

UAE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRADITIONAL
AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED PEER RESPONSE

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Using blogs has recently become popular in learning ESL. However, not much research has been done in use of blogs in ESL writing classes. In this research, I conducted a study in my English writing classes to explore how UAE High School students perceived the effectiveness of using peer response in both electronic and traditional modes. My study involved a total of 44 students in two of my grade 10 classes: one using traditional process writing and the other using blogs. I collected data by administering questionnaires to the students before and after applying peer response. I also interviewed some of the students. I analyzed the data quantitatively and qualitatively to look for differences in the attitudes within the same group before and after the study. I also looked at the qualitative data after the study to see how similar and different the attitudes of the two groups were. I gained some insights about how students in each group perceived peer response in writing classes. Though there was some disagreement about using peer response in the traditional class, students from both groups had generally positive attitudes. Students in the traditional class thought it was useful to have teacher feedback besides peer response, while

students in the computer-mediated class were more autonomous and recognized that technology could be used as an effective tool for facilitating writing.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wonderful husband, Mohammad Al Aqrabawi, for his support, care, and patience. It is also dedicated to my sister, Maha Al Arini, for her help and encouragement. To my sons Laith, Omar, Ali, and AbdulRahaman, thank you for your patience, autonomy, and all the happiness and liveliness you have added to my life. Finally, I cannot forget to dedicate it to my parents' souls, the source of my inspirations. Heartfelt thanks to you all.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Research Questions

I was first introduced to process writing when I joined the AUS MA TESOL Program. I was very enthusiastic about using it. However, I kept asking myself if I could really apply process writing in my high school English classes, especially the peer review technique. Later, I got even more excited when I looked back at my own initial writing attempts. First, I realized that I used to ask for peer response to my writing in my native language even when I was only 10 years old. Therefore, I thought my students who are from a culture that is very similar to my culture most probably would interact well in peer response sessions. This thesis explored UAE high school students' attitudes toward peer response in traditional and computer-mediated modes before and after applying it. Process writing was introduced to UAE students for the first time in the new textbook, *On Location Grade 10 Student Book*, (Bye, 2009). It was the Ministry of Education's decision to apply process writing techniques in ESL writing classes. In my study, I tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are UAE high school students' attitudes toward the idea of written peer response before they experience it and after they have experienced it?
2. Are there any differences between the students' attitudes towards the idea of written peer response after they have experienced it? If so, how are their attitudes different?
3. Are there any differences between the attitudes of the students who experienced peer response in the traditional mode and those who experienced peer response in the computer-mediated mode? If so, how are their attitudes different?

The findings of this study provided insights into UAE students' attitudes toward responding to peers' writing in both traditional and computer-mediated modes, as well as giving explanations of these attitudes. Data collected from the study were useful in the sense that they were compared to the existing literature in the field and

added new findings specifically related to teaching writing in high schools in the UAE. The findings suggested a number of implications for improving writing instruction in the UAE, as well as implications for further, more quantitative, studies on this topic.

Preview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one has discussed how I started thinking about this project, and what encouraged me to do it. It also mentioned the research questions I tried to answer throughout this project.

Chapter two reviews the literature that is related to definitions of peer response and its different modes. Then, it discusses the advantages and disadvantages of peer response in its different modes.

Chapter three introduces the participants, their age, and number. It also presents how I piloted the questionnaire I used in the study, and what important changes I made to make the questionnaire suitable for answering my research questions. Then, the chapter explains when and why I gave the questionnaire to the students. It also gives details on how students in the traditional and computer-mediated class were trained on how to respond to peers.

Chapter four presents the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of my data. It contains a qualitative analysis of students' attitude towards traditional and computer-mediated peer response before and after the study, and a quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis between students' attitudes before and after the study. It also contains a qualitative analysis of data collected from the open-ended questions before and after the study, as well as a qualitative analysis of the data collected from the interviews. Besides, it discusses the differences and similarities between students' attitude in both modes after the study.

Finally, chapter five includes the conclusions, limitations, and implications for future research related to the study. Four appendices are also included. Appendix A is the questionnaire used to examine all participants' attitudes towards peer response before the study. Appendix B is the questionnaire used to explore students' attitude towards peer response in the traditional mode. Appendix C is the questionnaire that explored students' attitude towards computer-mediated peer response after the study. Appendix E contains the interview questions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review starts by defining the term peer response. It then sheds light on the importance of peer response in writing classes, and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of applying peer response in writing classes in two different ways. First, it clarifies the advantages and disadvantages of applying peer response techniques to students and to teachers as well. Second, it discusses the advantages and the disadvantages of using different modes of peer response in ESL/EFL writing classrooms. Finally, it explains how peer response helps students improve their writing skill, and how students perceive peer response.

Definitions of Peer Response

According to Warschauer and Kern (2000), English language teaching (ELT) has been changing in many ways. First, ELT has been shifting from teaching “discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability” (p. 1). “Creative self-expression” (p. 1) has become more appreciated than memorizing conversations. Besides, students have started negotiating meaning rather than using structured drilling. In addition, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has turned out to be very helpful. Peer review using computers as a major activity in process writing lessons represents an example of that change.

Armstrong and Paulson (2008) report that the term peer response is widely used to describe students’ commenting on their peers’ writing in order to improve it; however, terminology related to peer review is “diffuse, inconsistent, and ambiguous” (p. 398). As Armstrong and Paulson state, there is a minimum of five different, but common terms that refer to “peer review” (p. 399): peer critique, peer evaluation, peer editing, peer response, and peer review. They give each term a different definition. For example, Armstrong and Paulson define “peer review” as commenting on “holistic and rhetorical issues” and “surface level issues” (p. 400) of writing. They also explain that since “peer editing” deals with the surface level of writing, it is mainly “associated with checklist-style, worksheet-based sessions” (p. 402). On the

other hand, Liu and Hansen (2002) put all terms under one “umbrella” (p. 1), which is “peer response.” They define “peer response” as an important tool in process writing used for commenting on students’ writing by their peers in order to improve their final drafts. Liu and Hansen’s definition of peer response is the primary definition that I will use in this literature review and throughout my study.

The Importance of Peer Response

The skill of giving and receiving peer response is very important for many reasons. Holst-Larkin (2008) basically emphasizes that students will need the skill of “reviewing written documents” (p. 76) in their future. Al Hazmi and Scholfield (2007) also point out that training students to apply peer response can be useful in writing classes. In addition, Sanders (2000) mentions that peer response helps students who do not have self confidence in their writing. She explains, “When students understand that writing is a developmental process, they become more confident in their writing.” In other words, students develop a critical sense towards their writing instead of only focusing on “their writing products” (p. 79). Another reason for the importance of peer response, as Sanders (2000) points out, is that applying peer response can be useful for “students who are learning a new language and culture at the same time” (p. 80) in planning for writing and organizing their thoughts and views. Nilson (2003) adds that when students apply peer response techniques, they “acquire important lifelong skills” (p. 34).

Peer Response as an Activity

Peer response as an activity has been found to be very beneficial in writing classes. Rollinson (2005) points to some advantages of using peer response in writing classes. First, peers can give “useful feedback” (p. 24). Second, peer writers consider their peers’ comments so important that they use them “efficiently” in revising their writing. Third, peer response is different from teachers’ feedback so that they complement each other. Fourth, while practicing critiquing and commenting on peers’ writing, both peer writers and peer reviewers become more critical in both writing and reviewing writing. Liu and Hansen (2000) also support the idea that peer response activities help students “build critical thinking skills” (p. 12). Liu and Hansen add

some more advantages of using peer response techniques. They state that peer response activities help students become responsible for their own learning, strengthen their knowledge of writing, develop their communication and social skills, enhance their linguistic knowledge, and increase their oral and written participation skills.

According to a number of studies and observations, peer response has advantages that benefit students and others that benefit instructors. Rubin (2006) reports, according to his study where participants wrote business reports, the advantages of giving and receiving peer response to students to be the following. First, students experience applying “feedback in a real [not theoretical] situation” (p. 390). Second, since dealing with ambiguity mainly occurs in real writing, response writers have an appreciated a chance to struggle “with the ambiguity presented by various reviewers” (p. 390), and let them make use of “feedback guidelines in structuring their feedback.” Third, “the presence of external feedback...[encourages] less assertive students” to defend their opposing opinions. Fourth, peer response helps students “focus...on...details” (p. 391) of their work. Besides, Holst-Larkin (2008) highlights that giving peer response “raises awareness of many ways to approach a given task” (p. 75). It also helps student gain the skill of appreciating the strengths in their peers’ writings as well as the ability of pointing out the weaknesses of a given piece of writing. Moreover, Mi-mi (2009) states that peer response can be beneficial on different levels. Peer response can activate cognitive skills like “exercis[ing]...[students’] thinking, and...enhanc[ing] audience awareness” (p. 61). “Affectively,” peer response makes students more confident, and have less “apprehension” (p. 61). On the linguistic level, as Mi-mi (2009) points out, when students discuss writing components like word choice, organization, content, and grammar, they improve their writing and reading abilities.

Rubin (2006) indicates peer response can be beneficial to instructors as well. Initially, after receiving detailed peer response, students “take personal responsibility for their errors...rather than blame the instructor.” Next, receiving peer response from more than one peer makes feedback “more variable than faculty feedback...[but it] highlight[s] most of the major problems” (p. 391) of the reviewed writing. Next, the instructor spends less time giving written feedback. In other words, reviewing “short feedback reports” (p. 392) takes less time than reviewing complete pieces of writing.

However, peer response can also be problematic in some ways. Rollinson (2005) points out that there are some considerations that should be taken into account. First, he states that this kind of activity, which includes reading a draft and writing comments and notes, is time consuming. Besides, teachers need to consider, in terms of consuming time, the need for pre-training on certain skills. Rollinson also explains that for effective peer response, students need to be trained on “arriving at a consensus, debating, questioning, asserting, defending, evaluating the logic and coherence of ideas, and expressing criticism and suggestions in a clear, comprehensible, yet tactful way” (p. 26). In addition, according to Rollinson, some students need to be convinced about the usefulness of peer response, especially since some students do not feel comfortable dealing with this type of activity because their culture, for example, does not support students’ autonomy. Teachers also may face problems in this kind of activity. Rollinson explains that it might be difficult for teachers to monitor students’ response in all groups concurrently since sometimes students give peer response orally. Additionally, as Rollinson points out, teachers might find it difficult to stop giving the kind of response they are used to giving. Moreover, Liu and Hansen (2002) state that peer response could be “questionable and...difficult to incorporate in revision,” and peer response can also be “anxiety provoking” and might lead to “communication breakdown” (p. 12).

According to Rubin (2006), peer response has other pitfalls that are related to students. First, some students can provide their peers with destructive peer response. Second, other students may provide peer response that lacks critique. Third, when writing is responded to by peers, the response loses its confidentiality. This may hurt some students. Finally, the peer response process consumes students’ time that is supposed to be spent on studying for exams, and makes students feel stressed.

A major pitfall according to Al Hazmi and Scholfield (2007) is that though training students to write a two-draft writing, to use checklists, and to use peer response can be useful in writing classes, these techniques cannot be performed in exams “due to lack of time in an exam” and because “peer revision is not usually allowed” (p. 241). Liu and Hansen (2002) add that the fact that the “nature of responding to peers’ drafts sometimes generates a sense of discomfort and uneasiness among the participants. Generally speaking the students could become rather defensive when their work is criticized, especially by their peers” (p.11). Besides, as

Mi-mi (2009) points out, peer response sessions can be ineffective due to students not having enough knowledge to “detect and correct errors” (p. 61), or students “tend[ing] to withhold critical comments so as to maintain group harmony” (p. 61).

Holst-Larkin (2008) points out that because some students lack confidence, they hesitate in criticizing their peers’ work and prefer not to suggest improvements. Unfortunately, students also tend to give suggestions related to grammar and spelling rather than comments about writers’ tone, style of writing or organizing ideas. Nilson (2003) adds another important point. She discusses the effect of students’ emotions on giving critical and accurate peer response. She points out that the problem of giving effective peer feedback is not only the students’ problem. There is also sometimes a problem with the way questions in checklists are prepared. In other words, teachers prepare questions that “give students emotionally charged tasks” while students are “cognitively ill equipped to perform well” in giving critical accurate peer response (p. 34).

Rubin (2006) suggests that teachers may also face some pitfalls when using peer feedback technique. Although applying peer feedback reduces the time teachers spend checking writing, it becomes difficult for the teachers to balance the time they spend on teaching how to give peer feedback and the time they need for teaching content. Moreover, teachers need to deal wisely with students who break rules, and policies of giving response.

Modes of Peer Response

Liu and Hansen (2002) classify peer response into two modes. The first is traditional, and the second innovative. Liu and Hansen explain that the former includes written response using “pen and paper” and oral response through “face to face communication” (FFC) (p. 81), whereas the latter strongly depends on computer-mediated communication (CMC) format, which is totally different from the traditional format. Both formats have advantages and disadvantages.

Traditional Mode

In a comparative study between students' attitudes towards traditional and computer-mediated modes in peer response sessions, Kim (2007) found that an advantage of traditional peer response was that the participants in the study received helpful and logical peer response that they could integrate into their writing. However, he also found disadvantages of traditional peer response. He states that participants in the study found traditional peer response boring, tiresome, demanding, and harmful to receivers' feelings. Traditional peer response can be either oral or written, and both of these modes have their advantages and disadvantages.

Traditional written peer response. Traditional written peer response can be advantageous in many ways. When students give written response, as Liu and Hansen (2002) state, writing "notes and...comments and sometimes draw[ing] lines" (p. 81), or even drawing circles with colored pens, makes it easy for peers to offer response. They also add that written response does not take as much time as oral peer response. Liu and Hansen actually consider written peer response as supportive to oral peer response.

On the other hand, traditional written response can suffer from many disadvantages. According to Liu and Hansen (2002), for example, inconsistent peer response can be problematic to students. In addition, as Liu and Hansen state, "poor handwriting" (p. 82) can cause difficulties in understanding the peer response. Some students also find it difficult to change their comments on their peers' writing "once they are made" (p. 82). In other words, there might not be enough space, or using pens might make it difficult to erase comments and substitute them with other comments that may contradict the ones written first, unlike writing using computers, in which students can easily revise their comments. Moreover, in traditional written peer response, as Strenski, Feagin, and Singer (2005) explain, students often either "adopt a teacherly persona" (p. 193) by either tracking all their peers' mistakes in a frustrating way, or avoid imitating teachers by ignoring giving constructive peer response. Besides, as Liu and Hansen (2002) point out, sometimes it is better to have anonymous comments, but unfortunately students usually cannot hide their identities in traditional mode peer response.

Traditional oral peer response. As far as traditional oral peer response is concerned, it has been found very beneficial for many reasons. First, as Liu and Hansen (2002) argue, it provides students with chances to “clarify queries [and] to negotiate meanings” (p. 82). Traditional oral peer response can also help, according to Liu and Hansen, explore “what is going on in the mind of...those who made the comment” (p. 82) in depth. Additionally, as Liu and Hansen point out, “communicative competence” (p. 82) can have the opportunity to develop. According to Liu and Hansen, peers “get to know each other better” (p. 82). In addition, Liu and Sadler (2003) comment that oral response easily provides peers with helpful nonverbal comments like “being silent (showing approval or disapproval)” (p. 221).

Traditional oral comments are not without constraints, however. Oral response might cause, as Liu and Hansen (2002) suggest, discomfort for students who lack communicative competence. Moreover, students who belong to cultures that do not encourage open discussions may feel upset and not succeed in oral comment sessions. Liu and Sadler (2003) argue that nonverbal communication in face to face response can also cause possible problems when the participating students come from different cultures. Finally, DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001) argue that teachers cannot monitor oral peer response because they can only hear bits of students’ conversations.

Innovative Mode (Computer-mediated Mode)

According to Liu and Hansen (2002), peer response using computers consists of asynchronous communication, such as e-mail, with no time limitations and synchronous communication, such as MOOs or chat rooms, which are limited to real-time. In other words, in asynchronous communication users can respond any time that suits them, while in synchronous communication multiple users can be in on both sides of the conversation at the same time. As Mi-mi (2009) explains, in both asynchronous and synchronous ways peer response is “automatically stored” (p. 62), and that helps teachers get it printed out for “in-class discussion” in a way that “increase[s] students’ autonomy” (p. 62) in responding to peers and reacting to peers’ responses. Kim (2007) adds, according to the participants in his study, computer-mediated peer response was practical, easy to read, interesting, and documented the draft in “chronological order” (p. 82).

Mi-mi (2009) also shows, a disadvantage that characterizes this mode is that students' responses can be "superficial" (p. 62) under the pressure of having to submit peer response immediately they have to submit. There are benefits and drawbacks that characterize both asynchronous and synchronous communication. Kim (2007) points out, in his comparative study, that in computer-mediated peer response it was difficult for students to focus on specific clear points, and students thought "the writer[s]...[were] insincere and lazy" due to many errors and too much "emotion...in posted writing" (p. 83). In other words it was exhausting for students to read "the same thing over and over again" (p. 83).

Asynchronous mode. As explained in Liu and Hansen (2002), peer response in the asynchronous mode can be to students' advantage for several reasons. First, it is very adaptable to students' "individual needs and learning styles" (p. 89). Second, it gives "sufficient time" for students to respond to their peers. As a result, students' responses become "more thoughtful," and it provides a good chance for students to practice writing. In addition, as Strenski, Feagin, and Singer (2005) state, e-mail peer response forces students to comment "using full sentences" (p. 193); consequently, it discourages peer response that is concerned only with "line editing or grammar mistakes" (p. 193). Additionally, according to Liu and Hansen (2002), it allows students to exchange peer response through messages. In addition, both individuals can interact easily using this mode.

Strenski, Feagin, and Singer (2005) add that considering e-mail "as an open-ended activity" (p. 193) encourages students to supply their peers with more effective, and more detailed responses. As Strenski, Feagin, and Singer explain, although instructors can establish guides for students to clarify the expected length of their comments and what exact issues they are to address, students customarily look upon e-mail as "an unstructured, spontaneous discourse" (p. 193) through which they generously provide their peers with invaluable comments. Strenski, Feagin, and Singer call attention to the effectiveness of e-mail peer responses to student drafts. They also declare that practicing e-mail peer response gives students "more applicable guidance through the draft process" (p. 193) so that instructors become less obliged to give exhaustive comments on their drafts. Students interact positively using electronic systems like e-mail because students feel excited when they receive e-mails in which

their classmates who read their writing intimately address them in person. Moreover, Strenski, Feagin, and Singer confirm that students who respond to their peers' work feel eager to provide their peers with "personalized...and thoughtful" (p. 193) comments since they feel that their peers await their comments impatiently. Suh (2002) examined Korean university students' attitude towards peer response via e-mail. He found that it made students in the study "concerned about providing meaningful and constructive feedback" (p. 677). Suh reports, "The students took the writing task seriously, and they appeared to be satisfied with the peer editing sessions."

However, Liu and Hansen (2002) also list some pitfalls of using the asynchronous mode in giving peer response. First, it is considered "time consuming" (p. 89). Second, it can be not convenient if home or work lack computer facilities. Third, not all students can be patient enough to wait for an indefinite time to receive peer response. Moreover, according to Liu and Sadler's (2003) study that compared peer response in traditional and computer-mediated modes for university level students, students who participated in face to face peer response seemed to be hesitant to provide their peers with modification comments, "perhaps due to a lack of self-confidence" (p. 196) concerning their own spelling skills and grammar. Liu and Sadler also commented that the students who used a MOO could have possibly referred to resources to check spelling or grammar. They did not, however, because "this would have required that they first notice that a problem existed and then they would have needed to consult such outside resources" (p. 205). Suh (2002) adds that his study found it problematic for students of high proficiency level to work with low proficiency level students. A high level partner gets involved in writing and drafting, while the other partner gets involved in searching the web only.

Synchronous mode. Peer response in the synchronous mode can also be very useful. According to Liu and Hansen (2002), this mode makes it easy for students to discuss their writings with no need to be sitting together. They also add that using this format strongly motivates students and makes them involved in the task. Besides, as Liu and Hansen mention, it encourages students to enjoy their time and be creative at the same time. Additionally, it helps improve students' learning and helps them build social peer to peer relationships. Moreover, the students in Liu and Sadler's (2003)

study considered using the MOO enjoyable. They suggested that the students may have responded this way because they “had already used chat rooms...in their personal communication with friends and family” (p. 218). Accordingly, the students seemed to feel comfortable using this method of communication. Furthermore, DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001) add that in the synchronous mode teachers have the advantage of monitoring students’ interaction, and therefore can read all their comments and check if they are on task. DiGiovanni and Nagaswami also point out that students do not need to rely on their memories to improve their drafts based on their peers’ oral remarks, because now they can depend on printouts.

Of course, using peer response in the synchronous mode is not without constraints. Liu and Hansen (2000) list some of the drawbacks of responding to peers using synchronous format. For example, they highlight that slow typing speed can affect peer response negatively. Students can also find it difficult to smoothly apply turn-taking. Moreover, students who receive their peers’ response might become uncertain due to receiving conflicting comments at the same time. Besides, if the peer response session is not organized well before students start the lesson, peers might give incompetent comments. Liu and Hansen end their list with the belief that students may also give subjective responses rather than giving “specific text-related comments” (p. 89). According to Liu and Sadler (2003), turn-taking is hard for students and students feel “rushed to type [their]... comments in order to follow the flow of communication” (p. 219). Because the amount of conversation is large, as Liu and Sadler mention, it is difficult for students to follow up with the conversation, and sometimes “one off-target comment can distract the students’ attention” (p. 219) so that they need a minute to return to the topic. Liu and Sadler argue that though most students in their study were attracted to cooperating with each other online, the MOO tended to generate shallow comments. As a result, “the effectiveness of MOO commenting in peer review is questionable” (p. 219).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in the study were a total of 47 Emirati female high school students between 14 and 16 years. They were in two grade 10 classes. 24 students in the traditional class and 23 students in the computer-mediated class participated in completing the pre-study questionnaire. However, only 44 completed the whole study including the post-study questionnaire. They all speak Arabic as their first language. They had not experienced any process writing techniques, including peer response. I used process writing techniques including drafting and teacher feedback in two assignments in the fall of 2009. Then, I used process writing techniques in both of my classes for two assignments in the spring of 2010 before I collected data. During these two assignments, I trained the two classes on what to write in peer response using their general knowledge of spelling and grammar, and using checklists. The first class applied peer response in a traditional (paper and pencil) mode, while the second class applied electronic peer response using a blog.

Pilot Questionnaire

I adapted my research and interview questions from Kim (2007). I used the same questionnaire questions, but I wrote them in complete sentences in the pre-study and post-study questionnaires to make them clear to my students. I discussed the pre-study questionnaire with three of my teacher colleagues who have an average of 18 years of experience in teaching ESL, and I piloted it to find out about any problems that may occur while using the questionnaires. I chose a group of 25 grade 10 students who had similar background and proficiency level to the students who participated in the study. I started by explaining what I meant by peer response. Then, I asked the students if they had ever tried to respond to their peers in writing classes. None of them had done it before. Then, I gave them the pre-study questionnaire. It took them about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire

were clear so that they did not ask any questions. However, they needed more explanation about what the term “peer response” exactly means in order to be able to complete the questionnaire sufficiently. They also wanted to know the purpose behind the questionnaire. In addition, I discovered that the information I collected was not adequate. The data I collected did not show if the students had tried peer response techniques in writing class.

Accordingly, I made some important changes to make the questionnaire as appropriate as possible for my research purpose. First, I added a yes/no question to have a record of those who had never experienced peer response in English writing classes. Besides, I added a note at the beginning of the questionnaire to enable students to know not only why they should respond to the questionnaire but also to encourage them to respond honestly. Thinking about how I was going to distinguish between the questionnaires given to the students who would respond to peers in the traditional class and those who would respond to peers using blogs, I included a space for students to write their classes and sections. Finally, based on my observation during piloting the questionnaire and my colleagues’ advice, in order to know what students thought about their computer skills, I incorporated a question into the post-study questionnaire given to the students who responded to their peers using blogs. In addition, I paraphrased the interview questions of Kim (2007) and added two more questions to gain insights into the usefulness of giving and receiving peer response in both modes.

Research Instruments

To answer my first research question, I gave the 47 students the pre-study questionnaire that explored their attitudes towards peer response before experiencing it (see Appendix A), and another questionnaire to explore their attitudes towards peer response after they had experienced it (see Appendices B & C). In the first questionnaire I just added a space in which students could write their sections because they did not have a clear idea about the project. They did not know that one section would use a blog while the other would not. The number of the section was enough to me to recognize which data belongs to which peer response mode. The title of each of

the post-study questionnaires showed the mode of peer response the students had used. It was clear to them towards which mode they were expressing their attitudes.

I made sure that the students understood what peer response is before they completed the pre-study questionnaire (see Appendix A). After I collected data from the first questionnaire, I added a question to the post-study computer-mediated questionnaire (see Appendix C) since I thought it would be useful to know about students' computer skills. 47 students gave their opinions before they responded to peers while only 44 of the students expressed their attitudes after responding to peers. To keep the participants homogeneous in receiving peer response training, I excluded three students because they did not attend some of the peer response sessions. To answer my second research question, I compared the students' attitudes towards peer response before and after they applied it in general.

I answered my third research question by comparing the data collected from the students' responses to the second questionnaire in each class (see Appendix B and Appendix C). I compared the answers of the students who used traditional peer response and the answers of the students who used the blog. In this way, I explored the differences and similarities between the students' attitudes towards traditional and computer-mediated peer response.

To gain more insights into the attitudes of the two groups, I also conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E). 15 students from the traditional class, and 20 students from the computer-mediated class were interviewed. To get credible data that represented students' true attitudes, whether negative or positive, I told the students that their participation in the interviews was appreciated no matter what their attitudes were. I recorded the interviews using a computer.

Procedure

Writing lessons usually come at the end of each unit of the students' book, *Writing to Learn* (Spaventa, 2008). However, it was impossible for me to wait till the end of the fourth unit, which is the first unit in the second term, in the students' book to start my study because of my research schedule. So I decided to start with writing assignments that did not have to do with the students' book. I chose for the students in the experiment to write narrative journals. I thought it would be appropriate for the

students to write narrative journals because they were asked by the Ministry of Education to write journal entries for their portfolios anyway, and I thought it would not take a lot of time to explain how to write one paragraph narrative journals. In fact, it was a lively topic for the students as well.

It took me a month to finish applying the peer response technique twice for all participants' pieces of writing in the two classes till I started collecting data. The two groups of participants, in the traditional and the computer-mediated classes, wrote two journal entries, responded to peers' entries, and revised the journal entries once before I collected data. Arabic was allowed in writing responses. I tried to train the students on more than one aspect of peer response like form, content, and organization since, according to Hansen and Liu (2002), students are capable of responding to more than one aspect at the same time. Though the students did not receive a great deal of training due to lack of time, I tried my best to train them to respond to form, content, and organization.

Traditional Class

For the first narrative journal, four sessions were required to respond to all the students' assignments. I asked the students to prepare their narrative journals beforehand and bring five hard copies for in class peer response. In the first peer response session, I set up the basic rules for the students to follow. I divided the students into groups of four or five. I assigned a facilitator for each group. I asked the facilitators to help their mates within their groups follow the instructions, or to tell me about any problems that occurred. Then, I gave the students a general idea about what they were supposed to do. I asked the students to look for mistakes and to correct them or give clues about them. I told the students to be as nice as possible in writing their comments. Then, I gave the students peer response empty cards on which they had to write their responses. I used these cards to avoid the not-enough-space disadvantage of paper and pencil peer response mentioned in Hansen and Liu (2002).

After that, I gave each group of five students five copies of one narrative to comment on. I was interested in written peer response, so the narrative journals had to belong to no one in the group. In other words, I tried to avoid face to face peer response to keep focus on written peer response. It was not easy for the students to understand how to respond to their peers because it was their first time. They asked

many questions like “What are we going to write?”, “Why are we doing this?”, and “What are these cards for?” I cannot deny; it was a mess at first. However, the facilitators were well chosen and very helpful. They were good team leaders in the sense that they could organize the work, explained the instructions to their group members, and directed them in giving peer response. Finally, the students started enthusiastically commenting on their peers’ narratives because they were interested in knowing more about their classmates.

Since that was the students’ first time to respond to peers’ writings, their main focus was on spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. The students gave and received peer response in class. Writing names of response writers was optional. The students finished commenting on five stories only. After that, I gave back the narratives with the peer response cards to their owners. I gave the students a week to hand in their second drafts. Then, they revised their narratives outside of class, and gave me the revised versions. Some students gave me their second drafts the next day. Others needed more time to finish theirs.

In the second peer response session, I explained to the students what the main elements were that had to be in a narrative journal. I had given the students checklists of what to look at when they responded to their peers on cards with some nice pictures on them (see Appendix D). I followed similar procedures to those I followed in the first peer response session. However, this time, the students had to comment on the spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes, as well as respond to the questions in the checklist they had (see Appendix D). They also had to write their responses on the cards. They finished responding to 10 narratives. I gave back the stories with the responses to their writers to revise the stories and hand them in. Some students were enthusiastic, and handed in the second drafts of their narrative journal entries the day after they received their peers’ responses. Others were less enthusiastic or maybe busy, and handed in their second drafts just on time.

In the third session, the students did not respond to their peers’ writing. It was a training session. The students received more training on responding to narrative writing journals. They had to respond to three stories I adapted from the cancelled grade 11 book, *Writing to Learn* (Spaventa, 2008). In the first story, the students were supposed to focus on the punctuation problems. In the second story, the students’ focus was on using the pronoun “I.” In the third story, they used transition

words like “first,” “then,” “after that,” “as a result,” “and,” “but,” and “because” to make short sentences longer. Some of the students expressed their preference for using real narratives of their peers’ writings.

The students responded to the rest of their peers’ writings. They had to comment on spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes, follow the points in the checklists they had, and correct or add transitional words when needed. I asked the students to give peer response to these three points because I thought it would be useful to improve the students’ knowledge of responding to peers and to meet the different students’ abilities.

Then the students had to write another narrative. They brought five copies of their narratives to class for peer response. I used basically the same procedures I used in peer responding to the first narrative journal; however, I made some modifications. I asked the students to respond to each others’ writings on the assignment directly without using response cards. In fact, I asked some of the participating students outside the class if they found the peer response activity useful. They said yes, but also said that some students did not respond to the writing itself. They were biased in commenting on their peers’ writings. Accordingly, when I gave the assignments to the groups to comment on, I asked each student writer which group of students she preferred to respond to her narrative. Only two students wanted specific groups to comment on their stories. Other students expressed no preference. After all the peer response activity was done, I started collecting data.

Computer-mediated Class

I applied the peer response technique using the blog and started collecting data in a month. It was not easy for me to set up the blog because I was not an expert, but I succeeded. I created the blog four or five months before the study. I limited the access to the blog for me and my students in order to avoid cultural problems. My students and I belong to a protective culture. In other words, if some sexual pictures, for example, appeared on the screen in my class, I might be in trouble. When I started adding my students to the blog, I faced some problems like writing some students’ e-mails wrong, or some of the students’ e-mail addresses were not suitable for the blog I used in the study. I could not solve these technical problems. I could not activate some of the students’ accounts, but they were able to use my account in class at the

same time. Finally, I successfully activated the blog in a week's time. All the students had nicknames. Some were known to others. Some stayed secret. Some students' accounts were activated before the others'. So they submitted their stories earlier.

The students were supposed to submit, respond to, and modify two narrative journals. I discovered that, for different reasons, only about eight students could have access to the internet from their homes. So I decided to ask the students to write their journals, to respond to their peers, and to modify their writing in the electronic learning center at school. The school internet connection was wireless and terribly slow. That did not decrease the students' enthusiasm, which was increasing every time they visited the electronic learning center.

I began the first peer response session by explaining that peer response meant to find mistakes in their peers' writings and try to correct them. After some of the students had submitted the first assignment, they started responding to each others'. I did not group the students. So any student could respond to any story. Those who could not submit their stories on the blog from home started writing their stories in class. I noticed that some students made use of the translation programs on the internet though I did not ask them to, or allow them to do so. I believe some students used those programs effectively, while others used them incompetently. According to my observations, those who used the program for translating single words were able to enrich their vocabulary, while those who translated complete stories fell in the trap of incompetent word-to-word translation.

In the next peer response session, all the students' assignments were ready for peer response. I asked the students to comment on the mistakes and to try to correct them. I asked the students to add comments to the stories that did not have any comments. Everyone was responsible for the comments. I told them that the least acceptable number of comments was three per story. In fact, I encouraged them to add more comments. I did not give the students specific clues, so the students started commenting on the spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. I actually wanted them to get used to peer response before moving on to more specific aspects of peer response. Most of the students gave general comments like "There are some spelling mistakes."

In the third peer response session, I distributed the response cards (see Appendix D), like the ones I used in the other class, to the students. I explained what

elements I expected them to look for in a narrative journal. They had to find, for example, if the story had a good title, used the pronoun “I,” had quotes, or had a clear order of events. The students responded to each others’ writings without being grouped. They revised their stories in the next class, except for one student. She insisted on having more comments because she thought that the comments she had received were not useful. I asked some of the students to comment on her story to help her finish the assignment.

The next time we met was for peer response training. I used the same stories I used in the other class. I trained the students in a regular classroom, not in the electronic learning center. For the first story, I asked the students to focus on the punctuation mistakes and correct them. The students added the needed punctuation marks like capital letters, full stops, or commas. They worked in groups. In the second story, the students focused on using the pronoun “I.” They expressed how that story was not a narrative journal because the writer did not talk about her/himself. S/he wrote about her/his grandfather. Then, I presented the transition words that could be used in narrative writing. I distributed the third story, and they used transition words like “first,” “then,” “after that,” “as a result,” “and,” “but,” and “because” to make short sentences longer and more interesting to the reader.

After that we met in the electronic learning center to submit the second story. Some students submitted their stories from home. Others brought their hand written stories to the center to type them and save them on the blog. As a peer response activity, the students were to respond to their peers’ writing focusing on editorial mistakes, applying the elements in the peer response cards with the checklist like using the pronoun “I,” or using transition words in their stories. A student, for instance, could respond to another student, “You are using the pronoun she instead of I.” I divided the students into groups of three. Each group member was responsible for responding to their peers’ writing within the same group, but some group members were not ready with their stories. Accordingly, I allowed the students to work with other groups if their groups were not ready. Those who did not have their stories ready had to write their stories in the center. By the end of the lesson, all the stories were submitted. Some were commented on. Others were not.

We had to meet for one more class before I began collecting data about the students’ attitudes towards peer response. I had to remind the students about what

kinds of comments they were supposed to send to their peers. Some students worked on responding to their peers who did not have comments, especially the ones in their three member groups. Those who finished submitting their stories responded to their group members' writing. All had their stories revised according to the peer response they agreed with by the end of the lesson.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, the collected data and the findings will be presented in depth using quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data collected from the questionnaire and the interviews will be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings of the pre-study questionnaire will be compared to the findings of the post study questionnaire for each group. Besides, the findings of the post-study questionnaires and the interviews of the traditional class (TC) will be compared to the findings of the post study questionnaire and the interviews of the computer-mediated class (CMC).

The findings will be presented in three sections: a comparison between students' attitude towards using paper and pencil peer response in ESL writing classes before the study and after the study, a comparison between students' attitude towards peer response using blog in ESL writing classes before and after the study, and a comparison between the students' attitude towards traditional and computer-mediated peer response.

Students' Attitude towards Traditional Peer Response before the Study

Analysis of the Close-ended Questions

All the 24 students of the class who were going to use the traditional peer response responded to the pre-study questionnaire (see Appendix A). The participants answered six close-ended questions. The qualitative analysis showed that the 24 students had not experienced peer response techniques in any of their ESL writing classes. Generally speaking, the students had a positive attitude towards traditional peer response before the study (see Table 1). 12 students (50%) thought that they would feel comfortable when they responded to their peers' writing. 10 students (41%) believed that they would feel comfortable when they received comments from their peers on their writing. 12 students (50%) thought that their peers would be able to give useful peer response. 14 students (58%) thought that peer response would help

them improve their writing ability. 15 students (63%) thought that peer response would make their writing classes more interesting. 13 students (54%) thought that they would integrate some of their peers' comments in their writing. However, six students (25%) expressed a negative attitude. They expected not to feel comfortable when receiving comments from their peers on their writing.

Table 1: Students' Attitude Towards Traditional Peer Response Traditional before Study

Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1. I think will feel comfortable when I correct mistakes in my peers' writing.	12 (50%)	4 (17%)	8 (33%)
2. I think I will be comfortable when I receive comments from my peers on my writing.	10 (41%)	8 (33%)	6 (25%)
3. I think my peers can give me useful comments on my writing.	12 (50%)	8 (33%)	4 (17%)
4. I think peer response will help me improve my writing ability.	14 (58%)	4 (17%)	6 (25%)
5. I think peer response will make writing more interesting.	15 (63%)	8 (33%)	1 (4%)
6. I think I will integrate some of my peers' comments in my writing.	13 (54%)	5 (21%)	6 (25%)

Analysis of the Open-ended Question

I allowed using Arabic in answering the open-ended question throughout the study (see Appendix A). All quotes throughout this chapter are translated except for three, which I have indicated in the text. Only two students did not answer the open-ended question. The students' answers to the open-ended question varied in many ways. Some had positive attitudes, and others had negative attitudes towards traditional peer response. Some students refused the idea of using peer response in writing classes and explained their answers. Some opinions were in between refusing and accepting the idea, and students said they did not mind trying it. Only four students were in favor of the idea initially.

Those who refused the idea justified their refusal by writing that responding to students' writing was the teacher's responsibility, or they did not trust their peers' opinions. One of the students said, "My classmate may add more mistakes to my

writing.” Another student wrote, “I cannot respond to my friends’ writing, and I do not expect them to be able to respond to mine.” More than one student wrote that they disagreed with using peer response techniques. One student, for example, wrote, “I am not for peer response because this does not make me feel comfortable.” Another student expressed no preference because she thought that if she corrected her mistakes herself after peer response she would not be able to recognize her mistakes.

Those who did not mind trying peer response in writing classes wrote some ideas to support their opinions. One student believed that though the students were not capable of correcting peers’ mistakes and said, it would be interesting to have “peers reading my writing and correcting mistakes.” Some students thought it would be useful in terms of improving their writing. One student also wrote, “My friend can understand problems I face because of my low proficiency level.” Another student wrote in English, “I dnt think that it will improve my writing. But maybe I will learn more idea’s while im reading my friend’s paragraphe.”

Other students had some inquiries. One student, for example, asked, “Will the peer response be under the teacher’s supervision?” Another student asked if it would improve the students’ writing.

Students’ Attitude towards Computer-mediated Peer Response

Analysis of the Close-ended Questions

The general attitude of the 23 students towards using peer response in ESL writing classes was positive (see Table 2). 14 students (61%) believed that the peer response technique would help them improve their writing. 10 students (44%) expected that they would feel comfortable while correcting their peers’ writing. 11 students (48%) believed that their peers might give them useful comments. 11 students (48%) believed that peer response would make writing more interesting. 11 students (48%) thought that they would integrate some of their peers’ comments in their writing. However, 11 students (48%) expressed their negative attitude. They expected not to feel comfortable when receiving comments from their peers on their writing, while only eight students (35%) expected to feel comfortable.

Table 2: Students' Attitude towards Computer-mediated Peer Response before the Study

Statements	Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree
	& Agree		& Disagree
1. I think will feel comfortable while I am correcting mistakes in my peers' writing.	10 (44%)	6 (26%)	7 (30%)
2. I think I will comfortable when I receive comments from my peers about my writing.	8 (35%)	4 (17%)	11 (48%)
3. I think my peers can give me useful comments on my writing.	11 (48%)	4 (17%)	8 (35%)
4. I think peer response will help me improve my writing ability.	14 (61%)	3 (13%)	6 (26%)
5. I think peer response will make writing more interesting.	11 (48%)	7 (30%)	5 (22%)
6. I think I will integrate some of my peers' comments in my writing.	11 (48%)	6 (26%)	6 (26%)

Analysis of the Open-ended Question

15 students responded to the open-ended question (see Appendix A). Some had negative attitudes and others had positive attitudes towards. Some students expressed their preference for teacher response. One student in favor of teacher response wrote, "Teacher's words and notes have deeper effect on the students than anything else." Some students had a positive attitude towards peer response. One student, for instance, wrote, "I like the idea that students can be beneficial to each other."

Other students had negative attitudes, and explained their worries about peer response. One student, for example, wrote in English, "I can't, I don't know correcting paragraph or writing." Another students wrote in English, "Im goin do disagree bicois if my frind integrte my peers' she will theink she is the bast." Another student wrote, "Peer response is not useful because students have different proficiency levels, and they do not cooperate." Another student complained, "It is boring."

Students' Attitude towards Traditional Peer Response after the Study

Analysis of the Close-ended Questions

I surveyed 21 of the 24 students who had had six peer response sessions. The rest, three students, were absent for more than one peer response session, so I excluded them from the study. The participants had a positive attitude in general; however, some students seemed to not to be able to decide how they felt towards traditional peer response.

Students' attitude towards peer response varied, but their overall positive attitude was clearly shown in the collected data (see Table 3). 12 students (57%) expressed their comfort while they were responding to their peers, and the same percentage (57%) said they felt comfortable receiving comments from their peers. 12 students (57%) also agreed that they had integrated some of their peers' comments in their writing, while only six students (29%) said that they had not. 10 students (48%) agreed that their peers gave them useful comments on their writing, whereas only 24% of the students believed that their peers' comments on their writing were not useful.

Table 3: Student Attitude Towards Traditional Peer Response after the Study

Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1. I felt comfortable while I was correcting mistakes in my peers' writing.	12 (57%)	4 (19%)	5 (24%)
2. I was comfortable when I received comments from my peers about my writing.	12 (57%)	5 (24%)	4 (19%)
3. Peers gave me useful comments on my writing.	10 (48%)	6 (29%)	5 (24%)
4. Peer response helped me improve my writing ability.	7 (33%)	10 (48%)	4 (19%)
5. Peer response made writing more interesting.	8 (38%)	4 (19%)	9 (43%)
6. I integrated some of my peers' comments in my writing.	12 (57%)	3 (14%)	6 (29%)

The collected data showed a less positive attitude in the answers to questions 4 and 5. Only seven students (33%) agreed that peer response helped them improve their writing, while four students (19%) believed that their writing abilities did not improve. The rest of the students (48%) were not able to decide whether their writing ability improved or not. Nine students (43%) believed that peer response did not make writing more interesting, and only eight students (38%) thought that peer response made writing more interesting.

Analysis of the Open-ended Question

17 of the 21 participants answered the question (see Appendix B). Some students expressed positive attitudes. Others had negative attitudes. Besides, some students expressed some worries.

Some students were in favor of using peer response techniques in writing classes. One student, for instance, wrote, "My classmates' comments encouraged me to know my mistakes." Another student added, "Commenting on peers' writing is very helpful to low proficiency level students." Another student added, "It is good, interesting, and easy to comment on peers' writing. Both the comments writer and receiver benefit from it." Another student was positive, but uncertain about peer response effectiveness. She wrote, "Peer comments may improve grammar and organization in writing."

Some students opposed using peer response in writing classes, and some students preferred teacher response to writing. One student stated that she did not like peer response sessions because "it is boring." Another opinion was that "it is a loss of time." Another student wrote, "The comment writer may add mistakes instead of correcting mistakes." Another student commented, "It is tiresome." Some other students were worried about what they had to study in the book. One student pointed out, "We are not following the same activities other grade 10 classes are doing." In other words, she was worried about the material grade 10 students had to cover in the syllabus.

Interview Data Analysis

I interviewed 20 participants to have a clearer vision of their attitudes towards traditional peer response. I used a focus groups method. I interviewed three groups of

four to five students. I interviewed them in Arabic. Then, I translated what they said. When I asked the students if they found traditional peer response useful when they responded to their peers, those who answered the question agreed that they found it useful. One benefit of peer response was, as one student said, “I will not repeat my classmates’ mistakes in my writing.” Another student commented, “It helped me learn to avoid mistakes in writing tests.”

When I asked the students if they found traditional peer response useful when they received responses from their classmates on their writing, they were undecided about it. Most of them confirmed that it was useful, but one student for example commented, “It was useful, but not very useful.” Furthermore, another student commented, “If we had teacher feedback, it would be better.”

When asked about the advantages of peer response, the students mentioned some advantages. One student, for example, said, “Some students accept comments from their friends rather than from the teacher.” Another student added, “It can improve students’ relations with each other.” Another student added, “Now, I can notice mistakes in writing.” Another student pointed out, “It was interesting to know my friends’ stories.”

When asked about the disadvantages of peer response, the students drew attention to some points. More than one student suggested that some students did not have the ability to provide peer response. One student commented, “My friends cannot do it.” Another student complained, “There wasn’t enough time. We had a lot of other homework to do.” Another student added, “Some students used words we didn’t know before.” Another student clarified, “I used the Google translator. It was faster but I discovered it was all wrong.” It seemed that students were used to doing so in writing assignments. Another student explained, “I couldn’t go to a bookshop that time to photocopy five copies of my story, so I had to write the five copies myself.” Another student added, “It may disrupt the classmates’ relationships.” However, a student ended the talk about this point by saying, “The advantages are more than the disadvantages.”

When I asked if they preferred a specific student to respond to their writing, most of the students showed no preference. One student, for example, responded, “I did not mind which group is correcting my writing.” However, two students had a different opinion. They thought that their classmates were biased when they

responded to their stories. I asked them what they thought about the solution I used to avoid this problem. During the peer response session when this kind of problem occurred, I started to ask for students' opinions about which group they wanted to respond to their writing. One student responded, "Yes, it really solved the problem." Another student added, "Google translator made my story a complete mess." However, she learnt that translating one word, then another word, and so on gave much better results than translating the whole story as a block. In other words, she was able to learn how to use technology positively and critically.

When I asked the students about integrating their peers' responses in their writing, they were critical about it. They agreed that they integrated some and not all peers' comments, but they examined them first. One student, for example, commented, "Yes if the comments were right." Then I asked for suggestions. Almost all the students I interviewed agreed that they preferred teacher feedback. However, when I asked them if they had to choose either teacher response only, or peer response followed by teacher response, they all said they would prefer peer response and teacher response together. In other words, they preferred to write multiple drafts.

Students' Attitude towards Computer-mediated Peer Response after the Study

Analysis of the Open-ended Questions

I collected qualitative data from the questionnaire to which all of the 23 students who participated in computer-mediated peer response sessions responded. Table 4 shows their attitudes toward computer-mediated peer response. Almost all of the students had a positive attitude towards using blogs to respond to and receive response from peers. 22 students (96%) integrated some of their peers' comments in their writing, and they believed that the peer response technique improved their writing ability. 21 students (91%) said that they felt comfortable while correcting mistakes in their peers' writing, and 20 students (80%) said that they were comfortable when they received comments from their peers. 19 students (83%) expressed the opinion that peer response made writing more interesting. 18 students (78%) thought that peer response helped them improve their writing ability. 20 students (87%) believed they had good computer skills.

Table 4: Students' Attitude towards Computer-mediated Peer Response after the Study

Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1. I was comfortable while I was correcting mistakes in my peers' writing.	21 (91%)	2 (9%)	0 (0.0%)
2. I was comfortable when I received comments from my peers about my writing.	20 (87%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
3. Peers gave me useful comments on my writing.	18 (78%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)
4. Peer response helped me improve my writing ability.	22 (96%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4%)
5. Peer response made writing more interesting.	19 (83%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)
6. I integrated some of my peers' comments in my writing.	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0.0%)
7. I have good computer skills.	20 (87%)	3 (13%)	0 (0.0%)

Analysis of the Open-ended Question

Answers to the open-ended question showed that most of the students expressed a positive attitude towards using blogs in peer response sessions (see Appendix C). Only two students had concerns about computer-mediated peer response.

Some students expressed how interesting and useful computer-mediated peer response was to them. One student, for example, wrote in English, "I think it's a great idea for learning and having fun in the seam time." More than one student stated that they learnt new vocabulary items and improved their writing ability. One student also commented, "I learnt how to write a story in English, and how writing stories in English is different from writing stories in Arabic." Some students were enthusiastic. One student expressed her happiness and satisfaction: "I liked writing. I feel eager to write. I look forward to seeing comments from my classmates." Another student pointed out, "We liked posting our stories in the blog." Another student stated, "I was happy when my classmates commented on my writing."

Many students commented that they learnt different social, academic, and personal skills. One student stated, “It strengthened student-student relationships, and built student independent character.” Another student commented, “This experiment caused students’ cooperation in class.” Another student stated, “I learnt how to help others.” Another student believed that it “nourishes students’ minds.” Another student believed that she became “talented in writing.” Another student added, “I became more confident.” Another student was craving more peer review sessions. She commented, “I hope using blogs will extend for more time.”

On the other hand, some expressed different opinions. For example, one student stated, “At the beginning, when I heard about the project I was excited..., but...I got bored because there weren’t enough comments from my classmates, and I didn’t have time to...comment.”

Interview Data Analysis

I held focus group interviews to know students’ attitudes towards computer-mediated peer response in more depth. I interviewed 16 students in groups of four. Their attitudes in the interview were very similar to their attitudes in the questionnaire and the open-ended question. They were confident when they expressed their attitude. I interviewed them in Arabic. Then, I translated what they said. Data collected from the interviews supported the data collected from the questionnaire and the open-ended question.

When I asked if responding to peers was useful to them, all the interviewees gave positive answers. Some of them added their thoughts. One student, for example, said, “I learnt from their mistakes.” Another student said, “It increased my learning ability.” Another student commented, “Chatting with people on the internet to exchange culture became easy for me.” Another student added, “My personal stories became more important to me. I wanted to tell them to my friends.”

When I asked if receiving responses from peers was useful to them, all the interviewees responded positively. They commented that it was useful in improving their grammar, spelling, and writing ability. One student, for example, commented, “I was used to writing some words like now instead of know for years without knowing it was wrong.” Another student compared writing English to writing Arabic stories. She said, “I learnt that punctuation in Arabic is different from punctuation in English.” They also commented on using technology as a facilitator. One student

commented, "It is good to use Google translator when responding to peers. We learnt new words." Other students recognized the other side of using technology. One student commented, "Google translator is a good program, but in the end it depends on me. I have to decide what to follow and what not to follow." Another student commented, "I didn't feel embarrassed when my peers commented on my mistakes." Another student added, "I became less embarrassed when I write than when I speak."

Their comments on the advantages of peer response were positive as well. They mentioned many advantages of using computer-mediated peer response. One student said that a peer response session "is a constructive application of the internet." Another student added, "I made more friends among my classmates." Another student added, "My appetite for learning and receiving information increased." Another student commented, "It improved my speaking skills." One group of students reported that they became more cooperative. One student said, "Now, I examine texts when I read them. I used to read texts without even understanding them." Another student added, "Students' communication on the blog is much better than students' interaction in class."

When we talked about the disadvantages of peer response using blog, I heard them saying loudly that there were no disadvantages. However, I told them to rethink so that they may find disadvantages. One student commented, "We did not have time to comment on our classmates' writing." In other words, she felt the internet connection was too slow. Another student added, "Though I didn't receive annoying comments, I received some useless comments." One student was annoyed because she did not receive many comments due to her "long story."

Answering the sixth question about possible ways to improve peer response performance, students mentioned some suggestions. They suggested ideas for improving the content and procedure of peer response. One student suggested writing about topics other than journal entries. She commented, "Writing or reading journal entries didn't attract me. I'd rather read and respond to paragraphs about world news." Another student suggested setting competitions: "A competition for the best story or the most number of comments would make the lesson more successful and interesting."

Having a specific person to respond to students' writing or refusing to work with specific students did not seem to cause any anxiety to the students. Only one

student wanted a specific friend to respond to her story, as she believed that the comments she received from that friend were useful. Other students had complained at the very beginning of the study about the groups I chose for them. However, they expressed their satisfaction with groupings I made. One student commented, “Working with students I never worked with before was fun to me, and in fact I wanted to work with more other students to explore their thoughts.” One student enthusiastically commented, “I wanted...[a certain] group to comment on my story to know more students I do not talk to in class.” Another student said, “I want every student to read my story.”

A Comparison of Students’ Attitude towards Traditional Peer Response before and after the Study

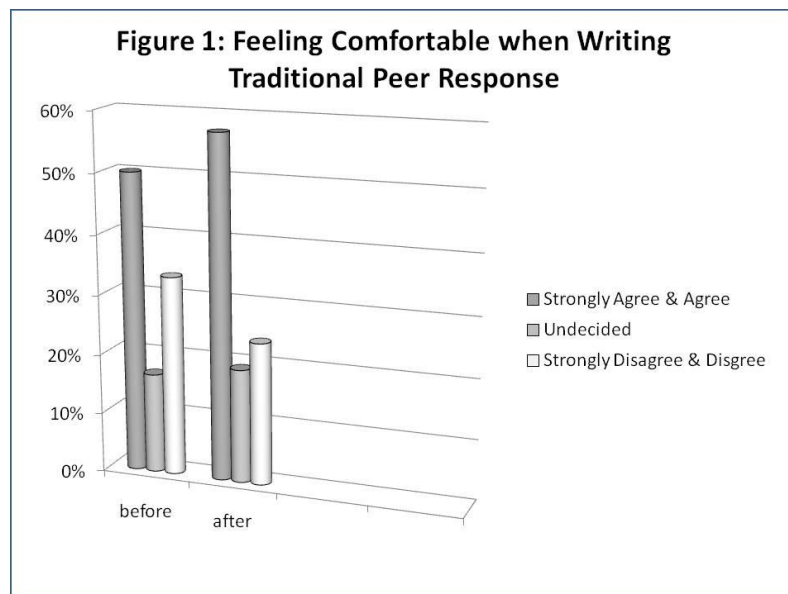
Analysis of the Open-ended Questions

To know the change in students’ attitude towards peer response, I calculated the difference between students’ attitudes before the study and after the study. In other words, I subtracted the percentage of the students’ attitude of each point in the pre-study questionnaire from its parallel in the results of the post-study questionnaire. As illustrated in Table 5, students’ attitudes towards traditional peer response changed after the study. Attitudes towards some points in the questionnaires became more positive, but attitudes towards other points became less positive. Students’ attitudes towards feeling comfortable when responding to peers’ writing became 7% more positive and 9% less negative. An increase of 16% and a decrease of 6% occurred towards feeling comfortable when receiving peer response. However, a lower percentage of students agreed that comments they received from peers were useful, and their attitude towards the usefulness of the responses received from peers also became more negative. 31% more of the students were not able to decide if peer response improved their writing. 39% more of the students did not find peers’ response in writing classes interesting. 3% more of the students agreed that they integrated peers’ responses in their writing, and 4% more students said they did not integrate their peers’ comments in their writing.

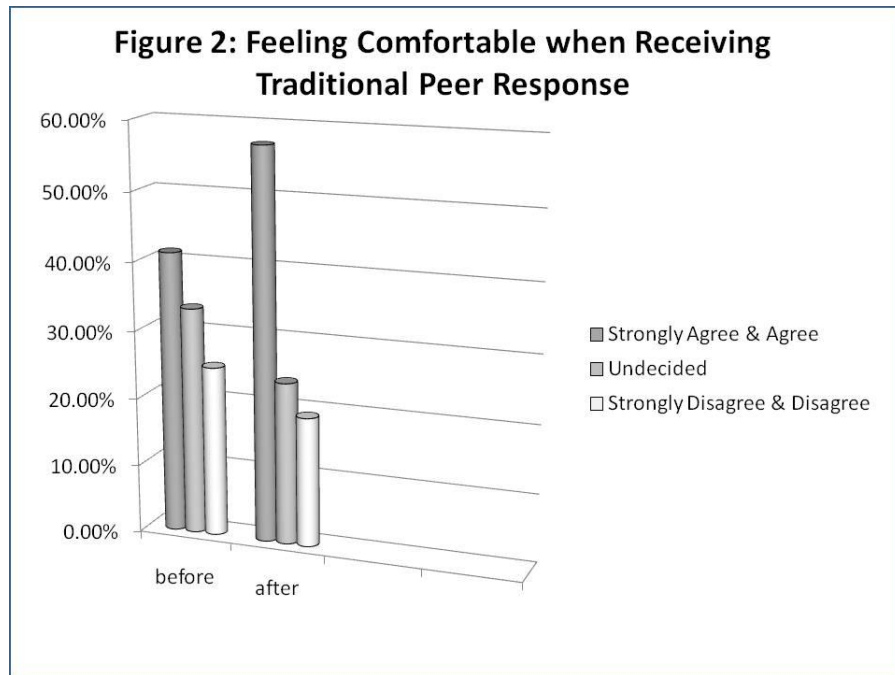
Table 5: A Comparison between Students' Attitude Towards Traditional Peer Response before and after the Study

The Difference of Attitude towards (Attitude After – Attitude before)	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1. Feeling comfortable when correcting peers' writing	(57%) <u>(50%)</u> + 7%	(19%) <u>(17%)</u> + 2%	(24%) <u>(33%)</u> - 9%
2. Feeling comfortable when receiving comments from peers	(57%) <u>(41%)</u> + 16%	(24%) <u>(33%)</u> - 9%	(19%) <u>(25%)</u> - 6%
3. Usefulness of comments	(48%) <u>(50%)</u> - 2%	(29%) <u>(33%)</u> - 4%	(24%) <u>(17%)</u> + 7%
4. Improving writing ability	(33%) <u>(58%)</u> - 25%	(48%) <u>(17%)</u> + 31%	(19%) <u>(25%)</u> - 6%
5. How interesting writing was	(38%) <u>(63%)</u> - 25%	(19%) <u>(33%)</u> - 14%	(43%) <u>(4%)</u> + 39%
6. Integrating peers' comments in writing	(57%) <u>(54%)</u> + 3%	(14%) <u>(21%)</u> - 7%	(29%) <u>(25%)</u> + 4%

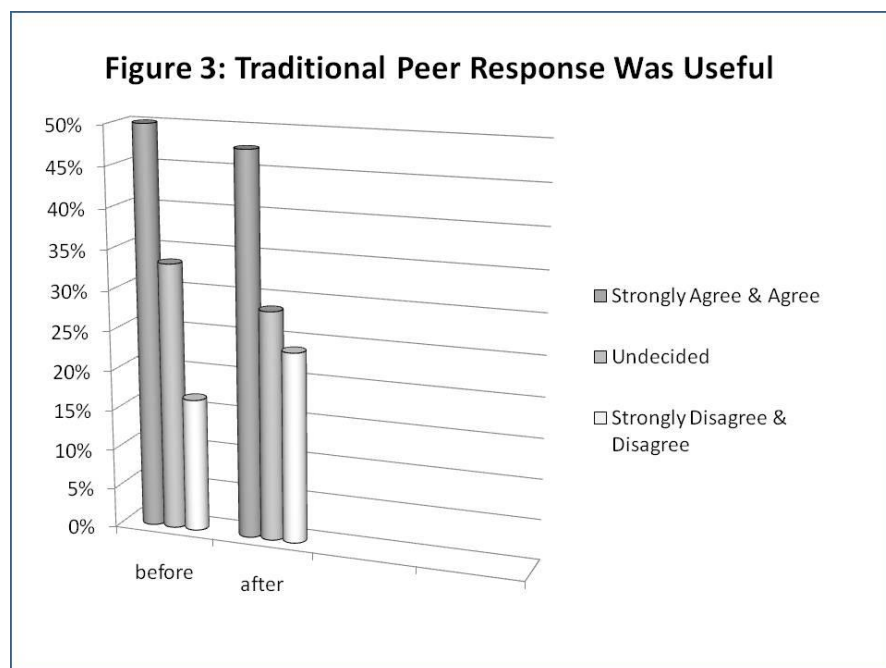
To know the overall view of how students' attitudes towards traditional peer response changed from before the study to after the study, I used column charts. In other words, I used the column charts to see how the decrease and increase affected the overall view of the participants' attitude after the study. As is shown in Figure 1, the students' attitude towards feeling comfortable when responding to peers appeared to be more positive after the study. Accordingly, the percentage of those who had a negative attitude towards feeling comfortable when responding to peers became lower. However, the percentage of those who were not able to decide stayed low.



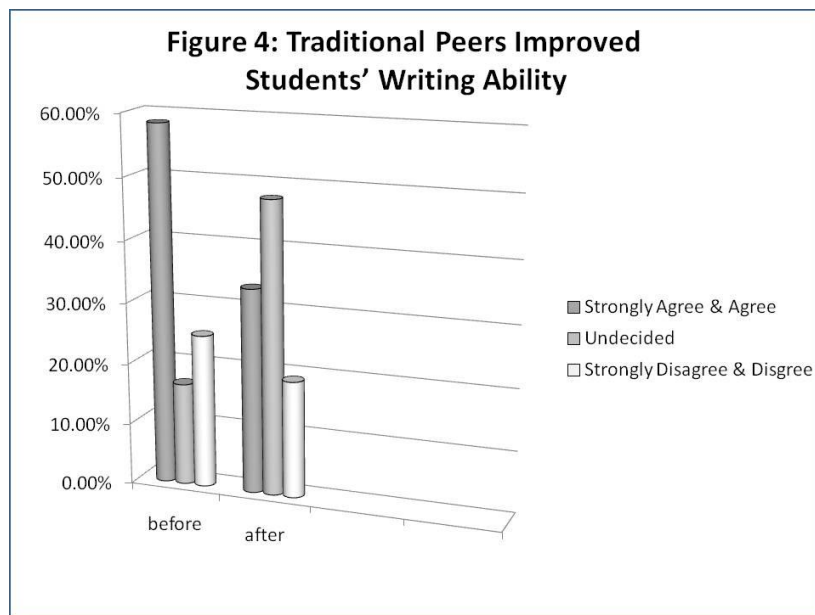
Students' attitude towards feeling comfortable when receiving peer response became more positive (see Figure 2). The percentages of those who disagreed or were not able to decide their attitude towards feeling comfortable when receiving feedback were lower.



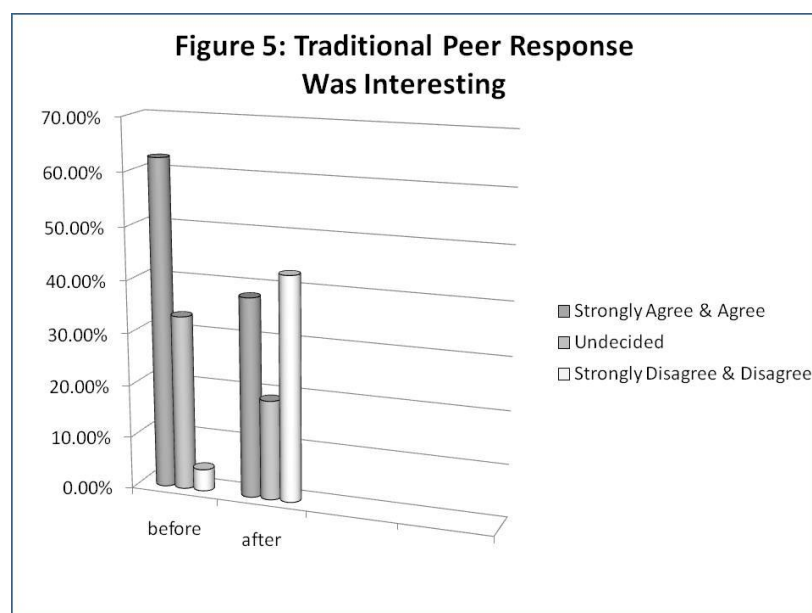
The percentage of those who agreed that traditional peer response was useful decreased (see Figure 3). However, the percentage was comparatively high.



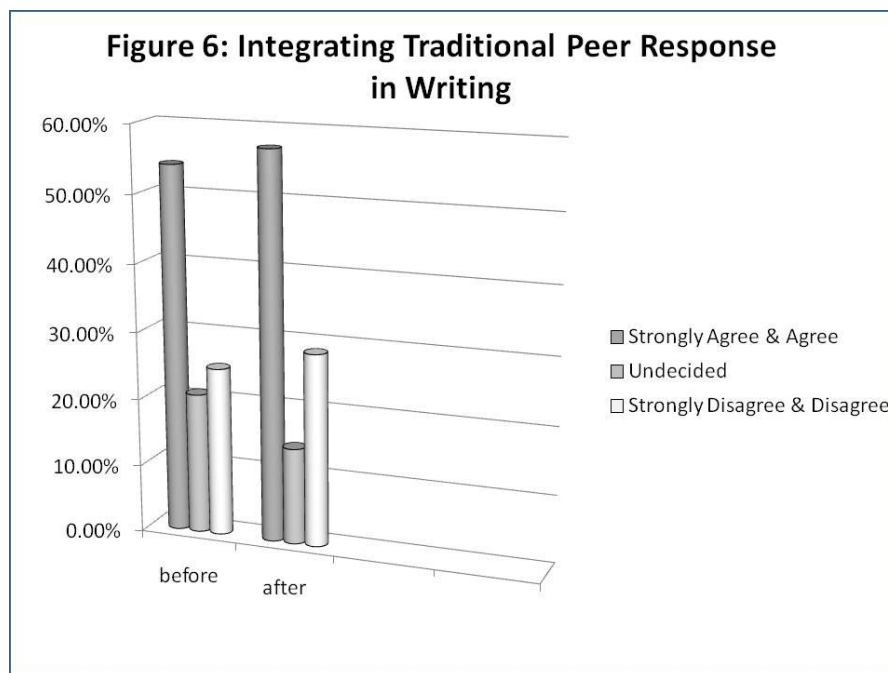
The percentage of the students' attitude towards the idea that traditional peer response improved their writing decreased (see Figure 4). However, 33% of the students still believed that traditional peer response improved their writing ability. What is worth examining in this figure, however, is the very large percentage (48%) of those who were not able to decide if peer response improved their writing ability or not. This suggests the importance of longitudinal studies and the importance of extensive peer response training.



The percentage of those who agreed that traditional peer response was interesting decreased, from 63% to 38% (see Figure 5). In other words, it became comparatively low.



Though the percentage of those who reported that they did not integrate peer response in their writing increased, it was still low, and the percentage of those who reported that they integrated their peers' responses in their writing became more positive (see Figure 6).



A Comparison of Students' Attitude towards Computer-mediated Peer Response before and after the Study

Analysis of the Open-ended Questions

Table 6 shows the amount of increase or decrease in students' attitude towards computer-mediated peer response. In other words, I calculated the difference between students' attitudes towards computer-mediated peer response percentages before and after the study. As shown in Table 6, some percentages went up and others went down.

Comparing students' attitude towards feeling comfortable when writing peer response before and after the study, there was an increase of 47%. Besides, the students' attitude towards feeling comfortable when receiving peer response increased 52%. Examining the students' attitude towards the usefulness of peer response, the rise was 30%. Their attitudes towards improving writing ability also increased 35%.

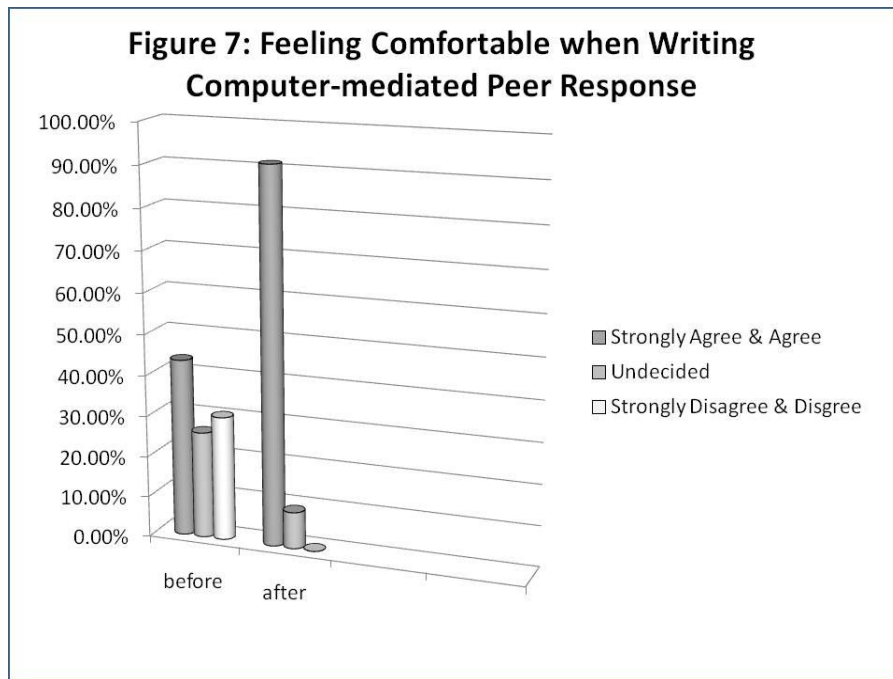
The rise in attitude towards feeling that peer response was interesting was 34%. The students' attitude towards integrating their peers' comments in their writing raised 9%.

Table 6: A Comparison between Students' Attitude Towards Computer-mediated Peer Response before and after the Study

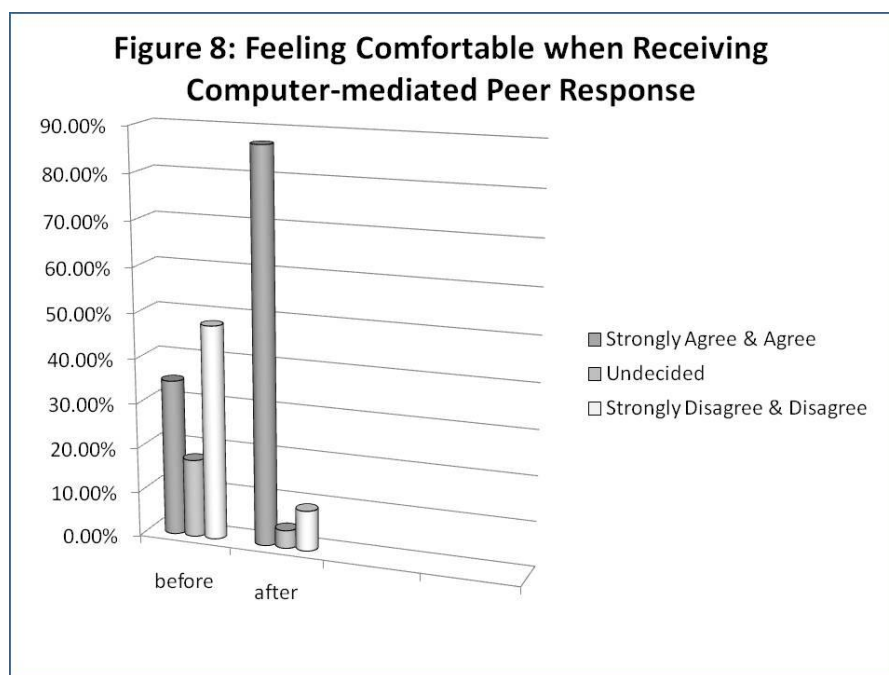
The Difference of Attitude towards (Attitude After – Attitude before)	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1. Feeling comfortable when correcting peers' writing	(91%) <u>(44%)</u> + 47%	(9%) <u>(26%)</u> - 17%	(0.0%) <u>(30%)</u> - 30%
2. Feeling comfortable when receiving comments from peers	(87%) <u>(35%)</u> + 52%	(4%) <u>(17%)</u> - 13%	(9%) <u>(48%)</u> - 39%
3. Usefulness of comments	(78%) <u>(48%)</u> + 30%	(17%) <u>(17%)</u> 0.0%	(4%) <u>(35%)</u> - 31%
4. Improving writing ability	(96%) <u>(61%)</u> + 35%	(0.00%) <u>(13%)</u> - 13%	(4%) <u>(26%)</u> - 22%
5. How interesting writing was	(82%) <u>(48%)</u> + 34%	(13%) <u>(30%)</u> - 17%	(4%) <u>(22%)</u> - 18%
6. Integrating peers' comments in writing	(57%) <u>(48%)</u> + 9%	(14%) <u>(30%)</u> - 16%	(30%) <u>(22%)</u> + 8%

To know how positive or negative the change of percentages of students' attitudes towards computer-mediated peer response after the study was, I put the data of each point in the pre-study questionnaire and the post-study questionnaire in a column chart. The charts show that the data changed dramatically, with more positive students' attitude towards computer-mediated peer response.

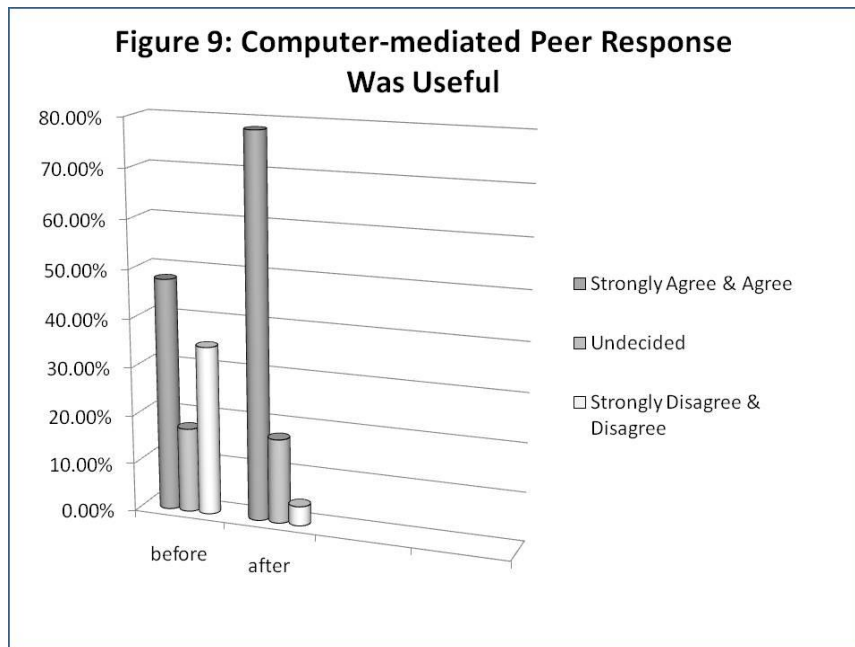
Students' attitude towards feeling comfortable while responding to peers using blogs was positive before the study. However, almost all the participants (91%) agreed that they felt comfortable after the study that when they responded to their peers' writing on the blog (see Figure 7). Their attitude became much more positive.



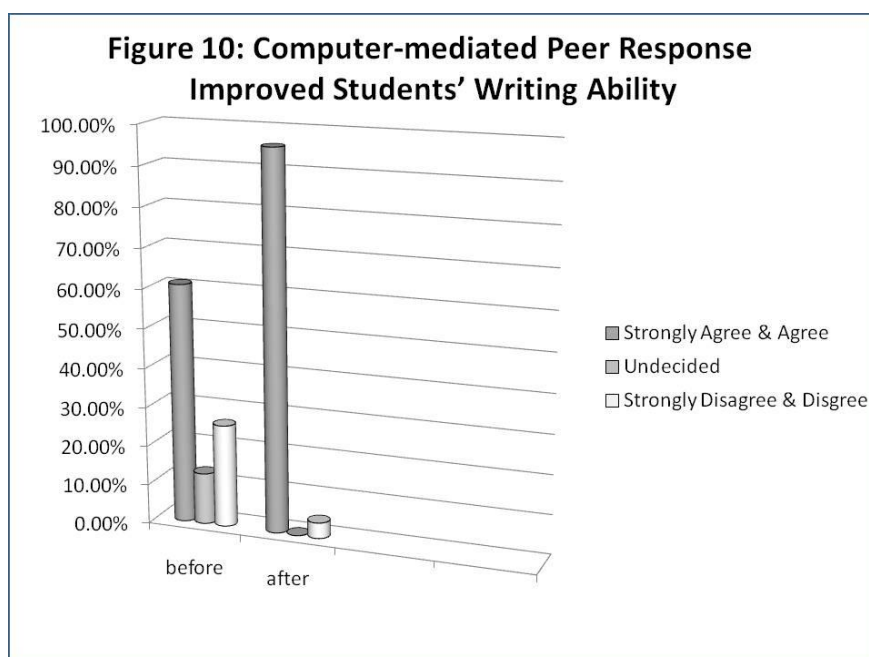
87% of the students agreed that they felt comfortable when they responded to their peers' writing after the study (see Figure 8), although 48% of the students were on the negative side before the study. In other words, their attitude changed from negative to highly positive.



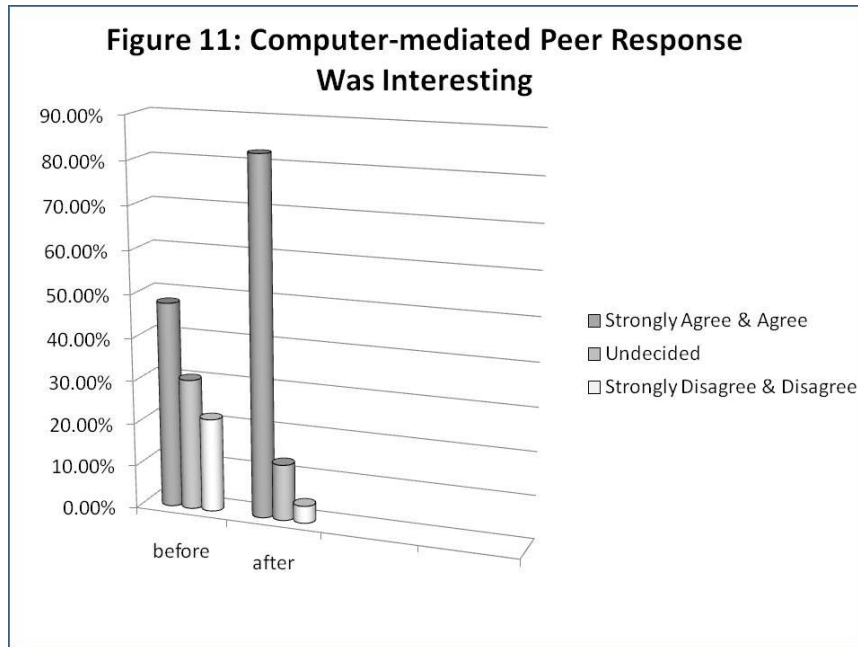
The students' attitude towards the usefulness of computer-mediated peer response also rose from 48% to 78%. Their attitude was positive before the study, but it became much more positive after the study (see Figure 9).



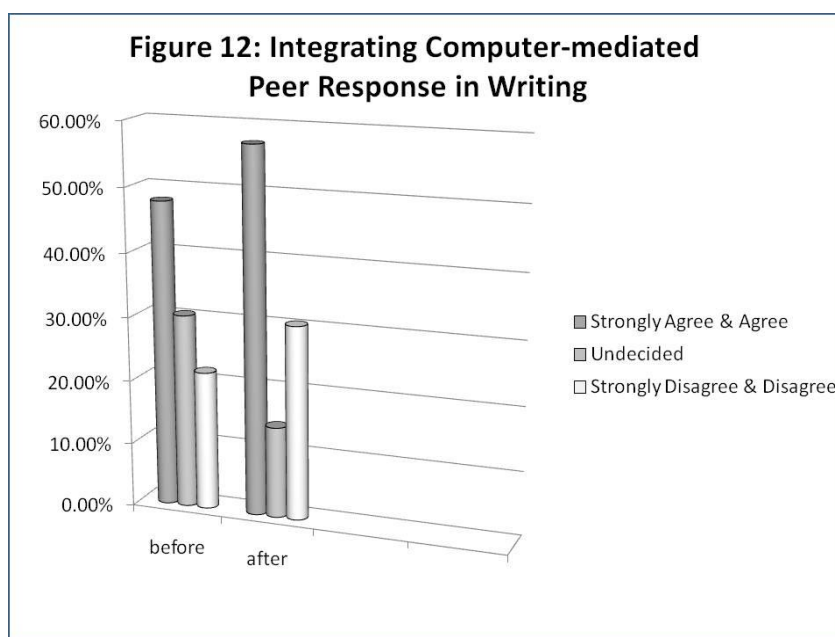
Before the study, 61% of the students expected to improve their writing when they used computer-mediated peer response techniques in writing classes, but almost all the students (96%) believed that computer-mediated peer response improved their writing after the study (see Figure 10).



48% of the students thought that peer response using blogs would be interesting before the study, while this increased to 82% after the study (see Figure 11).



The students' attitude towards integrating their peers' comments in their writing was also positive before the study, but with 57% of the students responding that they integrated some of their peers' comments, their attitude became even more positive after the study (see Figure 12).



Insights into Differences and Similarities between Students' Attitude towards Traditional and Computer-mediated Peer Response after the Study

To gain insights about the differences and similarities between using traditional and computer-mediated peer response, I compared the responses to the open-ended and the interview questions of the two groups. The two groups had some positive and some negative attitudes towards peer response. However, their attitudes had different dimensions.

Analysis of the Open-ended Question

On the one hand, only three students who used traditional peer response thought peer response was useful and interesting. They wrote that they learnt from their mistakes and improved their writing. One student, for example, wrote, "It is good, interesting, and easy to comment on peers' writing. Both comments writer and receiver benefit from it." However, 21 students who used blogs in peer response sessions had a positive attitude. They expressed that it helped them learn and have fun altogether. One student, for example, wrote in English, "I think it's a great idea for learning and haveing fun in the seam time." They were generally content with the writing task itself, the comments they wrote, the comments they received, and the revisions they made. In fact, they added that they improved their social, academic, and personal abilities. They built new and good friendships in class. They gained better writing skills. They became more autonomous, and confident. One student stated, "It strengthened student-student relationships, and built student independent character."

On the other hand, 10 students who used traditional peer response thought it was boring and tiresome, and expressed some worries. They were worried about what they had to cover in their books, and they thought it was a loss of time. One student pointed out, "We are not following the same activities other grade ten classes are doing." Besides, some students thought it may corrupt pieces of writing instead of improving them. One student wrote, "The comment writer may add mistakes instead of correcting mistakes." Two students who used computer-mediated peer response had negative points to talk about. One student expressed her inability to write comments on her classmates' writing. She commented, "I faced difficulties in commenting on my classmates' writing." The other wrote that she was bored because

there wasn't enough time for commenting on peers' writing, and she did not receive enough comments from her classmates. Maybe she was complaining about the slow internet connection.

Analysis of the Interview Questions

When I asked students in both groups if peer response was useful when they responded to their peers' writing, they had positive attitude. Students from both groups agreed that peer response was useful. They confirmed that they learnt from their friends' mistakes. One student from the traditional group said, "I will not repeat my classmates' mistakes in my writing." Students who responded to their peers' writing using blogs added that it became easier to chat on the internet with people from different cultures, and their personal stories became important to them. One student commented, "Chatting with people on the internet to exchange culture became easy for me."

When I asked the students if it was useful to receive responses from peers on their writing or not, their answers varied. Students who used traditional peer response said it was useful, but they commented that it was of limited value. Besides, they felt it would be better if the teacher responded to their writing. One student commented, "If we had teacher feedback, it would be better." Students who used blogs said it was useful, and gave different insights. They discovered that writing in Arabic was different from writing in English. In fact, they said that they benefited in terms of improving their spelling, grammar, and writing ability. They also became more critical about using technology. In other words, some of them discovered computer programs were not always right in their feedback on grammar, spelling, and translation, and it is the students' decision in the end. One student commented, "Google translator is a good program, but in the end it depends on me. I have to decide what to follow and what not to follow." They also expressed the opinion that they did not feel embarrassed when they received comments from peers.

The students mentioned some advantages of peer response. The students who used traditional peer response commented that peer response was less upsetting than teacher response. One student, for example, said, "Some students accept comments from their friends rather than from the teacher." Besides, they believed that peer response strengthened class relationships. Students who used blogs shared the same

opinions with the other group, and added that they liked the idea of using the internet in class, and felt that it functioned well and fruitfully. They also added that students' interaction on the blog was better than in-class interaction.

When talking about the disadvantages of peer response, the two groups shared some ideas, and they were different in some other ways. Inability to respond to peers appeared to be true in both classes. One student in the traditional class commented, "My friends cannot do it." Students in both groups struggled with time. Students in the first group found it impractical to bring five copies of their stories each time they wrote a new story, and most of students of the other group did not have access to the internet at home. However, while students who used traditional peer response complained about the difficulty of words, as one student commented, "Some students used words we didn't know before," students in the other group were satisfied with the new words they learnt during the peer response sessions. Besides, some students in the traditional class faced difficulties in terms of student-student relationships as one student said, "It may disrupt the classmates' relationships," while students in the other group did not. On the contrary, all the students were happy with their classmates' relationships. One student said, "I made more friends among my classmates." Another student added, "Students' communication on the blog is much better than students' interaction in class." Students in both groups said that they integrated some of their peers' comments in their writing. One student in the traditional class, for example, commented, "Yes [I would], if the comments were right."

In terms of preference for who responded to their writing, students in both groups had similar attitudes. All the students in the study showed no preference for one response writer over another except for two students in the traditional group and one student in the computer-mediated group. These three students preferred to choose the peers who were supposed to respond to their writing. The rest, however, did not mind: One student in the traditional class, for example, responded, "I did not mind which group is correcting my writing."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Findings

The qualitative and the quantitative data analysis revealed answers to my research questions. The quantitative data analysis of the pre-study and the post-study questionnaires answered my first research question. The qualitative data analysis of the open-ended question, before and after the study, and the interviews answered my second research question. Having a general look at the data analysis of the open-ended question after the study and the interviews of the two groups answered my third research question.

Findings Related to the First Research Question

First, I wanted to know UAE female high school students' attitudes towards peer response in classes that used both traditional and computer-mediated peer response before and after they had experienced it. Data analysis of the pre-study and post study questionnaires, and comparing percentages of data collected from the pre-study and the post-study questionnaires answered my first research question.

According to data analysis of the pre-study and post-study questionnaires, students in the traditional class had a generally positive attitude towards peer response before the study. Half of the students in the traditional class expected to feel comfortable when they responded to their peers' writing and when they received peer response on their writing. More than half of the students expected to improve their writing, have interesting writing classes, and integrate some of their peer comments in their writing. About half of the students expected to feel comfortable when they received peer response on their writing.

The general attitude of the students in the traditional class became more positive after the study. More than half of the students expressed their feeling of comfort in giving, receiving, and integrating some of their peers' responses in their writing. About half of the students believed that peer response was useful, although

about half of the students were not able to decide if peer response improved their writing or not. However, about half of the students disagreed with the idea that peer response sessions were interesting.

Students in the computer-mediated class also had a generally positive attitude towards peer response before the study. About half of the students expected to feel comfortable when they responded to peers, and when they received useful peer response. About half of the students also expected to have interesting writing classes, and integrate some of their peers' response in their writing. More than half of the students expected peer response to improve their writing ability. However, half of the students did not expect to feel comfortable when they received peer response. Compared to the traditional class, the students in the computer-mediated class had a much more positive attitude after the study. Most of the students agreed that giving and receiving peer response was useful, that they received useful peer response, that peer response improved their writing ability, that writing classes became more interesting, and that they integrated some peers' responses in their writing.

On the one hand, students in the computer-mediated class had a generally positive attitude towards peer response before experiencing it. However, their attitude became surprisingly much more positive after they experienced it. On the other hand, students in the traditional class had a positive attitude towards peer response before they experienced it, and their positive attitude increased slightly after the study, compared to the after-study attitudes in the other class.

Findings Related to the Second Research Question

Answering my second research question, I wanted to know if there were any differences between students' attitude towards peer response in the two modes before and after the study. Besides, I was interested in knowing how their attitudes were different. Students' answers to the open-ended question before and after the study, especially, showed some positive and some negative beliefs, and the interviews with the students revealed what they believed were the advantages and disadvantages of peer response.

According to the students' responses to the open-ended question in the traditional class before the study, only four students in the traditional class were in favor of using peer response in writing classes. The rest of the students were either

against the idea, or neutral towards the idea. However, they did not mind giving it a try. One student who was in favor of peer response wrote, "My friend can understand problems I face because of my low proficiency level." Another student expected to learn more ideas that could improve her own writing from reading her peers' writing. Those who were against the idea thought it was the teachers' responsibility to respond to students' writing. Besides, they believed that peer response was not a good source of knowledge. One of the students said, "My classmate may add more mistakes to my writing." Some students also thought that they were unable to respond to peers and expected their peers to have similar inability. One student wrote, "I cannot respond to my friends' writing, and I do not expect them to be able to respond to mine." One of the students who were not able to decide her attitude inquired, "Will the peer response be under the teacher's supervision?" Another student asked if it would improve the students' writing.

Students in the computer-mediated class responded to the open-ended question before the study. Some were in favor of and some against the idea of using peer response in writing classes. One student who was in favor of the idea wrote, "I like the idea that students can be beneficial to each others." Students who disagreed with this idea expressed different reasons. One student, for example, wrote in English, "I can't, I don't know correcting paragraph or writing." Another student wrote in English, "Im goin do disagree bicois if my frind integrte my peers' she will think she is the bast." Another student wrote, "Peer response is not useful because students have different proficiency levels, and they do not cooperate." Another student confirmed, "It is boring." One student in favor of teacher response wrote, "Teacher's words and notes have deeper effect on the students than anything else." The students' responses to the interview questions showed different ideas that explained their attitude towards traditional peer response. According to their responses, peer response was useful to both response writer and response receiver. However, teacher feedback was preferred to peer response. The advantages of peer response could be summarized in these points: Peer response is considered friendlier than teacher feedback, can improve student-student relationships, and builds students' ability to recognize mistakes.

The responses of both groups to the open-ended question after the study showed some positive attitudes, like believing that peer response was useful and interesting. One student in the traditional class, for instance, wrote, "My classmates'

comments encourage me to know my mistakes.” Another student from the same group added, “Commenting on peers’ writing is very helpful to low proficiency level students.” Another student from the traditional group added, “It is good, interesting, and easy to comment on peers’ writing.” One student from the computer-mediated group, for example, wrote in English, “I think it’s a great idea for learning and having fun in the spare time.” Another student pointed out, “We liked posting our stories in the blog.” Another student stated, “I was happy when my classmates commented on my writing.” Students in the two groups also thought that peer response was useful to both comments writer and receiver. One student in the traditional class added, “Both comments writer and receiver benefit from it.” A student in the traditional group also added that peer response was easy to do.

However, other students in the traditional class had negative thoughts about peer response like preferring teacher feedback to peer response, and believing that peer response was boring, tiresome and time consuming. One student stated that she did not like peer response sessions because “it is boring.” Another opinion was that “it is a loss of time.” In addition, some students were worried because they thought that peer response sessions should not be included in the syllabus in order to finish the textbook on time. One student pointed out, “We are not following the same activities other grade 10 classes are doing.” Only two students in the computer-mediated class had a negative attitude. One student wrote, “At the beginning, when I heard about the project I was excited..., but...I got bored because there weren’t enough comments from my classmates, and I didn’t have time to...comment.” The other expressed her inability to respond to peers.

The data analysis of the interviews supported the data analysis of the open-ended question. Like responding to peers, receiving peers’ responses was useful to the students. Eagerness to hear from peers accompanied the time students were waiting for peer response. One student pointed out that she was looking forward to receiving comments from her classmates. The advantages of peer response can be summed up in the following points. More friendships were built, speaking skills improved, and appetite for learning increased. No considerable disadvantages were mentioned. Creating a competitive environment was offered as a suggestion for improving peer response sessions. Almost all the students had no preference of specific students in mind to respond to their writing.

According to the interviews, the disadvantages of traditional peer response applied in this study were that some students were not able to respond to their peers, difficult words appeared in peers' writing, and it was not practical to apply, especially since some students found it difficult to prepare five copies of their writing beforehand. Finally, only two students in the traditional class and one in the computer-mediated class preferred to have specific classmates respond to their writing.

Data collected from the open-ended question and the interviews supported and explained the findings of the post-study close-ended questions. Students in the computer-mediated class gave reasons that explained why they had positive attitudes towards peer response. Students in the traditional class also gave reasons that explained why they had a less positive attitude towards peer response than the other group.

Findings Related to the Third Research Question

Answering my third research question, I overviewed the qualitative data analysis of the open-ended question after the study and the interviews to gain insights into similarities or differences between students' attitude towards peer response in the traditional mode and in the computer-mediated mode. Comparing the data analysis of the two groups' responses to the open-ended question after the study showed that students in both groups had some positive and negative attitudes towards traditional and computer-mediated peer response.

According to the students' responses to the open-ended question after the study, six students in the traditional class found peer response useful, interesting, and helpful in improving their writing. However, students in the computer-mediated class had some other dimensions to add. They commented that they both learnt and had fun. In addition, their social, academic, and personal skills improved. Some students in both groups agreed that responding to peers was useful. They could learn from the mistakes. Students in the computer-mediated class added that their personal stories became important to them, and chatting with people from other cultures on the internet became easy.

Regarding the disadvantages, some students in the traditional class found peer response boring, time consuming, and tiresome, while only two students in the

computer-mediated class had negative comments. One was unable to comment on her peers' writing, and the other was unsatisfied with the number of comments she received from her peers. She also expressed her boredom because of lack of time for commenting on peers' writing.

According to the students' responses to the interview questions, some students in both groups also agreed that receiving comments from peers was useful. However, students in the traditional class added that having teacher feedback in addition to peer response would be better. Students in the computer-mediated class thought that it improved their writing ability, and they became more critical about using technology. In other words, they discovered that they did not have to agree with all feedback supplied by computer programs. Moreover, in their opinion, they were not embarrassed by receiving peer response.

Both groups mentioned some advantages of peer response. Students in the first group thought that peer response is friendlier than teacher feedback, and it can strengthen class relationships. The second group had the same opinions, but they added that they believed that students' interaction on the blog was better than in-class interaction because they had better chances to communicate with students with whom they did not have face to face communication before.

Students in both groups expressed their opinion that their inability to respond to peers was a disadvantage of peer response. The training they received was not enough to make them able to respond to their peers proficiently. They also had time problems. Students in the first group believed that peer response was impractical and created problems in terms of students' relationships with each other. Some students found it difficult to write five copies of their stories themselves because photocopying was not easily available. Besides, two students felt that the comments received on their first stories were biased. Students in both groups did not have a specific student in mind that they preferred to respond to their writing except the two students who felt that they received biased comments in the first group and one in the second who wanted more comments from a specific student.

Students in both groups had generally positive attitudes towards peer response. However, the attitudes of students in the computer-mediated class were much more positive than those of students in the traditional. Only two students in the computer-

mediated class had a partially negative attitude, while more students in the traditional class had negative attitudes towards peer response.

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations of this study. First, the findings of this study cannot be generalized due to the fact that the participants were only female high school students, and the number of students in the study was relatively small. Also, students involved in the study wrote only narratives. In addition, the results of the study could have been affected by the fact that this was a completely new activity for the students involved.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study showed students' attitudes towards peer response in both computer-mediated and traditional modes. The students had generally positive attitudes towards peer response in both modes. However, students' attitudes towards computer-mediated peer response were comparatively more positive.

Due to the many advantages of peer response, especially the advantages of computer-mediated peer response this study highlighted, I believe it would be a good idea to apply peer response in writing classes in the UAE. Also, I believe that teacher could use computer laboratories in many ways to encourage consideration of audience. Teachers could contact teachers in other schools or even in other countries with similar cultures to the UAE like Jordan and Saudi Arabia to allow students in both parties exchange peer response. In other words, they could arrange for students to meet on blogs or in chatting rooms to give and receive peer response on different genres of academic writing. Teachers could also decide which genres they want their students to respond to beforehand. They could also decide to have audio, video, or just written peer response. Teachers could also arrange for exchanging writing among different classes at the same school for peer response.

I think teachers could also follow peer response with teacher feedback to make it more welcomed and acceptable to students. I also believe the Ministry of Education could have an important role to play concerning peer response. It could formally

assign peer response sessions to help students get rid of their worries about finishing the textbook.

For the above mentioned pedagogical implications, I believe ESL teachers have a variety of applicable ways to use peer response activities in both computer-mediated and traditional classes. They can choose what suits them best.

Suggestions for Future Research

In the light of the results of this study, I believe that there are some areas that could be researched. Researchers could examine different aspects related to peer response activities in ESL writing classes.

They could examine male students' attitudes towards peer response, and they could also examine using different genres other than narrative journal entries. Researchers could also do longitudinal studies to examine students' and teachers' attitude towards the effectiveness of peer response in improving writing in both modes. They could also observe the improvement of students' writing when students from other schools or countries give audio, video, or written computer-mediated peer response on their writing. They could also study the effect of computer-mediated peer response on cultural sensitivity in a culturally diverse group of students. Finally, they could study students' preferences for modes of peer response and relate those to students' diversity in learning styles and individual differences.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire about Students' Attitudes before the Study

ملحق (أ): استبانة حول تقبل الطالبات تصويب أخطاء التعبير من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن

الصف و الشعبة: _____
Grade and Section: _____

This survey will be used for academic research purpose. All the information you submit will be confidential. Read the survey carefully and tick the possibility that most describes your attitude.

ستستخدم هذه الاستبانة لأغراض البحث الأكاديمي. سنتعامل مع البيانات بسرية تامة. أرجو قراءة الاستبانة باهتمام والاشارة الى الاحتمال الأكثر دقة في وصف رأيك.

1. Have you ever used peer response in your writing class?

Yes

No

1. هل سبق أن صححت الأخطاء في موضوعات تعبير زميلاتك أو صححت لك زميلاتك موضوع تعبيرك؟

نعم

لا

2. I think I will feel comfortable while correcting mistakes in my peers' writing.

strongly agree

agree

disagree strongly disagree

I do not know

2. أعتقد أنني سأشعر بالراحة أثناء تصحيح الأخطاء في موضوعات تعبير زميلاتي.

لا أعرف

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

3. I think I will feel comfortable when I receive comments from my peers about my writing.

strongly agree

agree

disagree strongly disagree

I do not know

3. أعتقد أنني سأشعر بالراحة عندما تصحح زميلاتي الأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي.

لا أعرف

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

4. I think my peers can give useful comments on my writing.

strongly agree

agree

disagree strongly disagree

I do not know

4. أعتقد أن لدى زميلاتي القدرة على تقديم ملاحظات مفيدة على موضوع التعبير خاصتي.

أوافق بشدة أوافق لا أوافق لا أوافق بشدة لا أعرف

5. I think peer response will help me improve my writing ability.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree I do not know

5. أعتقد أن تولي زميلاتي تصحيح الأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي سيحسن قدرتي على الكتابة.

أوافق بشدة أوافق لا أوافق لا أوافق بشدة لا أعرف

6. I think peer response will make writing more interesting.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree I do not know

6. أعتقد أن تصحيح الأخطاء من قبل الطالبات سيجعل ممارسة الكتابة أكثر متعة.

أوافق بشدة أوافق لا أوافق لا أوافق بشدة لا أعرف

7. I think I will integrate my peers' comments into my writing.

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree I do not know

7. أعتقد أنني سأصوب كتابتي بناءً على تعليقات زميلاتي.

أوافق بشدة أوافق لا أوافق لا أوافق بشدة لا أعرف

8. Do you have any other comment or questions about using peer response?

8. هل لديك أسئلة أو إضافات فيما يخص تصحيح أخطاء الكتابة من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن؟

Appendix B: Questionnaire about Students' Attitudes after the Study for Traditional Class

ملحق (ب): استبانة حول تقبل الطالبات تصويب أخطاء التعبير من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن بعد الدراسة

This survey will be used for academic research purpose. All the information you submit will be confidential. Read the survey carefully and tick the possibility that most describes your attitude.

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

NS = Not Sure

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

ستستخدم هذه الاستبانة لأغراض البحث الأكاديمي. سنتعامل مع البيانات بسرية تامة. أرجو قراءة الاستبانة باهتمام والاشارة الى الاحتمال الأكثر دقة في وصف رأيك.

	Statements	SA أوافق بشدة	A أوافق	NS لا أعرف	D لا أوافق	SD لاأوافق بشدة
1.	I felt comfortable while I was correcting mistakes in my peers' writing. شعرت بالراحة أثناء تصحيح الأخطاء زميلاتي في موضوعات تعبير					
2.	I felt comfortable when I received comments from my peers about my writing. شعرت بالراحة عندما تصحح زميلاتي الأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي.					
3.	My peers gave me useful comments on my writing. كانت زميلاتي قادرات على تقديم تعديلات مفيدة على موضوع التعبير خاصتي.					

	Statements	SA أوافق بشدة	A أوافق	NS لا أعرف	D لا أوافق	SD لاأوافق بشدة
4.	Peer response helped me improve my writing ability. تصحيح زميلاتي للأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي حسن قدرتي على الكتابة.					
5.	Peer response made writing more interesting. تصحيح الأخطاء من قبل الطالبات جعل ممارسة الكتابة أكثر متعة.					
6.	I integrated some of my peers' comments in my writing. لقد صحت كتابتي بناءً على تعليقات زميلتي.					

7. Do you have any comments or questions about your experience with peer response?

7. هل لديك أسئلة أو اضافات فيما يخص تصحيح أخطاء الكتابة من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن؟

<p>Notes If you do not mind to be interviewed, please add your name to the survey. Name: _____</p>	<p>ملاحظة أرجو ذكر الاسم اذا لم يكن لديك مانع من تسجيل مقابلة حول الموضوع. الاسم: _____</p>
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Appendix C: Questionnaire about Students' Attitudes after the Study for Computer-mediated Class

ملحق (ب): استبانة حول تقبل الطالبات تصويب أخطاء التعبير من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن بعد الدراسة للطالبات اللاتي استخدمن الشبكة الالكترونية

This survey will be used for academic research purpose. All the information you submit will be confidential. Read the survey carefully and tick the possibility that most describes your attitude.

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

NS = Not

Sure

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

ستستخدم هذه الاستبانة لأغراض البحث الأكاديمي. سنتعامل مع البيانات بسرية تامة. أرجو قراءة الاستبانة باهتمام والاشارة الى الاحتمال الأكثر دقة في وصف رأيك.

	Statements	SA أوافق بشدة	A أوافق	NS لا أعرف	D لا أوافق	SD لاأوافق بشدة
1.	I felt comfortable while I was correcting mistakes in my peers' writing. شعرت بالراحة أثناء تصحيح الأخطاء في زميلاتي. موضوعات تعبير					
2.	I felt comfortable when I received comments from my peers about my writing. شعرت بالراحة عندما تصحح زميلاتي الأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي.					
3.	My peers gave me useful comments on my writing. كانت زميلاتي قادرات على تقديم تعديلات مفيدة على موضوع التعبير خاصتي.					


	Statements	SA أوافق بشدة	A أوافق	NS لا أعرف	D لا أوافق	SD لاأوافق بشدة
4.	Peer response helped me improve my writing ability. تصحيح زميلاتي للأخطاء في موضوع التعبير خاصتي حسن قدرتي على الكتابة.					
5.	Peer response made writing more interesting. تصحيح الأخطاء من قبل الطالبات جعل ممارسة الكتابة أكثر متعة.					
6.	I integrated some of my peers' comments in my writing. لقد صحت كتابتي بناءً على تعليقات زميلاتي.					
7.	I have good computer skills. لدي معرفة جيدة باستخدام الكمبيوتر.					

7. Do you have any comments or questions about your experience with peer response?

7. هل لديك أسئلة أو اضافات فيما يخص تصحيح أخطاء الكتابة من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن؟

<p>Notes If you do not mind to be interviewed, please add your name to the survey. Name: _____</p>	<p>ملاحظة أرجو ذكر الاسم إذا لم يكن لديك مانع من تسجيل مقابلة حول الموضوع. الاسم: _____</p>
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Appendix D: Checklist



Response writer: _____

Response receiver: _____

Does the story have a suitable title?

Did the writer use the pronoun I when writing the story?

Does the topic sentence capture the reader's attention?

Is the order of events clear?

Did the writer include transitions like as a result, because, or in other words?

Did the writer use details that appeal to the five senses?

Does the story have dialogue?

Does the story have a problem and a solution?

Is the conclusion an end to the narrative?

Appendix E: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Students

1. Was writing responses to your peers' writing useful to you? How?
1. هل كان تصحيح الأخطاء في مواضيع التعبير الخاصة زميلاتك مفيدا لك؟ كيف؟
2. Was receiving peer response useful to you?
2. هل كان تصحيح زميلاتك لموضوع التعبير خاصتك مفيدا لك؟ كيف؟
3. What were the advantages of applying peer response in writing classes?
3. ما هي ايجابيات تطبيق تصحيح أخطاء التعبير من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن؟
4. What were the disadvantages of applying peer response in improving your writing?
4. ما هي سلبيات تطبيق تصحيح أخطاء التعبير من قبل الطالبات أنفسهن؟
5. Did you correct your writing carefully after receiving peer response? Why or why not?
5. هل اتبعت جميع تعليقات زميلاتك على موضوع التعبير خاصتك؟ لم لا؟
6. What strategies do you think are helpful in improving peer response performance?
6. هل لديك أفكار لتحسين أداء الطالبات في عملية تصحيح الأخطاء من قبل الطالبات؟
7. Did you have a particular person you wanted to review your writing with?
7. هل لديك صديقة معينة كنت ترغبين أن تصحح موضوع التعبير خاصتك؟
8. Did you have a particular person you did not want to review your work with?
8. هل كنت تمنعين في أن يصحح موضوع التعبير خاصتك طالبة معينة؟

Appendix F: Parents' Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am an MA TESOL candidate at the American University of Sharjah. I am conducting a research project on peer response in writing classes using computer-mediated and traditional modes. I request permission for your child to participate.

In my study I am investigating what students in public high schools in UAE think or feel about peer response in writing classes. Your daughter will respond to a questionnaire before and after using peer response in writing classes. Your daughter will also be interviewed by me within a group of students. The group of students be asked a few questions in a language they can understand. Only I and my thesis supervisor, Dr. Rodney Tyson, will have access to information from your child. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your daughter to participate will not affect the services normally provided to her by the school. Your daughter's participation in this study will not lead to the loss of any benefits to which she is otherwise entitled. Even if you give your permission for your daughter to participate, she is free to refuse to participate. If she agrees to participate, she is free to end participation at any time. You and your daughter are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your daughter's participation in this research study.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me on 0507417855 or email me at muntaha5@hotmail.com. After completing the bottom portion of this letter, please sign it and return it back with your daughter.

Sincerely,

Muntaha Al Arini

MA TESOL Candidate

American University of Sharjah

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your daughter to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and sending the signed letter back with your daughter. You may want to keep a copy of this letter for your records.

I grant permission for my daughter to participate in this study.

I do not grant permission for my daughter to participate in this study.

Name of Student: _____

Date: _____

Printed Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

VITA

Muntaha Al Arini was born in Amman, Jordan, on April 4, 1972. She was educated in public schools in Amman, where she received her high school diploma from Jabal Al Taj Secondary School for Girls in 1990. She graduated from the University of Jordan in 1994 with a bachelor's degree in English Literature.

Ms. Al Arini has been teaching English for nine years. She has teaching experience in government and private primary, preparatory, and secondary schools in Jordan and the UAE. Ms. Al Arini is a member of TESOL Arabia. She attended the TESOL in a Globalized World (Exploring the Challenges) conference, the 13th CTELT (Current Trends in English Language Testing) conference, and the International Conference on Bilingualism and Bilingual Education at AUS, in addition to various workshops and training sessions. Her fields of interest include writing, culture, and autonomous learning.