

## **A Comparative Study of the Efficacy of Teacher and Peer Online Written Corrective Feedback on Second Language Learners' Writing Improvement**

**Mohammad Hamed Hoomanfar<sup>1</sup>**  
**Mohammad Rahimi<sup>2</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The present study compared online teacher and peer feedback with respect to feedback type and the effect they have on EFL learners' writing ability. As regards the feedback type, the study explored the focus of teacher and peer feedback (content/form), the accuracy of the comments they provided, as well as the patterns of incorporating comments by the students. The participants of the present study were 60 students participating in three intact classes, majoring in English language Literature and TEFL. The students in one of the groups received online teacher feedback, while the other groups received peer feedback; in one of the peer response classes, the feedback was exchanged through the conventional paper- and-pencil format, while in the other class, the students swapped comments through a website. The required data was collected through the students' essays, written during an academic semester, and a semi-structured interview. In the present study, seven queries were raised and attempted to be answered. At first, the study checked the effect of different online and conventional feedback methods on the students' writing ability in the short and long run. The results indicated that the students in the experimental groups outperformed those in the conventional peer feedback group in the long run (in immediate and delayed post-tests), while no difference was observed between the two groups on their immediate posttests (in the short run).

The findings of the study also indicated the superiority of the online courses in helping the students with lower levels of English proficiency to improve their writing ability. The results showed that the students in the online groups (both teacher and peer) used internet to increase their on-task interactions; they also took advantage of online resources, like dictionaries. The students in the online groups were found to use the resource texts found on the internet as models. They also reflected on their writings, and could check their progress more easily. They stated that they were less anxious while challenging the comments of their peer or the instructor.

The third research question dealt with the type of feedback that students in online and conventional peer feedback groups provided. The results revealed that the online

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Student of Tehran Payam-e Noor University of Tehran, [hamedhooman@gmail.com](mailto:hamedhooman@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor of Shiraz University, (Corresponding Author); [rahimim@shirazu.ac.ir](mailto:rahimim@shirazu.ac.ir)

medium could affect the students' patterns of giving feedback and directed the focus of the students from merely local aspects to global and suprasentential aspects. Although the students in both groups managed to give comments on both global and local aspects, the online group students gave significantly more global comments.

The fourth research question tapped the accuracy of the students' comments in the online and conventional groups. The findings showed that the online medium was successful in reducing the number of miscorrections. The students in the online peer feedback group gave significantly more sound comments, and significantly fewer inaccurate comments than their counterparts in the conventional group did.

The present study also investigated the effect of online feedback medium on the students' pattern of incorporating the peer comments. Although at the beginning of the experiment, the students incorporated just around thirty percent of the comments, this level increased two times in the conventional group, and more than three times in the online peer feedback group at the end of the semester. The results also revealed that the online group students became more successful in distinguishing the corrections and miscorrections and deciding upon the incorporation of them in the second drafts.

The sixth research question investigated the students' attitudes toward and perceptions about peer feedback. The students in both online and conventional peer feedback groups were interviewed. The findings showed that the students in both groups had positive attitude towards and perceptions of peer feedback. The students in the online group had significantly more positive attitude towards and perceptions of peer feedback. The students also enumerated time-independency, place-independency, use of online resources, and negotiation over the comments as the major advantages of the online peer feedback. The only disadvantage of this type of feedback, stated by the students, was the internet disconnections. With regard to their preference, none of the students disliked online peer feedback; the preferences were of two types: the first group favored just the online medium, and the other group preferred a combination of online and face-to-face peer feedback.

In sum, the results of the study revealed that the students in online teacher and peer feedback groups significantly improved more than those in the conventional peer feedback group. Other factors like the accuracy of the comments, the focus of the comments, and the revision patterns, also, indicated the superiority of the online feedback. The higher levels of students' attitudes towards and perceptions of peer feedback of the students in the online group showed the superiority of online peer feedback.

**Keywords:** writing, second language, feedback, accuracy, online learning