



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***LIBYAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING AND
MANAGEMENT OF PEER FEEDBACK IN A BLOG MODELED ON A
FANFICTION WRITING ENVIRONMENT***

FATMA ELHADI B.HARB

FBMK 2018 62



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By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2017

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated, with love, to my family for their moral and financial support during my Ph. D journey.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2017

Chairman : Associate Professor Yap Ngee Thai, PhD
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This study explored the narrative writing experience of 28 freshmen EFL Libyan university students in a learner blog modeled on online fanfiction writing environment. It examined the impact of blogging on narrative writing quality. It looked at blog functions stimulating writing, management of peer feedback and discussed how peer feedback may contribute to improving writing. The study reported participants' and their class teacher's perspectives on the online writing experience. This one-semester study adopted the mixed-method approach. Data were collected through writing test scores, questionnaire responses from students and transcripts of the interview session with the writing class teacher and the students' posted peer feedback. Descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test were used to analyze quantitative results while textual and thematic analyses were used to analyze qualitative data. The findings revealed that narrative writing performance did not significantly improve after the blog use. The findings also indicated that technological and social functions moderately stimulated writing. Task-Related Feedback was higher than Non-Task Related Feedback, but students' writing activity on the blog lacked constructive feedback. Most participants preferred teacher feedback and developed subject-related and non-subject related skills due to of their participation on the blog. The study suggests that EFL writing teachers need to understand the environment, which stimulates students' writing improvement. The study also reemphasizes the importance of a real audience, socialization and a balance of teacher feedback and peer feedback as proposed in constructivism and connectivism.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENULISAN NARATIF MAHASISWA EFL LIBYA DAN PENGURUSAN
MAKLUM BALAS RAKAN SEBAYA DALAM BLOG BERMODELKAN
PERSEKITARAN PENULISAN FIKSYEN PEMINAT**

Oleh

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Diesember 2017

Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Yap Ngee Thai, PhD
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Kajian ini menerokai pengalaman penulisan naratif bagi 28 orang pelajar universiti EFL Libya dalam sebuah blog pelajar bermodelkan persekitaran penulisan fiksyen peminat atas talian. Kajian ini meneliti kesan blogging ke atas kualiti penulisan naratif. Ia juga meneliti fungsi blog perangsang penulisan, pengurusan maklum balas rakan sebaya dan membincangkan bagaimana maklum balas tersebut dapat membantu memperbaiki penulisan. Ia juga melaporkan perspektif responden dan juga guru kelas terhadap pengalaman penulisan atas talian. Kajian satu semester ini menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran. Data telah dikumpul melalui skor ujian penulisan, respons soal selidik daripada mahasiswa dan skrip sesi temu bual dengan guru kelas penulisan dan maklum balas rakan sebaya yang diposkan. Statistik deskriptif dan Ujian Pengkat Bertanda Wilcoxon telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data kuantitatif manakala analisis tekstual dan tematik telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data kualitatif. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa prestasi penulisan naratif tidak meningkat selepas penggunaan blog. Dapatan juga memperlihatkan bahawa fungsi teknologikal dan sosial secara sederhana merangsang penulisan. Maklum Balas Berkaitan Task adalah lebih tinggi daripada Maklum Balas Bukan Berkaitan Task, tetapi ia kekurangan maklum balas konstruktif. Kebanyakan responden menggemari maklum balas guru dan membina kemahiran berkaitan subjek dan bukan subjek akibat penglibatan blog mereka. Kajian ini mencadangkan supaya guru penulisan EFL perlu memahami persekitaran pelajar akan tawarkan dan respon sewajarnya pada maklum balas rakan sebaya. Kajian ini juga menekankan semula akan kepentingan sosialisasi penonton sebenar dan keseimbangan antara guru dan maklum balas pelajar seperti yang disyorkan dalam konstruktivisme dan fahaman keterkaitan.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
APPROVAL	iv
DECLARATION	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
 CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.1.1 Narratives	1
1.1.2 Social Networking Technologies and Learning	2
1.1.3 Blog Interactions as Learning	2
1.1.4 Fanfiction Writing	4
1.2 Statement of the Study Problem	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study	8
1.4 Research Questions	8
1.5 Research Hypotheses	9
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Scope of the Study	10
1.8 Conceptual Framework	11
1.9 Definitions of Key Terms	12
 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Writing as a Productive Skill	14
2.2 Approaches to Writing Instruction	15
2.3 Narrative Writing	18
2.4 Fanfiction Writing as a Participatory Practice	18
2.5 Learning in the Twenty-First Century and the Enhancement of Writing	22
2.6 Social Networking Technologies and the Learning of Writing	23
2.7 The Blog Technology and EFL Learning	24
2.8 Learner Blogs and Interaction	27
2.9 Peer Feedback and the Learning of Writing	28
2.10 Theories Underpinning Blog-Based Studies	31
2.10.1 The Constructivist Theory of Learning	32
2.10.2 The Connectivist Theory of Learning	35

3	METHODOLOGY	39
3.1	Research Design	39
3.2	Sampling Procedure	41
3.3	Research Procedures	41
3.4	Instrumentation	44
3.4.1	Pre and Post Writing Tests	44
3.4.2	Fanfiction Writing Blog Feedback	45
3.4.3	The Student Post-Survey Questionnaire	45
3.4.4	The Teacher Post-Survey Questionnaire	46
3.5	Data Analysis Procedures	46
3.5.1	Quantitative Data	46
3.5.2	Qualitative Data	49
3.6	Ethical Considerations	53
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	54
4.1	Writing Test Results	54
4.2	Nature of Feedback Posted on the Fanfiction Writing Blog	55
4.2.1	Types of Feedback Posted on the Fanfiction Writing Blog	55
4.2.2	Types of Useful Peer Feedback Posted on the Fanfiction Writing Blog	59
4.2.3	Reasons for Offering Peer Feedback	61
4.2.4	Reasons for Refraining from Offering Peer Feedback	63
4.3	Management of Peer Feedback on the Fanfiction Writing Blog	64
4.3.1	Desired Types of Peer Feedback	64
4.3.2	Reasons for Responding to Peer Feedback	64
4.3.3	Reasons for Refraining from Responding to Peer Feedback	65
4.3.4	Reasons for Incorporating Peer Feedback	66
4.3.5	Reasons for Refraining from Incorporating Peer Feedback	67
4.3.6	Participants' Preferred Source of Feedback	68
4.4	Participants' and Teacher's Perspectives on the Online Narrative Writing Experience	69
4.4.1	Blog Functions Supporting the Online Narrative Writing Experience	69
4.4.2	Advantages of the Online Narrative Writing Experience	71
4.4.3	Challenges of the Online Narrative Writing Experience	73
4.4.4	Suggestions for Improving the Online Narrative Writing Experience	75
4.4.5	The Class Teacher's Perspectives on the Online Narrative Writing Experience	77
4.5	Discussion of Results	78
4.5.1	The Effect of the Online Writing Activity on Narrative Writing Performance	78
4.5.2	Response to the Peer Feedback-Giving Task	79
4.5.3	Response to the Received Peer Feedback	83

4.5.4	Participants' and the Class Teacher's Perspectives on the Online Narrative Writing Experience	86
5	SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	90
5.1	Summary of Key Findings	90
5.2	Implications	91
5.3	Limitations	93
5.4	Recommendations	94
5.5	Suggestions for Future Research	96
5.6	Concluding Remarks	97
	REFERENCES	100
	APPENDICES	131
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	156
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	157

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1 Timeline of the Online Writing Activity	44
3.2 Inter-Rater Reliability Test Result	47
3.3 Inter-Rater Reliability Scales of Landis and Koch (1977)	47
3.4 Results of the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality	48
3.5 Categories of Feedback Used by Littleton (2011, p. 75)	50
3.6 Categories of TRF and NTRF Used in the Current Study	51
3.7 Phases of Thematic Analysis as Outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.35)	52
4.1 Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test on the Pre-Post Test Scores in All Writing Quality Criteria	54
4.2 Categories and Percentages of Task-Related Feedback (TRF) and Non-Task Related Feedback (NTRF)	55
4.3 Examples of Task-Related Feedback (TRF) and Non-Task Related Feedback (NTRF) Posted on the Blog	57
4.4 Percentages of Writer-Reader Interaction (WRI) and Reader-Reader Interaction (RRI)	59
4.5 Reasons for Refraining from Offering Peer Feedback	63
4.6 Reasons for Responding to Peer Feedback	65
4.7 Reasons for Refraining from Responding to Peer Feedback	66
4.8 Reasons for Incorporating Peer Feedback	66
4.9 Reasons for Refraining from Incorporating Peer Feedback	67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1 Conceptual Framework	12
3.1 Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods Design (Creswell, 2012)	40



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A	Pre-Post Writing Tests 131
B	Student Post-Survey Questionnaire 132
C	Teacher Post-Survey Questionnaire 136
D	Fanfiction Writing Rubric 137
E	Student Consent Form 142
F	Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test in All Writing Quality Criteria 143
G	Examples of Participants' Overall Writing Quality Improvement 146
H	Examples of Talented Fanfiction Writers 151

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
EL	: English Language
ELL	: English Language Learning
ELLs	: English Language Learners
ESL	: English as a Second Language
FFN	: Fanfiction.Net Website
FL	: Foreign Language
F-OW	: Feedback on the Original Work
GC	: Global Criticism
GP	: Global Praise
NTRF	: Non-Task Related Feedback
P	: Participant
PR	: Personal Responses
RN	: Reader's Needs
RRI	: Reader-Reader Interaction
SE	: Sentence Edits
SF	: Social Feedback
SL	: Second Language
TP	: Text Playback
T-RF	: Technology- Related Feedback
TRF	: Task-Related Feedback
UNESCO	: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WE	: Word Edits
WRI	: Writer-Reader Interaction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an introduction to the thesis. It starts with a background of the study, followed by the statement of the study problem, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the study, conceptual framework and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Narratives

Narratives are stories or reports of connected events that may be real or imaginary. Wong and Hew (2010, p.2) define narratives as “recounts with a twist in them” and viewed narratives as “[a] time-ordered text[s] that [are] used to narrate events and to inform, entertain and emotionally move an audience” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2001, p.1). Abbott (2002) contends that narratives exist in people’s lives since the invention of writing. Narratives are the prime means of comprehension and expression of our experience over time, which can be encountered in every scenery of human interaction (Gutiérrez et al., 2015) and in all forms of human creativity such as art and entertainment; they come in many types of stories including horror and fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, TV cartoons, adventure stories, parables, fables, moral tales, myths and legends (Wong & Hew, 2010). They are recognized by characters, plot, setting, theme and goal known as the five Ws, including who, what, when, where and why (Metoyer et al., 2017). Oral storytelling is considered the oldest method of sharing narratives in society, but with the development of writing in modern society and modern technologies in the last decade, the way narratives are constructed and shared has also undergone tremendous changes.

Because of the centrality of narratives in everyday life, learning to write narratives remains an important part of education. When writing narratives, learners can think of imaginary and true stories (autobiographical or biographical) or fanfiction to entertain themselves, provoke audiences’ imagination and reading and draw their attention and interest by creating problematic events and unexpected endings (Abdollahzadeh, 2009). Thompson (2005) argues that narratives translate what happens in authors’ lives and inform others about who they are and what they want to do. Wong and Hew (2010) emphasize that narratives can teach, inform authors, nourish and extend the imagination of their audience. People often entertain themselves by reading memoirs, biographies and recounting stories; perhaps more so now, with the availability of social networking sites and different technologies that present alternative forms of narratives. They identify and sympathize with characters, see whether they share any common experiences with the characters and sometimes start writing their own stories (Caulley, 2008).

1.1.2 Social Networking Technologies and Learning

Due to the processes of globalization and technological advancement, constant changes are made in modern communication applications that enhance learning (Black, 2009), causing today's students to nurture in the Digital Age where communication with others is possible through various technologies (Sweeny, 2010). To these net-generation students, the dominance of the Internet and other social networking tools does not essentially equate with only educational contexts (i.e., reading and writing). By and large, it extends to the establishment and maintenance of an interactive cyberspace life (Duffy & Bruns, 2006), thereby enabling them to send messages, socialize with friends, do homework and interact with others who share the same interests and passions (Kim et al., 2016). More importantly, these tools empower students with productive literacy skills. Lankshear and Knobel (2007) argue that the concept of literacy is not restricted to only reading and writing; rather it refers to students' engagement in an effective process of social practices targeting interacting in authentic contexts and improving their educational progress. Such social practices involve narrative writing and fanfiction writing, digital storytelling and video gaming, which are often carried out as out-of-school tasks or leisure time activities (Black, 2009).

Emerging social networking technologies have led to the spread of out-of-school literacy practices among EFL and ESL learners and have increased a strong interest in conducting studies in the field of education literacy, since these studies provide an understanding of daily literacy practices of adults and explain how they can assist in language teaching and learning (Tan et al., 2009). Evidently, this is done based on the observation that individuals spend quality time participating in these practices, both in academic settings and in their spare time (Black, 2009). As ways of communication are changing in the Digital Age, educators' adoption and understanding of these new literacies are necessary (Sweeny, 2010), since they provide writers new chances to share their writing with local and international audiences (Magnifico et al., 2015). Black (2008a) argues that the spread of these literacies goes beyond regional, cultural and linguistic borders. Black (2009, p.696) writes that ELLs' engagement in activities and literacy practices can assist them to "contextualize and develop understandings of new language forms and content." This claim supports the integration of technology and new literacies in language classrooms in order to promote learners' literacy skills, academic progress and proficiency in the new media era (McWilliams et al., 2011).

1.1.3 Blog Interactions as Learning

Recently, blogs have become one of the prominent social networking technologies that contribute to learning enhancement owing to the specific characteristics that differentiate them from other communication tools. For example, their uniqueness accounts for their daily rising numbers and appearance on the World Wide Web as they do not require users to have prior technical knowledge in computer programming (Zhang, 2009; Du & Wagner, 2005). Practically, blogs are equipped with a variety of

affordances (Kelley, 2008), that entitle learners to browse other sites of interest, view and post comments and communicate with friends and classmates (Beale, 2007) on a regular basis. In addition, they are popular for their quickness and easiness of creation and publication of content (Du & Wagner, 2005), availability of various multimedia options like videos, images, music and provision of archiving services to older posts via hyperlinks, which keep writers connected and help them see how others organize their ideas (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003). As a consequence, what bloggers upload into their blogs is instantly updated and becomes available for others (Armstrong et al., 2004) to view and to post feedback (Du & Wagner, 2005).

Nowadays, blogs are renowned for promoting interaction. Usun (2004, p.134) believes that “[i]nteraction is an important part of all forms of learning” and Tan et al. (2009) find that interaction facilitates students’ discussion, improves writing quality, assists in grammar correction and enhances English language use. In the same vein, Choi and Ho (2002) point out that interaction attracts learners’ attention and serves as a medium for outside evaluation and researching as well. Therefore, blogs can function as interactive collaborative environments that enhance writing by providing abundant chances for learners to submit assignments, get feedback, establish rapport and improve the content quality of their texts. In this respect, Murugaih and Thang (2010) conclude in their study that both proper planning and close monitoring of a writing activity incorporating interactive learning, can assist in raising ESL students’ awareness, responsibility of their own learning and the learning process and acquisition of valuable learning skills over online discussions (Vuorinen, 2005).

Blogs encourage offering peer feedback, which from an educational perspective can reinforce and encourage learning (Alnasser, 2013) and writing (Bijami et al., 2013). Peer feedback is used as a kind of formative assessment to support collaborative learning (Van Zundert et al., 2010), which often involves qualitative episodes of feedback with or without providing marks (Gielen et al., 2010a). Recently, there has been an upsurge of discussion on electronic peer feedback due to its merits over traditional peer feedback (Ho, 2012), as it lessens students’ anxiety in oral communication and proves to be flexible and applicable to students anywhere anytime (Chang, 2012; Ho, 2012). Cho et al. (2006) argue that peer feedback has the capacity to raise learners’ perceptions on deepening meaning compared to teacher feedback, which can affect learners on the surface level only. More specifically, it is peer pressure that can highly encourage learners to check on each other’s level of progress and force them to maintain their activities at an acceptable level (Beale, 2007) and become more responsible at the same time (Blackstone et al., 2007). Given this paramount importance, it is not puzzling to claim that peer feedback can be more fundamental and more influential to the development of writing skills than teacher feedback in web-based learning environments (Alnasser, 2013).

Blogs support the creation of a convenient learning community (Luca & McLoughlin, 2005; Efimova & Fiedler, 2004), that enables learners to learn from experiences and from one another, raises their sense of competition (Yang, 2009) and promotes their

motivation and active participation via expressing thoughts (Luca & McLoughlin, 2005), reading and posting feedback on others' postings (Beale, 2007). It is generally upheld that when combined with writing, blogs can help student writers to cultivate an exceptional sense of ownership, which might increase their self-efficacy (Barton, 2005), active participation and develop learners' voices and foster learning through discussions (Land & Dornisch, 2002). Campos et al. (2001) report that discussions construct learners' knowledge and this fits with the constructivist view of learner-centered learning. Land and Dornisch (2002) add that discussions make learners share and exchange ideas with others, reflect on each other's views, and collaborate in order to make sense of what they learn. Not only this, but discussions in asynchronous environments permit learners to think before posting replies and feedback and to refer back to assigned readings or writing prompts (Herring & Dargan, 2002).

Blogs can enhance literacy skills, which are being regarded as the most essential requirements in all educational areas. Achieving progress in these skills guarantees success in the lives of individuals, beginning with education and continuing after graduation and employment (Cassell, 2004). Huffacker (2004) states that blogs are the optimal means for promoting literacy skills that push learners to write, read and augment their comfort with the web technology at once. Cameron and Anderson (2006) trust the ability of blogs to lead to positive changes in learning and improving writing and reading. Regarding writing, blogs provide learners with a real audience, who will not hesitate to criticize them, so that they learn to start writing in a careful way (Wu, 2005). Ward (2004, p.3) mentions that "a blog provides a genuine audience... [and] offers a completely new form with un-chartered creative potential." Lowe and Williams (2004) conclude in a study that frequent blogging lessens students' apprehension about publishing in a web-based technology. Concerning reading, blogs are seen as personal diaries and websites that are simple to use and open for people to view and read (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004) and that inspire a learner to take part in discussions with other learners who share the same interests (Yang, 2009).

1.1.4 Fanfiction Writing

Fanfiction is a sort of transformative work in which fans use multiple media such as television shows, movies, comic books, anime and video games to write a new story or adapt an original story (Yin et al., 2017). According to Black (2004, p. 1), fanfiction is "an element of popular culture that is ever growing in popularity as new technologies enable native and non-native speaking fans from all over the globe to meet online, to share, critique and build upon each other's fictions." The practice of fanfiction writing relates to literacy research and is one of the cultural products defined as a type of creative writing where writers alter and remix famous cultural media to produce other original versions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Posting fanfiction in online environments is a common interest among a large number of adolescents around the world, who allocate quality time to create social contacts to represent themselves and voice their opinions to other fanfiction fans (Black, 2009).

In these environments, writers of fanfiction "... build networks of reading, writing and editing-literacy..." (Magnifico et al., 2015, p.158) and situate themselves geographically and psychologically in certain places and communities (Thompson, 2005). Noticeably, fanfiction writers depend on forming networks of reading, writing and editing-literacy practices, which are highly appreciated in schools, universities and workplaces (Magnifico, et al., 2015). Fanfiction writers can be labeled as active exploiters and creators of original texts, by which they cultivate originality (Thomas, 2006) and constantly depend on readers' comments on the stories they make (ChandlerOlcott & Mahar 2003).

Some researchers (e.g., Padgett & Curwood, 2015; Curwood et al., 2013) contend that young fans are encouraged to take part in fanfiction writing and reading spaces through maintaining relationships with writers, readers and reviewers. Pardede (2011) stresses that fanfiction fans are committed to their interests and that literary texts depict new topics and expose students to an unanticipated language. Hence, this study examines whether fanfiction writing as an out-of-school activity may be suitable for narrative writing development for EFL learners. Giving students the freedom to write either fiction, fanfiction or both is done in support of their preference as different students may favor different narrative productions. Moreover, the affordances of popular culture in fanfiction websites such as anonymity, posting, reading peer feedback and picture additions are adopted in this study in an attempt to encourage writing and interaction.

1.2 Statement of the Study Problem

Teaching English to Libyan EFL students is very problematic. English is a foreign language in Libya. It is a compulsory subject at schools and universities, but Arabic is the official language and the language of instruction. Exposure to English is available mainly through TV programs, drama, films, news broadcasts and the Internet, but it is not clear how frequent university learners actually use EL outside the classroom because of research scarcity on the teaching of English in the Libyan context. Closely relating to the teaching of writing is learning to write in English, which has become one of the most urgent issues in the Libyan educational system.

This study addresses two pertinent problems to the learning of writing in Libya. These problems come to bear quite heavily when one thinks of the increasing number of students enrolling in English language programs at universities in Libya. The first problem focuses on the fact that narrative writing is neglected in Libyan EFL composition classes at all educational levels. There is little research focusing on EFL narrative writing in the Libyan context. Thus, the researcher cites other relevant studies from the Arab world and other countries where English is considered a foreign language and where the problem faced sounds similar. For example, writing in English is often overlooked in secondary schools (Ahmed, 2010) and constitutes one of the biggest difficulties at the university level in Arabic countries (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). Based on personal experience and observation, Al-Mansour (2014) criticizes

Saudi EFL university students' incapability to organize ideas logically and their lack of adequate vocabulary. Arab EFL learners also have a poor command of the English language grammar and together with problems related to spelling and mechanics of writing, they often obtain low scores in writing examinations.

Libyan EFL university students, like other Arab EFL learners, are also greatly apprehensive about writing in English, as observed by the researcher who teaches English in a public university in Libya. They may encounter similar problems reported in other studies on groups of EFL writers, particularly when support is not provided. EFL students encounter challenges in English writing classes and view it as the hardest skill to master since they do not possess enough English grammar competence and have less motivation for writing tasks as the teacher is the only audience for students' writing in traditional writing classes (Huang, 2016; Aljumah, 2012).

Libyan EFL students may also be reluctant to take part in writing activities, because of the lack of learner-learner interaction and the adoption of traditional methods of teaching and learning. In most traditional EFL learning contexts, activities in composition classes are confined to the classroom and students are disconnected from a 'real' audience (Bakar & Ismail, 2009) and the same problem may be found among Libyan EFL learners. In addition, Libyan EFL students may not have much interest in mastering writing because throughout the pre-university stage, the teaching of English gives prominence to the teaching of grammar. At the university stage, writing is taught to students majoring in EFL, but the contact hour is at no more than two hours a week.

Moreover, EFL students are nurtured in an educational system that overlooks collaborative learning and the value of peer feedback on writing is not appreciated as they consider their peers incompetent to evaluate their writing (Ahmed, 2010). In the same vein, Libyan EFL students do not expect to experience learning through the peer feedback technique, since they believe that the provision of feedback is teachers' responsibility. In fact, writing teachers, in an EFL context, can hardly find time to offer feedback on students' texts due to the large number of students, the heavy timetable and difficult nature of students' errors (Zheng, 1999). For example, in Iran, Abdollahzadeh (2010) claims that many Iranian EFL university students are hesitant to share their writing with peers. However, in most of these studies, the focus of the writing instruction was on academic writing. The situation may be different if the focus was on narrative writing where the purpose of story sharing may be viewed more positively as the sharing of narratives is a more natural part of everyday life. Therefore, the current study focuses on learning narrative writing in the EFL classroom and the use of blogging in a fanfiction environment to examine if Libyan EFL learners would be more receptive to these new methods of learning in the EFL classroom.

Narrative writing has become one of the educational domains in universities around the globe and it is reinforced with social networking tools such as blogs and Facebook pages. Roberts (2013) reports that a number of literary-minded instructors and ESL researchers have started focusing on creative writing in EFL classrooms. He adds that

most creative writing studies in EFL environments are limited to poetry and drama writing courses; hence little attention is paid to fiction writing. However, given the importance of narratives in the modern society and the potential increase in public participation in producing narratives in social media and the Internet, it has become important to examine how narrative writing can effectively be taught at the tertiary level, particularly in ESL classrooms. The same reasons are considered to examine how Libyan EFL students may interact in online environments for the purpose of constructing narratives.

Another problem that needs to be focused on concerns the type of feedback and students and teachers' response to different types of writing feedback. Libyan EFL students are often only exposed to teacher feedback and that is why Cho and Schunn (2007) contend that since the practice of feedback in classes is teachers' responsibility, it decreases students' writing practice as they write only when they receive teacher feedback. They add that although those teachers perceive the importance of teacher feedback in enhancing writing skills and the writing process, they often find it hard to read and give feedback on students' works and rarely request students to write in the class. Hayes and Ge (2008) argue that learners, who get teacher feedback only become demotivated to write, that they just repeat what they have learned prior to writing tests, hence produce texts that lack quality.

In Libya, classes consist of a large number of students and teachers find it difficult to comment on every student's work. In this domain, Yusof et al. (2012) state that offering timely teacher feedback to students on a one-to-one basis at different stages of the writing process is a constraint for writing teachers if the class is big. Furthermore, Cho and Schunn (2007) argue that the privatization of writing and feedback between a student and a teacher may restrict other students' access to benefit from teacher feedback on a large scale. Thus, Yusof et al. (2012) advise writing teachers to share feedback accountability with students. As a result, students' collaboration in peer review activities enhances their English language competency, helps them detect their writing problems and improves the quality of their writing (Yang, 2011).

Since there is hardly any literature available on EFL narrative writing in the Libyan context that has explored the use of blogging as a way to encourage narrative writing through peer feedback, this study is rather exploratory in nature and examines the type of feedback by the participants of the study and their response to peer feedback on their narrative writing attempts in a blog modeled on a fanfiction writing environment. In particular, the study investigates how Task-Related Feedback and Non-Task Related Feedback contribute to improving narrative productions and influence learner-learner interaction. Offering peer feedback on learners' writing is not extensively investigated (Lavolette et al., 2015) and pinpoints the cognitive gap more visibly (Zhang et al., 2014). Cho and Schunn (2007) report that the lack of writing practice in the classroom negatively influences the promotion of effective writing skills, which

makes the implementation of peer review a natural remedy instead of teacher feedback or expert reviews.

This study is inspired by Black's (2005-2009) works on fanfiction. Particularly, Black (2009) notices that English language and composition skills of the participants of her study have improved through their engagement in fan-related activities. Thus, the impetus of this study is to explore whether the trend of fanfiction writing can appeal to Libyan EFL university students and to investigate the extent to which a blog-based fanfiction writing environment supports and improves the narrative writing quality of Libyan EFL university students. Specifically, Magnifico et al. (2015, p.160) comment that "...less is known about the nature of the feedback that writers receive". So, the present study attempts to inspect the types of peer feedback given in the blog, their implications on participants and their contribution to writing improvement.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Against the background of issues discussed in the previous sections, the present study attempts to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To assess the effect of a blog-based fanfiction writing environment on Libyan EFL participants' narrative writing performance.
2. To identify the types of feedback that take place in the blogging activity.
3. To explore how Libyan EFL participants manage feedback in a blog-based fanfiction environment.
4. To obtain the perceptions of Libyan EFL participants and the writing class teacher on the blog-based students' narrative writing experience.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Did Libyan EFL participants' narrative writing improve after the use of the blog?
2. What was the nature of the feedback given in the blog-based narrative writing experience?
 - a) What types of feedback that were given and what aspects of writing did they address?
 - b) Which kinds of feedback did Libyan EFL participants find most useful?
 - c) Why did Libyan EFL participants give feedback?
 - d) Why did Libyan EFL participants refrain from giving feedback?
3. How did Libyan EFL participants manage the received feedback?
 - a) What kinds of feedback did Libyan EFL participants like to receive, but they did not?
 - b) What were the reasons that made Libyan EFL participants respond to peer feedback?
 - c) What were the reasons that made Libyan EFL participants refrain from responding to peer feedback?

- d) Why did Libyan EFL participants incorporate peer feedback in their writing?
 - e) Why did Libyan EFL participants refrain from incorporating peer feedback in their writing?
 - f) What were Libyan EFL participants' preferred sources of feedback and why?
4. What were Libyan EFL participants' and the writing class teacher's perspectives on the blog-based narrative writing experience?
- a) What were the blog functions that supported Libyan EFL participants' narrative writing?
 - b) What benefits did Libyan EFL participants get from the online narrative writing experience?
 - c) What challenges did Libyan EFL participants face during the online narrative writing experience?
 - d) What suggestions did Libyan EFL participants forward for improving the online narrative writing experience?
 - e) What were the teacher's perspectives on the use of the blog for improving the online narrative writing experience and enhancing interaction?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

In social research, the null and the alternative hypotheses are often tested in the light of some experimental data (Singleton et al., 1988; Kish, 1987). The null hypothesis often contradicts what the researcher hunches and the alternative hypothesis disproves the null. Depending on data, the null hypothesis either will or will not be rejected. If the data show improvement in students' narrative writing after the blog use, then the null hypothesis is rejected. However, if the data demonstrate no improvement in students' narrative writing, then the null hypothesis is retained. The following hypotheses have been formulated to address the first research question:

- The null hypothesis H0: There will be no significant differences in narrative writing performance between the pre and post writing test scores using the blog modeled on a fanfiction writing environment.
- The alternative hypothesis H1: There will be significant differences in narrative writing performance between the pre and post writing test scores using the blog modeled on a fanfiction writing environment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This section highlights the importance of this study, which examines Libyan EFL university students' narrative writing performance and analyzes the types of feedback and interactions in the fanfiction writing blog. It also explores the students' and the writing class teacher's views on the online narrative writing activity and provides additional insights into the fanfiction genre, which is often recognized as a technology-

mediated new literacy practice, which can contribute to the improvement of narrative writing and the enhancement of interaction. This study asserts its originality in the use of a blog modeled on a fanfiction writing environment in learning narrative writing in an EFL context. Although there remains much for future research to be done on the topic, this study takes a step forward in investigating the effectiveness of online fanfiction writing in improving EFL students' writing achievement.

Specifically, the paucity of studies in the Libyan EFL context is a key reason that makes this study valuable. Furthermore, the study contributes to the related literature in the scope of the efficiency of blogs on narrative writing quality in the educational domain, since the blog-enhanced narrative writing is a recent approach in language teaching and learning programs worldwide. Moreover, the study is important to the field of higher education because it offers an insight into more interactive approaches of assigning online tasks to help students practice writing and presents practical suggestions for teachers and educational policymakers. This study evaluates possible blog-mediated peer feedback on writing improvement and provides educators with data on how to use blogs as an effective writing strategy and the way they can contribute to enhancing student motivation and learning. Practically, this study attempts to link technology use to narrative writing achievement and assessment. Study findings can be good to share with other teachers because the blog is easy to utilize and is a solution for large classes. These findings may alert instructors who want to employ a web-based peer review on the possible tendencies depending on students' personalities and attitudes towards writing in an EFL classroom. Ultimately, this study has its contribution to the research field of peer feedback and narrative writing in EFL contexts by relating to Libyan EFL students' perceptions on actual peer feedback and focusing particularly on the implications of the blog writing experience, gains and challenges.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In order to make this study manageable, the study scope is restricted to examining how the use of blogs may improve Libyan EFL students' narrative writing in a web-based learning environment. More specifically, this study is designed to analyze fanfiction and fiction writing performance of Libyan EFL university students and to assesses the feedback and interaction types posted on the blog, hence no attempt is made to include other types of academic and narrative writing. In doing so, it should be noted that this study is exploratory in nature and it documents EFL students' experiences in Libya after an important transitional tough period after the Revolution on 17th February 2011. In addition, the time scope of the study is the spring semester of the Libyan educational calendar i.e., from April to June 2013.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Narrative writing is a fundamental component of academic literacy (Kelley, 2008). It is a genre of writing that includes fanfiction, fiction and personal stories. Roberts (2013) points out the fact that many literary-minded instructors and ESL researchers have started focusing on creative writing in EFL classrooms and states that most creative writing studies in EFL environments are limited to poetry and drama writing courses and pay little attention to fiction writing. Therefore, this denotes that not only narrative writing is under-researched, but also that students are deprived of interacting in online environments. In addition, the interest in EFL narrative composition stems from the apparent paucity of research in this area and the fact that testing the narrative ability is one of the means used to evaluate linguistic, cognitive and pragmatic skills among students (Leikin et al., 2014). In an attempt to address the previous issues, it may be useful for a Libyan EFL student to use blogs to post comments and discuss topics of interest with other students whose feedback could be beneficial to those seeking writing improvement in a constructive way. With respect to using the online writing activity, more frequent writing out-of-school was reported by girls and younger students. The research was driven by the lack of comprehensive quantitative studies examining the impact of blogs on student narrative writing in a world language. Students majoring in languages require a more opportunity to create language enthusiastically and to interact with it inside and outside the classroom, which can be done through technologies, which grant numerous means for students of a particular language to express and share ideas with native and non-native speakers (Glymph, 2012). Furthermore, Morales Beristain (2015) argues that EFL teachers must always look for activities that provoke students' experiences, knowledge, creativity and imagination to increase students' levels of motivation in these activities. In trying to bridge the research gaps and remedy the problems mentioned above, this study adopts a learner blog, which is based on fanfiction writing environment to enable participants to post narratives, engage in giving, responding to and incorporating feedback and subsequently assess the effect of such activities on students' narrative writing.

The conceptual framework in Diagram 1.1 presents a pictorial description of the related conceptual processes, which account for the way a learner blog in the current study operates and how it contributes to narrative writing improvement and interaction enhancement through feedback delivery. Specifically, the diagram exhibits the connections among the main constructs of the study that investigates the Libyan EFL students' narrative writing experience, where they have to undertake multi-task roles as writers, readers and responders in a blog, which is built on affordances and functions modeled on fanfiction writing environments. Narrative writing is selected, because it marks the transition from writing letters and short texts to a more extensive writing (Drijbooms et al., 2017). Besides, it is being used as a form of social literacy practice that can be reinforced by Task-Related or Non-Task Related types of feedback.

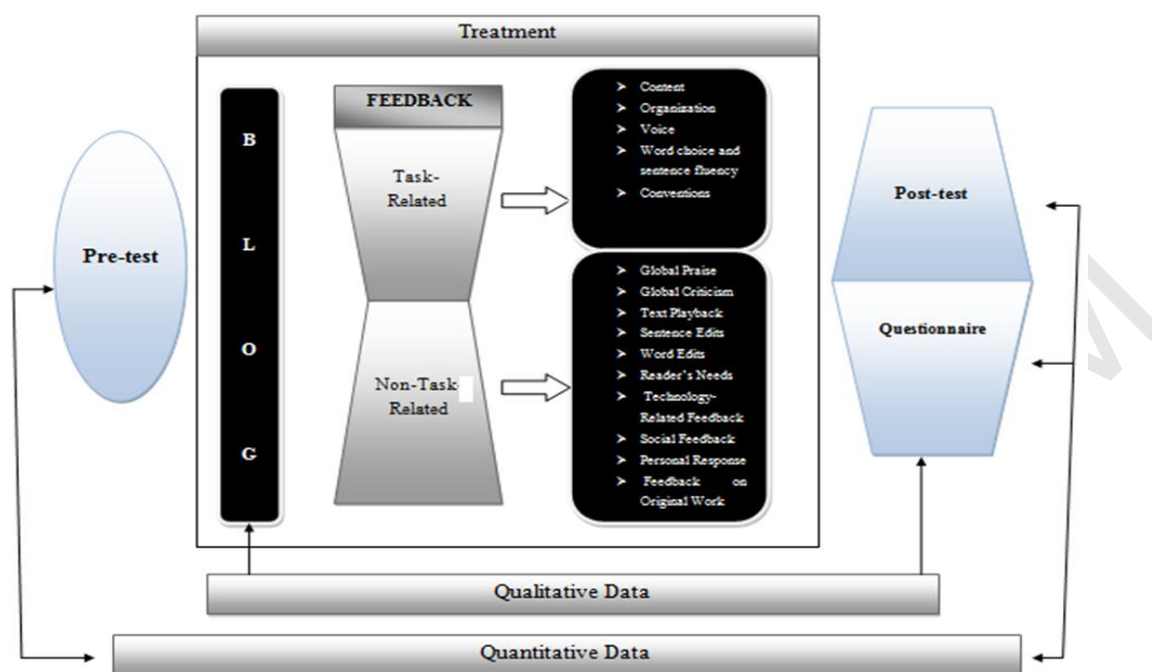


Figure 1.1 : Conceptual Framework

1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

In the following section, the basic key terms in this research are defined in accordance with the context of the study.

Blogs have emerged as a consequence of the Web 2.0 technology, which is called the 'Read-Write web' (Richardson, 2010; Price, 2006). Basically, a blog is an "easy-to-update website characterized by dated entries displayed in reverse chronological order" (Stefanac, 2006, p. 230). Tan et al. (2009, p.149) believe that blogs give bloggers the "freedom of expression, anonymity and immediate response from a wider audience." They permit students to publish their works online (Deng & Yuen, 2011). Also, they grant transparency to bloggers, which indicates that bloggers are visible to one another as reliable partners and available resources (Dalsgaard, 2008).

Blog Participation is considered a form of networked learning, which denotes "learning in which information communication technology is used to promote connections between one learner and other learners ... [and] between a learning community and its learning resources" (Steeple & Jones, 2002, p. 2). It has to be built on trust, mutual understanding and goodwill. It incorporates writer-reader interaction, which occurs between writers of certain narratives and readers who often post feedback and reader-reader interaction, which denotes readers' discussions of a certain narrative and answering other readers' inquiries, particularly when writers choose not

to respond. This study is based on a learner blog, which is designed to enhance learner-learner interaction in a networked learning environment without the presence of a teacher. In this study, students were asked to post original fiction and fanfiction stories. The writing test criteria focused on content, organization, voice, sentence structure and conventions. Each criterion comprises these six bands: unsatisfactory, poor, acceptable, good, very good and excellent

Fanfiction Writing is an imaginative form of narratives, which can either be written or orally narrated and used as a source of entertainment. This type of writing is practiced by millions of adults worldwide mainly as a leisure time activity. Black (2005, p.118) identifies fanfiction writing as “original works of fiction based on forms of popular media such as television, movies, books, music and video games.” Often, fanfiction writers create their own stories using new plotlines, settings and situations and affiliate themselves to fanfiction writing communities with readers, reviewers and beta readers. Littleton (2011, p.1) recognizes fanfiction writing communities as “writing groups devoted to producing new, unauthorized fictional works based on someone else’s published characters and settings”.

Feedback Management refers to how participants deal with the received feedback and whether they respond to it or incorporate it into their writing.

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