

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BLOG-BASED PEER RESPONSE FOR L2 WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have been conducted to see how Blog-based peer response helps students improve their writing revisions. The present study aims to investigate (1) types of comments most frequently generated via blog, (2) the differences between global and local comments, (3) and students' writing quality via blog-based peer response activities. Thirty-two 2nd year English major students taking a 15-week academic writing course at a Vietnamese university were selected to participate in this study. The students posted their writing on the blogs and provided and received comments for revisions. Data collection was from students' comments on each other's writing via blogs and their Drafts 1 – 3. Results indicated that “suggestion/ advice”, “clarification”, “confirmation”, and “evaluation” were the four most frequently used types of comments during the peer response sessions. In addition, the students provided more comments on the global than on local areas to help one another improve their writing quality. Finally, the students composed better and longer essays from the first to the third drafts; yet, there was great correlation between students' language proficiency and their writing outcomes. The study brings lights for instructors who expect to apply the blog to their writing classrooms.

Keywords: Blog-based, peer response, global and local comments, writing quality.

1. Background of the study

To help L2 students become independent writers, peer responses, also known as peer feedback or peer review or peer editing, have been introduced at the revision stage of the process approach to bring the students to work together to provide responses on one another's writing in both written and oral formats through active engagement with one another's progress over multiple drafts (Liu & Hansen, 2005). Peer responses are believed to serve the idea of learner-centered and apply the social-cultural theory in the learning process in terms of collaborative learning (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Students can learn from one another when they provide and receive responses from their peers/ instructor. Besides, instructors are now very conscious of the potential of peer responses

which help create a supportive teaching environment for modeling ideas about good writing and developing the ways students talk about writing, especially for mediating the relationship between students' wider cultural and social worlds and their growing familiarity with new literacy practices. In addition, peer responses help student writers with the sense of multiple readers (Liu & Hansen, 2005). Nunan (1993:100) asserts that “if we want to ensure that our ESL writing classes prepare students for their life outside the classroom, we must give them opportunities to experience collaborative writing”, adding that collaborative writing is essentially a social process through which writers looked for areas of shared understanding because in “real-world” contexts, writing is not a solitary enterprise; it is a social act.

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As technology develops and computer facilities become widely available, the role of the computer in delivering and mediating response has become a focus for research. Some researchers claim that the technological developments can empower students in the learning process and make writing classes more collaborative. To quote Warschauer et al. (1996: 3), “computer-mediated communication (CMC) provide students a much better opportunity for control and initiative in language learning initiative in language learning”. Also, CMC may empower disadvantaged and less able students to be equal in participation with those students who often dominate the discussions. Warschauer (2002: 56) states that “students need an opportunity to compare their own ways of thinking, acting, and communicating with the ways of different communities, and decide on their own which borders to attempt to cross and how.” Braine, (1997) and Sullivan & Pratt (1996) also claim that CMC can lead to better writing products and more focused and better quality peer response. In short, computer-mediated communication peer response has been implemented to make peer response more effective to L2 student writers.

2. Statement of the Problem

In general, writing instruction in Vietnam has traditionally based on finished products that focus on form over meaning and the finished text rather than on the process in which writing takes place (Tran, 2000; Nguyen, 2002; Nguyen, 2004; Kim, 2006). Viet (2006) in the interview with Assistant Professor Dr. Ha Van Duc at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Compositions, reported that students’ writing was clumsy in expressing ideas and committed spelling errors. Student poor writing was said to have been resulted from poor educational system of teaching writing methodology.

Nguyen (2006), one of the instructors of literature composition at the University of Pedagogy in Ho Chi Minh City, in his report of the college entrance examination in compositions of literature in 2006, listed many serious L1 writing problems in terms of lexical meaning, structure, and distraction. It resulted from traditional uncreative writing methods in high schools that taught the students to learn by heart from some sample compositions. Therefore, students did not know how to express their own thoughts. Supported his ideas, Nguyen (2006) reported that one essay with a full score of 10/10 in the 2006 college entrance exam was copied word-by-word from one of the sample compositions. Some well-known academia such as Tran Pho, and Dr. Nguyen Thi Hong Ha, professors of compositions at the University of Pedagogy, Ho Chi Minh City, and Nguyen Ha, a professor at the university of Social Sciences & Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, argued that one of the reasons for this reality derived from the bad educational system of teaching writing methodologies.

It was reasonable to say that the problem was much more serious when students had to write compositions in a foreign language, in this case, English. Tran (2000) claimed that in writing courses, when assigning a whole composition, the instructor asked the students to write on a topic only once. There existed always a pressure of time and little chance for improvement after the students produced their first drafts. In addition, the student writers had only one audience to write for, the instructor himself. Consequently, the writing process did not occur in the real life. Another problem was found by Nguyen (2002) that the teacher response in writing classes was mainly on grammar correction. She posited that the fact related to the problems of school policy, role

perception, and pressure of examination-oriented educational system. In addition, in terms of collaborative learning, Nguyen (2004) found that the group work practice was still unsatisfactory for two main reasons. The first was part of the students' characteristics - their low proficiency levels, lack of motivation, and preference for the traditional learning style. The other was related to part of the instructors' implementation of group work, the English program, and the teaching materials. Kim's survey (2006) showed that the learners' concepts about learning English was product-based; they perceived a lack grammar knowledge made learning English difficult. Luu (2006) and Tran (2006) posited that the current educational system of compositions has brought student writers to learning by rote, no chances for creative writing.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Comments on traditional vs. electronic modes

Some previous studies have investigated the effects of peer responses in both traditional and electronic modes to see if the latter mode got students involved in peer response activities in learning process. Liu and Sadler (2003) investigated to see if there were some differences between the effect of peer review on L2 writing in electronic and traditional modes. Forty-eight students participated in the study. The two groups followed the same basic syllabus, but the activities for the computer-enhanced group were performed on computers. The findings showed that the overall number of comments, the percentage of revision-oriented comments, and the overall number of revisions made by the technology-enhanced group were larger than those by the traditional group. The study failed to clarify students' types of comments frequently used.

In order to prepare students to be better peer reviewers, Stanley (1992) examined the effect of training students to become better peer evaluators in university ESL freshman composition classes. The training sessions lasted 7 hours during the first 4 weeks of a 15-week semester. During the training sessions, the students engaged in role-play, analyzing the genre of peers' essays and discovering rules for effective communication. Results showed that the four response categories that most often produced revision among the coached group were pointing remarks, advising remarks, collaborating, and questioning. Students who received coaching looked at each other's writing more closely and offered writers more specific guidelines for revision than did the uncoached group.

Song and Usaha (2009) investigated how EFL university students use electronic peer response into revisions. The study aimed to examine types of comments the students made, how they used the comments in revising their writing, and the students' writing quality after revisions. Twenty 3rd year English majors at a state university in southwest China participated in the study. The study made use of the Moodle's forum. The data were collected from Drafts 1-3, peer comments, and interviews. The study found that the face-to-face peer response group produced more comments than those of the e-peer response group, thus the face-to-face group resulted in a larger number of comments incorporated into revisions. However, the e-peer response group produced more revision-oriented comments. Furthermore, the e-peer response group wrote significantly better essays than those in the face-to-face peer group.

While few studies have been conducted to see how the new medium of the blog platform in the world of the Internet users (bloggers) today can be

applied effectively in a real EFL context. Pham and Usaha (2009) conducted a case study in Vietnam to see whether the blog-based peer response could be effective for EFL writing. Twelve 2nd year English major students taking a 15-week academic writing course at a Vietnamese university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, participated in this study. The students used blogs to post their essays, were trained in a 6-step procedure of peer response; then they provided and received comments two times from their peers on the first and the second drafts for revisions. This study found that the students who took part in the blog-based peer response training employed four most frequent types of comments which were “clarification”, “suggestion/ advice”, “explanation” and “alteration”. Second, these four common types of comments did significantly affect the students’ writing quality in mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. Finally, this study found that students expressed positive attitudes toward blog-based peer response activities. However, the study did not investigate if there were any differences between the global and local comments.

Based on the effects of e-peer response, the researcher attempts to imply several aspects for this study. First, the types of comments should be clearly emphasized in the training process in order to keep the response mood in harmony. The nature of comments should be explained carefully to help the writers make use of those, especially the tones of comments and the way how to provide. Second, no matter how much the student writers incorporate the comments into their revision, the researcher keeps in mind that receiving feedback in any form was better than receiving no feedback (Matsumura & Hann, 2004), and feedback makes changes. In other words, the

revision can be based directly on the comment provided or not on the comment-oriented, the writers make some changes to improve their writing quality as a result of peer response. This implication should come to the fact that students should take responsibility for their own learning and the classroom is not the only place for their studies. They should get involved in the learning activities outside the classrooms and help one another enhance the quality of knowledge, in this case, writing ability. Therefore, electronic peer response should be addressed.

3.2. Writing quality in technology-enhanced learning

Quite a few studies investigated the writing efficiency in the two different environments (face-to-face vs. CMC environment) in order to prove that whether one could replace the other. However, the findings of previous studies have been in line of debates on the improvement in writing quality.

Sullivan and Pratt (1996) implemented a qualitative and quantitative research to examine students’ attitudes towards writing with computers, writing apprehension, and writing quality. Thirty-eight students whose native language is Spanish from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, participated in the study. The researchers made use of the Daedalus Computer Program developed by The Daedalus Group Inc. The process methodology emphasized multiple drafts, peer and teacher responses to drafts, and dialogue learning logs. The results showed that writing environment had no effects on attitudes toward writing with computers or writing apprehension. Also, writing quality did improve in the computer-assisted classroom.

Braine (1997) conducted a study to compare ESL student writing in two contexts: a networked computer class and a traditional lecture-style class. The aim

was to see which setting promoted better writing, more improvement in writing, and more peer and teacher feedback. Sixty-nine students wrote three major assignments on the same topic during the academic quarter. The process approach was followed throughout the course, with small group discussions, peer reviews, teacher feedback, occasional teacher-student conferences, and multiple drafts of essays. The study found that holistic scores for first drafts indicated writing quality in networked classes were moderately better than in traditional classes. However, final drafts in traditional classes showed a slightly higher mean improvement than in networked classes.

In 2001, Braine was interested in comparing a local-area network (LAN) and traditional classes writing to explore which context produced better writing and more improvement in writing. Eighty-seven Chinese undergraduates participated in the study. The peer reviews in both the LAN and the traditional classes were allocated 100 minutes. The study found that although first drafts in LAN classes were qualitatively higher than in traditional classes, final drafts in traditional classes were of a higher quality. Furthermore, final drafts in traditional classes showed greater improvement.

However, the improvement in writing quality based on the literature seems to be questionable to the researcher of this study. The findings showed that though the quality of the writing in the electronic mode was better than the traditional mode, the improvement in quality was less than that in the traditional face-to-face mode (Braine, 1997, 2001) and that the LAN discussions were seen as obstacles to the enhancement of students' writing. There should be more considerations into these aspects. First, there should be sufficient time for computer literacy in order that

students get used to using it. Second, if the software is favorable to the students, then they may get involved more in the learning process in case of Lightfoot's (2006) study, and more focus of comments (Jone et al., 2006). More importantly, the training process of peer response in the electronic mode should be extra cared until there is no effect on attitudes towards the writing environment (Sullivan & Pratt, 1996) to see that if different setting might yield different results (Braine, 2001).

Helping Vietnamese L2 students to write more effectively in English through the process approach, which is believed to enable student writers to become independent, self-editors, is by no means easy. The present study aimed at investigating whether blog-based peer response could help them become more involved in their own learning process through collaborative learning to improve their writing quality.

3.3. Research Question

1. What types of comments (evaluation, clarification, alteration, suggestion/advice, explanation, confirmation, and statement) are most frequently produced by the students during the peer response activities?
2. Do students provide greater comments on global than local areas?
3. Does blog-based peer response affect the students writing quality? If yes, is there any correlation between students' language proficiency and their writing outcomes?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants and Setting

Participants selected in the study were 32 second year English major students, 23 females and 9 males aged 19 – 21, at the faculty of Foreign Languages at a university in Ho Chi Minh City,

Vietnam. They were native speakers of Vietnamese and had passed the National College Entrance Exam (English Major) administered by the Ministry of Education and Training. Their English proficiency, as measured by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (Paper based TOEFL) exam, ranged from 401 to 493. None of the participants had received any training in peer response via the blog prior to the study.

The present study was undertaken in the second semester of the second year when all 32 students had already taken two semesters of Academic Writing. They learned how to write Descriptive, Narrative, and Opinion paragraphs and Descriptive and Opinion essays. The focus of this course was to develop students' writing skills in Cause/Effect and Chronological Order/ Process essays. This class met twice a week for 15 weeks. The instructor/researcher adopted and modified the "writing cycle" (Tsui & Ng, 2000) in designing his class of Academic Writing. The writing cycle (Fig. 1) was described as follows: Topic selection, brainstorming, writing the first draft, posting Draft 1 on the blog, giving and receiving peer comments, revising writing and posted the second drafts, second round of peer comments, further revision for writing the third drafts, teacher comments (as a normal activity of the writing process), then final revision to write the fourth draft.

Working in the computer lab, the students were required to search for information to support for their essays. Four topics, two at the paragraph level, "How to write a good paragraph"; "The causes of traffic accidents in Vietnam" (reviewed as the normal curriculum of the Faculty) and two at the essay level, "Benefits of living in a big city"; and "How to maintain good relationship with friends", were written during the course of the semester. Each topic could

be revised up to three times, two after receiving peer comments and the other after the instructor comments.

In the present study, 32 students composed totally 128 essays through Drafts 1-4 (32 essays of each draft) on the same topic of "Benefits of living in a big city". However, only Drafts 1-3 were selected for data analyses since the students were committed to peer response activities from Drafts 1-2.

4.2. Procedure

Based on their scores of a paper-based TOEFL test - a sample TOEFL test drawn from the test-bank of the Center for Foreign Studies at the university, **the students were put into 8 groups of 4 each by mixed ability and shared ability levels (Richards & Lockhart, 2000).** In order to mix the students' levels of proficiency, two students who obtained highest scores were mixed with the two lowest proficiency students; two high proficiency students were mixed with two lower proficiency students, and four medium proficiency students were put together, etc. After the eight groups were formed, the group members selected a monitor "to get the ball rolling" for each group.

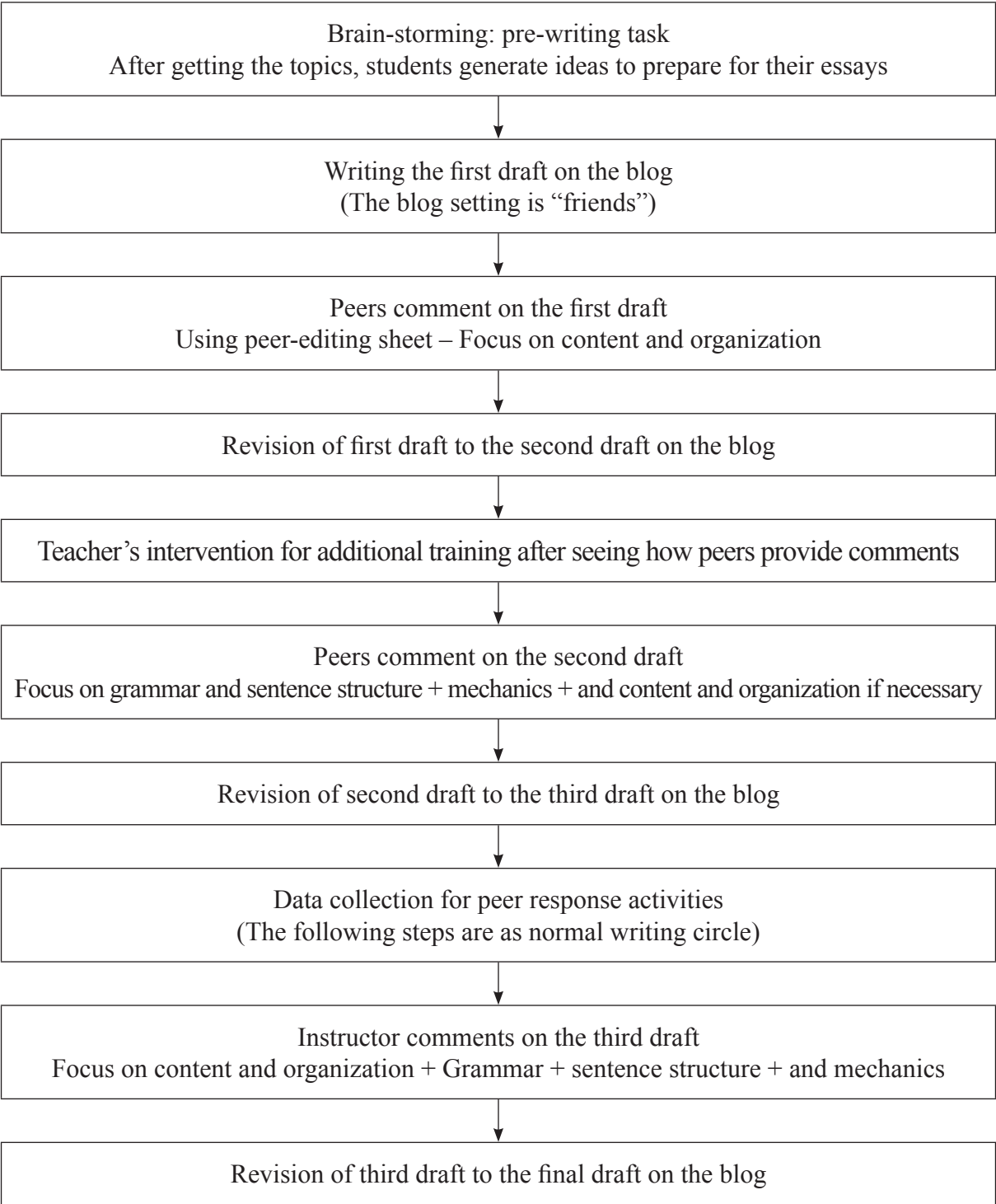
The 15-week Academic Writing course was sequenced as follows. Each week, the students had a class meeting for 3 hours in the Computer Lab (compulsory), and about other 3 hours in the Lab (optional) for providing and receiving comments. As stated in the curriculum of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, the first 4 weeks were spent reviewing writing at the paragraph level; other 5 weeks were used for learning to write a Chronological Order/Process essay; 1 week for the midterm test; and the last 5 weeks were for learning to write a Cause/Effect essay.

During the first week of the course, the students visited the website <http://360.yahoo.com> (it is now changed to <http://>

vn.360plus.yahoo.com/) to sign up for an account (Fig. 2) for their own weblog or blog (except those who already had an email account with Yahoo). The students were trained to set their blogs for selected friends only (group members) so that only the designated group members could read and provide comments on their writing entries. They were trained to be familiar

with the appropriate computer usage, accessing the Internet, and how to provide comments online. Three assignments - two for paragraph and one for essay writing - were done via the blogs without any specific peer response training with a purpose to help students become familiar with the computer-mediated communication.

Figure 1: The writing cycle



4.3. Peer response training

The peer response training (adapted from Min, 2005) took place after the first draft of the Cause/Effect essay posted on the blogs, and consisted of two phases: in-class training and one-on-one student - teacher conferences. The in-class training lasted 3 hours during the third writing cycle of the Cause/Effect essay. The students were explained the importance of peer response in the writing process and taught to provide comments on some essays composed by former students based on a 6-step procedure of evaluation, clarification, alteration, suggestion/ advice, explanation, and confirmation as well as to use the peer-edit sheet provision was used as guidelines to help them read and provide comments (Pham & Usaha, 2009).

The one-on-one student-teacher conferences lasted from 15 to 20 minutes beyond normal class meetings after the first round of commentaries on the first drafts. It was to help students learn from their own commentary experience if necessary for improvement of the quality of the comments. Some good comments of other students were also shown as models. In addition, student-teacher conferences aimed to check students' comprehension of instructions and feedback (Min, 2005). Furthermore, during the conferences, the student writers were helped to address peers' problems concerning such things as unclear comments from others as well as some specific grammatical structures, or particular ideas.

4.4. Data collection and analysis

After the in-class peer response training, the students were required to provide comments on the first drafts of the cause/effect essays of their group members via the blogs. The students could make it in the computer lab of the university or at an Internet Café or at

home if they had Internet. The students were given 4 days for peer comments and 3 days for revisions of each draft. Then the instructor/researcher collected drafts, revisions, and peers' comments via the blogs for analysis. The means of number of words produced from drafts 1 – 3 were 392, 482, and 561 words, respectively.

The quantitative analysis was used to compare the types and areas of comments. With regards to the effects of comments on students' writing quality, the pre-test (Draft 1) and post-test (Draft 3) scores and number of words produced in the three essays (Drafts 1 – 3) were compared. Paired sample t-test was run to see if there were differences between the aforementioned items.

4.5. Coding procedure

All Drafts 1 – 3 and peer comments were copied to Word Processor for data analyses. Regarding the quantitative analysis, two inter-raters coded the comments blindly (without students' names on the papers) based on the grid for data analyzing. A rubric-coding scheme was provided to the inter-raters as guidelines for their coding the comments. They first tallied the number of types of comments via the blogs from Draft 1 to Draft 2 which included "evaluation," "clarification", "alteration", "suggestion/ advice", "explanation", "confirmation", and "statement". Also, comments on global areas (comments regard to content and organization) and on local areas (comments regard to word, usage, grammar, spelling and punctuation) were counted. The reliability of each type of comments reached from 0.93 to 0.98.

Examples of applying coding scheme for comment analyzing:

Example: I think this part is off topic.// You are talking about "chances for education", why do you talk about

transportation?// Suppose that you live in a big city, for example in district 1, but your school is at Thu Duc district, do you think that you spend a lot of time or a little?//

In this comment, there was only one nature of comment, one area of comments, and three types of comments. “I think this part is off topic” was coded as global (area), and revision-oriented (nature); clarification – unity (type); “You are talking about “chances for education”, why do you talk about transportation?” was coded as clarification – specific of idea (type); “Suppose that you live in a big city, for example in district 1, but your school is at Thu Duc district, do you think that you spend a lot of time or a little?” was coded as explanation (type).

If two comments were addressed to one issue, only one of them was counted as a comment. Obviously, the better comment was considered while the other was out of concern. In the following examples, the second comment was counted in the coding scheme because it at least pointed out the light for revision.

Comment 1: In the sentence: “For me, who have been living in a big city all my life, living in a suburb also...” What does it mean?

Comment 2: In the sentence: “For me, who has been living in a city all my life, living in a suburb...” is not right in grammar and not logical. You should rewrite it as “For me, a person who has been living in a city all my life, considers that living in a suburb...”

Any statement which did not belong to the six types of comments was coded as “statement”. For example, after commenting on an essay, a peer wrote, “This is just my opinion, I hope it will help you a lot” or another said, “These are some

points I give you. I hope they help you much”. They were coded as “statement”.

5. Findings and discussion

Research Question 1: What types of comments (evaluation, clarification, alteration, suggestion/advice, explanation, confirmation, and statement) are most frequently produced by the students during the peer response activities?

Quantitative analyses were used to respond to this research question. Based on the scheme for language functions, seven types of comments delivered from peers through Drafts 1 & 2 were compared. The results showed that “suggestion/advice” (27.5%), “clarification” (23.6%), “confirmation” (12.8%), and “evaluation” (12.3%) were the four most frequent types of comments used by peers throughout two rounds of peer response sessions (drafts 1 – 2). The results indicated that the students collaborated in the learning process when frequently giving suggestion or advice to help one another revise for better writing. In addition, clarifying problems was frequently employed by peers during the blog-based peer response activities as well. Students helped one another improve their writing texts by pointing out the problems for revisions. With “Confirmation” type of comments, the students appealed to the authors to confirm an issue when they were unsure about its accurateness or they confirmed an academic feature in the essays to make the authors feel better with what they had done. Evaluation was needed during the blog-based peer response activities to be in harmony with the writers to encourage collaboration in the learning process. Table 1 presents the types and frequencies of occurrence of language functions in totality of blog-based peer responses produced by the student participants for Drafts 1 & 2.

Table 1: Types of comments produced during blog-based peer response activities

		Draft 1			Draft 2			Total	%
	N	Sum	Mean	S.D	Sum	Mean	S.D		
Evaluation	64	138	4.3	1.7	173	5.4	2.8	311	12.3
Clarification	64	298	9.3	5.9	297	9.3	4.3	595	23.6
Alteration	64	128	4	6.9	99	3.1	4.6	227	9
Suggestion/advice	64	328	10.3	6.4	366	11.4	5.3	694	27.5
Explanation	64	79	2.5	1.9	77	2.4	2.2	156	6.2
Confirmation	64	150	4.7	4.2	174	5.4	4.3	324	12.8
Statement	64	104	3.3	2.1	112	3.5	2.4	216	8.6
total_types	64	1225	38.3	14.3	1298	40.6	12	2523	100
Valid N (listwise)	64								

* Sum refers to the number of types of comments in each drafts

* Total refers to the total number types of comments on two drafts (Drafts 1 - 2)

• Descriptive statistics

Table 1 indicated that out of 64 Drafts 1 & 2, (32 each), there were in total 2523 comments delivered by peers during the blog-based peer response activities in which 1225 comments were identified from 32 first drafts and 1298 comments from the second drafts. On average, each first draft received 38 comments (Mean = 38.3), and each second draft received 40 comments (Mean = 40.6). The most frequent types of comments were “suggestion/advice” with 328 comments (Mean = 10.3) on draft 1 and 366 (Mean = 11.4) on Draft 2. “Suggestion/ advice” functions were either general or specific suggestions giving ways to help student writers with better revisions. The second most frequent type of comments was “clarification”, with 298 comments (Mean = 9.3) on Draft 1 and 297 (Mean = 9.3) on Draft 2. “Clarification” functions were remarks that pointed out problems of specific ideas, or particular word choices, phrases, sentences, or cohesive

in academic writing styles, or unity of idea development in an academic essay for the authors to make changes in texts. “Confirmation” was the third most common type with 150 comments (Mean = 4.7) on Draft 1 and 174 (Mean= 5.4) on Draft 2 by which the peers showed respects to the writer authors to ask for wash-back some particular issues in the writings or to confirm some specific academic writing styles to encourage one another in the learning process. The fourth type of comments was “evaluation” with 138 (Mean = 4.3) on Draft 1 and 173 (Mean = 5.4) on Draft 2. This indicated that in order to keep the harmony during the responses, the peers tried to praise some features in the writings while commenting. In short, the students took responsibilities in their responses, seriously engaged in the blog-based peer response activities. They were open-minded, respecting the writer’s ideas/ decisions.

The findings corresponded with those of (1) Stanley’s (1992) and Pham and Usaha (2009) that pointing remarks (clarification) and advising remarks (suggestion/ advice) were favored by students during the peer response sessions; (2) Zhu (2001) that non-native speakers employed “announcing” and “questioning” (clarification) most frequently; (3) and Rodriguez (2003) that students used “advising” (suggestion/ advice) and “announcing” (clarification) when providing feedback. However, the findings in the present study differed from Liu and Sadler’s (2003) in which fewer “clarification” and “suggestion” comments were generated than “alteration” and “evaluation” in the Technology Enhanced Group. Liu and Sadler (2003) and Tuzi (2004) found “evaluation” was the second most frequently used by the L2 peer feedback after “alteration” because the students were more comfortable

writing “praise” comments. “Evaluation” in the current study positioned fourth in the four most favored types of comments. This indicated that the students focused more on the quality comments (revision-oriented), not just as perfunctory work.

Research Question 2: Do students provide greater comments on global than local areas?

Global (comments refer to content and organization) and local areas (comments refer to word usage, grammar, spelling and punctuation) were investigated to respond to this research question. The data in the present study indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected. The students provided more comments on global than on local areas to help one another improve their writing revision. Table 2 shows the mean differences in number of comments between the global and local areas of Drafts 1 & 2.

Table 2: Mean differences in number of comments addressed to global and local areas

	Mean	SD	Std. Error	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Global1	15.88	5.841	1.032		
Local1	12.16	8.729	1.543		
Global2	17.25	6.075	1.074		
Local2	11.41	7.107	1.256		
Global1 - Local1	3.719	10.946	1.935	1.922	.064
Global2 - Local2	5.844	10.961	1.938	3.016	.005

- Global1 refers to the number of comments on global areas of Draft 1
- Local1 refers to the number of comments on local areas of Draft 1
- Global2 refers to the number of comments on global areas of Draft 2
- Local2 refers to the number of comments on local areas of Draft 2

• Descriptive statistics and Paired Samples T-test

Of the 897 comments made on the first drafts, 508 comments (56.6%) were related to global areas and 389

comments (43.4%) to local areas. On the second drafts, out of 917 comments, 552 comments (60.2%) were addressed to

global areas and 365 comments (39.8%) to local areas. As demonstrated in Table 2, the means of global comments were greater than those on local comments on the first and second drafts. It indicated that the students were able to provide greater comments on global than on local areas. Although the significant difference of Draft 1 was slightly higher than .05 (sig. 0.06), the significant difference of Draft 2 was reached at $P < .01$. This might be an effect of the training that in the writing cycle (Fig. 1), the students were encouraged to provide more comments on global areas on Draft 1 and not exclusive them on Draft 2. The findings suggested that students focused more on global areas during the blog-based peer response activities.

The findings contradicted to Liu and Sadler's (2003) **that** the technology-enhanced group made more comments overall in the local areas than in the global areas. However, these were consistent with Rodriguez's (2003), Tuzi's (2004), **Min's (2005), and Jones et al.'s (2006) that after receiving specific trainings**, the students were able to provide a greater number of comments on global than local areas.

Research Question 3: Does blog-based peer response affect the students writing quality? If yes, is there any correlation between students' language proficiency and their writing outcomes?

Quantitative data to respond to this question came from two sources. First, thirty-two first drafts (pre-test) and thirty-two third drafts (post-test) were rated by the inter-raters based on the 10-point analytic scoring rubric (see Appendix C) after names of students and other identifiers, nicknames, were removed from all papers which looked similar because they were laser printed. Second, the lengths of three essays (number of words) were compared. In addition, the Pearson Correlation was run to test the correlation of the three essays in

length, and to test the correlation between students' language proficiency (paper TOEFL scores) and their writing outcomes.

The results of the present study indicated that the students' writing quality, a comparison of the means of pre-test (Draft 1) and post-test (Draft 3), did improve and was statistically significant ($P < 0.01$) by the Paired t-test. In other words, the students' writing improved remarkably after receiving peer comments via blogs. In addition, the lengths of the students' essays did increase from Draft 1 to Draft 3, from 392 words on Draft 1 to 482 words on Draft 2, and were significantly longer in Draft 3 of 561 words. Also, the student's language proficiency and their writing outcomes gained very positive correlations.

5.1. Pre-test (Draft 1) vs. Post-test (Draft 3)

Two trained raters independently rated students' essays blindly. The inter-rater correlation was significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); the inter-rater reliability of the first drafts reached .75. Also, the correlation of Draft 3 was significant at the .01 level (2-tailed) with a reliability of raters of .86. Discrepancies were discussed between the two raters for the first and third drafts. After two discussions (2 hours each), the inter-raters agreement for the final scores of two drafts was reached at 100%. Paired sample statistics and matched paired tests were run to find out the significant difference between the pre-test (Draft 1) and post-test (Draft 3). Table 3 shows the results of the pre-test (Draft 1) and post-test (Draft 3) scores described by the Paired samples t-test.

Results indicated (Table 3) that the students' writing quality was significantly improved from the first to third drafts. The mean score of the 32 first drafts (pre-test) was 5.9 and that of the third drafts (post-test) was 7.1. No essays scored less than 5

on the 10-point scale. The $r = .816$ indicated a high positive correlation and seemed to provide good support for pre-test and post-test reliability. This correlation indicated that the students who scored highly on the pre-test were very likely to score highly on the post-test, and the students who scored low on the pre-test were very likely to

score low on the post-test. Paired samples t-test showed that the improvement in mean scores of the pre- and post-test was statistically significant ($P < 0.01$). The findings suggest that the peer response via the blogs helped student writers improve their writing quality through their revisions after receiving comments from peers’.

Table 3: Pre-test (Draft 1) vs. Post-test (Draft 3)

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	5.891	32	.7904	.1397
	Post-test	7.063	32	.7487	.1323
Paired Samples Correlations					
			N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre_test & Post_test		32	.816	.000

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test - post-test	-1.1719	.4685	.0828	-1.3408	-1.0030	-14.149	31	.000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-test refers to the first drafts and Post-test refers to the third drafts									
<ul style="list-style-type: none">P < 0.05 & P < 0.01									
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Paired samples t-test									

5.2. The Improvement of Drafts 1 - 3 in Length

The three essays (Drafts 1 – 3) were saved to Word Processor and counted.

Then the Pearson Correlation was run to test the correlation of the three essays in length. Table 4 presents the improvement of Drafts 1 – 3 in length.

Table 4: The improvement of Drafts 1 - 3 in length

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Essay1	392	122.42	32

Essay2	482.1875	162.058	32	
Essay3	561.625	159.752	32	
Correlations				
		Essay1	Essay2	Essay3
Essay1	Pearson Correlation	1	.677**	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0
	N	32	32	32
Essay2	Pearson Correlation	.677**	1	.886**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0
	N	32	32	32
Essay3	Pearson Correlation	.660**	.886**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	
	N	32	32	32

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Essay1 refers to Draft 1

Essay2 refers to Draft 2

Essay3 refers to Draft 3

•Correlate – Bivariate

Table 4 revealed that on average the students wrote about 392 words (Mean = 392) on Draft 1. However, after receiving comments from peers, they revised their writing for about 482 words (Mean = 482.2) on Draft 2, and significantly longer on Draft 3 of 561 words (Mean = 561.6). The Pearson Correlation also showed that the correlation was statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). This suggests that the more the students received comments and revised, the longer their essays became.

5.3. Correlations between the students’ language proficiency and their writing outcomes

Table 5 presents the correlations between the students’ language proficiency (Paper based TOEFL scores) and their writing outcomes after the blog-based peer response training.

Apart from the results found in this research question that the students’ writing significantly improved from Draft 1 to Draft 3 in both quality and length, Pearson Correlation was also run to see if there was any correlation between the students’ language proficiency based on the paper TOEFL test scores that the participants took at the beginning of the course and their writing outcomes after the blog-based peer response training for L2 writing revisions. The study found that there were very positive correlations between the students’ language proficiency and their writing quality; that is, the students who gained high scores on the paper TOEFL test also performed highly on their writing outcomes on the pre-test (P<0.05), and particularly higher on the post-test (P<0.01). This finding contributed partly to the validity and reliability of the blog-based peer response training of the present study.

Table 5: Correlations between the students' language proficiency and their writing outcomes

		Correlations		
		TOEFL scores	Pre-test	Post-test
TOEFL scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.431(*)	.488(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014	.005
	N	32	32	32
Pre-test	Pearson Correlation	.431(*)	1	.816(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014		.000
	N	32	32	32
Post-test	Pearson Correlation	.488(**)	.816(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000	
	N	32	32	32

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

- Pre-test refers to Draft 1
- Post-test refers to Draft 3

• Correlate – Bivariate

The results echoed the conclusions reached by Sullivan and Pratt (1996), Braine (1997, 2001), and Pham and Usaha (2009) that the writing quality did improve in the computer-assisted classroom from the first to the final draft. In addition, the findings of the present study also bolstered the results of Berg's (1999) that training students in how to participate in peer response had positive effects on revision types and writing outcomes. Recently, Fleta and Sabater (2010) found that writing for a purpose in blogs for professional development encouraged the students to produce language more fluently. They were also more concerned on correctness which led us to consider blogs as a potential tool for the development of foreign language linguistic skills.

In addition, findings of the present study seemed to support the views of the

advantages of the technology-enhanced learning of earlier research (Warschauer et al., 1996; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Braine, 1997; and Warschauer, 2002) that computer-mediated communication (CMC) allowed students to take more active and autonomous roles in the learning process and fostered the approach of "student-centered". In addition, CMC could lead to better writing products and better quality peer response. Yang (2010) also claimed that self-correction and peer review enabled students to monitor, evaluate, and adjust their writing processes in the pursuit of text improvement.

6. Conclusion and limitations

The present study bolstered previous research in terms of effectiveness of e-peer response for L2 writing, which was found in the studies by Berg (1999), Tuzi (2004),

Liu & Hansen (2005), and Min (2006) who claimed trained peer response to be very effective. Particularly, it was inventible compared to those of Chaisuriya's (2003) that the students were not confident in giving comments to each other, and Tsui and Ng's (2000) that the students did not believe much in the peers' comments. Therefore, the findings of the present study would provide new light, to say the least, for Vietnamese educators who look for effective technological tools for students in their writing classes.

The results of the current study cannot be generalized to other due to contexts

small sample size. In addition, the Single-Group Pre-test – Post-test Design (Robson, 1999; Nunan, 2001; Charles & Mertler, 2004) lacked for control group to confirm levels of improvements after the training. Furthermore, the students of the present study first experienced the computer lab and learnt in the Internet environment, the inspiration during the blog-based peer response may be at high motivation. Further research should investigate the motivation that leads students to self-revisions, becoming more autonomous learners who are responsible for their own learning outside the classroom.

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