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A Comparative Study between the Conventional Feedback on EFL Academic Writing and the Computer-mediated Feedback among Saudi Teachers and Students in Universities

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Abstract

Researchers have demonstrated that both teachers and students believe that written corrective feedback is very significant for acquiring a second language. The studies also reveal that there are different types of written corrective feedback, such as conventional (pen-paper) corrective feedback and computer-mediated corrective feedback (using computer-editing programs). However, a question remains as to which of these types of corrective feedback is more effective and suitable for both writing teachers and students. This study aims to examine teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards using the traditional and the computer-mediated corrective feedback in writing courses to explore which of these methods is more useful for Saudi university teachers and students. The study was conducted in one of the Saudi female universities, namely Princess Norah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU). Seven writing teachers participated in the questionnaire and the interview. Only four students participated in the questionnaire because the study was conducted during the summer vacation and it was impossible to meet them face to face. Therefore, the only way to collect the data was by sending the questionnaire via email and conducting the interview with the teachers via WhatsApp. The results revealed that writing teachers preferred using computer-mediated corrective feedback over conventional corrective feedback, although they used the latter to follow the university norms. The reason for their preference was that they believed conventional corrective feedback was time-consuming and took a lot of effort, while computer-

mediated corrective feedback saved them time and effort. However, the students believed the opposite. They thought that conventional corrective feedback was more suitable for them, although most of them did not have any experience of computer-mediated corrective feedback. It can be concluded that there was a mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and their actual practices, and another mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and the students' preferences.

Key Words: EFL academic writing, Computer-mediated feedback, Saudi teachers, Students.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Written corrective feedback is a controversial issue because teachers are continuously seeking a more effective way to provide corrective feedback. For example, Spivey (2014, p. vii) asks himself as a teacher whether he should write corrective feedback manually or on the computer. He also wonders whether teachers follow their predecessors in the way they teach. In my opinion, conventional written corrective feedback is effective, but has some negative effects on both teachers and students. It takes too much time and effort on the part of teachers, and it may demotivate students from developing their writing skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As a teacher assistant in a Saudi university, I taught writing for three semesters. Each semester, I taught four classes consisting of approximately 40 students. I experienced no difficulties teaching writing during the lectures, but I struggled to write corrective feedback for each student's papers. It was time-consuming and exhausting, and it negatively affected my performance in teaching other courses because I spent most of my time correcting essays. The stress of the workload related to giving corrective

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feedback made me decide not to teach writing at all, but I did not like the feeling of defeat. I also felt sad because my students begged me to teach them at other levels of writing courses, telling me that they liked my way of teaching writing and that they improved under my tutelage. I apologized because I did not want to commit to unfair workloads for them, for myself or for other courses.

On the other hand, the writing coordinator was an old American professor who was very enthusiastic about teaching writing. Once, I visited her and noticed that she was giving written corrective feedback via a computer program. She was writing her corrective feedback by highlighting the errors and recording her voice comments before sending them to her students. I was shocked because I felt that I had missed out on using this method. I asked her to send me a sample of her feedback, and she did. When I opened the program, I tried to put myself in the situation of my students. I felt that using the computer-mediated feedback was easy, clear, and interesting and that it saved significant time and effort.

Based on this experience, I started to think of ways to help myself and other writing teachers enjoy teaching writing as much as any other course. I felt that there was a need to find other techniques whose positive effects overcame the negative sides. Since we are currently surrounded by a technological revelation, we should find ways to use technologies to support corrective feedback. Teachers and students, in particular, cannot imagine their lives without using computers for studying, researching and writing; therefore, it seems only natural to use computers to support corrective feedback. Saadi and Saadat (2015, p. 2054) comment that technological development increases the need to use the computer to correct learners' writings. Similarly, Sain et al. (2013, p.834) state that electronic corrective feedback has advantages such as: developing writing skills and saving time. The pros of using computers in corrective feedback are such as: more personal, saving times for teachers and students, more influenced and flexible (Wresch 1984, p.4). Finally, we can use these new technological innovations to support and improve the human corrective feedback but not to replace it (Anson 2003, p.245).

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1.3 Study Aims

The aim of the current study is to investigate Saudi writing teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using two types of corrective feedback: conventional (using pen and paper) and computer-mediated (using computer editing programs). It also examines students' beliefs and preferences concerning these types of written corrective feedback and the extent to which their beliefs match those of their teachers.

1.4 Research Questions

This study tries to answer these following questions:

  1- What are the typical ways that Saudi teachers use to give written feedback in universities?

   2- What are the teachers' views on the strengths and weaknesses of using the traditional and computer-mediated corrective feedback?

   3- Which method of giving feedback, traditional or computer-mediated, do teachers prefer? Why?

   4- What are the students' views on the strengths and weaknesses of using the traditional and computer-mediated corrective feedback?

   5- Which method of giving feedback, traditional or computer-mediated, do students prefer? Why?

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the general background to written corrective feedback, the contradictory views about the effectiveness of corrective feedback in writing and the

different types of written corrective feedback. The review also consists of some studies that examine the teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards using conventional corrective feedback and computer-mediated corrective feedback. It also investigates their preference and alignment between these two techniques. The last section discusses a study that was conducted on the teachers' and students' perceptions and preferences towards the traditional and the technological methods in Saudi Arabia, where the present study was conducted.

2.2 Background

Corrective feedback means 'the practice whereby a teacher or peer provides formal or informal feedback to learners on performance that contains linguistic error' (Ai 2017, p.313). In fact, feedback has a correlation with learning a second language by encouraging learners and helping them acquire a second language correctly (Ellis 2009, p.3). Written feedback can be described as an output of learners' performance, as a communicating procedure between students and teachers and as an internal method, because students aim to show the difference between their recent and anticipated performance (Chong 2017, p.193). The aim of written corrective feedback is to improve the learners' writing skills by strengthening their consciousness, recognition and critical skills (Bitchener and Ferris 2012, p. 140). According to Hyland and Hyland (2006, p.83), feedback is vital for motivating and supporting learning, especially writing, in a second language.

There are three reasons why writing teachers provide corrective feedback: L2 teachers recognise that acquiring a second language takes a long time; even L1 learners need teachers to correct their writing to make it more formal and academic; and students need to improve their writing skills because teachers are not always available to support them (Ferries and Hedgcock 2014, p. 280). Therefore, teachers began to search for ways to improve their writing skills during the period between 1980 and 1990 (Ferries and Hedgcock 2014, p.280).

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Nowadays, because of the progress of technology, computers have a role to play in facilitating corrective feedback (Hyland and Hyland 2006, p.93). The role of computer-mediated feedback is not restricted to classes; it can also help students to receive feedback from their peers, teachers or even programs while they are far away from them (Hyland and Hyland 2006, p.93). Its merits may also extend to helping teachers with large classes and their students who need individual assistance, so using this computer-mediated feedback may help with other parts of a teacher's work and give them a chance to concentrate on different aspects (Hyland and Hyland 2006, p.94). Moreover, it can help students to receive their corrective feedback quickly (Hyland and Hyland 2006, p.94), and it can allow them to develop their performance, devote their efforts to improving their skills and feel that they are supported by their instructors and peers (Zhanga and Zhengb 2018, p.1). Therefore, it is important for students to understand and realise the necessity of feedback, and it is significant for teachers to give feedback and evaluation that match their learners' needs (Zhanga and Zhengb 2018, p.11).

2.3 Opposing Opinion on the Effect of Corrective Feedback in Second Language Learning

There are contradictory opinions about the effectiveness of written corrective feedback for second language learners. Because corrective feedback in writing may focus on different language errors and one of these errors may relate to grammar, some researchers were for and some of them were against focusing on grammar correction in writing. For example, Truscott (1996, p.328) believes that a writing course is not the place to correct grammar. He explains that grammar correction in writing may cause 'harmful effects' for both teachers and students because it takes too much time for them. Also, he says that correcting grammar is not effective because L2 learners should acquire language in a normal procedure. Similarly, Hyland and Hyland (2006, p.85) state that acquiring a second language has gradual steps, and

feedback is not efficient because it is just one of the factors that cause development in language accuracy. Ferris (1999, p.2) agrees with Truscott's point of view because he finds that correcting errors in writing is 'time-consuming and mostly tedious'. However, Ferris disagrees with Truscott's view about avoiding giving corrective feedback because Ferris thinks that L2 learners need corrective feedback, and it is very effective for them to edit and develop their writing skills.

2.4 Review of Related Literature

Sain et al. (2013) conducted a study that aimed to compare the effectiveness of using traditional corrective feedback and computer-mediated corrective feedback in academic writing classes. They followed the experimental approach. The participants were divided into an experimental and a control group, and each one consisted of 24 students in the English for Specific Purpose course. They were asked to work in pairs to write term papers. After they finished, the experimental group submitted their papers via email, while the control group submitted their essays by hand to their teacher. The experimental group was given computer-mediated corrective feedback via email, while the control group was given traditional corrective feedback using pen and paper. To investigate the students' views about computer-mediated corrective feedback, an informal interview was conducted with the experimental group. The results from the interview showed that the students liked receiving their feedback via email. They also indicated that it was very easy for them to understand the codes because they were similar to those in their textbooks. The students believed that conventional corrective feedback caused anxiety and it took time to understand the unclear handwriting of their teachers. In addition, they believed that computer-mediated feedback was more suitable for them because they did not need to print their papers and submit them to their teachers. They also felt that this method was preferable for them because they could read their teachers' feedback anywhere.

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Another study was conducted in a lower-secondary school in Denmark by Kjaergaard in 2017. The aim of the study was to investigate the beliefs and positions of students towards using written corrective feedback in teaching English. The study lasted for eight months with three participating teachers and three of their lower-secondary classes. These teachers were asked to use computer-mediated written corrective feedback for their students, and they chose a program called Markin to provide their corrective feedback. The program was easy for teachers and students because it depended on indicating the errors by abbreviated codes, and these codes could be described for students. Also, teachers could write their comments to students at the end of the page.
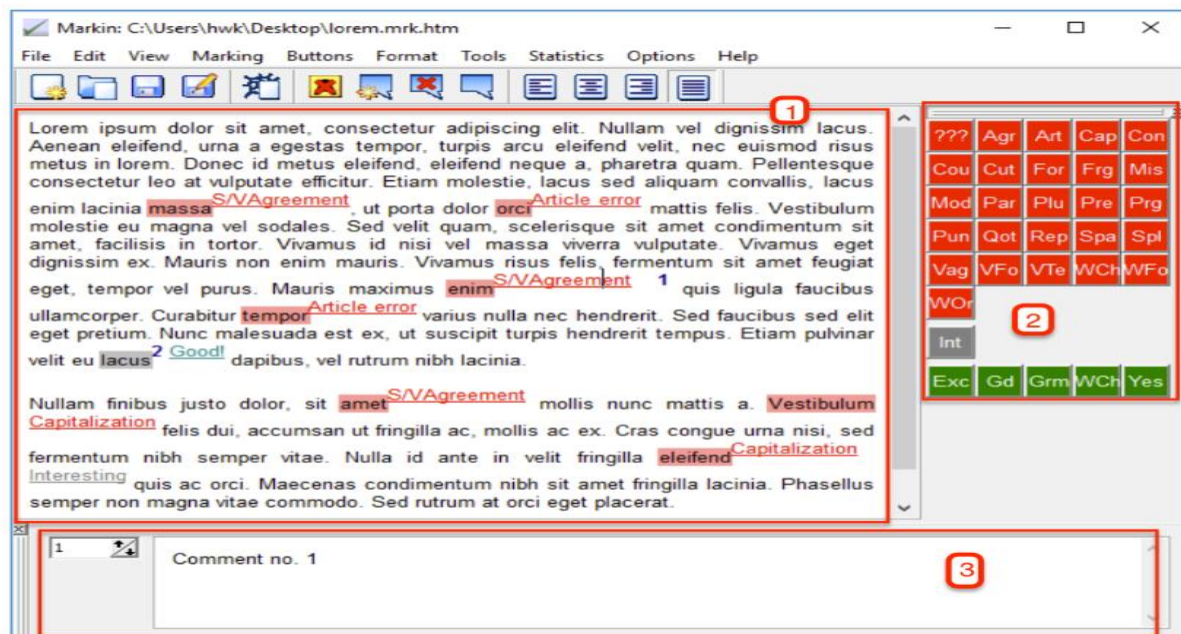
The students were asked to revise their assignments after receiving their corrected feedback. After that, four students from each class participated in the questionnaire and interview. These two tools were used to explore more information about students' beliefs and attitudes towards using computer-mediated corrective feedback for their writing papers. The results showed that the students had positive attitudes towards using computer-mediated corrective feedback. It also revealed that this method encouraged them to learn more and correct their assignments by themselves, gave them privacy and saved them time.

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Another study focused on the effects of electronic corrective feedback compared to conventional corrective feedback. The study was conducted by Tafazoli, Nosratzadeh and Hosseini in 2014 and was located in Iran at the University of Applied Science & Technology. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

(1) Is there any difference between the effect of electronic feedback as opposed to paper feedback on the grammatical accuracy of Iranian ESP students' writings?

(2) What are the attitudes of ESP students towards electronic feedback in their courses? (p. 355).

The participants were 86 ESP learners (males and females) and their major was Tourism. They were divided randomly into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received their corrective feedback via email while the control group received pen and paper corrective feedback in class. The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire about the participants' positions and their experience with computers. The findings of the study revealed that using computer-mediated corrective feedback motivated students and improved their writing skills. However, it could discourage those who were unfamiliar with technology and cause them to feel stress.

2.5 A Study Conducted in Saudi Arabia

Only one study was found that investigated the impact of computer-mediated instruction in language teaching for Saudi students in King Saud University. The study was conducted by two language instructors; Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman, in 2009. The study aimed to examine whether using computer-mediated feedback alongside the traditional approach could improve English teaching more than without using a computer for Saudi undergraduate students. The software that was used in the test consisted of two parts. One part was for explaining grammar rules, definitions and usages, and reading passages. The other part was about exercises in reading texts,

grammar and vocabularies. The 60 students who participated in the research were divided randomly into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was tested using the computer-assisted approach with the conventional approach, while the control group was tested using the conventional method only. The instruments used to collect the data analysis were pre-test and post-test. The findings showed that those who studied English using the computed-assisted with the traditional method had a significant improvement in language skills compared to those who were taught using the conventional method alone.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter discussed the background to corrective feedback, opposing views of the effectiveness of corrective feedback, its types and some related literature reviews. This chapter will discuss the method that is used in this study and give some details about the study context, participants, instruments, procedures and data analysis. All the information that is used in the study context about course reports was adopted from the PNU website (https://www.rcampus.com).

3.2 Study Context:

The study took place at Princess Norah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU), one of the newest and largest female universities in Saudi Arabia, located in Riyadh city. The data were collected from teachers and students who have experience with writing courses at different levels. Writing courses are taught at different grades, usually at three levels and for three hours a week in the university. In the first level, the students start to learn how to write three types of paragraphs and short essays which are narrative, argumentative and descriptive using the MLA style. They also practise using peer review to help each other. At the end of the semester, they collect all their assignments in portfolios that show how they have improved during the semester. The

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course book that is used in this level is *Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays (5th Edition) by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue in 2013*. In level 2, the teachers try to improve their students' academic writing by teaching them how to develop their critical thinking skills. This level focuses on writing essays about narration, argumentation, problem solving and description, but with more formal and complex language that increases the students' intellectual activities. Again, at the end of the semester, they collect all their essays in portfolios. The course book that is used is *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition) by Pearson Longman in 2012*. The last level is advanced. The students learn how to persuade different audiences. They learn how to expand their descriptive, narrative and argumentative essays in more academic and advanced language using MLA and APA styles. They also learn how to give and receive feedback to each other. The coursebook that is used is *Longman Academic Writing Series 5: Essays to Research Papers 1st Edition by Alan Meyers* **in 2014**. They also submit their portfolios at the end of the semester. In all of these levels, the assessment methods are 20 marks for one midterm, 40 marks for a portfolio and 40 marks for the final exam. The teachers make their own decision about how to give corrective feedback to their students during the semester, using any technique they like, whether traditional or electronic, but the final exam must be corrected traditionally using pen and paper. In other words, there is no rule that guides teachers in giving written corrective feedback in the university during the semester except for the final exams.

3.3 Participants

A. Teachers

Seven teachers participated in this study and they were all working as teacher-assistants in PNU. These teachers were invited to take part in this research via an email linked to SurveyMonkey.com. They were different in their years of experience as teachers in the university and different in their training as writing teachers. Some of them studied for their Master abroad and some of them studied in Saudi Arabia.

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B. The Students

Four students participated in the study although the plan was to include more than five participants. Three of the teachers tried to help expand the number of participants by sending the questionnaires to their students via emails and Twitter. The students contributing to the research were all students in the English department at the PNU. They varied in their language level between beginners, intermediate, and upper-intermediate because they were chosen randomly. Their ages were between 19 and 21 years old. Their first language was Arabic and they studied English for about six years at school before majoring in English at university. They studied writing as a compulsory course.

3.4 Instruments

There were two instruments used in this study, which were a questionnaire for both students and teachers, and an interview for the teachers only. Each of these instruments is described below.

3.4.1 The students' questionnaire

The aim of the student questionnaire was to solicit their feelings and emotions about receiving corrective feedback via computer because I believe that psychological factors play a central role in motivating or demotivating students to gain knowledge. The questionnaire was formulated by me.

The questionnaire had five sections containing 12 questions. It started by asking about the students' experience with computer-mediated corrective feedback. The second section concerned their beliefs and opinions about how using computer-mediated corrective feedback could save the students time and improve their writing skills. The third section was about their preference for using computer-mediated corrective feedback officially at Saudi universities. The forth section asked about the problems that students faced in understanding their teachers' handwriting. The last question was open-ended, asking for their comments on receiving computer-mediated corrective

feedback. The language of the questionnaire was English and it was sent to the students by their teachers, who participated in the study. The teachers sent the link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire to their students via email and Twitter.

3.4.2 The teachers' questionnaire

The aim of the teachers' questionnaire was to elicit their beliefs and preferences about using computer-mediated corrective feedback with their students. The questionnaire was formulated by me in English.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections with 23 questions. The first section was about the teacher's experience of using computer-mediated corrective feedback in writing courses. The second section was about how using this approach saved their time and improved their students' writing skills. The third section was about their opinion regarding using peer corrective feedback and comparing its effectiveness with traditional corrective feedback and computer-mediated feedback. The forth section was about the types of programs they used to give corrective feedback. The fifth section asked about their anticipation of having computer-mediated corrective feedback as an official approach in Saudi universities and their agreement with taking a training course before using computer-mediated corrective feedback. The last section was open-ended to give them space to give their opinions and suggestions about using computer-mediated corrective feedback in general.

3.4.3 Teachers' Interview

An online interview was used for teachers only, because the study was conducted during the summer vacation and it was very difficult to interview the students face to face. The interview's type was a structured and asynchronous interview. The questions were prepared from the teachers' questionnaires which had already been answered by the participants. It was a structured interview because 'in this format, the researcher follows a pre-prepared, elaborate "interview schedule/ guide", which contains a list of

questions to be covered closely with every interviewee…' (Dörnyei 2007, p. 135), and it was asynchronous because it allowed the participants to respond any time they liked and gave them a chance to think more before giving their answers (Al Arini 2010, p. 11-12). This 'asynchronous' discussion does not happen in 'real time' (Selfe 2003, p. 19).

I recorded my voice and sent the same questions to all the participants via WhatsApp. Their answers were sent back by their recorded voices. The interviewees were shown a screenshot of the Hemingway editing program as an example to help them visualise the computer-mediated corrective feedback method (see **Figure 3.8**). This interview was conducted on 12 July 2018 and lasted for about 30 minutes. The language used in the interview was Arabic to make sure that the participants understood the questions carefully and allow them to express their thoughts deeply. The aim of the interview was to investigate more about their beliefs and attitudes towards using computer-mediated corrective feedback and the problems they faced when they used the conventional approach. Also, the interview aimed to give the teachers a chance to express their opinions freely by using open-ended questions which provided more significant, deeper and richer information. This interview consisted of four parts containing nine questions. Part one was about their problems using pen and paper corrective feedback. The second part was about their opinion of using a computer program to help them correct their students' papers. The third part was about their anticipation of the effectiveness of using computers in corrective feedback in the future. The last part was about their suggestions for training teachers to use such programs before teaching writing.

Figure 3.8: A sample of computer-mediated corrective feedback method by using Hemingway editing program. The figure is taken from www.hemingwayapp.com.

3.5 Procedures

This study obtained ethical approval for research from the University of Sheffield and a permission letter from my supervisor to go back to Saudi Arabia to conduct the study in Princess Nora University and stay there for a maximum of three months. Moreover, I obtained an approval letter from PNU to conduct my study there. The letter was written in Arabic and then translated into English at a translation office.

After receiving these letters, I started contacting the participants (teachers) and asked them to contact their last semester students. I gave them the participants' information sheets, which clarified for them the aim and the steps of the study, asked them to fill in the consent forms and assured them that their names would not appear in the research. I also sent them the participant information sheets and consent forms for students and asked them to forward these forms to their students.

3.6 Data Analysis

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3.6.1 Teachers' and students' questionnaires analysis

The questionnaires were analysed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The participants' responses to the closed questions (multiple choice questions) were analysed quantitatively using the calculating percentage that was shown on the Survey Monkey website because the quantitative approach means 'meaning in numbers' (Dörnyei 2007, p. 28).

In addition, the participants' responses to the open-ended questions (clarification questions) were analysed qualitatively. 'Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods…' (Dörnyei 2007, p. 24). The study was looking to understand the participants' beliefs about using different types of corrective feedback in writing. According to Dörnyei (2007, p.27), 'qualitative researchers concentrate on an in-depth understanding of the "meaning in the particular"'. I tried to allow the teachers and students to express themselves freely by asking them open-ended questions to observe sufficient information about their thoughts and attitudes towards computer-mediated and conventional feedback.

3.6.2 Teachers' interview analysis

The teachers' interviews were analysed qualitatively. As mentioned before, these interviews were conducted using WhatsApp and the voices were recorded for questions and answers in Arabic. Then the interview discussion was translated into English and transcribed manually. After that, the answers to each question for each participating teacher were summarised and compared with the responses of other participants. To do that, I used main codes which divided into minor ones. For

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example, advocates of using computer-mediated corrective feedback was the first main code and it consisted of teachers' preferences, students' preferences, a helpful tool, supporting with oral and peer corrective feedback, facilitating teacher-student communication and the future of the technology revolution. The second main code was problems of traditional corrective feedback and it divided into different subclasses such as: collecting too many papers, unclear teachers' handwriting, dishonesty in submitting assignments, too much pressure in time and effort and carelessness in taking their assignments back. The last code was training, and it included university workshops, self-learning and online training using the blackboard on the university website. Then, the responses were classified into agreement and disagreement with using computer-mediated corrective feedback in writing courses.

RESULTS

4.1 Teachers' Interviews

The findings from the interviews with the seven teachers are presented according to their beliefs and attitudes towards: using computer-mediated corrective feedback; the problems that they faced with using conventional corrective feedback; their anticipation of their students' attitudes towards computer-mediated corrective feedback; their beliefs about peer corrective feedback; their suggestions about training courses for using computer programs for corrective feedback; and their predictions about the future of computer-mediated corrective feedback.

4.1.1 Beliefs and attitudes about using computer-mediated corrective feedback

All the seven teachers agreed that using computer-mediated corrective feedback may help them save time and reduce their effort in correcting students' mistakes. Teacher A said, 'I think it will help me save my time and reduce the pressure of collecting numerous papers that may get lost. Of course, any electronic devices will be well-

ordered.' Similarly, teacher B believed that using computer-mediated corrective feedback might reduce the teachers' workloads in making corrections because it could correct mistakes in a clear way. Teacher C reported that 'it might explain their mistakes to them much more clearly than I do when I correct traditionally because sometimes they do not understand my handwriting and comments.' Moreover, teacher D liked using computer programs to give corrective feedback because, she said, "it will take half of my work and I will have the rest…". Teacher E shed light on the advantage of computer-mediated feedback on student-teacher communication, saying:

> I prefer using programs to help me indicate the students' mistakes and it really helps me and saves me time. Communication with students becomes faster, without waiting for the next lecture to receive their papers. I think that communication improves results because I tried using some programs before for courses other than writing and the students' performance was good.

In addition, teacher F explained the reason why she preferred using computer-mediated corrective feedback, saying, 'It will decrease the pressure on teachers because it will save the paper along with its submission date, and it will also save time because I read the paper twice, once for grammar and once for content.' Teacher G believed that 'this program will save us time and we will have more opportunity to think about how to correct our students' mistakes. There will be space for teachers to show their talent in teaching writing.'

4.1.2 Problems with using conventional corrective feedback

The seven teachers described the difficulties they faced with using paper-pen corrective feedback. They complained that using this traditional method took too much time and effort. For instance, teacher B stated that, 'In our department we face the problem that teachers refuse to teach writing because it takes time and effort, and the workload is not decreased, and the writing work is endless.' A similar opinion is

provided by teacher D, saying, 'I am not against the traditional way, but if there is another way that will help me save time and effort, yes, I am not against it.' Other teachers declared that they faced problems clarifying their unclear handwriting and notes. For example, teacher F described her problem when she was a student, saying, 'I faced this problem as a student. I found that the teacher's handwriting was not clear, and she got angry if we asked her to explain.' She also described a different problem as a teacher, reporting:

> As a teacher now, I find the problem is not with the handwriting. The problem is with students not taking their papers back. It is really frustrating, because I spend time writing the feedback and correcting their mistakes and waste my ink and in the end the papers are left on my desk.

Teacher C said, 'When I correct traditionally, sometimes they do not understand my handwriting and comments.' Teacher A reported, 'I faced problems. For example, some of them asked me, "Teacher, what do you mean by this note?".' Teacher D stated, 'Honestly, it happens a lot, especially when they ask about clarification of my handwriting or explanation of notes or abbreviations.' Teacher E stated that, even if she explained her comments to students, they still did not understand, saying, 'These students face problems with traditional feedback and even if I discuss the feedback with each student, they may still find it difficult'.

4.1.3 Teachers' anticipations of their students' attitudes

All the teachers interviewed believed that most of their students prefer to be corrected by computer-mediated corrective feedback rather than the conventional method. After asking them about whether their students would like computer-mediated corrective feedback or not, and whether it would help them improve their writing skills, they reported similar answers. Teacher A said, 'Yes, they will like it, and it will help them.' Teacher B said, 'Yes, and all the mistakes will be clear to them and they will understand the kinds of mistakes better.' Similarly, teacher C stated, 'Yes, I think so

because it might explain their mistakes to them more clearly than when I correct traditionally.' Teacher F stated, 'I think students will find it helpful.' Also, teacher G stated, 'Yes, I think so, especially if the students are able to use the same program. They will work hard and write more and improve sharply.' However, teacher D was neutral, saying, 'It depends on students' preferences if they like using technology or not.' The faster communication between teachers and students from using computer-mediated corrective feedback may cause students to prefer this method more than the traditional one, as teacher E declared, saying, 'I think the communication will improve because I tried using some programs before for courses other than writing and the students' performance was good.'

4.1.4 Beliefs about peer corrective feedback

The seven teachers differed in their beliefs about the usefulness of using peer corrective feedback in writing courses. For example, teacher A, D and E agreed on using both computer-mediated corrective feedback and peer feedback. As teacher A said, 'It is better to use a mixed method of peer and computer correction to take individuals' differences into consideration.' Similarly, teacher D believed in using both methods, saying, '50-50' may be better. Teacher E explained:

> I prefer using both ways together. The teacher's feedback is very effective and expands the student's insights. Peer feedback depends on the student's level. However, peer feedback is important and interesting, and students can learn from each other's mistakes.

On the other hand, teacher C and F reported that even if they used the peer corrective feedback method, they also had to correct again themselves. Teacher C answered, 'Peer feedback and then I correct it because they will learn from each other's mistakes.' Teacher F added a new point, saying, 'I use peer correction during the class while they do the exercises, but correcting the writing papers I will do myself.'

In contrast, teacher G was against using peer corrective feedback in writing because students may replace correct sentences with wrong ones. She said, 'I tried peer feedback and it sometimes gave a negative outcome. In other words, the student may make the correct thing wrong.' A similar opinion is provided by teacher B, saying, 'Peer feedback may be useful for advanced level in translation, but not in writing courses because they usually have the same language level and they do not recognise their mistakes.'

4.1.5 Teachers' suggestions about training courses for using computer programs for corrective feedback

All the teachers believed that having training courses about how to use computer corrective programs was very significant. Teachers A, B, C and D indicated that conducting training courses and workshops in the university was a very good idea because they would help teachers learn how to use these programs to give corrective feedback using a computer. Also, teacher G had a similar suggestion, saying, 'I hope that in the first week, which is the period for adding/dropping courses, there will be a workshop for all courses, and especially for writing. These workshops will train teachers how to use these programs and how to train the students on using them as well.' However, teachers E and F preferred having online and self-training courses. For example, teacher E stated that 'if the college does not force teachers to take this training course, I think that teachers should practice it by themselves because it will help them in the first instance'. In addition, teacher F stated that, 'I suggest it becomes an online course on the blackboard and each teacher learns from it by herself, because I do not think it will be very difficult to use.'

4.1.6 Teachers' predictions about the future of computer-mediated corrective feedback

The seven teachers were equal in their predictions about the future of computer-mediated corrective feedback. They all thought that PNU might use computer-mediated corrective feedback as an official method to correct the writing course. Teacher A reported positively, saying, 'Of course, yes.' Teacher B and C had the same response, saying, 'Possible.' Teacher D said 'yes', and she explained the reason, saying, 'Because technology prevails in our lives, I think yes.' Teacher E stated, 'I think yes. Many things, particularly in our university, follow a technological trend. Now using a blackboard between students and teachers has become compulsory.' In addition, teacher F explained, 'Yes, if it corrects the grammar and spelling, because they make me feel confused with the spelling. If 40 students write the same mistake, I check the dictionary for the spelling.' Lastly, teacher G expressed her desire to have an official system of computer-mediated written corrective feedback saying, 'I hope that it is as you said.'

4.2 Teachers' and Students' Questionnaires

A quantitative analysis was used to analyse the results from the questionnaires. It can be concluded briefly that the teachers preferred computer-mediated corrective feedback, but the students preferred conventional corrective feedback in writing.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated Saudi teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards conventional corrective feedback and computer- mediated corrective feedback in writing courses at PNU. The study also scrutinised the extent to which they aligned. In this chapter, the results will be discussed in relation to the major research questions, divided into two sections. In the first part, I will discuss the results related to the first three research questions, which are about Saudi teachers' opinions and positions toward written corrective feedback. The last two questions, which are about Saudi students' beliefs and attitudes to written corrective feedback, will be discussed in the second part.

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After analysing the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires and the interviews, it can be observed that there is a mismatch between the Saudi teachers' beliefs and attitudes and their students' opinions and positions toward computer-mediated written corrective feedback. The teachers prefer the idea of providing corrective feedback for writing courses via computer programs because it saves them time and effort, while their students prefer the old and conventional corrective feedback which depends on using pen and paper, because it is more familiar to them and teachers may be more flexible in correcting their errors. However, I cannot assume that all students prefer traditional corrective feedback more than computer-mediated corrective feedback, and I cannot assume that all teachers prefer computer-mediated corrective feedback. The reason for this is that the participant sample is not large enough, so it is recommended that a larger group of participants is used in future research to confirm the teachers' and students' preferences.

This gap between teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes can be filled by some actions. First, students have to be trained to be corrected via computer programs. For example, teachers may conduct a training course for their students to show them how computer-mediated corrective feedback works. The second step is to allow them to have an experience with computer-mediated corrective feedback by taking two or three of their assignment papers and using editing programs to correct them. The last and most important step is to upgrade and improve editing programs to match the needs of teachers and students. For example, technologists may create corrective programs that can do a combination of computer-mediated corrective feedback and traditional corrective feedback. I mean that these programs will only correct the spelling and grammar mistakes without grading them until the teachers check them and add their comments about the general contents, and then the grades are evaluated by the teachers themselves. I believe this solution may please teachers and students

because it saves time and effort for teachers and evaluates students fairly and equally. In my opinion, combining the technological and the traditional way is extremely effective because we cannot ignore the advantages of traditional corrective feedback and we cannot depend on the electronic method as a replacement for the conventional one. Therefore, the best solution is to combine these two methods together to get the benefits of both.

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated Saudi teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward conventional and computer-mediated corrective feedback in the context of Princess Norah University in Saudi Arabia. In addition, it explored Saudi undergraduate students' preferences concerning these two types of written corrective feedback and examined whether they agreed with their teachers' beliefs.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

This study found that the Saudi teachers who participated in this research used the conventional written corrective feedback even though they did not prefer it. These teachers also found teaching writing using pen-and-paper corrective feedback to be very exhausting and to take extensive time and effort. Spending excessive time and effort correcting essays may negatively affect teachers' performance in other courses. The pressure of the overload of correcting written assignments may prevent these teachers from achieving success in their teaching and from correcting other courses. Furthermore, the findings showed that these teachers found that their students struggled to read their handwriting, which could prevent students from benefitting from their teachers' comments. The study also found that conventional corrective feedback slowed communication between teachers and students, resulting in corrections and feedback taking a long time. Teachers could not collect students' assignments until they met them in class, and students could not receive their corrective feedback until they met their teachers over the next couple of weeks during class.

Further, the teachers experienced that some students did not care about receive their corrected papers and that some careless students would fail to take their corrected papers back to see and learn from their feedback. This may demotivate and depress teachers, who spend a great deal of time correcting their students' papers and aim to help them benefit and improve. The results also showed that some students took advantage of their teachers' busyness due to using conventional corrective feedback by not submitting their papers on time. In other words, they tried to surreptitiously submit their papers late to their teachers' offices when they had the chance. The lack of a computer system preventing late submissions led to some students not seeing submission deadlines as very strict.

The findings also showed that the teachers preferred using different styles to consider their students' differences. For example, they liked to use peer corrective feedback during class exercises, though they took on the main correction and evaluation roles themselves. This shows that teachers may depend on computer-mediated corrective feedback more than peer corrective feedback. The study also found that teachers used the conventional method because this was the university's norm. This reveals that a university's policies and conventions can affect teachers' practices of giving written corrective feedback. The findings showed that the teachers believed that using computer-mediated corrective feedback would be more effective and useful for them and their students. Thus, their practices and their beliefs did not match. The teachers also suggested to conduct a training course or a workshop either inside the faculty or online via the university website to train teachers to use computer-mediated corrective feedback.

However, the study also found that participating students preferred conventional corrective feedback because they were used to this method and were not familiar with computer-mediated corrective feedback. Therefore, students' beliefs and preferences matched their teachers' current practices, but not their teachers' beliefs.

In sum, this study revealed two gaps: one between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices and one between teachers' beliefs and their students' preferences. These

mismatches could affect the use and perceptions of conventional and computer-mediated corrective feedback in writing courses.

6.2 Implications

The findings of this study have numerous implications for university policy and teachers' practices of giving computer-mediated corrective feedback. It is recommended that the head of the English department in the languages faculty encourage writing teachers to give corrective feedback via the computer. Furthermore, training courses should be conducted at the end of each semester to explain this new method to writing teachers and help them practice it before the beginning of the semester. It is also recommended that some British and American academics be invited to share their experiences of using computer-mediated corrective feedback and to discuss which programs are more effective and useful for teachers and students. The head of the department should be flexible; if teachers do not like using the computer to give corrective feedback, they should not be forced to teach this subject from the beginning of the semester. It is also important that the university freely supply all necessary equipment, such as computers, internet access and editing programs. For example, if the editing programs are not free, the university should buy them and allow all teachers to download them for free. Furthermore, the department should conduct workshops and provide students with periodicals and brochures to explain the strategy and rationale of computer-mediated corrective feedback and allow them to practice using this method by themselves to help them recognize and trust this new technological trend. It is also recommended that computer-mediated corrective feedback be officially supported by the Education Minister and be implemented across all universities in Saudi Arabia to ensure equality and justice for all Saudi Arabian teachers and students.

6.4 Future Research

Future research should conduct longitudinal experimental studies of two groups to test their beliefs and attitudes before and after using computer-mediated corrective feedback. Future studies should also conduct classroom observations to examine and

explore teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes towards conventional and the computer-mediated corrective feedback. Further work could also examine larger numbers of participants while they are easily available during their academic semesters. In addition, it is recommended that future studies collect data from questionnaires and interviews for both teachers and students to investigate equal information from both types of participants. Moreover, future research should examine male teachers and students in other Saudi universities; however, if gender is not found to be a significant factor affecting teachers' and students' beliefs concerning types of written corrective feedback, future studies could be conducted on other female teachers and students in other Saudi Arabian universities.

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