davies, 2013; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000).

In the 1960s, cognitive psychology sought to discover underlying motivations and deeper structures, focusing on meaning and understanding. Piaget (1970) suggested that the individual learner constructed new knowledge from previous

experiences, incorporating the new knowledge into existing frameworks. The cognitive constructivist view of learning meant that language learners reconstructed language rules for themselves, trying them out and altering them according to degree of success.

The generative-transformational school of linguistic analysis emerged, spearheaded by Chomsky (1957, 1965), who claimed that language was not a habit structure and instead spoke of the existence of a Universal Grammar and that children have an innate ability to acquire language, a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). To a certain degree the influence of the generative-transformation grammarians resulted, partly on false grounds, to a return to the learning of rules. This approach was defined as the cognitive code learning theory by Carroll (1965) (also Crusan, 2013; Rivers, 1981).

The corresponding period in testing built on the notion that language ability could be broken down into isolated skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Oscarson, 2009; Tsagari & Banerjee, 2014). Within each of these skills, isolated segments such as morphology and syntax could be tested separately in an item-by-item fashion, and it was consequently termed discrete-point testing. It was popular due to its assumed objective character and its often easily demonstrated high reliability features. Objective test formats, such as multiple-choice questions, and concentration on aspects of formal language, such as structure and form, were common.

As the need for an educated labour force increased, and larger groups of young people entered further education, demands for democracy and emancipatory learning grew. In the 1970s and 1980s, the trends in psychology focused on interpersonal relationships and group work, as well on collaborative and social dimensions of learning (Davies, 2013; Tsagari & Banerjee, 2014). Piaget had argued for the importance of cooperation and social interaction. He had early seen these aspects of human life as necessary elements for cognitive development.

The works of Vygotsky reinforced Piaget's ideas but emphasized the importance of discourse with others and language mediation to reach a higher level of understanding. Vygotsky's well-known concept, the "zone of proximal

development” (Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010) described how learners should be challenged in close proximity to, yet somewhat above, their current level of understanding. Through prompting and scaffolding from teachers (or others) the learner could learn to master concepts he or she would not reach on his or her own, as well as gain confidence and motivation for learning.

The theoretical school of social constructivism placed the responsibility of learning more on the student and emphasized the importance of the student being actively involved in the learning process (Tzagari & Banerjee, 2016; von Glaserfeld, 1995). The learner’s own metacognitive awareness and strategic ability became important features of learning more autonomously, and the learner’s experience of mastery and internal feelings of competence and self-efficacy were seen as central to sustaining motivation. The importance of social relationships and interactions for learning in general came into focus, emphasizing language, culture and context for the learner to be able to construct his or her own knowledge.

The interactive process of language (the nature of communication and communicative competence), and the importance of socio-cultural rules (being able to create utterances that are appropriate to the context in which they are made) was investigated by Hymes (1971/2004, 1972). Likewise, Halliday (1973) studied the interrelation between language use and social context but from “the view of language as semantic options derived from social structure” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 21). Inter-language and Krashen’s Monitor Model (which distinguished between conscious learning processes and less conscious but equally important acquisition processes), also became influential in the 1970s and early 1980s (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, p. 35; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Stern, 1983/1990, p. 330-331). Other theories, such as Comprehensible Output (Swain, 1985) for example, emphasized language output as a means for the learner to test acquisition, as language output generated feedback, and enhanced fluency.

The Communicative Approach to language learning, which grew out of the more modern theories on learning and language development, involved more implicit language learning. On the whole it meant having students communicate with each other in meaningful situations in a variety of contexts but not withholding explicit

formal instruction (Canale et al., 1980, p. 18; Widdowson, 1978 [1934], p. 19). van Ek's (1975) work with the Threshold Level described categories of language skills that the learner should be able to perform, and language activities they should be able to engage in to function independently in the language at a basic, "threshold" level. This was later developed further in the Common European Framework of Reference.

The work of Widdowson (1978 [1934]), Stern (1983/1990), and Nunan (1991/1998) reflected a more integrative theory of communicative competence. Nunan's list of elements of communicative language teaching for example, included an emphasis on communication through interaction in the target language, the use of authentic texts, learner focus on the learning process, and the contribution of elements of learners' own language experience inside and outside the classroom.

Generally, one can claim that peer and group work requiring negotiation and collaboration are typical features of the communicative language classroom. It also often involves features of more untraditional forms of classroom work, like self-directed learning or Learner Autonomy and Problem Based Learning (PBL) where students are stimulated and often even required, to take a more active role in their own learning. Researchers such as Oller and John (1979) began to investigate ways of testing communicative language competence. As language competence was now seen as a unified set of interacting abilities, it was assumed that they should not, and could not be separated into different testable components. Integrative or global (rather than discrete-point) tests were preferable as they tried to assess the language learners' ability to use several skills and language segments, including formal and sociolinguistic aspects at the same time, and in this way were supposed to measure the individual's total proficiency.

Canale et al. (1980) continued and examined grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse aspects of communicative competence. Bachman (1990) divided the communicative competence concept further into the broader "organizational competence", which included both grammatical and discourse

competence, and "pragmatic competence", which included sociolinguistic and illocutionary competence.

In light of the above, as Rivers (1981, p. 357) writes, integrative language tests need to involve the assessment of functional language and meaningful discourse that engages several skills. Emphasis should be on communication skills, authenticity and context. Communicative tests have accordingly to be both direct and pragmatic, and test the learner in a variety of language functions (Álvarez, 2013; Brown, 1987, p. 231). Communicative tests should also, according to Canale et al. (1980), build on a theoretical framework, concentrate on motivating, interesting and substantive content, do everything possible to elicit a good performance from students and work for a positive washback effect. The point that testing methodology must integrate all aspects of communicative competence was emphasized by Canale and Swain (op. cit.).

Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) stressed that assessment instruments should be designed to address communicative performance in real situations for authentic purposes. In the assessment of writing skills for example, a valid task would be to ask the learners to combine elements of what they have learned, and write something to express their own meaning, thus combining an authentic communicative purpose with the demonstration of the language level attained.

While considerable SLA research has been devoted to language learning in a natural setting, there have also been efforts made to explore SLA in the classroom. This kind of research is mainly concerned with the effect that instruction has on the learner which is also the focus of the current study. It explores what teachers do, the classroom context, the dynamics of classroom communication. It is both qualitative and quantitative research. A significant area of research in classroom SLA has been on the effects of different techniques of providing corrective feedback with the aim of assisting learners to communicate meaningful content (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Lyster & Rada, 1997; Lyster & Mori, 2006) engaging in some cases language teachers in action research to refine their pedagogical intervention to maximize interlanguage development (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009).

PA was also supported by the competition model a psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition and sentence processing developed by Elizabeth Bates and Brian MacWhinney (1989). The competition model accounts for the learning of second languages and refers to social isolation as one of the four risk factors that the second language learner faces social isolation (McWhinney, Bates & Kliegl, 1984; Ellis, 1998). Fortunately, a determined second language learner can rely protective factors to compensate for these disadvantages such as participation in assessment procedures which foster L2 learning such as PA, which counters the tendency to social isolation (McWhinney, 2015).

Various alternative modes of assessment, PA and SA for example, have increasingly come into focus (e.g. Gipps, 1994; Hamayan, 1995; McInerney, 2013; Taras, 2015; Vanderhoven, Raes, Montrieux, Rotsaert, & Schellens, 2015) due to the attention social constructivism, and, more recently, self-regulated language teaching methods assign the student's own role in learning. Therefore, the role that response and feedback has been found to have in the writing process, not only in developing students' writing ability but also in learning in general (Dysthe, Hertzberg, & Hoel, 2000; Shintani, 2016; Wigglewortg & Storch, 2012), has also had impact on the character of both writing assignments and tests.

The development of alternative modes of assessment has been enhanced by endeavours to help all students reach goals that were previously reserved only for the privileged. Both international and national policy documents, as well as projects endorsed by the Council of Europe, emphasize the democratic aspects of language learning, both on an individual and a global level. As Shohamy (2007) states, high-stakes language assessment such as tests have come to be "connected and embedded in political, social and educational contexts" and are judged "in relation to their impact, ethicality, fairness, values and consequences" (op.cit., p. 117).

Traditional, high-stakes language tests have power to influence actions and policy, not always to the learner's advantage (Gipps & Murphy, 1994; Tsagari, 2009). Other ways of assessing language learners' competence need to be developed,

given the “power” language tests may have. The development of more self-reflective as well as collaborative assessment models is one way to do this.

Alternative assessment, and more specifically PA, is to a large degree based on the critical perspective, as applied to language assessment by for instance Pennycook (2001) and Lynch (2001). This is briefly described in this section, as it is part of the theoretical background to PA practices. Classic critical theory strove to “link thought with emancipation” (Lynch, 2001, p. 352). In educational research for example, it raised important ethical questions, and the critical theory paradigm saw thought as mediated by socially and historically situated power relations. It did not isolate facts from values. Social inequality and social transformation were central. Pennycook saw several ways of responding to issues of inequality and oppression, and Lynch (op.cit., p. 357) characterized the critical approach to applied linguistics by:

- ❖ its interest in the ways in which language related issues are interconnected with other domains,
- ❖ its research ambition to consider paradigms beyond the dominant ones,
- ❖ its concern for social justice and equality, and
- ❖ its requirement to be self-reflexive in itself.

Lynch argued that the critical perspective could have elements to offer language research in assessment, as an additional approach to looking at individual language ability. He saw the paradigms underlying alternative assessment as different from those of testing. Testing, according to Lynch, is mainly concerned with measuring objective entities, while alternative assessment takes the view that language use can best be understood in social life and does not exist independently. He argues that the differences lie mainly in the conceptualization of validity and its criteria (Lynch, 2001, p. 362). It is the “assumptions of the research and practice with which they are embedded that determine their critical potential or alternative paradigm character” (op. cit., p. 364) the validity framework must integrate with ethics. Fairness in the critical alternative assessment perspective here means that the learner’s perspective is taken into account, and that the assessment is so structured as to maximize ethical behaviour so that the power

relations between the assessor and the assessee are shifted. The assessment practice should also actively enable the construction of the self as subject, rather than the object of assessment.

The critical perspective aims at establishing an assessment context where the learner's voice is given more room for expression, "a context in which traditional power relations are recognized and made more reversible and flexible" (Lynch, 2001, p. 368). As both Lynch and Shohamy maintain, the critical perspective needs to be self-reflexive in itself. The procedure needs to be continually scrutinized so as to not become in itself normative, and the expert status of traditional language assessment in the form of summative tests reconsidered in a more democratic approach, giving learners a more active role in assessment.

Alternative models of assessment can, through collaboration, lead to shared power, and thereby empower rather than subjugate the learner (Stoynoff, 2013). But the complexities of the nature of PA can also require the learner to 'confess' in the evaluation of their own performance. It is believed that this can occur in and through discourse associated with both summative and formative assessment and creates knowledge about the individual student. As Tan (2004) points out, "power should be appreciated for its productive pedagogical potential" (p. 660). This is also the case for the power inherent in different assessment practices, be they alternative or traditional.

Power is always present and the focus should be, first of all, on how it may be used to benefit learners (Shohamy, 2014). Thus, lifelong self-regulated learning and PA practices should be seen as a means to learning ends. If these means are not apparent, they are not going to be taken seriously. As many learners and teachers bring with them real life experiences other than that of the prevalent educational discourse, calling attention to the forces at work is needed (Brown, 2013). Students need help to develop self-regulating techniques. Lifelong learning, self-regulation and PA seek among other things to give students tools that help them learn how to learn. It represents a shift in practice, which is a part of a broader discourse (Lantolf et al., 2015).

Both the empowering and the disciplining potential of self-regulated learning and adherent PA practices exist, but the question is how this power is exercised in practice, which is important. As such, it can be seen as part of Messick's (1989) concept of consequential validity, that is, validity related to its consequences. Messick claimed that the consequences of assessment should be integrated into a wider and unified concept of validity, taking into account the washback effects of assessment on teaching and learning in addition to the usual kinds of validity considerations (McNamara, 2013). Boud (2000) calls this sustainable assessment. Needless to say, assessment practices should contribute towards learners' ability to learn, not venture or undermine learning.

4.3.3. The future

Hamp-Lyons (2001) argues that, while the third 'generation' of writing assessment still has a long way to go before all problems are resolved, there is a need to look forward to the fourth generation (Lee, 2016; Silva & Matsuda, 2012). She suggested (p. 120–125) that a fourth generation will need to be technological, humanistic, political, and ethical. This fourth generation must be both humanistic and technological, drawing on advances both in computer applications and in our increasing understanding of writing assessment as a complex of processes in which multiple authors and readers are involved and revealed (see, for example, Lumley, 2000). She opposes the unnecessary use of writing tests where other more appropriate and less intrusive tools may do the job (Lee, 2014). She does support the development and use of high-quality alternative forms of writing assessment and supports the efforts of teachers to use response to writing, peer feedback, self-reflection and SA, and all sound, creative paths open to them to place writing assessment in support of teaching (Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

After briefly referring to the evolution of writing assessment, in the next section, classroom assessment is going to be defined and good classroom-based assessment practices - such as PA - will be highlighted since these are vital for the development of self-reliant lifelong learners.

4.4. Classroom assessment

Schwartz (2014) described classroom assessment as “the set of routine tasks that students undertake to receive feedback on their learning” (p. 2). Usually this set of routine tasks is geared toward fulfilling the requirements of curriculum objectives; it is important that assessment provides feedback on students’ performance (Andrade & Brookhart, 2016; Sadler, 2005).

National educational reports have placed a great emphasis on classroom assessment as part of continuous learning (National Research Council, 2001a, 2005). The popularity of assessment as a tool for educational reform is not limited to national reports. Educational research literature has also extensively covered classroom assessment as one of the fundamental driving forces of meaningful learning and as a support system for curriculum objectives (National Research Council, 2001b; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). In light of reform efforts, assessment may be defined as an activity that engages both students and teachers in judgments about the quality of student achievement or performance, and inferences about the learning that has taken place (Cowie & Harrison, 2016; Sadler, 2005). Assessment helps students to direct their activities to what is needed for learning and helps them carry out learning tasks that are educationally engaging (Fulcher & Owen, 2016).

Teachers have always evaluated student knowledge through recall test, or by asking content questions during a lecture, but researchers and practitioners are beginning to understand that a different type of teacher developed assessments can play an important role in supporting learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Popham, 2008; Zhou & Deneen, 2015) and in helping to transform teaching practice. In fact, incorporating 21st century teaching practices should start with updating teachers’ arsenal of assessment strategies that they use in the classroom to support their teaching (Jacobs, 2010; Hill & McNamara, 2012). In a seminal review of the literature on how people learn, the National Research Council asserts that “appropriately designed assessments can help teachers realize the need to rethink their teaching practices” (2000, p. 141). The research around classroom assessments suggests that the effective tools and strategies share three important traits in different degrees:

- ❖ High quality teacher-designed assessments provide insight on what and how students are learning in time for teachers to modify or personalize instruction: For example, when employing the PA strategy, if students and teachers assess a student differently, it can open up productive dialogue to discuss student learning needs and goal creation (Ross, 2006). The teacher can then use that information to structure subsequent lessons around the needs and goals of those students. As teachers become more aware of their students' interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses, they are better positioned to modify their instructional strategies and content focus to help maximize student learning (Leung, 2014).
- ❖ They allow teachers to assess a broader range of skills and abilities in addition to content recall: strategies, such as PA, both teach and assess a broader range of life skills like self-reflection, collaboration, and communication. As a tool to measure student learning, rubrics allow teachers to measure multiple dimensions of learning rather than just content knowledge, and to provide a more detailed assessment of each student's abilities instead of just a number or percent correct.
- ❖ These assessments give students new roles in the assessment process that can make assessment itself a learning experience and deepen student engagement in content: In contrast to the traditional teacher-designed, teacher-administered, teacher-graded tests, this cadre of assessments involves students throughout the assessing process. Involving students in the creation of assessment criteria, the diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, and the monitoring of their own learning, transfers the locus of instruction from the teacher to his or her students (Nunes, 2004). During PA students are asked to be the actual evaluators offering feedback and suggestions on how to improve their classmates' work. When created collaboratively, many of these assessments enable teachers and students to interact in a way that blurs the roles in the teaching and learning process (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002).

When students are part of the assessment process, they are more likely to “take charge” of their own learning process and products, and will be more likely to want

to make improvements on future work (Leung, 2014; Sweet, 1993). Constructivist models of learning transform educators' thinking about teaching and learning (Cobb, 1994; Johnston, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010). Thus, the following idea is gaining acceptance in the reform movement: an individualized rather than a mass approach to learning is necessary for high achievement, because each individual constructs meaning in his or her own way (National Research Council, 2005; Rea-Dickins, 2008; von Glasersfeld, 1993). A great number of educators are realizing that, to strengthen and enrich all students' educational experiences, assessments should provide students with an understanding of their learning processes (Falchikov, 2005; Sadler, 1989; Yan & Cheng, 2015). New perceptions of assessment practices are emerging within educational systems (Graham, Hebert, & Harris, 2015; Shepard, 2000). Formative assessment, which will be presented in the next section, has also received a lot of attention over the past two decades (Black et al., 2003; Black, 2015).

4.5. Formative assessment

Assessment can have different purposes, namely, assessment for learning (formative) and assessment for grading (summative), both of which can motivate students and teachers. Assessment for learning or formative assessment aims to assist the learning process by providing feedback for the students for further study and improvement (Gardner, 2012). As McApline and Higgison (2002) put forward, "formative assessment intends to tell students how to improve their performance, diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback for the teacher, and present a profile of what students have learned. Summative assessment or assessment for grading has external purposes, and does not normally provide extensive feedback to the students" (p. 12). It aims to pass/fail a student, grade or rank the student, tell students what they have achieved, and help them to develop the ability to self assess.

Over the past several years, a growing emphasis on the use of formative assessment has emerged, yet formative assessment has remained an enigma in the literature (Black et al., 1998b; Havnes, Smith, Dysthe, & Ludvigsen, 2012; Leung & Mohan, 2004). Formative assessment is a concept that is more complex than it might appear at first sight. The basic idea seems simple enough - the

central purpose of formative assessment is to contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance.

Formative assessment is an ongoing process of collecting information about students' performance through various techniques of classroom assessment (O' Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). The purpose of formative assessment is not only to measure proficiency, but also to improve it as well (Clark, 2012; Torrance, 2012). Formative assessments do not bombard students with questions to be answered within a time limit. On the contrary, they "reflect the concepts and skills that the teacher emphasized in class, along with the teacher's clear criteria for judging students' performance" (Guskey, 2003, p. 8).

PA, in the context of formative assessment, means that learners must have an understanding of the goals of their work and of the criteria used in assessing (Panadero et al., 2016). PA has particular value in formative assessment since students ask of each other questions they may be inhibited from asking their teacher, and explain things to each other using familiar language (Harris et al., 2013). The process leads to the recognition by the learners of what further steps need to be taken to reach a particular goal, and to action on the part of the learners, possibly with the help of the teacher, to take these steps (Reinholz, 2016).

Besides its formative aspect, PA is also considered an 'alternative' method of assessment. In the following section, alternative assessment methods are going to be defined and their advantages will be discussed in detail.

4.6. Alternative assessment methods in ESL/EFL

Based on an extensive review of the literature, Falchikov (2004; 2013) reported that traditional assessment is more likely to produce passive learners and reduce motivation, and tends to be associated with surface approaches to learning. As Dietel, Herman, and Knuth (1991, p. 1-2) pointedly suggest, narrowly-focused traditional tests, that emphasize recall, have led to a similar narrowing of the curriculum and emphasis on rote memorization of facts with little opportunity to practice higher order thinking skills.

Black et al. (1998b; 2012) argue that such practices encourage superficial learning, which is easily forgotten, over-emphasise the grading function and promote competition among pupils rather than personal involvement of each. Gardner's suggestion in his conversation with Brandt (Garner, 1987, p. 33) that, what students really need, is to get more interested and involved in things, more engaged in wanting to know and more stimulated to work over longer periods of time and to find things out on their own, further emphasizes the dissatisfaction with standardized tests.

The discontent with traditional testing has recently led teachers worldwide to alternative forms of assessment. Alternatives in assessment have received much attention in the two decades (Birenbaum & Dochy, 1996; Imrie, Cox, Imrie, Miller, & Miller, 2014). In Europe, as well as in the USA and Australasia, leading experts are claiming that the era of testing has changed in recent years into an era of assessment (Birenbaum, 1996; I. Lee et al., 2013). The era of testing can be characterized by a complete separation of instruction and testing activities and by measuring products solely in the form of a single total score (Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991). The assessment era promotes integration of assessment and instruction, seeing the student as an active person who shares responsibility, reflects, collaborates and conducts a continuous dialogue with the teacher (Birenbaum & Dochy, 2012).

As defined by O' Malley et al. (1996, p. 1), 'alternative assessment consists of any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is an alternative to traditional forms of testing'. Similarly, Hancock (1994, p. 4) defines alternative assessment as 'an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgements about student's progress in language using non-conventional strategies'. Obviously, both definitions stress the ongoing, diagnostic nature of alternative assessment as well as its differentiation from traditional forms of assessment. McNamara (2000; 2013) also emphasizes the close connection between alternative assessment and curriculum goals as well as its 'constructive relationship with teaching and learning'.

Terms such as 'authentic', 'performance-based', or just 'performance assessment' are similar to alternative assessment, as they all represent approaches characterized by a move away from conventional assessment practices (Cunningham, 1998, p. 120). According to O' Malley et al. (1996, p. 1-2), authentic assessment refers to all these forms of assessment that are consistent with curricular and instructional goals and reflect realistic classroom activities. Similarly, as Cunningham (1998, p. 121) argues, performance assessment is an authentic form of assessment, since learners are assessed while performing real-life tasks in collaborative settings. In other words, learners are required to create their own response or product, orally or in writing, demonstrating their knowledge and skills and thus helping their teacher make more valid judgements about what they know and can do (Eisner, 1999, p. 7).

Alternative assessment uses non-conventional strategies and involves both the student and the teacher in making judgements about student's progress in language (Osborne & Walker, 2014). As Wingard (1981, p. 171) suggests, alternative assessment, as opposed to testing, should be used in a wider sense to include any means of checking what students can do with the language, to measure their performance, to diagnose their problems, and to provide them with useful feedback.

Alternative assessment is on-going or formative in nature and it is intended to be primarily diagnostic rather than judgemental. This kind of assessment can lead, according to Boston (2002), to improved student success, as it gives teachers the chance to know how students are progressing and where they are having trouble, so they can use this information to make instructional adjustments, such as re-teaching, trying alternative instructional approaches, or offering opportunities for practice.

Alternative assessment can be characterized as mainly informal. According to Harris and McCann (1994, p. 5) informal assessment is considered a way of systematically collecting information about students' performance without establishing test conditions but within normal classroom practices. Thus, in the context of alternative assessment processes collaborative work among students

and/or between students and teachers within a relaxed classroom atmosphere often results in students' performing real-world tasks, such as writing letters, which are not required when students are asked to focus on discrete pieces of information in multiple-choice traditional tests. By getting involved in the process of alternative assessment, students are expected to gradually learn to set their own goals and criteria for assessment, which in turn should guide them towards using their metacognitive skills to self assess their performance, putting themselves more in control of their own learning (Graham, 2014). Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001) have argued that both SA and PA skills are needed for students to develop lifelong learning skills since SA helps students to set goals, while PA can help them to contribute constructively in collaborative efforts.

Another term used to characterize alternative assessment is that of 'continuous assessment'. As the term suggests, this is an ongoing form of classroom assessment, informal in nature, which is integrated into the instructional process, reducing thus the stress and anxiety caused by formal testing (Puhl, 1997, p. 3). Hence, the use of the term 'formative or diagnostic assessment', as proposed by Conner (1991, p. 28) and Cunningham (1998, p. 45), is most appropriate, as the emphasis lies in the acquisition of diagnostic information, which the teacher can then feed into instruction with the aim of improving both teaching and learning.

Finally, Stiggins (2002; 2008), who also advocates 'classroom-based assessment', uses the term 'assessment for learning' in juxtaposition to 'assessment of learning'. He claims that the former is more likely to promote learning and maximize achievement gains by enabling the teacher to diagnose day-to-day learner needs and adjust instruction accordingly.

To sum up, according to Liakopoulou (2009), alternative assessment is a continuous, informal process of formative nature conducted in the classroom. Its principal aim is to improve learning by gathering diagnostic information about learners' progress and achievement based upon their performance in multiple authentic tasks. The intrinsic qualities of alternative assessment, which are conducive to its overall effectiveness, are concisely presented in the section that follows.

4.6.1. Benefits and challenges of alternative assessment approaches

Apart from the dissatisfaction from traditional testing, there is a considerable number of other reasons why one should opt for the use of alternative assessment procedures in the classroom (Shohamy, 2014). A basic argument is that this new trend in assessment is very much in accordance with the views of cognitive psychology, which suggests that learning is not linear, but it proceeds in many directions at once, and at an uneven pace. Under this perspective, as Dietel et al. (1991, p. 4) argue, learning isolated facts and skills is more difficult without meaningful ways to organize the information and make it easy to remember. In other words, mere development of language skills is not sufficient to make someone a competent thinker or problem solver. Students should be given the opportunity to use the strategies they acquired at the right time and in the right way so as to apply them for the realization of particular tasks (Sadeghi & Abolfazli Khonbi, 2015).

Alternative assessment techniques can help towards this direction by allowing learners plenty of time to 'generate' rather than 'choose' a response (Jacobs, Renandya, & Power, 2016). After recently acquired knowledge takes place, the higher-order thinking skills of synthesis and analysis are required for the learners to solve the relevant problems, which they can later reconsider by critically working together with the teacher or other learners in sharing perceptions.

Further arguments in favour of alternative assessment are given by Huerta-Macias (1995), who provides ample discussion for the advantages of its use in the classroom as opposed to traditional testing. According to her, alternative assessment: (a) does not intrude on regular classroom activities; (b) reflects the curriculum that is actually being implemented, as it mirrors the actual every-day activities that students are engaged with in the classroom; (c) provides information on both the strengths and the weaknesses of each individual student, which can be well exploited for both reassuring students for the progress they have made, but also for tailoring individual instruction; (d) provides a menu of various sources rather than one single method and therefore, students' progress and growth can be assessed more reliably, and (e) is more multiculturally sensitive and free of norm, linguistic, and cultural biases found in traditional testing.

It is an undeniable fact that learner assessment has to meet certain criteria if it is to be considered good and effective. Andrews, O'Brien, and Thorp (2000, p. 78) regard validity, fairness and reliability as the most important of these. As a matter of fact, the degree to which a specific form of assessment complies with these criteria determines its overall effectiveness (Falchikov, 2013). From its definition and the relevant literature, it is evident that alternative assessment displays numerous qualities, which justify its characterization as a valid, fair and reliable form of assessment (Tzagari, 2011).

First of all, regarding its validity, Ghaith (2002, p. 26-27) points out that alternative assessment reflects the curriculum goals and is closely intertwined with instructional practices and as such it provides a valid documentation of learners' progress and achievement (also in Birenbaum et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2013; Gardner, 2012). Its 'content validity' is also verified by the wide range of instructionally related assessment activities that it incorporates, as Smith (1995, p. 1) wisely argues. Moreover, alternative assessment can be said to have 'predictive validity', as it engages learners in authentic, real-world tasks and can therefore tell us whether or not they can carry out similar tasks in the future outside the classroom (Eisner, 1999, p. 2).

Apart from valid, assessment has to be fair, as well (Cunningham, 1998, p. 5) and alternative assessment definitely is. As a matter of fact, its fairness should be mainly attributed to the opportunities it gives to all learners to show their knowledge and skills as well as they can without facing linguistic or cultural biases (Fulcher & Davidson, 2013; Ghaith, 2002, p. 26; O' Malley et al., 1996, p. 27-28; Struyven & Devesa, 2016). Besides, alternative assessment is 'criterion-referenced', as argued by O' Malley et al. (1996, p. 1), which means that learners are assessed for what they can do in relation to certain pre-selected criteria, rather than being compared with other more or less competent peers (Wingard, 1981, p. 186).

Alternative assessment, in other words, encourages the expression of individuality and helps reveal the distinctive abilities of individual learners, as Eisner (1999, p. 12, 19) wittily remarks, and as such, it certainly promotes fairness. Finally,

because of its formative, diagnostic nature, alternative assessment is more responsive to individual learning styles and needs, while focusing on individual learner development, which is another indication of its fairness, according to Tannenbaum (1996, p. 1-2).

As for reliability, which implies that the assessment process should yield similar results no matter who the assessor is or when the assessment takes place (Andrews et al., 2000, p. 10; Falchikov, 2013; Knight, 2012), there seems to be some contradiction in the relevant literature. Brown et al. (1998; 2013), for instance, assert that alternative forms of assessment can hardly be reliable because of 'rater inconsistencies' and 'subjectivity in the scoring process'. Ghaith (2002, p. 27), on the other hand, rightfully maintains that alternative assessment can be reliable as it employs a variety of methods and tools, which provide multiple sources of information based on learners' performance over time. Therefore, alternative assessment can be said to have what Genessee and Upshur (1996, p. 59) call 'instrument-related reliability'. Huerta-Macias (1995, p. 10) also advocates the reliability of alternative assessment, which, along with its validity, makes it a powerful assessment tool.

Besides validity, fairness and reliability, another equally significant criterion that alternative assessment seems to meet is that of a positive washback effect on teaching and learning, which should be attributed to its persistent link to curriculum goals and instructional practices, according to Brown et al. (1998, p. 662). As a matter of fact, assessment is guided by daily instruction and its results feed into it, ameliorating thus the teaching process, as Genessee and Upshur (1996, p. 257) point out. Moreover, alternative assessment is success-oriented, as it highlights the learners' positive performance concentrating on the things that they can do well, rather than on their weaknesses (Hung, 2012; Shaaban, 2001, p. 17; Tannenbaum, 1996, p. 1-2). Apparently, this is most encouraging for learners and can certainly increase their motivation, as Shaaban (2001, p. 17-18) and Smith (1995, p. 8) reasonably maintain.

However, several researchers claim that alternative assessment methods are time-consuming especially when used in classes with a large number of students

(Alderson & Banerjee, 2001, Brindley, 2001). Moreover, teachers should become exposed to the concepts and practices of educational assessment to implement alternative assessment methods in their classes (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Students need clear instructions and continuous support in order to use these methods effectively (Kohonen, 1997).

On the whole, alternative assessment appears to have all these qualities that make it a good and effective assessment tool (Green, 2013; Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2014). PA is not only one of the most widely discussed forms of alternative assessment, but can also be used to promote dynamic and learning-oriented assessment as this will become evident in the next session.

4.7. PA as a form of dynamic and learning-oriented language assessment

Dynamic assessment (DA) has recently emerged in L2/EFL learning (Tsagari & Banerjee, 2016). The current trends in learner-centered language teaching approaches and a growing interest in “authenticity and interactiveness” (Beckman, 2006) have led to a greater interest in expanding the use of DA in ESL/EFL classroom teaching (Miao & Lv, 2013). Lantolf and Poehner (2004) describe the perspective of DA by suggesting that dynamic procedures view the future as a bet in favor of everyone. In DA, as called for in Vygotsky’s ZPD, assessment and instruction are dialectically integrated as the means to move towards an always emergent or dynamic future. Lantolf and Poehner (2008) point out that in DA, assessment and instruction are a single activity that seeks to simultaneously diagnose and promote learner’s development by offering mediation, a qualitatively different form of support from feedback. DA provides learners with the appropriate guidance in order to elicit the best possible performance. It is based on the socio-cultural approach and the interactionist approach to SLA (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2007) (see sections 3.4 and 3.5)

Miao et al. (2013), who used dynamic PA in an ESL writing class with 66 Chinese university students, concluded that peer collaboration and students’ active involvement in the process of development can reduce and overcome the obstacles to learning. That comparative study was designed to examine the differences between the experimental class and the control class in terms of

writing scores and writing products with regard to accuracy, complexity, fluency and local and global coherence. Moreover, the “process writing” approach can help provide a holistic and dynamic writing experience, dynamic and processed mediation from the teacher, or dialogues between teacher and learners or between peers. Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010), who explored the use of DA with 30 Chinese university students indicate that after mediation from the teacher or peers, students know what to write and how to write long enough.

Another assessment term to have emerged recently is “learning-oriented assessment” (LOA) (Carless, 2007; Carless, Joughin, & Liu, 2006), which like AfL puts student learning at the heart of assessment (Tsayari, 2014; Tsagari & Banerjee, 2016; Turner & Purpura, 2016). The processes of working towards well-designed summative assessment can also afford opportunities for formative assessment strategies, such as peer feedback, student self-evaluation and related teacher feedback. Learning-oriented assessment has hitherto attracted some modest attention in the literature (Carless, 2007; Hernández, 2012), but has not yet been conceptualized or explored in detail (Carless, 2015). Carless also discusses three elements of ‘learning-oriented assessment’ when he defines this relatively new term: assessment tasks as learning tasks; student involvement in assessment as peer- or self-evaluators; and feedback as feedforward.

The second component of LOA is student involvement in assessment so that they develop a better understanding of learning goals and engage more actively with criteria and standards. Within this strand, we include drafting criteria (Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2002); engaging with quality exemplars (Sadler, 2014); peer feedback (Liu & Carless, 2006) or PA (Falchikov, 2005); and the development of self-evaluation skills or ‘evaluative expertise’ amongst students (Sadler, 1989). Through these activities, it is hoped that both the standards required and the transparency of the whole assessment processes can be enhanced (Carless, 2007). Although it is anticipated that the tutor would often provide feedback, peers can also be usefully deployed as givers of feedback (Falchikov & Blythman, 2001). Assessment should involve students actively in engaging with criteria, quality, their own and/or peers’ performance (Carless, 2007).

To sum up, PA has been used as a dynamic assessment tool in very few studies, mostly, at university level. More research is, therefore, needed to explore its impact in other contexts, i.e. on adolescent EFL students' writing skills. In the next section, PA's benefits in promoting 'assessment for learning' are going to be highlighted before providing a summary of the background of PA as an assessment tool used to promote writing skills.

4.8. PA: a powerful 'assessment for learning' tool

PA is defined as the process whereby students are involved in grading the work of their own peers (Topping, 2009). It is often stressed that the main goal of PA is not to offer a final mark or evaluation, but to enhance the quality of the learning process itself (Dochy et al., 1999; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013a).

PA has been successfully deployed in elementary, middle, and high schools, including with very young students and those with special educational needs or learning disabilities (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1998; Topping, 2009). There is substantial evidence that PA can result in improvements in the effectiveness and quality of learning, which is at least as good as gains from TA, especially in relation to writing (Gielen, Dochy, Onghena, Struyven, & Smeets, 2011). The overriding goal of PA is to provide feedback to learners. Feedback can reduce errors and have positive effects on learning when it is received thoughtfully and positively. PA, therefore, is a tool especially suited to increase student involvement in classroom assessment (Gielen, 2007; Nicol et al., 2014) .

PA is a valuable learning how to learn tool (James, McCormick, Black, Carmichael, Drummond, & Fox, 2007; Jones & Alcock, 2014) because of its positive effects on motivation and engagement in learning of students (McMillan, 2007; Planas Lladó, Soley, Fraguell Sansbelló, Pujolras, Planella, Roura-Pascual, & Moreno, 2014), and its encouragement of students to take responsibility for their learning as well as supporting each other's accomplishments through processes of feedback and appraisal (Boud, 1995). It is also found to be an effective way to deepen understanding of students' own learning (Ashenafi, 2015; Sivan, 2000).

It benefits the learning for the student receiving the feedback and the student conducting the assessment. It encourages students' autonomy and higher order thinking skills as students develop skills in evaluating and justifying the decisions they make (Dar, Zaki, & Kazmi, 2014; Sluijsmans, Dochy, & Moerkerke, 1999). Peer-review activities cast students in the role of teachers by asking them to observe and evaluate a fellow student's work. This engages students in the cognitive process of elaboration by having them relate their criticisms and advice to someone else (Bostock, 2006; Shaw, 2002).

It can also, according to Rayner (2007), be used as a strategy to support a wide variety of students' learning styles including both those who learn independently and those who learn within groups and through structured interaction with tutors. According to Donaldson and Topping (1996), PA is an integral aspect of tutoring mechanisms that offer advantages to both the tutor and the learner. Topping (1996; 2013) describes the potential advantages of peer tutoring as comprising of development of the skills of evaluating and justifying, and using discipline knowledge. PA can also contribute towards developing student's abilities to make judgements that can be considered an essential life skill both for study and professional life (Boud, 2013; Yorke, 1998).

In relation to metacognition, Laverick (2007) describes this as the awareness of the process of learning, and considers this to be a critical ingredient in students successfully knowing how to learn. Laverick (2007) goes on to suggest that formative PA can help in assisting students to know which learning, teaching and assessment strategies work best for them which is a valuable skill that differentiates expert learners from novices. Consequently, metacognition is an important concept in the development of student's awareness of the merits of formative PA because two basic processes are occurring simultaneously, namely: monitoring progress as you learn and adapting strategies if they are not working effectively (Cheng & Hou, 2015; Cheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2015).

Authors such as Boud (1995), Vickerman (2009) and Race (1998) suggest there are possible gains in cost and time effectiveness to teachers as PA processes can assist with judging large numbers of students. Moreover, Race (1995) notes that

learning is improved by detailed, positive and timely feedback on student work. Consequently, it is worth considering whether formative PA increases the amounts of feedback that students can derive from their work. For example, an important role for PA can be the ability to provide additional feedback from peers while allowing teachers to assess individual students less, but better (Gielen & De Wever, 2015b; Liu & Chun-Yi, 2013). Formative PA is likely to involve intelligent questioning, coupled with increased self-disclosure and, thereby, assessment of understanding. In addition, PA can enable earlier error and misconception identification and analysis, which can lead to the identification of knowledge gaps and engineering their closure. PA can also increase reflection and generalization to new situations, promoting SA and greater metacognitive self-awareness (Reinholz, 2016; Zhao, 2014) .

PA is often used in conjunction with other types of TA so that PA is seldom the only evaluation provided (Panadero et al., 2013a). For example, peer editing maybe done on a draft report but the teacher evaluates the final draft or peers may provide part of the score on a student's performance, but the rest of the score comes from the teachers' assessment. Peers are generally defined as students of equal status in that they are in a similar grade and similar levels of proficiency with content, although there is often flexibility and slightly older students may assess younger students, or a student moving more quickly through the material may be asked to assess less advanced students (Mostert & Snowball, 2013). Topping (2005) contends that PA works best when students are asked to provide formative and qualitative feedback rather than merely grading or giving a score to peers since this often makes students uncomfortable.

PA incorporates many features of collaborative learning (Strijbos, 2016). Collaborative learning refers to an instructional approach in which students work together in small groups toward a common goal (Dillenbourg, 1999). Strijbos, Kirschner, and Martens (2004) illustrated that collaborative learning can be regarded as a specific form of group-based learning.

Most approaches to group-based learning rely on two central mechanisms: individual accountability and positive interdependence. Individual accountability

refers to the extent to which group members are held individually accountable for the jobs, tasks or duties, central to group performance or group efficiency. It was introduced by Slavin (1980) to counter the 'free-rider effect', i.e., some students would deliberately not invest any (or little) effort into group performance. Thus, individual accountability implies specifying individual responsibility, something someone can be held accountable for.

PA makes students individually responsible for an active contribution to group discussions that focus on establishing a shared set of criteria (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel, & Van Merriënboer, 2002a). In addition, when it is part of the group's task to ensure that every group member has learned something, it is in the interest of every group member to spend time providing feedback to their peers (Ashton & Davies, 2015; Meihami & Razmjoo, 2016; Slavin, 1989).

Overall, it is apparent that PA through the use of positive interdependence and individual accountability can enhance a student's sense of task ownership (Kirschner, 2002) and stimulate involvement in his/her learning (Birjandi et al., 2012a). However, assessment - let alone PA - has not been a focus of collaborative learning approaches. Most assessment techniques still rely on individual quizzes, group grades or a combination of the individual and group level achievement on quizzes (Slavin, 1991). Clearly, PA can be an asset to regular group-based learning approaches and decrease the emphasis on individual performance.

4.9. Summary

Discussions concerning education reform are paying increasing attention on the role that classroom-based learning-oriented dynamic assessment strategies such as PA play in fostering student-centered teaching practices. Together, all of the research cited here strongly suggests that PA can positively impact a number of key areas that we know are important aspects of education reform: student/teacher relationships, teacher's ability to personalize instruction, acquisition of 21st century skills, student engagement and student metacognition.

PA is becoming more common in developed countries (OECD, 2007), but there is still little research on how to adapt this approach to the school contexts of many countries. Many teachers are beginning to use 'assessment for learning' strategies, such as PA, and this has offered us a chance to see these new assessment strategies in action (León Sáenz, Castro, & Light, 2008; Light, Polin, & Strother, 2009). But there is still more work to be done by local governments and ministries both in researching and adapting these strategies to developing country contexts and to developing programs to promote their use in classrooms.

Shohamy (1992) advocated linking up testing and learning in language classrooms and suggested three directions: a) integration of assessment and teaching; b) student involvement in the assessment process, and c) use of multiple assessment sources (p. 11). First, she supported an interactive relationship between teaching and assessment; more specifically, the results of assessment can be used as information to improve teaching. Second, she suggested that teachers and students should cooperate in planning and analyzing assessment process and results. Third, she argued that there are diverse ways to obtain language samples and behaviors including portfolios, SA, simulations, observations, PA and so on.

Consequently, we need to bear in mind that tests are powerful tools in both everyday life and educational environment. "Tests can create winners and losers, successes and failures, the rejected and accepted" (Shohamy, 2001b, p. 374). By promoting the use of PA, we hope to provide learners with the opportunity to participate in the process of making decisions. Our aim is to create more self-reliant lifelong learners who will not be intimidated by tests, but will consider assessment as a real dynamic tool for learning.

- Chapter 5 - Research related to PA

"Organised, delivered and monitored with care, PA can yield gains in the cognitive, social, affective, transferable skill and systemic domains that are at least as good as those from staff assessment" (Bulman, 1998, p. 14).

5.1. Introduction

Chapter five introduces PA and reviews research related to the four research questions of the current thesis. The benefits of using peer feedback as an aid to revision in writing in L2 language classrooms have been amply discussed in the literature. However, there are still questions unanswered, even though peer revision enjoys solid theoretical and empirical support. These relate to the way PA can be implemented in the EFL context to provide learning benefits to students, increase their motivation towards writing and the assessment of writing, and alleviate some of the pressure that EFL teachers feel when they deal with the numerous problems their learners, especially low-performers, often face.

5.2. PA in ESL/EFL

A study of the literature in the EFL context has shown that PA has been more commonly incorporated into English language writing instruction where peers respond to and edit each other's written work with the aim of helping with revision (Caulk, 1994; Jones, 1995; Lam, 2013; Min, 2016). All of these studies underscore the role and value of PA in TESOL writing instruction, generally in terms of developing the learners' writing ability, writing performance, and self-reliance as learners (Holster, Pellowe, Lake, & Hahn, 2013).

Some studies compare TA and PA in the writing instruction in ESL/EFL contexts. Topping (1998, p. 262) reviewed the literature relating to outcome studies of PA of writing and found that it 'appears capable of yielding outcomes at least as good as TA and sometimes better'. Caulk's (1994) study found that the comments of the teacher and peer on L2 (second language) writing serve important and

complementary functions (also in Harris et al., 2013), and Devenney (1989) observed that the role and function of teacher evaluation differs from that of peer evaluation.

Writing is a socially constructed act and a cognitive one, and the social dimension of writing is often reflected in pedagogical practices aimed to develop writing skills. However, in Cyprus, pedagogical practices are geared to developing and maintaining individualism and individuated skills in terms of EFL writing skill development. Because societal institutions reflect and maintain cultural values, it is surprising that schools in Cyprus are structured to reflect the central role of the individual in that culture. Writing groups are usually structured to focus group attention on individual writing. In fact, in many educational settings, teachers of writing understand their goal to be preparing students to write as individuals, not as collaborators (Aydın & Yıldız, 2014; Chao & Lo, 2011). This individualist ethic, according to Clark and Doheny-Farina (1990), is one that treats community as an arena for seeking private good.

Moreover, in test-dominated settings such as Cyprus (Tsayari, 2012; Tsayari, 2014), educational reforms promoting assessment change clash with well-established values. PA, as part of assessment reform, involves students in undertaking authentic and diverse assessment tasks, negotiating assessment criteria with teachers, participating in setting learning targets, and self-regulating their own learning (Evans, 2013; Morrison, 2003). Such reforms require substantive change in stakeholder beliefs and teacher expertise, and necessitate a reconceptualization of the relationship of traditional external testing to the new assessment values (Morrison, 2003).

Two relevant studies were carried out in the subject of English as an L2 in Hong Kong secondary schools. It was found that students generally viewed assessment as the job of the teacher, who students considered to be more authoritative and the possessor of accurate knowledge; peers, in contrast, were viewed as lacking the language proficiency and expertise needed to give valid feedback (Sengupta, 1998). Similarly, Tsui et al. (2000) found that Chinese students typically had more confidence in teacher comments which could provide specific explanations and

concrete suggestions for revision. They did, however, still believe that peers made contributions, including raising learners' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and fostering autonomy in accepting or declining peer suggestions for revision (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2014; Cartney, 2010; Vickerman, 2009). Although second-language learners assess more proficiently in their native language (Oscarson, 1997, 2013), employing peers as assessors in second-language classes may create an authentic audience, stimulate discussion in the target language, and motivate students to write and gain confidence (Mittan, 1989; Panadero, 2016). The overall aim is to view the implementation of PA through this sociocultural lens to probe the possibilities and challenges in carrying out PA in a test-dominated context (Bryant & Carless, 2010).

Tsivitanidou, Zacharia, and Hovardas (2011) investigated 36 secondary school students' unmediated PA skills and attitudes towards the use of unsupported reciprocal PA in Cyprus. Findings showed that students have positive attitudes towards unsupported reciprocal PA and that they intend to implement it again (Vanderhoven, Raes, Montrieux, Rotsaert, & Schellens, 2015; Yang & Chang, 2012). It was also found that students have the skills, at least the beginnings, needed for the implementation of PA (Tsivitanidou, Zacharias C. Zacharia, & Hovardas, 2011). Specifically, they were found to be able to define and use their own assessment criteria, whose overall validity and reliability, however, were found to be low. Finally, the feedback they produced included grades, positive and negative judgments, as well as suggestions for changes (Kulkarni, Wei, Le, Chia, Papadopoulos, Cheng, & Klemmer, 2015).

However, some researchers have reported problems with their implementation of PA (e.g., McDowell, 1995). Poor performers might not accept peer feedback as accurate. Students might not be willing to accept any responsibility for assessing their peers, especially initially, in a small socially cohesive group or if they see it as substitutional (Falchikov, 1995). Byard (1989) noted that student groups can be inhibited and constrained, and the use and abuse of peer power relationships should be monitored. Thus, PA is not a universal panacea or necessarily a cheaper alternative to traditional assessment, although it might yield added value (Topping, 1998).

To sum up, advantages of PA include: (a) quick administration (Falchikov et al., 2000); (b) students' involvement in the assessment process (Lu & Law, 2012); (c) enhancement of students' autonomy of language learning by means of involvement (Kearney, 2013); (d) development of critical appraisal (Gibbs, 2006; Gibbs et al., 1986; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004), metacognitive (Ballantyne et al., 2002; Falchikov, 2005; Nicol et al., 2006) and problem-solving skills (Brown et al., 1998; Hwang et al., 2014), (e) social, cognitive (Birdsong & Sharplin, 1986; O'Donnell & King, 2014), affective (Bijami, Kashef, & Nejad, 2013; Ten Berge & Hofstee, 2004) and methodological benefits (Nicol et al., 2014; Villamil et al., 1996), and (f) increase of students' motivation toward language learning (Brown, 1998; Lee, 2016). Disadvantages of PA are concerned with reliability and validity (Fletcher & Baldry, 2000; Schunn et al., 2016); (b) it can be time-consuming and more cost-effective than teacher feedback (Paulus, 1999; Polio, 2016); (c) there is resistance of teachers to share their power (Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 1996; Race, 2014) and of students to have power over peers or peers to have power over them (Falchikov et al., 2001; Ladyshevsky, 2013), and (d) it can be partly determined by friendship bonds, enmity, or other power processes (Langan & 10 associates, 2005), perception of criticism as socially uncomfortable (Waycott, Sheard, Thompson, & Clerehan, 2013), or even collusion to submit average scores, leading to lack of differentiation (Topping, 2010).

5.3. PA and its impact on learners' writing performance

According to the literature (Falchikov, 1996; Hyland, 2013), peer feedback is expected to support the learning process by providing an intermediate check of the performance against the criteria, accompanied by feedback on strengths, weaknesses and/or tips for improvement. There can also be learning benefits for the peer assessor, arising from seeing other examples or approaches, and from internalisation of criteria and standards (Esfandiari & Myford, 2013; Topping, 1998). Not all feedback leads to performance improvement (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Visscher & Coe, 2013). Gibbs et al. (2004) and Pekrun, Cusack, Murayama, Elliot, and Thomas (2014) describe several conditions under which feedback has a positive influence on learning. Feedback should be: (a) sufficient in frequency and detail; (b) focused on

students' performance, on their learning, and on the actions under students' control, rather than on the students themselves and/or on personal characteristics; (c) timely in that it is received by students, while it still matters and in time for application or for asking further assistance; (d) appropriate to the aim of the assignment and its criteria; (e) appropriate in relation to students' conception of learning, of knowledge, and of the discourse of the discipline; (f) attended to, and (g) acted upon.

Involving students in the assessment process is widely recognized as essential to effective self-regulation by enabling students to uncover missteps and develop strategies to redress them (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Falchikov, 2013). However, the development of PA skills is challenging. The process requires ongoing and repeated practice for students to become competent assessors (Andrade, 2016; Oscarson, 1997; Sadler, 1989). Engagement in PA over the long term requires sustaining both students' involvement in high-quality tasks as well as their "passionate positive feelings about these tasks" (Munns & Woodwar, 2006, p. 197). Thus, engagement in PA aims to impact positively on students' cognitive development and affective enjoyment of learning (Brown et al., 2013; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

To date, literature that empirically links quality criteria for feedback to performance improvement in the case of PA is scarce (Kim, 2005), and few studies (Sluijsmans et al., 2002a) adopt a quasi-experimental approach to study the impact of instructional interventions on peer feedback effectiveness and learning (Strijbos & Sluijsmans, 2010b; van Zundert et al., 2010). The present study addressed the question whether the effectiveness of PA for learning can be raised through an instructional intervention that aim to meet the conditions described by Gibbs et al. (2004) earlier in this section. It also aimed at developing a deeper learning experience, with students experiencing interaction with new information in terms of the assignment content, assessment criteria and the process of assessment, as opposed to rote learning (Brown et al., 2013; Brown et al., 1994).

Fry (1990) and Rodgers, Horvath, Jung, Fry, Diefes-Dux, and Cardella (2014) outlined some significant advantages of PA: (a) students spend time marking the

work and comparing their efforts, thus reinforcing the correct solution; (b) students see the marking scheme and can appreciate that marks are awarded for method and understanding, as well as for the right answers, and (c) students are exposed to other students' solutions and in marking the 'scripts' they realise the importance of a clearly presented solution.

Nicol et al. (2006) also propose principles for effective formative feedback - that which is intended to “accelerate learning” (p. 199). They argue that formative feedback should be directed toward self-regulation (students' abilities to monitor their learning, to set goals and plan strategies to achieve those goals, to manage resources, and to exert the needed effort to achieve the goals), believing that learning would be enhanced through a greater emphasis on students' regulation and control of their learning (Cheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2013). They recommend that teachers should provide information about expectations. Standards, goals, and scoring criteria should be explained clearly, with exemplars. Teachers should collaborate with students to design scoring rubrics and provide opportunities for students to provide feedback on writing samples in relation to defined criteria or standards. They should also use PA in their classes because it motivates other students to persist to overcome blocks in their learning process because there is a sense that the peers share in the challenges of writing (Schwartz, 2014).

One of the intentions behind PA is that it can lead students to consider more carefully the same elements of their own work (Black et al., 2003, 2012). As students learn more comfortably when comparing their work and discussing it with peers than with teachers, the likelihood of expressing opinions, asking questions, and debating options increases (Deakin-Crick et al., 2005). On the other hand, a small-scale qualitative study with New Zealand secondary school students found that students believe feedback from peers to be unhelpful because students are perceived as lacking appropriate expertise, friends would comment too positively, and it is what the teacher says that counts (Peterson & Irving, 2008). Importantly, formative assessment practices have potential for improving students' subsequent performance in summative assessments (Black et al., 2003, 2015). Student involvement in assessment also seeks to prepare students for lifelong learning (Deakin-Crick et al., 2005; Nguyen & Walker, 2016).

There is, however, also the danger that PA can be perceived as a luxury or somewhat irrelevant when performance in high-stakes examinations is what counts (Bryant & Carless, 2010). Taking the perspective of formative assessment, the main difference between teacher and peer feedback is that peers are not domain experts, as opposed to teachers. Consequently, the accuracy of peer feedback varies. Moreover, the peer assessor is usually not regarded as a “knowledge authority” by an assessee, leading to more reticence in accepting a peer’s judgement or advice (Hanrahan et al., 2001; Strijbos et al., 2010a). Another issue of concern is that most peer responses focused on product rather than the processes of writing, and many students in L2 contexts focused on sentence-level errors (local errors) rather than on the content and ideas (global errors) (Storch, 2004). Moreover, many studies claim that PA was usually found to be lacking in validity and reliability (Topping, 2003).

Nevertheless, peer feedback can be beneficial for learning, which might even be due to the difference from teacher feedback (Topping, 1998, 2009), since the absence of a clear “knowledge authority” (e.g., the teacher) alters the meaning and impact of feedback. Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991) argue that “mindful reception” is crucial for the instructional benefits of feedback, and this might be stimulated through the uncertainty induced by a peer’s relative status. In the study by Yang, Badger, and Yu (2006), revision initiated by teacher feedback was less successful than revision initiated by peer feedback, probably because peer feedback induced uncertainty.

Teacher feedback was accepted as such, but proved to be associated with misinterpretation and miscommunication (Lee, Cheung, Wong, & Lee, 2013), whereas reservations regarding the accuracy of peer feedback induced discussion about the interpretation. Students’ reservations prompted them to search for confirmation by checking instruction manuals, asking the teacher, and/or performing more self-corrections. As a result, students acquired a deeper understanding of the subject. In contrast, teacher feedback lowered students’ self-corrections, perhaps students assumed that the teacher had addressed all errors and that no further corrections were required (Yang et al., 2006). In addition to stimulating the “mindful reception”, peer feedback may also increase the

frequency, extent and speed of feedback for students while keeping workload for teachers under control (Lee et al., 2013). Involving students in the assessment process increases the number of assessors and feedback opportunities. Although the accuracy might be lower compared to teacher feedback, this can be considered an acceptable trade-off for increased follow-up of students' progress (Gibbs et al., 2004).

To sum up, the findings in the literature are quite confusing. Although PA can yield various benefits in relation to students' writing performance, there still seems to be an emphasis on teacher-centred instruction and assessment despite students' low performance in formal tests of writing in Cyprus and other countries (Meletiadou, 2013; Panadero et al., 2013a; Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015).

The current study aims at filling in various gaps in the literature using a semi-experimental design, rarely used by investigators in the field of PA, in secondary education which has not been sufficiently researched (Lee, 2007; Topping, 2010). It aims to explore whether PA can be used to improve adolescent EFL learners' writing skills, and how teachers can successfully use PA to improve students' motivation towards PA and writing as well.

5.4. PA and writing quality

Another major concern of the current study was to investigate how PA of writing could impact students' writing quality. Previous studies have explored only one or two aspects of writing quality. For instance, Jalalifarahani and Azizi (2012) examined the effectiveness of two kinds of feedback (teacher vs. peer) on grammatical accuracy and overall writing improvement of 126 high vs. low-proficiency Iranian EFL learners. The results revealed that peer feedback did not affect grammatical accuracy improvement for both high and low-proficient students, but teacher feedback was found to be effective for grammatical accuracy especially for low proficient learners. In terms of overall writing performance, both feedback types were significantly effective, irrespective of the proficiency level. The study also showed that learners favored teacher feedback and saw the teacher as a figure of authority that guaranteed quality. These findings are in line with what Fathman and Whaley (1990) hypothesized regarding teacher correction.

They maintained that students made significant improvement in grammatical accuracy in revisions only when teachers provided feedback on grammar errors.

Ferris (2001, 2014) also proposed that most studies on error correction in L2 writing classes have provided evidence that students who receive error feedback from teachers improve in accuracy over time. However, Truscott (2007) suggested that correcting local errors leads learners making even more errors on subsequent drafts. He concluded that correction has a small harmful effect on students' ability to write accurately.

Zhang and Jacobs (1989) and Topping (2009) also found that teacher feedback was not significantly more effective than peer feedback. They said that it was not certain whether teacher correction was more beneficial than peer feedback in correcting grammatical mistakes. Regarding the effect of teacher feedback vs. peer feedback on the overall writing improvement of high vs. low proficiency learners, it was found that teacher feedback and peer feedback both led to overall writing improvement of participants regardless of proficiency level (Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, 2010). It can also be claimed that teacher feedback was not significantly more effective than peer feedback in promoting the overall writing performance of the learner. It seems that peer response served more pragmatic functions than linguistic functions (Sayed, 2010).

These findings confirm the findings of other studies like Chaudron (1984) and Hamer, Purchase, Luxton-Reilly, & Denny's (2015) study which indicated that there was not a significant difference between the amount of overall writing improvement resulting from peer feedback and that resulting from teacher feedback. According to Yang et al. (2006) and Chang, Tseng, and Lou (2012), teacher feedback and peer feedback improved students' writing quality in similar ways. Also Berg (1999) and Yang et al. (2006) confirm the effectiveness of peer feedback for meaning level changes and thus better writing quality, though it was beyond the scope of his study to compare the impact of peer and teacher feedback. Villamil et al. (1998) and Nicol et al. (2014) found that peer feedback had a beneficial effect on the quality of writing, though they again made no

comparison with teacher feedback. They explicitly stated that "peer revision should be seen as an important complementary source of feedback in the ESL classroom.

However, the findings of this study reject Paulus' (1999) finding. He found that teacher feedback was more likely to have an impact on overall writing quality than peer feedback (also in Lu et al., 2012). He carried out his study in a L2 situation, while the current research was carried out in a FL setting. It is obvious that the participant's competence and performance may not be the same in these two settings. It has been argued that because EFL and ESL students may have both different motivations for L2 writing and different experiences with learning English, the types of grammar feedback which is appropriate for EFL students may be different from what is helpful for ESL student writers, who are primarily "ear learners" and whose knowledge of English comes primarily from unconscious acquisition processes rather than from formal grammar teaching (Ferris, 1999). Paulus (1999) found that peer feedback groups received higher overall writing scores than teacher feedback groups. Some other studies report that peer feedback is more effective than teacher feedback (Evans, 2013; Hovardas et al., 2014; Keh, 1990; Urzua, 1987; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013). Similar studies produce controversial results. One reason for these controversies is related to the number of factors involved in the study, and the way they are manipulated or controlled by the researcher.

Diab (2011) conducted a quasi-experimental study comparing the effects of peer-editing to self-editing on improving students' revised drafts. The study involved two intact classes (experimental and control groups) of an English course. The experimental group practiced peer-editing, while the control group engaged in self-editing. Results revealed that, while peer-editors and self-editors had more or less the same noticing ability, writers who engaged in self-editing revised more errors than writers who received peer-feedback. In contrast, writers who engaged in peer-editing improved their revised drafts more than self-editors did. Differences in revised writing performance between the two groups were attributed to the use of language learning strategies, peer interaction, and engagement with language.

PA has been considered an important part of writing process that helps improving writing ability. Having a friend express opinions and provide certain guideline to improve the writing is analogous to a mirror reflecting the ability of the reviewer and the reviewed (Bostock, 2000; Schunn et al., 2016). Puegphrom and Chiramanee (2011) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of PA on writing and 24 grade 11 Thai students' attitudes towards the technique and being assessed by peer. They found that after experiencing the writing instruction with PA and being assessed by peers the subjects' writing ability improved significantly. Highly positive attitudes towards the teaching technique were also found, in particular on the following aspects: the writing ability development, self-directed learning, co-operative learning, and self-confidence.

The current study investigated the impact of PA of writing on adolescent EFL students' writing quality by analyzing the text quality of students' pre- and post-tests regarding four indicators of writing quality. This is the first study, to my knowledge, that investigates so many aspects of writing quality related to the use of PA in secondary education.

5.5. PA and its influence on learners' attitudes

An extensive body of research on learners' attitudes towards PA exists. This section will briefly review some of the most important findings in the literature. The affective advantage of peer feedback over teacher feedback in ESL/EFL writing is typically rationalized as follows (Chaudron, 1984, p. 2-3):

- ❖ Peer feedback is more at the learner's level of development or interest, thus perceived as more informative than the superior or older teacher's feedback, despite the assumption that the teacher "knows more.";
- ❖ Since different peers may be used, learners gain a sense of a wider audience than simply the one teacher;
- ❖ Learners' attitude toward writing can be enhanced by the more socially supportive peers, and
- ❖ Learners also learn more about writing and revision by having to read each other's drafts critically (Bryant & Carless, 2010).

Several studies report that students clearly prefer to get feedback from their teacher although they do appreciate their peers' assistance (Gamlem & Smith, 2013; Zhao, 2014; Tai, Lin, & Yang, 2015). Leki (1990) asked 20 ESL students how useful it was to read other students' papers and receive peer feedback. Students' reactions were positive, yet not without misgivings concerning the quality of peer suggestions, the overly critical tone of some peer evaluators, and the questionable sincerity of peer responses. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) asked 12 advanced ESL students whether they would rather receive feedback from both their peers and the instructor or from only the instructor. Their conclusion was that "the students thought both their peers and teacher's feedback were important" (p. 765). According to Garcia and Pintrich (1991), levels of motivation are associated with the level of cognitive engagement and performance. From this perspective, we can explain that the students who use PA probably reported more motivation because they actually performed better than the students who use TA only (Topping, 2009).

In terms of students' attitudes and intentions towards PA, both were found to be positive by a number of studies (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel, van Merriënboer, & Martens, 2004; Tsivitanidou et al., 2011; Xiao et al., 2008). Brindley and Scoffield (1998) used PA with undergraduate students at Manchester Metropolitan University. A questionnaire was used to elicit responses from a sample of 80 students concerning their attitudes to and experience of, the PA exercise. The key themes drawn from the responses to the open-ended question regarding the benefits of PA were as follows:

- ❖ It helped them to gain knowledge and understanding (also in Falchikov, 1986; Vickerman, 2009).
- ❖ It allowed active participation in the assessment process that alleviated boredom and increased concentration (Cartney, 2010).
- ❖ It increased motivation resulted from the students being able to express their own opinions (Kulkarni et al., 2015).
- ❖ The opportunity to compare work against peers was also welcomed (Hsia, Huang, & Hwang, 2015).

- ❖ The grades achieved from the process of PA or peer marking were more reliable than grades assigned by one person, i.e. the tutor's. (This was not necessarily an overt criticism, as the students stated that the tutors may be overworked and therefore inconsistent) (also in Fry, 1990; Luo, Robinson, & Park, 2014).
- ❖ Bias was eliminated and different views were reflected in the assessment process (Kao, 2013; Kerr, Park, & Domazlicky, 1995).

The stated criticism of PA was as follows:

- ❖ Students questioned their own worth (also in Brown et al., 2013; Etheridge, 1995) and, therefore, felt that it was difficult to take their marking role seriously.
- ❖ Students lacked experience of PA. The studies by Dochy et al. (1999), Falchikov (1995), and Sluijsmans et al. (2002a) refer to students' hostility towards PA when they first experience it. In this respect, Dochy et al. (1999) refer to other studies (Boud, 2013; Falchikov, 2013) revealing that students' conceptions of PA generally change for the better as they gain more experience with this mode of assessment .
- ❖ Students encountered difficulties in the interpretation of assessment criteria. Variation in students' attitudes about assessment may rely a great deal on how individual instructors introduce and plan PA (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Falchikov, 2005; Purchase, 2000).

Moreover, according to previous research (Nelson et al., 1993; van Gennip, Segers, & Tillema, 2010), students can sometimes be hostile, sarcastic, overly critical, or unkind in their criticisms of their classmates' writing when using PA. In fact, the nature of responding to peers' drafts sometimes generates a sense of discomfort and uneasiness among the participants (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011; Leki, 1990; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Generally speaking, students can become rather defensive when their work is criticized, especially by their peers (Amores, 1997; Carless, 2009). In doing peer response activities, some students might feel uncertain about the validity of their classmates' responses (Bostock, 2000; Topping, 2009), and some might struggle with their own listening comprehension

skills due to the accents of their peers. Because of the lack of L2 formal (rhetorical) schemata, some students might have inappropriate expectations about the content and structure of peers' texts, resulting in counterproductive feedback that leads writers further away from the expectations of their teachers (Kennedy, 2006).

Brown et al. (1994) and Davies (2009) state that students can under- or over-mark their colleagues to settle old scores or out of friendship and loyalty. Surprisingly, the newer the students, the more willing they tend to be to try new assessment methods. Williams (1992) and van Gennip, Segers, and Tillema (2009) stated that students seek security, with tutors planning what students do. It is suggested that students need to undergo attitudinal change towards their learning roles and need practice in more self-evaluative role behaviours if PA is to become more acceptable and successful.

Other reasons for not finding the PA activity useful includes: (a) lack of confidence in assessors and/or assessments; (b) receiving contradictory or misleading feedback; (c) poor quality of submitted essays, and (d) lack of confidence in the PA process or unfairness (Mostert et al., 2013).

Zhao (2011) reports that students in his study thought that their peers might be either easy going or very strict in marking. A noteworthy point that was also found was that students' perception of PA differed depending on their language proficiency level and that of their peer. Students who had their work assessed by a student with higher level of language proficiency expressed dissatisfaction with the work since they could not identify the errors and hence would assume that their peer who was more proficient was right. High proficiency students, on the other hand, complained that their peer could not provide useful comments because he or she was less proficient than them. In this regard, some students did not favor PA since they did not receive helpful feedback and comments from their peers. Instead, they preferred to receive feedback from their teacher who was a more reliable source of information in comparison with their peers.

Contrary to the findings of Fry (1990) and Birjandi et al. (2012a), who found PA easy to administer, some researchers found the process to be time consuming

(Karaca, 2009) and not a solution for minimising marking workload. Brown et al. (1994) highlight that the effort is 'front-loaded', with tutors spending a large amount of time discussing the process with the students and preparing them for the assessment session.

Prior studies have already shown that students are rather reluctant to accept peers as legitimate or capable assessors (Smith, Cooper, & Lancaster, 2002; van Gennip et al., 2010). Loss of face was seen as a potential threat to both the assessor and the person being assessed respectively (Bruner & Wang, 1988; Miller & Ng, 1994; Rowntree, 2015).

Teachers and students are also reported to view PA as assuming a wider role in preparing for examinations and future secondary schooling. A key implication is that assessment practices are deeply cultural and, in test-dominated settings, PA may have most potential when explicit links are drawn with preparation for summative assessment (Bryant & Carless, 2010). Student involvement in assessment, focused on the development of skills to self-regulate performance, may be facilitated by drawing on the strong motivational force of examinations. In so doing, PA may encourage examination preparation techniques which move beyond rote learning and memorization. For instance, through PA, students learn to identify in advance the types of errors that they would be most likely to make in examinations and develop strategies to rectify them.

Within the PA literature, several authors have referred to the relevance of interpersonal variables as well. Topping (2000, 2003, 2013), for example, theorises: "PAs might be partly determined by: friendship bonds, enmity or other power processes, group popularity levels of individuals, perception of criticism as socially uncomfortable or even socially rejecting and inviting reciprocation, or collusion leading to lack of differentiation". Ballantyne et al. (2002) refer to various studies indicating that students feel assessment to be the responsibility of teachers, who are recognised as the experts on appraising learning (White, 2009). McDowell (1995) and Nicol et al. (2014) also found that students expressed concerns about their ability to provide constructive feedback.

Falchikov (1986), who carried out a small study (N=48) of peer-, self- and tutor assessment of essays, reports that students felt both the schemes themselves hard (especially SA), challenging, helpful and beneficial (also in Lee et al., 2016; Schunn et al., 2016). Stefani (1994), with a slightly larger group of students (between 54 and 67 respondents), essentially reproduced these results, albeit with greater agreement among her group (also in Boon, 2015).

Much research has demonstrated the positive benefits of PA for both the assessor and assessee. Falchikov (1986) and Roscoe and Chi (2007) note that students who assess the work of their peers are engaging in a cognitively-demanding activity that extends their understanding of subject matter and writing. For the student who receives peer review, studies report deepened subject matter knowledge (Barak & Rafaeli, 2004; Planas Lladó et al., 2014; Venables et al., 2003) and a more positive attitude about writing (Hyland, 2015; Katstra, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 1987).

Research documents students' concerns about the fairness of PA (Carvalho, 2013; Cheng & Warren, 1997; Kaufman et al., 2011) and the lack of instructor input in the PA process (Liu et al., 2006; Sluijsmans, Moerkerke, van Merriënboer, & Dochy, 2001; Wang, 2014). In their study, Smith et al. (2002) specifically note that although students communicated a higher level of confidence in the PA process over time and continual experience with PA, "the unease about fairness and consistency [of PA] remained" (p. 76).

In his review of the literature on PA, Topping (1998) allows that "peer feedback might not be of the high quality expected from a professional staff member, [however] its greater immediacy, frequency, and volume compensate for this" (p. 255). Thus, the benefits of PA could center upon the ability of multiple peers to produce an overall evaluation that is comparable to or better than that of a single instructor (Topping, 2009).

Xiao et al. (2008) and McLaughlin and Simpson (2004) reported high levels of satisfaction with PA. Pond, Ul-Haq, and Wade (1995) support these results in their PA model, finding that students had increased ownership of the learning process, and that students regarded the exercise as effective for learning and overall

considered it useful (Gielen et al., 2010). Divaharan and Atputhasamy (2002) and Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001) stress that training or other measures to further involve students in the PA scheme are beneficial (Boud & Falchikov, 2007).

An important study which dealt with students' perceptions of the PA process was conducted by Ballantyne et al. (2002) who investigated the implementation of PA in large classes. A positive point about PA, as students said, was that it gave them the opportunity to develop skills which they thought were useful for their future career (Topping, 2009). McLaughlin et al. (2004), who studied how first year university students felt about PA, reports that a significant number of students preferred PA to the assessment merely provided by the teacher. The researchers finally came to the conclusion that the assessment process needs to be a learning tool that helps the learning process considerably (Zheng, Niiya, & Warschauer, 2015).

Wen and Tsai (2006) investigated university students' views towards PA. Having collected data from 280 university students in Taiwan employing a 20-item instrument, the researchers sought the students' attitudes towards and perceptions of PA. An interesting outcome of the study was that males had more positive view towards PA than females, and that students who had experienced PA before had less negative views towards PA (Falchikov, 2013). Furthermore, most students held the view that PA scores should account for merely a small part of the final score.

Vu and Alba (2007) explored Australian university students' experience of PA in a professional course. The authors reported that in their case study, PA processes were useful for students' learning. It was found that PA had a positive effect on students' learning experiences with most students acknowledging learning from both the process and from their peers. In an attempt to identify secondary school students' perception of PA and feedback, Peterson et al. (2008) carried out an investigation. Using a mixed-method approach including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and notes, the researchers arrived at feedback on students' perceptions of PA. Students had a positive view about PA and saw it as fun (Mostert et al., 2013).

An important advantage of PA pointed out by students who used PA was that it helped the students to prepare for examination and transition to secondary school education (Peterson et al., 2008). Students argued that through PA, they could identify in advance the type of mistakes that they were likely to make in the examination and, therefore, find techniques to avoid them (Majdoddin, 2010). Teachers' conception of feedback was similar to that of students in that they, too, saw PA useful, and that it would help learners become more successful in their learning (Kollar & Fischer, 2010). Reasons most often cited for finding the PA activity useful include that: (a) it gave students a chance to improve their essays to obtain higher marks and it assisted them in identifying mistakes; (b) it encouraged SA and fostered a more realistic sense of the value of their work; (c) students felt that they received constructive feedback from their peers, and (d) that they were exposed to other perspectives, which enhanced their sense of the essay requirements (Liu et al., 2013).

One of the potential benefits of PA is the positive peer pressure it can create, which may encourage students to put their best work forward for PA as they want to avoid looking foolish in front of their classmates (Hanrahan et al., 2001; Race, 2001). As found in the Vickerman (2009) study, most of the students thought that the useful part of the PA was giving feedback, rather than what was received. It thus seems to have been the change of 'position' from student to assessor, requiring the development of critical higher order outcomes that students found most useful in improving their work.

Karaca (2009), who investigated teacher trainees' opinions about the usefulness of PA, reveals that they thought of PA as a useful assessment method that encouraged students to critically analyze their peer's work, allowed students to take part in the assessment process and fostered interaction among students in a course. To deal with potential problems while implementing PA, teachers can: (a) discuss these problems with students; (b) prepare them thoroughly; (c) consider using anonymous PA, and (d) help students come to see their education as being their responsibility. Through the continuous use of PA, students may begin to regard PA as a normal part of their education and may also understand more clearly how their peers' advice can contribute to their education.

However, Black et al. (2003) warn that this learner-centered mode of assessment will only thrive if students are helped by teachers to develop peer assessment skills. They also make the point that “the ultimate aim of PA is not that students can give

each other levels and grades-these are merely a means to an end . . . the real purpose-the identification of learning needs and the means of improvement” (p. 62).

To sum up, the literature related to learners’ attitudes towards PA has produced mixed findings. More research is needed to explore how PA can be used in the EFL classrooms to enhance EFL learners’ performance and motivation towards writing and the assessment of writing.

5.6. PA and its impact on teachers’ attitudes

According to the literature, teachers view PA as a useful component of a process approach to writing, and a wider skill that students need to monitor their own work and become more empowered learners. Bay (2011) administered a survey investigating 56 prospective teachers’ attitudes towards PA. The results indicated that that prospective teachers thought that they acquired professional skills through PA. They also perceived that PA enhanced the quality of learning, provided constructive feedback in the learning process, and enabled them to obtain some democratic values. However, it was regarded as a tiring and time-consuming activity. Lastly, as parallel to the literature, prospective teachers criticized PA that they were not capable of evaluating themselves effectively because of several reasons such as peer-effect, emotional improper acts and unreliability among peers against each other.

Wu (2012) explored the teachers’ perspectives on the implementation of PA in the language classroom. Twenty-two English teachers with different cultural background were invited to participate in this study. The results indicated that most of the participants showed positive attitudes towards the feasibility of PA, however, they also expressed their conservative views. Very few participants of this study adopted PA in their previous teaching experience. Although it remains debatable

whether students can make just and fair assessment of themselves and their classmates, the issue of administering PA attracts more and more attention in educational circle. It is generally accepted that successful language teachers and learners employ a larger variety of teaching/learning strategies. Teaching is greatly affected by the belief systems of its practitioners. Moreover, according to the survey, participants hold positive attitude towards the impact of PA on students' learning. As indicated, motivation is associated with language learning/teaching; more motivated students/teachers tend to employ more language learning/teaching strategies. Above all, it is vital for teachers to inspire students' motivation and rebuild their confidence.

Koc (2011) conducted a study to determine the opinions of prospective teachers about PA in teaching practice. Twenty-two prospective teachers participated in the study. Results showed that all the prospective teachers stated that the use of PA in teaching practice was beneficial. Prospective teachers thought that: (a) PA helped develop skills in using standards while making assessments; (b) increased the awareness of the individual's strengths and weaknesses; (c) supported learning from the strengths and weaknesses of colleagues; (d) improved teacher competences; (e) gave the opportunity to make comparisons with other colleagues; (f) increased the responsibility towards mutually supportive learning and development; (g) improved teacher competences; give the opportunity to make comparisons with other colleagues (diversity of practice); (h) increased cooperation and interaction; (j) decreased the anxiety that results from being assessed; (i) enabled the teacher to focus on teaching, improves openness to criticism, develops assessment skills; (k) improved empathetic skills and critical thinking, and (l) brought PA skill and strengthened the relationship with colleagues. The findings of the study showed that PA is an effective method in the configuration of the teaching process.

According to the standards determined before, the PA process which includes making judgments about a peer's performance and conveying this judgment to the peer, can be considered as a functional process in terms of getting systematic and objective information about teaching processes for prospective teachers (Koc, 2011; Lai & Ng, 2011). Reflection, which is both a condition and the product of PA

processes, plays an important role in teacher education and the professional improvement of teachers. This is because reflection includes the questioning of a teacher's teaching process in all its dimensions and examining it in a critical way. PA improves reflective thinking, which has an important impact on professional improvement, in addition to being effective in bringing various skills necessary for the teaching profession (Koc, 2011; Seldin, Miller, & Seldin, 2010).

According to Sluijsmans and Prins (2006), PA is a powerful method for bringing together teaching skills. Sluijsmans and Prins explain why PA is important in teacher education as follows: First, teachers have to work together; they learn from each other and become members of an organization. In works including PA, students cooperate and communicate with each other and thus, they can improve their communication and cooperation skills (Çevik, 2015). Secondly, discussions about reflection are an ongoing subject in teacher education (Ryan, 2013). Supporting students to assess each other's work provides them with critical, reflective and analytical skills. Reflective skills are necessary for making reliable judgments on peer studies. Thirdly, the student teachers will be evaluators in their own classes. It is beneficial to learn how student teachers make critical judgments about their peers' performances so that they can make critical judgments on schoolchildren's work in the future.

Another reason for PA's importance in teacher education is that it provides students with the ability to trust more in their judgments while assessing their peers about the effectiveness of their performances at school after completing higher education. Being able to interpret the work of colleagues and peers is an important precondition for professional improvement and for increasing an individual's functionality. A teaching PA skill encourages this mutual interaction in order that the teacher can attain a professional level (Sluijsmans et al., 2006). Hinett and Weeden (2000) state that combining PA with teacher education programs increases teachers' confidence and motivations to learn and it provides them with an understanding of how to make qualitative assessment (cited in al-Barakat & al-Hassan, 2009).

In a study conducted by Ozan (2008) who investigated the effects of SA and PA on Turkish medical students' basic communication skills (Carless, 2009), SA and PA were determined to be positively effective on communication skills. In their studies, Wen, Tsai, and Chang (2006) reached the conclusion that PA increased the quality of the social interaction between students and teachers; provided students with an understanding of their peers' thinking and let them to understand their own cognitive and metacognitive fields concerning their own learning process and improved social skills (cited in al-Barakat & al- Hassan, 2009). There is a mutual interaction in PA while giving and receiving feedback. It can be said that this interaction among peers improves cooperation, communication and empathy. The positive impact of PA on critical thinking can be explained by the fact that students make a reflective criticism of their peers' works and performances by using pre-determined standards in the PA process. Topping (2000, 2010) state that PA can improve many social and communication skills such as verbal lecturing skills as well as an ability to criticize and an openness to criticism.

The finding that PA provides a focus for teaching practice and improves teacher competences is supported by some research findings in the literature. Many authors state that PA increases learning skills in various fields (Topping, 2009; Topping, 2005; Vickerman, 2009; Willey & Gardner, 2010). In the study conducted by al-Barakat and al-Hassan (2009), PA and how it contributed to prospective teachers' development in their field experience was examined. It was determined that PA improved educational competences; skills to form standards for reflection and assessment; and it had a positive impact on self-confidence and attitudes to PA. PA gives the opportunity to make comparisons, practice diversity, and practice more when this is compared to traditional teaching practices. Gielen et al. (2010) state that PA gives the opportunity to see different examples and approaches for the ones who are assessed and provides them with the ability to learn by internalizing given criteria and standards.

Yuen (1998) reports that due to school teachers' uncertainty about the feasibility of PA and a lack of guidelines and support for its implementation, PA has rarely been implemented in Hong Kong schools. Gardner (2006) stated that many teachers grieved over the use of peer evaluation because students could not respond

effectively to one another's writing (cited in Tahir, 2012). Classroom teachers favour PA because it saves them time (Moffett, 1968; Yang & Tsai, 2010). Sluijsmans et al. (2002a) who investigated the effects of PA training in teacher education on performance and perceptions revealed that student teachers are rather conservative and believe that the teacher is the expert and the only objective assessor. When students are trained to rely on their own judgement and that of their peers, they may develop a belief that a teacher is first of all a coach, who supports and adjusts the decisions that students make.

Wu (2012) explored 22 teachers' perspectives on the implementation of PA in the language classroom. He reports that teachers found it difficult to implement PA in large classes of 50-60 students and monitor the process of implementation of PA due to the limited time. They also regarded students' low proficiency level as one of the major obstacles in the entire procedure of PA (also in Volante & Fazio, 2007). However, teachers hold positive attitude towards the impact of PA on students' learning.

Wen et al. (2006), who studied pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes towards PA, indicates that pre-service teachers favoured PA more than in-service. In-service teachers, as compared to pre-service teachers, were more capable of recognising the 'learning aspects' of the benefits that PA might bring. Male teachers also tended to like PA more than female. Teachers also point out that PA can increase variety and interest, activity and interactivity, identification and bonding, self-confidence, and empathy with others (Topping, 2009).

According to Schulin (2013), little attention has been paid to teachers' beliefs about peer feedback, particularly in EFL contexts. Schulin conducted qualitative analysis of 26 Chinese EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use and role of peer feedback in writing classroom. The interview data reveals that most of the participants (20/26) have used peer feedback in their classes, but the frequency of use varies widely. For the majority of teachers, peer feedback is helpful for their students (also in Zevenbergen, 2001) to: (a) become aware of the common errors in their writing; to learn from their peer's writing; (b) to raise the audience's awareness; to enhance their own writing quality; (c) to stir self-

reflections, and (d) to promote interest and motivation in L2 writing. Few teachers maintained that PA was a waste of time, since they did not see where the effectiveness of peer feedback was and doubted students' ability to give comments on their peer's writing. Although some teachers thought that peer feedback was useful for their students' learning (Boud et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2013; Davies, 2000; Topping, 1998; Tsai, Liu, Lin, & Yuan, 2001), they still did not use it in their teaching practices. They believe that peer feedback is rather complicated to implement.

The findings of the previous study suggest that some EFL teachers may not be aware of the value and potential of peer feedback for their students' learning which prevents students from engaging in and benefiting from peer interactions in L2 writing. Therefore, there is a need to train EFL teachers about both the value of and implementation of peer feedback. EFL teachers should be also encouraged to learn from and negotiate with each other regarding the use of peer feedback in their teaching practices. Finally, many teachers reported that they did not often use peer feedback since in-class time is limited. They think that PA can help them see teaching as facilitating students' learning, rather than simply as completing the curriculum (also in Black et al., 2003, 2006). However, teachers were also found to be reluctant to use PA because they were not certain about the amount of effort (also in Ying, 2010) and time (also in Wu, 2012) they should devote to its implementation. Moreover, teachers were unfamiliar with ways to involve students in the assessment process through PA since they received no training in PA skills (also in Sluijsmans et al., 2004).

Volante et al. (2007), who investigated teachers' attitudes towards PA, stress that assessment should be a collaborative process including the teacher, the student, and the peers. At times, it can be difficult for teachers to relinquish authority. However, part of the teacher's role as an assessor is to know when to step aside. In general, it can be said that to function successfully in the 21st century, a person must be capable of adaptation and autonomous thinking. This means that students themselves lead the learning process (Black & William, 1998c). All self-directed learning theories are based on the premise that learning is not something that happens to learners, but something that the student does. This understanding

changes the educational focus and emphasizes the personal strategies they employ at their own initiative to improve educational outcomes and the learning environment (Zimmerman, 2001). Teachers also benefited from the savings in time that resulted from their ability to develop and use classroom assessments more efficiently (Boud, 1995; Race, 1998). Stiggins (2006) admits that he knows of no other school improvement innovation that can claim effects of this nature or size (one-half to a full standard deviation).

Wu and Kao (2008) conducted an intervention study implementing a web-based PA system using video streaming technology to support the training of pre-service teachers. Thirty-six pre-service computer teachers, who were enrolled in a teaching practicum course, participated in the study. Five rounds of PA were conducted during pre-service teachers' micro- and field-teaching sessions. The findings showed that pre-service teachers were satisfied with the PA activities (also in Karaca, 2009).

Wen and Tsai (2006) used a questionnaire approach to investigate the attitudes of 280 pre-service teachers and 108 in-service teachers from northern Taiwan towards PA activities (in general) and online PA activities (in particular). PA is often used in pre-service teacher education programmes to help novice teachers understand how to make qualitative judgements (Hinett et al., 2000). In general, all teachers held positive attitudes towards PA (also in Wu, 2012).

Falchikov (2004, 2007) states that teachers are often suspicious of, or hostile to, the idea. There seem to be several reasons for lack of enthusiasm in teachers. They may fear that students lack the necessary experience to do the job, or fear that students will collude and award over inflated grades. Some may feel uncomfortable with the change of role necessary to allow them to give over some control to students. Sometimes fears about reliability of student marking are justified. From time to time, differences between teacher and student ratings have been found, particularly when PA has been used, and we cannot ignore such differences.

According to Falchikov (2004), to resolve these problems, teachers can:

- ❖ become familiar with results of reliability and validity or meta-analytic studies relating to 'accuracy' of student marking to appraise ourselves of potential problems;
- ❖ help allay fears of colleagues by informing them about existing research that advises on best practice;
- ❖ consider using student assessment for formative purposes or reduce the amount the student derived marks 'count', and
- ❖ help ease the change of role required by stressing the importance of the teacher in setting up, implementing and running a PA initiative and in helping students acquire the necessary expertise. Setting up studies involves too much time. It is true that well designed and implemented studies require considerable input from the teacher. However, students need to be thoroughly prepared if obvious pitfalls are to be avoided (Black et al., 2009).

Noonan and Duncan (2005) explored the nature and frequency of high school teachers' use of PA and SA. Results indicated that many teachers find PA useful and that there is potential for greater classroom applicability, but that more research is needed to guide widespread use of these strategies.

Vanderhoven, Montrieux, Rotsaert, and Schellens (2015) who investigated anonymous PA in secondary education, report that the teachers in their study believed that students were capable of evaluating each other after the training and when using rubrics. They also claimed that the evaluation happened correctly and objectively and that the assessment was only valid when peer pressure was reduced. Vogt & Tsigari (2014) who explored the assessment literacy of 739 EFL teachers in Europe reported that almost half of the teachers who took part in the study did not use PA. This clearly indicate that although the curricula in Europe promote the use of alternative assessment methods such as PA, these are hardly ever used although they can double the speed of student learning (Wiliam, 2007). Even more importantly, formative assessment reduces the achievement gap by helping low achievers the most (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004;

Black et al., 1998b). Unfortunately, a constricted range of assessment practices, particularly those that emphasize traditional paper-and-pencil summative measures, are being overemphasized within contemporary schools (Earl, 2003; Popham, 2005; Stiggins, 2008; Volante, 2010). Thus, the reform of schools and classroom assessment strategies are intimately connected and the ability to promote diverse formative assessment strategies, such as PA, is paramount to school success (Harlen, 2005; Wilson, 2008).

PA has also been found to increase teachers' awareness in scaffolding students to achieve learning goals, identifying students' learning needs, and adapting their instruction to meet students' learning goals (OECD, 2007). Despite advantages, few studies have examined EFL teachers' attitudes towards using PA of writing (Vanderhoven, Raes, et al., 2015; Yu and Wu, 2013) and research about the effects of anonymous PA is lacking (Panadero, Romero, & Strijbos, 2013b), particularly in secondary education. In response to the need for more information, this study will contribute a teacher's voice which in so far has been absent (Topping, 2010).

5.7. Summary

The current study argues that relatively few studies explicitly concern themselves with the application of PA with adolescent students - remaining mostly silent on aspects of EFL courses for adolescent learners that make PA more or less suitable (Tsivitanidou et al., 2011a). As such, they only indirectly illustrate the suitability of PA in this context. This study has begun an exploration of some of the related issues. By doing so, it has explored some reasons for using PA and some difficulties that may be expected - particularly in respect of learners' young age. It has argued that the use of PA in young learners' courses is supportive of a developmental learning imperative to which educational programmes should respond, and therefore that there should be greater use of PA in secondary education - and onwards (Nulty, 2011).

PA practices are the practices that learners integrate into their ways of thinking and doing and take forward through their lives (Nulty, 2011). They support the exchange of ideas, values and culture, provide multiple perspectives and insights

that an individual alone could not self-generate, and they help to inform judgement by acting as a vehicle that helps induct students into, create and participate in, a community of critical scholarly enquiry (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Falchikov, 2004; Rourke & Kanuka, 2009).

Using PA is associated with a long list of other benefits. Falchikov (1991, p. 15) mentions a number of benefits, such as group-working skills, interpersonal skills, organisational skills and listening skills - also mentioned were an improvement in the speed and utility of feedback, increased student autonomy, more independence, greater responsibility for learning, higher enthusiasm, and motivation (Reinholz, 2016). The benefits somewhat lower on the list, but of high value, were increased student confidence, understanding, reflection and intellectual development. Pond and ul-Haq (1991) mentioned that PA led to benefits from peer pressure (promoting participation in group work activities).

More than this, students need to develop their understanding of the assessment criteria and to accumulate experience through practice so that they come to possess the knowledge (explicit and tacit) necessary for being able to make judgements using these criteria (Harris et al., 2013; Rust, Price, & O'Donovan, 2003). To this can be added the proposal that the introduction of PA is beneficial as early as possible 'before expectations are too entrenched' (Fullerton & Rafiq, 1991, p. 61), and that because students are more receptive to the novel aspects of PA in the earlier years of studies. Therefore, PA needs to be incorporated into the assessment culture at an early stage, if it is to be successful (Sher & Twigg, 1991, p. 104). Embracing notions of peer-learning, such as PA, is pivotal to effective engagement of learners in 'moving beyond independent learning to interdependent learning' (Boud et al., 2001; Evans, 2013).

To address the effects of PA and TA on adolescent intermediate EFL learners writing performance, this study examined whether the use of PA together with TA would result in: (a) a statistically significant improvement of the quality of student writing performance as this was indicated in experimental group students' grades, (b) a statistically significant improvement in the writing quality of students' essays, as this was indicated in the analysis of their pre- and post-test written scripts; (c)

considerable improvement in students' motivation towards PA, and (d) considerable improvement in teachers' motivation towards PA. The research questions of the current study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of the impact of PA and TA on adolescent EFL students' writing performance as opposed to TA only?
2. What is the nature of the impact of PA and TA on adolescent EFL students' writing quality as opposed to TA only?
3. What are EFL students' attitudes towards PA of writing after the implementation of PA?
4. What are teachers' perceptions of PA before and after the PA experience?

- Chapter 6 - Methodology of the study

“Weighing the pig doesn't make it fatter”
(old saying)

6.1. Introduction

Chapter six describes the type of study undertaken, the setting, the participants, the instruments, the materials, the sampling and collection of data, and the overall procedures and rationale for the different methods used. It refers to the methodological, ethical and quality considerations and proposed methods for data analysis. It gives an overview of the sequence of events, deals with validity and reliability issues, and discusses the limitations of the different quantitative and qualitative methods employed. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

6.2. Research design

The current study employed a multiple method approach which is common in language education research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Mixed methods research is a research design paradigm with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry (Stage & Manning, 2015). As a methodology, it involves assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (p. 5).

The quantitative data of the current study were collected and analyzed in a quasi-experimental design to answer the primary research questions. The qualitative data were embedded within the experimental design with the purpose of investigating the treatment or examining the course of the intervention (Mertens, 2014) to respond to the secondary questions. A mixed-methods design was selected with the intentions of soliciting a range of data to substantiate findings. Creswell and Clark (2007) provide the following rationale for using a mixed-method approach: quantitative data is deficient in including the setting, context, or

thoughts of the participants; while qualitative data may allow for biases since much of the narrative is the personal interpretation of the researcher.

Thus, quantitative data minimized biases, as the qualitative data authenticated findings by providing exposure to the participants and their setting. Tuckman (1999) confirms that the combination of quantitative data and qualitative data provide a more holistic picture by revealing trends and generalization as well as in-depth knowledge of participants' perspectives. In essence, by blending both words and statistics, the result of this study strengthened, and a deeper understanding of the research problem ensued. Creswell and Clark share one final perspective of a mixed-methods design: "If a study's target audiences are unaccustomed to or unaccepting of one approach (quantitative or qualitative), then the other method may receive a greater priority in the study's design" (p. 82).

Overall, the use of a mixed-method approach helped to consolidate findings and strengthen the responses to the research questions. Westat (2002) shares that the use of combination data provides an exchange between breadth and depth, and between generalizability and targeting to specific populations. For instance, if numerical results indicate an increase in writing achievement, one could assume that it is mere coincidence or a result of students being in school overtime or being exposed to the format of the pre-test. However, if the questionnaires, interviews and participants' thoughts which were expressed during the whole-class discussions in the current study show an evolvment in students' writing skills when using PA, then this parallelism may serve to further support the statistics. This may reveal that the integration of PA and TA did, in fact, impact intermediate EFL students' writing achievement.

Creswell and Plano Clark further pointed out the merits of mixed methods research as follows: a) its strengths compensate the weaknesses for both quantitative and qualitative research; b) compared to both quantitative and qualitative research, it offers more all-round evidence for examining a research problem; c) it is able to answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone; d) researchers of mixed methods can promote the sometimes opposing relationship between quantitative and qualitative researchers;

e) it supports the use of diverse worldviews or paradigms, and f) it is useful as researchers can use all methods to answer research questions (p. 9-10). By using the mixed methods research, researchers can have the best of both worlds. A multiple method approach allows the researcher to consider the research questions from different angles, and the information gathered can be cross-referenced (triangulation) so as to lead to plausible assumptions in answer to the research questions (Mertens, 2014).

Moreover, the present study had features of an explorative study, an intervention study as well as a descriptive case study, but did not conform strictly or exclusively to any one of them (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). A typical feature of an intervention study (Dornyei, 2007), which the current study also bore resemblance to, is that the researcher intervened through implementing a method of working with PA of EFL writing. The results of this method will be part of the outcomes. One may not be able to generalize to a large population from this study, yet the approach used will be likely to provide insights and deeper understanding of the assumptions and practices studied (Bryman, 2015). These may not be possible to generate in any other way.

The current writing study can, furthermore, be described as practical rather than basic (i.e. theoretical) or applied (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2013). The borderline between these categories are not clear-cut either (Stage et al., 2015), but the research is empirically based and is of practical relevance for the classroom context. It has also elements of an exploratory action research study. Action research has a clear approach or what Burns (2005) called “reflective research cycle”, which consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Seen like this, action research enables and empowers practitioners to investigate and evaluate their work, which makes it a very useful tool to fix problems presented in the researcher’s immediate context. Burns (2005) stated that teachers usually see problematic situations in the classroom or situations that are not the way they should be; these situations could be subjected to questioning and some new ideas or alternatives could be developed by following his reflective research cycle. Consequently, the present study employed some features of action research as it

aimed to analyze how teachers could include PA in their writing classes to help improve their students' writing performance.

The participants of this study were guided to use PA (as a cycle) to be aware of their learning process and be able to consciously include PA and ultimately as writers to improve their performance at the end of the pedagogical intervention. The researcher consulted the teachers every week to make sure that they did not encounter any problems with the implementation and made changes when necessary. For instance, the researcher wanted the participating students to write more than two drafts for each written assignment, but teachers thought that this would be very difficult due to time pressure and possibly students' reluctance to write a third draft. Therefore, the researcher chose not to have the students write a third draft.

6.2.1. Quantitative design

Quantitative research involves the collections and analysis of numerical data to answer research questions in an unbiased, objective manner (Creswell et al., 2011). Leedy and Orsmond (2005) note that quantitative research seeks to explore the "relationships among measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting, and controlling phenomena" (p. 94). Creswell (2005) adds that, quantitative data places "emphasis on scores that measure distinct attributes of individuals or organizations and on the procedures of comparing groups or relating factors about individuals or groups in experimental, correlational studies, or surveys. The purpose of this study was to measure the impact of a combination of PA and TA on students' writing achievement and attitudes. The best way to measure achievement is through the collection and analysis of numerical data (Punch & Oancea, 2014). A quasi-experimental pre-test post-test group design was, thus, employed, which allowed the comparison of twenty intact groups of intermediate EFL students (n=200). These were conveniently sampled from students enrolled in four Cypriot State Institutes of Further Education in Nicosia, Cyprus, with ten groups receiving the manipulated treatment (Cohen et al., 2013). The classes were randomly assigned into either the TA only or the PA plus TA groups (see Tables 6.1 and 6.4). This study can, therefore, be regarded as following a semi-experimental intact comparison group design (Mackey & Gass,

2012). A PA only group could not be used in the current study as teachers refused to use only PA in their classes as this came into contrast with their syllabus. Moreover, teachers were very reluctant to use only PA in their classes as they were inexperienced in using alternative assessment methods in their classes.

Since an educational setting limited the researcher's ability to select and assign samples randomly and manipulate conditions, the following quasi-experimental design was employed: the nonequivalent group design (Creswell et al., 2011). This study used intact groups, which created a potential problem for selection and mortality bias. As a result, a prewriting assessment was administered to students in all groups in an effort to demonstrate initial group equivalence and obtain a covariant (Dornyei, 2007). Tuckman confirms, the absence of nonrandomized samples "creates potential difficulty in controlling for selection and experimental mortality bias. To overcome this issue, the researcher can compare the intact groups on their pre-test scores" (p. 173).

Specifically, the quantitative analysis involved using descriptive statistics to compare the means from the prewriting assessments to the post-writing assessments from all groups. The aim was to determine if the treatment had a significant impact on students' writing assessment scripts. Finally, the quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics to present and compare students and teachers' attitudes towards PA before and after the implementation of this novel approach. It sought to explore whether teachers and students' attitudes changed in any way and whether they influenced students' writing behaviour and the participants' attitudes towards writing and the assessment of writing. The researcher took the close-ended items of the questionnaires into consideration, as the open-ended ones were included in the qualitative part of this study which will be presented in the next section.

6.2.2. Qualitative design

Qualitative research is generally used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, frequently with the objective of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Tuckman (1999) shares that qualitative research involves the

collection and analysis of data in the natural setting of a study, and the researcher is the key data - collection instrument. "Researchers enter the setting with open minds, prepared to immerse themselves in the complexity of the situation and interact with their participants" (Leedy et al., 2005, p. 95). The inclusion of qualitative data added valuable insight to the study. Beyond the numbers, participants' thoughts and perceptions naturalized the study because the researcher understood what "true" events may have led to the research problems and what "true" events were occurring during the implementation of the treatment. In essence, the qualitative research placed more emphasis on the researcher and participants' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives (Leedy et al., 2005; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015).

Thus, this study relied on the words expressed by the teachers via the interview protocols (Appendix X) and questionnaires (see Table 4). It also relied on students' perceptions of PA through the open-ended questions in their questionnaires and the semi-structured whole-class discussions (Appendix XI). This is especially important since the quasi-experimental groups did not involve randomized groups (convenience sample), which could have led others to conclude that results may be contributed to any differences reflective in the different groups. However, since the pre-test established initial equivalence (all students who were not at the intermediate level were excluded from the sample), and the qualitative data indicated that the only variations in teachers' writing instruction was the inclusion of PA in the experimental groups, then one can conclude that any gains in writing scores were, in fact, the result of the treatment.

The qualitative portion of this proposed study involved investigating the open-ended questions in teachers and students' questionnaires, teachers' semi-structured interviews (Appendix X) and students' semi-structured whole-class discussions (Appendix XI). Comments were explored using a coded, thematic analysis. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) share that "qualitative analysis begins with coding the data, dividing the text into small units (phrases, sentences, and paragraphs), and assigning a label to each unit" (p. 131). Patterns or trends that emerge within responses will be of interest. A thematic coding system was assigned to the common phrases that reflect teachers' perceptions of using PA

and their actual use of PA. Ultimately, these findings were used to substantiate or extend the quantitative findings.

Ultimately, the voice of the participants was strengthened and embedded in every step of the process. It was through these insights that the researcher began to collect "authentic" data. Tuckman (1999) notes, "the researcher focuses essentially on what things mean . . . why events occur... as well as what happens" (p. 395). Experimental group teachers could describe the strengths and challenges of the intervention while providing suggestions for the future. Educators may benefit from receiving qualitative insight to see whether this particular study may assist their learning environments improve their learning outcomes. Also, they will be cognizant to what complexities may surround the treatment and take the suggested precautionary methods early-on. Overall, there were immense advantages for the inclusion of the qualitative piece.

6.3. Piloting of the instruments

All instruments employed in the study were piloted (Cohen et al., 2013; van den Berg, Admiraal, & Pilot, 2006b) with two head-teachers, 14 intermediate adolescent EFL students and 5 experienced EFL teachers from other State Institutes who did not participate in the study. The group used for the piloting possessed similar characteristics to the participants of this study.

A debriefer, who was an experienced statistician, also checked the instruments. She was asked to analyze the appropriateness of each instrument, whether or not they allowed the researcher to collect sensible data, draw conclusions, and obtain useful outcomes. The debriefer made a few comments which were also taken into consideration when finalizing the form of the instruments.

The aim was to ensure their reliability and check their appropriateness for the particular learning context. Several changes were made. The instruments became shorter, easier to use and more reader-friendly. Piloting resulted in some changes and adjustments, such as simplification of terms and statements, and minor changes of the format.

6.4. Participants

The participants in the present study were two hundred, 13-15-year-old, 4th graders of four State Language Institute in Cyprus. Two of them (Akropolis and Platy) were located in the center of the city and two were in the suburbs (Latsia and Dali). The participating learners faced considerable problems with their writing performance, had a negative attitude towards the assessment of writing, and scored relatively low at the end of the year exams. Students, who were also 1st or 2nd grade students at the local junior high school, had four 45 minute classes per week at the Institutes. In terms of the experiment, the learners wrote five compositions (Experimental group students wrote 2 drafts for 3 of these essays) and received the following kind of feedback:

Groups 1-10 (Control groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•100 students- 10 teachers•TA
Group 11-20 (Experimental groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•100 students-10 teachers•TA and PA

Table 1: Assessment procedures in control and experimental groups

In the Institutes, the learners randomly formed 20 mixed ability EFL groups (Table 1) which attended two 90-minute classes per week. These were selected randomly (convenience sample) because it is the least costly to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money and allows her to use the most accessible subjects (Marshall, 1996; Mertens, 2014). The learners were taught by 20 teachers who taught their students the same types of essays using the same books and following strict guidelines by the Ministry of Education.

Participants were all native speakers of Cypriot-Greek and shared the same cultural and a similar socio-economic background. These students also had a similar kind of exposure to EFL which classifies them as intermediate stage (B1) according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The pre-test also served as a kind of diagnostic test. Students who did not seem to be intermediate EFL learners in terms of their writing skills according to the CEFR, which is also fostered by the Cypriot Ministry of Education, were excluded from the sample. However, they did participate in all the activities in

the classroom so as not to feel rejected. The time they spent on writing was about two teaching periods per week.

Twenty qualified EFL teachers also took part in the study. Ten of them taught the control groups and ten the experimental groups. Both teachers and learners received training in PA and process writing. All teachers, who took part in the study, were experienced EFL teachers with at least 10 years of experience in EFL and some of them had an M.A. in TEFL due to the requirements that the Ministry of Education poses for teaching intermediate and advanced EFL learners at the State Institutes. This was also particularly convenient for the researcher because these teachers needed less training and support than inexperienced EFL teachers. All teachers who took part in the study were volunteers.

6.5. Ethical issues of the study

Measures were taken for the students to consent freely to participate in the present study. Participation was voluntary and conditional on a potential participant signing an informed consent form, which had been previously approved by the Cypriot Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (Appendices I, II). Each student received two copies of the form to take to his/her parents, one to keep and the other to sign and return to the researcher. The initial consent form included full information about the data collection procedures and the possible ethical issues linked to this study were organized and disclosed in the form, such as the purpose and method of the research, experimental procedures, safeguarded storage of the data, confidentiality and anonymity concerns, ownership of the artifacts, questions/withdrawal option, and contact information. However, this was not used as head-teachers thought that it would alarm students and their parents. A simpler form with basic information was used instead, otherwise the researcher would never have initiated the study.

Students were informed that participation was not obligatory, and if they agreed to serve as participants, they would be free to withdraw their participation at any time without penalty. Each student together with his/her parents then decided whether he/she wished to take part in the experiment. Participants were accorded gratitude for their partnership. Students also went through the experimental processes as

one part of their regular class work or were provided with some other kind of related class work. However, their essays were excluded from data analysis. Because this study was mapped onto the existing curriculum of the EFL course, there were no risks to participants. All students were treated with respect, and they left this study with their self-esteem intact.

The researcher also made personal visits to the schools explaining to the head teachers and teachers what the study would involve. Each teacher was given a file containing the information sheet and a consent form for herself (Appendices I & III). The researcher also gave teachers information sheets and consent forms for their students and their parents or guardians. The researcher went through the information sheet with the teachers explaining to them aspects of the research project. She also answered any questions they had regarding the research.

The researcher kept information provided by the participants confidential. She assigned pseudonyms to the schools, and a number to students and teachers. To ensure privacy, interviews were conducted away from the school premises during teachers' non-teaching working hours. Participants were not compelled to participate in this study. They were informed that if any participant decided to withdraw from the study, the information he or she had given would not be used in the study. All raw data would also be destroyed after the completion of the study. The next section discusses the crucial issue of trustworthiness of the current study.

6.6. Trustworthiness of the study

Member checks, triangulation and peer debriefing were used to protect the credibility of the study (Mertens, 2014; Wolcott, 1988). Mertens (2005) stated that "[m]ember checks is the most important criterion in establishing credibility" (p. 255). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2006) suggested sending interview transcripts and conclusion summaries to participants for member checks. Interviewees had a chance to read the interview transcripts, interpretations and result summaries and were encouraged to clarify if the interpretations were not the true reflections of their thoughts and opinions.

Triangulation uses multiple sources or methods for checking evidence consistency across data (Cohen et al., 2013; Mertens, 2005). In this study, various sources of data were collected, for example, pre- and post-surveys with closed and open-ended questions, PA forms, interviews and whole-class discussions; and different methods were utilized such as semi-structured interviews and surveys.

As to peer debriefing, Lodico et al. (2006) described it as a strategy that helps the researcher look at the data differently and review assumptions. Mertens (2014) explained that a peer debriefer is a colleague who challenges the researcher's values by asking questions. Thus, a colleague worked with me during the process of undertaking the study. We had discussions regarding data analysis and findings of the research. This colleague had a PhD degree in Education and was working at the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus.

Additionally, based on the literature, there are several ways to increase the validity and reliability of PA. These include: a) training and practice beforehand to secure the fairness, objectivity and effectiveness as well as increase an understanding of marking criteria (Ellington, Earl, & Cowan, 1997; Kwan & Leung, 1996; Patri, 2002); b) involving students in negotiating and discussing criteria to raise agreement between teacher and student grading (Brown, Race, & Smith, 2005; Cheng et al., 2005; Falchikov et al., 2000; Patri, 2002; Sivan, 2000; Topping, 1998); c) combining PA with other assessment methods such as TA (Dochy et al., 1999; Shohamy, 1992; Zhao, 2014); d) having peer feedback before peer evaluation, to yield strong relationships between teacher and PA (Falchikov & Magin, 1997; Lin, Liu, & Yuan, 2001); e) careful planning and designing (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Falchikov, 2005), and f) employing the technique of anonymity (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Davies, 2000; Tsai et al., 2001; Wen et al., 2006) (also see Section 5.1, 5.4, 5.6, 6.5). To secure validity and reliability, the above techniques were all incorporated in the PA design.

As mentioned above, the reliability for the five-point Likert scale surveys was calculated to ensure that the instruments were reliable. Moreover, for preventing data skewedness, first, the students were assured that their opinions and responses would be kept confidential, hence, their grades would not be affected.

Second, the whole-class discussions were conducted after grade assignments. Finally, both positive and negative questions were asked, for example, students were not only asked about what they liked about or learned from the PA implementation, but also about their concerns and difficulties they encountered during the process. The next section presents the instructional context of the study. This discusses the kind of exposure these learners had to writing and to the assessment of writing focusing on the problems they faced.

6.7. Instructional context

The learners attended a general English course of eight months' duration (from mid-September to mid-May). They were rather inexperienced writers in English since they had never been used to thinking critically about their schoolwork. Their motivation towards learning English laid on the fact that they considered this language important for their academic and future professional lives (see section 2.2). As teenagers, they felt vulnerable to criticism or rejection from peers, therefore, it was important to create a positive learning environment in the classroom. These learners were developing their critical thinking skills and gradually becoming independent as learners. Additionally, they had never been involved in any kind of PA or reflective thinking before. On the contrary, they perceived that assessment was not their job but the teacher's (see section 5.5).

Furthermore, the instructional practices used in State Institutes reflected a combination of mostly product and less process approaches focusing mainly on the quality of the final essay rather than on the process of writing the essay (see section 2.5). Teachers generally adopted the methods they favoured without being committed to a single writing approach (Ministry of Education and Culture & Department of Secondary Education, 2010, p. 14-18). Moreover, writing was thought of as a tiring and difficult one-off piece of 'chore' which was handed to the teacher and expected to be given a numerical mark, just for the sake of marking (Panou, 2006).

PA was employed with half of the students involved in this study to foster active and flexible learning (Entwhistle, 1993; Landry et al., 2014) encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Cheng et al., 2005; Xiao et al., 2008).

This would also provide considerable benefits to teachers since as a form of alternative assessment it would ultimately lead to achieving a higher quality of learning and education (Panou, 2006, p. 70-71).

6.8. Learning materials

The book series employed in this teaching context was Cosmic B1 (Pearson) which was used as the main coursebook, workbook and grammar book. The coursebook had a whole section in each unit which was devoted on a particular type of essay. It included an essay outline, a sample essay, vocabulary exercises and guidelines for each genre.

According to their curriculum, students worked on the first ten units in their coursebook and workbook. These books which had a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary were prescribed by the Ministry of Education but did not conform to the principles of the communicative approach which the curriculum repeatedly stressed (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, p. 4). They also focused on the product rather than the process of writing although there is a need for language assessment that would focus on the process rather than the performance and could provide a chance for teachers to improve their teaching (Tsagari, 2001, p. 517).

Consequently, there was a mismatch between the goals of the curriculum, the contents of the syllabus and the classroom reality in relation to the teaching and assessment of EFL writing (see Section 2.2). Most students were also quite weak writers and expressed complaints that they did not like writing essays as the inspectors of the Ministry of Education repeatedly stressed in the seminars they organized for the EFL teachers working at the State Institutes.

Using PA would hopefully rectify the aforementioned problems since it is nonintrusive in that it can extend the day-to-day activities allowing students to be assessed in what they do in class every day (Brown et al., 1998; Harris & Brown, 2013). Special attention was paid not to deviate from the actual teaching material and the four-hour per week schedule. The main aim was to approach the assessment of writing from a different angle, i.e. using both peer and teacher

assessment procedures and employing a process approach to writing which is an indispensable part of PA. For this reason, the coursebook writing skills were taught according to the official guidelines. These were similar for all groups to ensure that they received the same kind of input. Teachers were instructed to avoid using any extra material and dedicate the same amount of time for all essays. All essays were also written in class in 45 minutes so as to avoid any interference (parents, books etc.).

The aim was to prove that, although the material used was not authentic and did not promote communicative teaching as the curriculum supported, PA combined with TA and supported by a process approach to writing, as is usually the case with the implementation of PA and the use of process writing, could improve learners' writing skills and their attitudes towards the assessment of writing.

Finally, before implementing PA, adequate training to learners and teachers had to be provided since they were totally inexperienced in PA (Sluismans et al., 2006; Subasi, 2014). The training required for learners and teachers will be presented in the next section.

6.9. Participants' training

Teachers received training in PA (Sluismans et al., 2004), process writing and rating (calibration session). The aim was to help teachers train their learners, assess their students' drafts and implement PA in their EFL classes effectively (Xiao et al., 2008). The training was the same for all experimental group learners and was supervised by the researcher. The researcher provided teachers with specific guidelines and material to be used during the training sessions.

6.9.1. Teachers' training

The researcher first met with control group teachers once for about an hour. She explained the EFL essay scoring rubrics (Appendices IV, V, VI, VII) that they were asked to use to assess their students' work. These also conformed to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus. The researcher also trained teachers in using these rubrics by organizing a short calibration session which was the same as the one she organized for experimental group teachers.

This will be described in detail later in this section. Finally, the researcher provided information to the control group teachers regarding their participation, but did not reveal anything about what the experimental groups were doing so as not to affect their work. In any case, the experimental groups were attending classes in different Institutes than the control groups. The researcher did not want the experimental and control group teachers and students to come into contact, as this would endanger the reliability of the study according to the debriefer.

The researcher met with the experimental group teachers once for about 4-5 hours, but during the implementation of the study she continued training and supporting teachers privately depending on the problems they faced (see section 5.5). First, the researcher presented a powerpoint and discussed: (a) what PA and process writing are; (b) how writing should be taught at the intermediate level; (c) what their benefits for learners and teachers are, and (d) what kind of challenges teachers may face according to previous research.

Then, the teachers and the researcher attended a calibration session during which they assessed four randomly chosen students' essays, a good, two average and a bad one. Raters were provided with the writing assessment rubric and were asked to look at it carefully and write down any questions they might have. Then, the researcher explained the rubric and answered all questions. The teachers and the researcher rated an average essay together and exchanged opinions on how they rated the essay by the criteria in the rubric to further calibrate their assessment standards. After the "norming" session, teachers proceeded to rate the texts independently. There was no case in which each rater had a different opinion on a single essay.

Finally, the researcher trained teachers in using PA in the same way that she expected them to teach their own students. Teachers' concerns about having students provide response were also discussed and reasons why peers at the same level can give helpful feedback were provided. The researcher provided teachers with training material (i.e. previous students' essays and the instruments of the study) and asked them to take notes. She also gave them all her contact information encouraging them to contact her in any way (face-to-face, email,

phone call) to clarify any problems they might have faced during their students' training.

Moreover, experimental groups teachers were also invited to attend weekly short meetings with the researcher to discuss problems that may have occurred and exchange ideas about how to deal with any issues during the implementation. These meetings actually strengthened the bonds among teachers and the researcher and helped them overcome all problems and become more determined in implementing the new approach. They also became more self-confident because they knew that they had the researcher and their fellow-teachers' help and support.

Students' training lasted about 6 teaching sessions as the constraints posed by the Ministry were very strict. The time that these students had to go through the books and be taught a variety of things at this level was very limited and, according to the Ministry of Education, students should not spend extra time on this particular study and neglect all other skills (reading, listening etc.). Consequently, students' training was limited to 6 teaching sessions and additional training/remedial teaching was provided between the drafts.

6.9.2. Learners' training

Supporting teachers and learners in using PA is of paramount importance because this is an activity in which learners need guidance and time to grow into. Approaching PA step by step helps reduce student concerns, build their self-confidence, and gain the necessary experience (see section 5.4). Learners need to build up a shared understanding of the nature, the purposes and the requirements of the PA method (Stewart et al., 1989, p. 42-44; Wu et al., 2008).

The training in this study was a learner-centered instructional strategy for participants in the treatment group with or without experience in the PA process that considered the recommendations and suggestions in peer response literature (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonca et al., 1994; Min, 2006; Sengupta, 2002; Zhang, 1999), and the researcher's classroom experiences in both the ESL and EFL contexts. Research on EFL PA was scarce compared to L1 PA research, but

the results in the studies conducted on PA training seemed to corroborate L1 findings that successful PA should focus on meaning, rhetorical aspects of text, and improve students' ability to detect mismatches between intended and understood meaning (Berg, 1999; Byrd, 2008; Connor et al., 1994; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonca et al., 1994; Nelson et al., 1992; Nelson et al., 1993; Stanley, 1992) (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). Training in these studies prepared students to participate, as peer reviewers/assessors, with the concepts needed for responding to each other's writing. These involved reading a peer's essay and writing useful comments to induce revisions rather than useless, uninformed and unconstructive written and verbal feedback.

Trained peer reviewers offered meaningful suggestions and alternative ways of making meaning clear in their peer's text in Berg (1999), Connor et al. (1994), and Min (2006) , while Mangelsdorf et al. (1992) reported the range of possible stances peer reviewers tend to take toward peer feedback during peer review sessions. Peer reviewers in this study took interpretive, prescriptive, and collaborative stances. In other words, peer reviewers were inclined to either impose their own ideas to a peers' essay, or expected a peer's essay to follow a prescribed form instead of communicating meaning, or tried to see the essay through the eyes of the author. Stanley (1992) described the preparation needed for peer review training in terms of student attitudes, student roles, the classroom context, affective benefits, and strategies for successful peer response. Thus, peer review training provided students in the treatment class with specific response skills.

In January 2014, the researcher prepared a PA training session for students which drew on models of awareness-raising programmes described by Stanley (1992), Keh (1990) and Saito (2008). Its main purpose was to make decisions about, establish the assessment criteria (Patri, 2002) and give a short PA introduction (Xiao et al., 2008). It lasted about 6 class hours and comprised a number of different elements (Table 2).

Groups	Experimental groups	Control Groups
Propaganda phase	√	
Revision strategies	√	
Revision with PA form	√	
Model texts	√	√
Mock/rating, commenting	√	
Discussion	√	

Table 2: Training sessions for learners

During the 'propaganda phase', the value of peer response in relation to teacher response was explained to teachers who would then have to teach their own students using the same material (Rollinson, 2005). Teachers were expected to conduct warm-up "get to know you" activities to give students time to familiarize themselves with one another (Hansen & Liu, 2005), and then introduced the purpose of PA in the process approach to writing and the influence of peer feedback on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) using the ideas from the powerpoint presentation the researcher used while training teachers. During this phase, teachers also explained the cognitive, social, linguistic and practical advantages and disadvantages of PA shown in Table 3, adapted from Hansen & Liu (2005).

Advantages	
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Take an active role in learning by exercising thinking ❖ Engage in exploratory talk and build critical skills
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enhance communicative power ❖ Gain confidence and reduce apprehension ❖ Establish collegial ties and friendships
Linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enhance linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge ❖ Gain additional language skill practice ❖ Enhance participation and improves discourse
Practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Applicable across proficiency levels ❖ Flexible at different stages of the writing process ❖ Time-efficient and reinforces process writing

Disadvantages	
Cognitive	❖ Uncertainty concerning peer comments and lack of learner investment
Social	❖ Discomfort, uneasiness ❖ Commentary may be overly critical
Linguistic	❖ Lack of formal schemata (background knowledge) ❖ Difficulty understanding foreign accent
Practical	❖ Time constraints, counter-productive feedback and lack of student preparation

(Adapted from Hansen & Liu, 2005)

Table 3: Advantages and disadvantages of PA in EFL writing

Teachers explained to their students that to assess something, the most crucial steps were to distinguish what they were going to assess and design a set of criteria to do the assessment. Students came up with several ideas and most of the criteria they proposed to use conformed to the criteria dictated by the Ministry of Education. The weighting of the marks for each category was also negotiated between teachers and learners. This involved them more actively in the assessment process and provided them with a sense of ownership of the PA forms (Falchikov et al., 2000; McLeay & Wesson, 2014). Students were then familiarized with the PA forms. They discussed the different categories and were asked to offer suggestions about improving the form in any way that they thought appropriate. The researcher took these suggestions into consideration when finalizing the format of the PA forms (Appendices IV, V, VI and VII). These were similar to the EFL essay scoring rubrics to ensure that peer assessors and teachers had in mind exactly the same criteria when assessing all students' essays. Consequently, comparison of their grades was possible to explore the impact of PA on learners' writing performance. Finally, the researcher took special care of the language and the wording of the statements. These had to be as simple as possible to correspond to students' age and cognitive abilities. Finally, the researcher took into consideration examples of other checklists (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; White et al., 1991, p. 118) and guidelines for peer response (National Project, 1990: 36-37) to create the PA forms (see Section 4.2). PA forms were used during this study to provide feedback for the essays. Namely:

- ❖ Student/assessors completed the PA forms for all student/assessees' drafts of all three essays (story, article, description), and
- ❖ Teachers provided a mark and comments to all drafts of all essays keeping in mind the PA forms.

Teachers also involved students in whole class, group and paired-response activities. Students commented on content and organization, unity and coherence, grammar and sentence structure, vocabulary, format and mechanics of texts written by former EFL students of the researcher. Teachers went through the same procedure during their training.

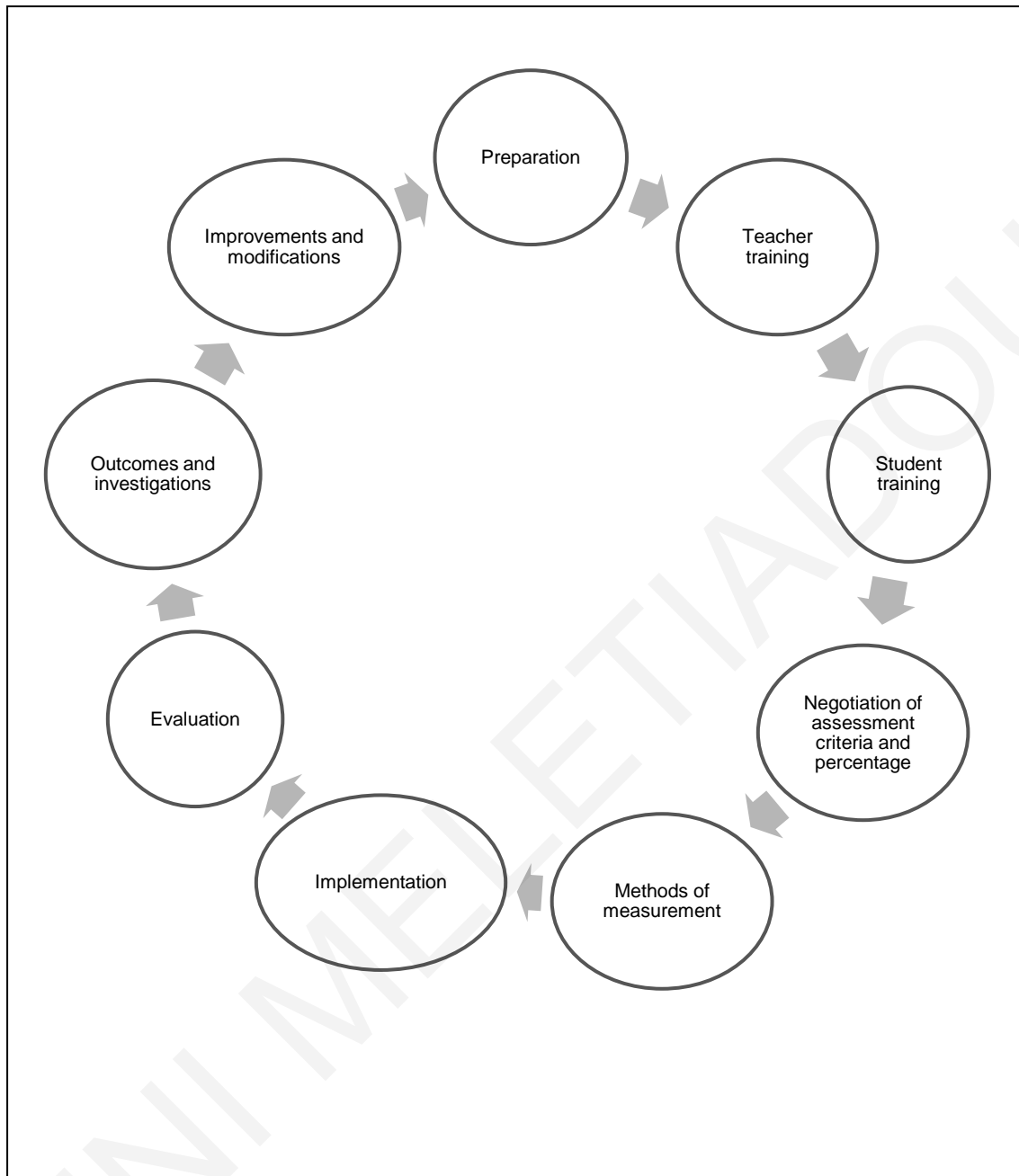
Furthermore, teachers modeled how to complete the PA forms and make comments as peer assessors using other students' essays. Students were asked to revise 3 samples of other students' drafts together with the completed PA forms in groups of three. They were presented with 3 samples of students' compositions and were asked to do mock rating/commenting of them in groups of three using the rating instrument. The aim was for both to realise what they should be looking for in a written text and, thus, transfer this knowledge to their own texts (Nicol et al., 2006). Their rates were discussed in class and any big differences with teacher's ratings and comments were examined to clarify any misunderstandings. Sample essays that presented errors in all areas in which marks would be allotted by the students were used.

Not all students find it easy to revise systematically from the reader comments, so there was some modelling of adequate and inadequate revision strategies, and all students' questions were answered. Teachers utilized peer response pep talk to help students feel comfortable with the peer review guidelines and the evaluation process in pairs and groups. For example, "You are capable of critiquing each other's essays. It is your responsibility to give and take criticism well. Remember that the writer is always ultimately responsible for their own writing, not the evaluators. Don't forget to give positive comments. Critiquing others' works is useful for you, too. You will learn skills that will enable you to better evaluate your own work" (Berg, 1999, p. 220).

The writer's sense of obligation to revise and be given freedom to reject comments was also discussed. Additionally, both experimental and control group learners worked with model texts from their coursebooks to identify their strong and weak points and focus their attention on the typical features of informal letter, narrative, descriptive and argumentative writing discourse. These were the four types of essays all learners were asked to write. Moreover, control group students did some extra exercises in their books, while the experimental group students were involved in the actual training in PA methods. Finally, although these sessions may be considered as being insufficient, it was believed that such a short training period simulates the time many basic EFL writing courses could allot to this activity in Cyprus.

6.10. Procedure of the study – Data collection

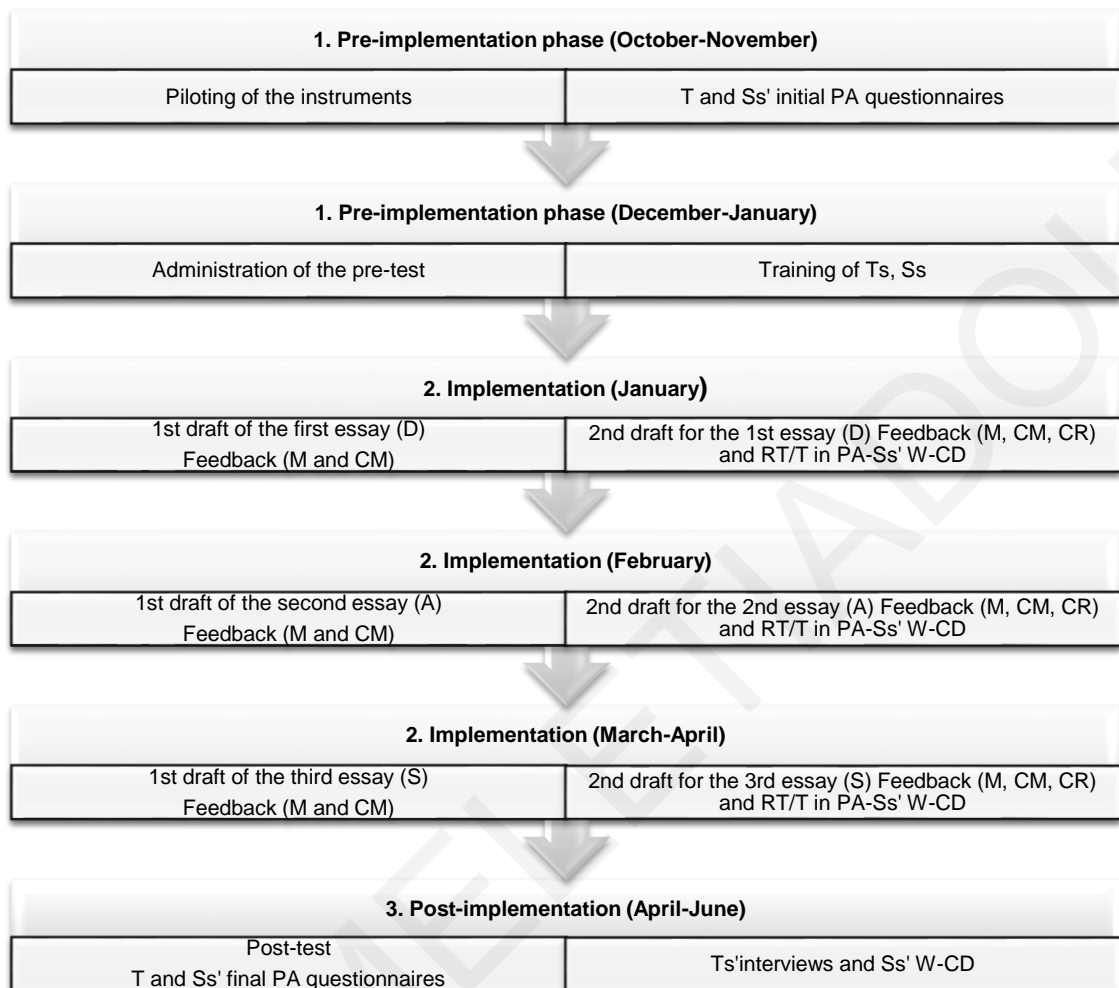
Falchikov (2005, p. 125) introduced a generic pattern of using PA with nine elements. The researcher modified the cyclic scheme of PA (see Figure 1) based on the pattern; and divided the cycle into three phases, i.e. pre-implementation, implementation and post-implementation phase.



Modified from Falchikov (2005, p. 125).

Figure 1: A Cyclic scheme for PA

Therefore, the study can be divided into the three phases below (Table 4).



* D=descriptive essay, M=marks, CM= comments, A=article, CR=corrections, S=story, RT/T=remedial teaching/training, W-CD=whole-class discussion.

Table 4: The procedure of the study

The aim of this study was to explore whether students who received PA and TA could improve their writing skills significantly more when compared to students who received only TA. After the necessary training, students were given approximately the same parallel writing instruction (e.g. by strictly following the same coursebook) to perform three writing tasks in two drafts. Students were also asked to write an informal letter as pre- and post-test. Ten groups of learners received TA and the other ten received both TA and PA (Table 1). The assessors and assesseees were different each time so as to avoid friendship bias and enmity among students (Topping, 2003; 2010). The researcher monitored the whole

process closely by discussing with teachers (in person, via telephone calls and/or emails) every couple of days. Moreover, she provided constant support and help to experimental group teachers, since they had not used PA in their classes before.

Student task performance in writing was measured using seven instruments, four EFL essay scoring rubrics and three PA forms [analytic rating scales adapted from Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998)]. The instruments were designed with the purpose of guiding students through a self-monitoring process in which they planned and evaluated their performance, and also helping teachers to assess their students in a consistent way.

All essays were assessed by an external assessor and part of them (20%) was also graded by the researcher to check the reliability of the assessor's marks (Cumming, Kantor, Baba, Eaouanzoui, Erdosy, & James, 2006). Information security, such as double-blind peer rating, also helped to ensure students' positive feelings about peer rating (Saito & Fujita, 2009). Validity of all instruments was checked through consultation with experts (inspectors and experienced EFL teachers).

6.10.1. First phase

During the first stage of the implementation, the researcher got permission for the study from the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus and from the Ministry of Education (Appendix I). Then, she got permission from the Head of the State Institutes for Further Education. The Head at the Ministry of Education informed the head-teachers of all State Institutes by sending them an email asking them to cooperate and provide their full support for the study to take place. Then, the researcher talked to various head-teachers and teachers asking them to participate in the study.

There were mixed feelings about the study since there is weak research culture in Cyprus and lots of people were sceptical. However, after talking personally to all parties involved and using personal contacts, the researcher found several teachers-volunteers who signed a consent form, talked to their students about the

study and sent out consent forms to their parents to sign them (Appendix II). Again, research studies in secondary education are not common and students and parents were sometimes reluctant to participate. In the end, the researcher got more than 200 consent forms from students' parents and asked teachers in all groups to fill in the teachers' PA questionnaire (Appendix VIII) to find out what they knew about PA and their initial attitudes. Experimental group teachers were then asked to have their students fill in the students' PA questionnaire (Appendix IX). The aim was to compare students' writing behaviour before and after the implementation using the same questionnaire and identify possible causes for learners' poor writing performance which PA helped in rectifying. Teachers' PA questionnaire also explored teachers' perceptions of their learners' writing behaviours as writers and detected any changes after the implementation. The triangulation of teachers and students' PA questionnaires could identify potential ways in which PA helped change students' writing behaviour and improve their writing performance.

According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009), questionnaires have proved to be a useful tool since they are based on simple and precise questions that become easily available for reflection and analysis. After the questionnaire was administered, the participants had a reflection session on the importance and relevance of PA strategies for their learning process. The main objective of this stage was to explore learners' attitudes towards PA, provide them with basic information about PA, and prepare them for the second and third cycle.

Students in all groups then had to write the same informal letter in 45 minutes in class. They were supervised by their teachers who had been asked not to interfere with the procedure or provide any help. This was a diagnostic pre-test which is common at State Institutes. The aim was to exclude from the study students who were not actually at the intermediate level and to make sure the sample was as homogeneous as possible. Students were provided with a mark but no comments or peer feedback. All essays were corrected by their class-teachers and an external assessor after a rater calibration session and appropriate training, and 20% of the essays were corrected by the researcher. The same test was administered at the end of the study. Students had to write the same type of essay

but were provided with a different but very similar topic. The aim was to evaluate whether students made any progress after one full school year and which groups made more progress, if so, the control or the experimental. The same type of essay was not provided because teachers had objections. They thought that students would be reluctant to write a second essay on exactly the same topic. As a result, the topic was slightly changed to ensure the participation of all students and teachers throughout the intervention.

Tuckman (1999) argues that a pre-test can enhance testing bias if students' improved performance on a post-test is a result of their exposure to the pre-test. However, Tuckman notes that a researcher can minimize this bias if the post-test is not identical to the pre-test. For the purpose of this study, the researcher incorporated alternate-form reliability testing, where the pre-test and post-test were based on slightly different topics. Therefore, students did not have pre-formulated ideas that could have enhanced their scores. Creswell (2005) shares that a researcher uses a pre-test "to equate the characteristics of the groups...and to receive a measure on some attribute (e.g. writing achievement) that you assess before a treatment...and a post-test is used to measure the (same) attribute after the treatment" (p. 285). Lastly, the study involved one scorer, which minimized a mixing of perspectives when evaluating the written essays. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of an experimental design was strengthened by the inclusion of a control group. Tuckman confirms that an experimental design controls for various threats to validity and causes for biasness. Tuckman explains that by exposing a control groups to all of the same experiences as the experimental groups except the implementation of the treatment, the researcher controls for history, maturation, and regression effects. Thus, many of the invalidating sources were stifled by including a comparison group.

6.10.2. Second phase

During this phase, the actual implementation of PA in secondary education took place. This quasi-experimental study employed a repeated-measure design to increase statistical power and to control for any possible effect of heterogeneity across participants. Every participant wrote a total of five essays on topics and genres that were prescribed by their coursebooks and their Curriculum. Each

writing prompt was explained at the time it was given to the participants. The instructor talked with the participants about the directions laid down in the prompt to help them set goals. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions to clarify any misunderstandings.

All groups of students were engaged in the experiment once every week for two teaching sessions (45 mins each) which added up to approximately 50 teaching sessions. Five compositions (two informal letters as pre- and post-tests, a narrative essay, a descriptive essay and an article) were written in class without disrupting the regular programme so as to exclude variables such as the amount of time spent on task at home and help from others. Control group students were engaged in doing exercises to deal with problems they faced in their writing, while experimental group students were writing their second drafts.

Students wrote the pre-test after a brief revision of informal letter writing which was the same for all groups. Students then wrote the three types of essays after receiving appropriate teaching of the specific genre, and control group students received feedback and a mark from their teacher. Experimental group students received peer feedback and a mark based on the PA forms, and teacher feedback (comments and some corrections of major mistakes) and a mark and had to assess a student's essay. Students then received some remedial teaching depending on the problems they faced in their first draft and were then asked to write a second draft. Teachers were instructed to support their students during the whole procedure but not to intervene with their writing. Writing was done in class to avoid any interference. Teachers provided corrections, marks and comments to students' second draft, and after some extra remedial teaching they moved to the next genre. The researcher got all students' drafts immediately after each step of the procedure was complete to check that teachers followed her instructions regarding the corrections and comments they provided to their students.

The length of the essays was around 4-5 paragraphs (120-150 words each). Instructors monitored the students but were not involved in the actual editing of the essays. Teachers assumed the role of a facilitator i.e. by explaining any difficult terms or consultant by giving advice when needed (O' Brien, 2004). The main aim

of the study was to introduce the PA method and examine which group of students had a better writing performance and a more favourable attitude towards PA. All teachers were asked to avoid overcorrecting their students' work and provide only occasional basic corrections and comments.

During the feedback sessions, the teacher and student/assessors presented their fellow students with feedback which comprised both marks and comments based on the PA forms. More precisely, all experimental group learners spent about 20 minutes of their normal teaching sessions filling in the PA form, while the control groups carried on with their usual teaching. Students were assigned with the correction of their peers randomly and changed every time they had to assess a new draft. The identity of the student/assessor and the student/assessee were kept secret to avoid conflicts and bitterness among the learners (Miller et al., 1994). Anonymity and change of student/assessors also ensured the reliability of the assessment process. For the same reason, oral interaction between peers was also avoided.

Afterwards, students were asked to re-draft their work. Teacher and peer feedback were given with a view to improving successive drafts and prompt more revision. Moreover, the feedback sessions were structured tightly with regard to time to avoid considerable variation between groups and to encourage the participants to stay focused. The time between drafts (usually two week) was considered to be sufficient for learners to redraft without feeling undue pressure ensuring the reliability of the assessment process (Raines, 1983, p. 149). Additionally, students were asked to peer assess only the first draft so as to avoid any resistance from students who may have been reluctant to provide feedback again in such a short time reading an essay which may have been similar to the one they had read a week ago.

In the first week of the implementation phase, participants wrote for their second writing prompt (description). After finishing their first drafts, all experimental group students carried out PA with the support of the PA form, while the control groups did not receive any special treatment. Finally, experimental group students were

encouraged to revise and submit their latest version of their essays in class a few days later.

Students received remedial teaching depending on their problems. Basically, the teacher was instructed to use selected parts with significant problems from students' essays and encourage students to identify the problem and indicate a solution. The teacher also asked students to study some pages from their grammar book at home and the handouts they used to correct errors in class. One week later, the third writing prompt (article) was administered to all groups and after a month the fourth writing prompt (story). The procedure was identical for all writing cycles. Finally, the fifth writing prompt which was similar to the first one was administered as a post-test to all students.

Additionally, teachers conducted whole-class discussions (Appendix XI) with the experimental groups during the feedback session after the second draft of all compositions (Table 5). Whole-class discussions assisted in evaluating the experiment by providing students' insights.

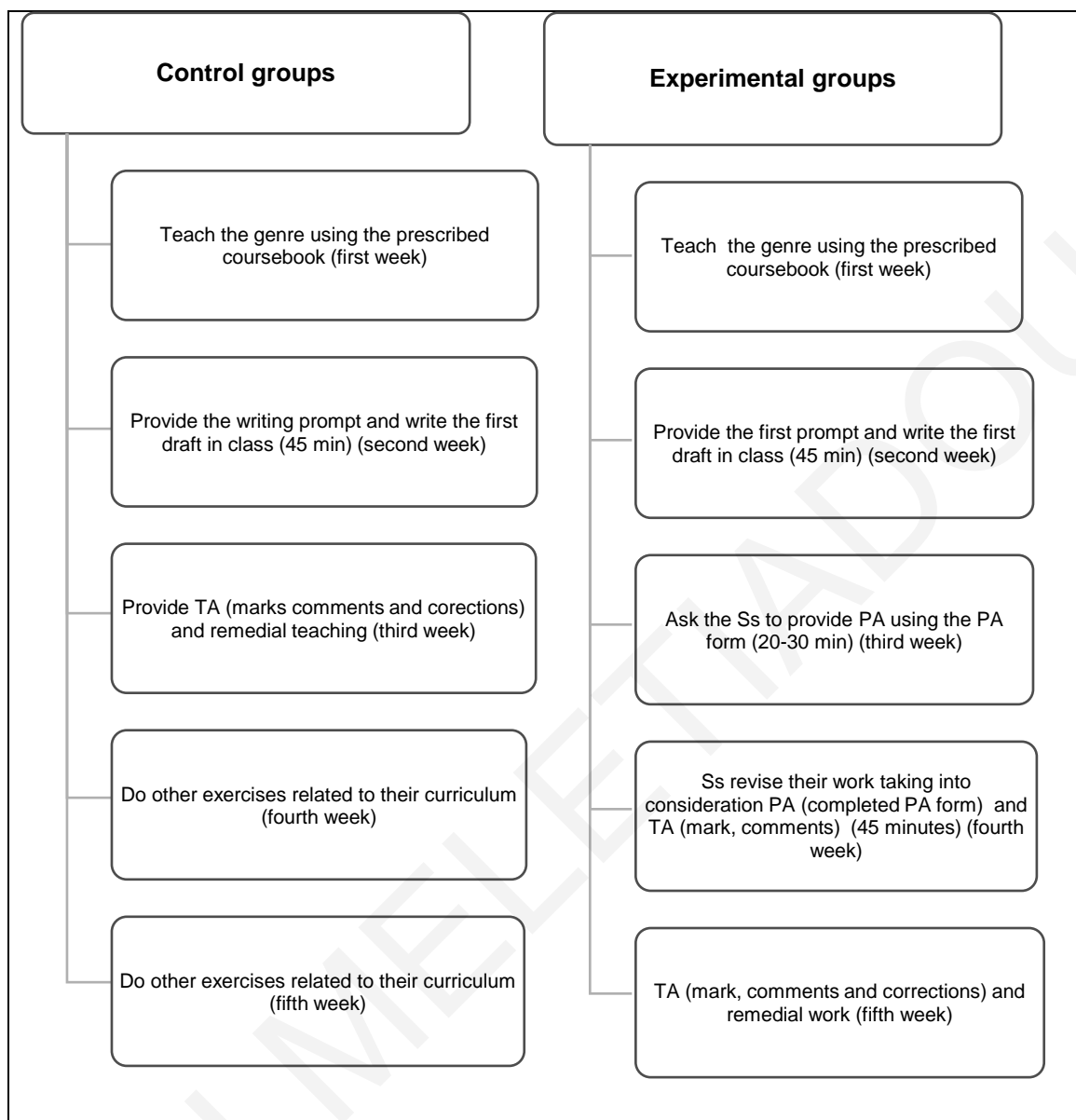


Table 5: Task cycle for experimental and control groups

6.10.3. Third phase

During this phase, the researcher administered two PA questionnaires (Appendices VIII and IX) to all learners and teachers respectively to explore their attitudes towards PA of writing after the implementation. The same PA questionnaires were used before and after the implementation of PA to both students and teachers. The aim was to explore students and teachers' attitudes towards the same issues relating to PA of writing before and after working with PA. The researcher hoped that both learners and teachers' attitudes towards PA would

be overall positive after its implementation possibly due to the benefits that learners and teachers could gain.

The researcher also asked teachers to lead a whole-class conversation among students after the completion of each cycle of PA asking them a list of specific questions (Appendix X). The conversation was in Greek so as to promote as much discussion among the participants as possible and allow them to express their thoughts and feelings freely. The aim was to explore students' attitudes during the implementation as the researcher was not allowed to interview students or be physically present in the classroom during the whole-class discussions. Teachers were asked to keep notes very carefully and these were given to the researcher. The researcher also kept a few more notes after talking about the whole-class discussion with teachers immediately after it took place so that teachers could remember as much from the conversation that took place as possible.

After the implementation, the researcher also administered semi-structured interviews (Appendix X) with all teachers to allow them to discuss their impressions regarding their own and their students' exposure to PA and get a more complete picture about what happened during the implementation and how teachers and their students felt about it. Interviews were either in Greek or English depending on the teacher who was asked to choose the language used during the interview so that she could feel at ease. The researcher also interviewed the head-teachers and the EFL advisor at the Cypriot Ministry of Education, who were indirectly linked to this intervention, to explore how they felt about it and what kind of personal experience they had with PA. Their views would also help the researcher have a more complete picture of the study and would allow her to make recommendations for the wider use of PA in the specific and in similar learning contexts.

The triangulation of these instruments, students and teachers' pre- and post- PA questionnaires, teachers' interviews and teachers' notes from the whole-class discussions after the completion of each one of the writing cycles would offer valuable insights into the implementation of the PA approach, the challenges that it presents for teachers and students as well as the benefits. It would also allow the

researcher to make changes and adaptations to improve the way PA was implemented in EFL writing classes.

6.11. Instruments of the study

The researcher employed several instruments: (a) four ESL essay rubrics - PA forms (Appendices IV, V, VI, VII), one for each essay genre, (b) a experimental group teachers' PA questionnaire (Appendices VIII), (c) a experimental group students' PA questionnaire (Appendices IX), (d) a semi-structured interview form (Appendix X), and (d) a whole-class discussion form (Appendix XI).

The methodology of the study can be seen more explicitly in the figure below.

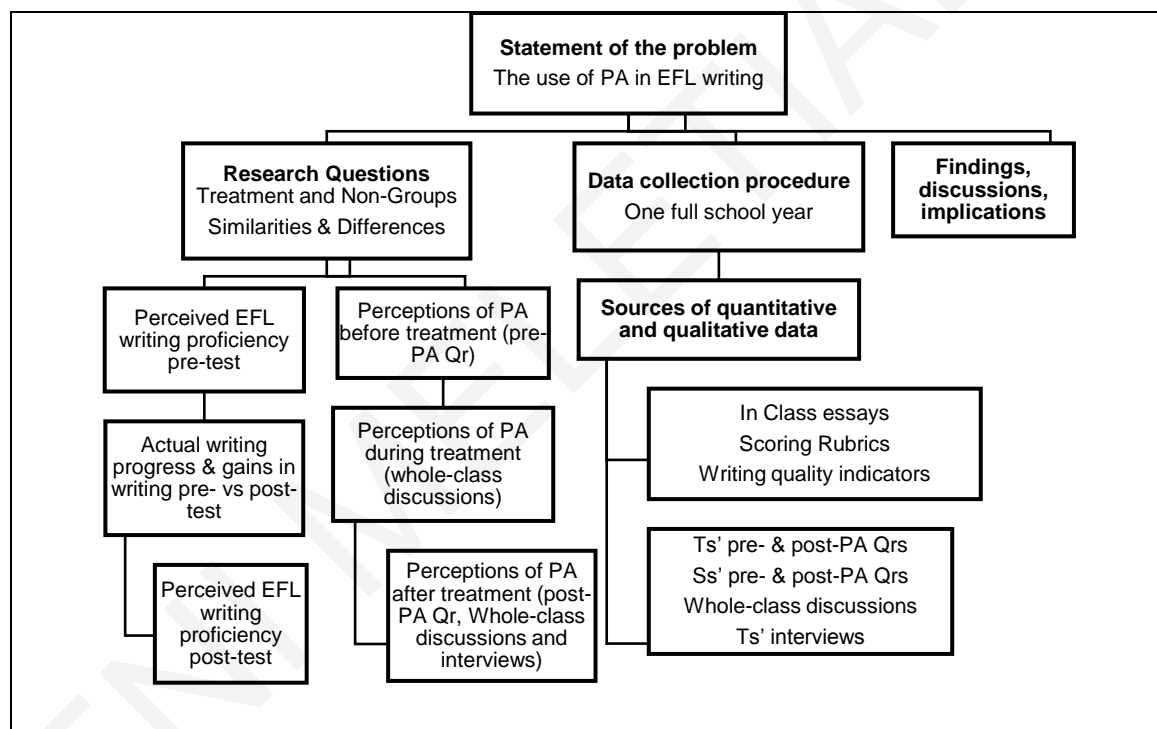


Figure 2: Methodology and instruments of the study

6.11.1. EFL essay scoring rubrics and PA forms

This study employed a “multiple-trait” approach (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 315) to assessing student essay quality prior to and post trained PA. According to Hamp-Lyons (1991b), multiple-trait instruments consider only “the most salient criteria or traits” associated with the writing task, as opposed to a general holistic scoring rubric that evaluates “every element of writing ability that may be manifested in the context” (p. 248). This kind of assessment generates enhanced

concurrent and predictive validity given that the more focused trait-based criteria allow raters to resolve differences and reach agreements more easily than with a holistic rubric (Hamp-Lyons, 1991b; Hamp-Lyons, 1991a). As for measuring the writing scores of the first drafts and final versions, two different scoring methods were employed: holistic and analytic scoring (Jun, 2005; Kim, 2005; Song, 1998; Villamil et al., 1998). Holistic scoring was adopted to verify the overall scores of the participants' writing and analytic scoring was used to evaluate the more detailed parts of the writing. Both measurements could complementarily contribute sufficient information about the participants' writing abilities.

The PA forms (Appendix IV, V, VI and VII), one for each genre were devised by the researcher but were also negotiated and discussed among the experimental group students and their teacher during the training sessions. The researcher revised these EFL essay scoring rubrics several times taking their comments into consideration before these reached their final form. All rubrics had been reviewed by two head-teachers and two experienced EFL teachers for face validity before data collection and had been tested for interrater reliabilities after data collection.

The PA forms were adapted from two lists in White and McGovern (1994) and Jacobs ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfield, & Hughey, 1981) to reflect learners' errors and their examiners' preoccupations, i.e. low as well as higher levels of writing [not direct attention away from grammar as do more communicatively inspired forms such as that of Paulus (1999)]. They consisted of five broad categories. The first two areas focused on global concerns (i.e. content, organisation), while the latter dealt with local concerns (i.e. vocabulary and language use and mechanics). These are categories that previous researchers have also used in their PA or SA instruments/rubrics (Goldburg, 2012; Jacobs et al., 1981; White et al., 1994). Genre was also included as a criterion in this rubric because students, who are learning to write in EFL/ESL, need to be aware of text genres (see Section 4.2): not simply of generic conventions, but of genre in the wider sense of communicative events or acts (Caudery, 1998; Dirgeyasa, 2016; Freedman, 1993; Hyland, 2003).

The three assessment forms were identical except for the last part that referred to the genre of each essay. The statements in this section were varied to assess the specific aspects that are deemed as important according to the different genres. The definition of the term genre varies somewhat between different writers, but most follow Swales (1990) and Bahtia (1993) in relating the concept of genre to communicative events or acts. In such approaches, genres are defined not in terms of their language, but by features which could be described as external to the text itself. These include areas such as text purpose, writer/reader relationships, and the medium of communication (e.g. newspaper article, letter, e-mail message). These external characteristics naturally have implications for internal features of the text, including areas such as syntax, lexical choice, organization, layout, etc. The researcher made sure that the characteristics that are considered as necessary for intermediate EFL writers to master, were outlined in their coursebooks, and explicitly taught by their teachers, were included in the EFL essay scoring rubrics. In fact, these rubrics were related to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as they included categories and in them statements that referred to criteria such as clarity, precision, effectiveness. These are directly linked to the CEFR's guidelines of positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence (p. 84; 206-207) and appear in the CEFR descriptors for writing (p. 61).

Moreover, in each one of the sections of the PA forms, the researcher guided students into assigning marks for each category by using a number of statements for each section, as learners were rather inexperienced writers and had never used PA before. All statements were in Greek and English so that students did not spend time translating. Students had to read their peers' essays, and taking in mind the statements for each category, they had to assign marks for each category, and then add them to get a mark/grade. Students were also asked to offer three specific suggestions for revision. The original PA forms were initially rather lengthy, but were significantly reduced to make the PA procedure faster and more convenient for learners and their teachers. The aim was to introduce learners into PA and allow them to understand how their essays are evaluated and how their peers' and their own essays may be improved by carefully editing them, proofreading them, and reflecting on ways to improve their content and form.

In fact, it was a rather controlled type of rubric in the form of a checklist. Nevertheless, it provided students with marks and feedback which play an important role to students' educational development (Black et al., 1998c; Holroyd, 2000). It requested learners to find and write down three of the essay under consideration main strengths, three of its weak points and provide three suggestions for revision. The aim was to help students reflect on the essay and take a more active role by providing meta-cognitive comments which would allow their fellow student to revise his/her work accordingly. This procedure allowed the assessors to reflect on their own work, compare it with the essay in hand, and help them revise their own work.

The researcher thought that both an analytic and a holistic score should be provided to learners as this conformed with their curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011) and had been supported by previous research (East, 2009; Goldberg, 2012; Hyland, 2003). Students appointed different marks to each category that is 4 out of 20 to content, 4 to organization, 4 to vocabulary and language use, 4 to mechanics and 4 to focus. Equal marks were provided to each category so as for the final grade to be well-balanced, always following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus. As Weigle (2002) argues, "[w]eighting of scores has two complementary but distinct aspects that must be taken into consideration: it represents an explicit statement of a theory of writing ability (i.e. that certain aspects are more or less important/relevant/involved than others), and it also has consequences for the final scores that are the basis for decisions" (p. 124). Taking these two arguments into consideration and trying to reduce subjectivity, the researcher decided to weigh all components equally in the development of this rubric.

The statements were chosen taking into consideration the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education and the prescribed coursebooks. Students were not asked to make any corrections on the essays as they were rather inexperienced writers. The aim was to encourage learners to get actively involved in their peers' and their own learning.

The PA forms were used to guide students in reading and revising their own texts and to guide the peer-response activity (Lamberg, 1980, p. 68). Being simple and 'procedural' in nature, it was expected to provide learners with basic guidelines for giving feedback to their peers' drafts and consequently approaching their own drafts critically and revising more effectively (Johns, 1986, p. 259-260). Since students were relatively young and did not have the necessary meta-language in English, the questions were presented both in Greek and English to facilitate the use of the form and avoid confusion among learners.

These PA forms consisted of about 33 closed-ended statements both in Greek and English to facilitate these rather inexperienced learners. They employed a five-point Likert type scale ranging from A to E. The first five statements explored four of the major concerns when evaluating the content of an essay at intermediate level. Namely, they intended to find out if the reader could easily understand the main ideas of the essay and whether these were appropriately supported and relevant to the topic.

The next seven statements were related to organization and examined if there was appropriate development, effective use of transition, cohesion, and coherence in the essay under consideration. The next thirteen statements were linked to vocabulary and language use and checked whether the vocabulary was varied and the writer effectively dealt with issues related to language use, i.e. errors of tense. The next four statements were related to mechanics and explored problems with spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and capitalization. The last four statements searched into the issue of focus of the essay and that of the genre and its requirements. The very last statement also had a number of sub-statements different for each type of essay.

Then, students were asked to respond to 3 open-ended statements by adding briefly their own comments and suggestions for revision. This last part engaged students more actively in the revision process and allowed them to develop even further their meta-cognitive and reflective skills (see section 3.4.1). Students were provided with an analytic and a holistic score.

Taking this form into consideration, students had to read the drafts carefully and tick accordingly. They could then quickly view the completed form, assign marks to each one of the criteria, and calculate the total score/grade (Appendix VI). The researcher chose to employ explicit student-owned criteria because they were associated with better PA validities than other criteria or absence of criteria (Falchikov, 1986; Fineman, 1981; Graves, 2013; Stefani, 1994).

To check the reliability and validity of the essay scoring rubrics, the researcher referred to Knoch (2009) for the distinctions between holistic and analytic rating scales found in literature, particularly as it related to essays' rating scales for L2 writing tasks, and also to Gennaro (2009) on the use of an analytic rubric versus a holistic rubric because L2 students usually differ in their control of grammatical, cohesive, rhetorical, sociolinguistic and content components of essays. Based on Alderson's (2005) description of direct holistic assessment of student writing, the EFL essay scoring rubrics met the criteria because they: (a) identified different strengths and weaknesses in learner's knowledge and use of written language, (b) enabled a detailed analysis of student responses to specific elements of the writing task, (c) provided detailed feedback which students could act upon, and (d) focused on specific rather than global writing abilities and overall foreign language proficiency. Moreover, the descriptors for writing ability and the point values reflected in the rating scales of the instrument in this study lend themselves well to a holistic approach by isolating troublesome aspects of writing performance (Knoch, 2009).

The holistic scale of the EFL essay scoring rubrics was considered as valid as it assumes that all relevant aspects of writing develop at the same rate and can be captured in a series of scores over time (Alderson, 2005). Additionally, holistic scores correlate well with other superficial aspects of writing, and are practical and relatively fast and easy measures for rating and awarding scores (Knoch, 2009). Calibration sessions with teachers of the different groups added reliability to the essay scoring rubrics and provided the researcher opportunities to get feedback from the other EFL writing teachers on borderline student essays. Teachers met once during the first semester and evaluated at least three of each other's in-class student essays.

Moreover, the reliability of the PA forms (or essay scoring rubrics) (Appendix IV-VI), the main instrument of the study, was examined calculating Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of items (included under the five sections of the PA form: content, organization, mechanics, focus, vocabulary and language use) (Dörnyei et al., 2009). According to the relevant literature (Gielen & Bram De Wever, 2015a; Landry, Jacobs, & Newton, 2015; Miao, Richard, & Yu, 2006b), a coefficient value greater than .8, is classified as high reliability. Higher values indicate greater consistency and a value between .7 and .9 is considered to be high consistency without redundancy. In our case, the coefficient value was .9. This clearly indicates that the PA forms can be considered as reliable instruments. These can also be used to explore the impact of PA on EFL students' writing performance.

The validity of the PA form was explored by consultation with experts, 8 headteachers, one inspector and 10 qualified EFL teachers who have taught at this level for at least 6 years. At first, the instrument had 4 categories (content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and language use). The instrument was a rubric, an adaptation of a well-known and widely used instrument for ESL composition writing, which is Jacobs' ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al., 1981). A fifth category (focus) was added because all experts and teachers believed that adding a criterion for genre was very important, since students at that age and level were trying to master a variety of genres. A pilot study was then conducted, during which 60 students and 6 teachers used this form to assess 5 essays. Students and teachers thought that the instrument was user-friendly and suitable for students' level and age.

Then, pre- and post-tests (the same informal letter) from 200 EFL students were collected and typed as word files assigning each student with a code to facilitate the text analysis of all drafts and ensure the anonymity of all students and the fair and objective evaluation of all drafts by an external assessor. All drafts were evaluated by an external assessor who provided an analytic and a total score for all drafts based on the PA forms (Appendix VII) provided by the researcher and after the relevant PA training and rater training took place. The reliability of the scores provided by the external assessor were checked against the evaluations of

the researcher. The researcher of the study evaluated 20% of the drafts (10% from the experimental groups and 10% from the control groups) which were chosen randomly. An interrater reliability analysis using Cohen's Kappa, which is considered to be a strict measure of interrater reliability (Viera & Garrett, 2005), was performed to determine consistency among raters. The interrater reliability was found to be $Kappa=.767$ with $p<.001$. According to McHugh (2012), this measure of agreement displays a good level of agreement which is also statistically significant. Therefore, the external assessor's scores were considered as reliable enough to be used to address the first research question of this study which examined the impact of PA on students' writing performance.

The researcher analyzed students' pre- and post-tests taking into consideration four factors: fluency, accuracy, grammatical complexity and lexical complexity. The aim was to further explore whether either control or experimental group students improved their writing performance and in which aspects, based this time on the analysis of their essays and not on teachers' marks which have also been found to be problematic e.g. unreliable, inconsistent and/or biased (Falchikov et al., 1997; Newstead & Dennis, 1994).

6.11.2. PA questionnaires

Teachers and students' attitudes were monitored before and after the PA exercise by means of two questionnaires developed for lower secondary EFL students and their teachers (Appendix VIII and IX). The researcher developed the questionnaires adapting and/or taking into consideration questionnaires that have been previously used by other researchers (Berg, 1997; Brindley et al., 1998; Peng & Jui-Ching Fion, 2009). The statements aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of their opinions, experiences and attitudes towards some theoretical issues relevant to PA. Moreover, it intended to elicit students and their teachers' reaction to the PA approach and the progress they made in writing. Finally, it collected quantitative and qualitative data before and after treatment to determine whether teachers and students in the treatment classes changed their perceptions toward the PA process and, to what extent.

The format used was that of closed items, whereby the range of responses was determined by the researcher (Nunan, 2002, p. 143). This made the scoring of the responses quicker and more reliable (Bell, 1993, p. 120; Wallace, 2000, p. 135). However, open-ended questions were also included to elicit some more information about students' experience with PA and allow them to describe their feelings and attitudes towards PA after the implementation. The aim of including these questions was to examine the perceived benefits, weaknesses, and concerns of students relating to PA. Students filled out the questionnaire after the PA exercises with no time limit to allow them sufficient time to respond. They were assured that their answers would not affect their course grades.

The researcher chose to use the same PA questionnaire before and after the treatment for teachers (Appendix VIII) and another one for students (Appendix IX). The aim was to facilitate comparisons between learners' responses before and after the PA implementation. The questionnaires were administered during class time immediately after completing the study so that students could easily recall and express their opinions. The researcher wanted to find out:

- ❖ whether PA changed students' writing behaviour;
- ❖ whether teachers and learners thought that PA was promoting language learning;
- ❖ whether teachers and learners believed that PA improved their writing performance, and
- ❖ what teachers and learners' general attitudes were towards PA and whether they thought it was suitable for learners of this age and background (see sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3).

The teachers' questionnaire was in English. Taking into consideration students' language level, both the instructions and the statements were presented both in Greek and English. The researcher did not want to put an extra burden on students. This would have made the whole procedure even more time-consuming and tiring. The language and the wording of the statements were also simple to correspond to students' age and cognitive abilities. Vague, double or leading statements that would confuse learners were avoided. Besides that, students were

reassured that the questionnaire would be anonymous to encourage them to respond as sincerely and freely as possible.

In the teacher's lengthy questionnaire, teachers had to provide some demographical data and were then fill in the second part of the questionnaire which consisted of four parts: (a) general (18 statements), (b) how well are you prepared to conduct PA? (12 statements), (c) PA and learners (17 statements), and (d) what are your overall impressions of PA? (18 statements). In this part of the questionnaire, teachers had to respond to a five-point Likert type scale statements, which is most commonly used according to Dumas and Redish (1999) and Dornyei and Taguchi (2009). This scale ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Finally, the last part of the questionnaire consisted of 7 open questions. The researcher chose to use both closed-type statements, which are easy to answer, and open questions, which allow the interviewee to express his/her views more openly and in detail so as to get a fuller picture of teachers and their learners' attitudes towards PA. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data would provide a fuller picture of teachers' perceptions of PA before and after the implementation.

Students' questionnaire consisted of 3 parts. The first part explored students' attitudes towards PA and the second investigated students' attitudes towards PA and writing. Students had to respond to 12 five-point Likert type statements ranging from strongly disagree to agree for the first part and 11 for the second part. The last part of the questionnaire also included 12 open questions.

The researcher aimed at getting an almost complete picture of the impact of PA on students. The researcher wanted to interview students as well, but the Ministry of Education would never have allowed this and if they had, parents would never have given their consent. Unfortunately, Cyprus does not have a research-friendly culture, so the researcher had teachers answer a very detailed and rather long questionnaire. This would hopefully indicate whether students and teachers enjoyed working with PA and whether they thought that using it in their classroom would prove beneficial for them.

6.11.3. Teachers' semi-structured interviews

One way to explore a phenomenon is to interview people who are involved in it in some way. Tuckman (1999) notes that interviews provide entrance into what a person is thinking, their knowledge of a particular subject matter, and their value systems. Interviews were used to personalize the study more and allow the voice of teacher participants to seep through the study's findings. This information enabled the researcher to answer the fourth research question. The interview strengthened internal validity because all teachers were asked more or less the same questions. Furthermore, interviews helped to substantiate or extend quantitative findings no matter the direction of the data analysis. On a larger scale, teachers' description of the strengths and challenges of the intervention provided individuals in the education world with the foresight to implement measures that may ensure a smoother and more effective implementation and outcome.

After the completion of the study, all experimental group instructors were interviewed for 30-45 min. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore a number of issues, i.e. teachers and students' attitudes and past experiences of PA or whether teachers changed their attitudes towards PA either in a negative or positive way after the implementation. Data obtained from the interviews provided in-depth information that the five-point Likert scale surveys and the open-ended questionnaires could not offer. The questions that the researcher asked during the interviews (Appendix XI) were based on a number of relevant studies such as Cheng et al. (2005), Falchikov et al. (2000) and Patri (2002). The informal interviews conducted with the writing teachers constituted an avenue for gaining further insight into the importance and meaning of peer review training (Seidman, 2006). The data collected from tape recorded informal interviews were transcribed and common themes were identified through Atlas.ti by the researcher and an external assistant.

Cohen et al. (2013) stated that research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation. Interviews, like questionnaires, vary depending on their degree of explicitness and

structure: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Interviews with teachers were held in May and June 2014. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used because they suited the purpose of this study better. Specific core predetermined questions were used to explore in-depth information, probing depending on the ways the interviews proceeded. It allowed for elaboration, within limits (Mertens, 2014; Seliger & Shohamy, 1995).

Although the interview has been conceived as a transaction which inevitably has bias (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 245; Cohen et al., 2013), in this study, this was controlled by allowing teachers to view their interview transcripts so that they could check whether what the researcher had written accurately reflected their experiences. The advantages of semi-structured interviews for this study were described by Hesse-Biber, Nagy, and Leavy (2011, p. 102). A set of questions were designed which aligned with the research questions and kept the conversation on track with the questions. Semi-structured interviews were used to align with the qualitative research paradigm. The interviewees were allowed some latitude and freedom to talk about what was of interest to them, hence allowing the conversation to flow more naturally and show the complexities that were unique to the participants being studied. This made room for the conversation to develop in unexpected directions where interviewees gave information or provided knowledge about things which were not planned or thought of in advance. When such knowledge emerges, a researcher using a semi-structured design is likely to allow the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee. Aligning with the methodological principles of action research, interviews are a meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents ... provide an opportunity for researchers to learn about social life through the perspectives, experience and language of those living it (ibid, p. 105).

As Cohen et al. (2013) advised, the researcher followed three procedures in conducting the interviews. First, to put teachers at ease, the researcher engaged in a short casual chat with teachers. Second, the researcher briefed teachers on the purpose and procedures of the interview. Third, the researcher asked for their permission to audio-record the interview (Appendix III).

Interviews with teachers were conducted individually. Each interview lasted 20-30 minutes. This technique provides opportunities for the participants to describe the situation in their own terms. It is a reflective process that enables the interviewee to explore his or her experience in detail and reveal the many features of that experience that have an effect on the issues investigated (Stringer, 2007, p. 8). The semi-structured interview in this study was to elicit from teachers the kind of assessment methods they have used so far. They also allowed them to describe the experience they had when they implemented PA in their writing classes, focusing on the benefits for themselves as teachers and for their students, the drawbacks and the challenges they faced.

The interview schedule consisted of two parts. The first part was about teachers' past experiences with PA as students and, then, as teachers prior to the current study. This was followed by a set of follow-up questions addressing a number of themes, i.e. benefits of PA for teachers and students, ways of dealing with students' reluctance to participate etc. The researcher audio-recorded the interviews to capture a detailed and accurate account of the interactions. The researcher transcribed the recording and provided teachers with a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy.

The regular qualitative interviews in this study were shaped by many factors including the purpose of the research, the participants' personalities, the researcher's personal style and the relationship between the participants and the researcher. For the interview to work well, the researcher tailored the questions for each interviewee. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 14), asking everyone the same questions makes little sense in qualitative interviewing. The same authors advocate the use of responsive interviewing which means that qualitative interviewing is dynamic and an iterative process, not a set of tools to be applied mechanically (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15).

The interviews conducted with teachers were responsive in nature. Although the researcher had a general focus, the interviews with teachers were adjusted to match their own situations. The researcher had a list of questions grouped into a few different categories at hand, but she normally followed the flow of the

interview, picked up leads from the interviewee, and probed if needed. The interviews included open-ended, semi-structured questions and discourse-based questions. The semi-structured, open-ended questions (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015) were used to elicit from the participants their perceptions on different aspects of peer response. The questions were focused, providing no cues for the answers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study at the end of the treatment to find out teachers' perceptions and beliefs about peer-editing and its efficacy. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) emphasize the importance of conducting this type of interview at the end of the study because it is the best way to gather information that aids the researchers in testing the hypotheses they have in mind. The semi-structured interview included a list of pre-set questions that the interviewees had to answer in order (see Appendix X). Such type of interview is vital because it enables the researcher to compare all interviewees' responses, thus enhancing the data organization and leading to better analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2006; Merriam et al., 2015).

As for the questions in the semi-structured interview, they are open-ended enabling the interviewer to encourage the interviewees to elaborate more on their responses to better comprehend their personal beliefs or perceptions regarding the topic under study. This gives the interviewer more flexibility while conducting the interview and provides a sense of relief and safety to the interviewees who won't feel that they are put under a rigid, strictly formal interview. The interviews were tape-recorded and analyzed to determine students' attitudes and perceptions towards applying peer-editing in their EFL class.

The scores and the text analysis of the pre- and post-test essays of control and experimental groups students, in addition to students' grades on the second draft will help triangulate the findings. According to Drew, Hardman, and Hosp (2008), triangulation is essential in research studies because it helps the researcher collect data from different sources, utilize a variety of data collection methods, or use different researchers' perspectives in a design (McMillan, 2004; Mertens, 2014; Neuman, 2006). They define triangulation as a process utilizing "a variety of

sources, collection methods, or perspectives to check the consistency or accuracy of research conclusion.” (p. 206). In addition, Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) state that the data collected through triangulation establishes “a more accurate and valid” results in qualitative studies (p. 4). To conclude, according to Cohen et al. (2013), interviews are a flexible and powerful implement for researches, as they may be controlled and still give space for spontaneity.

6.11.4. Whole-class discussion forms

One more data collection procedure employed in the present study was the whole-class discussions (Appendix XI). These were conducted at the end of every feedback session for all learners’ second drafts of all compositions (see Table 3). Teachers recorded the findings on a separate document (Appendix VIII) for each one of the three types of essays. These semi-structured group discussions were held as a substitute for students’ interviews which was almost impossible to take place. Teachers were asked to keep notes very carefully on a notebook as the researcher did not have permission to audio-tape the discussions. Students were given plenty of time to reflect on the questions and respond freely. They were informed that this would not affect their grades in any way, and that they had the right to remain silent if they did not wish to answer any of the questions asked by their teacher. The conversation was lively and since the researcher was not present, students felt very comfortable and were eager to take part in these informal class discussions.

During the last ten-fifteen minutes of all feedback sessions (see Table 4), the same list of twenty-two questions (Appendix XI) was discussed with all experimental group students in class. Semi-formal conversations were initiated and students were invited to express their opinions on certain issues, which were essential for the investigation of the research questions. These were employed, since they were believed to capture the classroom reality more faithfully than interviews with individual students by i.e. allowing the researcher to ‘get the feeling’ of the students as a group.

The analysis of the data was accomplished through the methodological triangulation with all procedures of data collection, that is, teachers’ marks,

students' marks, students and teachers' pre- and post-PA questionnaires, teachers' interviews and whole-class discussions. By using all these, the teacher examined the progress students made in writing, their reaction to PA, teachers' attitudes towards PA and the difficulties students and teachers faced carrying out PA.

6.12. Data analyses

For the purposes of the study, data were gathered from a number of sources (the teacher, the external assessor and students) so as to produce as full and balanced a study as possible (Mertens, 2014; Tellis, 1997).

These were analyzed by means of a combination of qualitative and quantitative strategies called 'mixed study design' (Cohen et al., 2013; Lynch, 1996) which provides rich information as data is validated by means of triangulation. This multi-method approach to data collection captures reality as much as possible (Bryman, 2015; Key, 1997, p. 2-3).

The researcher conducted quantitative and qualitative research to answer all three research questions of this study (Table 6).

Research Questions	Instruments	Types of analyses	Method
1. What is the nature of the impact of PA and TA on adolescent EFL Ss' writing performance as opposed to TA only?	An analytic rating instrument adapted by Jacobs et al. (1981) 2 informal letters, 1 as pre-test and 1 as post-test 3 types of essays (descriptive, article, story) written in 2 drafts by all Ss in all groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of Ts and R marks • Comparison of marks on the pre- and post-test essays Ss in the experimental vs control groups got (the marks were provided by an external assessor) 	Quantitative
2. What is the nature of the impact of PA and TA on adolescent EFL Ss' writing quality as opposed to TA only?	Analysis of Ss' pre- and post-test essays according to the four indicators of writing quality (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998)	Evaluation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy, • fluency, • grammatical complexity, • lexical complexity (text analysis using the Atlas.ti) 	Quantitative & Qualitative
3. What are EFL Ss' attitudes towards PA of writing?	2 Ss PA Qrs Focus group discussions with Ss in groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of pre- and post- implementation Ss' PA Qrs (DS and Atlas.ti) • Ss' whole-class discussions 	Quantitative & Qualitative

4. What are EFL Ts' attitudes towards PA of writing?	2 Ts PA Qrs Interviews with Ts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of pre- and post-implementation Ts' PA Qrs (DS and Atlas.ti) • Ts interviews (Atlas.ti) 	Quantitative & Qualitative
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* Ts.: teachers, Ss.= students, Qrs = questionnaires

Table 6: Research questions, instruments and types of analyses

6.12.1. Data analyses of the essays

All data of this study was examined to address the research questions. To answer Question 1, the pre-writing and post-writing assessment total scores from the experimental groups and control groups were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics. George and Mallery (2007) state that a researcher uses a two-tailed t-test to determine if one distribution of scores differs significantly from the mean of the comparison group. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the researcher ran a two-tailed t-test to determine whether the means of the control groups' pre-test and post-test writing scores differed significantly from the means of the experimental group students' writing scores.

To address the quantitative needs for Question 1, the scale score assigned to each category (content, organisation, vocabulary etc.) of the PA rubric was used. The researcher used the scale scores to calculate the mean of each category from the pre-test and the post-test. The researcher measured the growth that occurred between the two tests. This analysis only occurred using experimental groups' data since it received the treatment, and the researcher wanted to know if the treatment had a greater impact on one domain more than the others. To answer the first research question, the researcher performed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), which allows more than one dependent variable (e.g. writing domains) to be measured and compared. Specifically, these tests examine if there are differences among the dependent variables simultaneously (George et al., 2007; George & Mallery, 2016). Therefore, this test allowed the researcher to compare the means of each category from the pre-test to the post-test and determine if the provision of PA and TA had a greater impact on one of the writing categories than the others. The scoring system used in the present study was analytical, which means that more than one trait (domain) of an essay was

evaluated. The scores for each trait were added to calculate a weighted total score for each student (Arter, 2001). The researcher calculated and compared the mean of the total scores from students for each group to measure significance and to determine the impact of PA on students' writing achievement.

Moreover, students' perceived L2 writing proficiency was the composite score determined by the different indicators of writing quality of the different groups of students (experimental vs control). T-tests and descriptive statistics were used to compare the means scores of the different variables for the two types of feedback, and identify significant differences in the different variables and the general perceived EFL writing proficiency of the two types of groups in the pre-test and their post-test essays.

All essays were processed with Microsoft Word to achieve consistency in format for the purpose of data analysis. The layout of the printout was kept consistent across the board in typography (Times New Roman), font size (12 points), and line spacing (Doubled). Code numbers (not linked to a participant's identity) were utilized to replace participants' names and were placed on all essays with a two-fold purpose: (a) to protect participants' confidentiality, and (b) to prevent any moderator variables, such as rater perception of gender by writers' names (Peterson, Childs, & Kennedy, 2004), from interfering with raters' judgment.

Regarding the second research question, that is the impact of PA and TA on learners' writing quality, the researcher decided on five indicators to apply in the analyses of students' drafts (Table 5), building on precedents established in earlier studies of ESL writing and writing assessment:

- ❖ fluency [(a) average number of words per t-unit (Chipere, Malvern, Duran, & Richards, 2003), a t-unit being a minimal terminal unit or independent clause with whatever dependent clauses, phrases, and words are attached to or embedded within it (Faigley, 1979; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998), and (b) text length, operationalized as the total number of words written in a composition within the 30 minutes allocated for each task (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998)];

- ❖ grammatical complexity [(a) average number of clauses per t-unit; (b) average number of clauses per T-unit; (c) dependent clauses per T-unit, and (d) dependent clauses per clause (Tin & Qian, 2010)];
- ❖ accuracy [(a) the proportion of error-free t-units to t-units; (b) the number of T-units, and (c) the number of errors per T-unit (Ting & Qian, 2010), and
- ❖ vocabulary or lexical complexity [a sophisticated type-token ratio-word types per square root of two times the words ($WT/2W$ - that takes the length of the sample into account to avoid the problem that regular type-token ratios are affected by length (Chipere et al., 2003; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005)].

These indices have been determined to be best measures of second language development in writing (see, for example, Larsen-Freeman & Strom 1977; Wolfe-Quintero et al. 1998; Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Storch, 2009). Moreover, to establish reliability in categorizing these types of changes, the researcher and an external assessor, after first marking on 20% of the revised drafts where changes were made (Cumming et al., 2006), analyzed all data.

The researcher established interrater reliabilities of using the rubrics and the coding scheme by going through the following steps (Ortega, 1999): (a) the researcher set aside three different random samples of 10% of the data (one set for pilot testing, another set for rater training, and the other set for interrater-reliability checks); (b) the researcher pilot-tested the rubrics and the coding scheme so as to practise applying the instruments; (c) the researcher implemented solid rater training; (d) the researcher and an external rater independently coded the third set of data; (e) the researcher tallied agreements and disagreements by comparing her coding with the rater's, and finally, and (f) the researcher clarified any misunderstandings or disagreement.

Furthermore, two questionnaires which are "subjective" methods frequently used in language learning and teaching research (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 6-8) were also employed to answer the third and the fourth research questions (see Section 6.2). According to Watanabe (2004, p. 23), questionnaires are valuable ways for gathering public opinions which otherwise could not be identified. Additional

information was also provided by the whole-class discussions which are also qualitative methods.

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, percentile ratings were calculated, and t-tests were conducted to examine similarities and differences between participants' perceptions of the PA process in terms of the usefulness of PA, and participants' preferences for peer and/or teacher feedback and a number of other issues raised in PA questionnaires.

Relevant t-tests were performed to analyze the results of the 5-point Likert scale pre- and post-surveys about the EFL learners and teachers' attitudes towards PA. For instance, one-sample t-tests were used to check if mean values were statistically significant, while paired t-tests were performed to compare students' attitudes before and after the PAs. Individual t-values for each item were presented to check item differences. These results were then triangulated with the data from the interviews and whole-class discussions to further explore, for instance, the reasons for any change of attitudes.

6.12.2. Data analyses of the qualitative data

Lodico et al. (2006) proposed six steps for analyzing qualitative data. These were: a) preparing and organizing the data; b) reviewing and exploring the data; c) coding data into categories; d) constructing descriptions of people, places, and activities; e) building themes and testing hypotheses, and f) reporting and interpreting data" (p. 310-302). These six steps were followed for qualitative data analysis in the study.

To answer the third and the fourth research questions of the study, a thematic analysis was performed. Creswell et al. (2007) shared that "qualitative analysis begins with coding the data, dividing the text into small units and assigning a label to each unit" (p. 131). The questions on the interview protocol were dissected into these text segments (e.g. common words, common phrases, etc.) using teachers' responses to the questions. These text segments were analyzed to obtain the broader themes. Using these themes, the researcher elaborated on any

similarities and differences among different teachers and discussed their responses.

The analysis involved triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data in some instances, and the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies) to further explain, expand, elaborate, verify, and report the results. Qualitative inquiry is an appropriate source of illumination for understanding the ways students interpreted and made sense of their writing and PA experiences in the natural setting of the EFL writing classroom in the study. It is also the best interpretive approach for the teacher/researcher participating in the study because it is “multi-method in focus” (Richards, 2003, p. 11), and required the researcher to put aside assumptions so that the voices of 200 EFL students and their teachers will be clearly reflected in the analysis and reporting of the data (Bednell, 2006). Students and teachers’ responses to the open-ended and closed-ended questions on the pre- and post-treatment PA surveys together with the informal interviews with EFL writing teachers from the Ministry of Education of Cyprus and students’ semi-structured whole-class discussions compiled provided a wealth of descriptive, narrative, visual, textual, and non-numerical data that was analyzed to identify, explain, and describe the relevant themes (Gay, et al. 2009).

To control for internal validity and enhance comparability regarding the interviews, the involved teachers were asked the same questions. Tuckman perceptively shared, “Respondents [answering] the same questions [can] increase comparability of responses...and reduces interviewer bias...and permits evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in the evaluation” (p. 405). Additionally, some of the questions were written indirectly so that participants do not feel that the researcher was purposefully leading him/her to a specific response, and with most questions, the participants were asked to provide evidence or elaboration to substantiate their views. Tuckman suggests, “by asking questions without obvious purpose ... [the interview] is more likely to engender frank and open responses” (p. 238). To further validate interview responses, answers were compared to the information provided by teachers’ questionnaires. If the researcher noticed common patterns of thought and practices, the integrity of the interview was enhanced.

The qualitative data derived from the open-ended questions of students' questionnaires and focus group discussions as well as the open-ended questions of teachers' questionnaires and interviews of the current study were holistic and inductive, but they were not immediately ready for detailed analysis and required further processing. There were three stages to the data analysis, including data reduction, data display, and the drawing of conclusions (Behin & Hamidi, 2011). Due to the huge amount of data generated, data reduction became an indispensable process when there was a need to zero in on the variables and objects relevant to the study. The responses to the open questions in students and teachers' PA questionnaires, students' focus group discussions and interviews were transcribed and analyzed. A list of major codes was developed to sort and identify specific themes in displaying categorized data (see Appendix V). Relevant coding was integrated and refined to support responses to research questions to represent concepts emerging from the data (Skolverket, 2013). The coding method proposed by Skolverket (2011) was applied to the qualitative analysis. According to Saldaña's definition, "a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.3). The generated coding list was used to match corresponding and meaningful responses from students or teachers. After repeated data comparison and refinement, the data demonstrated interrelationships among different categories and the findings and conclusions from the qualitative data will be discussed in the next chapter.

In addition, the researcher matched the qualitative data to the quantitative data by comparing and contrasting similar ideas. The rationalization for this comparison is that qualitative research provides a contextual understanding of the broad relationships among variables uncovered via a survey (Laffey, Lin, & Lin, 2006). Through the use of different data methods and sources, triangulation could be applied and geared toward a higher quality of data interpretation for areas in which there was corroboration between quantitative and qualitative data. Based on the results from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study will try to elaborate, enhance and clarify results that are complementary as well as to extend

the breadth and range of inquiry (Axelsson, 2014). A mixed methods design was used to enhance the understanding of an experience or issue, and was neither more nor less valid than other specific approaches to research (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). When mixed methods of data collection are used, the validity derived from the weighing of the evidence is more appropriate, effective and thoughtful. When both quantitative and qualitative analyses are combined, the potential and likelihood of multiple unanticipated outcomes may be discovered.

A critical friend, who was an experienced EFL teacher with 15 years of experience in teaching EFL and an M.A. in Linguistics, also looked for common themes in 10% of the data (responses to the open-ended questions in students and teachers' post-PA questionnaires) to check the reliability of the researcher and identified the same themes in the qualitative data. The differences between the two coders (the researcher and her critical friend) were minor and related to the exact phrasing of the themes i.e. the researcher suggested the topic students were satisfied, and the second coder suggested students' satisfaction.

To summarize, this study embodied a quantitative perspective for a quasi-experimental, repeated-measure research design. This chapter provided information regarding the research method used to assess adolescent intermediate EFL students' use of PA as a means of promoting the development of writing skills. Without additional selection criteria for any specific characteristics associated with the participants (e.g., age, sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, or any social or economic qualifications), intermediate EFL students of a convenient source were invited to participate. The instruments were constructed specifically for this study, pilot tested, reviewed, and validated by a panel of head-teachers and experienced EFL teachers and two raters. All data were processed with Microsoft Word for a unified format to prevent any intervening factors from coming to play. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted to address the four questions of the study.

6.13. Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodology and the instruments employed in the present study were described to explore the effects that PA had on the writing

performance of 100 Cypriot EFL learners which were compared with that of 100 Cypriot EFL students, who formed the control groups of the current study. The experimental group students' writing performance and attitudes were then compared to explore the effectiveness of this relatively new method with adolescent Cypriot EFL learners. Additional evidence regarding the experiment was collected from teachers' interviews and students' whole-class discussions. The instruments described in this chapter were intended to generate a sufficient amount of meaningful data for analysis that tapped into students' prior learning experiences in EFL writing classrooms and their current writing skills to support a discussion of the results from the perspectives of students and teachers. The mixed methods case study design used in this study allowed for the collection of rich data. This vast quantity of data allowed for a thick description of changes in students' overall writing development. A "thick" description is defined as a complete and literal description of an entity being investigated (Merriam, 2009).

1,300 student writing samples were generated and 400 from these were thoroughly analyzed. Transcripts from 10 teachers' interviews were read and reread until distinct themes emerged. 200 students' questionnaires were collected from experimental group students along with 20 questionnaires from experimental group teachers. These were thoroughly analyzed as they involved both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, 30 whole-class discussions were collected hopefully allowing the researcher to have a better insight into students' feelings and thoughts during the implementation. All data was triangulated and as such the answers to the research questions resulted from the convergence of several forms of data and not the results of a single instrument. Several safeguards were employed to reduce bias and maintain objectivity in the interpretation of results. Expanding our understanding of what EFL student writers bring to and take away from the learning context is an important first step toward finding out what good EFL writing instruction should look like in the process-oriented, learner-centered, pluralistic arena of L2 writing classrooms of the 21st century. In the next chapter, the research data of the study will be presented.

- Chapter 7 - Findings

"Students can escape bad teaching, but they can't escape bad assessment."

(David Boud, 1995, p. 35)

7.1. Introduction

Chapter seven presents the findings of the study organized according to the research questions (see Section 6.6) they intend to answer. The participants' demographics are presented first to provide an overview of the background of the study. A description of how the researcher worked to analyze the data obtained during the study follows. The researcher attempts a triangulation of the information and interpretation of the data to explore the PA issues from all feasible perspectives and aid in credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability of the current study (Mackey et al., 2012). Then, the researcher discusses the findings of the current study organized according to the research questions they intend to answer. The discussion of the findings explains how the current study relates to previous research, explores whether it filled gaps in the existing literature and highlights its contribution. In terms of the discussion of the findings, the researcher interprets all data to reach conclusions as reliable and valid as possible. Finally, the limitations of the current study are also discussed and a summary of the findings and the discussion is provided.

7.2. Participant demographics

The sample consisted of 200 intermediate EFL students (volunteers) (B1 according to the CFR scale) at four State Institutes of Further Education in Nicosia, Cyprus. The absolute frequency (n) and the relative frequency of the sample characteristics (%) are presented in Table 7.

There were more female (n=118) than male (n=82) students in the participant pool as more girls than boys were enrolled in the participating Institutes at the intermediate level. Based on students' pre-test scores (M=11.73 in the control groups and M=10.37 in the experimental groups), it can be assumed that the

participating EFL students (Table 7) can be characterized as medium- towards low-achievers in the informal letter they had to write as a pre- and post-test. Students' low performance in tests is an issue of major concern (see Section 5.2) for EFL teachers, students and the Cypriot Ministry of Education (Meletiadou, 2012, 2013; Meletiadou & Tsagari, 2013; Tsagari & Meletiadou, 2015). Consequently, it would be interesting to explore whether PA can help these learners improve their writing skills.

	Students	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	82	41%
	Female	118	59%
Class rank (out of 20)	High-achievers (14-20)	15	7.5%
	Medium-achievers (7-13)	118	59%
	Low-achievers (0-6)	67	33.5%

Table 7: Characteristics of the participating students (N=200)

Twenty EFL teachers also took part in the current study, and their demographic information is presented in Table 8 based on the PA questionnaire (Appendix VIII). Our sample consisted of teachers who, in their majority, were 30-39-year-old females. They had learnt English as a FL, held both a B.A. and an M.A and had 7-10 years of experience. The Ministry of Education employs highly experienced EFL teachers to work at the State Institutes. It was interesting to see that there were no males in our sample, since EFL teaching is a female-dominated profession, and that most teachers had acquired English as a foreign language. Cyprus is after all, a country where English is widely spoken and used in everyday communication (see Sections 1.1, 2.2 and 2.3). It was also surprising to see that most teachers in our sample had an M.A. either in TEFL or TESOL. Teachers who work at the public Junior and Senior high schools do not possess post-graduate degrees as they are much older. Moreover, having a post graduate degree is not a requirement for employment at the Cypriot State Junior and Senior high schools. Taking into consideration the fact that few studies have examined teachers' attitudes towards using PA (Yu et al., 2013), this study aimed at presenting teachers' point of view when PA is used in the EFL classroom to enhance learning.

Measure and items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	0	0%
Female	20	100%
Age		
20-29	2	10%
30-39	16	80%
40-49	1	5%
50+	1	5%
English		
L1	2	10%
L2	2	10%
EFL	18	90%
Experience		
1-3 years	2	10%
4-6 years	12	60%
7-10 years	2	10%
11-14 years	2	10%
15 and above	2	10%
Educational qualifications		
B.A.	2	10%
M.A.	18	90%
PhD	-	-
Previous experience at B1 level (CEFR)		
Yes	18	90%
No	2	10%

Table 8: Characteristics of the participating teachers (N=20)

The next section presents the data analysis and the discussion of the findings taking into consideration the four research questions of the study.

7.3. Impact of PA on students' writing performance

The first research question explored the way PA influences students' writing performance based on students' marks.

Paired Samples Statistics									
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Control groups	Post-test	11.73	100	3.01	.30				
	Pre-test	11.59	100	3.5	.35				
Exp. groups	Post-test	13.38	100	2.95	.29				
	Pre-test	10.37	100	3.22	.32				
Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.				
					Lower	Upper			
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. Groups	3.01	3.65	.000	2.28	3.73	8.24	99	.000
	Control groups	.14	3.32	.33	-.51	.79	.42	99	.674

* Exp.: Experimental

Table 9 Descriptive data and paired findings for both groups

Paired T-tests were performed to explore whether students in the control (n=100 students) and the experimental groups (n=100 students) improved their writing performance in their pre- and post-test scores.

On average, control group students performed slightly better in the post-test (M=11.73, SD=3.01) in comparison to the pre-test (M=11.59, SD=3.5). However, this difference was not statistically significant $t(99)=-.42$, $p=.674 >.0005$ (Table 9). This finding implied that control group students did not improve their writing performance by receiving only teacher feedback during a full school year.

However, the findings for experimental group students revealed that, on average, experimental group students improved their writing performance by three points (out of 20). For example, the researcher compared their pre-test (M=10.37, SD=3.22) to the post-test scores (M=13.38, SD=2.95). This difference was statistically significant $t(99) = 8.24$, $p = .000 <.0005$ (Table 9). This finding suggested that students who use PA together with TA showed positive improvement. This was also confirmed by previous research (Gielen et al., 2015a; Panadero et al., 2013b; Yu et al., 2013) which indicated that the PA improved significantly the quality of learners' end product from draft to final version.

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	13.38	2.95	.29
Control	100	11.59	3.50	.35
Independent Samples Test				
			W. I.	
			E. V. A.	E.V.N.A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	6.56	
		Sig.	.011	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	3.90	3.90
		df	198	198
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	1.79	1.79
		Std. Error Difference	.45	.45
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	.886	.885
		Upper	2.693	2.694

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A.: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A.: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 10: Descriptive data and paired findings for the post-test scores

An independent t-test was also performed to explore differences between the post-test scores of both experimental and control groups. On average, in the post-test, experimental group students (M=13.38, SD=2.95) outperformed control group students (M=11.73, SD=3.01). This difference was statistically significant $t(99)=3.90$, $p=.000$ (Table 10). This highlights the fact that when PA and TA were used together, students improved their writing performance.

Paired t-tests were also performed to explore how improvement spread across the five categories (content, organization, mechanics, focus, vocabulary and language use). Students were assigned an analytical score per category (Appendix IV). The aim was to further explore which aspect(s) of their writing performance experimental group students improved.

Mechanics

Paired t-tests of the pre- vs post-tests scores control group students received for mechanics revealed that there was no improvement, which was statistically significant, for mechanics $t(99)=.00$, $p=1.000>.0005$ (Table 11).

Paired Samples Statistics										
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
Control groups	Post-test	2.13	100	.63	.063					
	Pre-test	2.13	100	.81	.081					
Exp. groups	Post-test	2.34	100	.68	.068					
	Pre-test	1.73	100	.76	.076					
Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.					
					Lower	Upper				
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. Groups	.61	.85	.08	.44	.77	7.16	99	.000	
	Control groups	.00	.80	.08	-.15	.15	.00	99	1.000	

* C. I. D: Confidence Interval of the Difference, S 2-t: Significance (2-tailed), Exp.: Experimental

Table 11: Descriptive data and paired findings for both groups (mechanics)

The same paired t-tests were performed for experimental groups as well. They revealed that there was improvement, which was statistically significant, for mechanics $t(99)=7.16$, $p=.000<.0005$ (Table 11). On average, experimental group students improved their writing performance by .6 out of four marks that students received for mechanics, while control group students could not improve their writing performance at all since they received exactly the same marks in their pre- and post-test. This difference clearly indicates that PA can have a direct impact on EFL students' mastery of writing mechanics.

Organization

Paired t-tests of the post- vs pre-tests scores control group students received for organization revealed that there was no improvement which was statistically significant for organization $t(99)=.42$, $p=.675>.0005$ (Table 12).

Paired Samples Statistics									
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Control groups	Post-test	2.42	100	.76	.07				
	Pre-test	2.38	100	.77	.07				
Exp. Groups	Post-test	2.75	100	.71	.072				
	Pre-test	2.24	100	.72	.071				
Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.				
					Lower	Upper			
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. groups	.61	.85	.08	.44	.77	7.16	99	.000
	Control groups	.04	.95	.95	-.14	.22	.42	99	.675

* C. I. D: Confidence Interval of the Difference, S 2-t: Significance (2-tailed), Exp.: Experimental

Table 12: Descriptive data and paired findings for both groups (organization)

The same paired t-tests were performed for the experimental groups. They revealed that there was improvement which was statistically significant for organization $t(99)=5.5$, $p=.000<.0005$ (Table 12). On average, control group students improved their writing performance in the post-test only by .04 points out of 4, while experimental group students improved their writing performance by .51 points. The difference between the experimental and the control groups' writing performance was significant and clearly indicates that the use of PA can cognitively impact how students organize their thoughts as they write.

Focus

Paired t-tests of the post- vs pre-test scores control group students received for focus revealed that there was no improvement, which was statistically significant, for focus $t(99)=2.41$, $p=.018>.0005$ (Table 13).

Paired Samples Statistics									
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Control groups	Post-test	2.21	100	.84	.084				
	Pre-test	2.44	100	.85	.085				
Exp. Groups	Post-test	2.68	100	.72	.072				
	Pre-test	2.11	100	.76	.076				
Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.				
					Lower	Upper			
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. groups	.57	.92	.09	.38	.75	6.16	99	.000
	Control groups	.23	.95	.09	.04	.41	2.41	99	.018

* C. I. D: Confidence Interval of the Difference, S 2-t: Significance (2-tailed), Exp.: Experimental

Table 13: Descriptive data and paired findings for both group (focus)

The same paired t-tests were performed for the experimental groups. They revealed that there was improvement, which was statistically significant, for focus

$t(99)=6.16$, $p=.000<.0005$ (Table 13). On average, control group students deteriorated their writing performance by .23 points, while experimental group students improved their writing performance by .57 points. This significant difference between the experimental and control groups post-vs pre-test scores indicates that students could comprehensively understand the texts as a whole, including the schematic structure and linguistic features of the genre in general. Moreover, they could write better essays in terms of this aspect when they were provided with PA together with TA.

Content

Paired t-tests of the post- vs pre-test scores control group students received for content revealed that there was no improvement, which was statistically significant, for content $t(99)=6.16$, $p=.000>.0005$ (Table).

Paired Samples Statistics										
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
Control groups	Post-test	2.42	100	.76	.076					
	Pre-test	2.38	100	.77	.077					
Exp. Groups	Post-test	2.92	100	.69	.06					
	Pre-test	2.34	100	.71	.07					
Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.					
					Lower	Upper				
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. groups	.58	.81	.08	.41	.74	7.08	99	.000	
	Control groups	.57	.92	.09	.38	.75	6.16	99	.000	

* C. I. D: Confidence Interval of the Difference, S 2-t: Significance (2-tailed), Exp.: Experimental

Table 14: Descriptive data and paired findings for both groups (content)

The same paired t-tests were performed for the experimental groups. They revealed that there was improvement, which was statistically significant, for content $t(99)=7.08$, $p=.000<.0005$ (Table 14). On average, control group students improved their writing performance by .04 points, while experimental group students improved their performance by .58 points. This difference clearly indicates that the use of PA led to an improved performance in the content domain.

Vocabulary and language use

Paired t-tests of the post- vs pre-tests scores experimental group students received for vocabulary and language use revealed that there was no

improvement, which was statistically significant, for vocabulary and language use $t(99)=-.420, p=.675>.0005$.

Paired Samples Statistics										
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
Control groups	Post-test	2.42	100	.76	.076					
	Pre-test	2.38	100	.77	.077					
Exp. Groups	Post-test	2.73	100	.67	.06					
	Pre-test	2.00	100	.81	.08					
Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	S 2-t	
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% C. I. D.					
					Lower	Upper				
Post- vs pre-test	Exp. groups	.73	.90	.08	.55	.91	8.03	99	.000	
	Control groups	.04	.95	.09	-.14	.22	-.42	99	.675	

* C. I. D: Confidence Interval of the Difference, S 2-t: Significance (2-tailed), Exp.: Experimental

Table 15: Descriptive data and paired findings for both groups (vocabulary and language use)

The same paired t-tests were performed for the experimental groups. They revealed that there was improvement, which was statistically significant, for vocabulary and language use $t(99)=8.03, p=.000<.0005$ (Table 15). On average, control group students improved their writing performance by .04 points, while experimental group students improved their writing performance by .73 points. This difference shows that PA had a positive effect on students' performance in the vocabulary and language use domain which confirms previous research (Plutsky & Wilson, 2004). Various measures of text improvement have been employed in different studies. Some considered improved grammar as characteristics of enhanced text quality (Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman, 1989; Celce-Murcia, 1992).

Independent sample t-tests for content

Independent samples t-tests were also performed to determine whether the differences between the pre-vs post-tests among the experimental and the control groups were statistically significant. The independent samples t-test for content indicated that PA, in combination with TA, can improve the writing performance of intermediate EFL students, with regard to content, compared to students who only receive TA, $t(99)=4.26, p=.000$ (Table 16).

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	.58	.819	.082
Control	100	.05	.936	.094
Independent Samples Test				
			Wr. I.	
			E. V. A.	E. V. N. A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	.000	
		Sig.	.985	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	4.26	4.26
		df	198	194.55
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	.53	.53
		Std. Error Difference	.12	.12
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	.28	.77
		Upper	.28	.77

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 16: Descriptive data and independent sample tests findings for the experimental groups for content

Experimental group students improved the content of their essays by .53 out of 4 marks. This finding corroborates previous research (Yang et al., 2006), since Berg's (1998) study also depicted a positive effect of peer review on ESL students' essay content.

Independent sample t-tests for focus

The independent sample t-test for focus indicated that PA, in combination with TA, can improve intermediate EFL students' writing performance in the domain of focus compared to students who only receive TA, $t(99)=6.03$, $p=.000$ (Table 17).

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	.57	.92	.092
Control	100	-.23	.95	.095
Independent Samples Test				
			Wr. I.	
			E. V. A.	E. V. N. A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	.101	
		Sig.	.752	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	6.03	6.03
		df	198	197.82
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	.8	.8
		Std. Error Difference	.13	.13
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	.53	.53
		Upper	1.06	1.06

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 17: Descriptive data and independent sample tests findings for the experimental groups for focus

On average, experimental group students outperformed control group students by .8 marks out of four in terms of focus. This finding clearly shows that PA successfully raised students' awareness of the context, the reader and the interpretation of the writer's intended meaning as experimental group students conformed more to the conventions of the genre in hand. The deliberate focus on genres, which were included in the PA form, helped learners become more aware of the requirements of the different genres and take them more seriously into consideration when writing their essays.

Independent sample t-tests for organization

The independent samples t-test for organization indicated that PA, when used together with TA, can improve the writing performance of intermediate EFL students in terms of organization concerned compared to students who only receive TA, $t(99)=4.13$, $p=.000$ (Table 18).

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	.51	.92	.093
Control	100	-.04	.95	.095
Independent Samples Test				
			Wr. I.	
			E. V. A.	E. V. N. A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	.657	
		Sig.	.419	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	4.13	4.13
		df	198	197.84
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	.55	.55
		Std. Error Difference	.13	.13
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	.28	.28
		Upper	.81	.81

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 18: Descriptive data and independent sample tests findings for the experimental groups for organization

Experimental group students outperformed control group students by .47 out of four regarding organization in the post-test. Previous studies also deemed organization of information as an important criterion in determining text quality. They have shown that PA can improve students' organizational skills in writing (Anson, 1989; Flower, 1979; Nystrand, 1986; Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993; Sato, 1991).

Independent sample t-tests for vocabulary and language use

The independent samples t-test for vocabulary and language use indicated that PA, in combination with TA, can improve the writing performance of intermediate EFL students in terms of vocabulary and language use compared to students who only received TA, $t(99)=6.61$, $p=.000$ (Table 19).

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	.73	.9	.091
Control	100	-.03	.7	.070
Independent Samples Test				
			Wr. I.	
			E. V. A.	E. V. N. A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	12.51	
		Sig.	.001	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	6.61	6.61
		df	198	186.25
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	.76	.76
		Std. Error Difference	.11	.11
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	.53	.53
		Upper	.98	.98

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 19: Descriptive data and independent sample tests findings for the experimental groups for vocabulary and language use

On average, experimental group students improved their writing performance by .7 out of 4 marks they received for vocabulary and language use more than control group students. Previous research (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009b) has also indicated that intermediate EFL students improved significantly in organization, cohesion, and vocabulary from pre-test to post-test.

Independent sample t-tests for mechanics

The independent samples t-test for mechanics indicated that PA, when used in combination with TA, can improve intermediate EFL students' writing performance in terms of as mechanics compared to students who only receive TA, $t(99)=5.20$, $p=.000$ (Table 20).

Group Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	.61	.85	.085
Control	100	.00	.80	.080
Independent Samples Test				
			Wr. I.	
			Eq. V. A.	Eq. V. N. A.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		F	5.34	
		Sig.	.022	
t-test for Equality of Means		T	5.20	5.20
		df	198	197.35
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		Mean Difference	.61	.61
		Std. Error Difference	.13	.13
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	.37	.37
		Upper	.84	.84

*Wr. I.: writing improvement, Eq. V. A: equal variances assumed, E.V. N. A: Equal variances not assumed.

Table 20: Descriptive data and independent sample tests findings for the experimental groups for mechanics

This finding contradicts previous research indicating that there aren't any significant gains for EFL students in mechanics when PA is used (Lundstrom et al., 2009b). It clearly indicates that PA can have a positive impact on students' writing by helping them to proofread their work more carefully based on their peers' comments.

One way-Manova tests for the experimental groups (prior achievement and genre)

One way Manova tests were also conducted to show whether improvement in the experimental group students' writing performance was affected by genre or school attainment (high: 16-20, medium: 10-15, low: 1-9 out of 20). Tests showed that there was no statistically significant difference in writing performance according to genre $f(94)=.982$, $p=.88 >.0005$ (Table 21). However, there was significant difference depending on students' prior achievement $f(186)=.663$, $p=.000 <.0005$, partial $\eta^2=0.18$ (Table 21).

Multivariate Tests for genre								
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power b
Wilks' Lambda	.982	.352a	5.000	94.000	.880	.018	1.761	.136
Multivariate Tests for prior achievement								
Wilks' Lambda	.663	4.251a	10.000	186.000	.000	.186	42.509	.998
a. Exact statistic		b. Computed using alpha=.05						
Multiple Comparisons								
Tukey HSD								
	Prior achievement	Mean difference	Std. Error	Sig.				
Dependent Variable mechanics	Excellent-medium	-.93*	.341	.020				
	Excellent-low	-1.67*	.343	.000				
	Medium-excellent	.93*	.341	.020				
	Medium-low	-.73*	.150	.000				
	Low-excellent	1.67*	.343	.000				
	Low-medium	.73*	.150	.000				
Dependent Variable Focus	Excellent-medium	-.27	.401	.773				
	Excellent-low	-.98*	.404	.046				
	Medium-excellent	.27	.401	.773				
	Medium-low	-.70*	.176	.000				
	Low-excellent	.98*	.404	.046				
	Low-medium	.70*	.176	.000				
Dependent Variable Organization	Excellent-medium	-.47	.410	.481				
	Excellent-low	-1.06*	.413	.030				
	Medium-excellent	.47	.410	.481				
	Medium-low	-.59*	.180	.004				
	Low-excellent	1.06*	.413	.030				
	Low-medium	.59*	.180	.004				
Dependent Variable Content	Excellent-medium	-.77	.349	.074				
	Excellent-low	-1.33*	.352	.001				
	Medium-excellent	.77	.349	.074				
	Medium-low	-.56*	.153	.001				
	Low-excellent	1.33*	.352	.001				
	Low-medium	.56*	.153	.001				
Dependent Variable Vocabulary	Excellent-medium	-.69	.392	.189				
	Excellent-low	-1.31*	.395	.004				
	Medium-excellent	.69	.392	.189				
	Medium-low	-.62*	.172	.001				
	Low-excellent	1.31*	.395	.004				
	Low-medium	.62*	.172	.001				

Based on observed means
The error term is Mean Square(Error)=.733
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 21: One way-Manova findings (Multivariate tests) for the experimental groups (prior achievement and genre)

More specifically, findings from the one way-Manova tests showed that mean scores for students were statistically significant between high- (16-20 marks out of 20) and low-achievers (1-9 marks out of 20), medium- (10-15 marks out of 20) and low-achievers, and low and medium-achievers regarding all categories, ($p < 0,5$), but the differences were more significant for mechanics ($p = .000$) and content ($p = .001$). Less statistically significant were differences between excellent and low-achievers regarding focus ($p = .046$) and organization ($p = .030$). These clearly indicate that low-achievers got more benefits than medium-achievers, and even more than high-achievers (Table 21). Moreover, there were contradicting findings from teachers' interviews and questionnaires which suggested that proficient

students benefited more from this procedure since low-achievers were not so eager to participate in PA (see Table 31).

To sum up, the findings indicated that the experimental groups improved their writing performance by 3 marks out of 20 (Table 9), a statistically significant finding, while the control groups improved their marks by .14 (Table 9). Finally, experimental group students improved their writing performance by at least half a mark out of 4 for each one of the categories included in the PA rubric that is content (Table 14), organization (Table 12), vocabulary and language use (Table 16), mechanics (Table 11) and focus (Table 13). These findings reveal that students, who used PA in their writing classes, received multiple benefits in all domains included in the EFL essay rubrics. Consequently, if this PA-related learning can be of benefit in terms of students' final summative assessment, it is surely a worthwhile exercise. As previously mentioned (see sections 2.3 and 2.6), educational authorities, parents, teachers, and students look forward to any kind of improvement in students' writing skills.

Discussion

Data related to the first research question revealed that intermediate adolescent EFL students, who use PA throughout a school year, can improve their writing performance (also in Kuo, 2015; Oluseyi, 2014; Park & Williams, 2016). Students increased the overall marks they got on a written assignment, by three marks out of twenty (see Table 9) in a year, although they had very little experience of PA and received basic training. Introduction of PA in EFL classes from an early age may have improved students' writing performance even more. Furthermore, this finding contradicts previous research stating that peer feedback is not as effective as teacher feedback in terms of enhancing general L2 writing self-efficacy (Ruegg, 2014).

Findings from the paired t-tests and the independent sample t-tests (see Tables 9 and 10) also highlight the fact that evaluating peers' work as well as making reflections based on peers' comments helped these students improve their learning outcomes. Paired t-tests, which were performed to explore students' writing performance by comparing pre- and post-test scores, indicated that there

was statistically significant improvement in students' writing performance regarding their total scores (see Tables 9 and 10). Moreover, the analytic scores that students received for all aspects of the PA rubric that is: mechanics, content, organization, focus, and vocabulary and language use (see Tables 11-20) were also significantly improved.

Consequently, the positive impact that PA can have on all aspects of students' writing should be taken into consideration by EFL teachers who struggle to help their students improve their writing performance. Such a result conforms to what has been reported by previous studies (Chaudron, 1983; Olson, 1990; Plutsky & Wilson, 2004), namely that PA can engage students in making reflections when they play the role of tutor as well as tutee (Chen, Wei, Wu & Uden, 2009). Finally, few studies (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel, & Van Merriënboer, 2002b) adopt a quasi-experimental approach to study the impact of instructional interventions on PA effectiveness and learning. Previous studies rely only on marks to make claims for the potential benefits of PA. Moreover, the absence of a control group has been the main weakness of longitudinal studies on feedback in writing (Bitchener et al., 2012). The current study relies not only on marks but on the analysis of students' scripts to confirm that PA has a positive impact on students' writing performance. It uses both control and experimental groups in a semi-experimental design to explore in what aspects and to what extent PA affects intermediate EFL students' performance.

For many instructors, the most viable alternative to teacher feedback would be peer feedback, which has become almost as common as teacher feedback in writing classes (Ruegg, 2015). The current study is one of the few that explores the potential benefits of using PA combined with TA on EFL students' writing skills. Peers and the teacher tend to focus on different aspects of writing, when asked to provide feedback, leading to potential differences in improvement in students' writing. For example, it has been suggested that teachers may focus on surface-level issues, while peers may attend more to meaning-level issues (Connor et al., 1994; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Yang et al., 2006). In the current study, to determine whether differences in the types of feedback given by peers and the teacher may have led to significant differences in improvement in writing ability,

the experimental groups received both TA and PA. By contrast, the control groups received only TA, as is the norm with adolescent EFL learners in Cyprus and in other countries as well. The aim was to ensure that the main difference among the control and the experimental groups in the current study was the use of PA. As a result, the improvement that was detected in the experimental groups' writing performance can be attributed to the use of this innovative approach with these intermediate EFL students.

A further positive aspect of the PA procedure employed in the current study was the use of the process approach which encouraged extended practice in writing and assisted teachers in developing learners' writing skills effectively (Curtis, 2001; Graham et al., 2013). It helped learners realize that writing, however difficult it may be, is also manageable and even pleasant (Panou, 2006: 69) if students stop focusing on the end product and their grade (see Section 7.5).

However, the PA form that was used in this study was a rather controlled form of rubric. Students had to simply respond to this form by ticking the appropriate box instead of providing more detailed comments and suggestions for further research. This would be more helpful for the student-assessee but students were too inexperienced to provide constructive feedback in the form of comments. More exposure was deemed necessary by the researcher before students could provide more feedback in the form of comments and/or suggestions.

This study also supports studies which suggest that students may ignore or misuse teacher commentary when revising drafts and thus profit when they get extra (peer) feedback (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1995, 1997). In particular, PA is seen by many researchers as a way of giving more control and autonomy to students. It involves them actively in the feedback process as opposed to a passive reliance on teacher's feedback to 'fix' up their writing (also in Mendonca et al., 1994). The findings of this study confirmed that PA can improve EFL learners' writing skills by allowing them to assume responsibility for others' and their own learning, which is in line with previous research (Olson, 1990; Plutsky et al., 2004; van den Berg, Admiraal, & Pilot, 2006a).

The current study also refutes the claim that PA is only suitable for adult learners (Harlen, 2007). The adolescent participants of the present study were able not only to provide marks for their peers, but also to improve the marks they got in their own essays by getting involved in the practice of PA and gaining insight in their peers' work. This allowed them to reflect on their own work and eventually improve it. Pienemann's (1989) theory of the order of acquisition illustrates that learners can only deal with feedback for which they are developmentally ready. Indeed, this was one of the reasons why Truscott (1996) first stated that teacher feedback was ineffective. A number of writers have recommended that teachers tailor their feedback to each learner's needs (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Goldstein, 2004; Hyland, 1996; Storch, 2010). On the other hand, Ferris and West (2002) state that this "sounds challenging and cumbersome for teachers". This study has demonstrated a way in which feedback can be individualized for each learner by combining PA, which is more student-friendly, and TA, which is considered more accurate.

An important finding that came out from this study was that students in the experimental groups managed to improve their writing performance in all different aspects included in their PA rubric, while the control groups did not manage to improve their writing performance in any of them. Students in the experimental groups improved their vocabulary more, than any other aspect of writing (Table 16, $t=8.03$). This indicates that PA has a positive impact on different aspects of students' writing performance. Students read their peers' essays and learnt new words which they then used in their own essays. Learners also improved the content of their essays (Table 14, $t=7.08$). They possibly got new ideas from their peers' essays and added new content since they had the chance to write a second draft. Several studies have investigated the revisions made by learners after receiving PA or TA and found that PA leads to more meaning-level revisions, while TA leads to more surface-level revisions (Connor et al., 1994; Hedgcock et al., 1992; Yang et al., 2006).

In their study, Khaliq et al. (2015) conclude that students improved their organization more than other writing components (content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics of their essays) after the application of peer feedback. Diab (2011)

claims that the group that practised peer feedback showed significant improvements of their drafts regarding content and organization of ideas, which is included in global writing aspects. Diab (2011) and Doolittle (2014) further showed that there are positive effects of peer feedback, namely the improvement of writers' drafts concerning global issues, which include composition skills, organization, and ideas. However, none of these studies have showed that students managed to improve almost all aspects of their writing performance.

In addition, other researchers (Choi, 2013; Hu et al., 2010; Leki, 1990; Storch, 2004; Ting et al., 2010b) found that students, using peer feedback mostly concentrate on surface level errors, i.e. grammatical and spelling mistakes, instead of deep or semantic level issues, i.e. content. In the current study, results have been different. The impact of peer feedback is detected more on deep and semantic level issues than surface level issues (see Table 24 and Section 7.4). According to the literature (Axelsson, 2014; Xu, 2007), students, without training, tend to focus largely on local issues. Zhao (2010) conducted a study on 18 English L2 learners in China which showed that pupils incorporated more teacher feedback into their second drafts. However, he stressed that peer feedback might ultimately lead to more language improvement, because students would acquire more knowledge from their peers, in that they understood peer feedback better than teacher feedback.

Students, who participated in the current study, also managed to upgrade the mechanics of their essays (Table 11, $t=7.16$) supporting previous research (Yaghoubi & Mobin, 2015). Students had the opportunity to look back to their texts, edit and proofread their work more carefully after providing feedback to their peers. Finally, students enhanced aspects of their essays related to focus (Table 13, $t=6.16$). They developed their meta-cognitive skills since they were asked to improve their work taking into consideration two kinds of feedback. Students could also refine their language use and organizational skills (Table 12, $t=7.16$) less than the other aspects of their writing. Although students looked at their work once more, they did not manage to improve their use of grammar and their organizational skills as it takes more time and effort to improve these aspects of writing. There has been a debate about whether learners can attend to both

language form and content at the same time (Raimes, 1983). However, a meta-analysis of research (Biber, Nekrasova, & Horn, 2011; Hesse-Biber et al., 2011) found that a combined focus on both language form and content leads to greater gains than either focus on form or focus on content alone. This was also confirmed by the current study which showed that feedback on both form and content can result in improving all aspects of writing (Tables 23 and 24).

When comparing students' performance in the post-test, it is interesting to note that experimental group students improved their performance more in vocabulary and language use (Table 19, $t=6.61$) and focus (Table 17, $t=6.03$) than in other aspects of writing. This finding indicates that students who used PA enriched their vocabulary and comprehended even better the requirements of the specific genre (informal letter in our case). This is also confirmed by previous research conducted by Subaşı (2014) who found out that trained students can provide specific and relevant feedback on global features of writing, such as genre, which in turn may result in better quality in their revised drafts and other studies (Çiftçi & Çöker, 2011; Min, 2006; Peng, 2010; Wakabayashi, 2013; Wang & Han, 2013; Yurdabakan, 2012).

Students could also improve the writing mechanics (Table 20, $t=5.20$), content (Table 16, $t=4.26$), and organization (Table 18, $t=4.13$) of their essays slightly less than other aspects. Adolescent intermediate EFL students, who were inexperienced in PA, needed more time and exposure to this approach to improve these aspects of their writing performance. Experimental group students used PA for a few months in only three types of essays.

Moreover, much of the literature on PA and feedback does not appear to explicitly recognize differences in student demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other factors (McLeay et al., 2014). Exceptions include Langan et al. (2005), who examined a number of factors that may change the distribution of marks allocated through PA including gender and higher education background. Gender differences have also been identified in a study by van Zundert et al. (2010). In particular, there appears to be a gap in the literature in terms of research that

examines and assesses the influence that demographic factors, such as gender, may have on students' perceptions of PA and/or peer feedback.

One surprising finding of this study was that students' performance, as this was indicated by their mean scores in the pre- and post-tests, was not affected by gender (Table 21). Both girls and boys reaped similar benefits, which was not detected in any previous studies where PA was implemented in EFL classes of adolescent learners. This was also confirmed by previous research conducted on adult university students (Behjat & Yamini, 2012). However, students' performance was affected by prior achievement (Table 21) confirming previous research (Landry et al., 2015). Low-achievers gained more benefits probably because high-achievers cannot improve their marks as much as low-achievers (also in Zi-gang, 2011). Proficient students are often quite knowledgeable and can therefore gain less benefits at the cognitive level than weak students.

To sum up, the findings of this study indicated that the use of PA together with TA can help adolescent EFL students improve their writing performance in all aspects by developing their higher order thinking skills. Weak students also seemed to gain more from this procedure as there was more room for improvement in their case. These findings were based on students' writing performance as this was indicated by students' marks in the pre- and post-test to determine whether students improved their writing performance in any of the five aspects included in the rubric. The next section, will discuss the impact of PA on adolescent students' writing quality to further explore what kind of benefits PA provides EFL learners.

The next section is going to discuss the findings related to the first research question and discuss them in light of previous research.

7.4. Influence of PA on students' writing quality

The second research question investigated the kind of impact that PA may have on students' writing quality by analyzing students' texts. Text analyses were conducted to determine whether using PA can improve students' essays in five aspects which are considered to be the best measures of writing quality in the literature.

An interrater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among raters (the researcher and the external assessor who conducted text analysis). The kappa statistic is frequently used to test interrater reliability (McHugh, 2012). The interrater reliability was found to be $Kappa=.767$ with $p<.001$. This is considered a good level of agreement according to Dörnyei et al. (2009). It implies that the marks provided by the researcher were reliable enough to be used to show whether PA had any effect on students' writing quality.

One way Manova was performed to explore whether the use of PA had any impact, which was statistically significant, on the four indicators that are related to writing quality (Table 22). The analysis suggested that the difference in the writing quality among experimental and control groups, in terms of the four indicators of writing quality, was statistically significant for the measures mentioned above $F(10)=3.461$, $p<.005$; Wilk's $\Lambda=.845$, partial $\eta^2=.16$.

Multivariate Tests								
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df.	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^b
Wilks' Lambda	.845	3.461 ^a	10.000	189	.000	.155	34.613	.991
a. Exact statistic								
b. Computed using alpha=.05								

Table 22: One way Manova analysis of all indicators of writing quality

Tests between subjects, which determine how the dependent variables differ from the independent variable (DeCoster, 2006), indicated that the use of PA had a statistically significant effect on learners' writing performance: (a) regarding lexical complexity ($F=9.838$, $p=.002<.5$, $\eta^2=.47$); (b) on all indicators of accuracy, that is error-free T-units ($F=5.061$, $p=.026<.5$, $\eta^2=.025$), error-free T-units per T-unit ($F=4.264$, $p=.040<.5$, $\eta^2=.021$); (c) on some aspects of grammatical complexity, that is clause per T-unit ($F=9.838$, $p=.002<.5$, $\eta^2=.047$), and dependent clause per T-unit ($F=2.276$, $p=.133<.5$, $\eta^2=.011$), (d) on some aspects of fluency, that is text length (TL) ($F=4.339$, $p=.039<.5$, $\eta^2=.021$) and words per T-unit ($F=1.062$, $p=.304<.5$, $\eta^2=.005$). However, PA did not have a significant impact on one aspect of learners' grammatical complexity, that is on dependent clauses per T-unit ($F=.279$, $p=.598>.5$, $\eta^2=.001$) and on some aspects of fluency, that is words per

error-free T-unit ($F=.103$, $p=.748>.5$, $\eta^2=.001$) and words per clause ($F=.232$, $p=.630>.5$, $\eta^2=.001$).

Dependent variables	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Accuracy (errors per T-unit)	5.608	.019	.028	.654
Accuracy (error-free T-units)	5.061	.026	.025	.610
Accuracy (error-free T-units per T-unit)	4.264	.040	.021	.538
Lexical complexity (WT/2W)	9.838	.002	.047	.877
Grammatical complexity (Dependent clauses per T-unit)	.279	.598	.001	.082
Grammatical Complexity (clause per T-unit)	9.838	.002	.47	.877
Grammatical complexity (Dependent clauses per clause)	2.276	.133	.011	.324
Fluency (text length)	4.339	.039	.021	.545
Fluency (words per T-unit)	1.062	.304	.005	.176
Fluency (words per error-free T-unit)	.103	.748	.001	.062
Fluency (words per clause)	.232	.630	.001	.077

Table 23: Tests between subjects findings for all dependent variables

This finding corroborates previous research which indicates that students focused mainly on surface-level aspects when doing their revisions (Ting & Qian, 2010). This led to slight improvement in fluency, significant improvement in accuracy, but no significant improvement in grammatical or lexical complexity. This finding also resonates with Paulus's (1999) result that surface changes occupied much higher percentages than meaning changes did. However, it contradicts Miao et al. (2006b) who claim that due to students' perception of their low linguistic abilities, peer-initiated revisions were concerned less with surface changes.

To fully understand the impact of PA on students' writing performance, the effect size for the total scores was calculated. It was moderately significant (Cohen's $d=.59$ and $r=.28$). The effect size for each one of the categories was also calculated and it was: (a) large for the analytic score of content (Cohen's $d=.81$ and $r=.37$); (b) medium for organization (Cohen's $d=.49$ and $r=.24$), vocabulary and language use (Cohen's $d=.67$ and $r=.31$), focus (Cohen's $d=.69$ and $r=.32$), lexical complexity (Cohen's $d=.44$ and $r=.21$), and one aspect of grammatical complexity (ICT: Cohen's $d=.45$ and $r=.22$); (c) low for mechanics (Cohen's $d=.28$ and $r=.13$), accuracy (Cohen's $d=.20$ and $r=.13$), one aspect of fluency (TL: Cohen's $d=.29$ and $r=.14$), and one aspect of grammatical complexity (Cohen's $d=.22$ and $r=.11$), and (d) no effect for one aspect of grammatical complexity (DCT: Cohen's $d=.07$ and $r=.03$) and almost all aspects of fluency (WT: Cohen's $d=.14$ and $r=.07$, WEFT: Cohen's $d=.044$ and $r=.022$, WC: Cohen's $d=.064$ and $r=.032$).

Effect size of various indicators	Cohen's d	Effect-size r
Total score	.59	.28
Analytic score – Mechanics	.28	.13
Analytic score – Organization	.49	.24
Analytic score – Content	.81	.37
Analytic score - Vocabulary and language use	.67	.31
Analytic score – Focus	.69	.32
Accuracy – EFTT (Error-free T-Units per T-Unit)	.20	.13
Accuracy – ET (Error-free T-Units)	.33	.16
Lexical complexity	.44	.21
Grammatical complexity – DCT (Dependent clauses per T-Unit)	.07	.03
Grammatical complexity – DCC (Dependent clauses per clause)	.22	.11
Grammatical Complexity – ICT (Independent clauses per T-Unit)	.45	.22
Fluency – WT (words per T-Unit)	.14	.07
Fluency – WEFT (Words per error-free T-unit)	.044	.022
Fluency – WC (Words per clauses)	.064	.032
Fluency – TL (Text - Length)	.29	.14

Table 24: Effects sizes for all indicators of writing quality

To sum up, findings indicate that experimental group students improved their writing performance in all aspects related to total and analytic scores. The improvement was more significant primarily for content, secondarily for focus and vocabulary and language use, and least of all for organization and mechanics. This indicates that PA helped experimental group students get new ideas, use more sophisticated vocabulary, organize their essays better and finally improve their grammatical and spelling mistakes and their understanding of the different genres. Moreover, the findings indicate that students did not improve their fluency significantly (see Table 24) as this requires more time, training and systematic exposure to PA for a longer time period (also in Hovardas et al., 2014). Experimental group students improved some aspects of grammatical complexity in their essays (see Table 24), but they need more time to develop its more complex aspects (i.e. organization). They improved their accuracy and their lexical complexity (see Table 24), according to the findings from the text analysis, but not to the extent that the findings from teacher's marks had indicated. All in all, PA improved learners' writing performance despite the limited training and lack of previous exposure that these students had to PA (see Section 6.9.2). This contradicts previous research claiming that a lower level of general L2 writing apprehension was evident after peer review (Jahin, 2012).

Discussion

Few studies have explored the impact of PA on students' lexical complexity and grammatical accuracy. Most of them relied on marks rather than text analysis. Zarei and Madhavi (2014) explored the impact of PA on 70 female Iranian students, who were assigned to experimental and control groups, at Safir Institute. A Cambridge English Preliminary Test (PET) was administered to all participants as a pre-test and post-test. Results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the comparison group in terms of both grammatical and lexical writing accuracy. Researchers claimed that Iranian students learnt from their mistakes and performed better when they were assessed by their peers.

Findings from the text analysis of the current study indicated that students improved the writing quality of their drafts predominantly regarding lexical complexity (Table 23, $F=9.83$). That is students managed to increase the number of words they used in their essays considerably. The fact that intermediate EFL students wrote much longer essays is an indicator of increased lexical complexity and overall fluency in writing.

Previous research has established that in timed language production tasks, producing more words is a good indicator of linguistic fluency (Ellis et al., 2005; Ortega, 2003; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). According to Wang, Niu, and Zheng (2000), longer essays generally indicate richer content, more fluent language use, and expressiveness. Writing longer essays also helps build up self-confidence in writing and English learning. Ma (2002) also commented that for EFL learners, writing essays to a considerable length indicates that their writing proficiency has reached a higher level. Therefore, in the current study, the much longer essays produced by the experimental groups indicate that the experimental groups outperformed the control groups in fluency (Tables 23 and 24), a crucial aspect of writing proficiency, confirming previous research (Zhang, 2011).

Soleimani and Rahmanian (2014) also implemented PA in three classes of 30 EFL students in Iran and employed the writing complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) scale of Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998). Results indicated that students benefited from a steady CAF triad improvement and gained more benefits regarding writing

complexity and fluency rather than accuracy. In the current study, students also improved one aspect of grammatical complexity (Table 23, $F=9.83$), that is the use of independent clauses per T-unit. This finding suggests that students generated more sentences. Ho and Duong (2014) also conducted a study using peer feedback with 37 graduate students of Ho Chi Minh City Open University. Students were asked to write different types of paragraphs and essays, working in groups to provide comments on their peers' writing. The results showed that students produced more feedback on local areas, such as grammar using a variety of grammatical structures and correcting their grammatical errors, than on global areas.

However, students in the current study were unable to increase the number of dependent clauses in their essays (Table 23) probably due to difficulties that adolescent intermediate EFL (B1 level at the CERF) students face when handling dependent clauses since they have just learnt how to use them (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010, 2011). Students are still striving with grammar, and it is very difficult to master all aspects of grammatical complexity - especially its more advanced aspects, that is the successful use of dependent clauses. Students in the present study could have improved other aspects of grammatical complexity if they had been involved in PA more frequently and over a longer time frame.

Students also improved all aspects of accuracy (Table 23, $F=9.83$ and $F=4.33$). The number of error-free T-units students produced increased. This finding corresponds with the finding related to students' analytic score on mechanics, and vocabulary and language use (Tables 8, 12 and 21). Taking into consideration the marks provided by an external assessor or students' texts analysis, the fact that students improved their accuracy significantly, after being exposed to PA, is an important finding. It offers a solution to teachers and their weak students who are struggling with accuracy. EFL teachers often seem unable to find a strategy that can help weak students improve their writing skills.

The aforementioned findings are also confirmed by previous research. Trinh and Yen (2013), who investigated the nature of peer feedback and its effects on

learners' writing argumentative essays in a Vietnamese context, reported that giving feedback enhanced the mechanics component of learners' argumentative paragraphs. Jamali and Khonamri (2014) investigated whether peer feedback, as an alternative to teacher feedback, can promote better writing quality and found out that it can be an effective method to enhance the accuracy of EFL writings. Greater exposure to peers' work enables students to view and critique a range of writing styles, techniques, ideas, and abilities, thus encouraging them to learn from both the mistakes and exemplary performance of their peers (Race, 1998). To sum up, the current study contradicts ten studies (Berg, 1999; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Connor et al., 1994; Jones, Garralda, Li, & Lock, 2006; Lundstrom et al., 2009a; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Min, 2006; Paulus, 1999; Stanley, 1992; Villamil et al., 1996) which claim that peer feedback is not effective in enhancing the grammatical accuracy of students' final drafts. It shows that students can improve their accuracy by providing feedback to each other. This sharing of feedback among students helps them develop their cognitive and metacognitive skills allowing them to scaffold and, eventually, become more independent learners. They first reflect on their peers' work, compare it to their own and gradually detect and correct their own mistakes.

However, students did not improve two indicators of fluency (Table 23). They could not create longer sentences because fluency develops last than all other aspects of writing (Nation, 2008). At this level, students still struggle with their grammar, syntax and vocabulary (Tuan, 2010). They first need to improve these aspects of writing and then produce longer and more complex sentences. However, students improved one very important indicator of fluency, that is text length (Table 23, $F=4.339$). They produced longer texts using simpler sentences since they managed to increase the number of independent clauses they produced. Students had more ideas about the topic after the implementation of PA and included them in their essays relying on what they knew best, that is forming simple rather than complex sentences which they had not mastered yet.

To sum up, experimental group students revised their texts both locally and globally improving their accuracy, lexical complexity, fluency, and grammatical complexity (Table 23). These are new and important information for text

improvement (also in Olson, 1990; Yang et al., 2010). Peer feedback can positively affect students' writing performance (also in Gielen et al., 2010; Li, Liu, & Zhou, 2012b; Olson, 1990; van Gennip et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2013). Students can read and revise their peers' and their own work more critically and make successful revisions. The current study clearly shows that participants with peers and tutor's scaffolding made remarkable progress in writing quality (also in Shooshtari & Mir, 2014).

The third research question explored the kind of impact that PA may have on students' attitudes. In the next section, the findings related to this research question are going to be presented.

7.5. Students' attitudes towards PA

A PA questionnaire was used to explore students' attitudes towards PA before and after the implementation. The construct validity of the questionnaire was tested using exploratory (EFA) and then confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The reliability was determined using Cronbach's α . A total of 100 EFL learners completed the questionnaire. The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of .836 and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2=1678.738$, $df=435$, $p=.000$) indicated that the CFA was possible. The questions loaded heavily on two factors (Table 25), except for 7 questions (13-23) which were excluded from the questionnaire (Appendix IX). The two factors were attitudes towards PA, and PA and writing which correspond to the two main categories under which the questions in the PA questionnaire were presented (Appendix IX). Cronbach's α coefficient of .879 also showed good reliability. Consequently, this questionnaire is considered as a reliable and valid measure of students' attitudes towards PA.

No	Students' statements	Factors	
		1	2
1.	I think it helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.	.81	
2.	PA motivates me to do my best work.	.74	
3.	I think it helps me become well-organized and careful.	.71	
4.	As a learning tool, PA is very useful.	.66	
5.	PA makes students understand more about teachers' requirements.	.66	
6.	It makes me feel responsible for my own and others' learning.	.62	
7.	PA is appropriate for assessing writing skills at this level.	.60	
8.	I think PA helps weak and shy students improve their writing performance.	.58	
9.	I believe that I should learn how to provide/receive PA.	.57	
10.	I benefit from receiving assessment from my peers.	.55	
11.	PA is an effective way of helping me reflect upon and improve my writing performance.	.54	
12.	I think that the idea of PA is a waste of time.	.48	
13.	I think the PA process should be introduced in every writing class.		.81
14.	I think PA must be incorporated into the regular curriculum/syllabus.		.67
15.	I prefer receiving assessment from my peers as well.		.66
16.	I can improve my written work as a result of the reviews that I received or wrote.		.66
17.	I enjoy providing/receiving PA.		.58
18.	I think that PA is not appropriate for every student.		.55
19.	It would be useful for me to do PA during the whole school year.		.50
20.	I benefit from providing assessment to my peers.		.49
21.	I feel more relaxed to read my classmate's feedback on my writings.		.42
22.	PA assesses aspects of Ss' EFL writing that cannot be evaluated by the T or by formal exams.		.45
23.	After the PA exercise, I will understand the meaning of the assessment criteria better.		.48
Eigenvalues		11	1,09
Percentage of variance		22.42	17.44

* T=teacher.

Table 25: The CFA for students' PA questionnaire

Descriptive data regarding the items of students' post-PA questionnaire (Appendix IX) indicate that students' response to the questionnaire was mostly positive as the mean of almost all of the questions was above 3, when the answers ranged from 1-5. This clearly indicates that students had an overall positive attitude towards PA of writing. In fact, students were mostly positive regarding items 7, 9, 10, 14 and 22 (Table 26). The mean of all these statements was above 3.6 (Appendix IX).

A. Attitudes towards PA	M	SD	A	N	D
1. I think it helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.	3.29	1.27	52	24	24
2. PA motivates me to do my best work.	3.31	1.27	52	24	24
3. I think it helps me become well-organized and careful.	3.59	1.07	65	22	13
4. As a learning tool, PA is very useful.	3.45	1.15	59	23	30
5. PA makes students understand more about teachers' requirements.	3.48	1.04	67	23	10
6. It makes me feel responsible for my own and others' learning.	3.44	1.16	51	26	23
7. PA is appropriate for assessing writing skills at this level.	3.82	1.16	54	29	17
8. I think PA helps weak and shy students improve their writing performance.	3.36	1.1	61	19	20
9. I believe that I should learn how to provide/receive PA.	3.62	1.03	71	18	11
10. I benefit from receiving assessment from my peers.	3.64	1.10	51	31	18
11. PA helps me reflect upon and improve my writing performance.	3.36	1.08	51	30	19
12. I think that the idea of PA is a waste of time.	3.26	1.35	27	15	68
B. PA and writing					
13. I think the PA process should be introduced in every writing class.	3.42	1.4	45	27	28
14. I think PA must be incorporated into the regular curriculum/syllabus.	3.78	1.26	61	18	21
15. I prefer receiving assessment from my peers as well.	3.21	1.32	45	26	29
16. I can improve my written work as a result of the reviews that I received or wrote.	2.93	1.13	33	42	25
17. I enjoy providing/receiving PA.	3.11	1.29	41	30	29
18. I think that PA is appropriate for every student.	3.38	1.21	59	21	20
19. It would be useful for me to do PA during the whole school year.	2.93	1.18	44	25	31
20. I benefit from providing assessment to my peers.	3.16	1.07	46	31	23
21. I feel more relaxed to read my classmate's feedback on my writings.	3.27	1.18	44	25	31
22. PA assesses aspects of Ss' written English that cannot be evaluated by the T.	3.64	1.13	33	42	25
23. After the PA exercise, I will understand the assessment criteria better.	3.34	1.04	58	30	12

* M=means, SD=standard deviation, A=agree, N=neutral, D=disagree, T=teacher.

Table 26: Descriptive statistics for students' PA Qr

Students believed strongly that PA assisted them in becoming better-organized and careful (Table 26, Item 3) possibly because they were asked to take responsibility for their own and their peers' learning by acting out as 'teachers' (Item 6). Students also felt that PA helped them understand more about teachers' requirements (Item 5) as they were asked to assume their role and assess their peers. They also thought that they needed to learn more about PA (Item 9) through some kind of training which would help them use PA effectively and to their benefit. Learners also realized that to use PA effectively, it should become part of their curriculum (Item 14). Regular and carefully organized use of PA could help them improve their writing skills and their performance in summative tests (Item 13 and 22). Finally, they believed that their exposure to PA would help them understand the assessment criteria better (Item 23) and possibly improve their writing performance (Item 20) which was confirmed by the findings related to the first two research questions of the current study (see Sections 7.3 & 7.4).

Frequencies and percentages for each item in the PA questionnaire were calculated. It is obvious that the findings were moderately positive and that one fourth of students (about 25%) were uncertain about any item in the PA questionnaire possibly due to lack of extensive training and experience in PA

(Table 26). Students' belief that PA was appropriate for every student (Table 26, Item 18) contradicts previous research which claims that PA is more appropriate for adult learners (Topping, 1998). It is also worthwhile mentioning that most students thought that PA is a very useful learning tool (Table 26, Item 4) confirming previous research (Van Gennip et al., 2010).

A. Attitudes towards PA	Test	Sig	t	M	SD
1. I think it helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.	Pre Post	.001	3.32	2.7 3.29	1.09 1.27
2. PA motivates me to do my best work.	Pre Post	.004	2.91	2.82 3.31	1.19 1.16
3. I think it helps me become well-organized and careful.	Pre Post	.122	1.55	3.33 3.59	1.13 1.35
4. As a learning tool, PA is very useful.	Pre Post	.209	1.26	3.25 3.45	1.27 1.1
5. PA makes students understand more about teachers' requirements.	Pre Post	.011	2.59	3.07 3.48	1.23 1.15
6. It makes me feel responsible for my own and others' learning.	Pre Post	.687	.40	3.37 3.44	1.18 1.21
7. PA is appropriate for assessing writing skills at this level.	Pre Post	.003	3.01	3.32 3.82	1.22 1.04
8. I think PA helps weak and shy students improve their writing performance.	Pre Post	.232	1.20	3.17 3.36	1.20 1.16
9. I believe that I should learn how to provide/receive PA.	Pre Post	.002	3.15	3.08 3.62	1.27 1.15
10. I benefit from receiving assessment from my peers.	Pre Post	.002	3.24	3.12 3.64	1.32 1.07
11. PA is an effective way of helping me reflect upon and improve my writing performance.	Pre Post	.413	-.82	3.49 3.36	1.14 1.08
12. I think that the idea of PA is a waste of time.	Pre Post	.015	2.46	2.88 3.26	1.4 1.06
B. PA and writing					
13. I think the PA process should be introduced in every writing class.	Pre Post	.009	2.64	3.02 3.42	1.17 1.1
14. I think PA must be incorporated into the regular curriculum/syllabus.	Pre Post	.000	3.85	3.2 3.78	1.26 1.03
15. I prefer receiving assessment from my peers as well.	Pre Post	.739	.33	3.15 3.21	1.28 1.32
16. I can improve my written work as a result of the reviews that I received or wrote.	Pre Post	.083	1.75	2.75 3.08	1.36 1.29
17. I enjoy providing/receiving PA.	Pre Post	.668	.43	3.04 3.11	1.1 1.18
18. I think that PA is appropriate for every student.	Pre Post	.211	1.25	3.19 3.38	1.28 1.22
19. It would be useful for me to do PA during the whole school year.	Pre Post	.008	-2.7	3.34 2.93	1.06 1.13
20. I benefit from providing assessment to my peers.	Pre Post	.077	-1.7	3.49 3.16	1.23 1.4
21. I feel more relaxed to read my classmate's feedback on my writings.	Pre Post	.419	.81	3.15 3.27	1.05 1.17
22. PA assesses aspects of Ss' written English that cannot be evaluated by the teacher.	Pre Post	.023	2.31	3.27 3.64	1.2 1.03
23. After the PA exercise, I will understand the meaning of the assessment criteria better.	Pre Post	.622	-.49	3.42 3.34	1.2 1.24

Table 27: Descriptive data and paired T-test findings of the pre- vs post-PA questionnaires

To explore the differences in students' attitudes towards PA of writing before and after the implementation, paired t-tests were used. The results indicated that

students' attitudes showed differences which were statistically significant in almost half of the closed statements of the PA questionnaire (Table 27).

The change in students' attitudes was also mostly positive since most t-values, especially the ones that showed statistically significant differences, were positive. This indicates that students' attitudes towards PA were more positive after the implementation of PA in their classes. Students thought that PA helped them realize their strengths and weaknesses (Table 27, Item 1) and motivated them to do their best work after the PA implementation (Item 2). This clearly shows that students found the experience interesting and worthwhile, since they believed that PA was not a waste of time (Item 12) and was appropriate for their age and level (Items 7 and 13). It is also quite encouraging that, although PA is a tiring and time-consuming procedure, most students still wanted to use it during a whole school year (Item 19) possibly because they could learn things by engaging actively in their own learning process (Items 8 and 16).

Manova tests were also used to explore whether there was a correlation between: (a) students' responses to the questionnaire and sex, and (b) students' responses to the questionnaire and prior achievement. No correlation which was statistically significant was found for sex $f=.71$, $p=.202>.001$ (Wilk's Lambda), and for prior achievement $f=.618$, $p=.714>.001$ (Wilk's Lambda). This indicates that students had more or less the same attitudes towards PA of writing after the implementation.

The qualitative data from students' PA questionnaire included open-ended questions (Appendix IX) which were collected and transferred in a Microsoft Word file. Experimental group students did not answer the majority of the pre-PA questionnaire open questions because they had no previous experience with PA. In the open questions that the students did answer, they pinpointed several highlights and challenges of PA.

Experimental group teachers also conducted and kept notes of students' responses during focus group discussions (Appendix X) which lasted about 20-30 minutes with each one of the experimental groups. Students' comments were

transcribed in a Word document by the researcher and will be presented and discussed in the following subsection.

Discussion

Taking into consideration the findings from the closed items of the PA questionnaire (Appendix IX), we can detect that students had an overall positive attitude towards PA since their mean was in most cases above 3 when the Likert scale ranged from 1 to 5 (Table 27).

Students seemed very confident that PA helped them become better-organized and more cautious (Table 27, Item 3). They improved the organization and mechanics of their essays (Table 24) by correcting their own mistakes after detecting their peers' errors. This was also confirmed by the findings which were related to the first research question (see Tables 23 & 24). Siow (2015), who investigated Malaysian students' perceptions of PA in enhancing learning experience, claimed that PA was perceived as enabling students to become more critical, work in a more structured way, and think more deeply. If greater experience is gained in assessment and learning by using PA, it is hoped that students will develop into more autonomous learners, encouraging reflective and self-regulated learning (Ten Berge et al., 2004), with less dependence on the tutor for all the 'answers'. The following student's response in one of the open questions in the post-PA questionnaire supports the above statement:

(1) Group 1, Student 3: During PA, you demand more from yourself as a writer...

Students also felt that PA was a very useful tool which made them understand more about teachers' requirements (Table 27, Item 23). By assuming the role of the teacher, students were asked to understand the assessment criteria very well before using them to assess their peers' work. Students often do not understand some of the terms used when assessing a written essay, i.e. mechanics. In the current study, they asked a lot of questions and clarified everything about the assessment criteria because they had to provide marks and comments on their classmates' work. According to Chappuis (2009), student-directed assessment gives students an accurate understanding of learning goals, the criteria and

standards for assessment, and the expected performance; consequently improving both motivation and performance (also in Chiramanee & Kulprasit, 2014; Wakabayashi, 2008). PA takes the mystery out of the assessment process, thereby enabling students to appreciate why and how marks are awarded and provides students with a better understanding of what is required to achieve a particular standard (Hanrahan et al., 2001).

Contrary to previous research (Topping, 2010), students thought that PA is appropriate for assessing writing at this level (Table 27, Items 7, 13 and 18) and were interested in learning how to provide and receive PA (Table 27, Item 9). PA allowed them to understand their mistakes and improve their work. Being an assessor was challenging, while being an assessee did not cause any discomfort or tensions among students as the PA procedure was anonymous. This finding contradicts previous research which indicates that students tend to feel that assessment should be the sole responsibility of tutors (Brindley et al., 1998). PA can engage students in making reflections when they play the role of tutor as well as tutee (also in Chen, Wei, Wu & Uden, 2009; Falchikov, 2005; Nicol et al., 2006). This is illustrated below in a student's response to the post-PA questionnaire:

(2) Group 3, Student 4: ...you become more responsible by helping your classmates.

Students also thought that PA should be incorporated into their regular curriculum/syllabus (Table 27, Item 14). Using PA occasionally without planning and continuous support cannot improve students' writing performance. PA is a complex procedure and students need time and constant exposure to use it effectively and reap its benefits. Researchers have indicated that PA activities are beneficial to participants in several respects, including receiving valuable feedback for improving their performance and obtaining higher level knowledge for providing comments to peers (Hsia et al., 2015; Hwang, Yang, & Wang, 2013).

Students also felt that PA assesses aspects of students' written English that cannot be evaluated by the teacher or by formal exams (Table 27, Item 22). Learners empathize with their peers and can provide comments using language that can be better understood by people of the same age. Students also feel less

intimidated and are not offended by their peers' comments. They see them as people walking on the same path struggling to improve their EFL writing skills and are sometimes more willing to take their comments into consideration. Caulk (1994) claimed that teachers' feedback was often rather general, while responses from students could be more specific. Gibbs (2006) argued that over-emphasizing the reliability of student marking misses the point and dilutes the benefit of PA wherein students engage in learning by internalizing academic standards and by making judgments about their own and peer performance in relation to these standards. Peer review offers an opportunity to broaden and deepen students' thinking and understanding when they compare their own writing processes with those of others (Yang et al., 2010). Data from the students' post-PA questionnaire open questions (Appendix IX), such as the comment below, clearly indicated that students perceived PA as being quite beneficial.

(3) Group 5, Student 6: Everybody had an opportunity to improve himself/herself.

PA helped learners learn how to write. Students provided additional constructive feedback to their peers but also reflected on the quality of their own work and improved various aspects of their writing performance. Moreover, even though students were required to dedicate time to assessing their peers' work, most students felt that the benefits were worth the time invested (also in Landry et al., 2014). Initially, students rejected the idea of spending additional time to correct their work and provide feedback to their peers. However, after taking part in the PA implementation, they realized that the time and the effort they had put was worth it. They managed to understand aspects of the writing procedure they were unaware of, i.e. self-revision, and saw considerable improvement in their own and their peers' work.

Students claimed that they could trace, understand and learn from their mistakes and actually saw improvement in their own work. Students often get teacher feedback they do not understand. As a result, they cannot correct their work and repeat the same mistakes. Teachers often wonder why their students do not take their comments into consideration. Most of the times, they could not understand their teachers' comments and revise their work accordingly. Other studies have

mentioned quality concerns, as they found that peer responses were sometimes not specific or lacked elaborations or explanations and thus could not facilitate revision (Tsui et al., 2000). Peer feedback, a basic feature of PA, has an impact on affect, e.g. increases motivation through the sense of personal responsibility, reduces writing anxiety, and improves self-confidence (Topping et al., 2000). In the following comment made by a student who responded to the PA questionnaire, the student detected one of the benefits she got from the PA implementation in her class:

(4) Group 7, Student 2: I learnt how to write more carefully.

Students learnt to accept their peers' views welcoming their teacher's assessment as well since they are the 'experts'. Unlike previous research, which has indicated that learners sometimes have negative reactions to peer response (Fei, 2006; Qi, 2004), the current study revealed that students regard PA as complementary to TA, as students and teachers may be looking at different things (Alias, Masek, & Salleh, 2015). Tsivitanidou et al. (2011), who explored students' attitudes towards PA in a similar context, found out that students wanted to use reciprocal, anonymous PA in their future learning activities as well. In the current study, students thought that PA enhanced their own learning by providing insight into their peers' work, while TA provided valuable feedback from people who were more experienced than their peers in providing feedback. This is quite evident in the student's response to one of the open questions of the post-PA questionnaire below:

(5) Group 9, Student 1: I can see 2 different points of view, the teacher's and my peer's...

Students realized how difficult their teacher's work was and learnt to appreciate it more. This finding comes to confirm previous research that highlights students' expression of empathy with their teachers who were asked to mark unfinished work (Adams & Mabusela, 2015). For example, Liu et al. (2006) reported the benefits of having students play the teachers' role in giving ratings and comments on peers' work. Students often believe that their teacher is unfair or that his/her job is very easy. PA makes them realize how much time their teachers spend

assessing their work and understand all the criteria they must take into consideration when providing marks. After the PA experience, they - hopefully - learn to spend more time writing and editing their essays. They read their written assignments several times before handing them in, and they take different aspects of writing into consideration when correcting their work.

Students also took their peers' comments into consideration especially regarding grammar and spelling. They trusted their peers more when providing feedback regarding the surface aspects of their writing, since they thought that their peers were more straightforward. It was also easier for them to check the accuracy of their peers' comments. This contradicts the findings related to the first research question indicating that students improved their global rather than local aspects of their writing. It seems that students improved their global aspects as a result of the ideas they got from their peers' work and possibly of increased self-reflection, being a byproduct of the PA implementation. Previous research indicates that learners feel that their peers' advice could help with the writing content (McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Mendonca et al., 1994). However, others noted that their peers placed too much emphasis on surface errors (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Tsui et al., 2000).

Finally, students thought that PA is not only beneficial, but it is also fun. Unlike Amores (1997), who indicated that some students might resent acting like a teacher and became uneasy in editing peers' writings, students in the present study enjoyed assuming the role of the teacher. Students may not have been happy with the lengthy and demanding work, but they nevertheless genuinely enjoyed working with their peers collaboratively. It is important to stress that humans are fundamentally social animals, and that working together at collaborative learning seems to appeal to the majority of students in very fundamental ways (Chen, 2015).

Students' responses in the focus group discussions (Appendix XI) indicated that most of the students had no previous experience in PA, although PA was included in the curriculum of the State Institutes in Cyprus, but would love to use PA in the future. Students' eagerness to learn more about PA and continue to use it in the

future, which was evident in the present study, was also reported by previous researchers (Siow, 2015). Students realized the kind of benefits they can get from PA and were eager to learn how to use it correctly.

Students claimed that they used ideas they got from their peers' work to improve their own work and made corrections on a variety of aspects of writing. They could detect their own mistakes in their peers' work as soon as they assumed the role of the teacher and felt responsible for providing good feedback to their peers. These things became evident when the researcher examined the kind of improvements experimental group students made in terms of the PA implementation, namely in content, organization, and vocabulary and language use (see Table 24). Previous research has generally supported the advantages of peer feedback, which has been shown to help students improve their writing quality and enhance their writing confidence (for example, Coniam & Lee, 2008; Lin & Yang, 2011; Liu et al., 2002). Peer feedback helped them to develop their autonomy and self-confidence as writers (Cotterall et al., 2003; Curtis, 2001).

Students preferred teacher's feedback because they thought that their peers were not experts, but admitted that they used their peers' feedback as well. They trusted their teachers more as they had spent many years studying and providing feedback to EFL students. Their peers' comments were complementary and provided additional insight into what they had to improve in their writing. Moreover, Motlagh (2015) pointed out that peer correction is acceptable to learners when followed by teacher feedback or explanation, and peer feedback alone, without teacher's explanation or at least confirmation was not their preference. This study has partly confirmed previous research (Hyland, 2010; Kamberi, 2013) claiming that some students may not value peer feedback, as a result of inexperience, students' cultural and educational background, and Cypriot schools being traditional in their sense. However, Ferris (2007) concludes that teachers should not abandon teacher nor peer feedback, while Reid (1993) claims that students need to be taught peer feedback even though it takes time and effort. A student, who took part in the focus group discussions, explains why students in the current study were more in favour of teacher feedback:

(6) Group 10, Student 8: Teachers are more professional.

Moreover, students in the current study preferred anonymous PA. Previous researchers claim that students may feel peer pressure due to friendship bonds, enmity or other power processes or even social discomfort about being critical which have been associated with PA (Cartney, 2010; Stepanyan, Mather, Jones, & Lusuardi, 2009). Learners in the present context reported more positive attitudes towards this kind of evaluation. Researchers suggest that anonymity within PA is one of the several factors that encourage student participation (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Vickerman, 2009; Yang et al., 2010). Making assessments anonymous inspires greater objectivity and, presumably, greater value (Sullivan & Watson, 2015). Adolescent students in the present study might have refused to provide feedback to their peers, especially at the beginning, due to their inexperience in providing assessment. Anonymity and the fact that their teachers provided additional feedback helped them relax and invest time and effort into familiarizing themselves with this innovative learning tool.

PA allowed them to practise and understand the assessment criteria better. Since the assessment criteria were partly shaped by the learners themselves, students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning (also in Brown et al., 1994). Studies have also advocated certain steps to alleviate students' negative perceptions of PA, including more PA experience, clarity about the PA criteria (Smith et al., 2002), and support and training in regard to the PA process (Boud et al., 2007; Falchikov, 2005; Min, 2005). The current study combined all the above up to a certain degree, always taking into consideration the limitations of the specific educational context. The aim of the study was to involve students actively in the assessment procedure to encourage them to overcome any difficulties they might have encountered during the PA implementation.

Students in the current study also believed that teachers should explain even more the assessment criteria. Students complained that their teachers do not explain the assessment criteria explicitly. As a result, they could not write according to their teachers' standards or even correct their work when their teachers provided their comments. Students were probably quite confused about teachers'

expectations and needed time and support to fully understand what is expected from them (also in Vanderhoven, Raes, et al., 2015). Studies also show a lack of self-confidence in students when they rate their peers (Sullivan, Hitchcock, & Dunnington, 1999), and the need for a pre-existing guideline or rule for the assessment activity (Clifford, 1999; Orsmond et al., 1996). Peer review activity is feasible in a mixed-level EFL writing class, provided appropriate teacher guidance is also available as a kind of added assurance (Chen, 2015). In the current study, the necessity for teachers and students' longer training and continuous support was evident.

Students also agreed that PA was not a waste of teaching time (Table 27, Q 12). They realized that when they get involved in PA, they could actually correct their own work as well as their peers' (Table 27, Item 16). Previous research also states the benefits of PA as bringing forth better study, an encouraging, beneficial activity and a motivating and effective practice, making students recognise their areas of strength and weakness (Sadeghi & Khonbi, 2014). van Zundert et al. (2010) found that the practice of PA improves students' performances and positively affects their attitudes toward its practice. Students in the current study realized that they were not totally dependent on their teachers. They could also rely on one another as alternative and/or parallel source of feedback. They realized that the teacher may not always have the time to detect and correct every mistake they made. Consequently, getting additional feedback from a peer was beneficial for them, as a student who participated in the focus group discussions stated:

(7) Group 1, Student 2: My classmate detected mistakes my teacher did not.

Students also believed that their teacher was harsher than their peers. They claimed that their peers were fairer and wanted to receive as much and as varied feedback as possible, i.e. marks, comments, corrections etc. Students realized that getting as much feedback as possible was to their benefit, as different people could see their work from different angles. Students in the current study noticed that their teachers' feedback was sometimes written in a hurry or rather impersonal and believed that their peers were more precise in their comments and more supportive as they may have faced similar problems in their writing. Previous

researchers have also reported that students believe that PA provides them with an accurate and fair assessment of themselves (Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2013).

Students felt that they should participate in the formation of the assessment criteria to understand them better and take them into consideration when writing their essays. This contradicts previous research claiming that there are troubling, unresolved issues relating to ensuring fairness as well as accuracy in PA (Aggarwal & O'Brien, 2008; Fellenz, 2006; Willcoxin, 2006). In the current study, students showed preference for a combined feedback mode, which would allow students to benefit from multiple sources of feedback, both PA and TA, a finding in line with previous research (Hu et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2014).

Moreover, students thought that assessing their peers fairly and responsibly was an easy procedure since they were provided with a rubric and received training in understanding the assessment criteria and using the PA checklist. Students felt that the instruments they were using in combination with their training and continuous support helped them understand the criteria well enough to provide constructive feedback to their peers (Table 27). In any case, the fact that they were totally inexperienced in PA was taken into serious consideration in the design of the instruments used in the study, and teachers were encouraged to provide additional explanations whenever needed during the implementation. In contrast to this study's findings, Kaufman et al. (2011), in their study on students' "perceptions about PA for writing" (p. 387), found that students sometimes regard PA as unfair and often believe that peers are unqualified to review and assess their work (also in Cheng et al., 2005; Mangelsdorf et al., 1992; Storch, 2005). However, grading by both peers and the instructor appears to lead to more positive perceptions, as opposed to grading by peers only (Kaufman et al., 2011). Students felt that their peers could not replace the experts (teachers), but would provide a different type of assessment based on a rubric which was more reader-friendly and allowed them to better understand the problems they faced with writing. Students would be encouraged to provide less structured feedback later on as soon as they would feel more confident as assessors.

In terms of the way students felt about getting assessment from their less knowledgeable peers, two possible situations may occur. Students may be too critical on themselves or too rodomontade or they simply do not know how to make an adequate assessment (Izadi & Hakhverdian, 2014). It is also possible that, toward PA, they may feel anxious and resistant (at least in the beginning) (Falchikov, 2005; Topping, 1998). The following comment made by a student during the focus group discussions reveals how uncertain some students felt about the kind of feedback low-achievers could provide:

(8) Group 2, Student 4: My classmates are immature.

However, students only provided additional feedback and the main aim of the PA procedure was not to turn them into expert assessors, but to allow learning to take place by having the learners assume the dual role of assessor and assessee. Students also felt that PA helped them become more independent as learners and claimed that PA should be used in the EFL classroom to help weak students. Gender and proficiency may also be two interesting factors to be investigated. Miller et al. (1994) stated that proficient and highly motivated L2 learners can more realistically assess their peers' language ability. In the current study, gender did not affect students' writing performance, but findings indicated that weak students got more benefits than more proficient students (see Section 7.7).

Students also claimed that they became more responsible by helping their classmates. They used to believe that assessment was their teachers' job. Learning was teachers' responsibility, and when students did not manage to learn something, teachers were to blame for it. The current study showed how students can improve their writing performance by assuming responsibility for their own and their peers' learning. Responsibility was eventually shared among teachers and students as it should have been. Empirical evidence, spanning more than two decades, further substantiates the facilitative effects of PA on learner motivation, as well as on their sense of responsibility, higher-order thinking skills, cognitive restructuring, level of performance and attitudes (Falchikov et al., 2000; Hanrahan et al., 2001; Tsai, Lin, & Yuan, 2002; van Gennip et al., 2009).

Students also claimed that they should be able to express their views about the assessment criteria since they are the ones who used them in PA. They may refuse to take the criteria into consideration if they do not understand them or believe that they are unfair or irrelevant to their work. Learners should comply with the assessment criteria and adapt them, if necessary, depending on their needs. While theoretical and empirical foundations are generally supportive of PA, (Topping, 2009; Topping & Ehly, 1998; van Zundert et al., 2010), the importance of clear and pre-specified criteria for PA that ensure objective assessment of student performance has frequently been stressed.

In line with the findings from the post-PA questionnaire, students were fond of PA after using it and expressed their wish to use it in the future (Table 27, Items 17 and 19). Although it was time-consuming, it allowed students to detect their own mistakes and correct them. Learning is a cumbersome procedure and students need time and sometimes extra effort as well as training to learn how to overcome possible obstacles in their effort to improve their performance. The problem of time has also been put forward by previous research (Hansen Edwards, 2014). This comes to contrast with previous research stating that some learners were found not to have much confidence in their peers' competence (Hu et al., 2010; Wang, 2014; Yang et al., 2006). Topping (2000) found that most students considered the PA process as time consuming and socially uncomfortable although it was effective in improving their learning.

Moreover, the instruments (questionnaires, focus group discussion form and interview protocol) that were used to gather qualitative data for this study were rather lengthy because the researcher wanted to gather as many data as possible in order to explore students' attitudes towards PA of writing in depth and triangulate the data from the quantitative analyses.

Students liked providing a mark for their peers, but found it hard to produce comments at that point. Students need time and effort to become efficient assessors. Providing comments on a peers' work was a difficult task for those inexperienced adolescent learners who were used to passively accept any feedback provided by their teachers without even incorporating it into their work.

According to previous research (Adams et al., 2015), students feel ill-equipped to undertake the assessment, and may be reluctant to make judgements regarding their peers. Exposing students continually to PA will, besides equipping them with assessment skills, encourage students to strive towards excellence (Wen et al., 2006; Yucel et al., 2014). A qualitative analysis of students' comments showed that students provided more thorough peer feedback over time and became gradually more capable of providing corrective feedback (Nikolaou, 2013). As a student who took part in the focus group discussions indicates below, it takes time and effort to become an assessee as well as an assessor:

(9) Group 7, Student 5: I learnt how to accept other people's views.

The qualitative findings of the current study indicate that PA can yield improved writing performance when used with adolescent EFL learners. Students were eager to experiment with new assessment techniques which enhance their learning and assign them new exciting more active roles in relation to their own learning. This contradicts previous research stating that students have limited proficiency of the language and its rhetorical rules, preventing them from providing concrete and useful feedback, and also differentiating good and poor feedback (Leki, 1990; Tsui et al., 2000). It also contradicts other researchers stating that learners tend to attend to surface errors when they are assigned to comment on their peers' writings (Nelson et al., 1992). All in all, it takes time and effort to transform these passive learners into active responsible students who wish to become less dependent on their teachers and more actively involved in their own learning.

To sum up, there were a number of positive and negative findings regarding students' attitudes towards PA. The major positive findings of the current study were: (a) the findings from the PA questionnaire were moderately positive; (b) the students indicated that PA helped become more autonomous and responsible; (c) PA had a positive impact on students' cognitive development and affective enjoyment of learning, and (d) the learners expressed their wish to experience it for longer periods of time. The negative findings were that: (a) PA was time-consuming and tiring; (b) the students preferred TA as they thought the teachers

were the experts; (c) the students indicated that they needed more guidance and support as well as training and that PA should be carefully organised; (d) PA helped weak students; (e) it was difficult to write comments, (f) they did not trust their peers as assessors.

In terms of the fourth research question, the researcher explored teachers' dispositions towards PA of writing using questionnaires and interviews.

7.6. Teachers' dispositions to PA

To answer the third research question, a PA questionnaire was used to explore teachers' attitudes towards PA before and after the implementation of PA. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's α . A total of 10 teachers completed the questionnaire. The degree of reliability of teachers' attitudes towards PA was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha, and a sufficient benchmark of reliability was found, $\alpha = .92$ (Johnson & Svingby, 2007). Descriptive data regarding the items of teachers' post-PA questionnaire can be seen in Table 28.

A. General	M	SD	A	N	D
1. The primary purpose of PA is to assess learners.	2.9	1.6	60	0	40
2. Language classes should be teacher-centered.	4.4	.6	90	10	0
3. PA is beneficial for learners.	4.3	.6	90	10	0
4. PA could strengthen responsibility.	4.1	.5	90	10	0
5. PA enhances students' autonomy.	3.9	.9	70	20	10
6. PA offers another feasible choice for evaluation.	3.4	1.1	60	20	20
7. PA is a useful teaching strategy.	3.7	1.1	60	20	20
8. PA increases motivation.	4	.9	80	10	10
9. PA promotes reflection.	4.1	.5	90	10	10
10. PA is time-consuming.	4.2	.9	90	0	10
11. PA is unreliable.	3.2	1.5	60	0	40
12. PA is invalid	3.9	1.1	80	10	10
13. PA is hard to monitor.	4.1	.31	0	0	100
14. PA cannot be implemented due to Ss' passive attitudes.	3.6	1.5	30	10	60
15. PA cannot be implemented due to Ss' low English proficiency.	3.5	1.4	30	10	60
16. PA provides fair judgements when it is anonymous.	3.2	1.2	50	20	30
17. PA assesses aspects of Ss' written English that cannot be evaluated by the T or by formal exams.	2.8	1.2	40	20	40
18. PA has a beneficial impact on teaching and learning writing.	4.1	.9	80	10	10
B. How well are you prepared to conduct PA?					
19. I have a good understanding of the requirements of PA.	3.9	.3	90	10	10
20. I have a good understanding of the procedure of PA.	4.1	.5	90	10	10
21. I have a good understanding of the marking criteria of PA.	4.1	.5	90	10	10
22. I can understand the underlying philosophy of PA well.	4.1	.5	90	10	10
23. I can attend professional development courses on PA.	4.4	1.2	20	0	80
24. I have plenty of opportunities to discuss PA with other Ts.	4.2	.9	10	0	90
25. I have plenty of opportunities to discuss PA with my Ss.	4	1.1	10	0	90
26. Ts should have know about classroom assessment.	4.3	.6	90	10	0
27. I have incorporated PA tasks into my regular curriculum.	2.2	1.2	70	20	10
28. I put more emphasis on giving my Ss feedback.	4.5	.7	90	10	0
29. I involve Ss in PA.	3.6	1.2	70	10	20
30. I understand the concept of PA in instruction.	4.1	.5	90	10	0
C. PA and learners					
31. I think PA helps shy Ss improve their writing performance.	3.4	1.2	80	0	20
32. I think PA helps weak Ss improve their writing performance.	3.4	1.3	60	10	30

33. I think PA benefits Ss with higher language skills.	4.8	.6	90	10	0
34. I think PA helps identify Ss' strengths and weaknesses in writing.	4	.6	80	20	0
35. I think PA increases Ss' study workload excessively.	2.8	1.3	40	40	20
36. I think PA makes Ss nervous.	2.9	.9	50	10	40
37. PA makes Ss understand more about Ts' requirements.	4.1	.5	90	10	10
38. PA activities increase the interaction between the T and the Ss.	3.9	.3	90	10	10
39. PA helps Ss develop a sense of participation.	4.2	.6	90	10	10
40. PA activities increase the interaction among Ss.	3.9	.8	80	10	10
41. I think Ss are eligible to assess their classmates' performance.	3.7	1.0	80	10	10
42. I believe that PA improves Ss' critical thinking.	4.3	.6	90	10	10
43. I feel comfortable if Ss assess other Ss' work.	4.1	1.2	80	10	10
44. Ts should consult their Ss about how to assess them.	3.4	1.5	70	0	30
45. PA helps Ss improve their knowledge about EFL grammar.	3.8	.9	70	20	10
46. PA helps Ss improve their ability in organizing ideas their writing.	4.1	.7	80	20	0
47. Ss learn to improve and edit their writing after practicing PA.	4	.6	80	20	0
D. What are your overall impressions about PA?					
48. I welcome the inclusion of PA in teaching EFL writing to Ss.	4.2	.78	80	20	0
49. I think PA can enhance teacher collaboration within school.	4.1	.99	80	10	10
50. I think PA can enhance sharing of expertise across schools.	3.5	1	30	60	10
51. I think PA can develop Ts' professional skills.	3.8	.91	70	20	10
52. I think PA benefits Ss because they have several opportunities to be assessed.	4.2	.78	80	20	0
53. I think PA can be incorporated into the regular curriculum.	4	.66	80	20	20
54. I believe that Ss will be extremely forced with PA.	2.9	.99	40	40	20
55. I think that PA is a waste of time.	4.2	.78	0	20	80
56. I think it is very difficult to apply PA in my classrooms.	3.5	1.4	20	10	70
57. I think that PA is appropriate for every student.	4	.94	80	10	10
58. I think that PA is not necessary.	4	.94	10	10	80
59. I believe that PA can make a great contribution to education.	3.7	.94	50	30	10
60. PA impacts the way Ss write their essays.	4.1	.87	70	30	0
61. Incorporating PA into classroom activities is a difficult task.	3.9	.99	10	20	70
62. Ts do not have the skills to implement PA appropriately.	3.6	.96	70	10	20
63. PA may increase teaching efficiency.	3.8	1	20	60	20
64. PA makes Ss more cautious.	4.5	.70	90	10	0
65. PA helps learners learn about errors and remember them better.	4.3	1	80	10	10

* M=means, SD=standard deviation, A= agree, N=neutral, D= disagree, Ss= students, T= teacher.

Table 28: Descriptive statistics for teachers' PA questionnaire

The results indicate that students' response to the questionnaire was mostly positive as the mean of almost all of the questions was above 3.5, when the Likert scale that students had to respond to ranged from 1-5. Teachers believed very strongly that PA makes students EFL more cautious and helps them pay more attention on the details in their own writing (Table 28: Item 64). Teachers also thought that PA benefits students with higher order skills more (Item 33). Teachers claimed that classrooms should be teacher-centred (Item 2) and that teachers must concentrate more on providing feedback to the students themselves (Item 28). This reveals that they are reluctant to allow their students to become more active and take responsibility for their own learning.

Frequencies and percentages for each item in the PA questionnaire were calculated. It is obvious that the findings were moderately positive since the mean

scores of most of the answers was above 3,5, while the Likert scale of the closed items ranged from 1-5 (Table 29).

A. General	Test	Sig.	T	M	SD
1. The primary purpose of PA is to assess learners.	Pre Post	.823	-.23	3 2.9	.81 1.6
2. Language classes should be teacher-centered.	Pre Post	.000	8.06	1.7 4.4	.67 .69
3. PA is beneficial for learners.	Pre Post	.096	1.86	3.8 4.3	.91 .67
4. PA could strengthen responsibility.	Pre Post	.193	-1.4	4.4 4.1	.69 .56
5. PA enhances students' autonomy.	Pre Post	.642	.48	3.7 3.9	1.4 .99
6. PA offers another feasible choice for evaluation.	Pre Post	.140	-1.6	4 3.4	.81 1.1
7. PA is a useful teaching strategy.	Pre Post	.343	-1	4 3.7	.81 1.1
8. PA increases motivation.	Pre Post	.128	1.67	3 4	1.5 .94
9. PA promotes reflection.	Pre Post	.074	2.02	2.9 4.1	1.6 .56
10. PA is time-consuming.	Pre Post	.000	6.67	2.1 4.2	.87 .91
11. PA is unreliable.	Pre Post	.427	-.83	2.7 3.2	1.4 1.54
12. PA is invalid	Pre Post	.039	2.41	2.6 3.9	1.5 1.19
13. PA is hard to monitor.	Pre Post	.030	2.57	2.9 4.1	1.4 .31
14. PA cannot be implemented due to Ss' passive attitudes.	Pre Post	.002	-4.1	2.3 4.2	1.4 .68
15. PA cannot be implemented due to Ss' low English proficiency.	Pre Post	.823	.23	2.4 2.5	1.4 1.34
16. PA provides fair judgements when it is anonymous.	Pre Post	.347	-1	3.3 3.8	1.2 .92
17. PA assesses aspects of Ss' written English that cannot be evaluated by the T or by formal exams.	Pre Post	.279	-1.1	2.8 3.4	1.2 .84
18. PA has a beneficial impact on teaching and learning writing.	Pre Post	.153	1.56	3.4 4.1	.84 .99
B. How well are you prepared to conduct PA?					
19. I have a good understanding of the requirements of PA.	Pre Post	.025	2.68	3.2 3.9	.63 .31
20. I have a good understanding of the procedure of PA.	Pre Post	.037	2.44	3.3 4.1	.67 .56
21. I have a good understanding of the marking criteria of PA.	Pre Post	.000	9	1.4 4.1	.69 .56
22. I can understand the underlying philosophy of PA well.	Pre Post	.000	11.2	1.3 4.1	.48 .56
23. I can attend professional development courses on PA.	Pre Post	.111	1.76	1.6 2.3	1.4 1.2
24. I have plenty of opportunities to discuss PA with other Ts.	Pre Post	.001	5.01	4.2 1.8	.97 .91
25. I have plenty of opportunities to discuss PA with my Ss.	Pre Post	.247	1.23	3.1 2.3	1.2 1.5
26. Ts should have know about classroom assessment.	Pre Post	.726	.36	4.3 4.4	.67 .51
27. I have incorporated PA tasks into my regular curriculum.	Pre Post	.004	3.79	2.2 3.9	1.2 1.1
28. I put more emphasis on giving my Ss feedback.	Pre Post	.024	2.71	3.9 4.5	.31 .70
29. I involve Ss in PA.	Pre Post	.522	.66	3.2 3.6	1.31 1.2
30. I understand the concept of PA in instruction.	Pre Post	.052	2.23	3.1 4.1	1.2 .56
C. PA and learners					
31. I think PA helps shy Ss improve their writing performance.	Pre Post	.081	- 1.96	4.3 3.4	.48 1.2

32. I think PA helps weak Ss improve their writing performance.	Pre Post	.297	-1.1	4 3.4	.94 1.3
33. I think PA benefits Ss with higher language skills.	Pre Post	.000	6.12	2.6 4.8	.84 .63
34. I think PA helps identify Ss' strengths and weaknesses in writing.	Pre Post	.193	1.4	3.4	1.34 .66
35. I think PA increases Ss' study workload excessively.	Pre Post	.066	2.09	3.0 2.8	1.39 .87
36. I think PA makes Ss nervous.	Pre Post	.045	2.33	2.9 3.6	.99 .69
37. PA makes Ss understand more about Ts' requirements.	Pre Post	.678	.42	4 4.1	.44 .56
38. PA activities increase the interaction between the T and the Ss.	Pre post	.168	-1.5	3.9 4.1	.31 .31
39. PA helps Ss develop a sense of participation.	Pre Post	.032	2.53	3.1 4.2	1.3 .63
40. PA activities increase the interaction among Ss.	Pre Post	.555	.61	3.7 3.9	.48 .87
41. I think Ss are eligible to assess their classmates' performance.	Pre Post	.662	.45	3.7 3.9	1.05 .87
42. I believe that PA improves Ss' critical thinking.	Pre Post	.591	.55	4.1 4.3	.73 .67
43. I feel comfortable if Ss assess other Ss' work.	Pre Post	.273	1.16	3.6 4.1	.96 1.28
44. Ts should consult their Ss about how to assess them.	Pre Post	.413	.85	3.4 3.9	.47 .27
45. PA helps Ss improve their knowledge about EFL grammar.	Pre Post	.555	.61	3.8	.91 .66
46. PA helps Ss improve their ability in organizing ideas their writing.	Pre Post	.811	.24	4 4.1	.94 .73
47. Ss learn to improve and edit their writing after practicing PA.	Pre Post	1	.000	4 4	1.05 .66
D. What are your overall impressions about PA?					
48. I welcome the inclusion of PA in teaching EFL writing to Ss.	Pre Post	.279	1.15	3.9 4.2	1.1 .78
49. I think PA can enhance teacher collaboration within school.	Pre post	.509	.68	3.7 4.1	1.56 .99
50. I think PA can enhance sharing of expertise across schools.	Pre Post	.244	1.24	3.5 4	1.08 .94
51. I think PA can develop Ts' professional skills.	Pre Post	.619	.51	3.6 3.8	1.14 .91
52. I think PA benefits Ss because they have more than one opportunities to be assessed.	Pre Post	.000	5.47	2.2 4.2	.78 .78
53. I think PA can be incorporated into the regular curriculum.	Pre Post	.269	1.17	3.6 4	.96 .66
54. I believe that Ss will be extremely forced with PA.	Pre Post	.893	.13	2.8 2.9	1.68 .99
55. I think that PA is a waste of time.	Pre Post	.309	1.07	3.8 4.2	.91 .78
56. I think it is very difficult to apply PA in my classrooms.	Pre Post	.859	-.18	3.5 3.6	1.43 1.07
57. I think that PA is appropriate for every student.	Pre Post	.006	3.53	2.4 4	1.07 .94
58. I think that PA is not necessary.	Pre Post	.003	4.11	2.6 4	.69 .94
59. I believe that PA can make a great contribution to education.	Pre Post	.780	.28	3.6 3.7	1.17 .94
60. PA impacts the way Ss write their essays.	Pre Post	.662	-.45	4.1 4.3	.87 .82
61. Incorporating PA into classroom activities is a difficult task.	Pre Post	1	.000	3.9 3.9	.99 1.28
62. Ts do not have the skills to implement PA appropriately.	Pre Post	.541	-.63	3.6 3.9	.96 .87
63. PA may increase teaching efficiency.	Pre Post	.642	.48	3.6 3.8	.51 1.03
64. PA makes Ss more cautious.	Pre Post	.010	3.25	3.6 4.5	.51 .70
65. PA helps learners learn about errors and remember them better.	Pre Post	.111	1.76	3.6 4.3	.51 1.05

* M=means, SD=standard deviation, A= agree, N=neutral, D= disagree, Ss= students, T= teachers, 2-td=2-tailed.

Table 29: Findings from teachers' post vs pre-PA questionnaire

Teachers confirmed the findings from students' questionnaire that PA is time-consuming (Table 29: Item 10) and claimed that it is not hard to monitor (Item 13). Teachers also complained that they did not have many opportunities for professional development (Item 23).

Paired t-tests were also conducted to explore teachers' attitudes towards PA before and after the PA implementation. Teachers changed their attitudes in a statistically significant way in only 19 out of 65 statements of the PA questionnaire (see Table 29). For example, teachers improved their understanding of the underlying assessment philosophy of PA after the relevant training and implementation (Item 22). They also thought that PA was appropriate for every student (Item 57) and necessary to use to develop students' writing skills (Item 58).

Teachers also had to respond to open questions in the pre- and post- PA questionnaires and take part in semi-structured interviews (Appendix X). The following subsection discusses the qualitative findings of the study in detail.

Discussion

Taking into consideration teachers' responses to the PA questionnaire, it was obvious that teachers were enthusiastic about PA before, during and after the implementation. They were eager to experiment with new methods to solve their students' writing problems. However, they believed that language classes should be teacher-centered. This finding was in a way shared by the students who preferred TA to PA (see Section 7.5). Teachers were reluctant to allow too much freedom to their students and wanted to retain considerable control over what classroom assessment practices were used and how these were implemented (also in Ploegh, Tillema, & Segers, 2009). This actually contradicts their willingness to experiment with PA and allow learners to take a more active role as learners. They claimed that they put more emphasis on providing feedback to the students themselves even though they also tried to involve students in PA.

- (10) Teacher 4: I think it's the teacher's job to undertake assessment. For some simpler tasks, it is possible to use PA and it is fun for them.

Research consistently demonstrates that students, at least initially, require preparation and feedback from teachers to engage successfully in PA (Harris & Brown, 2013; Topping, 2013; van Zundert et al., 2010). Hence, it is important to examine teacher understandings and intentions alongside student perspectives and prepare both students and teachers, before engaging them in alternative assessment practices. PA is quite a demanding task and all participants, although willing to participate, were quite unaware of the obstacles they might encounter when using it to enhance students' writing performance. Continuous training and support is the only way this new method could be successfully implemented in EFL writing classes. This finding was also shared by the students who asked for more training and support (see Section 7.5)

PA may require teachers to change their existing beliefs about teaching, learning, and assessment (Black et al., 2003). Many students are yet to be persuaded of the benefits of these practices, preferring more traditional teacher-controlled assessments, a belief reinforced by school grading and reporting practices. What this study adds is a clearer understanding that, notwithstanding a supportive policy context, teachers and students require much more preparation and support to handle the complexities of PA assessment practices (also in Harris & Brown, 2013). As one of the teachers also points out in the post-PA questionnaire, careful planning is necessary for this novel approach to work:

- (11) Teacher 1: We should work more...use it for a longer period of time...and right from the start...so that we don't hurry...we should start from junior classes so that they gradually become familiar of the procedure...it will be part of their education...I do believe 100% that assessment should become part of students' education...it should be present in our syllabus...

Teachers were also quite confident about their overall mastery of PA, although they admitted that they did not have plenty of opportunities to attend professional development courses on PA or discuss it with other teachers. They mistakenly believed that the main purpose of PA was to assess learners and not to promote

learning. This is due to lack of sufficient training in PA skills. Although most of the participants indicated that they had 'little' or 'no' 'taught' experience of PA, most of them appeared to have quite firm ideas as to its primary purpose. However, when asked to describe the potential benefits of effective PA, few participants could demonstrate more than a surface based understanding of what these might be. The current study of PA implementation is part of an intervention where teachers had continuous access to coaching (see Section 6.9.1). However, more training into PA skills is needed for teachers to understand the benefits of PA and use it effectively in their classes.

Some teachers also pointed out that PA is time-consuming (belief also shared by students), unreliable, invalid and hard to monitor (Table 29, Item 10-13). This attitude could be attributed to the fact that teachers had limited experience of 'assessment for learning' methods and were able to use PA only six times in a whole school year. Moreover, both content-based and form-based feedback were used, as both are equally important (Guenette, 2007; Tahir, 2012), but require a lot of time to produce promising results (Ferris, 2007). Teachers regard students' low English proficiency as one of the major obstacles in the entire procedure of PA (also in Wu, 2012). Hence, successful PA implementation relies on teacher's ability to adequately prepare students and prevent these problems (e.g., over/under marking, cheating) (Noonan et al., 2005; Topping, 2013). A teacher, who took part in the semi-structured interviews, describes students' reluctance to use PA at first and their eagerness to learn how to use it correctly as soon as they realized the kind of benefits it may yield:

- (12) Teacher 3: At first, they thought it was awkward and useless...but then they realized what was happening...and they liked it...they may see it as more work... some of them improved their attitudes considerably and realized that they should check their work...

Training students to provide reliable feedback to each other may be time-consuming at the beginning, but it is a valuable lifelong skill which students need to develop from an early age. Students will be asked to provide some form of PA in their workplace, as they will most probably be asked to collaborate with other people. Possessing this valuable skill from a young age is an asset to every

person who wants to find a job and/or succeed in the workplace. This finding confirms previous research as PA in primary and secondary schooling has been shown to engage and empower students, develop pupil self-regulation and metacognition, improve student communication skills, and develop students' understanding of the criteria used to evaluate their work (Andrade et al., 2009; Black et al., 1998c; Munns et al., 2006; Topping, 2013).

Moreover, most teachers believed that PA could be implemented with weak students (Table 28, Item 15) although some researchers claim that weak students do not get many benefits out of PA (Sadeghi et al., 2015).. Previous research states that when students feel there is an audience to read their writing, they tend to improve it and know their focus and purpose of their writing (Lockhart & Ng, 1996; Porto, 2001). The current study has also indicated that weak students get more benefits from PA when compared to more proficient students (Table 21). This was also confirmed by the students (see Section 7.5). Most of these students were unable to understand the assessment criteria or their teachers' comments on their work. As a consequence, they felt trapped as they could not improve their writing performance. PA helped these students become more self-confident as they got the opportunity to request clarifications regarding the assessment criteria, better understand them, and revise their work accordingly. They also asked for more support during the writing process as well as a second chance to improve their work.

Teachers also stated that they firmly believed that PA has a beneficial impact on teaching and learning especially in relation to writing (Table 28, Item 18) as it helps identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing (Table 28, Item 34). Teachers claimed that by assuming an active role as assessors, students urged themselves to understand the assessment criteria well enough to use them to assess their peers' work. PA takes the mystery out of the assessment process, thereby enabling students to appreciate why and how marks are awarded (Brindley et al., 1998), and provides students with a better understanding of what is required to achieve a particular standard (Hanrahan et al., 2001). This was also confirmed by the students during the focus group discussions (see Section 7.5). With all the problems and difficulties teachers face, it is time to find other ways to

improve students' writing which do not only benefit students, but teachers as well (Tahir, 2012). One of the teachers during the administration of the post-PA questionnaire referred to the reason why PA really worked in helping students improve their writing skills:

- (13) Teacher 5: They should be actively involved...they discover things... they are not provided...they look for them and we guide them in discovering...

Furthermore, teachers shared students' view that PA helps learners understand more about teachers' requirements and develop a sense of participation (Table 28, Items 37 and 39 & Table 26 Items 5 & 6). PA helped students improve their ability in organizing ideas and contents in their writing. The teachers' aim was to enhance their students' learning experience and enable them to become independent learners, with a view to improving students' writing performance in the long run. Morris, Lo, and Adamson (2000) claim that teachers in general feel that their workload has reached 'a saturation point' (p. 259). Cheng (2009) adds to this by affirming that teachers are suffering from the 'bottle-neck' of high workload and a new initiative would become a heavy burden on them (p. 76). However, PA is an investment of time and effort which will, most probably, alleviate part of teachers' burden by allowing them to share the responsibility for their learners' assessment and learning.

In the present study, teachers welcomed the use of PA in their classrooms since students have more than one opportunities to be assessed (Table 28, Item 52). Most teachers did not believe that PA is a waste of time and claimed that PA is appropriate for every student (Table 28, Items 55 and 57). The current study proved that PA can improve students' writing performance (Tables 23 and 24) and motivation towards writing and the assessment of writing. It can be used as a tool to help them improve their learning (Table 26 and 29). The use of peer feedback in writing classes reduced students' writing anxiety in terms of cognitive, somatic, and avoidance anxiety and made them more confident (also in Yastibaş & Yastibaş, 2015). While teacher feedback can be more specific and rigorous, student feedback can be more immediate and ease teacher's burden (also in Coll, Rochera, & De Gispert, 2014; De Salvador & Juan, 2016). Since time and full

attention are the major problems among teachers in teaching writing, alternatives such as peer review might help in easing the problems and heighten the quality of writings (also in Tahir, 2012).

Teachers in the current study also believed that PA impacts the way students write essays by helping students learn about errors and remember them better (Table 28, Items 64 and 65). This finding coincides with students' view of PA as helpful in their effort to avoid repeating the same mistakes and becoming more careful. The presence of an equal-status reader helps raise students' awareness of audience (Mendonca et al., 1994; Mittan, 1989), alert them to a potential loss of face before their classmates, thereby prompting them to expend more time and effort on their writing (Gibbs et al., 2004), and assist them in developing a sense of ownership of their text (Tsui et al., 2000). The comment made by a teacher, who filled in one of the post-PA questionnaire illustrates how students improve their writing performance by becoming more responsible as learners:

- (14) Teacher 2: At first, they were reluctant to do it...then they became more positive...they need time and they should realize that by correcting others' work they also correct themselves...

The paired t-tests of the findings from teachers' pre- vs post- PA questionnaires, which were used to detect any changes in teachers' attitudes towards PA, revealed that teachers became more confident in using PA after its implementation in their classrooms (Table 29, Item 22). They realized that PA was a time-consuming procedure after using PA in their classes (Table 29, Item 10). However, they managed to incorporate PA into their regular curriculum and realized that students should have more than one opportunities to be assessed to improve their writing skills (Table 29, Items 27 and 52). Teachers were positive before the implementation as they were looking for a way to assist their students in improving their writing performance, but were rather reserved because they did not know how to implement it in their classes successfully and whether it would actually work. After the implementation, they realized that their students had a lot to gain from this alternative assessment method which can have a positive impact on their students' performance.

After the PA implementation, teachers believed even more firmly that PA benefits more proficient students than weaker ones although the quantitative findings from students' marks indicate the opposite (Table 29, Item 33, Section 7.3, Table 21). Proficient students may have taken part in the PA process more actively, but there is not a lot of room for improvement in their case. Previous research has also indicated that teachers believe that average and high-ability students benefited the most from peer feedback (Nikolaou, 2013). As it becomes evident from a teacher's response in the interviews, teachers believed that weak students could not assess their mates fairly and responsibly:

- (15) Teacher 5: Some students who take English classes seriously tried to assess their classmates responsibly as much as they could but some very weak students could not and did not assess their classmates in a fair and responsible way.

However, the aim of the current study was not to transform students into competent assessors but to improve their writing skills and this was accomplished in the present implementation (Tables 23 and 24). Teachers also stated that PA is appropriate for every student (Table 29, Item 57). PA helps students keep track of their fellow students' learning outcomes providing powerful impetus to make progress and perform better (Bouzidi & Jaillet, 2009; Yang et al., 2010). Additionally, students become aware of the quality of their own work (Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2012). Teachers thought that every student had something to gain depending on their exposure to PA, his/her training and support he/she would receive during its implementation.

Furthermore, teachers claimed that PA should be incorporated in the regular curriculum (Table 28, Item 53) for students to benefit even more from the PA procedure. Regular exposure to PA in a systematic way and not its sporadic use can bring even more benefits for students (Sluijsmans, & Van Merriënboer, 2010). After using PA, teachers also realized that they did not have many opportunities to discuss PA with their colleagues and share their experiences to improve the practice of PA. More seminars, staff meetings and other opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss may help them overcome any problems they may face while implementing PA in their classes (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Teachers should be able

to communicate, share their problems, and find solutions together as 'two heads are better than one'.

Moreover, in the interviews, teachers claimed that PA improved the quality of students' writing and helped them understand writing better. Many teachers' comments also indicated that the collaborative nature of peer reviews exposed students to other writing styles, which, if more advanced than their own, could prove beneficial. Teachers further suggested that within peer editing, layout is the easiest aspect for students to check, with reviewing for cohesion and comprehension considered more difficult to implement. However, the findings regarding improvement in students' writing performance indicate that students improved content more than organization in their essays (Table 24). It seems that teachers did not pay attention to the fact that when students were asked to revise their work, most of them chose to write a new essay. Their aim was most probably to correct not only their surface errors, but also to use the ideas they got from their peers or from reflecting on their own work.

Some teachers suggested all levels of students could become consciously aware of their own mistakes through reviewing others' writing, providing opportunities to correct their own writing before submitting assignments for grades. However, while most teachers believe conducting peer editing was beneficial, few teachers thought that the time it took to train students how to peer edit effectively, students' level, or their willingness to truly invest time and effort in the PA procedure meant that peer editing may not have been a worthwhile task in their current environment. Fortunately, few teachers were unwilling to change their way of teaching and adopt new techniques which would require an investment of considerable time and effort before they could yield benefits for them and their students.

Quantitative analysis indicated support for curricular adoption of peer review. It showed that instructors are mostly positive to the relative advantage of peer review, very positive towards its results demonstrability, and strongly positive towards its compatibility, but also recognize peer review's complexity (Table 28, Items 47, 52, 53, 59 and 61). There is obviously a desire from Cypriot EFL

teachers to use some form of peer review process when teaching writing, but unless it is specifically written into the curriculum with guided training for both teachers and students, it is unlikely to be unanimously implemented (Table 28, Items 68 and 71 and 31, Q 35).

Furthermore, some teachers are not overly confident in students' ability to give grades to other students. Students may be either over-critical, general or reluctant to evaluate at all (Lehtinen & Yates, 2008). This suggests teachers must provide concrete instruction in PA and carefully manage interpersonal issues for successful implementation (also in Harris et al., 2013). Finally, previous researchers indicate that pupils felt more positive towards PA and experienced less peer pressure and fear of disapproval when anonymous PA was employed (Vanderhoven, Raes, et al., 2015). As one of the teachers points out in the interviews, since the aim is not to make students impeccable peer assessors, we need to consider 'blind' peer review to avoid potential problems among students:

- (16) Teacher 1: Some of them insisted that their essay was anonymous...they did not want their mates to know whose that essay was because they made a lot of mistakes...proficient students don't care...but they were curious how their mate assessed their work.

Some teachers also reported that students were not felt to be up to the language level to provide explicit constructive feedback to their peers (also in Ying, 2010). However, the use of a detailed checklist to provide PA helped them understand the marking criteria better. PA is a complex undertaking and requires effort and time before students can provide detailed comments and explanations to their peers to support the feedback they provide. This case study also serves to affirm that student reflection on assessment procedures is a necessary part of the learning experience. Such reflection should also be supported in the instructors' teaching practices to make sense of what has been learned (Race, 1994). Moreover, although the learners in the current study could not provide detailed comments, students could improve their writing skills in a statistically significant way (see Section 7.3). Even more improvement may be expected, if students are provided with more training and time to develop their PA skills. Hence, this small-

scale study reinforces that, with careful preparation and explanation, the benefits of involving students in PA outweigh the risks.

Teachers thought that PA developed students' critical thinking skills, helped them learn the assessment criteria, and keep them in mind when writing their essays, although some students were hesitant at the beginning. Peer-evaluation of writing was also found to have a significant impact on the improvement of student writers even more significant than self-assessment (Chang, Chen, & Chen, 2012; Khonbi et al., 2013). Teachers also agreed that all three types of assessment that is PA, SA and TA are necessary, but admitted that they needed more training and time to implement it successfully. Teachers could overcome their students' initial hesitation and implement PA although they admitted that careful planning and continuous support through seminars is needed to help their students use it effectively.

Most teachers thought that students were fair, as they provided similar marks to their own because the PA form they used was very detailed and user-friendly and the PA procedure was anonymous (Table 29, Item 16). Students, with guidance from the writing teacher, can provide constructive feedbacks to their peers (Yusof, Manan, & Alias, 2011). Previous research indicates that the fairness of PA is frequently questioned by participants and the collection and compilation of ratings and comments associated with such activities are especially tedious, cumbersome and time-consuming, resulting in resistance to swift adoption on the part of teachers (Orsmond et al., 1996; Purchase, 2000; Searby & Ewers, 1997). Teachers in the current study had mixed feelings but tended to believe that students could provide reliable marks if a detailed reader-friendly assessment tool was provided to them. These learners would also need training and continuous support especially at the beginning of using PA in their classes.

Teachers also thought that, by using PA, students could develop their meta-cognitive skills and linguistic abilities, reflect on their own work, and learn from each other. Most of the teachers believed that PA was an interesting experience and that students loved it. Teachers claimed that they saw a lot of improvement in students' work regarding structure, paragraph development, vocabulary and new

ideas. But this does not mean that writing teachers should go for an one-shot training session because EFL students' peer reviewing skills take time to mature (also in Min, 2016). Despite the belief that students prefer their teacher to correct their errors, the feedback the peers provide can be more effective than the feedback provided by the teacher (Kazemipour, 2014). Hansen and Andree (2015) also found out that most students used feedback that they had themselves provided to another student slightly more than received feedback. One of the teachers during the interviews noticed that, in terms of the PA exercise, students became more careful when writing their essays:

- (17) Teacher 7: They pay attention to things they normally don't pay attention to, like paragraphs and punctuation...precisely because of the embarrassment they feel when they get PA...

In the interviews, teachers also noted that students became more independent learners as they could reflect on their own work and learn from each other. Teachers thought that they benefited from PA as they realized how they could help their students improve their writing skills. Involving students in the process of peer evaluation enables them to interact with each other as writers and readers and helps them write more confidently and with lower levels of anxiety (Moussaoui, 2012). Teachers claimed that students were eager to get both teacher and peer feedback and that increased their motivation towards writing. They would also recommend PA to their colleagues although it requires more work. Research proved that the technique of peer evaluation saves time and effort for many EFL writing instructors, mainly for those who have time constraints and large class sizes (Miao, Badger, & Zhen, 2006a). All in all, as one of the teachers remarked, PA had a strong impact on both teachers and learners:

- (18) Teacher 10: Lessons change for the teacher and the learner...

Teachers were inclined to use PA in the future, not only in writing, but in other skills as well. Teachers' impetus for change derived from their reflection on their teaching experience (also reinforced at the researcher's training), which led them to cast doubt on the effectiveness of their former practice (also in Lee, 2014). Despite teachers' conscientiousness in responding to every single error in

students' writing, teachers remarked that students tended to make the same mistakes. They felt that students lost confidence as they were discouraged by the red marks on their writing. Also, teachers thought that there were few learning opportunities for students; they did not know how to improve their writing nor did they have a purpose or goal for writing. They raised concerns about the ineffectiveness of their direct comprehensive corrective feedback approach and the lack of interrelatedness between assessment, learning and teaching:

- (19) Teacher 2: I only felt pressure from the other things that I had to do and in combination with the students who were at a very low level...it was difficult...PA is not stressful...it is the context that bothers me...

Process writing, which required multiple drafting for students to develop richer content and more accurate grammar in their writing, was lacking. Though students might have wanted to engage with teacher's response to their writing, they experienced difficulties in understanding teacher's feedback, not to mention using the comments to improve their future writing. Teachers were motivated to participate in this study and thought that the way forward lay within the implementation of PA. To conclude, teachers believed that their former assessment practice was beset with problems and shortcomings, which led them to undertake alternative measures with a view to enhancing their assessment practice. Through highlighting the features of the target genre, helping students set goals and demystifying the assessment criteria, teachers enhanced students' awareness of where they were going and enabled them to have a clear vision of how they were to progress towards the expected standards (i.e., 'feed up'). The new element (i.e., PA) was injected into the existing assessment system, which came into conflict with the conventional practice, thereby constraining teachers' PA initiatives in the writing classroom. As one's thoughts and actions are more powerfully influenced by the organization's culture than one's previous training and experience, one tends to adjust the features of the innovation to accommodate the culture of the school (Heckman & Mantle-Bromley, 2004).

The current study has also confirmed that assessment tools which cede some degree of evaluative control to the student - student self-evaluation and peer

evaluation - are more frequently deployed by the least experienced than the most experienced teachers (Hunter, Mayenga, & Gambell, 2006). Very few dedicated teachers actually apply innovative forms of assessment (Vogt & Tzagari, 2014).

All in all, teachers had a rather positive attitude towards PA since it helped their students improve their writing performance. However, they needed additional training and support to implement PA more effectively and solve some of the main problems of PA, i.e. students' resistance. Most EFL studies concerned with attitudes towards peer review have focused on the views of learners (White, Morgan, & Fuisting, 2014). Instructors believe peer editing suits their teaching style. This is further enhanced by teachers who suggested that if peer editing was included in the curriculum, they would be flexible enough to adopt it. Teachers believed peer editing is somewhat easy to implement in their classroom. They also stressed the fact that before conducting peer editing, students need to be trained on how to do it effectively, emphasizing the need for effective training programs to be implemented within EFL writing curricula.

To sum up, teachers claimed that there are benefits as well as challenges when using PA of writing in their classes. The positive findings regarding teachers' attitudes towards PA of writing were: (a) findings from teachers' PA questionnaire findings were moderately positive; (b) teachers shared a positive perception of the impact of PA on their teaching practices and on students' learning; (c) they favoured PA and regarded it as a valuable learning tool; (d) teachers felt that all participants in PA should receive training and support through the PA implementation, and (e) PA should be used more extensively, systematically and from a younger age in schools. The negative findings of the study include: (a) teachers believed that language classes should be teacher-centered; (b) they claimed that PA was time-consuming, unreliable and invalid; (c) they thought that PA made students nervous and increased their study workload excessively, and (d) they believed that teachers did not have the skills to implement PA appropriately.

In the next section, the limitations of the current study are going to be explored to indicate potential shortcomings of the current study.

7.7. Limitations

While instructive, this study's data set may not be representative enough to allow generalizations, a challenge to be undertaken in future studies. Although positive effects were found, it became apparent that the training could have been much more systematic and of longer duration than was feasible to organise in the available context and time span of the current study. This study focused only on short-term effects of the training in PA. It is clear that more structured PA training and critical reflection about assessment might have a long-term effect for students. Moreover, the short duration of the three individual types of writing may be inadequate for students to master the writing skills within only two semesters. The study could have used an additional source of data, the think aloud method or learners' diaries, to provide more in-depth data and shed more light into how students use PA in the classroom and what kind of challenges they face. The PA rubric used in this study is suited for three types of essay (descriptive, argumentative and stories). Future researchers could develop a similar comprehensive PA checklist for other types of essays.

The instruments used in the current study were rather controlled (see PA forms) and did not allow the learners to express more openly their views regarding their peers' essays. Moreover, diaries or think aloud protocols were not used to provide an insight into the process of the study as well as the students and teachers' feelings and problems while using PA. An analysis of all students' essays or at least the analysis of the second draft of the second essay could help us evaluate students' progress during the implementation of PA in their classes. Interviews with the students would also allow a deeper understanding of the students' attitudes and feeling towards PA. Regarding the components of the student questionnaire, there was a meaningful larger number of statements that depict the positive elements of PA in comparison with the negative ones. However, the researcher devised this questionnaire adapting and/or taking into consideration questionnaires that have been previously used by other researchers (section 6.11.2) who addressed the same issues when exploring students' attitudes towards PA. All the above limitations of the current study were mainly due to context constraints as the Cypriot educational context is rather sensitive when it

comes to implementing innovative methods in the State school classrooms. Consequently, further research is needed to explore the procedure of implementing PA in EFL classes in detail highlighting the potential challenges that students and teachers face when using PA to promote EFL learning.

Finally, due to the amount of instructional time needed to complete the study and the young age of the participants, it was deemed necessary for the classroom teachers to act as researchers. Careful attention was given to maintain objectivity when collecting and analyzing data: ensuring adequate engagement in data collection, triangulation of data, the use of multiple scorers to analyze data, and a control group to enhance the reliability of the study.

7.8. Summary of the findings

The current intervention study implemented PA of writing in intermediate EFL classes with the aim of exploring the feasibility of using PA to improve students' writing performance and their motivation towards writing and the assessment of writing. It also focused on helping EFL teachers guide their students in their effort to improve their writing skills while having fun at the same time. Teaching experiences and research proved that implementing peer evaluation in a writing classroom helps foster student writers' autonomy and develop their critical thinking skills (Thomas, Martin, & Pleasants, 2011). Hence, through training and practice, students can learn to think, write, provide feedback to each other, revise, and edit their own writing (Moussaoui, 2012).

The first research question of the current study addressed the issue of whether PA, when used in combination with TA, can help improve students' writing performance. The findings clearly indicated that it can, since experimental group students showed a statistically significant improvement in their writing performance based on the pre- and post-test scores compared to the control groups ones who did not show any kind of statistically significant improvement. The researcher chose to use only the pre-test and post-test scores since this is the norm in intervention studies (Birjandi et al., 2012a). Moreover, it would be very difficult to analyze all students' drafts (1.300 essays) and present their findings together with all the other data (questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions).

According to the findings, the use of PA improved students' writing performance in all 5 aspects: mechanics, organization, content, focus, vocabulary, and language use based on the marks provided by an external assessor. The assessor took the PA rubric into consideration since that was employed during the implementation of PA in this particular study. Finally, unlike previous research on PA (Cheung, 2011), the current study generated useful results, since it employed a valid research design which included a control group, a revised piece of writing, trained peer reviewers, provision of appropriate writing tasks and conditions, and addressed the issue of comparability of population.

Moreover, there was no statistical difference in students' writing performance according to gender, but that there was considerable difference according to students' prior achievement. Findings clearly indicated that low-achievers got more benefits than medium-achieving students and even more than high-achievers (Appendix XII).

The second research question aimed to explore the impact of PA and TA on students' writing quality. Text analysis of the students' pre- and post-tests revealed that the difference in the writing quality among the experimental and the control groups with respect to the four indicators of writing quality was statistically significant. Tests between subjects also indicated that the use of PA had a statistically significant effect on learners' writing performance with respect to lexical complexity, accuracy and some aspects of grammatical complexity and fluency. However, PA did not have a significant impact on some aspects of learners' grammatical complexity and fluency. Consequently, the findings ranged from strongly to moderately positive as far as the improvement of writing performance was concerned for most of its aspects. The impact of PA may have been much stronger and would have possibly covered more aspects, if more training and exposure to PA was provided for these learners and their teachers. Finally, unlike previous research on PA (Cheung, 2011), the current study generated robust results, since it employed a valid research design which included a control group, a process approach to writing, trained peer reviewers, provision of appropriate writing tasks and conditions, and addressed the issue of comparability of population.

The third research question aimed to explore students' attitudes towards PA of writing. The analysis of the data from the PA questionnaires indicated that students' attitudes were positive before experimenting with PA, but improved even more after the implementation. This is also confirmed by the focus group discussions in which shortcomings of PA were also highlighted. Students supported the quantitative findings of the study which relate to students' improved writing performance after the PA implementation. Learners thought that the PA procedure helped them improve their writing by allowing them to have an insight into their peers' work and reflect on their own performance. They could understand the assessment criteria better, detect the mistakes they made, and correct them. They also claimed that PA helped them improve all aspects of their writing confirming the quantitative findings of the study. Assigning marks was easy for them as they had a reader-friendly PA instrument, received training and had continuous teacher support. However, students complained that PA was rather time-consuming and that it was difficult for them to provide comments on their peers' work without additional exposure to PA and training. Unlike some teachers, who thought that only proficient students could take part in and benefit from PA, students confirmed the quantitative findings regarding the kind of impact that PA had on students' writing performance depending on their proficiency. They felt that weak students got more benefits from PA. They also expressed their wish for multiple forms of assessment and for more training and exposure to PA. All in all, students' positive attitude towards PA seemed to have affected their writing performance and vice versa.

The fourth research question investigated teachers' attitudes towards PA. Findings indicated that EFL teachers' attitudes were initially positive. However, they did not improve as dramatically as their students' after the implementation because teachers strongly believed that they, as teachers, and their students should receive more training and support during the PA implementation. They also felt that PA should be used more extensively, systematically, and from a younger age in schools. Teachers' interviews described students' enthusiasm during the procedure and the gradual internalization of the assessment criteria employed by their teachers when students wrote. However, they did also stress the problem of

time and students' occasional resistance to take part in the procedure, as they failed to see the benefits of PA at least at the beginning.

To sum up, PA is a rigorous and reliable assessment and learning tool which should be used as soon as students start learning how to write to help them build their writing skills gradually and enhance learners' collaboration. Students should share responsibility for their learning with their teachers and avoid depending totally on them. Moreover, PA can only work if a detailed reader-friendly instrument, which helps students understand the assessment criteria, is used. Teachers are also encouraged to involve their students in the formation of the assessment criteria to ensure that they mastered them. Training and continuous support throughout the PA implementation is necessary so that PA can have a positive impact on students' writing performance and motivation.

The next chapter will discuss the diverse findings of the current study, relate them to the existing literature, and interpret them to explore the kind of contribution the current study offers to the field of applied linguistics.

- Chapter 8 - Conclusion

"We learn by teaching"

(Latin Proverb)

8.1. Introduction

Chapter eight presents a summary of the thesis, a synthesis of results and its main conclusions. It discusses the contribution of the study, draws tentative conclusions and highlights implications for EFL writing in language education to promote the alignment of assessment, teaching and learning goals. Possible further research areas are also suggested.

8.2. Summary

The current study investigated the practice of using PA as a learning tool while teaching EFL writing at secondary level. To gather the required data, the researcher conducted the study using students and teachers from four State EFL Language Institutes.

Two hundred students and twenty teachers who taught EFL at intermediate level (B1 according to the CFR) were selected for the study. Several instruments of data collection were used: students' pre- and post-test essays, questionnaires, interviews, and structured whole-class discussions. Students' pre- and post-test essays were analyzed both quantitatively (by comparing students' marks) and qualitatively (by analyzing students' texts and comparing some of their features among the experimental and control groups). Lengthy questionnaires with closed and open items were administered to both experimental group students and teachers to explore their attitudes towards PA of writing. Interviews were conducted only with teachers, while students took part in whole-class discussions. Data collected via the questionnaires, interviews and whole-class discussions were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The design of the present study included several characteristics of PA that have been previously shown to be associated with positive outcomes and are enlisted

below. As already mentioned, inclusion of useful feedback and the assignment of both a peer and instructor grade to student work results in more positive perceptions of the PA process (Kaufman et al., 2011, p. 4). Moreover, use of non-directive and directive feedback is positively associated with improvements in assignment quality (Cho et al., 2010; Topping, 2010). A review article by van Zundert et al. (2010) describes that training and practice have a positive influence on PA, and use of a rubric, or clear grading criteria, is also predicted to improve outcomes (Graves, 2013; Mulder, Pearce, & Baik, 2014; Orsmond et al., 1996). Cho, Schunn, and Wilson (2006) use the term “scaffolded PA” to describe this general process.

In the present study, students took part in writing workshops prior to engaging in PA of their writing assignments. During these workshops, they were instructed how to use the rubric, applied the rubric to three sample papers, and received feedback from the instructor on how their qualitative and quantitative comments aligned with the instructor grades and comments on the same papers. These likely contributed to a level of comfort and proficiency with the rubric and assignment criteria that have possibly enhanced their abilities to provide accurate and reliable PAs. Moreover, training and clarity may have promoted a trusting environment in the classroom, which has similarly been shown to confer positive outcomes with PA (van Gennip et al., 2009). The positive findings of student and teacher perceptions of the PA experience and the moderately positive improvement of students’ writing skills when they employ PA in their classes possibly results from inclusion of several characteristics into the PA process.

The study employed reciprocal PA of writing (see section 5.1) using a well-defined rubric which was negotiated with the students before it reached its final form. The aim was to improve students’ writing performance and motivation towards writing and the assessment of writing. Both students and teachers received adequate training and support throughout the process by the researcher. Experimental group students used process writing (see section 3.2) and received both TA and PA while writing three essays, a pre- and a post-test essay. Findings related to the first research question, which explored the impact of PA on students’ writing performance, clearly indicated that PA of writing, when used in combination with

TA, can have a positive impact on students' writing performance. Experimental group students clearly outperformed control group students based on students' scores in all five aspects. These characterize writing performance at that level and were included in the PA rubric which was used as a point of reference for both teachers and students throughout the PA implementation. Gender did not seem to affect students' writing performance, while students' prior achievement did, since the findings indicated that PA was more beneficial for low-achievers.

Research findings related to the second research question which aimed to explore the quality of students' actual texts revealed that experimental group students have produced better texts overall with regard to the four indicators of writing quality as these have been described in the literature. PA had a significant effect on learners' writing performance regarding most of the indicators. The findings were moderately positive and suggested that PA can help students improve their lexical complexity, accuracy and some aspects of their grammatical complexity and fluency. This finding provides further proof than simply grades, which are not often considered as reliable and/or valid. Very few studies have conducted text analysis to clearly show improvement in students' writing performance. Moreover, no study, to the knowledge of the present researcher, has conducted text analysis of so many aspects of writing quality using such a - relatively - large sample in such a challenging setting. In the next section, the contribution of the study in various aspects is going to be explored to highlight the significance of the current study.

8.3. Contributions of the study

The current study is significant because it explored backwash effects of PA (Bachman, 1990) and provided a framework for conducting consequential validity research on PA of writing and other types of alternative assessment. The quality question in the case of PA as a tool for learning can be summarised by the concept of 'consequential validity' (Boud 1995; Saito and Fujita 2004). In relation to learning and instruction, consequential validity is an aspect of validity that needs further attention (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

Moreover, it is the only study, to the knowledge of the present researcher, that has used a semi-experimental design and involved large number of participants over a long-time frame, nine months, to explore the impact of PA on adolescent EFL students' writing performance and attitudes. It yielded some very interesting findings which clearly indicate that PA of writing can be used as a form of dynamic learning-oriented assessment with adolescent EFL students to improve their writing skills.

It highlights the role that PA can play in raising the consequential validity of an assessment/testing system in secondary education. First, it shows the type of impact that PA may have on learning (see section 7.2), and defines the design principles for increasing the consequential validity of an assessment system on language learning (see section 6.10, 7.4 and 7.5) (Chapelle, 1999; Kane, 2001; Messick, 1996). More specifically, this PhD thesis shows that PA can help students better understand the assessment/testing demands (see sections 8.4 and 8.5) (also in Gielen, 2007); it can provide a supplement for formative TA, and support students' response to TA by making it even more comprehensible for students (see section 7.4) (also in Tsivitanidou et al., 2011).

An additional pedagogical contribution of the current study is that its findings can help to create proper teaching materials for adolescent EFL learners. These can be implemented in teaching adolescent EFL learners to improve their writing skills. The results of the current study can also be used by teachers who try to implement PA, when teaching younger or even older students, not only English, but a variety of subjects with the aim of enhancing their students' learning.

The current study has also shown that PA can serve as a supplement to expert feedback. The pre-test post-test control group design examined the long-term learning effects of the use of PA and TA on writing assignments in secondary education (N=200). Moreover, it examined the added value of one more measure to support the response of the assessor and assessee to PA: a PA form which includes detailed statements to guide students in evaluating their peers' and their own work as well as their teachers.

The present study also compared strengths and weaknesses of PA and TA, from the student's perspective. Closed-ended questionnaire items were triangulated with qualitative data from the open-ended questions. Results showed that most students were willing to trade in the credibility of TA for the specificity of PA, if they had to choose between the two types of feedback (see section 7.4). However, both sources of feedback appeared to have their own strengths and weaknesses from the student's perspective. They were complementary and even provided the conditions under which the complementary source sometimes gave more accurate feedback.

The current study has also showed that PA can be used with adolescent EFL students to improve students' writing skills and their motivation although many researchers claim that PA can only be used with adults (Topping, 1998). The study has also indicated that writing improvement can occur in adolescent EFL classes when teachers choose to avoid the use of overly corrective feedback, but instead provide some comments, marks and PA in the form of a rubric. This twofold kind of feedback (PA and TA) helps students improve their writing skills more than providing only TA in the form of marks, some comments, and a lot of corrections as is the norm in EFL classes in Cyprus (Meletiadou, 2013).

The present study adds to the previous literature as it places emphasis on PA as a valuable learning tool which helps improve students' writing performance rather than process writing. Process writing is presented as a part of PA and not vice versa, as many experts in the field of writing would claim (see section 3.2). It also argues for the use of PA as a dynamic form of assessment which informs instruction and helps promote learning (Taheri & Dastjerdi, 2016). In that respect, PA can be used as a form of learning-oriented assessment which may bring fruitful results especially in relation to writing (see section 4.8).

The findings of this study provide support for the conceptualisation of the classroom as dynamic in nature and of learners as agents in their own learning (Symeon, 2014) (see section 4.8). While the participating teachers mediated learner writing and assessment strategies through classroom instruction, collaborative tasks, and PA training, it has also demonstrated that students had

ways of mediating their own writing processes through learner writing and assessment strategies: using the teacher, the PA rubric, and, most importantly, using peers. For example, it is evident in this study that PA practices played a prominent role in providing access to strategies and tools to students through instruction and explanations. Students later appropriated these strategies, such as revising their work using the PA checklist etc. This suggests that learner writing and assessment strategies are not uniquely cognitive activities, situated within the individual learner, but instead they are contextually situated social and cultural practices (Simeon, 2014).

This study made use of a quantitative and qualitative design. This has been an essential contribution of the study because, so far, most studies of PA have taken a descriptive approach exploring PA implementation over a short time frame with few participants and basing their findings on students' marks only (Sluijsmans et al., 2002b). Moreover, very few have used detailed questionnaires and interviews for teachers, and focus-group discussions for students, especially in the context of secondary education. This study has moved PA research a step forward as it studied the complexity of PA and embraced the notion of knowledge as socially constructed recognizing that all research is embedded within a system of values and promotes some models of human interaction (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 4).

Teachers were not merely implementers of PA in their writing classes for a month or two, as is the case in most PA experimental research studies (Topping, 2010). Instead, based on data collected on teachers' current practices in that particular context (Meletiadou & Tsagari, 2013), they focused attention on a particular problem - students being too dependent on them - which they knew existed but could not have addressed systematically in their classroom experiences. They chose to make a difference in their practices (their participation was voluntary) with relation to writing by integrating PA strategies with a process approach to teaching writing. What the participating teachers accomplished in this study, which borrowed some elements from the action research theory, is best explained by Stringer (2007, p. 188): 'One of the strengths of action research is that it accepts the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders - the theory each will hold to

explain how and why events occur as they do - and finds ways of incorporating them into mutually acceptable ways of understanding events that enable them to work toward a resolution of the problem investigated.'

In this study, several PA techniques (for example, use of a rubric, providing feedback to peers, receiving feedback from teacher and peers, making choices about the kind of revisions learners would make in their essays etc.) were identified and discussed in terms of the ways teachers mediated students' writing processes. As Van Lier (1996, p. 171) has pointed out, - in order to learn, a person must be active, and the activity must be partly familiar and partly new, so that attention can be focused on useful changes and knowledge can be increased. In this study, students used a variety of mediating resources in their writing processes. These included social agents (teachers and peers) and psychological tools such as the use of L1 and L2 in the PA rubric. Teachers could raise more explicitly students' awareness on the importance of these resources as a means of improving students' writing. As Donato and MacCormick (1994, p. 459) argue - individuals are active transformers of their world rather than passive recipients of input (including PA training and feedback). The findings of this study documented in Chapter 7 show that when teachers, for example, made use of suitable tools, such as PA, to assess students' writing, learners could make effective use of both TA and PA in their own writing and help their peers in their writing processes as well.

Another important pedagogical contribution of this study is that it lends support to establishing communities of writing practice (Symeon, 2014). For example, in this study, experimental group teachers systematically required their students to use PA as an essential instructional strategy to improve their writing skills. Teachers provided opportunities for some kind of collaborative creation, revision and discussion of texts by allowing their students to act as both peer assessors and peer assessees. This contributed to creating a community of learning where students helped peers to become more effective writers. In their journey from novices to experts, students were trying to learn the rules of community, socialise with other community members, and play their roles in the community (Symeon, 2014). This is a practice that is worthwhile promoting in EFL and in other subjects

in Cyprus, but also worldwide as well. It will assist students in their effort to better understand themselves as writers and the nature of writing. It will also help learners realize how writing contributes in the social aspects of their lives as EFL learners.

Moreover, the present study may act as a pilot study of a large-scale research project which could implement PA as a useful learning tool in Cypriot secondary schools to improve students' performance at the end of the year summative tests. The current study could therefore contribute to the project in terms of instrument design, refinement of instruments, and approaches to data analysis. The study contributes to the theoretical propositions of PA, especially to our understanding of PA in relation to formative use of summative assessment and the tensions between the two purposes in high-stakes contexts (Yin, 2003).

As the study shows, formative practices, such as using assessment information for adjustment in teaching and engaging students in peer-evaluation, seem to be limited by the pressure from external examination (see Table 31). This is the case when these practices are first introduced into a long existing high-stakes exam system such as the one at Cypriot State schools and EFL Institutes. In addition, in such a high-stakes context, when the assessment focuses on a certain aspect of language learning (e.g. writing in the case of the study), teachers tend to perceive the assessment as another 'exam paper' (also in Ying, 2010), rather than something that should be and can be integrated into the teaching and learning processes (see Section 7.6).

In applying the theories of educational innovation (see Chapter 3) (Hyland, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978 in VanPatten & Benati, 2010) as a framework for the investigation of factors that influenced the implementation of PA, the findings of the study point out the importance of student-related factors and suggest that students should be included as one significant component in the conception of "school capacity" (Ying, 2010). The study provided a detailed description of the context of the case study, including the students' demographic information, class structure, teaching staff, and the situation of English language education in Cyprus. The description allows readers in similar contexts to judge

whether and which findings and implications of the study are transferable to their own settings and allow them to plan how PA can be used in their own context to yield similar positive results.

The study has more significant practical implications for the future implementation of PA. The insufficient training (due to the context of the study which was not supportive, see Section 6.9.1) that teachers received suggests a need for teacher professional development with regard to the implementation of PA. Practical guidance and possible solutions to teachers' concerns would form an essential part of the teacher development program, for instance, on the ways of integrating the PA component into the normal curriculum and using the assessment information formatively to feed forward to the next stage of teaching and learning. What would be equally important, as the findings of the study indicate, would be professional development in assessment skills for both pre- and in-service teachers in Cyprus, particularly in relation to designing appropriate PA tasks, making sound judgment of student performance, and providing quality peer feedback. Yung (2001) argues that educational reform not only involves working with teachers to change how they think and act, but also relies on the shared beliefs among the whole community as support for the recommended changes. This is also valid regarding the implementation of PA in the context of EFL secondary education in Cyprus. My research can confirm this (Meletiadou, 2011; 2011b; 2012; 2013).

PA reflects the attempt of the education reform initiatives in many countries, i.e. England and Hong Kong (Black et al., 2012; I. Lee et al., 2013), to move from a testing culture to an assessment culture and promote all round education and life-long learning. Within the sociocultural context of Cyprus, where the stress on measurement and accountability has existed for a long time, the successful implementation of PA in the way it is intended needs promotion of "conversations about teaching and learning to become a more visible component of all the lives of all stakeholders and for a majority to understand the need for change, advocate reform, reconceptualize their goals and associated roles" (Yung, 2001, p. 266).

The study also has important implications for classroom practices in relation to the implementation of PA. At the teaching level, EFL teachers' effort of integrating PA into their normal teaching suggests that it is possible for PA to be implemented if appropriate training is provided to students who should participate in the creation of the PA instruments. Anonymous PA is also recommended to avoid problems among students due to enmity or friendship bias. Teachers should be encouraged to critically evaluate feedback they get from their students and their peers and make adequate changes to improve their essays. This kind of monitoring and intervention can steadily improve the feedback students provide to their peers and to themselves. The aim would be to improve students' essays even more.

At the learning level, the study found that students' potential of providing constructive feedback yet lacks confidence in doing so, and lack of trust to their peers implies more exposure for students in this aspect (see Section 7.4). Cycles of PA type of activities incorporated into the normal teaching as well as exposure to PA at an earlier age (during primary school), will provide ample opportunities for students to get familiar with PA. The development of students' skills in PA, as the findings of the study show, should be systematic rather than casual, by teachers clearly explaining the various domains of the marking criteria and involving students in using the criteria as often as possible.

Moreover, the current study has significant research implications. It may contribute to other intervention studies in terms of instrument design, refinement of instruments, and approaches to data analysis. It may assist researchers in applied linguistics who wish to use a semi-experimental design and involve a large number of participants over a long-time frame to explore PA or other linguistic phenomena. The present study is also of interest to researchers who wish to use rubrics, detailed questionnaires and focus group discussions with young and adolescent learners. It provides an insight into training students and teachers in assessment and using interviews with teachers. It may also help researchers who wish to use text analysis to explore writing improvement. The thorough description of the context of this study and the detailed PA implementation process scheme which is proposed can guide future researchers and allows transferability to other contexts. Researchers may adopt and examine the framework used in this study with

appropriate adaptations so that it can ideally fit into their research contexts. Finally, the current study informs future researchers regarding the constraints in conducting research in PA and formative assessment in general.

8.4. Pedagogical implications and recommendations

The current study has a number of pedagogical implications for teachers, parents and students. Firstly, instructors who ask their students to review their peers' writing should recall how difficult it is to accomplish with efficiency the tasks involved in responding to written scripts (see section 7.3.3.1). It can also be difficult, even for experienced writers, to respond effectively to the comments they receive from reviewers of their work. It is essential, then, that the teacher plans carefully the guidance s/he will give his/her students on how to conduct and utilize PA. Therefore, teachers need to identify the skills for PA like reading skills (locating a writer's main point etc.), writing skills (writing constructive comments), and collaboration skills (phrasing comments in a helpful way). Then, they need to develop a coherent plan by integrating PA into the course. Finally, they must formulate clear and specific instructions that students need to follow as they use the PA rubric to review a peer's essay. They should also show learners how to use the constructive comments they receive during PA.

Second, teachers are expected to emphasize the need of PA as an essential part of the writing process that all successful writers engage in, at some point. Teachers need to remind students that the process of writing involves three steps: drafting, revising, and editing. PA is helpful to student writers when it is utilized between the drafting and revision stages, or after each student has produced a complete draft, but while there is still time to make substantial changes. The purpose of PA as a prelude to revision is to help the writer determine which parts of the paper are effective as is, and which are unclear, incomplete, or unconvincing. A writer might learn to be more conscious after reviewing his/her peers.

To maximise the positive outcome of PA, issues like learners' proficiency level, tasks and monitoring must be addressed. The lesson should start with simple writing tasks to more challenging ones. This way, learners can be trained to give

their feedback step by step. Learners can also be coached to offer feedback at different levels namely on content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. PA processes can help students learn how to receive and give feedback which is an important part of most work contexts.

However, successful implementation and continuation of PA also rests upon a trained cadre of teachers. The current study has shown us how successful teachers create learning environments and evaluate their students' work using evidence based in interaction (Moss, 2003). It would be ideal if teachers participating in PA could be further supported through a university and school partnership (which was not a focus of the study) (also in Richert, Stoddard, & Kass, 2001). The faculty members of the university can work together with schools to provide external assistance and explore new possibilities, specifically to develop assessment within teachers' specific context at a pace and in a manner that best suits their needs. Taylor (2009) noted that "training for assessment literacy entails an appropriate balance of technical know-how, practical skills, theoretical knowledge, and understanding of principles, but all firmly contextualized within a sound understanding of the role and function of assessment within education and society" (p. 27) (also see Section 5.5).

A structural change in course design and assessment implies a serious effort on the part of teachers. Teachers often are not educated in instructional design or assessment. In-service training in topics such as PA, and instructional design increases the successful implementation of this new assessment approach. This approach requires both a top-down and bottom-up approach. Top-down in creating the conditions, such as time and training, bottom-up to create 'good examples' that can be deployed by colleagues. PA is mostly considered as a learning tool that supports students in their assessment skills. After adequate training, it is possible to use PA for summative purposes on the understanding that students are capable to assess a peer. Teachers need to assess if students acquired these skills by supervising closely the whole procedure.

To implement PA in writing, therefore, a supportive professional community of colleagues with a shared mission, vision, values and goals is essential (Fullan,

2009). For instance, the participating teachers could provide input to teachers new to the reform, organize workshops to share their experience in implementing PA with their colleagues, and acquaint them with the approaches they adopted as well as the difficulties encountered. Teachers could also formulate future action plans in collaboration with the rest of their colleagues and work with them through peer coaching, taking small steps progressively. Lasting support from the administrators is also needed; otherwise, innovations will become episodic (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Teachers could be granted greater flexibility and autonomy in planning and implementing the curriculum, so that PA could be integrated seamlessly into the existing curriculum. Also, school administrators could consider giving teachers more time to experiment with new ideas, to reflect, and to learn from the experience. While improvement in student learning is a legitimate goal, it is important to understand that time is needed for innovation to take root and that improvement in writing scores requires time and effort. When teachers undertake innovation, problems or even failures at the initial stage are sometimes inevitable because humans often learn by trial and error. Therefore, patience and support from school leaders are very much needed.

Assessment drives the learning process and overrides practically every other aspect of curriculum design (Longhurst & Norton, 1997). Instruction, assessment, and learning and teaching strategies have to be completely aligned (Ramsden, 1991). By involving students in the design of instruction and assessment, they become aware of how and on what knowledge and skills they are assessed. PA is an evaluative device, but in the way it is used in this study it is moreover a learning tool. The student is introduced as an important collaborator with the teacher in the creation of tasks as well as in developing guidelines for scoring and interpretation. By doing this, students will study in a particular way in the hope that this will improve their test performance, but there is virtually no way that students can 'learn by doing' in the way that they learn while engaging in a PA in which they were involved as one of the assessors (Frederiksen, 1984).

Both students and teachers professed in the interviews that there were areas of students' language proficiency that teachers could not see, nor access in the ordinary classroom assessment situation. The narrower the basis for assessment

is, the greater the risk that certain skills may be under-represented and that certain students and student groups may become marginalized. The power of assessment on a personal as well as a societal level should not be underestimated, as Heron (1988), Shohamy (2001a; 2001b) and Giota (2006), among others, point out.

In the current context, where assessment is used for accountability purposes (Tzagari & Pavlou, 2008), summative forms of assessments and large scale testing are still the main drivers of classroom instructions. Similarly, Ottevanger, Van den Akker, and de Feiter (2006) reported 'a lot of teaching to the test' with teachers focusing on topics and skills that appear frequently in the national examinations and devoting a lot of time acclimatizing students to examination-type questions. These classroom cultures which focus on summative forms of assessments impede assessment for learning and suggest misalignment between systemic assessment priorities and assessment for learning reforms.

Another main barrier to the adoption of assessment for learning is the misconception that PA and summative assessments are detached processes (Bennett, Kane, & Bridgeman, 2011; Gardner, 2012). Teachers view PA practices as different from summative forms of assessments. This perception results into low adoption of PA because summative assessment is prioritized. Teachers are inclined to focus on summative assessments because its results are used to communicate student's achievement, form part of students' academic record and criteria of school progress and teacher effectiveness within the accountability context (DeLuca, Luu, Sun, & Klinger, 2012).

Lack of positive personal experiences of PA among teachers is also a barrier. Evidence shows that innovative assessment approaches such as PA are yet to be integrated in teaching and learning process in many schools around the world (Ottevanger et al., 2006; World Bank, 2008). Thus, teachers have not had positive personal experiences with new assessment practices as students (Paulus, 1999). Assessment practices by these teachers may be shaped by their own experiences of assessment as students and they may continue to assess learning in conventional ways they experienced as students in a learning environment that centers on assessment for accountability (Harrison, 2005).

Lastly, the use of PA for improving learning may be practically constrained by shortage of time and large class sizes. Literature reiterates teachers' beliefs that traditional forms of assessment are more time efficient and valuable because they serve summative requirements and accountability demands (Hargreaves, Earl, & Schmidt, 2002; Mabry, Poole, Redmond, & Schultz, 2003). Even in countries where substantial numbers of teachers appreciate the potential of assessment for learning in improving student's achievement, teachers are concerned with the too much class time required to integrate assessment for learning. This limits the amount of curriculum teachers can cover (Morgan & Watson, 2002). The concerns for time become even more intense when the class size is large because the interaction and exchange between teacher and student on individual basis is compromised.

Changing classroom assessment practice is both emotionally and intellectually demanding to teachers because teachers will need to think about and find new ways of facilitating students' learning through assessment so that every learner attains the intended curriculum (Earl & Katz, 2006). Emotionally, teachers will have to abandon traditional views of transmitting knowledge and maintaining classroom control at the expense of redistributing learning responsibility to students including assessment responsibility.

Research continues to characterize teachers' assessment and evaluation practices as largely incongruent with recommended best practice (Popham, 2006). Stiggins (2008) states that teachers' assessment ill-literacy has resulted in inaccurate assessment of students, causing them to fail to reach their full potential. In an article published by Popham (2004), the lack of assessment literacy was presented as "professional suicide".

Assessment literacy is seen, therefore, as a sine qua non for today's competent educator. As such, AL must be a pivotal content area for current and future staff development endeavors (Inbar-Lourie, 2008a; 2008b). Teachers in Cyprus need to realize that becoming an EFL teacher and teaching (and assessing) in a confident, competent, creative and ethical manner is a challenging and complex learning process, where teachers can learn from their teaching (and assessment)

experiences, question the educational values, evaluate their own practice, and develop their teacher autonomy. To foster autonomy among learners, teachers should be both free and able to assert their own autonomy in the practice of teaching.

Writing as an increasingly needed skill has been given specific attention during the last decades. However, it has continued to be a major source of difficulty for most Cypriot EFL students (Tzagari & Pavlou, 2008). A major source of weakness is that in the Cypriot educational setting, and in this case, in writing classes, most teacher still have a product orientation, so emphasis is put on the product that learners finally produce, while underestimating the process of learning, peer-assessing and teaching via which the final product is obtained. The findings of this study, along with other studies conducted in this area, proved that PA which makes use of a process approach to writing was a more viable and efficient method of teaching writing which yielded positive results. Actually, the writing process is important because it gives a central position to learner's needs, expectations, goals, learning styles and skills. So, teachers in an EFL context are encouraged to integrate PA with a process-oriented approach in their classes and allow language learners to benefit from the task cognitively.

One further pedagogical implication is that through peer feedback the students were involved in the process of acquiring strategic competence in revising and evaluating a text. They could easily analyze textual problems, internalize the demands of different rhetorical modes, acquire a sense of audience, and in general become sensitive to the genre of the student essay. Moreover, in this way students became not only "better peer reviewers, but also conscientious writers who take responsibility for editing their own work" (Hu et al., 2010, p. 124).

The results of this study also form a strong case for utilizing PA rubrics in secondary classrooms. Providing instruction on how to use a PA rubric guided students to develop higher-quality writings. Additionally, rubric use relieved students of uncertainty about expectations and gave them the opportunity to be in control of their own writing success. Therefore, incorporating PA rubrics in daily

writing instruction is strongly recommended for students as young as possible, that is even in elementary schools.

It is concluded that, if the value of PA - in terms of employability skill development - is accepted, then it should be adopted as regular practice on secondary and even primary school programmes wishing to equip students with a complete repertoire of employment-relevant skills. The larger aim of the study was to see whether the use of PA could help students develop lifelong learning skills and in this way further the development of more comprehensive and, thereby, fairer assessment practices (also in Sluijsmans et al., 2004).

8.6. Suggestions for further research

In the current research, anonymous PA was undertaken to avoid enmity among students. Possibly, upcoming research projects could use and probe into a variety of PA approaches (e.g. random assessment) in search of the optimal ones. Apart from the investigation of the sociocultural factors that impact the PA practice, other dimensions including teacher beliefs, teacher conception of change, understanding of change process, teacher learning and the larger sociopolitical assessment landscape should be taken into account (Borg, 2003) when examining the teacher change in using PA strategies in the Cypriot context. These provide avenues for further research. Finally, any change in pedagogical assessment innovations takes time to be effective, and, thus, another future line of research entails the need to conduct the study over a longer time frame to find out how teachers' change efforts can be supported and sustained. Monitoring the assessment practices of teachers may become imperative to ensure that over-reliance on paper-and-pencil testing does not seriously distort instruction or impede important school improvement efforts. Teachers should be encouraged to embark on innovative approaches to assessment practices. However, tests should not be seen as a curse. The current study encourages the use of PA in the classroom to improve students' writing skills and enhance students' performance in external tests which are necessary to confirm students' progress in SLA.

A relevant question for future research is how the design of courses which aim to develop other skills i.e. speaking, and the design of assessment training is most

conducive to skill acquisition. It is also interesting to elaborate further on the relationship between PA skill acquisition and content skill acquisition, and to what extent domain expertise influences the development of assessment skills. Changing assessment practices and views on learning and the role of students in this, is a considerable challenge in teacher education. The success of sound assessment practices lies in a close relationship between learning, instruction, and assessment. Teachers and researchers are also encouraged to conduct observational studies to study the effects of PA and how various situational variables may influence PA.

Next, students' whole-class discussions and teachers' interview responses in this study have shed light on further consideration of involving students even more in decisions concerning the formation of the PA criteria and providing further training to both students and teachers. As training participants in PA and involving them even more in the formation of the assessment criteria are interdependent, the issue of how to enhance students and teachers' use of PA in the classroom by training them and involving them in the decision-making procedure is also worth investigating in future studies. Additionally, it could be helpful to investigate the effects of different class sizes on learners' writing skills development and their writing performance when using PA. Another point drawn from both teachers and students' PA questionnaires and interviews is that intellectual ability, leadership skills and learning responsibility appear to be three aspects students need to develop further. Since these three aspects can be involved in good characteristics of autonomous learners, further research on how to reinforce these aspects for learners could be helpful for all parties, learners, teachers and relevant stakeholders.

Future research could also use three groups of students, a TA only group, a PA only group and a TA and PA group to explore the differences in students' writing performance as this was not attempted in the current study due to context constraints.

To conclude, there is already a great amount of research concerning PA and the implications that exist for using it. However, it would be interesting to see more on

how PA is actually used and what students and teachers think of it. A follow-up study of implementing PA in secondary education in a variety of subjects could also be useful to show whether similar results could be obtained if the current study was replicated in a similar context. Furthermore, it would be rewarding to see research in elementary schools, since much of the research made on PA is carried out in universities. In conclusion, much has been learnt about PA and its dynamics already, but a few areas are still more or less unexplored and ready to be researched.

8.7. Concluding remarks

The current study examined PA of writing employed as a learning tool for developing the writing skills of a group of Cypriot intermediate EFL adolescents and both the learners and teachers' attitudes towards this innovative approach. The PA approach helps change a competitive learning atmosphere to a more collaborative one in the classroom, improves students' writing performance, raises awareness of their own learning processes, and develops students' socio-cognitive skills. The current study aimed to explore the impact of PA on students' learning because if we want Ss to learn more and become better learners for their lifetime, the consequential validity of the assessments is a precious jewel to handle with care. The interest for the consequential validity of assessment is in alignment with the view of assessment as a tool for learning (Gielen et al., 2003). New modes of assessment have a positive influence on the learning of students, on the one hand by stimulating the desired cognitive skills and on the other hand by creating an environment, which has a positive influence on the motivation of students.

While there is limited research regarding use of PA in secondary education, the findings of the present study are consistent with previous research (Patri, 2002; Tsui et al., 2000). This may be due to the incorporation of characteristics that have been previously shown to support positive findings, such as training, use of a clear rubric with well-defined criteria, promotion of a trusting environment, use of peer and instructor grading, and provision of directive and non-directive feedback. This study therefore builds on previous work and suggests that use of a carefully

designed PA activity may provide students with useful feedback that improves their performance on a writing assignment.

On account of the relatively large class size in the Cypriot EFL State secondary school context and the dynamic learners with various levels of English proficiency, it is a real challenge equating what a teacher teaches with what individual learners eventually learn. Hence, in a heterogeneous classroom, fostering learners' self-reliance is suggested to narrow the difference between faster and slower learners. The use of the PA as a learning tool in the EFL writing classes in the current study can help develop Cypriot EFL students intellectually, emotionally and interactively. This study suggests that equipping non-native English speaking learners with PA skills, which they can use in their effort to develop through assessment their writing skills, probably represents a contemporary practice that is a response to the challenges of EFL in heterogeneous and large classes. Strengthening learners' socio-cognitive potential can be deemed to be one of the achievable goals of promoting learners to have both eligible IQs and EQs to become "quality global citizens" (Puengpipattrakul, 2014).

PA offers a 'face-saving' setting that encourages collaboration and analytical thinking towards providing constructive feedback necessary for students to improve their writing skill. Therefore, using PA in language learning could contribute to a more meaningful learning experience where students benefit from their peers' experience and linguistics resources.

In the current study, students' writing performance improved as a result of the combination of PA and TA. Their post-treatment essays showed maturity in thinking, improved awareness of the genre in hand, wider range of vocabulary, proper language use, fluency (length of the essays) and better organisation. Consistent assessment of their work heightened their awareness and consciousness of mistakes made. By engaging in PA, they had the opportunity to look at things from different perspectives, those of the teacher and their fellow students who may have had a different mentality and/or level of proficiency in writing. Students also became competent to respond to the comments received from PA feedback to construct a more reader-friendly essay. Finally, some of the

weaker students demonstrated increased cognitive development, while better students gained from the deliberation of ideas. Through PA, students have also developed social skills when they were opened to criticism, learnt to revise their work after thinking critically about the feedback they got, and became independent of the instructor. These skills are vital in developing learner autonomy.

The results of the surveys administered to both teachers and students suggested that, even though most of the students and teachers had no PA experience prior to the study, regardless of their proficiency levels, students held positive attitudes towards PA before and after the PA exercises. The participants identified numerous benefits of the PA activities and expressed their wish to have PA together with TA in the future. Students' motivation and engagement is another factor that contributes to peer feedback, and this can bring both writing improvement and social benefits (Hu, 2005). Their positive attitude to peer feedback can enable students to benefit from the activity both as givers and receivers (Lundstrom et al., 2009a).

Moreover, the findings of this study have important implications for PA practice in similar contexts. When peer feedback does not seem to work, instead of jumping to the conclusion that such an activity does not suit the learners in the context, there are important questions that teachers can ask and reflect on - for example, does the PA activity cater to the needs of students? Does grouping facilitate effective PA? Are students allowed to use L1? Have teachers provided PA training? This study examined students' PA for five essays only. If PA studies are to be conclusive, related investigations must cover large samples, abundant course units, and participants from distinct educational backgrounds (Bouzidi et al., 2009). It is preferable researchers will adopt and examine the framework used in this study with appropriate adaptations so that it can be ideally fit into their research contexts.

It should be understood that there is no single approach to successful adoption of PA which can enhance students' learning and rise standards (Yu, 2002). However, emphasis should be on the provision of concrete examples of what and how should teachers do. Concrete examples if accompanied with context based

professional support will increase teachers' confidence to try out and consequently adopt assessment practices such as PA that exploit assessment's power in enhancing students learning.

In conclusion, the current study makes a significant contribution to the field of applied linguistics by proving that PA is a valid assessment method since it enhances student learning (Moss, 1998). Students were very supportive of the activity, and showed a significant grade improvement following revision subsequent to PA and TA, with lower graded papers showing the greatest improvement; learners improving their writing performance in all five aspects (mechanics, organization, content, focus, vocabulary and language use), and students improving the writing quality of their essays pertaining to lexical complexity, accuracy and some aspects of grammatical complexity and fluency. Teachers were also satisfied with the overall outcome of the PA implementation. With the support of students and teachers' favorable reactions, moderately positive improvement in students' writing performance in almost all aspects of writing and benefits brought about by PA, this study concludes that PA is a viable alternative to involve students in the assessment process and promote independence in secondary education.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Permission granted from the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ

ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΜΕΣΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

Αρ. 7.15.01 .25.8.2/3
Αρ. τηλ Ν 22800630/631
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1 Νοεμβρίου 2013

Κυρία
Ελένη Μελετιάδου

Πάτροκλου Κόκκινου 11
2201 Γέρι

Θέμα: Παραχώρηση άδειας για διεξαγωγή έρευνας

Αναφορικά με τη σχετική με το πιο πάνω θέμα αίτησή σας στο Κέντρο Εκπαιδευτικής Έρευνας και Αξιολόγησης, ημερομηνίας 25/10/2013, πληροφορείστε ότι το αίτημά σας για διεξαγωγή έρευνας, με θέμα «Ετερο-αξιολόγηση: ένα πολύτιμο εργαλείο μάθησης για τη βελτίωση του γραπτού λόγου στο Μάθημα της Αγγλικής ως Ξένης Γλώσσας στη Μέση Εκπαίδευση», στα πλαίσια έρευνας για την απόκτηση διδακτορικού τίτλου σπουδών στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου, εγκρίνεται. Νοείται ότι θα λάβετε υπόψη τις εισηγήσεις του Κέντρου Εκπαιδευτικής Έρευνας Αξιολόγησης οι οποίες επισυνάπτονται, και θα τηρήσετε τις ακόλουθες προϋποθέσεις:

1. θα εξασφαλίσετε τη συγκατάθεση των Διευθυντών των σχολείων τα οποία θα συμμετάσχουν στην έρευνα,
2. η συμμετοχή των μαθητών και των καθηγητών θα είναι προαιρετική,
3. θα εξασφαλίσετε τη γραπτή συγκατάθεση των καθηγητών και των γονέων των μαθητών που θα συμμετάσχουν στην έρευνα,
4. δε θα επηρεασθεί ο διδακτικός χρόνος και η ομαλή λειτουργία των σχολείων για τη διεξαγωγή της έρευνας,
5. θα χειριστείτε τα στοιχεία των εμπλεκόμενων με τέτοιο τρόπο, ώστε να διασφαλιστεί πλήρως η ανωνυμία τους, και τέλος,
6. τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας θα κοινοποιηθούν στο Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού και στα σχολεία που θα σας παραχωρήσουν διευκολύνσεις για τη διεξαγωγή της.

Ευχόμαστε καλή επιτυχία στους ερευνητικούς σας σκοπούς.


Στάββας Αγιωάνιου

Appendix II: Parental permission for participation
Topic: Students' participation in a peer assessment study

Dear parents,

Your children will have the opportunity to participate in a PA program which aims at improving student's writing skills and motivation through an innovative assessment method which fosters learning. The European Union supports the implementation of PA as an 'alternative' assessment method which promotes learning in teaching languages (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010). Peer assessment has been implemented in various developed countries of the world such as the U.S.A., the UK, Canada, Norway, Finland, China etc.

Your children will receive training in using peer assessment, that is in assessing their classmates through the use of a checklist and will then be asked to use both peer feedback and teacher feedback to improve their writing skills.

Permission for carrying out the programme has been obtained by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

I am looking forward to your cooperation.

The EFL teacher of your children

.....

I.....parent/guardian ofof the
4th grade of theState Institute approve/do not approve
the participation of my child in the peer assessment program.

Signature

.....

Appendix III: Teachers' consent form

Dear colleagues,

My name is Eleni Meletiadou and I am a PhD Candidate at the Department of English studies, University of Cyprus and one of your colleagues at KIE. In terms of my PhD Thesis which is supervised by Dr. Dina Tzagari, I am conducting a research which will explore the impact of peer assessment and teachers' assessment on the EFL students' writing performance. I would like to ask you to take part in my research.

First of all, I will meet you before the implementation and explain the whole procedure. I will ask for the written consent of all parents/guardians whose children will participate in the study. Teachers will ask their students to write five essays in terms of teaching EFL writing at the intermediate level (according to the Curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education): (a) an informal letter at the beginning and the end of the implementation, (b) a description of a person, (c) a story, and (d) an article.

Students and teachers can withdraw from the procedure at any time they wish. There is not going to be any loss of teaching time as there is not going to be any change in the syllabus/curriculum. The anonymity of all participants is guaranteed. All information collected from the study will be held strictly confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

I,(full name) declare that I would like to participate in the study you are conducting. I give my consent to conduct research in my class (name of class) at(name of KIE).

I would like to thank you for your support. For any further information, you may contact me:

Eleni Meletiadou (emelet01@ucy.ac.cy / 99681362)

Appendix IV: EFL essay scoring rubric (Description)

Criteria/Weighting	18-20 A	15-17 B	11-14 C	6-10 D	0-5 E
A. Content					
1. The essay fulfills the task fully.					
2. The main ideas are clear.					
3. The main ideas are well-supported with helpful details.					
4. The ideas are relevant to the topic.					
5. The purpose of the essay is clear to its readers.					
B. Organization					
6. The essay has an introduction, body and conclusion.					
7. There is logical sequence of ideas.					
8. There is effective use of transition within across paragraphs.					
9. There is effective use of transition across paragraphs.					
10. The writer uses paragraphs to separate his/her ideas when writing.					
11. The writer uses paragraphs with a clear focus and purpose.					
12. The writer uses simple linking devices.					
C. Vocabulary and Language Use					
13. The vocabulary is sophisticated and varied, i.e. use of unusual adjectives.					
14. There is effective word choice and usage, i.e. the meaning is clear.					
15. The writer uses simple constructions effectively.					
16. The writer uses complex constructions effectively.					
17. There are errors of tense.					
18. There are errors of subject/verb agreement.					
19. There are errors of number (singular /plural).					
20. There are errors of word order.					
21. There are errors of articles.					
22. There are errors of pronouns.					
23. There are errors of prepositions.					
24. All sentences are well-constructed.					
25. All sentences have varied structure.					
D. Mechanics					
26. There are problems with spelling.					
27. There are problems with handwriting.					
28. There are errors of punctuation.					
29. There are errors of capitalization.					
E. Focus					
30. There is a clear sense of purpose.					
31. There is a clear sense of audience.					
32. There is a consistent point of view.					
33. The writer is writing within the correct mode (descriptive) throughout the essay. Take the following list of points into consideration.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introductory paragraph has a strong attention grabber that is appropriate. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer uses descriptive language. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is thoroughly focused on the topic being described. 					

• The writer uses present tenses.					
• The writer includes information about his/her character's appearance.					
• The writer includes information about his/her character's hobbies/ interests.					
• The writer includes his/her personal feelings about the person.					

Additional open-ended comments:

1. Write three of the essay's main strengths.

.....

2. Write three of the essay's main weaknesses.

.....

Suggestions for revision

1. Write three specific recommendations concerning the revision of this paper.

.....

Analytic score: Content: /4, Organization: /4, Vocabulary and Language use: /4,
Mechanics: /4, Focus: /4, **Total score:** /20.

Holistic score:

18-20 A	15-17 B	11-14 C	6-10 D	0-5 E
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Appendix V: EFL essay scoring rubric (Article)

Criteria/Weighting	18-20 A	15-17 B	11-14 C	6-10 D	0-5 E
A. Content					
1. The essay fulfills the task fully.					
2. The main ideas are clear.					
3. The main ideas are well-supported with helpful details.					
4. The ideas are relevant to the topic.					
5. The purpose of the essay is clear to its readers.					
B. Organization					
6. The essay has an introduction, body and conclusion.					
7. There is logical sequence of ideas.					
8. There is effective use of transition within across paragraphs.					
9. There is effective use of transition across paragraphs.					
10. The writer uses paragraphs to separate his/her ideas when writing.					
11. The writer uses paragraphs with a clear focus and purpose.					
12. The writer uses simple linking devices.					
C. Vocabulary and Language Use					
13. The vocabulary is sophisticated and varied, i.e. use of unusual adjectives.					
14. There is effective word choice and usage, i.e. the meaning is clear.					
15. The writer uses simple constructions effectively.					
16. The writer uses complex constructions effectively.					
17. There are errors of tense.					
18. There are errors of subject/verb agreement.					
19. There are errors of number (singular /plural).					
20. There are errors of word order.					
21. There are errors of articles.					
22. There are errors of pronouns.					
23. There are errors of prepositions.					
24. All sentences are well-constructed.					
25. All sentences have varied structure.					
D. Mechanics					
26. There are problems with spelling.					
27. There are problems with handwriting.					
28. There are errors of punctuation.					
29. There are errors of capitalization.					
E. Focus					
30. There is a clear sense of purpose.					
31. There is a clear sense of audience.					
32. There is a consistent point of view.					
33. The writer is writing within the correct mode (article) throughout the essay. Take the following list of points into consideration.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article contains six components of a news story ('who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'how'). 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article is written with the most important information first. 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article contains an interesting lead which hooks the reader. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article contains many creative details that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The last paragraph ends with a catchy phrase. 					

Additional open-ended comments:

1. Write three of the essay's main strengths.

.....

2. Write three of the essay's main weaknesses.

.....

Suggestions for revision

1. Write three specific recommendations concerning the revision of this paper.

.....

Analytic score: Content: /4, Organization: /4, Vocabulary and Language use: /4,
Mechanics: /4, Focus: /4, **Total score:** /20.

Holistic score:	18-20	15-17	11-14	6-10	0-5
	A	B	C	D	E

Appendix VI: EFL essay scoring rubric (Story)

Criteria/Weighting	18-20 A	15-17 B	11-14 C	6-10 D	0-5 E
A. Content					
1. The essay fulfills the task fully.					
2. The main ideas are clear.					
3. The main ideas are well-supported with helpful details.					
4. The ideas are relevant to the topic.					
5. The purpose of the essay is clear to its readers.					
B. Organization					
6. The essay has an introduction, body and conclusion.					
7. There is logical sequence of ideas.					
8. There is effective use of transition within across paragraphs.					
9. There is effective use of transition across paragraphs.					
10. The writer uses paragraphs to separate his/her ideas when writing.					
11. The writer uses paragraphs with a clear focus and purpose.					
12. The writer uses simple linking devices.					
C. Vocabulary and Language Use					
13. The vocabulary is sophisticated and varied, i.e. use of unusual adjectives.					
14. There is effective word choice and usage.					
15. The writer uses simple constructions effectively.					
16. The writer uses complex constructions effectively.					
17. There are errors of tense.					
18. There are errors of subject/verb agreement.					
19. There are errors of number (singular /plural).					
20. There are errors of word order.					
21. There are errors of articles.					
22. There are errors of pronouns.					
23. There are errors of prepositions.					
24. All sentences are well-constructed.					
25. All sentences have varied structure.					
D. Mechanics					
26. There are problems with spelling.					
27. There are problems with handwriting.					
28. There are errors of punctuation.					
29. There are errors of capitalization.					
E. Focus					
30. There is a clear sense of purpose.					
31. There is a clear sense of audience.					
32. There is a consistent point of view.					
33. The writer is writing within the correct mode (story) throughout the essay. Take the following list of points into consideration.					
• The story has a well-thought-out setting i.e. answering who? when? where? why?					
• The story has well-thought-out characters.					
• The essay uses past tenses.					
• The story contains many creative details that					

maintain the reader's interest.					
• The writer uses many descriptive words and action verbs.					
• It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face.					
• The writer wrote a story with a clear opening, build-up, events, resolution and ending.					
• The introduction, main body and conclusion of the story are suitably balanced, clearly distinguished and logically related.					

Additional open-ended comments:

1. Write three of the essay's main strengths.

.....

.....

2. Write three of the essay's main weaknesses.

.....

.....

Suggestions for revision

1. Write three specific recommendations concerning the revision of this paper.

.....

.....

Analytic score: Content: /4, Organization: /4, Vocabulary and Language use: /4,
Mechanics: /4, Focus: /4, **Total score:** /20.

Holistic score:	18-20	15-17	11-14	6-10	0-5
	A	B	C	D	E

Appendix VII: EFL essay scoring rubric (Informal letter)

Criteria/Weighting	18-20 A	15-17 B	11-14 C	6-10 D	0-5 E
A. Content					
1. The essay fulfills the task fully.					
2. The main ideas are clear.					
3. The main ideas are well-supported with helpful details.					
4. The ideas are relevant to the topic.					
5. The purpose of the essay is clear to its readers.					
B. Organization					
6. The essay has an introduction, body and conclusion.					
7. There is logical sequence of ideas.					
8. There is effective use of transition within across paragraphs.					
9. There is effective use of transition across paragraphs.					
10. The writer uses paragraphs to separate his/her ideas when writing.					
11. The writer uses paragraphs with a clear focus and purpose.					
12. The writer uses simple linking devices, e.g. 'and', 'also', etc.					
C. Vocabulary and Language Use					
13. The vocabulary is sophisticated and varied, i.e. use of unusual adjectives.					
14. There is effective word choice and usage, i.e. the meaning is clear.					
15. The writer uses simple constructions effectively.					
16. The writer uses complex constructions effectively.					
17. There are errors of tense.					
18. There are errors of subject/verb agreement.					
19. There are errors of number (singular /plural).					
20. There are errors of word order.					
21. There are errors of articles.					
22. There are errors of pronouns.					
23. There are errors of prepositions.					
24. All sentences are well-constructed.					
25. All sentences have varied structure.					
D. Mechanics					
26. There are problems with spelling.					
27. There are problems with handwriting.					
28. There are errors of punctuation.					
29. There are errors of capitalization.					
E. Focus					
30. There is a clear sense of purpose.					
31. There is a clear sense of audience.					
32. There is a consistent point of view.					
33. The writer is writing within the correct mode (informal letter) throughout the essay. Take the following list of points into consideration.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The letter starts with Dear...or another type of greeting. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reason for writing is clearly given in the first paragraph. 					

• The letter has been signed off correctly, e.g. 'Best, ...'					
• The letter delivers the necessary message.					
• The letter states clearly what the sender would like the recipient to do.					
• The writer uses an informal tone and language and informal connectives, e.g. too.					
• Adverbs and nouns are used to make it interesting and add detail.					
• The letter includes a range of adjectives to describe things which make it sound interesting.					

Additional open-ended comments:

1. Write three of the essay's main strengths.

.....

2. Write three of the essay's main weaknesses.

.....

Suggestions for revision

1. Write three specific recommendations concerning the revision of this paper.

.....

Analytic score: Content: /4, Organization: /4, Vocabulary and Language use: /4,
Mechanics: /4, Focus: /4, **Total score:** /20.

Holistic score:	18-20	15-17	11-14	6-10	0-5
	A	B	C	D	E

Appendix VIII: Teachers' PA questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to answer the questionnaire.

Code number: _____

Personal Information [Please tick the appropriate box (es)]

1. Your gender

Male Female

2. Your age:

20-29 30-39 40-49 50+

3. I learned English

as a mother tongue as a second language as a foreign language

4. I have been teaching English for

1-3 years 4-6 years 7-10 years 11-14 years 15 years and above

5. My educational qualifications (Select all that apply):

Bachelor's degree Master's degree Doctorate (PhD/EdD)

6. I have taught English language at the following level(s) according to the CERF:

A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2

(Please circle your response)

SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, N=neutral, A=agree, SA=strongly agree

A. General		SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	The primary purpose of PA is to assess learners.	SD	D	N	A	SA
2.	Language classes should be teacher-centered.	SD	D	N	A	SA
3.	PA is beneficial for learners.	SD	D	N	A	SA
4.	PA could strengthen responsibility.	SD	D	N	A	SA
5.	PA enhances students' autonomy.	SD	D	N	A	SA
6.	PA offers another feasible choice for evaluation.	SD	D	N	A	SA
7.	PA is a useful teaching strategy.	SD	D	N	A	SA
8.	PA increases motivation.	SD	D	N	A	SA
9.	PA promotes reflection.	SD	D	N	A	SA
10.	PA is time-consuming.	SD	D	N	A	SA
11.	PA is unreliable.	SD	D	N	A	SA
12.	PA is invalid	SD	D	N	A	SA
13.	PA is hard to monitor.	SD	D	N	A	SA
14.	PA cannot be implemented due to students' passive attitudes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
15.	PA cannot be implemented due to students' low English proficiency.	SD	D	N	A	SA
16.	PA provides fair judgements when it is anonymous.	SD	D	N	A	SA
17.	PA assesses aspects of students' written English that cannot be evaluated by the teacher or by formal exams.	SD	D	N	A	SA
18.	PA has a beneficial impact on teaching and learning particularly in relation to the development of writing skills.	SD	D	N	A	SA
B. How well prepared are you to conduct PA?		SD	D	N	A	SA
19.	I have a good understanding of the requirements of PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
20.	I have a good understanding of the procedure of PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
21.	I have a good understanding of the marking criteria of PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
22.	I have a good understanding of the underlying assessment philosophy of PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
23.	I have plenty of opportunities to attend professional development courses on PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
24.	I have plenty of opportunities to discuss PA with other teachers.	SD	D	N	A	SA
25.	I have plenty of opportunities to discuss the processes and scoring criteria for PA with my students.	SD	D	N	A	SA
26.	Teachers should have some sort of background about classroom assessment.	SD	D	N	A	SA
27.	I have incorporated PA tasks into my regular curriculum.	SD	D	N	A	SA
28.	I put more emphasis on giving my students feedback.	SD	D	N	A	SA
29.	I involve students in PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
30.	I understand the concept of PA in instruction.	SD	D	N	A	SA
C. PA and learners		SD	D	N	A	SA
31.	I think PA helps shy and nervous students improve their writing performance.	SD	D	N	A	SA
32.	I think PA helps weak students improve their writing performance.	SD	D	N	A	SA
33.	I think PA benefits students with higher language skills.	SD	D	N	A	SA
34.	I think PA helps identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing.	SD	D	N	A	SA
35.	I think PA increases students' study workload excessively.	SD	D	N	A	SA
36.	I think PA makes students nervous.	SD	D	N	A	SA
37.	PA makes students understand more about teachers' requirements.	SD	D	N	A	SA
38.	PA activities increase the interaction between the teacher and the students.	SD	D	N	A	SA
39.	PA helps students develop a sense of participation.	SD	D	N	A	SA
40.	PA activities increase the interaction among students.	SD	D	N	A	SA

41.	I think students are eligible to assess their classmates' performance.	SD	D	N	A	SA
42.	I believe that PA improves students' critical thinking.	SD	D	N	A	SA
43.	I feel comfortable if students assess other students' work.	SD	D	N	A	SA
44.	Teachers should consult their students about how to assess them.	SD	D	N	A	SA
45.	PA helps students improve their knowledge about English grammar in writing.	SD	D	N	A	SA
46.	PA helps students improve their ability in organizing ideas and contents in their writing.	SD	D	N	A	SA
47.	Students learn to improve and edit their writing after practicing PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
D. What are your overall impressions about PA?						
48.	I think I welcome the inclusion of PA in teaching EFL writing to students.	SD	D	N	A	SA
49.	I think PA can enhance teacher collaboration and sharing of expertise within school.	SD	D	N	A	SA
50.	I think PA can enhance collaboration and sharing of expertise across schools.	SD	D	N	A	SA
51.	I think PA can develop teachers' professional skills and knowledge of assessment of learning.	SD	D	N	A	SA
52.	I think PA benefits students because they have more than one opportunities to be assessed.	SD	D	N	A	SA
53.	I think PA can be incorporated into the regular curriculum/syllabus.	SD	D	N	A	SA
54.	I believe that students will be extremely forced with PA.	SD	D	N	A	SA
55.	I think that PA is a waste of time.	SD	D	N	A	SA
56.	I think it is very difficult to apply PA in my classrooms.	SD	D	N	A	SA
57.	I think that PA is appropriate for every student.	SD	D	N	A	SA
58.	I think that PA is not necessary.	SD	D	N	A	SA
59.	I believe that PA can make a great contribution to education.	SD	D	N	A	SA
60.	PA impacts the way students write their essays.	SD	D	N	A	SA
61.	Incorporating PA into classroom activities is a difficult task.	SD	D	N	A	SA
62.	Teachers do not have the skills to implement PA appropriately.	SD	D	N	A	SA
63.	PA may increase teaching efficiency.	SD	D	N	A	SA
64.	PA makes students more cautious and helps them pay more attention on the details in their own writing.	SD	D	N	A	SA
65.	PA helps learners learn about errors and remember them better.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Part E. Open questions						
Please answer the following questions.						
66.	What are/were the positive aspects (if any) of undertaking the PA exercise?					
67.	What are/were the negative aspects (if any) of undertaking the PA exercise?					
68.	What do/did you like the <i>best</i> or the <i>worst</i> about the PA process?					
69.	What impress/impressed you the most about the PA process?					
70.	Would it be/Was it a successful experience for you to use the PA in this course?					
71.	What other comments do you have about the PA?					
72.	Did you change your attitudes after using PA? If yes, please explain why you changed your attitudes.					

Appendix IX: Students' PA questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to answer the questionnaire. Confidentiality is guaranteed.
The results will not affect your grades whatsoever.

Class: _____ Code number: _____

(Please circle your response)

SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, N=neutral, A=agree, SA=strongly agree

A. Attitudes towards PA		
1	I think PA helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.	SD D N A SA
2	PA motivates me to do my best work.	SD D N A SA
3	I think it helps me become well-organized and careful.	SD D N A SA
4	As a learning tool, PA is very useful.	SD D N A SA
5	PA makes students understand more about teachers' requirements.	SD D N A SA
6	It makes me feel responsible for my own and others' learning.	SD D N A SA
7	PA is appropriate for assessing writing skills at this level.	SD D N A SA
8	I think PA helps weak and shy students improve their writing performance.	SD D N A SA
9	I believe that I should learn how to provide/receive PA.	SD D N A SA
10	I benefit from receiving assessment from my peers.	SD D N A SA
11	PA is an effective way of helping me reflect upon and improve my writing performance.	SD D N A SA
12	I think that the idea of PA is a waste of time.	SD D N A SA
B. PA and writing		
13	I think the PA process should be introduced in every writing class.	SD D N A SA
14	I think PA must be incorporated into the regular curriculum/syllabus.	SD D N A SA
15	I prefer receiving assessment from my peers as well.	SD D N A SA
16	I can improve my written work as a result of the reviews that I received or wrote.	SD D N A SA
17	I enjoy providing/receiving PA.	SD D N A SA
18	I think that PA is not appropriate for every student.	SD D N A SA
19	It would be useful for me to do PA during the whole school year.	SD D N A SA
20	I benefit from providing assessment to my peers.	SD D N A SA
21	I feel more relaxed to read my classmate's feedback on my writings.	SD D N A SA
22	PA assesses aspects of Ss' written English that cannot be evaluated by the teacher.	SD D N A SA
23	After the PA exercise, I will understand the meaning of the assessment criteria better.	SD D N A SA

Part C. Open questions Please answer the following questions.	
24	What are/were the positive aspects (if any) of undertaking the PA exercise?
25	What are/were the negative aspects (if any) of undertaking the PA exercise?
26	What do/did you like the best or the worst about the PA process?
27	What impresses/impressed you the most about the PA process?
28	Generally, did you find it useful to read and comment on your peer's paper? Why or why not?
29	Generally, did you find your peer's feedback useful in revising your essay(s)? Why or why not?
30	In your opinion, what are the differences between TA and PA? Which one do you prefer and why?
31	Was/Is it a successful experience for you to use the PA in this course?
32	What did/do you learn about writing during the PA process?
33	Did you change your attitudes after you used PA? If yes, please explain why you change your attitudes. For example, you like/liked the experience of being able to evaluate your peers or you found it difficult to assess your peers especially your friends?
34	Did/Do you follow your peer's suggestions and implement them in the final draft of your essays? _____ YES _____ NO. Why or why not?
35	What other comments do you have about the PA?

Appendix X: Teachers' semi-structured interview questions

1. Have you ever had experience with peer assessment (PA) as a student? If yes, could you describe your experience?
2. Have you ever used PA in your classes? If yes, please describe.
3. What kinds of assessment methods did you usually employ to evaluate students before the study?
4. Isn't it the teacher's job to undertake assessment?
5. Would you agree to use multiple assessment methods in your classes, for example, TA and PA? Why or why not?
6. What are your perceptions of students' use of PA?
7. In your opinion, what are the overall limitations/disadvantages and advantages of using PA?
8. How comfortable were you with implementing PA?
9. Have you seen any changes in students' writing skills? If so, what are they, and are changes more prevalent in specific domains? If no, why do you think no changes occurred? Explain.
10. Why do teachers shy away from PA?
11. What do you think about PA as a way to empower students and involve them in the assessment process? Do you think it is effective?
12. What do you think about giving students some power of negotiating the assessment criteria?
13. What were the problems you had during the process of PA?
14. Do you think your students evaluated their peers in a fair and responsible manner? Please explain why.
15. Did your students become autonomous and independent learners after experiencing the PA exercise? If not, please give some reasons.
16. Do you think the results of the PA accurately reflect your students' ability or performance? If not, why?
17. Were you satisfied with the results of incorporating the PA for teaching and assessing in this course?
18. In what ways did the PA help you as a teacher?
19. Do you think PA is a useful assessment method?
20. In your opinion, how can you improve the PA exercise?
21. Did students generally have positive attitudes towards the PA? If not, why?
22. Did the motivation of students increase because of the PA exercise?
23. From your observations, were there any differences between students with higher English proficiency level and the ones with lower English proficiency level? For example, students with higher English proficiency level assessed their peers more accurately and fairly?
24. Would you recommend PA to your colleagues?
25. Do you think PA should be incorporated in an EFL curriculum? Why?
26. Students say PA is just a way of saving the teacher's time. Is that true?
27. Isn't it the case that students lack the knowledge or experience to carry out the task?
28. Don't students find assessing themselves or their peers stressful?
29. It takes teachers long enough to get through their marking. Won't students doing it just take too long?
30. Students may not want to be involved in assessment. How can you persuade them to give it a try?
31. How should teachers prepare their students for PA?
32. Describe the students' experience: the positives, the challenges, and any suggestion for future implementation?
33. Would you consider using PA next school term? Why or why not? If yes, would you change anything during the process? Explain.
34. Would you consider using PA as a supplementary assessment method in the future?
35. Any final comments?

Appendix XI: Focus group semi-structured discussion questions

1. Did you have any previous experience with PA?
2. Were you able to understand your peers' comments and their marks?
3. Did you use any ideas from the PA form?
4. What kind of corrections did you make? (significant, minor and in relation to what in your essay? i.e. grammar?)
5. Which feedback did you consider as effective, your teacher's or your peer's?
6. Do you prefer to receive or provide PA anonymously?
7. Do you know any ways in which PA could work better, i.e. how can your teacher help you?
8. Did you need PA in any way, while you corrected your essay? If so, how would you use it? If not, why not?
9. Did providing PA to others yield any benefits to you? If so, which were the benefits? If not, why not?
10. Would you prefer to get PA from your teacher and your peers or only from your teacher or only from your peers? Why?
11. What kind of assessment do you prefer? (marks, corrections, comments, recommendations for corrections)?
12. As a teenage student who learns English at the intermediate level, do you believe that you can fairly and reliably assess your classmates? Please explain why?
13. Which were some of the difficulties you encountered during PA?
14. Do you believe that PA helped you become an independent learner?
15. Did you understand the assessment criteria better?
16. Do you believe that the results of PA reflect your skills or your performance appropriately?
17. Do you believe that PA can be used in EFL? Why?
18. What do you believe about the ability to negotiate the assessment criteria with your teacher?
19. Would you like to participate in PA in the future?
20. Based on your experience, which were the benefits and pitfalls of PA?
21. What do you believe about PA? Which are the parts of PA that you like more? Which parts of PA do you like less?
22. Was it difficult to assess your classmates?

Appendix XII: One way-Manova tests for the experimental groups (prior achievement and genre)

Multivariate Tests for genre								
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power b
Wilks' Lambda	.982	.352a	5.000	94.000	.880	.018	1.761	.136
Multivariate Tests for prior achievement								
Wilks' Lambda	.663	4.251a	10.000	186.000	.000	.186	42.509	.998
a. Exact statistic b. Computed using alpha=.05								
Multiple Comparisons								
Tukey HSD								
Dependent Variable	Prior achievement		Mean difference	Std.Error	Sig.			
mechanics	Excellent-medium		-.93*	.341	.020			
	Excellent-low		-1.67*	.343	.000			
	Medium-excellent		.93*	.341	.020			
	Medium-low		-.73*	.150	.000			
	Low-excellent		1.67*	.343	.000			
Low-medium		.73*	.150	.000				
focus	Excellent-medium		-.27	.401	.773			
	Excellent-low		-.98*	.404	.046			
	Medium-excellent		.27	.401	.773			
	Medium-low		-.70*	.176	.000			
	Low-excellent		.98*	.404	.046			
Low-medium		.70*	.176	.000				
organization	Excellent-medium		-.47	.410	.481			
	Excellent-low		-1.06*	.413	.030			
	Medium-excellent		.47	.410	.481			
	Medium-low		-.59*	.180	.004			
	Low-excellent		1.06*	.413	.030			
Low-medium		.59*	.180	.004				
content	Excellent-medium		-.77	.349	.074			
	Excellent-low		-1.33*	.352	.001			
	Medium-excellent		.77	.349	.074			
	Medium-low		-.56*	.153	.001			
	Low-excellent		1.33*	.352	.001			
Low-medium		.56*	.153	.001				
vocabulary	Excellent-medium		-.69	.392	.189			
	Excellent-low		-1.31*	.395	.004			
	Medium-excellent		.69	.392	.189			
	Medium-low		-.62*	.172	.001			
	Low-excellent		1.31*	.395	.004			
Low-medium		.62*	.172	.001				
Based on observed means								
The error term is Mean Square(Error) = .733								
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.								