Chapter 12
Asynchronous Online Peer Written Corrective Feedback: Effects and Affects

Shahin Vaezi
Iran University of Science and Technology, Iran

Ehsan Abbaspour
Iran University of Science and Technology, Iran

ABSTRACT
The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether there is any statistically significant difference between the effects of asynchronous online peer WCF through blogging and face-to-face peer WCF on the writing achievement of Iranian EFL learners. The study also investigated the extent to which students revise their writings based on peer comments provided. This study also measured the attitude of students towards peer WCF through blogging as compared with that of the participants receiving face-to-face peer WCF. The findings indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the effects of face-to-face and asynchronous online peer WCF on the writing achievement of the Iranian EFL learners. In terms of the extent of incorporating the peer comments in their final drafts, the participants in the FF group incorporated more of the comments they received into their second drafts in comparison with the OL group. Finally, it was revealed that the participants of each group generally expressed their satisfaction with both methods of peer review.

INTRODUCTION
E-learning courses are attempting to find their stance in the milieu of EFL learning and teaching in Iran. In order to promote Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), studies need to be carried out on this area of enquiry in general and on online EFL writing courses in specific. Writing stands out among the four basic skills of language learning.

As Warschauer (2010) indicates, writing is of great significance for L2 learners for three reasons. First, writing well is a vital skill for academic or occupational success. Second, writing can be an
effective tool for the development of academic language proficiency. Third, writing across the curriculum can be invaluable for mastering diverse subject matter, as written expression allows learners to raise their awareness of knowledge gaps, abstract problem-specific knowledge, and elaborate mental representations of knowledge that can be more easily retrieved.

Moreover, robust student-student and student-teacher interaction is a must for teaching and learning to take place effectively (Long, 1996). As e-learning courses are devoid of the face-to-face teaching situations, negotiations are almost always in the form of teacher-student interactions. Thus, the academic community (Abu Bakar, Latif, & Ya’acob, 2010; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Guardado & Shi, 2007) are still looking into the issue to find efficient ways to foster more interaction in CALL supported situations.

Nevertheless, face-to-face method of peer Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is one of the relatively well-researched aspects of WCF. Asynchronous online peer WCF has not attracted sufficient attention on behalf of the ESL/EFL researchers.

The present study was undertaken to investigate whether there is any statistically significant difference between the effects of asynchronous online peer written corrective feedback through blogging and traditional face-to-face peer feedback on the short-term writing achievement of Iranian EFL learners. In addition, the types of peer feedback that students provided through blogging and face-to-face interaction, and the extent to which students receiving the feedback revised their work according to it were examined. Since attitude plays a crucial role in accepting the norms, the attitude of the students towards peer written corrective feedback through blogging was also assessed.

The present study aims at answering the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between the effects of providing peer written corrective feedback through blogging and face-to-face peer written corrective feedback on short-term writing achievement of Iranian EFL learners?
2. What types of comments as peer written corrective feedback are provided more frequently through asynchronous online peer written corrective feedback as compared to face-to-face peer written corrective feedback?
3. To what extent do the learners revise their writings based on the peer feedback they received in form of blog comments as compared to the comments they received via face-to-face interaction?
4. What are the Iranian EFL learners’ attitudes towards asynchronous online peer written corrective feedback provided through blogging and face-to-face peer written corrective feedback?

BACKGROUND

Blogging and L2 Learning

The term blogs has been in circulation since 1997 when Jorn Barger decided to rename his website, Robot Wisdom, as a weblog. He soon afterwards abbreviated it to blog. Consequently, terms such as blogger, to blog and blogosphere have become part of the vocabulary employed by users whose diverse writings have contributed to establishing a dynamic and ever-expanding network (Murray & Hourigan, 2008). It is hard to say that how many active blogs exist. However, it can be estimated that there are roughly 800 million active blogs on the internet (visit www.en.wordpress.com/stats, and www.tumblr.com/about). As defined by Eastment (2005),

blogs are simply online diaries. They are logs (weblogs – hence the name) of thoughts, reflections, and events in the writer’s life. A space for
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