

PEER FEEDBACK AND GOOGLE DOCS IN VERB TENSE USAGE

The Role of Peer Feedback Through Online Word Processors in Acquiring Accuracy on Simple  
Past Tense Usage

Luis Fernando PRIETO SERRATO

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Directed by Carl Anderson  
Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures  
Universidad de La Sabana  
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## PEER FEEDBACK AND GOOGLE DOCS IN VERB TENSE USAGE

### Declaration

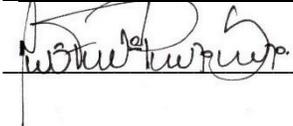
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### **Abstract**

This research project aims to analyze the role of peer feedback through an online word processor in the improvement of simple past tense usage, with 10 to 12-year-old fifth-graders from a private Colombian bilingual school. The students are classified at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and after the analysis of various writing samples, their difficulties to use the simple past tense in written texts were evident. This project tracks their improvement in using the simple past tense accurately, as a result of collaborative work and peer feedback received from one another, when writing narrative texts, on an online word processor (Google Docs). The analysis of the data obtained during the implementation process through surveys, artifacts, checklists, semi-structured interviews, and a researcher's journal suggests that the participants improved their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense when writing thanks to the peer feedback strategy provided through the selected online word processor. Additionally, the participants increased their lexical variety and language awareness. Further research would enrich the discussion about the role of social interaction in the co-construction of knowledge regarding accuracy, as well as in the development of lexical variety.

*Key words: Accuracy; peer feedback; writing skills; simple past tense; online word processor.*

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de este proyecto de investigación es analizar el rol de la retroalimentación entre pares a través de un procesador de textos en línea para mejorar el uso del tiempo pasado simple, con alumnos de quinto grado de 10 a 12 años de edad de un colegio bilingüe colombiano. Los estudiantes se clasifican como A2 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las

Lenguas (CEFR). Después del análisis de varias muestras de escritura, se evidenciaron sus dificultades para usar el pasado simple en textos escritos. Este proyecto hace un seguimiento de su progreso, como resultado del trabajo colaborativo y la retroalimentación entre pares recibida entre ellos, al escribir textos narrativos en un procesador de textos en línea (Google Docs). El análisis de los datos obtenidos durante la implementación sugiere que los participantes mejoraron su precisión en el uso de verbos en pasado simple al escribir, gracias a la estrategia de retroalimentación entre pares proporcionada a través del procesador de textos en línea seleccionado. Además, los participantes aumentaron su variedad léxica y su conciencia frente al lenguaje. Investigaciones futuras enriquecerían la discusión sobre el papel de la interacción social en la co-construcción de conocimiento con respecto a la precisión en el uso del lenguaje, así como en el desarrollo de la variedad léxica.

*Palabras claves: Precisión, retroalimentación de pares, habilidades de escritura, pasado simple, procesadores de texto en línea.*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the study**

Language acquisition is a multistage process. O'Grady (2001) has described it as a “developmental sequence leading to the emergence of mature linguistic competence in the areas of phonology, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax” (p. 359). Brown (2007) argues that comprehension skills are usually developed faster than production skills. However, there is an interconnection between comprehension and production skills when it comes to learning a language. Learners need to decode a language in order to produce it, and vice versa (El-Koumy, 1997). Declarative knowledge (e.g. reading skills) supports the development of procedural knowledge (e.g. writing skills), thanks to the learning strategies used in the learning process of the target language (Chan, Chin, Nagami, & Suthiwan, 2011; Harmer, 2007). Additionally, written and oral discourses need to be structured in a manner that they are understood by readers or listeners for effective communication to happen (Harmer, 2007).

The writing process implies communication between the writer and the reader through the text (Hyland, 2016). In other words, the writing process is not a unidirectional process but implies social interaction. This characteristic of the writing process can be used as a feature that can help L2 learners improve their writing skills if we encourage them to provide feedback to one another in their writing. In fact, providing peer feedback in the writing processes is a strategy that sets the conditions for learners to “enter into dialogues related to performance and standards” (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280). Moreover, there are currently technological tools, such as online word processors, that, due to their characteristics, allow collaborative feedback to take place in real-time (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com/>) was chosen for the present study because it is an online word processor

that enhances interaction and collaboration in writing and allows learners to provide peer feedback during their writing processes. The present study examined the effects of combining a peer-feedback strategy with the use of a word processor (Google Docs for the case of this study) on the writing skills of L2 English-learners; such an approach may also be relevant to other learner populations, such as other university or school students, with access to similar kinds of tools.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

### **1.2.1 Rationale for the problem of the study**

#### *1.2.1.1 Needs analysis and problem statement*

The participants considered for this study were 14 students from a private school in La Calera, Colombia. Fifty percent of the students were girls, and the other fifty percent were boys. Their average age was 11.4 years. The first instrument used to identify the problem to be studied was their results on the English Cambridge KET exam (“A2 Key for Schools,” n.d.), taken by the participants as part of the school’s curriculum. According to their results, they were classified at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), and it was evident that writing was the communicative skill for which the participants had more improvement opportunities. Twelve of them scored just 6 or less out of 10 possible points in the exam’s open cloze questions related to grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.

To better determine which area of writing skills the participants most needed strengthened, they were required to write a narrative text as a writing pre-test (Appendix A), which was corrected and analyzed using a checklist (Appendix A.1) to record the mistakes they made with different language aspects, such as capitalization, spelling, subject-verb agreement, and accuracy in the usage of verb tenses. After analyzing the results of the writing pre-test, it

was established that 25 out of the 28 students made mistakes related to simple past tense: the area in which more mistakes were committed (Appendix A.1.1). Therefore, the problem of accuracy in simple past tense usage in writing texts was selected for examination by the current study, and peer feedback was chosen as the strategy to address this problem.

### ***1.2.1.2 Justification of the problem's significance***

Writing is a fundamental skill that needs to be strengthened at school, because “through writing, we create, store, and communicate knowledge, build up social networks, develop projects, inform colleagues and customers, and generate the basis for decisions” (Perrin & Jakobs, 2014, p. 1). The use of technology is leading us to use handwriting less every day since people do not need to necessarily take a pencil and a pen to express their ideas in writing (Suddath, 2009). Nevertheless, people still need to produce written texts to express their ideas, opinions, arguments, and feelings (Yildirim, 2014). In the writing process, there is no face-to-face contact between the author and the reader to explain a point or stimulate the reader's interest. Writing needs to be accurate for its message to be communicated effectively, which requires precise writing skills (Kaiser, 2016). In fact, the process of writing accurately requires a process (planning, drafting, and revising) if the writer is to express their understandings in such a way that the reader can clearly understand them (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

Accuracy is defined as “the ability to produce target-like and error-free language” (Housen, Vedder, & Kuiken, 2012). In the case of the present study, as might happen in other similar EFL contexts, the participants' accuracy in the usage of the simple past tense was not high because it was determined, the students paid attention to correct *meaning* when producing

written texts but they struggled to pay attention to *form*, not least when writing verbs in the simple past tense (Ellis, 2012).

### **1.2.2 Rationale for the strategy selected to address the problem of the study**

One of the aspects to be considered in the learning process of an L2 is the affective domain, defined by Brown (2007) as “the emotional side of human behavior”. He argues that “second language learners need to be receptive both to those with whom they are communicating and the language itself” (p. 153). Based on this understanding, various studies have demonstrated that students tend to improve in the development of their writing skills and become better writers when they receive peer feedback, since students feel more comfortable and open to feedback when it comes from their classmates (Anjarwati, 2017; Benson, 2006; Bijami, Kashef, & Nejad, 2013; Topping, 2009). Additionally, in a controlled context, in which students with more solid writing skills are paired with those who need to strengthen them, students can become more critical of their own written productions, since by checking someone else’s work they develop a self-awareness of their own areas to improve (Kim, 2015). In writing processes, peer feedback is a strategy that can increase student confidence, since it brings a social context to the writing process (Bijami et al., 2013). This can positively affect students’ motivation and, therefore, their performance in writing tasks. In the present study, the strategy of peer feedback was expected to positively affect the students’ performance in writing tasks since they would not feel the pressure of being assessed by a teacher or tutor (M. Gielen & De Wever, 2015).

Having the students working collaboratively, from the constructivist perspective, should lead to improved writing skills. As suggested by Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development theory, understood as the “distance between learners’ existing developmental state and their potential development” (Vygotsky, 1978), learners achieve results they ignore they can achieve

when working with peers under certain stimuli conditions (Brown, 2007). That is why using a strategy such as peer feedback, mediated through an online word processor such as Google Docs, can create a collaborative atmosphere in which English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners interact and learn from each other while developing greater accuracy in their writing.

### 1.3 Research question(s) and objective(s)

Considering the evidence about the participants' problems with simple past tense usage found through the needs analysis made to identify the problem of study (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), as well as the benefits peer feedback can have on the development of writing skills in EFL learners (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), this research project's objectives were:

1. To analyze the effects of providing peer feedback on the usage of the simple past tense in writing tasks.
2. To evaluate the role of online word processors in supporting peer feedback for written tasks.

The research question that guided this study was: "How does online peer feedback affect the development of accuracy with the simple past tense in writing with A2 EFL 5th grade students?"

### 1.4 Conclusion

Learning an L2 can be a long process in which skills are developed at different stages and paces. Comprehension competence is developed before production competence, and learners are believed to comprehend much more than what they can produce (Brown, 2007). When analyzing the writing samples taken from the participants in this study, simple past tense usage was identified as the area in which all of them made the most mistakes (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**); this problem with grammatical accuracy of verb tense

was therefore chosen as the focus of the present study. Accurate use of verb tense is important in formal and informal writing because it helps the writer to convey their message and communicate their ideas more effectively (Perrin & Jakobs, 2014). Peer feedback was chosen as the strategy to tackle the focus problem of the current study because it has been shown to have a positive impact on learning processes in different contexts (Bijami et al., 2013). An online word processor was chosen for use in the present study's pedagogical intervention because of its characteristics that facilitate collaborative work and immediate feedback in an interactive way while maintaining a record of the entire process (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). All these elements combined to help the participants improve their writing skills through improving their accuracy with the simple past tense (of English verbs) in their writing.

The following chapter (Chapter 2) explains writing as social interaction, as well as the reasons that peer feedback can be an effective strategy for helping learners strengthen their writing skills. The chapter explores the concept of accuracy in EFL learning and the ways it can be measured for research purposes to focus on the problem explored in this study regarding the accurate use of verbs in the simple past tense in writing. It also explains the choice of Google Docs as the tool selected for participants to provide feedback to one another and establishes social interaction as the common ground between the problem of focus (grammatical accuracy in writing), the strategy (peer feedback), and the tool (online word processors) used in the present study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the problem identified as the focus for the present study (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) concerned the participants' accuracy with the usage of the simple past tense in written texts, where accuracy is understood as "the ability to produce target-like and error-free language" (Housen, Vedder, et al., 2012). Peer feedback was selected as the strategy to tackle this problem (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) because it brings a social context to writing tasks and also because learners can feel more comfortable receiving feedback from peers rather than from teachers (Bijami et al., 2013). An online word processor (in the case of the present study, Google Docs, <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>) was chosen as the vehicle for providing peer feedback due to the desirability of a tool whose characteristics allowed participants to receive their peers' feedback with immediacy and in an interactive manner.

This chapter, Chapter 2, presents writing as a social act between the *writer* the *reader* and the *text* (Hyland, 2016), as well as the concept of accuracy, understood as the ability to produce a L2 without mistakes, considering the target language as a model (Hammerly, 1991; Housen & Kuiken, 2009; A. C. Lahuerta, 2018; Pallotti, 2009; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). The chapter also explores different perspectives on how accuracy can be measured (Housen, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012; Pallotti, 2009). Additionally, the chapter considers the characteristics good quality feedback should have – clear criteria, generates change, timely, focused on task – (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 1989), and shows how the interactions generated through peer feedback can support the development of collaborative learning, thinking skills, and social skills,

among other side benefits (Bijami et al., 2013; Topping, 2009; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). Furthermore, Google Docs is presented as the tool chosen for the present study for the participants to provide feedback to each other, since its features allow social interactions, collaborative learning, and immediacy (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). The state of the art presented in this chapter shows that different studies have been conducted to establish the role of peer feedback in the improvement of writing skills (Anjarwati, 2017; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; Jones, 2008; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; N. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nilson, 2003), as well as on how to improve and measure accuracy in writing (Evans, Hartshorn, Cox, & Martin de Jel, 2014; Kuhl, Rasuli, & Deylami, 2014; A. Lahuerta, 2017; Polio, 1997; Polio & Shea, 2014; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998), and on the role of Google Docs in the development of collaborative writing skills (Chu, Kennedy, & Mak, 2009; Rienzo & Han, 2009; Seyyedrezaie, Ghonsooly, Shahriari, & Fatemi, 2016; Vallance, Towndrow, & Wiz, 2010; Zhou, Simpson, & Domizi, 2012). However, unlike the present study, none of those studies have integrated the problem (grammatical accuracy in writing), the strategy to tackle it (peer feedback), and the tool to implement such strategy (Google Docs), through their common feature: social interaction. And there is where the importance of the present study lays.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

### **2.2.1 Writing Skills**

Writing is a multidimensional experience; people write for different purposes, about different topics, through different genres and modes, and reflect on different stages of the writing process itself (Elbow, 1999). This makes mastering writing a long and difficult process, especially when students see evaluation as the sole purpose for writing (Elbow, 1999). Certainly, one of the purposes of writing in primary and secondary contexts is to support the

development of certain skills that are themselves needed to help students produce more effective texts and help them reflect on what they write so that ideas clearly express the connections they make between concepts (Moos & Holder, 1988). However, as suggested by Hyland (2016), writing is also a social act that takes place in different contexts and is influenced by many factors, such as personal attitudes and prior experiences. In fact, beyond the act of writing itself, Hyland suggests that there are three dimensions to be considered in the writing process that coexist with and structure what writing is: the *text*, the *writer*, and the *readers*. The *text* dimension focuses on structure and implies that writing is a final product that “is accurate and conveys the writer’s meaning explicitly” (p. 5). The *writer* dimension considers *personal creativity*, the *cognitive processes*, and the *immediate context* as key elements that influence writing. At the same time, the *reader's* dimension focuses on the implicit interaction that happens between the writer and the reader, as well as the choices the writer makes, anticipating the desired reader’s response.

Hyland’s three dimensions of writing are closely related to the processes of peer feedback, particularly the *reader's* dimension, with the presence of interaction between the *writer* and the *reader*, although in the case of peer feedback such interaction is oriented toward improving the *text*. During the implementation phase of the present study, described in section 4.3.2, writers and readers interacted through texts, participating in communicative interactions aiming to enhance understanding and co-construction of knowledge in terms of the usage of the simple past tense accuracy. Also, in the present study, special attention was also given to the *text* dimension, since grammatical accuracy (the correct usage of the simple past tense) was the problem of focus.

### 2.2.2 Accuracy

Based on Foster and Skehan (1996), the present study considers three different aspects of language production: *complexity*, understood as the learner's capacity to take risks and produce more complex language structures; *fluency*, or the capacity to use language in real-time, using more idiom-based (instead of rule-based) language; and *accuracy*, which "may be the result of relatively simple, well-controlled forms being used to achieve a more target-like use of language" (Skehan & Foster, 1996, p. 304). Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) define accuracy as "the ability to be free from errors while using language to communicate in either writing or speech" (p. 33). Furthermore, various authors (Hammerly, 1991; Housen & Kuiken, 2009; A. C. Lahuerta, 2018; Pallotti, 2009; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998) suggest that EFL learners' accuracy is determined through a comparison between their L2 production and the established norms for the target language. When it comes to writing, the "effectiveness of a piece of writing will be determined in part by its accuracy" (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012, p. 165), and that is why writing accuracy was the focus of the present study.

Although the characteristics of what accuracy is in L2 production seem to be clear, Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder (2012) suggest that the nature of the mistakes made in terms of accuracy, as well as their identification and evaluation, might be difficult to research. In this regard, Pallotti (2009) analyses how errors might be classified in different ways by considering the extent to which they compromise communication or the developmental sequence stage of an L2 learner. Polio (1997) has also studied the ways that different researchers use different approaches to measure linguistic accuracy. Therefore, accuracy is not a construct that can be measured or studied in a standardized fashion. Bearing in mind these perspectives, in the present study, accuracy was measured in terms of the knowledge the participants had about a specific

grammar item (Tonkyn, 2012): the usage of verbs in simple past tense. During the implementation phase, as explained in section 4.3.2, a corpus of verbs (Appendix I) was identified by students as the most used in narratives. Accuracy was measured by obtaining the percentage of mistakes made by students in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense (out of the total simple past tense verbs produced in a writing assignment).

### **2.2.3 Feedback**

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define *feedback* “as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p. 81). However, as feedback is formative, it also informs teachers about their own teaching practice and the choices they need to make to support the students’ learning process (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Quinton & Smallbone, 2010; Sadler, 1989). When it comes to students, the main purpose of feedback is to generate actions for learners to close the gap between their actual performance and the desired performance; otherwise, that feedback would turn into loose, purposeless information (Butler & Winne, 1995; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Mory, 2004; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 1989; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018).

However, there remains considerable debate over what makes feedback effective or good quality (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 1989). To produce good quality feedback, many researchers suggest that learners need to know and understand in advance the goals, assessment criteria, or level of achievement for the tasks they must perform, as well as the purpose of those tasks. Another characteristic of good quality feedback is that it should inform students on how to close the gap between their current level of achievement or understandings and the expected set

criteria for the tasks. Furthermore, some authors (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006) suggest that good quality feedback must also be timely since that helps ensure the feedback remains relevant for the students' learning process. When feedback is provided with delay, it may be too late for students to improve their outcomes or deepen their understandings. Besides the characteristics that have been presented, Nicol and MacFarlane (2006) note other features that good quality feedback should have: it facilitates self-assessment, encourages teacher and peer dialogues around learning, and encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem (p. 205). Similarly, Gibbs and Simpson (2004) argue that feedback should focus on the task, not on the students themselves or their characteristics. For the present study, during the implementation phase described in Chapter 5, the participants gave each other feedback in a timely manner, based on previously established criteria, providing information to close the gap between their understanding and the desired outcomes, and they were also expected to take action based on the feedback received.

In like manner, feedback can be *implicit* when mistakes themselves are not pointed out but their correction is encouraged using recasts or clarification requests (Adams, Nuevo, & Egi, 2011). However, in the present study, students were instructed to use *explicit feedback* through explicit correction and the use of metalinguistic information (Adams et al., 2011). The participants were instructed to provide *explicit feedback* in a corrective way, which means they had to make an explicit identification of their peers' mistakes in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense and provide comments to help correct those mistakes (Adams et al., 2011). This kind of *corrective feedback* implies the verification of the correctness of the texts produced by learners, and the subsequent provision of information about how to correct the mistakes made (Mory, 2004). This process is important because when learners explain, clarify, and exemplify

information about a topic, they are intellectually challenged and are more likely to obtain cognitive gains (Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

### ***2.2.3.1 Peer Feedback***

Various authors (Adams et al., 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Mory, 2004; Quinton & Smallbone, 2010) suggest that feedback is a social interaction between learners, in which they negotiate the resolution to a problem in a given context. They argue that feedback should go beyond informing learners about correctness. It should become a dialogue in which the agent providing feedback and the one receiving it establish new actions to be taken to foster success in the learning process. These interactions among learners, known as peer feedback, also influence the development of thinking skills, help them construct new knowledge, and deepen their understanding of concepts.

It has been noted (Bijami et al., 2013; Topping, 2009; Yarrow & Topping, 2001) that peer feedback can provide various benefits in the language learning process. For example, it can help students work collaboratively on the identification of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as with developing plans for overcoming their difficulties, which can ultimately help them develop better metacognitive skills (Topping, 2009). Additionally, feedback can support the development of different language skills, encourage student participation in class, help develop social skills and critical thinking, and provide a social context for writing tasks, which can increase motivation towards them (Bijami et al., 2013). Peer feedback also helps guarantee that learners obtain more individualized and immediate feedback in writing tasks than feedback provided by teachers or instructors (Yarrow & Topping, 2001), which is a factor that has been shown to have positive effects on learning processes in different contexts (Kulik & Kulik, 1988; Shute, 2008). In the case of the present study, immediacy was encouraged throughout the use of

an online word processor, as its characteristics (presented in section 2.2.4), which facilitate timely interaction between users.

However, there have been doubts about whether L2 learners can provide good-quality peer feedback to their classmates (Brandl, 1995; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Some challenges associated with peer feedback have been related to poor quality resulting from the learners' lack of experience in providing feedback (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nilson, 2003). However, although some students might consider that the feedback received from their classmates to be not as good as the feedback they receive from their teachers, they might also prefer receiving feedback from their peers since they do not feel as emotionally affected (N. Liu & Carless, 2006). Since "a reliable assessment depends on knowing what one is trying to assess and by what means one comes to an accurate judgment" (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280), in the present study, learners were instructed in how to provide good quality feedback and what to provide feedback about (S. Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, 2010; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nilson, 2003; Shute, 2008).

Peer feedback in this study is seen as "a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards" (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280). The main reason this strategy was chosen is that the participants were expected to interact with one another and use comments to report on each other's accuracy with the simple past tense in writing tasks. However, the students were not expected to give grades or marks to their counterparts, since the study also aimed to reduce the stress students can feel when receiving feedback or grades from teachers (Bijami et al., 2013).

#### 2.2.4 Google Docs

A word processor is a software application that is designed to write, edit, customize, and digitally store, documents (Covaleski, 2018). Nowadays, computers usually come with at least a basic preinstalled word processor. More advanced word processors might come at a price. However, there are some online word processors that can be used for free (Covaleski, 2018), such as Google Docs (<https://docs.google.com/>), part of Google Apps (<https://apps.google.com/user/hub>), a Web 2.0 package that, unlike conventional “first generation” Web pages, allows users to work collaboratively in the construction of content (“7 things you should know about Google Apps,” 2008). Multiple users can work simultaneously on the same Google Docs document and see the changes made by each other in real-time (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). Users can also chat on the document and see other people’s chats (Gralla, 2010), a feature that permits the kind of immediacy that is useful for peer feedback, as discussed in section 2.2.3.1. As all documents created with Google Docs are stored on Google servers, users of Google Docs can access their documents from anywhere with an Internet connection (Conner, 2008). Additionally, just like most other word processors, Google Docs allows users to insert comments in the document. The advantage of Google Docs is that comments are received in real time, even if the users are working in different locations (Ruby Yang, 2010).

Section 2.2.1 highlighted the social role of writing, which is seen as a dialogue between the *writer* and the *reader* through the *text*, which means there is an inherent social interaction in the writing process itself. Likewise, in section 2.2.3.1, peer feedback was presented as “a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards” (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 280). Google Docs was chosen in the present study as

the tool for participants to provide feedback to their peers, because it allows interaction between them (Conner, 2008; Gralla, 2010; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010) and it allows the immediacy feedback requires to be effective (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). In other words, Google Docs is a technological tool that is aligned with the social dimension that writing and peer feedback have.

## **2.3 State of the art**

### **2.3.1 Previous research on peer feedback in writing**

Peer feedback in English L2 writing has long been a subject of study (Anjarwati, 2017; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; S. Gielen et al., 2010; Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nilson, 2003; Osmani, Pajaziti, & Terziu, 2017; Shute, 2008; Topping, Smith, Swanson, & Elliot, 2000). Most studies have found peer feedback to have a positive effect on the improvement of grammatical accuracy not less effective than the traditional feedback learners usually get from their teachers. Other studies have reported additional collateral benefits from peer feedback, such as the development of self-assessment skills (Topping et al., 2000) and improved writing skills for those students who provided feedback (Chanski & Ellis, 2017). Students have also reported that they have felt that their concerns about writing processes are addressed with greater immediacy through peer feedback, which can affect their writing skills positively (Anjarwati, 2017; Kulik & Kulik, 1988). Further studies have found that to guarantee good quality feedback, learners need to be instructed about how and what kind of feedback they should provide (S. Gielen et al., 2010; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nilson, 2003; Shute, 2008). However, there has been little research about the effect of using online word processors to improve the immediacy of peer feedback and any attendant effects on the accuracy of verb tense usage in writing tasks. This might be

because, unlike this study, previous researchers have focused their work on other aspects of peer feedback as a strategy (efficacy, conditions), disregarding the element of social interaction, which online word processors can facilitate, and which is a common feature of both peer feedback and the writing process itself.

The present study, in contrast, found common ground between the problem addressed (grammatical accuracy in writing), the strategy chosen to tackle that problem (peer feedback), and the tool used to implement the strategy (Google Docs), which is that they all involve or facilitate social interaction. Such social interaction mediated through Google Docs helped the participants discuss their written work in real-time, encouraging greater immediacy in the provision of peer feedback (Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Zhou et al., 2012). Additionally, using Google Docs during the implementation of the present study allowed students to work autonomously, both in and out of class, if needed (“7 things you should know about Google Apps,” 2008; Conner, 2008).

### **2.3.2 Previous research on accuracy**

Various studies on accuracy have assessed the conditions that can help L2 learners learn to write with greater accuracy and how accuracy should be measured to support research (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012; Evans et al., 2014; Francis, Romo, & Gelman, 2002; Kuhl et al., 2014; A. Lahuerta, 2017; Nosratinia & Razavi, 2016; Polio, 1997; Polio & Shea, 2014; Saadi & Saadat, 2015; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Yılmaz, 2016). Polio (1997; 2014) and Wolfe-Quintero (1998) have analyzed the work of various theorists on the effects of different measures of accuracy (for example, holistic scales, error per clause, error-free clauses, error-free clauses per sentence, error-free T-units, error-free T-units/total T-units, error per t-unit, error classification systems, error counts, errors/words). Both conclude that it is not possible to

determine whether one measure of accuracy is better than another, since they all have different focuses, and it depends on what the teacher wants to focus on for error identification. The present study focused on the accuracy of simple past tense usage in writing, and accuracy was measured by considering the number of errors out of the total number of verbs in simple past tense used by the participants in their writings.

Equally important, some studies have focused their analyses on the types of texts that participants write. Kuhl (2014) compared how students at different proficiency levels performed when writing different types of texts – narratives, and cause and effect – in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). In general terms, he concluded that, in the case of advanced and intermediate students, accuracy was not significantly affected by the type of texts participants wrote. Similarly, Lahuerta (2017) compared texts written by CLIL and non-CLIL students and concluded that the accuracy errors made by the participants did not vary significantly because of their learning background, although CLIL students tended to perform slightly better than non-CLIL students. In the case of the present study, narrative texts were chosen as the products students wrote, since this type of text usually provides more opportunities for students to use verbs in the simple past tense.

The type of feedback provided by the participants to their peers was another aspect that was considered in the present study. Some studies (Azizian & Rouhi, 2015; Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Saadi & Saadat, 2015; Sato, 2013; Shafiee Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2015; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018) have compared the effects of different types of feedback (written corrective feedback, metalinguistic corrective feedback, revision-mediated feedback, attention-mediated, feedback) on grammatical accuracy in writing. Most of these studies agree that corrective feedback can have a positive effect on the development of accuracy

in writing. Some studies (Azizian & Rouhi, 2015; Sato, 2013) have focused on the effects of corrective feedback provided by peers, finding that corrective feedback can have a positive effect on grammatical accuracy in writing, even if the agent providing feedback is not the teacher. Considering this, participants in the present study were instructed to provide corrective feedback to their peers.

### **2.3.3 Previous research on Google Docs in collaborative writing**

A number of studies regarding the effect of Google Docs in collaborative writing, both in English L1 and L2 contexts, have been conducted (Chu et al., 2009; Riaño Casallas, 2013; Rienzo & Han, 2009; Seyyedrezaie et al., 2016; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Vallance et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2012); all recognize the benefits this tool can provide for collaborative writing. For example, it has been noted that some students find it beneficial that this tool can reduce the need for face-to-face meetings when working collaboratively (Vallance et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2012). Another study found out that students working in collaborative writing tasks through Google Docs reported better results than those students working collaboratively in face-to-face collaborative writing settings because they felt more motivated (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014). Additionally, learners perceive Google Docs as a user-friendly tool, which can motivate them more during their learning process and make them consider using the tool for other purposes in the future (Chu et al., 2009; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014).

The present study uses the collaborative work and interaction opportunities that Google Docs offers to potentialize the social role of writing and peer feedback and thereby support the participants' efforts to improve the accuracy when using the simple past tense in writing. This approach could also help tackle different kinds of problems with writing that other populations might face, as it encourages learners to interact and learn from each other.

### 2.3.4 Justification of research question and objectives

Writing skills are an opportunity for students to express, revise, and reflect upon learned concepts, as well as a form of social interaction (Hyland, 2016; Moos & Holder, 1988). The *text*, the *writer*, and the *reader's* dimensions of the writing process, as presented in section 2.2.1, are the components that make the writing process a social act (Hyland, 2016). The interaction between the writer and the readers through the text was the main reason the present study selected peer feedback as the strategy to address the participants' problems with accurate use of the simple past tense in written texts. Peer feedback permits interaction between learners that can lead to improved performance in writing tasks (Luo & Liu, 2017). Additionally, peer feedback has been shown to help learners develop social and thinking skills (Bijami et al., 2013; Topping, 2009). Likewise, immediacy in feedback also benefits the learning process in different contexts (Kulik & Kulik, 1988; Shute, 2008). Various studies (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012; Saadi & Saadat, 2015; Shafiee Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2015) have shown that corrective feedback can have a positive effect on grammatical accuracy in writing, and that an online word processor such as Google Docs can support collaborative work and interaction in real-time between users working on a text (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). However, there have been no studies addressing all of the mentioned elements at the same time, probably because researchers have not focused on the common ground all these elements share: social interaction. Thus, the current study used the potential of social interaction to address problems with accuracy in writing, providing a different perspective on how peer feedback and technological tools (online word processors) can be used to support EFL teaching-learning processes.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Numerous studies have analyzed the role of peer feedback in the improvement of writing skills (S. Gielen et al., 2010; Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Nilson, 2003; Shute, 2008; Topping et al., 2000). Others have explored the role of Google Docs in the development of writing skills (Chu et al., 2009; Riaño Casallas, 2013; Rienzo & Han, 2009; Seyyedrezaie et al., 2016; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Vallance et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2012), and quite a few have explored the ways that accuracy in writing can be acquired (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012; Evans et al., 2014; Francis et al., 2002; Kuhi et al., 2014; A. Lahuerta, 2017; Nosratinia & Razavi, 2016; Polio, 1997; Polio & Shea, 2014; Saadi & Saadat, 2015; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Yilmaz, 2016). However, not all of these studies have considered their subjects (writing skills, accuracy, peer feedback, online word processors) through the lens of social interaction. The present study identified a problem in a specific population (accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing) and, moreover, understood writing as a social act that should be treated as such, using a strategy that encourages participants to interact and learn from each other, using a tool (Google Docs) with features that facilitates such interaction. Thus, the present study might also provide insights on how to address similar problems in writing, in other contexts, with other populations.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) explores in greater detail the population that participated in this mixed-methods study, as well as the instruments – artifacts, checklists, surveys, teacher’s journal, semi-structured interviews – used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The teacher-researcher is presented as an active participant in identifying and solving a problematic situation in their own educational contexts, and strategies used to guarantee the validity of the data gathered are also described.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored accuracy as the ability to express ideas, verbally or in writing, without making mistakes (Housen, Vedder, et al., 2012; Schroeder, 2013). For the case of the present study, accuracy plays an important role, since it implies “making the right choices concerning syntactic patterns, [and] morphological inflections” (Agusten Llach, 2011, p. 42) in simple past tense usage. Peer feedback was discussed as a strategy to encourage interactions where participants would learn from each other’s writing skills (Canh, 2016). Equally important, the writing was explained as a social act between the *writer*, the *reader* through the *text*, (Hyland, 2016). Accordingly, Google Docs was selected as a tool that allows social interaction between people working on an online document (Conner, 2008; Oishi, 2007; Ruby Yang, 2010). All these constructs share the same feature: they encourage social interaction. The importance of the current study lies in combining explicit peer feedback on simple past tense usage, through an online word processor – Google Docs – to facilitate language mixed-abilities learners’ interactions when providing feedback to one another.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed strategy in the context of the present mixed-methods action research (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Sagor, 2000), the teacher-researcher (Burns, 2010; Mills, Gay, & Airasian, 2012) had to reflect and make decisions about the best strategies to help the participants overcome their difficulties with their usage of simple past tense verbs in writing. To achieve this purpose, the teacher-researcher used a teacher’s journal (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Koshy, 2010; Nunan, 1992). Surveys (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016; Mills et al., 2012) and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2012, 2014; McMillan, 2016) were other instruments used to collect qualitative data regarding the participants’ perceptions

about their writing skills, their accuracy in the simple past tense usage in written texts, the peer feedback strategy, and the effectiveness of Google Docs as a platform to provide feedback to their peers. Additionally, quantitative data (Creswell, 2007, 2014) were collected through artifacts (McMillan, 2016; Norum, 2008; Saldaña, 2011) and checklists (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012; McMillan, 2016; Meliha & Dündar, 2018) to document the participants' progress in their grammatical accuracy in the usage of simple past tense in writing. All the data collected through the different instruments was triangulated to ensure its validity (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016; Mills et al., 2012).

## **3.2 Context**

### **3.2.1 Type of study**

Action research is a strategy for teachers to collect and analyze data about their own practice, to reflect and decide on future actions to be taken in their teaching (Wallace, 1998). This action-research study was designed as a reflection process done *by* and *for* the teacher-researcher (Sagor, 2000) to find the most suitable strategy to solve the identified problem among the participants in using simple past tense correctly in their writings. This study was carried out with the sole purpose of helping the participants to tackle that specific problem related to their learning (Ferrance, 2000). This study followed a mixed-method approach in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed with the purpose of merging and combining them to better answer the research question (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2012). This approach facilitates the triangulation of information collected through qualitative and quantitative methods and lessens the possible biases or weaknesses such data collection approaches might have (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, a mixed-method approach helps to explain relationships between the variables found, explore those relationships in-depth, and

cross-validate them to see if the quantitative and qualitative methods “converge on a single interpretation of a phenomenon” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 558). Using a mixed-method approach was a decision made by the researcher to have a better picture of the participants’ needs and their progress with the implementation of the strategy.

### 3.2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 14 fifth-grade students from a private school located in La Calera, Colombia. The group was composed of 7 girls and 7 boys. Their average age was 11.4 years. Based on their results on the English Cambridge KET exam (“A2 Key for Schools,” n.d.), they were classified at the A2 level for English of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Most of the participants had studied at the host school during their whole academic life.

During the needs analysis stage, presented in section 1.2.1.1, it was established that these students had strong listening and speaking skills, probably because they went to a summer camp in Canada during the last month of the academic year prior to the study, where they socialized with native speakers, both their own age and adults. However, their reading and writing skills, as shown in the needs analysis, still needed some strengthening. This means that these students were “moving from registers expressing their firsthand experience in oral language to those expressing academic knowledge in writing” (Gibbons, 2003, p. 250). In other words, these students had solid *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS), but they were still developing their *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) (Cummins, 2008). The school where the study took place had a curriculum based on inquiry and constructivism, and therefore the participants were accustomed to working collaboratively. Sixteen (16) out of 54 hours of class a cycle (six days) of the curriculum were taught in English, including English and science classes.

### **3.2.3 Researcher's role**

In the present study, the researcher's role was not that of an expert conducting a study from the outside (Stringer, 2007). The teacher-researcher in this study played an active role to “develop solutions to [their] own problems” (Mills et al., 2012, p. 509). This perspective on the researcher's role implies following an action research cycle (McMillan, 2016), which starts with the identification of a problem, understood as areas that needed to be examined in greater depth to find possible answers according to the participants' needs (Burns, 2010). This needs to be followed by solid reflection on teaching practices, leading to a systematic series of actions to collect and analyze data then used to establish an action plan (Mills et al., 2012), in this case, intended to help students improve their usage of verb tenses in writing. Once this process is completed, a new action research cycle starts. Participants benefit from this approach since the researcher's purpose is to reflect and develop self-awareness on professional areas of improvement regarding their teaching practice (Wallace, 1998).

### **3.2.4 Ethical considerations**

Ethics, understood as the “standards and principles that are used to guide conduct, to determine what is right or wrong, a virtue or vice, good or evil, often related to values and morals” (McMillan, 2016, p. 29), must be considered as a fundamental principle at all the stages of an action research. In the present study, ethical practices were developed to “guard against unwarranted intrusion into [the participants'] lives, maintain their privacy, and establish appropriate ownership and use of the products of investigation” (Stringer, 2007, p. 179). For that purpose, two different instruments were used. The first was a letter sent to the headmaster and the primary-level coordinator of the school where the study took place (Appendix O). That letter presented the purpose of the study and the implications its implementation had for the school, the

participants, the parents, and the teacher-researcher. It also served to request official authorization from the school to conduct the study (Creswell, 2012). The second instrument used was an authorization letter (Appendix P) sent to the parents and/or caregivers of the students who wanted to participate in the study, considering that they were children. This letter, besides the previous information, clarified that the participation of the students in the study would not affect their academic results.

### **3.3 Data collection instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Descriptions and justifications**

##### **3.3.1.1 Surveys**

A number of studies (N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Y. Xu, Gelfer, & Perkins, 2005) have used surveys as an instrument to collect data related to students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of peer feedback in writing. This is because surveys are instruments created to "gather information about [the] group's beliefs, attitudes, [and] behaviors" (Mills et al., 2012, p. 184) regarding their progress throughout the action research process. Surveys were chosen as data collection instruments for the current study because they would help the teacher-researcher gain a better picture of the participants' opinions about the study, as well as on the target problem, the strategy, and the tools to be used to tackle such problem, besides providing characteristics of the group's attitudes and behaviors (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016). The initial online survey applied to the participants (Appendix B) gathered information about their initial perceptions about their own performance in writing, peer feedback, online word processors, and their accuracy in simple past tense usage in writing texts. At the end of the implementation phase, a final online survey was conducted (Appendix B) to collect data about the participants' final perceptions on the their own performance in writing, peer feedback, online

word processors, and their accuracy in simple past tense usage in writing texts, after the implementation phase. The purpose of having an initial and a final survey was to compare and contrast how the data gathered “concerning [the participant’s] affective, cognitive, [and] attitudinal issues” (Sagor, 2000, p. 104) might have changed with the implementation of the strategy selected to tackle their accuracy in simple past tense usage.

### **3.3.1.2 Artifacts**

Artifacts are material evidence that is documented or recorded and serve to analyze their creators’ characteristics, values, and beliefs (McMillan, 2016; Norum, 2008; Saldaña, 2011). For educational research, artifacts can be defined as “written or visual sources of data that contribute to our understanding of what is happening in classrooms and schools” (Mills et al., 2012, p. 390). At different stages of the present research project, the participants were instructed to write narrative texts to monitor their accuracy in the usage of simple past tense. This decision was made because, in research, artifacts do not have to be previously produced but can be produced for research purposes (Norum, 2008; Saldaña, 2011). In the present study, two different kinds of written artifacts were considered. The first were hard-copy written samples, which were collected both at the beginning and at the final stage of the implementation. The second kind of artifact consisted of the digital written samples collected through Google Docs throughout the implementation.

The first artifact that participants produced was a narrative text inspired by a given title, chosen as one of three options presented to them (Appendix A). This artifact served to diagnose the current state of their verb tense usage since the problem had originally been identified at the beginning of the school year and their accuracy in that regard could have changed since the needs analysis (1.2.1.1). During the implementation phase, some digital artifacts (Mills et al.,

2012) were collected digitally on Google Docs, since that was the tool selected for use in the current study. However, at this point, the participants did not produce the whole text at once. They followed a cycle of production-peer feedback-correction for each paragraph they wrote (as explained in detail in section 4.3.2). At the end of the implementation phase, the participants were instructed to develop another hard-copy narrative text artifact (McMillan, 2016) (Appendix C) similar to the initial one but with different triggering titles. Artifacts played an important role in this research because they helped the teacher-researcher to track the participants' progress with the development of accuracy with using the simple past tense. Additionally, artifacts helped with the triangulation and validation of the data gathered through the checklists and the researcher's journal.

### **3.3.1.3 Checklists**

Checklists provide multiple options, regarding a specific topic or issue, for people to choose from. They can be designed for people to choose just one option or multiple options from those provided (McMillan, 2016). Other types of checklists can be constructed as a list of steps or behaviors, avoiding any kind of subjective statement or evaluation about the efficacy of their performance. Checkmarks are used in checklists to keep track of the steps or behaviors that are or are not being achieved (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Checklists are frequently used in research because they are systematic, cost-effective, convenient, and explicit (Meliha & Dündar, 2018). In this study, the participants had to assess certain artifacts (narrative texts) produced by their classmates by completing a checklist (Appendix D) on their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing. The use of this checklist – or rubric – was one of the actions taken to guarantee that the participants participated in the peer feedback process. The teacher-researcher also used a similar rubric (Appendix E) to track the participants' accuracy when using

verbs in the simple past. This was a measure taken to validate and triangulate the data gathered through the artifacts and the students' checklists. Other studies (Topping et al., 2000; Walker, 2015; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012) have also used checklists to help students provide feedback to their peers or to identify participants' perceptions about the strategy itself.

#### **3.3.1.4 *Semi-structured interview***

An interview aims to collect information straight from the participants. The researcher asks questions to the participants and records their answers (Creswell, 2012). These questions can be structured, meaning that the participants are given some options to choose, or semi-structured, which means that the researchers use open-ended questions (McMillan, 2016). In the present research project, a semi-structured interview was conducted at the final stage of the implementation phase (Appendix F) to encourage the participants to provide individual responses on their views and opinions (Creswell, 2014) regarding their writing skills, their accuracy in simple past tense usage, peer feedback, and the effectiveness of Google Docs as a tool to provide feedback to their peers. This semi-structured interview served to control the line of questioning, meaning that the teacher-researcher did not stick solely to the planned questions (Appendix F), but he allowed himself to ask new questions based on the students' responses to encourage them to elaborate their ideas. As a result, he was able to find information on the participants' responses that could have been overlooked in the data obtained through other data collection instruments, a situation that supports the triangulation of data.

#### **3.3.1.5 *Researcher's Journal***

A researcher's journal can be a very valuable data collection instrument since it keeps a record of the researcher's "authentic voice as described during the research process" (Koshy, 2010, p. 91). For a teacher, a researcher's journal is also a reflection instrument, not only for

particular situations that happen in a class but also on their feelings as a teacher-researcher in regards to the research process itself (Koshy, 2010). According to Nunan (1992), such an instrument can serve to reflect on the teacher's practice, the students' learning, the interactions between them, as well as his own interpretations of what happens during the research (Kemmis et al., 2014). In the present research project, a researcher's journal (Appendix G) was used by the teacher-researcher to reflect mostly on the participants' interactions regarding peer feedback in writing tasks, how Google Docs facilitated such interaction, as well as the participants' progress regarding their accuracy in simple past tense usage.

### **3.3.2 Validation and piloting**

Mills (2012) describes validity as “the degree to which qualitative data accurately gauge what we are trying to measure.” (p. 391). In the current study, the teacher-researcher designed the instruments and validated them with different experts on the relevant educational context, such as the primary school principal and colleagues. This form of democratic validity allowed the researcher to “gather multiple perspectives ... from the relevant groups that have a stake in the problem, such as students, other teachers, parents, and administrators” (McMillan, 2016, p. 408). Validity plays an important role in research since it helps to determine the accuracy of the data collected through the instruments applied (Creswell, 2014).

Additionally, this study was also conducted under certain conditions that ensured its reliability, understood as the dependability or consistency that action research guarantees through “(1) clearly conceptualize constructs, (2) ... a precise level of measurement, (3) ... multiple indicators, and (4) ... pilot tests” (Neuman, 2007, p. 116). All the instruments used in the present study were piloted to guarantee that its design and content were not misleading the data collection process. As a result, their formats and questions were changed and/or improved

(Creswell, 2014). This piloting served to ensure that the final collected data was not affected by the characteristics of the tool or the strategy itself (Neuman, 2007). For example, both the initial and final surveys were reshaped after piloting, guaranteeing more room for open-ended questions. The initial and final hard copy artifacts were also modified by rewording their instructions to avoid misunderstandings.

Faulty interpretations of data might result when just one instrument was used to gather information or information was gathered at just one stage of the implementation (Dooley, 2001). In the present study, various instruments were designed to gather different kinds of data, and they were applied at different stages of the implementation phase, which also helped to guarantee triangulation.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter explored the context and the participants considered for the present mixed-methods action research (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Sagor, 2000; Wallace, 1998), in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to evaluate the progress the participants made in their simple past tense usage accuracy, thanks to the peer feedback strategy adopted for the study. The role of the researcher was established as the role of a teacher-researcher (Burns, 2010; Mills et al., 2012; Stringer, 2007) who would reflect and make decisions on the best approaches to tackle the participants' problem with their simple past tense usage in writing texts. It also presented the ethical consideration measurements taken into account to guarantee the participants' privacy, the protection of their identity, as well as the ethical use of the data obtained throughout the research (Creswell, 2012; McMillan, 2016; Stringer, 2007). The data collection instruments used in the current study were chosen due to their characteristics. Artifacts (McMillan, 2016; Norum, 2008; Saldaña, 2011) – both digital and

hard-copy – were chosen for the present study, because they documented and provided information about the participants' writing skills progress. This information was triangulated with the data collected through surveys (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016; Mills et al., 2012), which were applied at the beginning and at the end of the implementation phase, to contrast the participants' perceptions about their writing skills, their accuracy in the simple past tense usage in written texts, peer feedback, and the effectiveness of Google Docs as a platform to provide feedback to their peers. Checklists (Fraenkel et al., 2012; McMillan, 2016; Meliha & Dündar, 2018) also served to triangulate information collected through the artifacts and surveys, since they were used by both the teacher-researcher and the participants to track the progress of the participants' accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing. Checklists also served as a mechanism to encourage interaction and feedback among the participants. Semi-structure interviews (Creswell, 2012, 2014; McMillan, 2016) were run to collect qualitative information from the participants in an individual manner, in order to dig in their ideas and responses to have more elements for the triangulation process. Equally important, a researcher's journal (Kemmis et al., 2014; Koshy, 2010; Nunan, 1992) was kept to record the reflections of the teacher-researcher about the research process itself, and make decisions about its further development, considering the information collected through the other instruments. The strategies used to guarantee the validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016; Mills et al., 2012; Neuman, 2007) of the current study were also described in detail in this chapter, as well as the role of the piloting process to guarantee the validity of the data collected through the selected instruments and their triangulation. Chapter 4 describes how the implementation of the strategy was planned and put in place, as well as the action plan designed to help the participants in their usage of verb tenses in writing.

## Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter 3) explained why a mixed-methods action research approach (Creswell, 2012, 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Sagor, 2000; Wallace, 1998) was chosen for the present study, as this facilitates triangulation of the information collected through the instruments selected in order to answer the research question. Initial and final *surveys* (Creswell, 2014; McMillan, 2016; Mills et al., 2012) and *semi-structured interviews* (Creswell, 2012, 2014; McMillan, 2016) were the instruments used to collect qualitative data related to the participants' beliefs about their own writing skills, their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in written texts, and their perceptions about *peer feedback* as a strategy to enhance learning. A *researcher's journal* (Kemmis et al., 2014; Koshy, 2010; Nunan, 1992) was another instrument used by the teacher-researcher to collect qualitative data about his own perceptions about the participants' progress, interactions, and attitudes at every stage of the implementation process. Additionally, *artifacts* (McMillan, 2016; Norum, 2008; Saldaña, 2011) and *checklists* (Fraenkel et al., 2012; McMillan, 2016; Meliha & Dündar, 2018) were the instruments chosen to collect quantitative data, regarding the participants' progress in their accuracy in simple past tense usage. The information gathered through the chosen instruments was used to guarantee the triangulation and the validation of the data.

The present chapter frames the *vision of language* adopted for the present study as a system and from a functional perspective (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nunan, 2007; Tudor, 2001), the *vision of learning* from the social cognitive theory perspective (Schunk, 2012; Tudor, 2001), and the *vision of curriculum* as a backward design process (Richards, 2013). These visions of language, learning, and curriculum were considered from the very beginning of the process to

choose peer feedback through an online word processor – Google Docs – as the strategy to help the participant to improve their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in written texts. The present chapter also describes the choices made for *lesson planning* and the whole design of the *implementation* of the pedagogical intervention, which had a close relationship to the backward design vision of the curriculum adopted for the present study.

## 4.2 Visions of language, learning, and curriculum

### 4.2.1 Vision of language

Language is present in every aspect of our lives. However, many researchers have come to the conclusion that we still have a very long road ahead of us before we can more fully understand just what language is (Everaert et al., 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nunan, 2007). Nunan defines language as “the phenomenon that defines us as humans” (2007, p. 4), observing that we use language to communicate, but that it can only be understood in context when we have a comprehension of the circumstances it is produced. However, language can be studied considering other dimensions. For example, Nunan (2007) sees the *sound system*, the *lexical system*, and the *grammar system* as separate dimensions under which language can be studied. He also analyses the actions that can be done with *spoken language* and *written language* distinctly. Tudor (2001) analyses language from four different perspectives: as a *linguistic system*, as *self-expression*, as *culture and ideology*, and from a *functional perspective*. Kumaravadivelu (2006) studies language from three perspectives: as a *system*, as *discourse*, and as *ideology*. In the present study, the language was seen as a *system* since the study’s main purpose was to help the participants improve their accuracy in the use of verb tenses in written texts.

Language is seen as a *system* because each one of its units, “from a single sound to a complex word to a large text—spoken or written—has a character of its own” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 4), and they are all interdependent. This has some implications for the teaching and learning process since it requires the teacher to make decisions on which elements of the language are to be taught, and how (Tudor, 2001). For the present study, the element of the language system that was principally considered was grammar, since this study analyzed the role of peer feedback as a strategy to address the problem identified among the participants regarding the accurate use of verbs in the simple past tense in written texts. Grammar has to do with the way in which words are formed and how they are combined with one another (Nunan, 2007); the term is also used to refer to the structural patterns in which messages are organized (Tudor, 2001). The fact that the problem of focus in the present study was related to “the knowledge of form” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) of a specific grammatical structure was the basis for choosing to approach language as a system.

However, it is also true language serves mainly for purposes of communication; it is a social action with specific purposes (Tudor, 2001). In the present study, peer feedback was chosen as a strategy to help the participants improve their writing skills. Therefore, the language was also seen from its *functional perspective*, since the participants were using language with a specific purpose. In this regard, Nunan (2007) argues that written and spoken language have the same basic functions: a *transactional function* related to exchanging good and services; an *interpersonal function* that allows people to socialize; and an *aesthetic function* that permits communication for entertainment or enjoyment. Therefore, considering that the present study aimed to help the participants improve their writing skills, language was seen from the *functional perspective*, focusing on its *textual and aesthetic functions*.

#### 4.2.2 Vision of learning

There have been different visions of how language is acquired or learned (Norton & Toohey, 2002; Nunan, 2007; Schunk, 2012; Tudor, 2001). For instance, Skinner (1957) claimed that language is learned by an imitating process in which children produce the utterances they hear from their parents or other adults around them. This *behaviorist approach* was later debated by Chomsky, whose *mentalist approach* states that “language is hard-wired into the human brain” (Chomsky, 1957 cited by; Nunan, 2007, p. 148), and therefore, humans would be able to communicate through language, even if they are not taught. Other theorists, such as Halliday, state that language is produced with a purpose, meaning for different functions (Halliday, 1973 cited by; Nunan, 2007). This *functional approach* suggests that children learn their first language thanks to their interactions with other people, and the communicative needs those interactions create (Tudor, 2001). For the case of an L2, language learning is “a socioculturally situated social practice” (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 119). Therefore, the interactions among learners are a key component in their language learning process.

In the present study, learning was seen from a *social cognitive theory* perspective, which understands that “learning occurs in a social environment” (Schunk, 2012, p. 118). This theory understands learning as taking place through “reciprocal interactions among persons, behaviors, and environments” (Schunk, 2012, p. 119), meaning that the interactions happening among students, the teacher, and the teaching practices have an influence on the students’ performance. Since the strategy chosen to help the participants improve their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in written text was peer feedback through an online word processor (Google Docs), these reciprocal interactions supported the learning process because the participants were collaborating with one another to achieve a shared goal with the teacher-researchers guidance

(Tudor, 2001). Allwright suggests that learning and the conditions for productive learning are the results of the interactions with others (Allwright, 1984 cited by; Tudor, 2001). That is why for the present study the peer feedback strategy through an online word processor was important since it was the vehicle for supporting collaborative learning.

#### 4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

White defines curriculum as “the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or educational system” (Medgyes & Nikolov, 2002, p. 196 citing; White, 1993). However, the curriculum includes many other elements that are closely related to the success of the teaching-learning process. For instance, the participating school in this study saw its curriculum from the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) perspective, in which a curriculum “includes all those student activities, academic and non-academic, for which the school takes responsibility, since they all have an impact on student learning” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2007, p. 8). In other words, as observed by Richards (2013), a language curriculum has to include elements related to the linguistic content to be taught (the input), the methodology that is going to be followed to teach such content (the process), as well as the learning outcomes students are meant to achieve (the output). Richards defines three different options for curriculum design (2013). If a curriculum has a focus on the *input*, it has a *forward design*. It means that the methodologies and the outputs are only determined once the contents of the course have been decided. If a curriculum is designed based on the methodology, it has a *central design*, where the contents and the outputs are chosen consequently. However, if the focus of a curriculum is on the *output*, or what learners are able to do at the end of the learning process, it has a *backward design*.

For the present study, the *backward design* curriculum approach (Richards, 2013) was selected for planning the whole pedagogical intervention phase, since this was designed based on the identification of the participants needs (step 1), that led to the establishment of an objective (step 2), followed by the selection and organization of content (steps 3 and 4), the selection and organization of the learning experiences (steps 5 and 6), and the decisions on what and how to evaluate (step 7). Considering this approach in curriculum design, the teacher-researcher established from the beginning the objective of the learning process, based on the problem identified among the participants in their accuracy in the usage of simple past tense in written texts.

### **4.3 Instructional design**

#### **4.3.1 Lesson planning**

The lesson planning for the four stages established by the teacher-researcher for the implementation process (*pre-implementation, training for implementation, implementation, evaluation of the process*) was carried out following the same structure, following the lesson plan stages established by the participating school in the corresponding lesson planning template (Appendix H). Each lesson plan included a *learning outcome*, addressing the participants' comprehension of certain *key* and *related concepts* (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2007). It also included an *inquiry question*, the *resources* to be used during the lesson, and the opportunities of *assessment of the learning outcome*. Each lesson plan had a description of the development of the class itself, structured in four stages, namely: *activate prior knowledge, introduction by teacher, student-centered learning, and assessment of knowledge, skills, and concepts*. Lesson plans also included the specification of the *knowledge, skills, and concepts* to

be developed at each stage of the class, as well as information on the *differentiation* strategies to be implemented.

The lesson planning process was also developed following the *backward design* vision of the curriculum (Richards, 2013) chosen for the present study as a whole. Each lesson was planned based on the learning outcome for that specific class, from which each class stage was planned. Additionally, the whole sequence of the implementation planning was designed keeping in mind the final learning outcome expected for the research project, which was a narrative text written by the participants independently, demonstrating to what extent the peer feedback strategy through an online word processor had affected their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in written texts.

#### **4.3.2 Implementation**

The pedagogical implementation was carried out for 5 weeks, summing up a total of 26 hours, including the pre-implementation, training for implementation, implementation, and post-implementation phases, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Implementation Planning.

Stage	Objectives	Time
Pre-implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To collect information regarding the participants' initial perceptions on their writing skills, peer feedback, simple past tense usage accuracy, and the use of Google Docs (survey).</li> <li>• To assess the participants' writing skills at the beginning of the research project (initial artifact).</li> </ul>	2 h 30 min
Training for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To train students in identifying and differentiating verb tenses.</li> <li>• To teach students when and how to use verbs in simple past tense.</li> <li>• To teach student the morphological differences between regular and irregular verbs in simple past tense.</li> <li>• To create a list of the most relevant irregular verbs to be used in narrative texts.</li> <li>• To teach students relevant correction conventions to use when providing feedback about writing.</li> <li>• To train students on strategies to provide feedback about writing (focused on verbs in simple past tense).</li> <li>• To evaluate the familiarity of the students with Google Docs, and to teach them the features that allow collaborative work they might ignore.</li> </ul>	7 h 30 min
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To guide student to work collaboratively on Google Docs, through a cycle like writing process for narrative texts, following these steps:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pre-writing (planning using graphic organizers).</li> <li>○ Writing one section of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution).</li> <li>○ Provide feedback to a peer on the plot section they wrote (checklist).</li> <li>○ Correct their own text, based on the feedback received.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	12 h
Post-implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assess the participants' writing skills at the end of the implementation phase (final artifact).</li> <li>• To collect information regarding the participants' initial perceptions on their writing skills, peer feedback, simple past tense usage accuracy, and the use of Google Docs (survey &amp; semi-structured interviews).</li> </ul>	4 h

During the *pre-implementation* phase, the participants answered a survey through which they expressed their perceptions regarding their own writing skills, their accuracy in verb tenses usage, and peer feedback as a strategy to support their learning process. They also wrote a narrative text, which was used to collect data about their writing skills and identify the problem

area. After that, during the *training for the implementation* phase, the participants were guided to a better awareness of the role of verbs in narratives, the characteristics, and functions of the simple past tense, and the use of conventions to identify mistakes in written texts. The purpose of this phase was to set a common ground for the participants and provide them with a focus on *what* and *how* to provide feedback to their classmates.

The *implementation* phase was organized into two stages. In the first stage, the participants made use of a graphic organizer to plan the narrative text they wanted to write, using an online tool called Draw.io (<https://www.draw.io>). Based on the graphic organizer, the participants began to write their narrative texts in Google Docs. Their narrative texts had to include five paragraphs: a paragraph for the *beginning* (introduction), three paragraphs for the *middle* (body paragraphs), and a paragraph for the *end* (conclusion). For the production of each paragraph, the participants followed a three-lesson process. In the first lesson, the participants were instructed to write the paragraph allocated for the corresponding phase of the process. In the second lesson, the participants used the checklist and correcting conventions to identify the mistakes made by their classmates and provided them with feedback using the *comments* feature in Google Docs. In the third lesson, the participants had to make corrections based on the feedback received. All participants' Google Docs documents were shared with the teacher, who was permanently monitoring the process.

During the *post-implementation* phase, the participants had to write new narrative texts that played the role of a post-test artifact used to analyze how the implementation process had influenced their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in written texts. They also completed a survey about their perception of the whole process and how it influenced their

writing skills. Finally, semi-structured interviews were run to collect more qualitative data in that regard.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The present chapter explores the choices made for the present study in terms of the vision of language, the vision of learning, and the vision of the curriculum. Considering that the main focus of the present study was to help the participants with their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past, language is seen as *a system*, because the study deals with the way in which words are formed (Nunan, 2007), the structural patterns in which messages are organized (Tudor, 2001), and the participants' knowledge about that particular grammar structure form and meaning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, this study also saw language from its *functional perspective*, since the participants were using language for the specific purpose of writing narrative texts.

Learning was seen in the present study as a process that happens in a social context and through social interactions (Schunk, 2012). That is why peer feedback through an online word processor – Google Docs – was chosen as the strategy used to help the participants improve their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in written texts. Additionally, the present study adopted *backward design* as its vision of curriculum (Richards, 2013), because the learning outcome (writing narratives with accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past) was identified and selected by the teacher-researcher from the beginning of the process. The lesson planning process, as well as the implementation design, also followed the backward design approach.

The subsequent chapter describes the way in which data were organized in a Google Spreadsheet and analyzed following a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014), which permitted analyzing qualitative and quantitative data at the same time, to guarantee

triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Mills et al., 2012). It also explains how the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2014; Mills et al., 2012) was used for the analysis of qualitative data to establish a theory to explain the results obtained by the present study. The chapter also presents the results of the present study, which evidence the improvement of the participants in their usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing, as well as the increase of their lexical diversity (Yarrow & Topping, 2001) and language awareness.

## Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the choices made for the implementation phase of the present action research project based on the vision of language, vision of learning and vision of curriculum. Considering that the present study aimed to help participants with their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past in written texts, the visions of language adopted were *language as a system* and *language from a functional perspective* (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nunan, 2007; Tudor, 2001). Peer feedback through an online word processor – Google Docs – was selected as the strategy to tackle the mentioned problem among the participants, since the present study sees learning as a social phenomenon in which knowledge is constructed through the interactions with others (Norton & Toohey, 2002; Nunan, 2007; Schunk, 2012; Tudor, 2001). The lesson planning and the implementation design followed a backward design vision of curriculum (Richards, 2013) because the whole research project was designed considering the final outcome of the participants, meaning their accurate usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing.

The present chapter explains why a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014) was chosen by the teacher-researcher to analyze qualitative and quantitative data at the same time, to complement one another. Google Spreadsheets is also presented as an effective technological instrument to create a matrix to store, organize and analyze data, thanks to its features (Tracy, 2013). The chapter also discusses triangulation and peer-debriefing (Creswell, 2014; Mills et al., 2012) as the validation strategies used to guarantee effectiveness and objectivity in the data analysis process. Equally important, section 5.2.2 explains why a grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2014; Mills et al., 2012) approach was followed to create a theory about the specific phenomenon examined in the context in which

the study was carried out. The results of the present study show that, despite the few critical cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006), the participants, in fact, improved their accuracy in their usage of verbs in the simple past tense when writing. Additionally, they increased their lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013) and language awareness.

## **5.2 Data management procedures**

In the present mixed-methods study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through the instruments described in Chapter 3 (artifacts, checklists, surveys, researcher's journal, semi-structured interview) and analyzed following a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014). This approach was selected because, although the quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately, the results of such processes were compared to “see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other” (Creswell, 2014, p. 219). This model in which qualitative and quantitative data are equally weighted is also known as the triangulation mixed-method design (Mills et al., 2012). The main advantage of collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data at the same time in the present research was that the possible flaws in the data collection process of qualitative data were compensated by the quantitative data collected, and vice versa (Mills et al., 2012). Table 2 shows how qualitative and quantitative data were collected throughout the present study, as well as the objectives for which each data collection instrument was used.

**Table 2** Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection Process During the Implementation Phase

Phase	Objective	Instrument	Type of data
Phase 1: Pre-implementation (2 h 30 min)	Objective 1: To evaluate the participants' accuracy in the simple past tense usage, at the beginning of the implementation.	Artifact	Quan
	Objective 2: To gather data on participants' perceptions of writing skills, peer feedback, online word processors, and simple past tense usage.	Survey	Qual
Phase 2: Training for implementation (7 h 30 min)	Objective 1: To teach participants the role of verbs in writing texts.	Teacher's journal	Qual
		Artifact	Quan
	Objective 2: To get familiar with providing feedback strategies	Teacher's journal	Qual
	Objective 3: To guarantee participants familiarity with Google Docs	Teacher's journal	Qual
Phase 3: Implementation (12 h)	Objective 1: To have the participants producing a narrative text on Google Docs.	Artifact	Quan
		Researcher's journal	Qual
	Objective 2: To have the participants providing feedback to their peers.	Artifacts	Quan
		Checklist – students	Quan
	Objective 3: To provide the participants with opportunities to make corrections based on their peers' feedback	Artifact	Quan
		Researcher's journal	Qual
Phase 4: Post-implementation (4 h)	Objective 1: To gather information on the impact of the pedagogical intervention	Artifact	Quan
		Checklist - teacher	Quan
		Researcher's journal	Qual
	Objective 2: To collect data on participants' perceptions of writing skills, peer feedback, online word processors, and simple past tense usage, after the pedagogical intervention	Survey	Qual
		Semi-structured interview	Qual

Data collected through the surveys were copied and stored in a Google Spreadsheet.

Both the initial and final surveys were designed to gather just qualitative data. In both cases, Google Spreadsheet was a useful tool to organize and analyze the collected data, as well as to turn some of the data into percentages. The researcher's journal also served to collect qualitative

data, which was kept in the same Google Spreadsheet. The semi-structured interviews, which likewise served to collect qualitative data, were kept as audio files on Google Drive, and their transcriptions were stored and organized in the aforementioned Google Spreadsheet. The qualitative information was classified through coding, which is the “active process of identifying data as belonging to or representing, some type of phenomenon” (Tracy, 2013, p. 189).

The artifacts produced by the participants in Google Docs were stored digitally on Google Drive. On the other hand, data collected through the initial and final artifacts and the checklists were collected on paper and stored in folders. However, the data obtained from these were also analyzed statistically in the Google Spreadsheet, where all the other data were stored. This process was carried out in Google Spreadsheets since this software allows not only storing but also locating data in an effective way, thanks to the codes assigned by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, as noted by Tracy (2013), “although spreadsheet programs are designed for numeric data, qualitative researchers can also use them to store and count key bits of data” (p. 188). The Google Spreadsheet became the matrix that was used to help the researcher sort data based on the commonalities found in the information collected through the different instruments (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### **5.2.1 Validation**

Validity is “the degree to which qualitative [and quantitative] data accurately gauge what we are trying to measure” (Mills et al., 2012, p. 391). One of the strategies used in the present study to guarantee validity was triangulation since different data sources were used to cross-check information and ensure the trustworthiness of such data (Creswell, 2014; Mills et al., 2012). The participants’ initial and final perceptions about their writing skills and the role of peer feedback in the accuracy of their usage of simple past tense verbs gathered through the

surveys and semi-structured interviews were compared to the quantitative data collected through the initial and final artifacts written by the participants. This triangulation allowed the researcher to confirm to what extent the writing production of the participants reflected their perceptions in the mentioned areas. The students' and teacher's checklists were , compared to each other and to the final artifacts themselves in order to analyze the language awareness of the participants, as well as the nature of the mistakes participants were still making at the end of the implementation process. The qualitative data obtained from the researcher's journal were compared to all the other instruments, as well.

Another strategy for validation in the present study was peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014; Mills et al., 2012), in which the researcher received feedback on preliminary coding and analysis from professors and fellow graduate students' classmates. As a result of such feedback, some initial categories were combined and others were renamed. For example, after the coding process, the teacher-researcher established 5 different categories, namely *perspective*, *actions*, *language skills*, *expertise/accuracy*, and *strategy*. Thanks to the feedback received, and after a discussion of the relevance of those categories in the light of the research question, three new categories emerged: *effectiveness in language use and language awareness*, *improvement in accuracy*, and *conditions for co-construction of knowledge*. Subsequently, after deeper reflections on the codes belonging to each of those categories, the categories *effectiveness in language use and language awareness*, and *improvement in accuracy* were merged into a single category called *improvement in accuracy and language awareness*. Thus, at the end of the process, just two categories were considered as a result of the data analysis process: *improvement in accuracy and language awareness*, and *conditions for co-construction of knowledge*.

### 5.2.2 Data analysis methodology

The present study aimed to analyze and explain a particular phenomenon and to create a theory based on data collected on that specific context with a specific population. This approach, known as *grounded theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007, 2014; Mills et al., 2012), was chosen for the present study because it helped the researcher to focus on the qualitative data collected throughout the study. Such data, regarding the role of online peer feedback on the improvement of accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing served to create a theory that explained this phenomenon in the particular context in question. Based on this approach, a coding system was established by the researcher to create categories – open coding – based on the information gathered through the qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments (Creswell, 2014). In the process, the qualitative codes were transformed into quantitative variables, a process is known as *data transformation* (Creswell, 2014). This allowed the researcher to compare the qualitative and quantitative data collected in terms of tendencies.

On the other hand, the quantitative data collected through the initial and the final artifacts, and the students' and the teacher's checklists were tabulated and stored in the same Google Spreadsheet and analyzed through a descriptive statistical approach (Mills et al., 2012). Both the initial and the final artifacts were revised through the same procedure: all verbs that should be written in the simple past tense in the participants' narratives were highlighted. A green highlighter was used for verbs that were conjugated correctly and a yellow highlighter was used for the verbs with mistakes in their conjugations. Thereafter, as shown in Table 3, correct regular verbs (CRV), correct irregular verbs (CIV), incorrect regular verbs (IRV), and incorrect irregular verbs (IIV) were counted separately; this information was organized in a Google Spreadsheet (Appendix M). Then, the total amount of verbs in each category was added to

obtain the total number of simple past tense verbs (SPTV) used by each student in each one of their artifacts. Based on the final number of SPTV, percentages for the CRV, CIV, IRV, and IIV were obtained for each one of the artifacts, and then the researcher focused on the percentages of correct verbs obtained in total for both the initial and the final artifacts. The difference between the total percentage of correct verbs produced by the participants in the first artifact and the percentage of correct verbs produced by the participants in the final artifact was called Progress %. It represents the improvement in accuracy made by the participants, as shown in the sample of the three participants, presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** Sample of the First and Final Artifacts Statistical Analysis

		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %
		%	%		%	%		
S6	CRV	0	0	53.571	CRV	3	7.1429	50
	CIV	15	53.571		CIV	18	42.857	
	IRV	5	17.857	46.429	IRV	19	45.238	50
	IIV	8	28.571		IIV	2	4.7619	
	SPTV	28	100	100	SPTV	42	100	100
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %
		%	%		%	%		
S7	CRV	1	5	45	CRV	9	25	69.444
	CIV	8	40		CIV	16	44.444	
	IRV	8	40	55	IRV	6	16.667	30.556
	IIV	3	15		IIV	5	13.889	
	SPTV	20	100	100	SPTV	36	100	100
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %
		%	%		%	%		
S8	CRV	1	2.7027	32.432	CRV	17	56.667	80
	CIV	11	29.73		CIV	7	23.333	
	IRV	11	29.73	67.568	IRV	3	10	20
	IIV	14	37.838		IIV	3	10	
	SPTV	37	100	100	SPTV	30	100	100

Two critical cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006) were identified: participants who had a negative progress percentage, meaning that they made more mistakes with the verbs in simple past in the final than in the initial artifact. However, in both cases, the number of total verbs used increased. This led the teacher-researcher to pursue a second analysis of this data, considering the corpus of verbs selected for this study (Appendix I). The second round of data analysis consisted of listing and counting the verbs in simple past tense produced correctly by each one of the participants in both the initial and final artifacts, disregarding repetitions, in order to determine their lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013) in each case. This analysis provided evidence that all the sample participants, even the critical cases, increased their lexical diversity after the implementation phase of the present study, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4** Sample of the Comparison of the Lexical Diversity Demonstrated by the Participants in the Initial and Final Artifacts

				First Artifact	Final Artifact	
S7	Lexical Diversity			Verbs Used		
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		wanted	opened, started, loved, started, turned, called, killed, trained,
	RV	1	RV	8		
	IV	5	IV	7		
	Total	6	Total	15	was, said, went, got, put	was/were, found, put, told, saw, came, took
	Ratio		Ratio			
	0.3		0.416666667			
S8	Lexical Diversity			Verbs Used		
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		destroyed, died	tried, failed, arrived, started, endured, captured, advanced, discovered, used, packed, finished, opened, entered, killed, stopped
	RV	2	RV	15		
	IV	5	IV	6		
	Total	7	Total	21	went, made, saw, was/were, said,	was/were, went, got, found, had, became
	Ratio		Ratio			
	0.189189189		0.7			

Furthermore, the quantitative data collected through both the students' and the teacher's checklists were also analyzed following a descriptive statistical approach (Mills et al., 2012). However, the two instruments were designed to collect data for different purposes. The students' checklists were used as a tool for the participants to evaluate their peer's accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing. On the other hand, the teacher's checklists were designed to help the teacher-researcher identify the nature of the mistakes made by the participants in their usage of simple past tense verbs in writing. In both cases, all the categories used for the checklists (Appendix D and Appendix E) were counted and transformed into percentages for analysis.

### **5.3 Categories**

#### **5.3.1 Overall category mapping**

Once all of the qualitative data collected was stored and organized in the Google Spreadsheet, the researcher started to read, analyze, and classify the information using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) by highlighting and grouping extracts from the participants' answers or transcribed utterances, using different colors for concepts that were related. From this process, 16 different codes were established, namely *positive perceptions*, *negative perceptions*, *time-related perceptions*, *teacher's expertise*, *students' expertise*, *equal expertise*, *lack of expertise*, *positive outcomes*, *specific actions*, *benefits*, *ideal conditions*, *language awareness*, *other reasons for improvement*, *strategies and sub-skills*, *sub-skills*, and *learning opportunity*. These codes emerged solely from the data collected in the semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014), which were the first data collection instruments analyzed and, later, were used to analyze the data collected throughout the initial and final surveys and the researcher's journal.

Subsequently, the selected codes were grouped into 5 categories based on certain conceptual connections that were established among them. For example, the codes' *positive perceptions*, *negative perceptions*, and *time-related perceptions* were grouped into a category called *perspectives*. The codes' *benefits*, *positive outcomes*, and *specific actions* were group into a category called *actions*. The codes *strategies and sub-skills*, and *sub-skills* were grouped into the category *language skills*. The codes *teacher's expertise*, *students' expertise*, *equal expertise*, and *lack of expertise* were grouped in the category "*expertise/accuracy*". Finally, the codes' *ideal conditions*, *feedback*, *learning opportunity*, and *collegiality* were grouped in the category *strategy*. After the validation process described in section 5.2.1, the final categories considered in this study were *improvement in accuracy and language awareness* and *conditions for co-construction of knowledge*.

Ultimately, a core category *knowledge co-construction as a strategy to enhance accuracy and lexical diversity* was established, and the two categories that resulted from the analysis of the codes created based on the qualitative data played a key role in achieving a better comprehension of the core category and in designing a theoretical model to explain the role of online peer feedback in the improvement of accuracy in the usage of simple past verbs in writing, as shown in Figure 1.

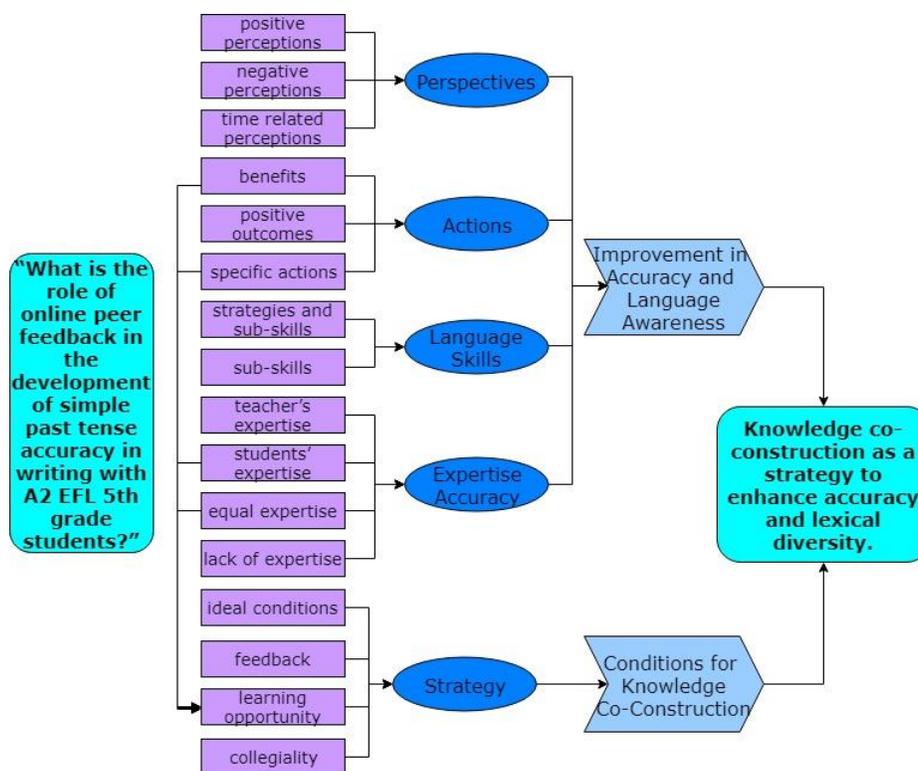


Figure 1 *Category mapping process.*

## 5.3.2 Discussion of categories

### 5.3.2.1 Improvement in accuracy and language awareness

This first category emerged from the majority of codes that were established during the coding process of the data collected in order to answer the research question presented in section 1.3 regarding the role of peer feedback through an online word processor in the participants' accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing. After analyzing the initial 16 codes identified, five categories were established, and four of these were merged into the *improvement in accuracy and language awareness* category, as explained in section 5.3.1.

The first component of this category, *improvement in accuracy*, was found after analyzing both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered through the five different data collection instruments used in this study. For example, in the initial survey (Appendix J), 11 out

of the 14 sample participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement “I can confidently write regular verbs in simple past tense”, and 10 out of the 14 sample participants also neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement “I can confidently write irregular verbs in simple past tense”. This suggests that the participants’ perception of their own accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing was not strong. However, in the *final survey* (Appendix K), 9 out of the 14 sample participants stated that their usage of verbs in simple past had improved thanks to the peer feedback strategy, as shown in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1. *S12, Final Survey.*

“I think that I improve more the spelling and the redaction like in using appropriately verbs in past”.

Additionally, during the analysis of the data obtained through the semi-structured interview (Appendix L), 7 out of the 14 sample participants compared their perceptions regarding their current writing skills to their writing skills in the past, expressing improvement, as exemplified in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. *S14, Semi-structured interview.*

“Well, first like seeing my process of years before, I feel more comfortable with my writing skills this year, cause I can improve many things, like the simple past. And well, like spelling... things like that. So, I feel good.”.

The quantitative data also reinforced the *improvement in accuracy*. As previously discussed in section 5.2.2, when comparing the *initial and final artifacts* produced by the sample participants, 12 out of the 14 sample participants improved their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing, after the implementation of the peer feedback strategy,

through an online word processor. The average progress in this area was 23.58%, as presented in the Google Spreadsheet used for this descriptive statistical analysis (Appendix M). The *students' checklists* also provided information to support the participants' improvement in accuracy. Based on the evaluation participants did on their peers' final artifact, using the mentioned checklists, it was established that the accuracy in their usage of verbs in the simple past tense was 64.28% on average (Appendix N).

The improvement in accuracy found by the present study has a close relationship to the strategy chosen for it. The participants perceived that peer feedback helped them noticeably to improve their writing skills, as demonstrated in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3. *S6, Semi-structured interview*

“I think [peer feedback] is good because I can compare my text with the one I'm correcting and I can improve on that. So I think it works very good”.

Further analysis in this regard, based on previous studies, is presented in section 6.2.

All of the sample participants identified positive aspects of using Google Docs, such as the possibility of various users working collaboratively and synchronously, regardless of the location since it is an online tool. They also identified the benefits of immediacy in receiving comments and feedback in real-time, since it saves time when working, as illustrated by the following excerpts.

Excerpt 4. *S7, Semi-structured interview.*

“I think that we both can edit, and he had... he can highlight the errors, upload comments, as we did... and we can share all this stuff”.

Excerpt 5. *S12, Semi-structured interview.*

“The good of Google Docs would be that you can be connected with another person at the same time”.

Excerpt 6. *S14, Semi-structured interview.*

“the classmate can see like the punctual mistakes, and it's easier to highlight [them] and to tell things. Like we add comments”.

The second component of the category discussed in this section is *language awareness*. Ten out of the fourteen sample participants stated during the semi-structured interview that peer feedback offered them different benefits in their writing processes such as the stimulation of reflection, the possibility of learning from others and with others, the awareness on their own language used when writing, and improvement of their own writing skills, as shown in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7. *S10, Semi-structured interview.*

“when I’m in writing tasks, I can think of the corrections that [...] my partner made to me, so I could say like for example, “This is not right like this. It's right like this”. And I write it how it is [correct]”.

Additionally, in the final survey (Appendix K) all the sample participants demonstrated through their answers to have a better language awareness after the implementation stage since they mentioned specific areas where they feel they need to improve. For example, five of them mentioned explicitly they have improved their usage of verbs in simple past, and that they need to “go beyond” in this area. However, some others mentioned other language sub-skills where

they feel they need to improve, which demonstrates the development of certain language awareness. Excerpt 8 exemplifies this idea.

Excerpt 8. *S13, Final survey.*

“I think I have to improve some of the use of verbs and also the punctuation marks in the paragraph”.

### **5.3.2.1 Conditions for knowledge co-construction**

This study has shown that online peer feedback plays a role in the enhancement of accuracy when it comes to the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing. After the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected during its implementation, different codes emerged indicating that the conditions under which this study was conducted also helped the participants to develop their co-construction of knowledge.

In section 5.2.2, it was discussed how through a descriptive statistical approach (Mills et al., 2012), of the quantitative data gathered through the initial and final artifacts, it was possible to compare the accurate usage of verbs in simple past tense produced by the participants, in terms of *lexical diversity* (Jarvis, 2013). It was established that all the participants increased their lexical diversity thanks to the peer feedback strategy adopted in the present study. This perception was confirmed through the qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews. When asked about how confident they felt about providing feedback to one of their peers about their usage of verbs simple past tense, 5 out of the 14 sample participants identified providing peer feedback as an opportunity to improve their own writing skills and their usage of verbs in the simple past tense. Furthermore, 7 out of the 14 sample participants stated that providing feedback to their classmates was beneficial for themselves since they learned and

improved their own writing skills in the process. Some also observed that the peer feedback strategy helped them start collaborative learning discussions, as shown in the quotations collected in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9. *S7, S5, S11 Semi-structured interview.*

“that's another way to remember the past tense and improve my use of past tense verbs.”. (*S7, Semi-structured interview*)

“I feel well because these corrections I make also can be... can be useful to me and my own self”. (*S5, Semi-structured interview*)

“I feel the other person can learn, and at the same time I can learn about what I am correcting. (*S11, Semi-structured interview*)

Additionally, 4 out of the 14 participants considered that it was better to receive feedback from their classmates since they felt more comfortable at receiving feedback from a person they know in a social field. They also valued receiving feedback from someone who is going through the same learning process.

Excerpt 10. *S9, S8, Semi-structured interview.*

“a classmate sees the things like you see them, like when you're still learning, and so like they kind of make the same mistakes (Excerpt S9, Semi-structured interview).

“our classmates have the same level that us, so they can correct us. Yeah! Since they have the same level, they know the usual mistakes we make (Excerpt S8, Semi-structured interview)

All the presented examples demonstrate that in the present study, online peer feedback permitted the participants co-construct knowledge, since it provided them with opportunities for social interactions, which is “fundamental to the co-construction of new knowledge, [since] students have access to their peers’ language resources, which constitute an expanded collective language repertoire” (Dagenais, Walsh, Armand, & Maraillet, 2008, p. 142).

### **5.3.3 Core category**

The core category (Creswell, 2012) *knowledge co-construction as a strategy to enhance accuracy and lexical diversity* emerged from the two main categories, *improvement in accuracy and language awareness* and *conditions for co-construction of knowledge* by classifying the chosen codes. The explanation that evolves from the core category answers the research question (section 1.3) that guided this study.

The peer feedback strategy provided through an online word processor created a social context for the participants to share their knowledge and co-construct new knowledge related to the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing, which enhanced their accuracy in that area and helped them gain a greater lexical variety. During the different stages of the implementation process, which was explained in detail in Chapter 3, the participants were able to consolidate the required skills to provide explicit feedback to their peers, since by interacting with their peers while identifying their mistakes and providing them with the accurate forms of the verb in the simple past, the participants providing feedback entered into intellectual processes that helped them gain awareness on their own language, improve their accuracy, and gain more lexical diversity (Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

The analysis of the quantitative and the qualitative data that led to the emergence of the core category demonstrated that the great majority of the participants in this action research

project improved their accuracy in the usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing, and all of them gained lexical diversity.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, presented in section 5.2.2, strongly suggests that the online peer feedback strategy had a positive effect on the accuracy of the participants' usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing, as well as on their lexical diversity. Thanks to the comparative descriptive statistical analysis (Mills et al., 2012) of the initial and final artifacts produced by the participants, it was possible to identify their improvement in accuracy in their usage of verbs in simple past in writing. Although there were two critical cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006), it was evident that the fourteen participants developed their lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013), which was an unexpected positive finding from the study. The other instruments applied, such as the surveys, and the semi-structured interview, made it possible to identify, as presented in section 5.3.2, the participants' positive perceptions regarding their own language awareness and the importance of the social context that peer feedback represented.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, describes how the present study's results lend weight to an understanding of peer feedback as an effective strategy for enhancing writing skills and accuracy, as well as to improving thinking and reflection skills and language awareness (Bijami et al., 2013; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Topping, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000). The role of social interaction in the co-construction of knowledge (Dagenais et al., 2008) and the development of lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013) is also discussed. The chapter also considers some limitations on the present study in terms of the size of the population and the time spent during the implementation phase. Possible directions for future research, such as on

the impact of peer feedback in the development of lexical diversity and the role of corpora in this type of study, are also suggested since these might further develop an understanding of the effects of peer feedback provided through collaborative online writing tools.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The present study analyzed the effect of peer feedback provided through a collaborative online writing tool (Google Docs) on the accuracy of the participating fifth-grade EFL students' use of the simple past tense in writing tasks. The previous chapter illustrated how data were collected and analyzed, using Google Spreadsheets to construct the matrix in which all qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. Considering the mixed methods procedures followed in the present study, a convergent parallel method (Creswell, 2014) was selected to use both qualitative and quantitative data to confirm the findings obtained from one another. Qualitative data was analyzed following the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Mills et al., 2012) so that the researcher could create a theory based on the data collected from the study's particular context to solve the particular problem happening among its particular population; quantitative data were analyzed following a descriptive statistical approach (Mills et al., 2012).

The present and final chapter, Chapter 6, discusses the implications of the results for understanding how peer feedback works as an effective strategy for helping L2 learners improve their skills and accuracy in written English (Bijami et al., 2013; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Topping, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Other benefits derived from social interactions among the participants during the implementation of the present study, such as the development of reflection skills, thinking skills, and language awareness, are also discussed (Bijami et al., 2013; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Additionally, improvements to lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013) turned out to be an important unexpected side-benefit of the co-construction of knowledge (Dagenais et al., 2008)

that such social interaction encourages. Some recommendations for further studies, such as training students to provide good quality feedback, the role of corpora in acquiring lexical diversity, and using correction symbols in an effective way, are also discussed.

## **6.2 Comparison of results with previous studies' results**

The results of the present study are aligned with the findings other studies (Adams et al., 2011; Anjarwati, 2017; Azizian & Rouhi, 2015; Bijami et al., 2013; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; Guardado & Shi, 2007; Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Luo & Liu, 2017; Saeed, Ghazali, Sahuri, & Abdulrab, 2018; Topping, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Q. Xu & Yu, 2018) have reached regarding the effectiveness of the peer feedback strategy in the improvement of writing skills with EFL populations. Although not all studies have found a significant difference between the feedback provided by teachers and the feedback provided by learners to their peers, (Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; Topping, 2009), in the present study an action that was taken during the implementation phase, presented in section 4.3.2, was to train the participants in how to provide good quality feedback to their peers on their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing, an approach that other studies have also found relevant (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Topping, 2009). In fact, not training learners on how to provide good quality feedback, or on identifying the expected standard levels, might result in this strategy has no substantial effect on the learners' improvement of their writing skills (Adams et al., 2011).

The participants in the present study, as evidenced in section 5.3.2, also claimed that providing feedback to their peers had provided them with opportunities to reflect on improving their own writing skills, which in turn supported the development of greater awareness of the quality in writing expected for the task. Correspondingly, other studies (Azizian & Rouhi, 2015; Bijami et al., 2013; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Tsui & Ng,

2000; Ubilla Rosales, Gómez Álvarez, & Sáez Carrillo, 2017) have found evidence of this same aspect and have related it to the way that interactions happen during peer feedback and/or how collaborative writing experiences contribute to collaborative learning – the co-construction of knowledge (Dagenais et al., 2008) – a central aspect of the core category in the present study, as discussed in section 5.3.3.

Furthermore, some researchers (Bijami et al., 2013; Chanski & Ellis, 2017; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000) have found certain side benefits resulting from the social interactions that take place during peer feedback experiences, such as the development of reflection skills, thinking skills, and confidence in writing processes. For the present study, the most salient side benefit was the development of the participants' lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013), since all of the sample students increased the repertoire of verbs in the simple past tense used in writing tasks, as discussed in section 5.3.1.

Regarding Google Docs, the collaborative online writing tool used in the present study for participants to provide feedback to one another, as shown in section 5.3.2, the participants considered that it helped them conduct more immediate and fluent interactions with their peers. Other studies (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014; Ubilla Rosales et al., 2017) have also found that online collaborative writing through Google Docs can have a positive effect on the development of writing skills, although they were not focused on peer feedback. However, other studies (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Saeed et al., 2018; Q. Xu & Yu, 2018) have used other online platforms (different from Google Docs) to analyze the effectiveness of online peer feedback with positive results. Nevertheless, these studies have also found that the technological tools used – blogs, Facebook, Blackboard (<https://www.blackboard.com/index.html>) – did not allow efficient

synchronous interactions, thereby impeding immediate feedback, which was a key element for the success of the present study.

### **6.3 Significance of the results**

The present study has provided evidence for the effectiveness of peer feedback mediated through an online word processor in improving the writing skills of EFL students. The main reason identified for the positive effect of the studied approach in this study is that its three core elements (writing skills, peer feedback, online word processors) encourage social interaction (Hyland, 2016; N.-F. Liu & Carless, 2006; Ruby Yang, 2010) and, therefore, the co-construction of knowledge (Dagenais et al., 2008).

The results of the present study provide valuable evidence that writing can improve for both students who receive feedback and those who provide it. Although this study was focused on the accuracy of a specific grammatical feature (simple past tense usage), the data collected suggest that it might also be effective for the improvement of other aspects of EFL (or non-EFL) students writing skills. As shown in the present study, participants' interactions helped them co-construct knowledge (Dagenais et al., 2008), resulting also in their increased lexical diversity (Jarvis, 2013). Additionally, another key aspect in the present study that helped to the improvement in accuracy was the selection of an online word processor (Google Docs) as the medium for participants to provide feedback to one another.

Finally, the results of the present study provide evidence about the influence of the peer feedback strategy on the participants' language awareness. Various responses obtained from the qualitative data collection process show how providing and receiving feedback helped the participants reflect on their own language skills and identify areas of improvement beyond the language feature (use of the simple past tense) specifically examined in the present study.

#### **6.4 Pedagogical challenges and recommendations**

Although the present study provides evidence of the positive effects of the peer feedback strategy when provided through an online word processor on the participating fifth-grade EFL students' accuracy with the simple past tense in writing tasks, there were certain pedagogical challenges encountered in the implementation of the study that deserves deeper attention. Firstly, although the participants went through a pre-implementation process in which they were trained on how to provide good quality feedback, some participants claimed that their peers did not provide them with feedback sufficient for them to identify their mistakes or provided them with erroneous feedback, which created confusion. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers implementing similar strategies in their own contexts plan a comprehensive pre-implementation phase to train participants on the provision of good quality peer feedback (Lam, 2010; X. Liu & Li, 2014; Nilson, 2003; Rollinson, 2005).

Another aspect to be considered is the role of the correction symbols in the feedback process. In spite of the fact that the participants were involved with the selection of the correction symbols to be considered in the feedback process during the implementation phase, it seems there were too many such symbols, and this sometimes distracted the participants from focusing on accuracy with verbs in the simple past tense. This situation is reflected in the participants' responses to the final survey; some did not identify accurate usage of simple past tense verbs as an area in which they improved, although the final artifacts, in fact, demonstrate that they did improve. Most probably, it would be beneficial to provide students with only the most necessary correction symbols, depending on the study aims (Bartram & Walton, 1991; Harmer, 2004).

### **6.5 Research limitations on the present study**

One of the main limitations of the present study was the reduction of the population while it was in progress. Although initially, 28 participants provided parental consent letters for their participation, half of them subsequently declined to be recorded during the semi-structured interview; therefore, their data could not be included during the data analysis phase. Thus, the results depend on a much smaller population (only 14 participants) than originally planned.

Time was another limitation encountered during the present study. Although the whole implementation process was carried out over more than 26 hours, there was a forced rush during the data collection process of the post-implementation phase, due to the end of the academic year at the school where the research project was carried out. The main issue with this situation was that during the data analysis of the final survey the teacher-researcher realized that the answers provided by the participants were not adding information different from what had already been gathered throughout the semi-structured interview and there was not time to modify or change the instrument to collect more focused data.

### **6.6 Further research**

Although the objective of the present study was to evaluate the role of peer feedback provided through online word processors on the accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing tasks with fifth-grade EFL students, the results suggest that the strategy had a positive effect on the participants' language awareness and lexical diversity; therefore further research in these areas would be advisable. Additionally, an aspect that might have influenced the results of the study in a positive way was the establishment of a simple past irregular verbs corpus. This would be another area in which further study related to peer feedback provided through Google Docs might be directed.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The present study concludes that peer feedback provided through an online word processor (Google Docs) can play a positive role in improving learners' accuracy with the simple past tense in writing tasks. In fact, this approach to implementing peer feedback seems able to support not only the learners' development of improved grammatical accuracy but also the lexical diversity of their L2 use. These outcomes in the present study might have been influenced by its approach to viewing writing like a social act in which there is a dialogue between the *writer* and the *reader* through the *text*. This same social interaction approach also affected the decision to select as peer feedback the strategy to be tested, since peer feedback likewise depends on dialogues between learners with the purpose of achieving certain learning goals in a collaborative manner. Moreover, the tool selected for implementing both the writing and peer feedback aspects of the study, Google Docs, has features that facilitate social interaction and collaboration. To sum up, the effectiveness of the present study derives in a large part from the social context that was established as a common feature between the problem (accuracy in writing), the strategy (peer feedback), and the tool (Google Docs) selected to solve the participants' problems with accuracy in specific grammatical feature (simple past tense). This social context promoted the co-construction of knowledge among the participants, which ultimately positively affected their grammatical accuracy, language awareness, and lexical diversity. Furthermore, the approaches explored in the present study might also help L2 learners with other writing difficulties or improve their accuracy regarding other grammatical structures.

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The form is a story analysis template. At the center is a mind map with a central oval labeled "Story Title:". Four ovals branch out from it: "Theme" (top), "Setting" (right), "Characters" (bottom), and "Plot" (left). To the far left is a vertical oval labeled "Point of View:". Above the "Theme" oval is a large rounded rectangle with three horizontal lines. Above the "Setting" oval are two smaller rounded rectangles: "When:" with three lines and "Where:" with three lines. Below the "Plot" oval is a large rounded rectangle divided into three sections: "BEGINNING: Exposition:" with two lines, "MIDDLE: Rising action:" with two lines, and "END: Climax:" with two lines, followed by "Falling action:" with two lines and "Resolution:" with two lines. To the right of the "Plot" section is a rounded rectangle labeled "Main Character – Characterization:" with three lines. Below that is another rounded rectangle labeled "Secondary Characters – Characterization:" with five lines.



**A.1.1 Diagnosis writing pre-test Data Analysis**

This chart summarizes the mistakes made by the participants in the writing pre-test.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	#S
<b>Capitalization</b>	5	3	1	1	2	1					1			1	8
<b>Punctuation</b>	4	5	3	1	1			2	2						7
<b>Spelling</b>	1	1	2	3	2	2	2		1	1					9
<b>Wording</b>	5	3	3	4			2								5
<b>Run-ons</b>	4	6	4	3											4
<b>Pronouns</b>	1	2	1												3
<b>Agreement</b>	5		1												2
<b>Verbs</b>	3	2	2	2	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	14

## Appendix B: Initial and final surveys

### B.1 Initial Survey

The first online survey (<https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/ZGWHBLZ>) used in this study aimed to gather information about the participants' perceptions of their own writing skills and peer feedback. It consisted of the questions displayed in this section.

1. Out of the following language skills, which is the one you feel more confident at?
  - Listening
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing
  
2. Out of the following language skills, which one do you feel you need more support at?
  - Listening
  - Speaking
  - Reading
  - Writing
  
3. Mark the area or areas where you feel more confident at when writing. You may choose as many options as you want.
  - Capitalization
  - Punctuation marks
  - Spelling
  - Subject verb agreement (using the right verb form, according to the personal pronoun)

- Expressing actions in the right verb tense (past, present, future, simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous)
  - Using connectors to link sentences or paragraphs
  - Writing coherent, complete sentences.
4. Mark the area or areas where you feel less confident at when writing. Choose as many options as you want.
- Capitalization
  - Punctuation marks
  - Spelling
  - Subject verb agreement (using the right verb form, according to the personal pronoun)
  - Expressing actions in the right verb tense (past, present, future, simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous)
  - Using connectors to link sentences or paragraphs
  - Writing coherent, complete sentences.
5. Choose the option you feel more identified with regarding the following statement: "I understand the role of feedback in any learning process"
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree

6. Choose the option you feel more identified with regarding the following statement: "I understand the role of feedback in any learning process"
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
7. Choose the option you feel more identified with regarding the following statement: "I take into account the feedback I receive to reflect and improve my writing skills".
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
8. How do you feel about receiving feedback from your teachers in writing tasks? Explain your answer.
9. How do you feel about receiving feedback from your classmates in writing tasks? Explain your answer.
10. How do you feel about providing feedback to your classmates in writing tasks? Explain your answer.
11. I feel comfortable when working with online word processors such as Google Docs.
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree

12. I know how to share my documents on Google Drive, for other people to edit them.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
13. I know how to work collaboratively on a Google Doc.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
14. I know how to comment on other people's work on a Google Doc.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
15. I know how to review the different versions of a Google Doc.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
16. I can identify verbs in simple past by the way they are written.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree

17. I can differentiate regular verbs from irregular verbs in simple past.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
18. I can confidently write regular verbs in simple past tense.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
19. I can confidently write irregular verbs in simple past tense.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
20. I know when to write verbs in simple past tense, according to what I want to express.
- Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree

## **B.2 Final Survey**

The second online survey (<https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/R3SW2DR>) used in the present study aimed to gather information about the participants' perceptions of their accuracy in simple past tense usage and their expertise in using Google Docs. It consisted of the questions displayed in this section.

1. What do you think about your writing skills after the implementation of the peer feedback strategy?

2. What specific areas of your writing have improved thanks to the peer feedback strategy?
3. What aspects of your writing skills do you feel you still have to work on?
4. What do you think a person needs to provide feedback to someone else?
5. How did you feel about providing feedback on your classmates' writing?
6. How did you feel about your classmates providing feedback on your writing?
7. How do you think the peer feedback strategy impacted your writing skills?
8. In which other contexts would you use the peer feedback strategy? What for?
9. What are the positive aspects of the peer feedback strategy?
10. How would you improve the peer feedback strategy, so that it has a better impact on learning?
11. What do you think the advantages of using Google Docs for collaborative work are?
12. What do you think the disadvantages of using Google Docs for collaborative work are?
13. What are the features of Google Doc that you find more useful? Why?
14. If you could ask the developer of the Google Doc to improve something about it, what would it be?
15. How do you feel about your knowledge on Simple past tense?
16. How do you think the implementation of the peer feedback strategy impacted your usage of Simple past tense verbs in writing tasks?
17. What knowledge related to the usage of verbs in Simple past you think you have consolidated?
18. What aspects related to the usage of verbs in Simple past tense do you think you still have to work on?

19. How do you think you can improve your knowledge about verbs in Simple past tense?



The worksheet is designed for story planning. At the top left is a large rounded rectangle with three horizontal lines. To its right are two smaller rounded rectangles: 'When:' with three lines and 'Where:' with three lines. Below these is a central mind map with 'Story Title:' in the center oval. It is connected to four surrounding ovals: 'Theme' (top), 'Setting' (right), 'Characters' (bottom), and 'Plot' (left). To the far left is a vertical oval labeled 'Point of View:'. Below the mind map are three large rounded rectangles. The leftmost one is divided into sections for 'BEGINNING: Exposition:', 'MIDDLE: Rising action:', 'Climax:', 'Falling action:', and 'END: Resolution:'. The middle one is labeled 'Main Character - Characterization:' and has three lines. The rightmost one is labeled 'Secondary Characters - Characterization:' and has five lines.

### Appendix D: Students' Checklist

This checklist was used by the participants to assess their peers on their accuracy in the usage of verbs in simple past tense in writing.

Read the short story your classmate wrote and choose the option that best describes each one of the following aspects of his/her writing.

	Yes	No	N/A
All of my classmate's sentences include a subject and a predicate, with at least one verb.			
All of the verbs my classmate used in this piece of writing are in agreement with their corresponding subjects.			
My classmate wrote all verbs in the right verb tense, according to the time (past, present, future) where actions take place.			
My classmate used the verb to be in simple past in agreement to the subject.			
My classmate used the simple past tense to express all actions that began and finished in the past.			
In my classmate's writing, repeated actions and routines in the past are expressed in the simple past tense.			
In my classmate's writing, actions happening through long periods of action time in the past are expressed in simple past.			

In my classmate's writing, generalities or past events are expressed in simple past.			
My classmate wrote all regular verbs in simple past with appropriate spelling.			
My classmate wrote all irregular verbs in the past with the correct spelling.			



### **Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview**

The semi-structured interview was used to gather information related to the participants' views and opinions regarding their writing skills, their accuracy in simple past tense usage, peer feedback, and the effectiveness of Google Docs as a tool to provide feedback to their peers.

1. What do you think about the current state of your writing skills?
2. Do you consider that there was any change?
3. What do you think about peer feedback in writing tasks?
4. How do you feel about receiving feedback on your writing from a classmate?
5. How do you feel when providing feedback to your classmates about their writing?
6. What are the advantages of Google Docs in a collaborative writing task?
7. Would you feel confident to correct someone else's mistakes in the usage of simple past tense? Why?
8. How accurate do you think you use simple past tense? Explain your answer by providing some evidence.

**Appendix G: Researcher’s journal**

This journal used to keep the teacher-researcher’s reflections about the whole action research project.

STAGE	LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CLASS	DATE	TIME	INSTRUMENT	OUTCOME	REFLECTION
Diagnosis	At the end of the class, students will be able to reflect on their perceptions about their own language learning process, through a survey.	1	March 15, 2018	1 period of class 45 minutes	Survey	Data to be analyzed	On peer feedback: On writing skills: On Google Docs: On simple past usage: Other aspects:
Diagnosis	At the end of the class, students will be able to produce an informational text, based on their prior knowledge.	2	March 16, 2018	2 periods of class 90 minutes	Artifact	Narrative text written by the participants	On peer feedback: On writing skills: On Google Docs: On simple past usage: Other aspects:

### Appendix H: Lesson Plan Sample

This lesson plan format was used by the teacher-researcher to plan all of the lessons that happened during the implementation phase of the project.

Lesson Plan 2017-2018

Teacher: Luis Fernando Prieto Serrato

Grade: 5<sup>th</sup>

Date: Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<b>Section 1: Methodological design</b>	
<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>	At the end of the class, students will be able to identify different verb tenses from a narrative text and will be able to explain when they are accurate according to context clues.
<b>KEY CONCEPTS</b>	Verb tenses
<b>RELATED CONCEPTS</b>	Reading, adverbs of time, simple past tense, simple present tense, progressive tenses, perfect tenses.
<b>INQUIRY QUESTION (S) &amp; Opportunities to develop critical and creative thinking skills</b>	What clues do we get from texts about the time when actions happen?

<b>RESOURCES</b>		Meissner D. (N.D.) Adventure on the Amazon river. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.raz-plus.com/projectable/book.php?id=218&amp;lang=1&amp;type=book">https://www.raz-plus.com/projectable/book.php?id=218&amp;lang=1&amp;type=book</a>	
<b>ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES</b>		Students will classify in their English notebooks the verbs they find in the reading according to their tense. They will construct a chart showing the clues (words) they get from the text to do such classification.	
<b>Homework</b>		N/A	
<b>Section 2: class stages</b>			
<b>time</b>	<b>Knowledge , skills, concepts</b>	<b>Content of the lesson</b>	<b>Differentiation</b>
5 min	Activating prior knowledge	<b>Activate prior knowledge:</b> The teacher is going to start a little discussion about the way in which narrative text are usually written. What they communicate, their purpose and usual structure.	The teacher will encourage those students who rarely participate in class discussions to be
25 min	Listening skills +	<b>Introduction by the teacher:</b> The teacher is going to explain students that they are going to read a story from <a href="http://www.raz-kids.com">www.raz-kids.com</a>	active in this one, since this is a theme they are

<p>40 min</p>	<p>Reading skills + Identifying specific information + Speaking skills + Justifying choices  Reading skills + Identifying specific information. + Classifying</p>	<p>(Meissner D. (N.D.) Adventure on the Amazon river. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.raz-plus.com/projectable/book.php?id=218&amp;lang=1&amp;type=book">https://www.raz-plus.com/projectable/book.php?id=218&amp;lang=1&amp;type=book</a>) with the purpose of identifying verbs, classifying them according to their tenses, and identifying clues from the text that might accompany certain verb tenses.</p> <p>He is going to project the book on the class SmartBoard, and is going to encourage students to take turns to read aloud. After each paragraph is read, he is going to encourage students to identify the verbs, the tense in which they are expressed, and the clues that can be taken into account for the verbs to be expressed in such tense. After modeling this with the first two pages of the book, the teacher is going to ask students to work in the same way in groups.</p> <p><b>Student Centered Learning:</b> Students are going to keep on reading the story in groups. They are going to identify the verbs in the reading, classify them according to the verb tense in which they are expressed, and identify</p>	<p>highly expected to know.</p> <p>The teacher will constantly monitor students to find out if they need any kind of assistance. He is going to focus on those students with weak reading skills.</p>
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<p>20 min</p>	<p>Reflection</p>	<p>the clues they get from the text that justify one or another verb tense. They will do a chart in their English notebooks, that will be later shared with the class.</p> <p><b>Assessment of Knowledge, skills and concepts:</b></p> <p>Each group is going to orally share the results of their work. Students are going to be encouraged to complete their charts based on the information they get from the other groups. The teacher will lead the class discussion to make students discover why verbs are used in certain tenses, and how we can recognize them. At the end of the class, each student is going to raise their hands and say something new they learned in the lesson.</p>	<p>Students who struggle to express their ideas are going to receive assistance from the teacher.</p>
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**Appendix I: Irregular Verbs Corpus**

This irregular simple past tense verbs' list was used as the corpus for student to focus on during the implementation phase of this project.

The principal parts of some irregular verbs are listed below. The past participle is used with the helping verbs *has, have or had*.

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
1. To be	was, were	been
2. To begin	began	begun
3. To bite	bit	bitten
4. To blow	blew	blown
5. To break	broke	broken
6. To bring	brought	brought
7. To buy	bought	bought
8. To catch	caught	caught
9. To come	came	come
10. To dive	dived - dove	dived
11. To do	did	done
12. To draw	drew	drawn
13. To drink	drank	drunk
14. To drive	drove	driven
15. To eat	ate	eaten
16. To fall	fell	fallen

17. To fight	fought	fought
18. To fly	flew	flewn
19. To freeze	froze	frozen
20. To get	got	gotten
21. To give	gave	given
22. To go	went	gone
23. To grow	grew	grown
24. To hang	hung	hung
25. To hide	hid	hidden - hid
26. To hold	held	held
27. To keep	kept	kept
28. To know	knew	know
29. To lay	laid	laid
30. To lead	led	led
31. To leave	left	left
32. To lie	lay	lain
33. To make	made	made
34. To ride	rode	ridden
35. To ring	rang	rung
36. To rise	rose	risen
37. To run	ran	run
38. To see	saw	seen
39. To shake	shook	shaken
40. To shine	shone	shone
41. To shrink	shrank	shrunk
42. To sing	sang	sung

43. To sink	sank - sunk	sunk
44. To sit	sat	sat
45. To sleep	slept	slept
46. To speak	spoke	spoken
47. To spring	sprang - sprung	sprung
48. To stand	stood	stood
49. To steal	stole	stolen
50. To swear	swore	sworn
51. To swim	swam	swum
52. To swing	swung	swung
53. To take	took	taken
54. To teach	taught	taught
55. To tear	tore	torn
56. To throw	threw	thrown
57. To wake	woke	woken
58. To wear	wore	worn
59. To weave	wove	woven
60. To write	wrote	written

The following verbs are the same in each of the parts: *burst, cost, cut, hurt, let, put, set,* and *spread.*

**Appendix J: Initial Survey Analysis**

This table presents the analysis made on the participants answers to the survey presented in Appendix B.1

Question 1		Question 2		Question 3		Question 4		Question 5
Out of the following language skills, which is the one you feel more confident at?		Out of the following language skills, which one do you feel you need more support at?		Mark the area or areas where you feel more confident at when writing. You may choose as many options as you want.		Mark the area or areas where you feel less confident at when writing. You may choose as many options as you want.		How do you think you could improve your writing skills?
Listening	29 %	Listening	7.1 %	Capitalization	57 %	Capitalization	0 %	35, 71 % of the students state that they might need to read more in order to improve their writing skills, which suggest they are aware of the relationship between different language skills for their development. Just 28,57 % of the students state that to improve their writing skills they need to write more often. Another 28,57 % refer reflecting on their writing as a strategy for improvement.
				Punctuation marks	36 %	Punctuation marks	7.1 %	
Speaking	43 %	Speaking	0 %	Spelling	57 %	Spelling	29 %	
				Subject-verb agreement	14 %	Subject-verb agreement	64 %	
Reading	0 %	Reading	71 %	Expressing actions in the right verb tense (past, present, future, simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous)	7.1 %	Expressing actions in the right verb tense (past, present, future, simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous)	57 %	
				Writing	29 %	Writing	21 %	
Writing	29 %	Writing	21 %	Using connectors to link sentences or paragraphs	36 %	Using connectors to link sentences or paragraphs	14 %	
				Writing coherent, complete sentences	64 %	Writing coherent, complete sentences	14 %	
Question 6		Question 7		Question 8		Question 9		Question 10
Choose the option you feel more identified with regarding the following statement: "I understand the role		Choose the option you feel more identified with regarding the following statement: "I take into account the feedback I		How do you feel about receiving feedback from your teachers in writing tasks? Explain your answer.		How do you feel about receiving feedback from your classmates in writing tasks? Explain your answer.		How do you feel about providing feedback to your classmates in writing tasks? Explain your answer.

of feedback in any learning process"		receive to reflect and improve my writing skills".				
Agree	92.9 %	Agree	92.9 %	92% of the sample participants mentioned specific actions they can take based on the feedback they receive from teachers. The same percentage of the sample participants have a positive perception regarding teacher's feedback. 14% of the sample participants mention teacher's feedback might be confusing or discouraging.	35,7% of the sample participants state some specific actions they can take based on the feedback they receive from their peers. 50% of the sample participants express a positive perception about receiving feedback from a classmate. The same percentage expresses the opposite. 28,57% of the students recognize that their classmates have the same language skills than they do; therefore, their feedback might be beneficial	85,71% of the sample participants had a positive perception about providing feedback to their classmates. 57,14% of them can state specific actions that can help their classmates improve. 14,28% of the sample participants have a negative perception about the quality of feedback they can provide to their classmates. 7,14% of the sample participants mentioned that their language skills are the same as their peers, therefore they feel able to provide them with feedback.
Neutral	7.14 %	Neutral	7.14 %			
Disagree	0 %	Disagree	0 %			
Question 11		Question 12		Question 13	Question 14	Question 15
I feel comfortable when working with online word processors such as Google Docs.		I know how to share my documents on Google Drive, for other people to edit them.		I know how to work collaboratively on a Google Doc.	I know how to comment on other people's work on a Google Doc.	I know how to review the different versions of a Google Doc.

Agree	78.6 %	Agree	85.7 %	Agree	92.9 %	Agree	64.3 %	Agree	50 %
Neutral	21.4 %	Neutral	14.3 %	Neutral	7.14 %	Neutral	21.4 %	Neutral	21.4 %
Disagree	0 %	Disagree	0 %	Disagree	0 %	Disagree	14.3 %	Disagree	28.6 %
Question 16		Question 17		Question 18		Question 19		Question 20	
I can identify verbs in simple past by the way they are written.		I can differentiate regular verbs from irregular verbs in simple past.		I can confidently write regular verbs in simple past tense.		I can confidently write irregular verbs in simple past tense.		I know when to write verbs in simple past tense, according to what I want to express.	
Agree	50 %	Agree	42.9 %	Agree	21.4 %	Agree	28.6 %	Agree	78.6 %
Neutral	42.9 %	Neutral	57.1 %	Neutral	78.6 %	Neutral	71.4 %	Neutral	14.3 %
Disagree	7.14 %	Disagree	0 %	Disagree	0 %	Disagree	0 %	Disagree	7.14 %

**Appendix K: Final Survey Analysis**

Q1	Q2	Q4	Q6
<p>What specific areas of your writing have improved thanks to the peer feedback strategy?</p>	<p>What aspects of your writing skills do you feel you still have to work on?</p>	<p>How do you think the peer feedback strategy impacted your writing skills?</p>	<p>What are the positive aspects of the peer feedback strategy?</p>
<p>64,28% of the sample participants state that their usage of verbs in simple past improved thanks to the peer feedback strategy. 100% of them are able to identify the areas in which they feel they improved thanks to the peer feedback. Some of the sub-skills they mention are spelling, punctuation marks, vocabulary, and sentence structure.</p>	<p>100% of the sample participants demonstrate to have a better language awareness after the implementation stage. 35,71% of them mentioned explicitly they have improved their usage of verbs in simple past, but they also need to "go beyond" in their accuracy in this area. Other areas of improvement related to sub-skills they mention are related to sentence structure and punctuation marks, mostly.</p>	<p>35,71% of the sample participants expressed a positive perception regarding how peer feedback had impacted their writing skills. The same percentage of students were able to mention specific benefits or outcomes they perceive as consequence of the peer feedback strategy. 28,57% of the sample participants stated that peer feedback allowed them to see how other people used language in their own writings, so they could learn from their classmates' productions. 21,42% of them are able to mention specific sub-skills they improved at thanks to peer feedback. 7,14% of the students expressed not to have perceived any improvement in their writing skills thanks to peer feedback.</p>	<p>50% of the students see the peer feedback strategy as a good opportunity to learn from one another. 28,57% of the students see on peer feedback a good opportunity to improve their relationships with their classmates. 14,28% of the sample participants highlight the fact that thanks to peer feedback they got to learn from someone different from the teacher. 35,71% of the sample participants are able to explicitly identify areas of their writing where they improved thanks to the peer feedback strategy.</p>

How would you improve the peer feedback strategy, so that it has a better impact on learning?	What do you think the advantages of using Google Docs for collaborative work are?	What do you think the disadvantages of using Google Docs for collaborative work are?	How do you feel about your knowledge on Simple Past tense?
<p>50% of the sample participants mentioned they consider they would not change anything about the strategy used to provide peer feedback in this research. 28,57% of the sample participants mentioned that the peer feedback strategy would work better if they had the chance to interact with more students than just one. 21,24% of the students feel that the peer feedback strategy would work better if the teacher had a more active role in the supervision of the corrections made by students.</p>	<p>100% of the sample participants mentioned some advantages of using Google Docs as a tool to enhance collaborative work. Among those advantages they mention, the possibility of working online so that they don't have to meet to work, immediacy, synchronicity, and the possibility of having plenty of users working at the same time are the ones they highly remark. Other advantages they mentioned are the fact that the platform saves the work instantaneously.</p>	<p>57,14% of the sample participants do not state any disadvantage Google Docs may have to enhance collaborative work. The other 42,85% mention some disadvantages such as the fact that the tool automatically corrects some spelling mistakes, the fact that the tool does not allow "facial expression", and some comments might be misunderstood, that the tool might not save changes all the time, the difficulty to add image to the texts, and the fact that it does not work without internet connection.</p>	<p>100% of the sample participants state that they have improved their knowledge and usage of simple past tense verbs. However, 12,42% of them clearly express that they still need to keep on working to improve in this area.</p>

### **Appendix L: Semi-structured Interviews Samples**

This semi-structured interview was conducted at the final stage of the implementation phase to encourage the participants to provide individual responses on their views and opinions regarding their writing skills, their accuracy in simple past tense usage, peer feedback, and the effectiveness of Google Docs as a tool to provide feedback to their peers.

#### **L.1 S7 Semi-Structured Interview Transcription**

Teacher: Thank you very much for participating in this interview. My first question is, What do you think about your writing skills today.

S7: Well I think that they improved a lot in comparison to the beginning of the beginning of the year. And the feedback of my classmate made that I improve a lot.

Teacher: Ok. So what do you think about using peer feedback when it comes to writing tasks.

S7: That I learn much more. Because like I have been friends of like my peer from a long time and I feel like I learn and they feel comfortable

Teacher: So how do you feel about receiving feedback on your writing from a classmate

S7: That we both are learning because I learn... Like I write my classmate correct me. And I think that my classmate learn about what I did. So he can put it in his text.

Teacher: And how do you feel about providing feedback to one of your classmates in their writing.

S7: I think that I... I can like tip my future given feedbacks and that I learned to like some verbs in past tense I don't remember I can remember providing feedback.

Teacher: How is it different receiving feedback from a classmate than from a teacher.

S7: It seems like there are two difference for me that when I receive feedback from a classmate, I think sometimes I think he's like not... he don't know what is giving feedback to me. Like I have

a word like “writed” right. And he said that it's not a right, so... There's like a difficult. And when a teacher I feel sure that he's giving the right feedback to me.

Teacher: Okay. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using Google Docs in collaborative writing tasks?

S7: I think that we both can edit, and he had... he can highlight the errors, upload comments, as we did... and we can share all this stuff.

Teacher: How well do you think you use simple past tense verbs today.

S7: Well today I think that we... Well I use it every day and I feel like comfortable, because I know in the book we have the verb tense so I can study them before the summatives and all of that. So, I feel comfortable that I can use it.

Teacher: Well, how confident do you feel about correcting someone else's mistakes in the use of simple past tense verbs

S7: that will feel that that's another way to remember the past tense and improve my use of past tense verbs.

Teacher: Okay Thank you very much.

## **L.2 S14 Semi-Structured Interview Transcription**

Teacher: Well first of all thank you very much for participating in this interview. I would like to know what you think about your writing skills.

S14: Well first like seeing my process of years before I feel more comfortable with these like writing skills of this year, cause I can improve many things of my simple past and well, like spelling things like that. So I feel OK.

Teacher: So what do you think about using peer feedback when it comes to writing tasks.

S14: Well I think it's like cool cause you can know the perspective and the view of other classmates like another person that is not only your teacher.

Teacher: And how do you feel about receiving feedback on your writing from a classmate.

S14: I feel OK cause... Well, like I already said before it's like the perspectives of someone that doesn't have the experience a teacher has. So it's like say same level.

Teacher: Ok. And how do you feel about providing feedback to your classmates about their writing.

S14: I feel ok cause I know not only like the way I... Like give the feedback but also like I started knowing how my other classmates write. So I can learn of that.

Teacher: How is it different receiving feedback from a classmate than from a teacher.

S14: That the teacher has more experience so maybe he's going to be like more detailed. And the student, the classmate has like this same experience that I so it's not like that detailed but also it's like in his or her way.

Teacher: Ok. So what are the advantages or disadvantages of using Google Docs in collaborative writing tasks.

S14: Well I think that has more advantage than disadvantage, cause... well, the classmate can see like the punctual mistakes and it's easier to highlight and to tell things like we add comments and it's easier I think and maybe the things that can improve of the... giving or... well, provide feedback in the Google Docs is that sometimes it's not like you can erase something cuz you're correcting and you read something or something like that. So maybe it's like you in Google Docs has to be more. Detailed... more careful.

Teacher: So how accurate do you think your usage of simple past tense is now.

S14: Well I think that I use simple past words on sentences more than before, because this year like with the things we do in class not only with this exercise helped me like understand... All of that some simple past experience.

Teacher: How confident do you feel about providing or correcting someone else's mistakes in simple past.

S14: Oh well, at the beginning I feel a little nervous, cause I think that maybe I don't know like all. But, then I was more like... Knowing the specific mistakes. So then it was easier to me and, well I feel OK.

Teacher: OK. Thank you very much.

**Appendix M: Initial and Final Artifacts Analysis**

This table presents the initial and final artifacts analysis presented in section 5.2.2, which was followed to determine the categories presented in section 5.3.

		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %	Average Progress %
		%	%			%			
S1	CRV	5	38.462	84.615	CRV	9	31.034	86.207	
	CIV	6	46.154		CIV	16	55.172		
	IRV	1	7.6923	15.385	IRV	3	10.345	13.793	
	IIV	1	7.6923		IIV	1	3.4483		
SPTV		13	100	100	SPTV	29	100	100	
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %	23.58078989
		%	%			%			
S2	CRV	3	13.636	45.455	CRV	11	28.947	71.053	
	CIV	7	31.818		CIV	16	42.105		
	IRV	6	27.273	54.545	IRV	3	7.8947	28.947	
	IIV	6	27.273		IIV	8	21.053		
SPTV		22	100	100	SPTV	38	100	100	
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %	
		%	%			%			
S3	CRV	0	0	27.586	CRV	0	0	54.545	
	CIV	8	27.586		CIV	6	54.545		
	IRV	11	37.931	72.414	IRV	4	36.364	45.455	
	IIV	10	34.483		IIV	1	9.0909		
SPTV		29	100	100	SPTV	11	100	100	
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %	
		%	%			%			
S4	CRV	7	30.435	91.304	CRV	9	34.615	88.462	
	CIV	14	60.87		CIV	14	53.846		
	IRV	1	4.3478	8.6957	IRV	3	11.538	11.538	
	IIV	1	4.3478		IIV	0	0		
SPTV		23	100	100	SPTV	26	100	100	
		First Artifact			Final Artifact			Progress %	
		%	%			%			
S5	CRV	5	27.778	66.667	CRV	14	41.176	70.588	
	CIV	7	38.889		CIV	10	29.412		



	CRV	8	34.783	60.87	CRV	9	45	40	
	IRV	5	21.739		IRV	4	20		
	IIV	9	39.13		IIV	4	20		
SPTV		23	100	100	SPTV		20	100	100
<b>First Artifact</b>				<b>Final Artifact</b>				Progress %	
		%	%			%	%		
S12	CRV	2	7.1429	50	CRV	4	9.5238	57.143	
	CIV	12	42.857		CIV	20	47.619		
	IRV	5	17.857	50	IRV	10	23.81	42.857	
	IIV	9	32.143		IIV	8	19.048		
SPTV		28	100	100	SPTV		42	100	100
<b>First Artifact</b>				<b>Final Artifact</b>				Progress %	
		%	%			%	%		
S13	CRV	0	0	8.3333	CRV	10	28.571	82.857	
	CIV	2	8.3333		CIV	19	54.286		
	IRV	14	58.333	91.667	IRV	3	8.5714	17.143	
	IIV	8	33.333		IIV	3	8.5714		
SPTV		24	100	100	SPTV		35	100	100
<b>First Artifact</b>				<b>Final Artifact</b>				Progress %	
		%	%			%	%		
S14	CRV	1	3.7037	25.926	CRV	6	20	80	
	CIV	6	22.222		CIV	18	60		
	IRV	8	29.63	74.074	IRV	5	16.667	20	
	IIV	12	44.444		IIV	1	3.3333		
SPTV		27	100	100	SPTV		30	100	100

	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact			
S1	RV	5	RV	9		
	IV	3	IV	10		
	Total	8	Total	19		
	Ratio		Ratio		were/was, went, broke,	was/were, saw, ate, went, could, heard, stole, put, hid, left,
	0.615384615		0.655172414			
S2	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		passed, decided	crashed, wished, whispered, worked, answered, finished, proved, returned
	RV	2	RV	8		
IV	4	IV	6			

	Total	6	Total	14	was/were, could, saw, said	was/were, knew, had, saw, said, went,
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.272727273		0.368421053			
S3	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>			happened, decided, produced, arrived, confronted, saved, realized, approached, called
	RV	0	RV	0		
	IV	5	IV	2		
	Total	5	Total	2	were/was, went, let, said, saw	was/were, became
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.172413793		0.181818182			
S4	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>		helped, considered, played, started,	looked, hugged, finished, changed, walked, tried, captured, wished
	RV	4	RV	8		
	IV	5	IV	9		
	Total	9	Total	17	were/was, made, read, went, saw,	was/were, saw, told, ran, said, went, left, forgot, had
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.391304348		0.653846154			
S5	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>		arrived, stayed,	liked, shouted, opened, dressed, entered, teleported, seemed, lived, introduced, asked, wanted, learned, arrived,
	RV	2	RV	13		
	IV	4	IV	3		
	Total	6	Total	16	were/was, said, went, found,	was/were, understood, met,
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.333333333		0.470588235			
S6	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>			called, scared, named
	RV	0	RV	3		
	IV	4	IV	9		
	Total	4	Total	12	were/was, went, broke, came	was/were, came, had, said, told, put, saw, came, took
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.142857143		0.285714286			
S7	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>		wanted	opened, started, loved, started, turned, called, killed, trained,
	RV	1	RV	8		

	IV	5	IV	7	was, said, went, got, put	was/were, found, put, told, saw, came, took
	Total	6	Total	15		
	Ratio		Ratio			
	0.3		0.416666667			
S8	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		destroyed, died	tried, failed, arrived, started, endured, captured, advanced, discovered, used, packed, finished, opened, entered, killed, stopped
	RV	2	RV	15		
	IV	5	IV	6		
	Total	7	Total	21	went, made, saw, was/were, said,	was/were, went, got, found, had, became
	Ratio		Ratio			
	0.189189189		0.7			
S9	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		finished, decided, returned, knocked	located, called, noticed, finished, saved
	RV	4	RV	5		
	IV	2	IV	8		
	Total	6	Total	13	was/were, found	saw, ran, met, was/were, began, told, took, gave
	Ratio		Ratio			
0.4		0.52				
S10	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		called, wanted, started	changed, started, changed, cleaned, painted, stocked
	RV	3	RV	6		
	IV	5	IV	7		
	Total	8	Total	13	was, went, left, found, saw	went, thought, saw, was/were, said, felt, bought
	Ratio		Ratio			
0.25		0.5				
S11	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		wanted	called, arrived, played,
	RV	1	RV	3		
	IV	5	IV	5		
	Total	6	Total	8	got, began, was/were, told, said	was/were, said, ate, brought, could
	Ratio		Ratio			
0.260869565		0.4				
S12	Lexical Diversity				Verbs Used	
	First Artifact		Final Artifact		yelled, asked	noticed, transformed, started, arrested
	RV	2	RV	4		
	IV	3	IV	9		

	Total	5	Total	13	said, went, was	was/were, went, saw, woke up, knew, came, chose, put, told
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.178571429		0.30952381			
<b>S13</b>	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>			wanted, happened, stopped, covered, configurated, arrived, showed, returned, started
	RV	0	RV	9		
	IV	1	IV	8		
	Total	1	Total	17	was/were	was/were, fell, did, told, could, ran, saw, found
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.041666667		0.485714286			
<b>S14</b>	<b>Lexical Diversity</b>				<b>Verbs Used</b>	
	<b>First Artifact</b>		<b>Final Artifact</b>		started,	started, arrived, looked, appeared, hugged
	RV	1	RV	5		
	IV	3	IV	8		
	Total	4	Total	13	was/were, put, said	went, got, gave, was/were, knew, said, went, made
	<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>			
	0.148148148		0.433333333			

**Appendix N: Students' Checklists Analysis**

This table presents the analysis of the checklist the participants used to assess their peers' accuracy in their usage of verbs in the simple past tense in writing.

Question 1			Question 2			Question 3			Question 4			Question 5		
All of my classmate's sentences count on a subject and a predicate, with at least one verb.			All of the verbs my classmate used in this piece of writing are in agreement to the corresponding subjects.			My classmate wrote all verbs in the right verb tense, according to the time (past, present, future) where actions take place			My classmate used the verb "to be" in simple past in agreement to the subject			My classmate used the simple past tense to express all actions that began and finished in the past		
YES	NO	N/A	YES	NO	N/A	YES	NO	N/A	YES	NO	N/A	YES	NO	N/A
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
13	1	0	9	4	1	7	5	2	8	3	3	7	3	4



**Appendix O: Consent letter – school**

This consent letter was sent to the headmaster and the primary-level coordinator of the school where the study took place to present the purpose of the study and the implications its implementation had for the school, the participants, the parents, and the teacher-researcher. It also served to request official authorization from the school to conduct the study

Señora Rectora  
Señora Coordinadora de Escuela Primaria

Estimada señora,

Espero que se encuentre muy bien.

Como es de su conocimiento, en el momento me encuentro cursando la Maestría en la enseñanza del inglés, con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo, en la Universidad de La Sabana. Como parte de dicho programa, me encuentro llevando a cabo una investigación titulada “El rol de la retroalimentación de pares a través de plataformas de documentos colaborativos, en el desarrollo de habilidades escritas”.

El objetivo de dicha investigación es evaluar cómo la realimentación entre estudiantes, a través de plataformas de documentos colaborativos, afecta la exactitud del uso de tiempos verbales en la producción de textos escritos en inglés. Para tal fin, me gustaría contar con su beneplácito y aprobación, para llevar a cabo algunas encuestas y entrevistas, tanto a profesores como a estudiantes, realizar un registro y análisis de los textos escritos en inglés de los estudiantes de grado 5°, además de recolectar material audiovisual de algunas de las clases. Todo ésto con el ánimo de establecer cuáles podrían ser las prácticas más efectivas para el mejoramiento de la expresión escrita de los estudiantes de primaria en el colegio.

Cabe anotar que me comprometo a guardar completa confidencialidad y anonimato del nombre de los estudiantes, así como de los resultados de la investigación, que serán usados netamente con fines académicos. También me aseguraré de garantizar que la investigación no incida de manera alguna en las calificaciones de los estudiantes.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización y apoyo para poder llevar a cabo mi investigación, que seguramente va a impactar positivamente el proceso de L2 de los estudiantes de Tilatá.

Para mayor información sobre este particular, puede contactar al Señor Jermaine McDougald,

Director de Maestrías, Departamento de Lenguas y Culturas Extranjeras en el teléfono 8615555, Ext. 41011 - 41105, celular 300 2 09 17 39, o en el correo electrónico [jermaine.mcdougald@unisabana.edu.co](mailto:jermaine.mcdougald@unisabana.edu.co) o [jermaine.mcdougald1@unisabana.edu.co](mailto:jermaine.mcdougald1@unisabana.edu.co).

Cordialmente,

Luis Fernando Prieto Serrato

Profesor de inglés 5° de primaria

**Appendix P: Consent letter – parents/caregivers**

This consent letter was sent to the parents and/or caregivers of the participants to present the purpose of the study and the implications its implementation had for the school, the participants, the parents, and the teacher-researcher. It also served to request their authorization for their children to participate in the study, and to clarify that the participation of the students in the study would not affect their academic results.

Estimados Padres de Familia,

Espero que se encuentre muy bien.

Como parte de mi desarrollo profesional, y contando con el apoyo del colegio, en el momento estoy cursando la Maestría en la enseñanza del inglés, con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo, en la Universidad de La Sabana. Como parte de dicho programa, me encuentro llevando a cabo una investigación titulada “El rol de la retroalimentación de pares a través de plataformas de documentos colaborativos (Google Docs), en el desarrollo de habilidades escritas”.

El objetivo de dicha investigación es evaluar cómo la realimentación entre estudiantes, a través de plataformas de documentos colaborativos, afecta la exactitud del uso de tiempos verbales en la producción de textos escritos en inglés. Para tal fin, me gustaría contar con su beneplácito y aprobación, para llevar a cabo algunas encuestas y entrevistas a sus hijos, realizar un registro y análisis de sus textos escritos en inglés, además de recolectar material audiovisual de algunas de las clases. Todo esto con el ánimo de establecer cuáles podrían ser las prácticas

más efectivas para el mejoramiento de la expresión escrita de los estudiantes de primaria en grado 5°.

Cabe anotar que la participación en la investigación no implica de ninguna manera trabajo adicional para los estudiantes, ni dentro ni fuera del salón de clase. De igual forma, me comprometo a guardar completa confidencialidad y anonimato del nombre de sus niños, así como de los resultados de la investigación, que serán usados netamente con fines académicos. La investigación de ninguna manera incidirá en las calificaciones de sus hijos.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización y apoyo para poder llevar a cabo mi investigación, que seguramente va a impactar positivamente el proceso de L2 de sus hijos. Por favor diligenciar el desprendible de autorización adjunto, para constatar su conocimiento y aprobación con respecto a la investigación que realizaré.

Cordialmente,

Luis Fernando Prieto Serrato

Profesor de inglés 5° de primaria

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Desprendible de Autorización para la participación de la investigación “El rol de la retroalimentación de pares a través de plataformas de documentos colaborativos, en el desarrollo de habilidades escritas”

Sí autorizo \_\_\_\_\_ / No autorizo \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del estudiante: \_\_\_\_\_ Curso 5° \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del padre: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de la madre: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre: \_\_\_\_\_ Firma de la madre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_