



## TYPES OF INTERACTION AND NATURE OF FEEDBACK IN A BLOG BASED ON A FANFICTION WRITING ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reports part of the findings of a study carried on EFL university students' narrative writing experiences in a blog based on a fanfiction writing environment. It examines interaction types and feedback posted. It looks at the types of feedback that participants found useful, the feedback they desired to receive and participants' preferred source of feedback. The study was carried out with twenty eight freshmen students in an academic writing class from the English language department at the University of Tripoli, Libya. Participants posted fanfiction and original fiction, read, reviewed others' stories, and responded to reader feedback. This semester long study adopted a mixed methods approach. Data collected via questionnaire responses from students and posted feedback. Thematic and textual analyses and descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Findings revealed the occurrence of writer-reader and reader-reader interaction types. Task Related Feedback made up a significantly sizeable category of the total reader feedback (Global Praise, Reader's Needs, Text Playback, and Sentence Edits) compared to Non -Task Related Feedback (Feedback on Original Work, Social Feedback and Personal Response). Corrective feedback (Sentence Edits), constructive criticism (Reader's Needs and Text Playback), and positive feedback (Global Praise) were the most useful types of feedback received. Corrective feedback, positive feedback, constructive criticism, a combination of positive and corrective feedback, critical feedback and a combination of critical and corrective feedback were desired. Most participants were pro-teacher feedback.

**Keywords:** Narrative Writing; Non-Task Related Feedback; Peer Feedback; Task-Related Feedback; Teacher feedback

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In learning and teaching contexts, blogs enjoy specific characteristics that differentiate them from other communication tools. Blog uniqueness accounts for the rising number of blogs that appear daily on the World Wide Web. They do not require

users to have prior technical knowledge in computer programming (Zhang, 2009; Du & Wagner, 2005). By nature, they entitle learners to refer to other sites of interest and give them the opportunity to read and post comments and opinions to friends and classmates (Beale, 2007) on a regular basis. In

addition, they are popular for quickness and easiness of creation and publication of content (Du & Wagner, 2005; Armstrong et al., 2004) and availability of a variety of multimedia options like videos, images, music, etc., (Bull & Kajder, 2003). Therefore, what bloggers upload into their blogs is instantly updated and becomes available for others (Armstrong et al., 2004) to post feedback and express themselves (Du & Wagner, 2005). Moreover, they provide archiving services to older posts via hyperlinks which keep writers connected and help them see how others' ideas are organised (Bull & Kajder, 2003; Bartlett-Bragg, 2003).

Blogs promote interaction nowadays. Usun (2004, p.134) believes that, "Interaction is an important part of all forms of learning." Tan et al. (2009) find that interaction facilitates students' discussion, improves writing quality, assists in grammar correction and enhances English language use. Su et al. (2005) view interaction as an essential element of online learning, but they claim that there is still a need for empirical studies to investigate its significance using certain techniques. Choi & Ho (2002) point that interaction does not only attract learners' attention, but can also be a medium for outside evaluation and researching. Blogs function as an interactive and collaborative environment that enhances writing by providing an ample chance for learners not only to submit assignments, but also to learn, get feedback on what they have written, establish rapport and deepen and improve the quality of essay content. In this respect, Murugaiah & Thang (2010) in their study of online learning and fostering interactive and reflective learning among ESL language students in a public university in Malaysia, concluded that both proper planning and close monitoring of a written activity that incorporate interactive learning have assisted in raising students' awareness, responsibility of their own learning and the learning process and acquisition of significant benefits and valuable learning skills through online discussions.

Blogs encourage peer review. Cho et al. (2006) argue that peer feedback and revision have the capacity to raise learners' perceptions on deepening meaning, compared to teachers' revision

which can affect learners only on the surface level. More specifically, it is peer pressure that highly impacts and encourages learners to check on each other's level of progress and activity while at the same time forces them to maintain their activities at an acceptable level (Beale, 2007). Also, engagement in peer review makes learners become more accountable both as writers and readers (Blackstone et al., 2007). This indicates that peer feedback may be more influential than teacher feedback in web-based learning environments.

Blogs support the creation of a learning community (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004; Luca, 2005) that forms a suitable learning environment for learners to learn from one another, raises their sense of competition (Yang, 2009) and promotes their motivation and active participation via expressing their thoughts (Luca, 2005), reading and posting feedback on others' writing and learning from their experiences as well (Beale, 2007). It is generally perceived that when coupled with writing, blogs can enhance active participation, develop learners' voice and ownership and foster discussion among learners. Discussion is fruitful in online environments. It promotes learning through providing learners with the opportunities for active and collaborative learning (Land & Dornisch, 2002). Campos et al. (2001) report that discussion assists learners' construction of knowledge and this fits with the constructivist view of learner-centered learning. Land & Dornisch (2002) add that discussion makes learners share and exchange ideas with others, reflect on each other's views, collaborate and work together in order to make sense of what they are learning. Not only this, but discussion in asynchronous communication permits learners to think before posting replies and feedback and reread classmates' postings while referring back to assigned readings or writing prompt (Herring & Dargan, 2002).

#### **Interaction Types in Online Environments**

Interaction is a fundamental element in any learning environment. It has been recognized as the most crucial factor in online learning environments (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005) and is identified as the basic component that determines their effectiveness (Mancuso-Murphy, 2007). It occurs in a

number of forms. For example, it can be in the form of learner-learner interaction. Moore & Kearsley (1996) mention that learner-learner interaction occurs "between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings, with or without the real-time presence of an instructor" (as cited in Usun, 2004, p.131). This interaction includes both writer-reader and reader-reader interaction. Rollinson (2005) emphasizes that reader-writer interaction results in the provision of feedback, encouragement of conversations and negotiation of meaning between two parties and involves engagement in the processes of explaining, clarifying and justifying. De Wever et al. (2009) contend that online learning and teaching approaches have highlighted the importance of learner-learner interaction in relation to knowledge construction. In online learner-learner interaction, peer revision is a unidirectional kind of scaffolding (Wong & Hew, 2010) where learners assist each other by reading posts and commenting on them without the presence of a teacher. Learner-learner interaction can be used in conjunction with learner-teacher interaction which happens between learners and their teachers either in face-to-face situations or online.

Learner-technology interaction (Learner-interface interaction) is also possible in online environments. Hillman et al. (1994) mention that "a learner must use these intervening technologies to communicate with the content, negotiate meaning, and validate knowledge with the instructor and other learners" (as quoted in Usun, 2004, p.133). This interaction relates to learners' use of the multimodal features of technological tools.

Learner-content interaction is a noticeable phenomenon in online interaction. Moore (1989) defines this type of interaction as "the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner's understanding, the learner's perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind" (as cited in Su et al., 2005, p.3). The use of meta talk may be the most prominent type of learner-content interaction which Swain (2001, p. 51) identifies as the "conscious focus on language form."

Vicarious interaction (Learner self-interaction) could occur in online environments.

DeVreis (1996) argues that "vicarious interaction means that learners are participating internally by silently responding to questions" (as cited in Su et al., 2005, p.3). It takes place when learners opt to observe and read rather than actively participate (Su et al., 2005).

## 2. Purpose of the Study

A study was conducted to look at narrative writing done in a blog based on a fanfiction writing environment. This paper presents some of the findings from a study that focused on EFL university students' narrative writing experiences in a learner blog modeled on online fanfiction writing environments. It investigates the interaction types that occurred in a blog based on a fanfiction writing environment. It examines the nature of feedback. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate the following research questions:

1. What were the types of interaction that took place in the blog, and which was the most frequently occurring type?
2. What was the nature of the feedback given in the blog-based writing process?
  - a) What kinds of feedback were given and what aspects of writing did they address?
  - b) Which kinds of feedback did the participants find most useful?
  - c) What kinds of feedback did participants like to receive, but did not?
  - d) What were the participants' preferred source of feedback and why?

## Methodology

### 3.1 Design and Sampling

This study employed a mixed methods approach and was based on convenience sampling. The population of the study consisted of sixty one undergraduates. The study sample comprised only twenty-eight undergraduates at the English Language department, Faculty of Languages, University of Tripoli, during the spring semester, 2013. The study was based on volunteer participation.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected via blog comments as participants had to interact in the blog by reading others' posts and commenting on them as well as responding to blog mates' comments. Also, a post-

questionnaire was used to explore participants' perspectives on the useful types of feedback and the feedback that they desired to get and their favorite source of feedback (See Appendix A).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Blog comments were textually analyzed to find about the types of feedback posted. For purposes of this study, feedback was classified into two types: Task-Related Feedback (TRF) and Non-Task Related Feedback (NTRF). TRF related to texts posted and included utterances, statements or emoticons about content, form or evaluation of the text as a whole. Non-Task related feedback (NTRF) in this study referred to social cues and irrelevant statements on posted texts. Henri (1992) defines social cues as a "statement or part of a statement not related to formal content of subject matter" (as

quoted in Hara et al., 2000,p.10). They may include expressions of self- introduction, greetings, jokes, use of symbols, compliments or expressions of feelings (Hara et al., 2000). As for TRF, this study implemented Littleton's (2011,p.75) textual analysis of feedback that he employed to analyze feedback from two online fanfiction writing groups which he had based on Simmons' (2003) categories of response. Originally, Simmons (2003) included global praise, personal responses, text playback, sentence edits, word edits, reader's needs, and writer's strategies, however, Littleton excluded writer's strategies as he explained that it overlapped with reader's needs and that it was not possible to know an author's intent. He also added another category and labeled it global criticism.

Table 1. Categories of feedback used by Littleton (2011, p. 75)

Type of Response	Description	Example
Global Praise (GP)	General, positive comments about whole work	"This was great!"
Global Criticism (GC)	General, negative comments about whole work	"This sucks!"
Personal Responses (PR)	Comments on mindset of writer	"You are obsessed with love stories!"
Text Playback (TP)	Comments on ideas or organization of text	"You have a good underlying plot...needs elaboration"
Sentence Edits (SE)	Comments on sentence-level grammar	Fragments, run-ons, comma usage, etc.
Word Edits (WE)	Comments on word-level grammar	Spelling errors, word choice, etc.
Reader's Needs (RN)	Comments focusing on needs or reactions of the reader	"I can feel so much emotion in this piece-I'm having trouble understanding."

The researcher in this study also adopted Littleton's categories of feedback, but used the category of personal response (PR) with NTRF. She also added an additional category which was technology-related feedback (T-RF) as the study was based on the development of a blog and added it to TRF. NTRF in this study included social utterances for greeting,

leave taking and utterances that had no relation to posted texts. Liou (2010) considered social utterances as separate types of feedback neither relating to TRF nor NTRF. The researcher added an additional category to NTRF (i.e., feedback on original work) and labeled it (FOW). Thus, categories of TRF and NTRF in this study were as follows:

Table 2. Categories of TRF and NTRF used in the current study

Type of Feedback	Explanation
1. TRF	Feedback about the narrative writing task
a-Global Praise (GP)	Comments posted to make writers feel good about their writing.
b-Global Criticism (GC)	Comments posted to make writers feel bad about their writing.
c-Text Playback (TP)	Comments addressing the text as a whole.
d-Sentence Edits (SE)	Comments focus sentence level grammatical errors, fragments, run-on sentences, tense shifts, punctuation.
e-Word Edits(WE)	Comments focus word level errors, spelling and word choice.
f-Reader's Needs(RN)	Comments focus on the needs of the reader.
g-Technology related(T-RF)	Comments about the use of blog functions.
2. NTRF	Feedback irrelevant to the writing task.
a-Social feedback (SF)	Utterances for greeting or leave taking, jokes.
b-Personal Responses (PR)	Comments addressing the author as a person not as a writer.

Thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke (2006,p.35) was used to analyze participants'

responses to open ended questionnaire questions. Descriptive statistics was also used when necessary.

Table 3. Phases of Thematic Analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.35)

Phases	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with data	Reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

## RESULTS

### 4.1 Interaction Types

This section reports on types of learner-learner interaction that took place in the blog as

well as the most frequent type. Two interaction types were found as a result of the analysis of comments. They involved writer-reader interaction (WRI) (94.12%) and reader-reader interaction (RRI)

(5.8%).The analysis showed the higher proportion of writer-reader type of interaction compared to reader-reader type of interaction. Such a result may reflect the nature of participants and their tendency to interact with those who initiate interaction or those who they know offline (friends). They appeared to prefer direct writer-reader interaction to reader-reader interaction because they may consider it impolite to respond to others commenting on others' stories and were afraid to lose face and to be criticized for their interference.

#### 4. 2 Types of Posted Feedback

Reader feedback that was posted was textually analyzed and categorized into two main types: Task-related feedback (TRF) and Non-Task Related Feedback (NTRF).

Task-related feedback (TRF) made up (97.9%) of the total reader feedback offered in the blog.

Table 4.4 illustrates categories of TRF found as the result of textual analysis of blog entries. It was noted that the majority of this TRF consisted of Global Praise (82%) compared to only a little percentage of Global Criticism (5%). Reader's Needs constituted (9%), followed by Text Playback which represented (6%) of the total TRF. While Sentence Edits accounted for a very low percentage (3%), there were no representations of Word Edits and Technology-Related Feedback (0%).

Table 4.1.Categories and Percentages of TRF

GP	GC	TP	SE	WE	RN	T-RF
82%	5%	6%	3%	0%	9%	0%

As Table 4.2. shows that there was a relatively small number of NTRF which accounted for only (2.1%) with the presence of three categories involving Feedback on Original Work (50), Social Feedback (SF) (25%. and Personal Responses (PR) (25%).

Table 4.2. Categories and Percentages of NTRF

F-OW	SF	PR
50%	25%	25%

In fact, the offered feedback may present some information about EFL Libyan students. For instance, the presence of a large proportion of Global Praise comments in comparison to other types and NTRF seems to reflect that participant may know each other offline, thus they tended to avoid criticizing

others. It may also indicate participants' unawareness of the useful types that could contribute to writing improvement.

#### 4.3 Useful Types of Reader Feedback

Participants who received reader feedback reported the types of reader feedback they found useful. Some indicated that corrective feedback was encouraging and beneficial. They felt that this type of reader feedback had a positive impact on their writing, grammar and the content of their next stories. They stressed that this feedback helped them spot grammatical mistakes and how to correct them. Some equated this feedback with constructive criticism sense they sensed its seriousness in pointing their weaknesses in writing.They explained that:

"The ones that pointed out my grammatical mistakes."

"The ones that gave me an opinion about the content of the story."

"Ones that tell me about my mistakes."

"[Feedback]that criticizes my writing and makes me improve."

"Constructive criticism, especially that comes from serious readers who comprehend our stories and tell us our shortcoming in writing."

Some participants acknowledged the usefulness of positive reader feedback as it encouraged them to write more.

Some participants highlighted that the reader feedback was useful and encouraging. They acknowledge the tremendous advantages of this feedback on their next narratives. This feedback seemed to make a turning point in some participants' writing. It encouraged them to write more and publish narratives in a good way employing cohesion, well-built structures and layout and reconsider and correct their narratives before posting them. They mentioned that:

"It encouraged me to write more stories."

"Yes, I benefited from some of them. For example, when I publish some stories and some comment on the cohesion, structures and conclusion of my stories."

"Yes, they helped me in correcting my second story."

"Yes, it was very helpful and encouraging."  
Others seemed to want more than positive feedback statements. They were in favor of serious and critical feedback. They complained that reader feedback was not useful because it failed to address the content and form of stories posted, was not critical feedback, much of it contained praising and encouraging feedback only, and the number of reader feedback received was limited. They stressed that:

"No. There was not any reader feedback that really addressed my stories with regard to content and form."

"To tell the truth, not very much, since most of readers were not serious when it came to giving feedback. What they did was just sending encouraging statements."

"Not at all. Because there were no serious feedback. All feedback was copied, pasted comments like, 'nice work' or 'keep it up.'"

"No, not much because I did not receive many statements of feedback."

"Not that much because it is all about praising."

"No, not very much, because as I have mentioned before they were not criticizing any of my fiction as most of them were mere compliments."

#### **4.5 Types of Feedback Participants Liked to Receive, but They did not.**

Participants gave a variety of responses which were thematically analyzed and revealed a number of types that involved corrective feedback (25%), positive feedback (21.4%), constructive criticism (21.3%), positive corrective feedback (14.2%), Critical feedback (14.2%) and Critical corrective feedback (3.5%).

#### **4.6 Participants' Favored Source of Feedback**

The blog was a learner-centered space, but participants confirmed that they would like it if there was teacher feedback in conjunction with reader feedback. The majority of them (96.4%) said that they preferred teacher feedback to reader feedback. They argued that teacher feedback is an important aspect for improving writing and interaction in the blog. They ascribed their preference of teacher feedback to some factors

highlighting teachers' academic experience such as using standard criteria for evaluation, provision of critical, accurate and serious feedback, knowledge of the subject and mistakes and how to correct them as well as giving new ideas. They supported their claim saying that:

"Teachers have more experience than we do."

"Because the teacher is academically more experienced."

"Because teachers focus more on students' mistakes unlike students who may not feel brave enough to point out others' mistakes."

"The teacher will evaluate my writing according to grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, cohesion, organization, choice of strong ideas etc."

"A teacher will be responsible for reading and checking students' writing. I think teachers' criticism works more than reader feedback."

"Because teacher feedback is more accurate and professional than student feedback."

Some participants viewed teacher feedback from a psychological aspect. They found teacher feedback to be motivational and inspiring for enhancing their morale and encouraging them to write and become better writers. They stated that:

"Teacher feedback will inspire me to post more stories."

"The teacher gives me the motive to write more."

"Yes, the teacher will make me change to the better."

Some respondents' responses uncovered the cultural disposition and view of teacher feedback according to EFL Libyan students who preferred teacher feedback over reader feedback because they accepted, trusted it more than peer feedback as they were still in the first stages in learning English. These participants reported that:

"It is more accepted and trusted among students in Libya."

"I accept teacher feedback only. We are all students and make mistakes. I do not trust student feedback."

"I trust teacher feedback more than student feedback."

"Yes, we need teacher feedback. Most of us are in the first semester and need teacher feedback more [than] student feedback at least at this stage. Unless students in advanced semesters and ones who have good levels in English use the blog, the teacher will be more responsible and students will trust him more."

#### Discussion

The blog stimulated writer-reader interaction which made up the majority. Participants seemed to prefer to deal on one to one basis (i.e., engaging in WRI with participants whom they know offline). Jacovi et al. (2004) believe that blogging supports learner-learner communication and functions as a communicative device that is akin to bulletin boards when teachers are not present. Rollinson (2005) emphasizes that reader- writer interaction results in the provision of feedback and response, encouragement of conversations and negotiation of meaning between the two parties and involvement in the processes of explaining, clarifying and justifying. EFL undergraduates in this study utilized the blog for interactive narrative writing with posting fiction, and original fiction, reading others' stories and offering and receiving feedback. In online learner-learner interaction, peer revision is a unidirectional kind of scaffolding (Wong and Hew, 2010) where learners assist each other by reading posts and commenting on them without the presence of a teacher. Reader-reader interaction accounted for a relatively small percentage. This could be due to the fact that participant may know each other offline, thus they tended to avoid criticizing others.

TRF made up a significantly sizeable category comprising Global Praise, Reader's Needs, Text Playback, Global Criticism and Sentence Edits. This finding contradicts the study of Yusof et al. (2012) which reveals that less useful feedback outnumbered useful feedback. It is interesting to note that the posting of a high rate of Global Praise in this study corroborates Cho et al. (2006) conclusion that refers to undergraduates' tendency to produce more directive and praising feedback

than graduates whose comments involve transition between expert and undergraduate types of comments and more criticism production. NTRF was small dealing with Feedback on Original Work , Social Feedback and Personal Response. TRF contribution to the writing process though limited was observed. NTRF did not contribute to writing improvement, but might enhance interaction.

There was a difference in the order and frequency of the TRF posted and their perceived helpfulness according to participants' views. Corrective feedback (Sentence Edits), constructive criticism (Reader's Needs and Text Playback), and positive feedback (Global Praise) were perceived as the most useful types of feedback. Although corrective feedback (Sentence Edits only) made up only 3% of the total TRF segments posted and included only sentence edits, many participants mentioned that this type of feedback had a positive influence on their writing as it helped them improve the grammar of their stories by enabling them to spot mistakes and do corrections. They believed that it served as an alarm to notify them about mistakes. This indicates that participants were concerned about mistakes and how to correct them. What participants implied was direct corrective feedback. This finding agrees with a previous study that has investigated the efficacy of written corrective feedback to 75 low intermediate international ESL's writing in Auckland, New Zealand (e.g., Bitchener, 2008). The result of this 2-month study revealed that the accuracy of low proficiency students who got written direct corrective feedback enhanced and that the level of performance was retained 2 months later.

Bitchener's (2008) conclusion that directive corrective feedback facilitates accuracy in L2 writing of low proficiency learners is in line with another claim that undergraduates rank directive feedback as being useful (Cho et al., 2006). However, the outputs of Bitchener (2008) and (Cho et al., 2006) totally contradict with the study of Truscott (2007) that emphasizes that corrective feedback has very harmful effects on students' writing. After comparing the results of these two studies with other studies, it seemed that evidence regarding the

effectiveness of correction is conflicting. However, the conclusion of this study is that direct correction is quite effective and is suitably relevant to EFL undergraduates in Libya and may guarantee success in their performance as it would be more valued by students at this level for it is directive and less vague.

Constructive criticism (Reader's needs and Text Playback) was the second ranked useful type of feedback reported by some students does in fact reflect these participants awareness of the gains of constructive criticism in their writing. They pointed out that this type of feedback served as a pushing force that made them know and correct mistakes and improve writing. They asserted that this feedback improved their stories by showing the pitfalls in them, especially as it came from serious readers. It also denotes to their need to benefit from useful feedback types other than praising comments.

Participants perceived positive feedback (Global Praise) as the least useful type though it had the biggest number of comments posted in the blog. Only a small group of participants appeared to approve it. It enhanced writing through increasing students' motivation to write only.

Opinions regarding the usefulness of feedback received on subsequent stories were varied. Some participants found the received feedback to be useful for improving their next stories and encouraging them to write more. Others thought that the received feedback was not beneficial since it was inadequate, focused on praising comments, and lacked critical feedback on content.

Desire for having corrective feedback, positive feedback, constructive criticism, a combination of positive and corrective feedback, critical feedback and a combination of critical and corrective feedback reflected participants' awareness of the feedback that would improve writing though the small rate of constructive criticism was remarkable in this study. Cho et al. (2006) ascribe the general scarcity of producing criticism comments by graduate students to lack of training in critical thinking skills and not having the chance to practice feedback offering with subject-

matter experts who possess expertise in feedback production. This plausible explanation fits with the finding of this study.

Most participants were pro-teacher feedback. They said that teachers possess academic expertise, are serious, caring to pointing out and correcting mistakes, use of objective standard criteria to evaluate writing, and give useful new ideas to students. They are inspirational, motivational and trustworthy. Participants' preference of teacher feedback is in line with the opinion of Yang et al. (2006, p.182) where they stress that teacher feedback is more valued and accepted than peer feedback. Yang et al. (2006) investigated the efficacy and incorporation of peer feedback and teacher feedback on EFL writing class in tertiary education in China. The study focused on two groups of students at a Chinese University writing essays on the same topic, one group got teacher feedback and the other group received peer feedback. The results of the study showed that although students used both teacher and peer feedback to improve their writing, teacher feedback was more likely to be implemented and that it had led to greater improvements in students' writing. Students' high rate incorporation of teacher feedback (90%) in the study of Yang et al. (2006) was because these students believed that their teacher was more professional, experienced, and trustworthy than peers. Tsui and Ng (2000) argue that students are incapable of producing useful comments.

Nevertheless, some researchers tend to support peer feedback and stress that it can achieve desirable results once it is implemented in language classes. For instance, Eksi (2012) claims that teacher feedback may deprive writers of the ability to accept and adopt peer feedback because they consider teachers are as experts and role models and students worry about marks which is the job of teachers.

Preference of teacher feedback in this study relates to some cultural disposition in EF contexts where "... EFL students hold high estimation of the knowledge of their teachers" (Mahfoodh & Pandian (2011, p.22). Therefore, this applies to the students in the current study who also consider their teacher

as the main trustworthy source for feedback. Yang et al.(2006,p.193) see that students' acceptance of teacher feedback is because they find it "... more to the point and trustworthy." Mahfoodh & Pandian (2011) contend that EFL Arab students find written teacher feedback to be useful and vital for the promotion of their writing skills and that students request their teachers to take all aspects of writing into consideration when evaluating their written work and providing feedback. Written feedback is most favored by EFL students as it "... is clearly crucial to students' growth as writers, and it is one of the most fundamental components of ESL/EFL writing-centred classrooms. ...[and] despite [its] time-consuming nature ... is considered to be the best way for communication with each student on a one-to-one basis" (Mahfoodh& Pandian (2011,p.14).

There seems to be an agreement between EFL students over teacher feedback preference which stems from students' trust in the knowledge and authority of their teachers. This is partially lies in the teachers' provision of constructive criticism and praising comments. Mahfoodh & Pandian (2011) point out that EFL students like teachers who give positive feedback and dislike ones who give critical feedback since this assists them in building self-confidence and motivates them to do more writing.

### Conclusion

This study reflects true lived experiences of the blog use, depicts the struggles of EFL Libyan students majoring in English and articulates both the strong and weak points of participating in the blog through exploring participants' perspectives. The blog writing activity moderately facilitates learner-centered learning and allows the students to explore and share their learning experiences outside the confines of the classroom for the first time. Many participants find the online communication to be easier and more effective than face-to-face when it comes to writing and sharing experiences. Interaction is associated with offline acquaintances evidenced from writer- reader and reader-reader types of interaction. However, some concerns about the blog use are raised with many participants state that lack of teacher feedback discourages them for practicing writing and learning the target language.

Some participants do not feel like taking the initiative to send constructive comments and that they are not active enough to engage in peer feedback because they trust teacher feedback and are afraid of losing face as they know blog users offline.

Nevertheless, the current research calls for the need to use balanced sources of feedback in Libya to better help their learners develop their writing skills. Yang et al.(2006) advocate the use of a balanced source of feedback in writing classes, believing that such a method can lend a great help to the development of students' writing skills. They stress that peer feedback is a helpful adjunct to teacher feedback even in cultures where teacher authority prevail. The study agrees with the conclusion of Lundstorm & Baker (2009) that although peer feedback is time-consuming, it is very rewarding and effective in enhancing students' writing, especially those with lower proficiency levels or those who have little experience with peer review practice. Yang et al.(2006) report that although peer feedback was accepted with reservation in their study , it is still functional and rewarding even in cultures were teachers are authoritative. They add that a large number of students find peer feedback to be useful and that it leads to student autonomy. Thus, they emphasize the implementation of peer feedback in writing classes and consider it a logical step. Villamil & De Guerrero (1998) confirm that "Peer revision should be seen as an important complementary source of feedback in the ESL classroom" (as cited in Yang et al.,2006,p.193). This is in line with the opinion of Yang et al.(2006) where they warn that over-reliance on teacher feedback reduces students' initiative to engage in self-correction because they believe that the teacher presents their mistakes and there is no need for them to make extra revisions.

The study stresses that teacher feedback is important in EFL classrooms and shows that without a teacher's thoughts, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for EFL undergraduates in Libya to effectively participate in an online activity.The importance of teacher feedback has been emphasized by Yusof et al. (2012) who stress that it is with writing teachers, students can give

constructive comments to their peers. EKŞİ (2012) warns that although teachers are more knowledgeable and their comments can offer guidance to students during the writing process, this can be time-consuming for the teachers.

Irrespective of the negative points in the study, promising findings should be acknowledged. The study shows that some students are aware of the constructive types of feedback that they desire to have. The blog use leads to the discovery of some talented writers. In addition, many participants point out that their English writing skills have improved greatly. The study succeeds in generating some other interesting directions for further research studies and some of its findings can serve as starting points for reexamining.

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