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Merging the Forces of Asynchronous Tutoring and Synchronous Conferencing: A Qualitative Study of Arab ESL Academic Writers Using E-tutoring

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Merging the Forces of Asynchronous Tutoring and
Synchronous Conferencing: A Qualitative Study of Arab ESL
Academic Writers Using E-tutoring

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2012

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Title: Merging the Forces of Asynchronous Tutoring and
Synchronous Conferencing: A Qualitative Study of Arab ESL
Academic Writers Using E-tutoring

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Previous studies in the field of e-tutoring dealt either with asynchronous tutoring or synchronous conferencing as modes for providing e-tutoring services to English learners. This qualitative research study reports the experiences of Arab ESL tutees with both asynchronous tutoring and synchronous conferencing. It also reports the experiences of tutors who provided tutoring services asynchronously and synchronously using moodle as a platform.

Each one of the nine tutees submitted a writing draft through moodle and received feedback asynchronously first and then synchronously. This study is the first study to incorporate both modes of e-tutoring to Arab ESL writers. At the end of the e-tutoring process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, whether tutee or tutor, to report their experience with the service.

The study reveals that the use of asynchronous tutoring and synchronous conferencing together yields positive outcomes to tutees and that these stages complement each other. It also reveals that training and coaching tutors are important factors to the success of an e-tutoring service. Also, providing adequate technical support to tutees and tutors is deemed important.

The study also reveals that e-tutoring can be beneficial in Arab conservative societies provided that such a service is well established and closely monitored. E-tutoring is also believed to open the door for learners to freely discuss their writing without the fear of losing face which may be a hindering factor in face-to-face conferencing.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The use of online technologies in providing educational services to students in higher education is growing and is believed to be of positive pedagogical significance (Williams and Severino, 2004:168). One of these services is electronic tutoring (e-tutoring) where students receive instruction and/or feedback on their work in an electronic environment that is free from space limitations, and in the case of asynchronous tutoring it is free from time and space limitations. This new and growing field of e-tutoring has been applied in many academic fields; however, the application of e-tutoring in the field of academic writing has not been fully addressed and researched in the second and foreign language contexts.

Before getting into details about e-tutoring for academic writing, I find it necessary to talk briefly about the effects of using technology in writing and how it differs from the traditional way of writing. Research studies have shown that students who use computers to perform written tasks compose longer pieces of writing, have more motivation, and are more willing to revise their written works in comparison to students who write in the traditional way (Kulik, 2003; Cochran-Smith 1991; Daiute,

1986; Scott 2006; and Burns 1992). These positive effects of using technology in writing may be extended to the area of e-tutoring of writing provided that the process of e-tutoring is conducted appropriately and in accordance to valid and relevant theory and research. New technologies are believed to change the face of composition pedagogy and e-tutoring is one of these new trends that needs to be researched and utilized in order to help students become better writers.

There is a small yet growing body of research on the use of e-tutoring as an online service for academic writers. This current study adds to that body of research by examining the experience of providing e-tutoring services to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This study has implications for writing centers, Online Writing Labs (OWLs), instructors of academic writing, and ESL/ESL writers and teachers.

How Is e-Tutoring Different from Traditional Tutoring?

E-tutoring can be defined as teaching, support, management and assessment of students using online technologies (TechLearn, 2000). Basically, e-tutoring is an electronic/online support service offered to students to

help them in their learning process in any given field. The application of e-tutoring can take place, for example, via e-mail, Learning Management Systems (LMS's) (e.g. BlackBoard, Moodle etc...), and/or blogs. E-tutoring entails many benefits; for example, in e-tutoring of academic writing, the e-tutor and the e-tutee have more time to ponder a response to a text. Some students may also prefer written communication because it helps them keep a record of the feedback they receive which, in turn, helps the students in the revision process. E-tutoring also is generally not time-and-space dependant (Purdue's OWL, 2006).

The current study provided an e-tutoring service to Arab ESL students using Moodle, an open-source LMS which helps in managing materials and information and organizing communication between instructors and students and among students' themselves. Basically, I recruited two groups of participants; an e-tutors' group and an Arab ESL e-tutees' group. Using moodle as a platform for the e-tutoring service, qualified e-tutors offered their e-tutoring services to the Arab ESL e-tutees. All forms of communication between the e-tutors and the e-tutees took place through moodle; the e-tutors received participants' drafts, communicated with e-tutees, and provided feedback

to them both asynchronously (in delayed mode) and synchronously (via live conferences). In the discussion section I discussed and argued for themes that would help in implementing an online writing lab (OWL) that houses the e-tutoring services. The idea of the proposed e-tutoring services is original as it takes into consideration the academic, cultural, and social needs of Arab ESL/EFL writers and provides customized resources that suit their needs as articulated by the participants.

This study, on the other hand, did not attempt to measure improvements tutees achieve as a result of e-tutoring. Jones (2001) reached a conclusion that there is no concrete evidence that writing centers actually improve student writing because such evidence is difficult to substantiate; this also is the case for e-tutoring of writing. According to Jones, indirect evidence such as satisfaction surveys can be used instead. Thonus (2002) also states that writing center assessment is rarely connected with assessment of the quality or changes in quality of students' writing. However, Thonus (ibid) and Vasquez (2008) mention that students still come to writing centers because students, especially returning students, believe that writing centers make a difference in their writing.

Although e-tutoring may not cater to all learning styles and may have some shortcomings, it holds a lot of promise in the field of e-learning and second/foreign language education. I believe, due to limited research in this area, it is important to conduct more research in this area in order for us to judge the overall effectiveness of e-tutoring. Also, some earlier research that exists in this area does not fully embrace the values of e-learning and are considered replications of traditional tutoring studies (Harris and Pemberton, 1995). Therefore, genuine research that focuses on studying the dynamics of e-tutoring is deemed necessary.

Background and Context

The current study of e-tutoring of Arab ESL students' writing is situated in the framework of Network-based Language Teaching (NBLT) that mainly emerged from the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) framework. NBLT mainly focuses on the use of technology as a tool and as a means to establish communication among the students themselves and between the students and teachers. It focuses on human-to-human communication, a feature and a characteristic that is usually missing in CALL frameworks (Warschauer & Kern 2000 and Warschauer 2000). The NBLT

framework focuses on human interaction and communication when using technology in the educational environment; it multiplies students' opportunities to learn in a more communicative manner (ibid). It is worth mentioning that NBLT is linked to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism which in part implies that learning occurs better when social interaction is present. Holmes et al. (2006) and other researchers argue that "e-learning courses should provide students with online opportunities to develop their skills of social interaction." (ibid, para.7). The interaction between tutors and tutees in the writing center or online is considered a social interaction that provides learning opportunities not only to the tutees, but also to the tutors who learn more by having more experience in tutoring and interacting with tutors. I will further discuss Vygotsky's theory in chapter two.

To reach the ultimate benefit of the use of technology in language education, educators, including tutors, should bear in mind the fact that Warschauer and many other researchers emphasize that "the computer like any other technological tool...does not in and of itself bring about improvements in learning." (ibid, p.2). Getting satisfactory results depends on learners, procedure of learning, rationale behind using certain types of

technology, the interaction process, and the context (ibid).

Tutoring, whether face-to-face or electronically, is considered an informal form of teaching because the tutor is available to help the tutee or learner and at the same time does not have educational authority over the tutee. Since e-tutoring has this same sense of informal teaching, and is best carried out through effective communication and interactions, e-tutoring can help in reducing students' anxiety and can keep them motivated because they do not have anything to lose but a lot to gain in terms of improving their writing, becoming more conscious about writing techniques they use, and enhancing their writing style - just to mention a few.

e-Tutoring is well-situated in the NBLT framework; the direct relationship between the NBLT framework and the communicative approach to teaching makes this framework promising in the sense that it merges the forces of new computer technologies and the communicative aspect in the educational process. In e-tutoring, tutors and tutees can communicate together synchronously or asynchronously to discuss students written texts in a relaxed environment that can help create a positive learning experience for tutees.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

To date, there is a limited number of studies that thoroughly examine the use of synchronous and asynchronous tutoring in the second/foreign language context; research is even scarcer when it comes to combining both modes as a tutoring service. The purpose of this study is threefold:

1) to evaluate and report the experiences of Arab ESL academic writers using asynchronous and synchronous e-tutoring, 2) to evaluate and report the experiences of e-tutors delivering the asynchronous and synchronous e-tutoring, 3) to report on benefits, problems, themes, and issues that emerge from the e-tutoring process.

To investigate these issues, I followed a qualitative research design to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the experience like for Arab ESL academic writers who receive asynchronous e-tutoring and synchronous conferencing services on their written drafts?
2. What is the experience like for e-tutors who provide asynchronous e-tutoring and synchronous conferencing services to Arab ESL academic writers?

Methodology Overview

In order to answer my research questions, I used a qualitative research design that focused on collecting data

from multiple sources. The first step in this design was to set up an e-tutoring service through the Learning Management System (LMS) "moodle" and to recruit two groups of participants; an e-tutors' group consisting of 3 participants, and an e-tutees' group consisting of 9 participants. The ratio of e-tutees to e-tutors was 3:1. To ensure that the e-tutors were qualified to provide quality feedback to the e-tutees, the e-tutors' group consisted of graduate students who studied or are studying English and had at least three years of teaching experience in the ESL/EFL context. As for the e-tutees group, it consisted of 9 undergraduate ESL students enrolled in Indiana University of Pennsylvania. After obtaining the approval of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, the study was conducted in Spring 2011.

After all participants, in both groups, received optional orientation on moodle, each e-tutor provided e-tutoring services to 3 e-tutees. E-tutees submitted, through moodle, a draft of a writing essay that they had to originally submit for a writing class they were enrolled in. An e-tutor read the draft and then provided feedback to the e-tutee asynchronously, first by providing comments that address high-order concerns and second, by providing comments that address some low-order concerns, if present.

After the e-tutees received feedback from their e-tutors, the e-tutee would arrange a time with the e-tutor to conduct a 20-30 minutes live, synchronous conference to discuss the same draft that has the asynchronous feedback and comments. The aim of this session was to answer individually any questions the e-tutees might have. After conducting thematic analysis of feedback records and all interactions between the e-tutors and the e-tutees, I conducted an individual, semi-structured interview with each participant. The interviews with e-tutors focused on three main aspects: description of the e-tutor's role during the process, recommendations e-tutors had to improve the service, and challenges they faced during the process of e-tutoring. On the other hand, the interviews with e-tutees focused on three main aspects: advantages of the e-tutoring service, Challenges the e-tutees faced, and recommendations e-tutees had to improve the service. Throughout the study, I played the role of an observer. I kept a journal where I jotted down notes about technical and other aspects of the e-tutoring sessions. Even though I was not involved in the interactions between the e-tutors and the e-tutees, I had access to all archives and transcripts of the sessions through moodle. These records

were thematically analyzed to find patterns in the e-tutoring process.

Significance of the Study

Many studies focus on the effects of using CALL to enhance the learning and teaching environments. Also, there has been much research on teachers' and students' attitudes towards using technology in the classroom. Few studies, however, focus on the area of e-tutoring in general and e-tutoring of writing in particular. On this point, Lynch (2002) states that like advising, tutoring services are often overlooked for web-based students. He mentions that many colleges and universities provide some type of campus-based tutoring services; these services must also be provided to distance students (p.59). The dynamic nature of colleges nowadays and the fact that many universities are providing web-based services to both campus-based students and distance students call for more research on e-tutoring of writing. The problem with some existing OWLs is that they try to replicate face-to-face writing tutorials in an electronic environment without realizing the importance of employing dynamics that are different than those employed in the traditional setting (Harris and Pemberton, 1995).

The aim of this study is to explore e-tutoring as a whole phenomenon, not just a replication of traditional, face-to-face tutoring because conducting e-tutoring requires addressing different dynamics that are uniquely relevant to this mode of tutoring. These dynamics should mainly focus on the communicative and interactional aspects of tutoring services provided to all students in general and ESL/EFL students in particular. What hopefully distinguishes this research study is that it combined asynchronous tutoring and synchronous conferencing for providing e-tutoring services. It is hoped that this combination provided e-tutees with a suitable socio-academic environment that enhanced their learning experience.

The limited literature and the scarcity in theoretical and empirical data in the field call for more research and experimentation. I hope that this study provides some insights to ESL/EFL professionals and writing centers to:

- Understand and differentiate between the dynamics involved in traditional tutoring and e-tutoring of writing.
- Implement e-tutoring strategies to improve the quality of service provided to ESL/EFL students.

- Identify and explore difficulties that ESL/EFL writers and tutors may face in e-tutoring situations.
- Develop practical solutions and ideas that will help in financially managing the implementation of e-tutoring and the recruitment of e-tutors.

Also, on the personal perspective, this study will help me shape my professional development in a theoretical and practical sense since I will be collecting empirical data that can be used to make informed decisions about using e-tutoring to raise students' awareness in regard to the importance of seeking help and reviewing their writings. Also, this study is expected to contribute to the existing body of research in the area of e-tutoring for improving the writing skills of ESL/EFL students.

Research Goals

The goals of this research study can be divided into two main categories: professional and institutional. The professional goals are related to my personal development as a researcher and educator while the institutional goals aim at evaluating the fruitfulness of implementing e-tutoring services in educational institutions.

Professional Goals

As a growing professional in the areas of composition, second language teaching, and educational technology, this study will help me contribute to my self-development as a teacher and researcher who uses technology. The professional goals of this study are:

- To explore the effectiveness of e-tutoring and how different it is from traditional tutoring.
- To understand the challenges that may arise in the e-tutoring process and try to utilize this experience to shape my identity not only as a writing teacher, but also as a language educator.
- To evaluate current research on the use of technology in the development of ESL/EFL students' writing.
- To collect empirical data on e-tutoring interactions in a web-based environment.
- To monitor changes that students make after receiving e-tutoring and to see how students employ ideas discussed in e-tutoring sessions.
- To identify advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to e-tutoring, namely synchronous and asynchronous techniques, and to see what ESL/EFL students prefer about each technique.

Institutional Goals

Being part of educational institutions as a composition instructor, I believe that this study has the following institutional goals:

- To explore issues that might impact the implementation of e-tutoring services in colleges and writing centers.
- To explore ways to improve e-tutoring services provided to ESL/EFL students.
- To present ideas to writing instructors who use technology in their classes.

The whole process of recruiting and implementing the e-tutoring service should facilitate conceptualizing how feasible e-tutoring is when it comes to implementing it on a larger scale.

By the end of the study, I hope to formulate a plan for a better implementation of e-tutoring and to contribute to the current research and theory regarding the use of technology in the ESL/EFL writing classroom.

Assumptions

Based on my role as a researcher and as a teacher who uses technology, I hold three primary assumptions that are

pertinent to this study. First, e-tutoring is pedagogically sound and financially cost-efficient. This assumption is based on the fact that computer technologies are fairly available in the field of language learning and teaching and are low in cost due to the fact that e-tutoring, as well as e-learning, do not have many time or space restraints. The second assumption is that implementing a functional e-tutoring service for writers needs and takes time due to issues related to training and other logistics that take time. The third assumption is that e-tutoring may not cater to the needs of all ESL/EFL students due to individual differences in learning styles. However, this does not mean that e-tutoring, as well as e-learning, is totally rejected by some students. It simply means that there are degrees of adoption. This assumption is also applicable to teachers.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations that may minimally affect the results of this study are:

- While I used multiple sources of data collection (triangulation), I, as a researcher, do not assume that the data is totally thorough because the participants may choose not to share some personal information.

- While the number of participants may raise a validity threat, it is partially difficult to recruit a large number of participants for a study of this nature.
- Due to cultural limitations, all participants were males. It was hard for me to recruit females participants because the Arabic culture limit direct interaction between the two genders.
- Since this study focuses on ESL/EFL students, its results and findings may not be generalized to native speakers of English.

Definitions of Terms

Within the scope of this study, the following definitions will be used:

CALL -an acronym that refers to *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*. CALL is the use of technology, mainly computers, in the teaching or learning of a second or foreign language (Richards & Schmidt 2002; and Higgins 1993). Changes in language pedagogy have also affected CALL-generally there are three phases of CALL; Behavioristic, Communicative, and Integrative (Warschauer & Healey 1998).

ESL - an acronym that refers to English as a second language. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), ESL refers to "English as the second language of anyone who

learns it after learning their first language in infancy in the home" (p. 180). It is sometimes contrasted with English as a foreign language (EFL).

EFL - an acronym that refers to English as a foreign language. EFL, according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), refers to someone who learns "English in a formal classroom setting with limited or no opportunities for use outside the classroom" (p.180). They further explain that EFL countries are countries "in which English does not play an important role in internal communication" (p.180). The term English Language Learner (ELL) can be used interchangeably with EFL student.

NBLT -an acronym that refers to *Network-Based Language Teaching*. *NBLT* is a theory (conceptual framework) derived from *CALL* that focuses on human-to-human interaction when using technology (Warschauer & Kern 2000).

LMS -an acronym that refers to *Learning Management System*. According to Dougiamas and Taylor (2003), a learning management system is "An information system that administers instructor-led and e-learning courses and keeps track of student progress."

Synchronous Communication -In *CALL*, synchronous communication refers to communication that is instantaneous

with all participants logged onto their computers and exchanging messages in real time (Richards & Schmidt 2002). *Asynchronous Communication* -In *CALL*, Asynchronous communication refers to communication that is not instantaneous and can be accessed and read by the recipient at a later time. This is generally in the form of discussion boards or discussion lists. (Richards & Schmidt 2002).

Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to lay the foundation for the present study by presenting the research questions within the NBLT framework. An overview of the methodology to be used was provided based on the research questions and theoretical framework. Goals, assumptions, limitations, and definitions of terms related to the current study were also provided.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter one laid the foundation for the current study by providing the research questions that are situated in the NBLT framework and will be researched using a qualitative research method. The chapter also provided information on the study's goals, assumptions, limitations and definitions of terms.

In chapter two, I provide a contextual overview of the literature related to this study. I begin by tracing the development of CALL and then discuss how the NBLT framework emerged and its relevance to the e-tutoring. I also cite and discuss key studies in three domains: the collaborative writing domain, the traditional tutoring domain, and the e-tutoring domain.

In chapter three, I provide a detailed description of the methodology to be used in this study. I discuss information related to sampling strategies, participants, instruments to be used, and site selection strategies. I also provide a plan on how collected data was classified and analyzed in order to get the most out of it. At the end of the chapter, I discuss issues related to the study's trustworthiness.

Chapter four is dedicated to present the results of the study and the analysis of the data. I categorized the results of the study according to each research question and highlighted and discussed significant findings afterwards.

Chapter five will shed light on key conclusions of the study in the form of discussing the emergent themes. I also point out and discuss recommendations for future research

and discuss the limitations associated with this empirical study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The aim of this chapter is to situate the current study by discussing the key studies that are related to it on theoretical and practical grounds. Thus, this chapter will be divided into two main sections.

The first section will follow a bottom-up approach and will focus on a number of theoretical concepts and frameworks that are related to the study. First, I will briefly trace the history of e-learning and how it is related to language education through reviewing the history of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Then, I will provide an overview of the Network-Based Language Teaching (NBLT) framework and will explain how it is theoretically related to e-tutoring. After that, I will discuss key points connected to the two popular forms of e-tutoring; synchronous and asynchronous tutoring. I will also discuss Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory and its relation to e-tutoring. In addition to that, I will discuss how the theory of Communities of Practice has an important role to e-tutoring as a community of language learning.

The following timeline graphs an outline of this chapter's theoretical connections to e-tutoring. It starts

from CALL and its phases that are parallel to the phases of language education, namely, behavioristic, integrative, and communicative phases, and then moves to the NBLT framework where e-tutoring is situated. Then, a connection is made between e-tutoring and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and Wenger's (2007) concept of communities of practice.

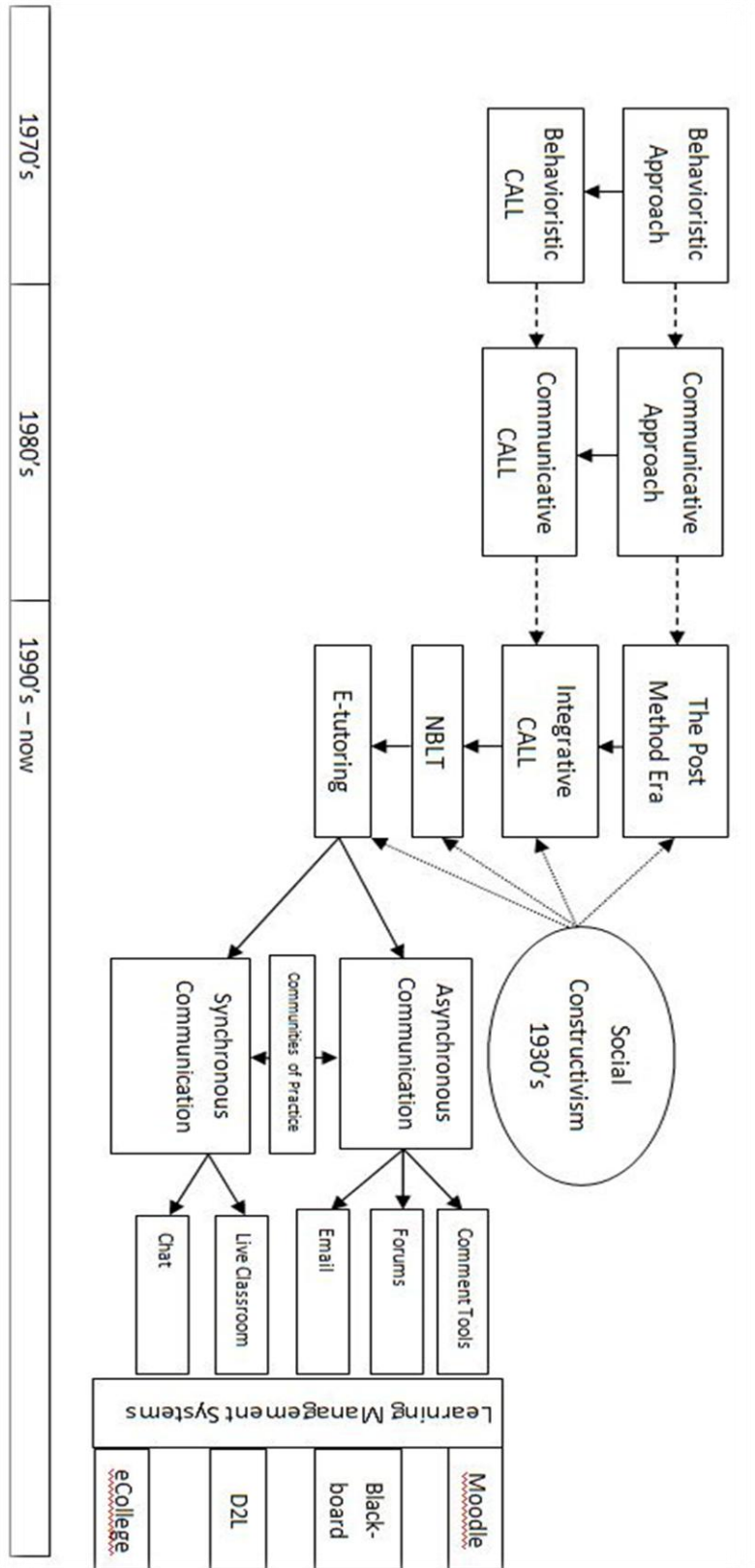


Figure 1: Theoretical Basis for e-tutoring

The second section will tackle the practical side of e-tutoring of writing through focusing on relevant key studies in the field. I believe it is important to start off the discussion by reviewing recent studies which focus on how educators, whether teachers or tutors, should address problems in ESL/EFL students' writings. I will be addressing the error gravity system and high and low order concerns in English Language Learning (ELL) student writings. Also, I will review the role of tutors and teachers when responding to student writings. Towards the end of the chapter, I will provide a contextual overview of important studies directly related to e-tutoring in the first and second language learning contexts.

History of CALL

In this section, I will mainly focus on Mark Warschauer's works for two main reasons; the extensive work he has done in the area of CALL, and the close relevancy of his works to this research study.

According to Warschauer and Healey (1998), CALL originally started in the early 1960's with the early development of computer hardware and software. CALL is defined as "any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language" (Beatty

2003, p.7). Levy (1997) provides a more comprehensive definition that includes teaching. Levy defines CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning "(1997, p.1). Combining these two definitions illustrates that CALL systematically changes along with changes in technologies, pedagogies, and teaching and learning strategies and beliefs.

Warschauer (1996) divides the history of CALL and its relationship to language pedagogies into three phases; Behavioristic CALL, Communicative CALL, and Integrative CALL. Each of these phases is closely related to the dominant pedagogy of its time. I will provide a brief overview of the characteristics of each phase and particularly focus on the role of the computer and how that changes from phase to phase.

Behavioristic CALL

This phase, as its name suggests, is based on Behaviorism which was a dominant theory in the 1950s. Warschauer (1996) indicates that Behavioristic CALL emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and it mainly focused on repetitive language drills; a dominant approach to language teaching at that time. According to Taylor (1980), the role of the computer in this phase was the role of a tutor who provided

drills for students to practice. In this phase, Warschauer (1998) describes the computer as a mechanical tutor that would not get tired or bored. In other words, the computer provided language drill tasks and the students repeated those drills until they mastered them. An example from this era would be computer software for teaching pronunciation, in which the computer models the pronunciation of words and the learner repeats the words. This type of software, even though still used in some EFL contexts, decontextualizes language learning and hinders learners from learning and interacting with the language more effectively. According to Warschauer (ibid) this type of software is referred to as "drill and kill" because the continued drilling without meaningful interaction may lead to killing the enthusiasm of students.

Communicative CALL

This phase was prominent in the 1970s and 1980s and was influenced by the communicative approach to teaching. Like the principles of the communicative approach, the role of the computer in this phase was to help students produce language using non-drill forms, to teach grammar implicitly, and to encourage the production of original utterances by learners rather than repetitive drills

(Underwood 1984, p.52). In this phase, the computer served three main roles; as a tutor, as a stimulus, and as a tool (Warschauer 1996; and Taylor and Perez, 1989). The computer as a tutor provided practice in a non-drill form enabling students to have a relatively wider range of choices, control and interaction. This is represented by some language games and multiple choice exercises in which the computer provides the right answers. As for the computer as a stimulus, CALL programs were made to stimulate students' discussion, writing, or critical thinking enabling more original language production from the part of the students, unlike the computer as a tutor in which the computer provides the right answer. As tools, CALL programs of this era served the purpose of producing language without necessarily providing any language materials. Examples of such programs include word processors (e.g. Microsoft Word) and spelling checkers (Warschauer, 1996 and Perez and Taylor, 1989).

Integrative CALL

This phase of CALL arose from the development of two main computer technologies; multimedia and the internet. Multimedia technologies allowed a variety of media to be integrated and accessed on a single computer. According to

Warschauer (1996), what makes multimedia a great transformative power in the history of CALL is that it allows for easy navigation among different resources with a touch of a mouse. For example, a learner can easily navigate a language learning application that has text, audio, and/or video materials easily because all the materials are carefully linked together. Internet technology also plays an important role in this phase as it facilitated the Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) movement, which became widespread in the early 1960's and provided some of the most powerful tools for technological teaching. The ability of the internet to connect people from all over the world has led to a new theoretical and practical advancement in the areas of CALL and CMC which is known as Network-Based Language Teaching (NBLT).

Network-Based Language Teaching (NBLT)

Network-Based Language Teaching emerged in the early 1980s as a result of technological and educational advancements (Kern, Ware, and Warschauer, 2008). It can be seen as a development of computer mediated communication with more focus on the educational aspects of communication. The advancement of internet technology with its feasibility and all the power it carries changed the

face of CALL to become more human-oriented. The internet enabled the computer to become a tool for human communication, leaving more space for human interaction in the language learning process. In the previous phases of CALL, the computer was the main source of information, but in this integrative phase of CALL along with the development of the NBLT framework, human interaction became more prominent. According to Kern, Ware, and Warschauer (2008), NBLT refers specifically to the pedagogical use of computers connected in either local or global networks, allowing one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communication. This framework focuses on the effects of bringing language learners from different backgrounds and locations together and/or with their teachers.

There are two main research paradigms that this framework entails, according to Kern, Ware, and Warschauer (ibid); they are Second Language Acquisition (Grounded Research); and the Socio-Cognitive and Socio-Cultural approaches. Second Language Acquisition grounded research mainly focuses on the study of negotiation of meaning in the e-learning environment. According to Kern, Ware, and Warschauer, SLA-grounded research are either 1) comparison studies that examine the effectiveness of online vs. face-to-face interaction in promoting negotiation of meaning,

noticing, comprehensible output, and form-focused learning, or 2) transfer studies that explore degree to which language use online transfers to language proficiency.

The Socio-Cognitive and Socio-Cultural approaches of NBLT research mainly focus on genre differentiation (i.e. blogs, emails, wikis, etc...) and Cultural studies in NBLT. Basically, research related to the genre differentiation domain focuses on how learning occurs and the benefits and characteristics of different networked communication tools such as blogs, wikis, discussions boards, and/or emails and listservs. This current study will be situated in the genre differentiation category as it examines the experiences of e-tutees and e-tutors in the synchronous and asynchronous communication in moodle.

Synchronous Communication

NBLT first emerged as a way to teach writing to deaf students via synchronous conferencing (Kern, Ware, and Warschauer. 2008). Synchronous communication refers to the mode of communication where two or more computer users communicate live and in real time using chat programs or instant messaging. This form of communication allows computer users to instantly communicate orally, visually, and/or in writing and, thanks to the advancement of

technology, all communications, whether synchronous or asynchronous, can be saved and archived for future reference.

Besides achieving success in other fields, this development of technology has also proved to be successful in the educational and academic fields. Nowadays, for example, we can see that electronic communication has been utilized in distant learning courses and electronic tutorial services. For the purposes of this study, I will be reviewing literature that has focused on the use of technology in education and academia.

Scholars have often compared and contrasted discussions and collaborations that take place in the classroom environment (face-to-face) with synchronous online communication. Some of these early studies (Ortega, 1997 and Warschauer, 1997) that compared in-class discussions with synchronous online communication found that synchronous communication had some added benefits which included (ibid): more democratic student participation, more time to develop and refine comments, encouragement of more collaborative spirit among students, enhanced motivation for language learners, reduction of anxiety, and positive effects on students' writing ability.

On the other hand we find that there are certain shortcomings to synchronous communication. Kern (1995) noted that teacher control over class discussion could be compromised, the rapid pace of written discussion sometimes affected the students' comprehension abilities, and that the coherence and flow of discussion often suffered. Kern suggests that instructors should evaluate the effectiveness of this mode of communication in light of the instructional goals they set for their classes. In other words, this mode of communication may not work for every class; instructors need to evaluate the students' needs and performance along with the pedagogical goals and objectives set for the class before deciding which mode of teaching to use. Instructors should remember that the ultimate goal of education is to achieve progress, and if progress is better achieved through the use of technology, then they should consider it.

Another point to consider is that synchronous communication may particularly well serve ESL/EFL students. Synchronous communication may encourage ESL/EFL students to communicate with each other and/or with their instructors or tutors without the fear of making mistakes. This mode of communication may be used as a way to save face; ESL/EFL students will have time to formulate a response before

submitting it which may make the students more comfortable when communicating with teachers, tutors, or their classmates. Various studies have shown that if students feel comfortable in the learning environment, they will have lower anxiety, and as a result will achieve better (Krashen 1982). This can be particularly true for ESL/EFL writers who seek help with their writing. Research has shown that ESL/EFL writers sometimes avoid seeking help from the writing center because they may get overwhelmed by the discussion of their writing inadequacies (Hayward 2009, p.12).

In the following section, I will be reviewing key studies in using synchronous communication to provide e-tutoring of writing.

Synchronous tutoring of writing.

In this section, I will be reviewing seminal studies that used synchronous communication methods to perform tutoring tasks to provide feedback to writers. I will also review some of the advantages and disadvantages of this mode of tutoring, and then clarify how this mode of tutoring can be helpful to writers in general and L2 writers in particular.

In a case study by Thurber (1999), the popular software "Netmeeting" was used to provide synchronous

tutoring services to one academic writer as a case study. Netmeeting enabled the tutee and the tutor to easily interact together visually, orally, and textually. At times, the tutor had access to the tutee's screen in order to advise the tutee what to do and where to go for help. Thurber reports the lessons learned from this case study, and provides insights when using this mode of tutoring. He points out the benefits of having visual and oral communication which makes sessions smoother because both parties have spoken language with visual reference. He also advises tutors to be patient with tutees and with the technology used, and recommends training both tutors and tutees in order to avoid any possible problems. Another benefit of visual and oral communication is the engagement of the tutor with the tutee throughout the process of revising the tutee's paper. The tutor will be available to help the tutee on the spot with any issues that may emerge from the paper, especially higher-order concerns (p.154). Thurber cautions against shift of focus of the session towards mechanics. He mentions that tutees may tend to ask more questions on grammar and punctuation as they are easier to solve, and may ignore higher order concerns. To solve this problem, the tutor may shift the focus of the

session by reading several paragraphs to create an agenda for the session (p.155).

Although Thurber provides useful insights to tutors that work well with native speaker writers, some of his techniques may not be applicable to L2 writers. For example, using visual and oral communication with L2 writers may have some affective implications as the L2 learners may become preoccupied while trying to not make mistakes while communicating with the tutors which may partially lead to ineffective communication with tutors.

Textual synchronous communication in e-tutoring of academic writing will be used in this study for holding conferences to discuss drafts, give specific feedback, answer e-tutees' questions, and clarify points related to students' drafts. In chapter three, I will discuss the use of synchronous conferencing and how it will be utilized by e-tutors and e-tutees.

Asynchronous Communication

Asynchronous communication within online education and the NBLT framework focuses on delayed electronic communication between two or more users. This mode of interaction may take place using emails, discussions boards, blogs, wikis and other mediums of communication.

The advantages of asynchronous communication in comparison to synchronous communication are that it is "less fragmentary, more informationally dense and complete, and focuses on a single discussion topic" (Kern, Ware, and Warschauer, 2008, p.284).

Asynchronous tutoring of writing.

In e-tutoring of academic writing, asynchronous feedback gives the e-tutor the chance to read the paper, comment on it in an organized fashion, and have more time to provide original ideas to the e-tutee rather than providing on-the-spot comments (Purdue's OWL 2006).

In a study by Vonderwell (2003) about students' experiences with asynchronous communication, she found that the main disadvantages of asynchronous communication are lack of consistency and lack of immediate feedback from the instructor. This is true due to the fact that tutors may get overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do. These two disadvantages are related to management and training and since the field of e-tutoring is fairly new, efforts should be put forward to employ professional tutors and provide continuous, up-to-date, professional training and strategies to handle paperwork and workload. Also, institutions should consider investing in hiring more

tutors in order to cater to the needs of the students enrolled in their institutions.

Coogan's (1995) study of using emails as an extension of the writing center showed that asynchronous tutoring is of numerous pedagogical benefits to the students; however, there was a problem of sustaining the dialogue between clients (tutees) and the consultants (tutors). Coogan reports in her study that out of 554 email consultations over the course of one year, only twelve resulted in continuous dialogue. This possibly means that in order to sustain conversations with students via asynchronous communication, more research efforts need to be exerted in order to understand the nature of the communication, the tutees' needs, and possibly the media used.

In another study by Castner (1999), in an attempt to understand the problem of non-sustained dialogue, she conducted a study where she asked her students to email drafts of their papers to the OWL to get feedback. Castner analyzed the drafts and the writing center tutor's email responses, and asked the students about the email interactions. Thirteen students indicated that they understood everything and had no questions to the tutors, while sixteen students had questions and needed an extended dialogue (p.121).

The second part of Castner's study focused on finding why her students did not email the writing center back with questions. Her findings revealed that some students thought that response time on the writing center's part was long. She also found that some students were unfamiliar with email. Another finding was that some students had issues with technology accessibility. Also, she found that students chose other sources for help, did not know that they could ask questions, feared that more confusion would occur, or viewed the activity as a mere class requirement that is not aimed to help them (pp.121-123). Analyzing these findings, a number of solutions can be found; first, writing teachers should explain to their students the importance of seeking help, be it from the writing center, OWLs, other peers, and/or the instructor. Also, I think that students should be familiarized with the mission of writing centers and how they operate so that they get a clear picture of what the process is about. I think that technological accessibility and/or familiarity is not an issue nowadays as most, if not all, students are familiar with the basic functions of technology.

In 1999, Mabrito published an article which emphasized the potential role of e-mail tutoring in reducing writing apprehension in high-apprehension writers. Mabrito argues

that the nature of email tutorials creates an emotional and psychological distance. This environment may help lower high-apprehension writers' feelings of anxiety toward the evaluation process and make them more willing to participate in the process of writing (p.146) He also notes that email tutorials are more useful to high-apprehension students in the revision process as these tutorials provide a "permanent blue-print" which helps writers in the revision process. Another benefit of this mode of tutoring is it allows high-apprehension students to witness their own writing process and see the evolution of their texts.

Socio-cultural Aspects of Learning Management Systems

In this section I will be reviewing the popular LMS moodle by presenting some recent statistics on its use and availability worldwide. I will also talk about some of the features it offers and how these features may be utilized in e-tutoring.

This section will also discuss Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and its relationship to e-learning. I will also discuss briefly its relation to moodle, and how it can be of benefit to EFL students.

Learning Management Systems: Moodle as an Example

Learning Management Systems (LMS's) refers to computer systems that are mainly designed to facilitate an electronic learning environment. These systems are widely used in most universities and institutions of higher education across the globe. They have features that simulate the traditional educational environment but in an electronic mode. Features include chatting, document sharing, discussion boards, white boards, organizational tools, grading tools etc.... The most popular LMS's in the academic world are Blackboard, WebCT, moodle, Desire2Learn, and eCollege.

Today, an LMS represents an extension or a replacement of the traditional classroom, depending on the way an LMS is integrated into the curriculum.

The importance of e-learning in general and LMS's in particular can be represented by the rapid growth the industry is witnessing since the beginning of the 21st century. To illustrate this growth, I will use some statistics from the moodle official website. I will use moodle statistics for two reasons; firstly, moodle is one of the top used LMS's worldwide, and secondly, moodle will be the platform for the current study. The statistics will

show the approximate number of courses, users, and institutions using moodle for e-learning purposes.

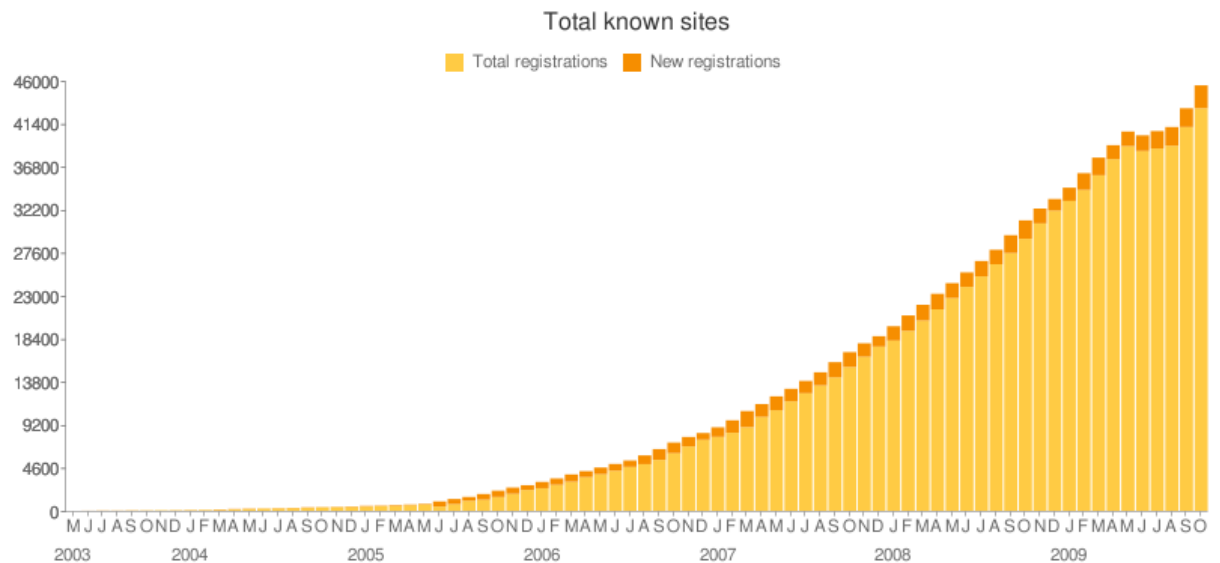


Figure 2: Total Known Sites Using Moodle

The figure above shows the steady growth of moodle usage by educational websites; more than 46000 websites registered with moodle across the globe in October 2009. This indicates that more and more websites are being registered with moodle every month.

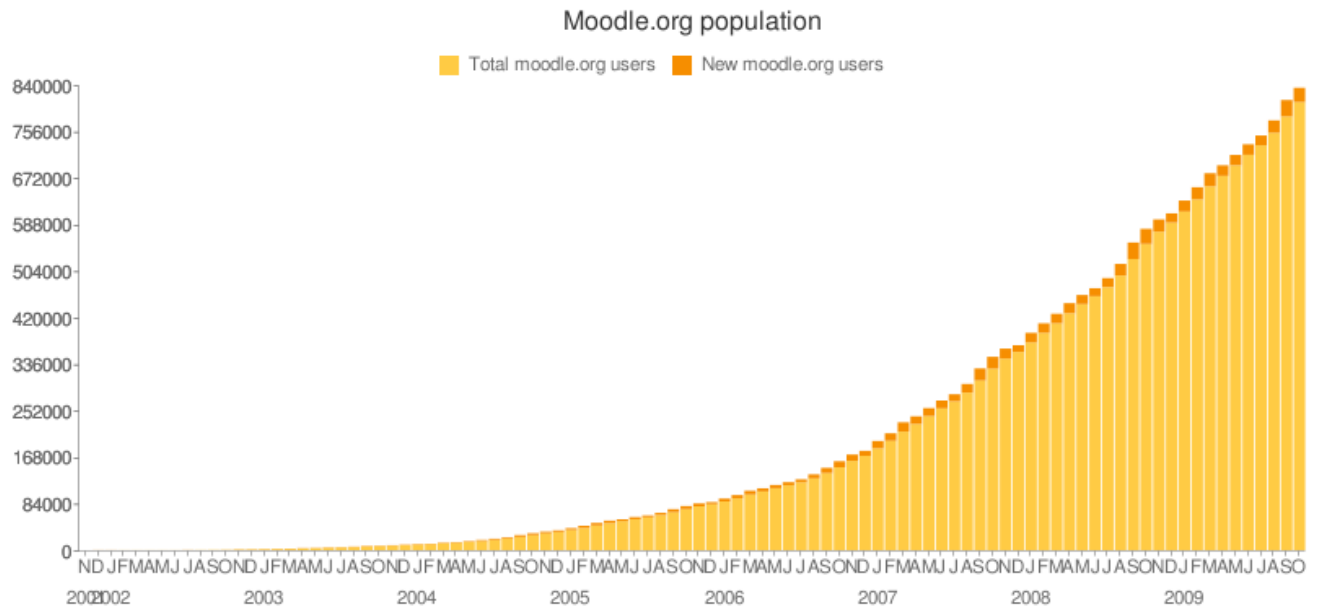


Figure 3: Moodle Population



Figure 4: Moodle Registrations Worldwide

The above cited figures (Moodle, 2009) clearly show the rapid growth of moodle in the US and across the globe. Moodle is used in 207 countries with more than 840000 registered users. From the graphs, one can say that the growth is rapid and continuous. The reason behind this growth in usage of moodle and other LMSs is the increasing interest by students, teachers, and educational administrations to turn to the electronic mode either

partially or completely. According to Wesley (2002) and Dougiamas and Taylor (2003), these interests can be financial, educational, social, and even psychological. E-learning has proven to be feasible in all these areas provided it is being applied and utilized in an appropriate manner after conducting proper needs analysis of the educational situation.

As for the e-tutoring service, more information are provided and discussed in chapter three. Discussion included the rationale behind using moodle and the tools that were used in the service.

Social Constructivism and LMS's

Lev Vygotsky was the first scholar to introduce the idea that students need social interaction to learn better. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (ibid). Vygotsky also introduced the socio-cultural concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where a child follows an adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without help or assistance. According to Bodrova and Leong (1996), the concept of ZPD was broadened and modified by Vygotskian scholars and new terms, such as scaffolding, were introduced.

The theory of social constructivism is also closely related to writing instruction; according to Hewett and Ehmann (2004), online writing instruction has epistemological roots in social constructivism. This is due to the nature of writing as a collaborative process not only between the writer and teacher/tutor, but also between the writer and his peers. This collaboration provides an opportunity to the writer to get feedback on the written piece. This process of discussion and negotiation is considered a part of the process of writing.

Another point worth mentioning is that the relationship between social constructivism and electronic learning becomes stronger and clearer when tasks and activities performed online are designed interactively and engage students with teachers, tutors, and/or other students. According to Dougiamas and Taylor (2003) the basis and development of moodle was theoretically informed by social constructivism. Le Blanc's (2004) ideas go in line with this concept as he explains:

What distinguishes these theories from cognitive theories is the belief that 'knowledge' is not seen as an object that can be passed from one person to another, rather understanding and meaning are constructed by learners through their interactions

with others, while actively engaging in learning tasks. Learning does not take place within a vacuum, rather it is a process integrated within a social context. Knowledge is negotiated and constructed through a dialogical process. The real jewel of the moodle LMS is that it centres on learning activities rather than objective content. There is great support for social interaction and dialogue around learning materials. (Message # 2).

Nowadays, socially interactive e-learning activities and environments are widely available, and a lot of opportunities are presented to students to interact with their teachers, tutor, or other students.

That is why Holmes et al. (2006) and many other researchers emphasize the fact that online courses should incorporate some sort of social interaction and provide opportunities for collaboration in order for the learning environment to be more beneficial to students. According to Holmes et al. (ibid), students who work collaboratively enhance their own learning experience and that of others; this applies not only in the traditional classroom but also in the electronic/online environment.

One kind of environment that encourages online collaboration is a Learning Management Systems (LMS). The tools of LMS's are very well developed and designed to provide many interactive features that make collaborative learning more accessible to students. Those features include synchronous and asynchronous tools. For example, moodle has synchronous tools like chat rooms and live classrooms that allow students, teachers, and tutors to have synchronous text, audio, and/or video communications. Asynchronous tools in moodle include discussion forums, message sending, quickmail, and grading features that allow for communication in a delayed mode. The key to make interactive activities in LMS's depends on the pedagogical decisions a course or service designer takes. Those decisions should also be taken bearing in mind the suitability of tools available in the LMS. All these features require designing interactive learning opportunities in order to enhance the learning experience.

Another important issue to consider is that some students in general and some ESL/EFL students in particular are shy when it comes to collaborative learning in traditional classroom settings. On the other hand, learning in an electronic environment that encourages collaboration may give those students the opportunity to collaborate and

learn without the fear of making mistakes. This will help them become better learners as they will be able to collaborate and discuss issues with other students, teachers, and/or tutors. Providing this stress-free environment that embodies the tenets of social constructivism will help shy students play an active role in the learning process.

Moodle as a Community of Practice for e-tutoring

For this study, moodle was used as an online community of practice. Wenger (2007) defines communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Wenger identifies three characteristics of a community of practice: 1) the domain, 2) the community, and 3) the practice. Those characteristics can be summarized as a group of people whose identity is defined by a shared domain of interest (domain). Members of such communities engage in joint activities and discussions and build relations (community), and they are also practitioners, not merely a community who has a shared interest (practice).

In this study, e-tutees worked with e-tutors to discuss various aspects of e-tutees' drafts. There were

active communication between the two parties aiming at producing a better understanding of the drafts. The e-tutors attempted to provide e-tutees with useful feedback to help them in the process of writing. By interacting with e-tutees, e-tutors developed better tutoring skills as they got more experience by being engaged the in e-tutoring process.

In the sections below, I will address the practical aspects of the study. An important part of providing e-tutoring services is the practice of giving feedback. In order to address this issue, I selected research studies that present the nature of the process of giving feedback and the difference between electronic and traditional written/oral feedback. I will also tackle the role of tutors in the tutoring process and how it is different from the role of teachers; discussion in this area will include the teacher-student relationship and the tutor-student relationship. In addition, I will also focus on the error gravity system which provides an overview of the seriousness of mistakes ESL students end to make by prioritizing which mistakes should be dealt with first while reviewing students' drafts and papers. Then, I will refer to some electronic peer review studies which have theoretical and practical relevance to this study and

seminal studies in that are directly related to the e-tutoring of writing.

Research on Teacher and Tutor Responses to Students'

Writing

Although teacher response is important and this importance has been pointed out by many scholars, research in this area in general and L2 in particular seems to be scarce.

Research on teacher response to students' writing has a direct relationship to this study of e-tutoring because the role of a writing tutor in providing feedback to students is similar to the role of a regular teacher in many ways. Therefore, it is safe to assume that teachers and tutors play similar roles when responding to students' writings.

Tutors' Roles

Discussion in this section will be devoted to the role of the tutor and the role of the teacher, focusing in particular on the similarities and differences and the advantages and disadvantages of each role. I will also focus on the importance of written feedback on students' writing and what makes written feedback most effective and useful to students.

When it comes to responding to students' writing, teachers and tutors play important yet different roles. On one hand, the teacher provides feedback from an authoritative position as a grader and as an evaluator. This capacity that teachers hold may put a burden on the student's shoulders as they may feel obligated to correct errors and make all changes pointed out by the teacher in order to get a better grade. Students sometimes do not realize that although teachers strive to help students become better writers, they give priority to implementing requested changes to get better grades. Their main concern and source of anxiety are their grades (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986, p.127).

The tutor, on the other hand, if properly qualified, provides feedback from a non-authoritative position as an optional service provider who does not have any power over students. This sense of voluntary interaction may contribute to the reduction of students' anxiety and result in better learning opportunities as students are not under any pressure to seek the services of a tutor nor to apply everything a tutor suggests (Bruffee 1978, and North 1984).

(E-)Tutoring is a good option for students; because students who seek this service most probably want to

improve their writing skills and produce good pieces of writing.

Bruce and Rafoth (2009) mention that tutors, whether face-to-face or online, play important roles in the tutoring process and they also emphasized the "urgent need for trained tutors to work with ESL writers both in the United states and around the world" (p.xii). Therefore, it is important for us to realize that tutors need to be able to play a number of roles in order to be successful in the tutoring situation. In an interesting guide in tutor training, Ryan and Zimmerelli (2004:pp.28-30) state that tutors wear many hats, referring to the different roles tutors play. According to them, a tutor can be an ally, a coach, a commentator, a collaborator, writing expert, and a counselor; these roles are applicable to e-tutors as well.

Tutors are allies when they offer help, support, and sympathy to tutees. The tutor as a coach provides instructions and directions without doing the work. Rather, a tutor wearing this hat observes the functionality of the tutee and looks for what went right and what went wrong. The tutor as a commentator gives a broader picture of the writing situation for a tutee in hope of improving not only for a certain paper, but also for other papers. The tutor as a collaborator shares his/her own experience and

knowledge with tutees and discusses ideas and concepts with them aiming to help them in developing their ideas or arguments. The tutor as a writing expert admits that he/she is not an expert in issues they do not know. They try to help tutees find the answer to their questions or concerns. The tutor as a counselor provides advice on issues that may interfere with a tutee's performance on an assignment.

The Teacher-Student Relationship and The Tutor-Student Relationship

The relationship between writers and tutors, whether in the writing center or in the electronic mode, is unique; and at the same time it is very different from the writer - teacher relationship. Harris (1995) explains this relationship very clearly; Harris states that the tutor comes as a middle person between the student and the teacher. He further explains that students work with tutors more effectively because tutors "do not need to take attendance, make assignments, set deadlines, deliver negative comments, give tests or issue grades." (p.28). This role that tutors play is a role that makes students feel more comfortable and have more control over the writing process. In other words, the liberal relationship

between students and tutors makes an excellent setting for writing productivity.

Both teachers and tutors can play an important role in creating a relaxed atmosphere for the students so that learning may occur at its optimum. The more relaxed the atmosphere, the better the learning. According to Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis of his second language acquisition theory, learners who have high levels of motivation, good self image, self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success. This surely applies to academic writing in the second/foreign language context. Academic writers should not feel that grades are the main goal, rather educators should teach students that the main goal is to become better writers through extensive practice of writing in a relaxed and stress-free environment.

Feedback that Students Value the Most

There has been extensive discussion in the field on the nature of feedback that students value the most. The study by Kapner (1991) revealed that message-related, comment-based written feedback is significantly related to the production of higher-level writing in college intermediate-level L2 student journals. He also found that

error-correction feedback is not significantly relevant. This means that when a commenter, whether a teacher or tutor, provides feedback that is aimed at the content of the written piece, the students will produce better written pieces and may be more willing to revise.

Goldstein (2004) states that written feedback can be ineffective because teachers do not always understand students' intentions and students do not understand or know how to use teacher comments. In order to improve this situation, Goldstein and other researchers in the field suggest that written commentary should be text-specific, direct, and contain advice about how to a student should revise.

Perhaps one of the first and most influential studies in this area is that of Ferris' (1997). Ferris looked at 110 drafts of 47 ESL students and examined over 1600 marginal and end comments and then examined revised drafts of each paper to study changes that students make in response to teacher commentary. Ferris found that a significant proportion of the comments appeared to lead to substantive student revision, and particular types and forms of commentary (discussed above) appeared to be more helpful than others. In another study by Williams (2004) on the effect of tutoring on L2 students' revision, she found

that in tutoring sessions, students tend to substantially revise their papers when suggestions of tutors are direct, when students participate actively in the conversation, and when they write down their plans during the session.

In a nutshell, research in this area comes down to one conclusion, that ESL students value teachers' feedback more than any form of feedback including peer feedback (Tuzi, 2001, p.27).

Differences between Oral and Electronic Feedback

I find it necessary to have a section on the differences between oral and electronic feedback because recognizing the differences between the two types helps in reducing possible obstacles and approaching a better understanding of the data. Tuzi(2001) lists a number of differences between oral and electronic feedback. The following table is adapted from his work(p.37):

Table 1.

Tuzi's (2001) differences between oral and electronic feedback

Oral Feedback	Electronic Feedback
Face-to-face	Distant
Oral	Written
Time Dependant	Time independent
Pressure to quickly respond	No pressure to quickly respond
Place dependent	Place independent
Non-verbal components	No non-verbal components
More personally intrusive	More personally distant
Oral/cultural barriers	Written/cultural barriers
A greater sense of involvement	A greater sense of anonymity

The table above summarizes the key differences between oral and electronic feedback. It can be noticed that the comparison between the two modes of feedback have their unique advantages. This study will try to add more advantages to the electronic feedback mode by employing the synchronous technique of communication between the tutor and the tutee. The areas of written cultural barriers and the sense of anonymity will be dissolved as the tutor and

the tutee will be involved in a conversation specifically tailored to the needs of the tutee. In the synchronous session, the tutor and the tutee will be able to discuss matters related to the drafts and the tutor will have the chance to ask for clarifications and by doing so, the tutee will be involved in an implicit elaboration/brainstorming process.

The following are some benefits of the synchronous sessions:

- Active discussion of issues pointed out in the asynchronous session.
- Discussion of specific ideas will help tutees in the process of elaboration/brainstorming.
- The tutor will have a good chance to ask questions, discuss thoughts, propose ideas, and point out common mistakes.
- The feedback process will become more personal, more interactive, and less anonymous.

It's worth mentioning also that since this area of research is fairly new, more research needs to be done to establish valid criteria to compare different forms of feedback.

The Error Gravity System and High and Low Order Concerns

As mentioned before, giving feedback should aim at improving the students' writing by giving comments relevant to the content rather than mechanics. The feedback has to be clear with suggestions on doing the revision. Such feedback requires close attention from the teacher/tutee on the nature of errors the student makes through applying the error gravity system. The error gravity system was introduced by Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1984). This system relied on faculty response to the written errors of students who are non-native speakers of English. This system is similar to the High order concerns and low order concerns systems. Both systems state that there is a hierarchy of errors that range according to the degree of obstruction of meaning. Both systems embody the fact that some errors in writing need to be addressed more than others. What determines which errors to be pointed out and discussed is the meaning of the text; if an error interferes with the understanding of the meaning of the text, it should be pointed out. The difference between the two systems, I believe, appears to be that the error gravity system was introduced for ESL writers and that high and low order concerns systems was introduced for native speakers of English and can be used for ESL or EFL.

Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (ibid) preset the following chart as a reference to seriousness of errors:

A. Word Order	
B. Verb Tense or Missing Verb	(A-E are relatively serious)
C. Relative Clause	
D. Word Choice	
E. Subject-Verb	
F. Pronoun Agreement	
G. Preposition	(F-J are less serious)
H. Spelling	
I. Comma Splice	
J. Article	

Figure 5: The Error Gravity System

Research in the field shows that pointing out all errors in a student's written product is a stressful process for teachers and writers (Sommers, 1982). This process is not only time-consuming to the teacher/tutor, but also affects students' self-esteem especially for non native speakers of English.

The above-mentioned figure represents a hierarchy of errors that should teachers and tutors should consider when commenting on students' papers. The first set (A-E) represents what is also called in the literature the higher-order concerns, and the second set (F-J) represents lower-order concerns.

It is also worth mentioning here the conclusion (Hartwell 1985) and other researchers have reached that the formal teaching of grammar "has no effect on the quality of

students' writing nor on their ability to avoid error" (p.106). This, however, does not mean that teachers or tutors do not have to point out some grammatical errors that writers sometimes make that affect meaning making in the written piece. In fact, errors that interfere with the meaning of the text, grammatical or others, have to be pointed out and discussed.

Online Writing Labs and e-tutoring Services of Writing

It is important at this point to differentiate between OWLs and e-tutoring of writing because these two services are, though similar in some ways, have major differences between them. The most important difference between the two services is that OWLs usually provide general resources that offer guidance to writers without personalized attention to writers. The importance of these resources is non-negotiable; however, as research indicates, individualized instruction that is offered by tutors and provided by conferences with teachers significantly help students with their writing. Murray (2004) stressed the importance of individualized instruction of writing because this individual attention will cater to the needs of the students and will address their individual differences in various aspects of students' writings. When an instructor

or a tutor individually interacts with a writer and discusses the various aspects of his/her draft, the instructor or tutor will be able to address higher-order and lower-order concerns that are crucial to the development of the students' writings, will help students' think critically, and will also help the students with their writing organizational skills. This individual attention may seem time and effort consuming at first, however, in the long run, this will produce better writers in less time. In other words, the students will receive concentrated attention that will hopefully help them with their writing in a shorter time. Higher education institutions will be able to serve more students in less time if they invest in hiring more tutors.

Studies on Electronic Peer Review of Academic Writing

Although the use of technology seems to be promising on the educational as well as the financial level, research on the use of e-tutoring and online correspondence between the tutor and the tutee in OWLs and writing tutorial services in the second and foreign language contexts as well as the first language setting is somewhat limited. There have been some studies relevant to e-tutoring of writing such as electronic peer reviewing but very limited studies of e-

tutoring of writing as a professional service have been conducted. In this section, I will discuss some major studies conducted on electronic peer review and the similarities and differences between such studies and the study of e-tutoring.

The difference between this study and electronic peer review studies is simple. In peer review studies, students receive feedback from their fellow students. This study, in contrast focuses on providing feedback to student writers from a professional tutor source. It is worth mentioning that because of the close relevancy between electronic peer review and e-tutoring most of the theoretical background for this research study will be derived from the literature of those two areas.

Some previous studies that have focused on electronic peer review (e.g. eDRAFT by Pagnucci, Mauriello, and Williamson 1999; Al-Jamhoor 2005; and Scott 2006) show that online peer reviewing is a technique that produces positive pedagogical results. I will talk about the studies mentioned above and then discuss some of their relevancies to this research study.

The eDraft Project and the College Writing Peer Response Project (CWPRP)

The eDRAFT project by Pagnucci, Mauriello, and Willaimson (1999) and Mauriello's (2000) research study have similar themes; both concentrate on the use of technology for providing feedback to students' writings and the role of peers in providing that feedback. They provide a service where students can post their academic writings online and other students and internet users can respond to the posted writings. This service helped the students receive feedback from a diverse web audience. The researchers combined a number of sections in the same university in this project and students from different universities Mauriello's (2000) study.

On the significance of collaborative revision of writing, one student said that "it is difficult to discount the impact of community members on the revision process." (Mauriello 2000, p. 152).

Findings of the projects suggest that providing feedback electronically gave the students a chance to produce better writing through receiving collaborative feedback. Also, collaborative writing helped students develop new writing strategies as they involved the

audience in the revising/writing processes which made the writings more informative, personal, and interactive.

This research project is different from the studies mentioned above in the sense that I, as an ESL certified teacher and researcher, will use technology to provide individualized feedback to students. I will provide this service in a professional manner for the students. Also, in my research study I will provide asynchronous feedback to drafts and synchronous conferences with the participants to maximize the benefits of the service and to provide individualized, one-on-one instruction and feedback to the students. Many researchers agree that academic writing is best taught through individualized instruction, catering to the needs of the students. Although peer feedback is valuable, a professional e-tutoring service may serve the purpose of producing even better academic writers.

The Online Collaborative Writing Project (OCWP)

The OCWP by Al-Jamhoor (2005) focused on connecting Arabs and Americans online to promote peace and to increase cultural awareness through collaborative writing. Participants of this study were male and female students at three Arab universities and an American University. The Arab students were enrolled in advanced EFL writing classes

and exchanged feedback on cultural themes with their American peers. Findings of the study revealed that Arab EFL participants had strong positive attitudes toward the OCW activities. The OCW activities motivated the students to read and write more habitually. The project also increased their self-confidence, lowered their anxiety, and empowered their voices according to Al-Jamhoor. Also, the project increased the participants' cultural awareness, lessened tensions, corrected negative stereotypes, and built bridges of communication.

Although Al-Jamhoor's (2005) study focused on cultural and political issues as well as collaborative writing, it has several connections to the e-tutoring of academic writing paradigm in the sense that voluntary, as opposed to coercive, interactions between the e-tutor and the e-tutee may help in increasing the e-tutees' confidence about their writing and help in lowering the e-tutees' anxiety because the e-tutoring service will give the students feedback and tips that may help in improving their writing without any risk on the part of the student.

Research Studies on e-Tutoring of Academic Writing

In this section, I will focus on studies that are directly related to my study. I have discussed some studies

earlier, but in this section I am focusing on research projects that have either used asynchronous tutoring or synchronous tutoring. Also, it is worth mentioning that most of the studies in this area are either master's theses or doctoral dissertations.

Tuzi (2001) conducted a research study on the role of e-feedback on ESL writers' revisions. The study focused on how the students responded to electronic feedback and what kinds of revisions they made as a result of feedback they received. Twenty second language writers performed writing tasks on Internet accessible computers using a web-based writing application where they can write, edit, revise, and receive feedback from other students and instructors. The study found that some students preferred oral feedback to e-feedback. However, Tuzi found that e-feedback, compared to oral feedback, had a greater impact on revision and that e-feedback helped ESL writers focus on larger blocks of writing like sentences and paragraphs more than oral feedback.

It's worth mentioning that this study was one of the first studies to discuss how technology can combine writing, editing, revising, and receiving feedback from different internet users. Although this study found that some students preferred oral feedback to e-feedback, there

has been tremendous changes in the field of educational technology which allow even better communication among internet users.

Sandvik (2007) conducted a research study on exploring interactions between students and tutors in the asynchronous environment using a mixed method approach. She examined 15 students' rough drafts, the tutorials applied to these drafts, and the resulting final papers and found that asynchronous tutoring can generate useful learning opportunities for students in terms of writing strategies and error-correction. The main limitation of her study was the lack of students' familiarity with the practice which she said may have limited the benefits of online tutoring.

I think this limitation can be addressed by having the students practice interacting with tutors in an extended period of time. Also, using synchronous conferencing may help in making the students understand their roles and the roles of their tutors. Although, combining synchronous and asynchronous tutoring techniques may be a burden on educators and service providers, this study will try to examine whether or not using both techniques may produce better results for tutees.

Moser (2002) conducted a study in which she used a qualitative approach to describe the online writing lab

tutorial. Moser's aim was to attempt to capture a full picture of the online tutoring sessions conducted by three tutors over a six-week period in a university writing center. Her role was of a participant, observer, and/or interviewer of tutors for the sessions. Her study reveals that computer mediated conferencing is a promising field and more training is needed for tutors in order to facilitate stronger pedagogical outcomes. I believe that being trained and being qualified to tutor writing plays crucial role in the quality and the outcomes of e-tutoring.

Summary

Having reviewed studies that are related to this research project and after extensive review and reading in this field, I could not find a single study that combines asynchronous tutoring, synchronous conferencing, and the effect of e-tutoring on e-tutees' writing. This research study will combine these aspects in an attempt to capture a comprehensive view of the process and the product of e-tutoring.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to explain and justify the research methodology used in collecting and analyzing the data for this empirical research study. I will begin this chapter by giving a brief overview of the methodology that I followed, and then I will describe in detail the sampling method, participants, data collection, instruments, procedures, and methods of data analysis. At the end of this chapter, I will address issues related to the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Qualitative Research Method

What informs the researcher's decision when using a qualitative, quantitative or a mix of both while conducting an empirical research study are the research question(s) and purpose(s) (Maxwell, 2005). Due to the nature of this research study, a qualitative approach was followed to help me in addressing the purposes of this study and in answering the research questions. Because I am looking at examining the experiences of Arab ESL students in using e-tutoring and that of the tutors, the qualitative research

approach empowered me as a researcher to gain a thick description of the experience of each participant. Qualitative research helped me situate the possibilities for using e-tutoring in the ESL/EFL context.

Gay and Airsian (2003) stated that qualitative research is usually conducted with a small number of participants. They also mentioned that data collected through qualitative methods is analyzed by synthesizing, categorizing and organizing data into patterns that produce a descriptive, narrative synthesis.

I believe that the qualitative findings of this study can be applicable to other contexts and can contribute to the research body in the area of writing in general, second language writing in particular, and especially writing-focused tutoring.

Study Overview

This study focused on reporting the experiences of Arab ESL students enrolled in writing classes in Indiana University of Pennsylvania using the e-tutoring service I designed. The level of the writing classes ranged from Basic Writing to College level Writing. The study also focused on reporting the experiences of e-tutors who provided e-tutoring services asynchronously and

synchronously. In order to achieve these aims, I sat up an electronic platform through moodle where all participants were enrolled (See Appendix A for screenshots). Every 3 e-tutees were randomly paired with one e-tutor. Each e-tutee was asked to turn in a draft of a written essay for the class that they were enrolled in by uploading it in the appropriate place in moodle. Then, the designated e-tutor retrieved the file, provided feedback asynchronously on the draft, and uploaded the file back with his feedback and comments. Then, the e-tutor arranged for a 20-30 minute synchronous conference to discuss the draft with the e-tutee. During the conference, the e-tutor and the e-tutee had the chance to discuss the draft; the e-tutee had the chance to ask the e-tutor about the comments written while the e-tutor may have added or clarified comments in order to assist the e-tutee to revise his draft. The synchronous conference did not focus on the academic side only; it also provided an opportunity for the e-tutor and the e-tutee to socially interact. This social interaction made the synchronous conference more personalized due to the individual attention given to each e-tutee.

For the sake of data analysis, all typed interactions in the asynchronous and synchronous sessions were automatically archived by moodle and were retrieved for

analysis. Moodle archives all typed interactions that occurred between its users whether by email (asynchronous) or in the chat rooms (synchronous) for later retrieval by teachers/tutors. All archived records of the interactions were coded and analyzed in order to see what themes and patterns existed.

When both modes of e-tutoring were complete, I conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. The participants were given the option of face-to-face or phone interviews; all interviews were conducted face to-face except for two interviews which were conducted by phone. The purpose of the interviews was to get in-depth description and detailed feedback on how the e-tutees felt after experiencing the e-tutoring service. In the interviews, the e-tutees were asked about recommendations to improve the e-tutoring service and any comments they wanted to make about the whole experience. The interviews with the e-tutors aimed at getting an overview of the e-tutor's role(s) during the e-tutoring process. The e-tutors were asked to give suggestions that may improve the service. They were also asked about challenges they may have faced while providing their e-tutoring services. All interviews were audio-taped and I

took notes during each interview. A summary of the research plan is provided below.

Table 2.
Summary of Research Plan

Purpose	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis	Anticipated Findings
Arab ESL students' experience with asynchronous tutoring	Asynchronous tutoring of drafts, Semi-structured interviews.	Descriptive content analysis of drafts, tutor's comments, and transcription of interview transcripts. (Coding Scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of asynchronous sessions. • Participants' positive and negative experiences about asynchronous sessions. • Recommendations for improvement of service.
Arab ESL students' experience with synchronous conferencing	Synchronous conferencing scripts, semi-structured interviews	Descriptive content analysis of conference sessions and transcription of interview transcripts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of synchronous conferences. • Participants' positive and negative experiences with synchronous conferences. • Recommendations for improvement of service.
The role of tutors in e-tutoring (asynchronous and synchronous)	Interviews with e-tutors and research journal	Thematic content analysis of interviews and research journal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and negative experiences with the process. • Difficulties faced and Recommendations for improvement.
Benefits, problems, and issues emerging from the e-tutoring process	Semi structured interviews, and research journal	Thematic content analysis of interviews and research journal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of Participating in the study. • Problems faced by participants. • Recommendations for future improvement of the service.

Sampling

In order to have an accurate account of ESL students' experiences with the e-tutoring service, participants in the e-tutees group were recruited from writing courses taught in Indiana University of Pennsylvania. These courses were not necessarily specially designed for ESL students. After obtaining necessary approvals for conducting this study, I asked a number of writing instructors to announce to tell their Arab students about the availability of the e-tutoring service and how this service may be of help to them. I also used the snowball sampling method in order to get more participants. The target number for this group was between 9-15 students (e-tutees), and I was able to get nine students.

As for the e-tutors group, it consisted of 3 e-tutors who have a Master's degree or higher and have at least three years of experience teaching/tutoring writing in the ESL/EFL context. All participants in this group had previous experience with LMS's such as WebCT, Blackboard, and moodle. Each e-tutor was randomly paired with 3 e-tutees to help them with their written drafts.

The e-tutors did not have to be native speaker of English because there is a decent number of non-native English speakers who were completing or had completed their

graduate studies in English or a related field and are capable of providing quality assistance to writers.

Participants

Participants in the e-tutees group were ESL undergraduate students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania regardless of age, gender, and study major. All e-tutees' were second language learners and their first language was Arabic. All participants had either achieved the upper-intermediate English proficiency level, or had successfully completed the American Language Institute's requirement for undergraduate students. All participants were equally considered because that did not make any difference in the selection criteria since the proficiency level in both cases is approximately the same.

As for the e-tutors group, all e-tutors had a Master's Degree or higher in English and had at least three years of experience teaching/tutoring ESL/EFL writers. Participants in this group were selected regardless of their age, gender, and mother language as long as they had three years of teaching/tutoring experience and know how to use moodle or any other LMS. Preferences were be given to participants who have the most teaching/tutoring experience.

Participants in both groups were not be grouped for purposes of comparison. Rather I wanted to see how all participants perceived this e-tutoring service, and how this service can be improved in the future.

Instruments

In order to collect data for this research study, I used three main instruments that are consistent with the study design. The instruments are: moodle archives, semi-structured interviewing to be conducted with the e-tutors and the e-tutees at the end of the semester, and a personal research journal that I kept during the process while observing the e-tutoring sessions. Below is a detailed description of each instrument.

Moodle Archives.

The reason I used moodle as the host for the e-tutoring service for this research study was because it was the official platform for delivering electronic courses in Indiana University of Pennsylvania since Fall 2009. Like Blackboard and WebCT, moodle has many user-friendly features including discussion forums, wikis, databases, live communication tools (chat), uploading files, creating web pages, etc... These features of moodle are built to

enhance communications between the users of the platform, whether students or teachers.

Through moodle, all e-tutees' drafts and all written communications were archived which helped me electronically retrieve the data for analysis. Also, having access to chat records enabled me to thematically study the records of communication between e-tutors and e-tutees to examine what patterns and themes emerged from these records.

After recruiting participants in both groups, I arranged for an optional, individual orientation session on how to use moodle. In the session, I explained to e-tutees how to use the upload feature to submit their essays for review, how to retrieve the feedback of the e-tutor, how to contact e-tutors to ask any questions and arrange for the synchronous conference, and how to access the chatting feature for the synchronous conference. Each orientation session was optional and lasted for about 15 minutes. The sessions took place in Indiana University of Pennsylvania's library; I brought a laptop equipped with wi-fi technology and demonstrated to each e-tutee the whole process. Similar sessions were provided to the e-tutors. The purpose of this procedure was to ensure that all participants received the necessary information in order to effectively use moodle.

Semi-structured interviews.

According to Spradley (1979), individual interviews fall into three categories; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In structured interviews, interviewers mainly ask a certain set of questions constructed prior to the interview and are asked to all participants. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer mainly has certain points to cover during the interview but the questions may differ from one participant to another. Unstructured interviews do not have any planned structure; questions get asked depending on the course of the interview and the responses from the participants. This research study will utilize semi-structured interviews.

Atkinson (1998) has set basic interview guidelines. These interview guidelines will be followed when conducting the interviews. The guidelines are as follows:

- Decide who you want to interview.
- Explain your purpose.
- Take time to prepare.
- Create the right setting.
- Bear in mind that an interview is not a conversation.
- Be responsive and flexible.
- Listen well.

- Be grateful.

After preparing for the interviews and having looked at each participant's e-tutoring records, a semi-structured interview was held. All face-to-face interviews were held in a reserved room in Indiana University of Pennsylvania's main library. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. I also took notes during and after the interview as a backup in case the recording failed.

Basically, the interview with the e-tutees focused on three aspects: the positive experiences of the e-tutoring service, the challenges they faced, and any recommendations they would make to improve the service in the future.

In the first aspect of the interview, I asked each participant to generally reflect on the process of receiving feedback asynchronously and synchronously on their essays. I attempted to elicit each participant's experience by asking them a set of carefully designed questions to get as much description as possible.

As for the second aspect of the interview, I attempted to elicit the challenging experiences of each participant as a user of the e-tutoring service. I prompted the participants to speak about these challenges as openly as possible and implied to them that reporting these

challenges would help in developing a more user-friendly platform for e-tutoring.

The third aspect of the interview was dedicated to any recommendations the participants may have had to improve the e-tutoring service in the future. The participants were asked to transform their negative experiences into recommendations that they can bring to my attention without any form of discomfort on their part.

The interviews with e-tutors also covered three aspects; description of e-tutors' roles, the advantages of the e-tutoring service, and any recommendations they would make to improve the service.

Research Journal.

Throughout the e-tutoring process, I kept a research journal where I noted aspects of the process and the challenges the tutors or tutees may have encountered. The purpose of the journal was twofold: as a reflective act for service improvement in the future, and as an objective, systematic record of the observations during the whole process.

Although such a method has been criticized for its subjectivity, as a researcher, I tried to reduce my biases by systematically taking notes. Also, triangulation of data

helped me in reducing the subjectivity of my role as McKay (2006) points out that "diary studies when used with other sources of data can provide a vehicle for data triangulation." (p.69).

Setting and Site Selection

Choosing convenient settings for data collection is an important issue that every researcher has to consider before collecting data. According to Atkinson (1998), the setting has to be convenient for the researcher and the participants at the same time in order to assure the quality of the data collected.

This research project took place in two main settings; a cyber setting and a physical setting. The cyber setting accommodated asynchronous tutoring, synchronous conferencing, and all electronic communications between the e-tutees and the e-tutors. The physical setting of the study accommodated the moodle orientation sessions and the semi-structured interviews.

The cyber setting of the study was moodle. Moodle was used to accommodate the e-tutoring service. Each IUP student automatically has a moodle account. The e-tutoring service platform was treated as a regular course so I was

able to enroll tutors and tutees manually by selecting their user ID's.

As for the physical setting of the study, I reserved a room in IUP's main library to conduct the moodle orientation sessions and the semi-structured interviews; the library served as a neutral, quiet, setting for the participants and me.

e-Tutoring strategy

I developed two main strategies for the e-tutoring process; a strategy for the e-tutees, and a strategy for the e-tutors. The strategies have been developed after I have reviewed the writing tutoring guides of Ryan and Zimmerelli (2004) and Bruce and Rafoth (2009). The strategies that I developed would serve as guidelines for the whole e-tutoring process for the participants in both groups. I would also say that due to the importance of each participant's voice in this study, the strategies were meant to be a somehow broad in order to give the participants the freedom to add their own voice and input to the process. This means that these strategies are only guides and participants did not have to stick to them.

The following list has been developed to help e-tutees when submitting their drafts for review by e-tutors:

When submitting a draft for review, make sure to:

- Submit the draft with as much development as possible. This will better help the e-tutor to respond to your draft.
- Submit all information relevant to the draft such as assignment description, teacher's expectations, the due date of the essay, specific questions you want to ask the e-tutor, and any concerns you may have.
- Submit your draft as early as possible in order to receive maximum.
- Try to cooperate as much as possible with the e-tutor when he/she asks for additional information or when scheduling a time for the synchronous conference.

The e-tutoring strategy or plan that the e-tutors will follow is as follows:

- As soon as you receive the student's draft, send him/her an email acknowledging the receipt of the

draft. In your response, state the estimated time of response, preferably not to exceed 72 hours.

- Carefully read the student's assignment's instructions, their questions, and their concerns as they will help you understand the context of the assignment and the focus of the feedback.
- When responding to students' drafts, first start with some constructive feedback by focusing on the points of strength, and then the points of weakness. This will contribute to boosting students' confidence, motivation, and self-esteem.
- Try to address and focus on higher-order concerns. This will help the e-tutee to know the areas he/she needs to pay special attention to.
- Give some attention to lower-order concerns.
- When returning drafts to students, do not forget to remind students about scheduling an appointment to discuss the draft synchronously.
- The synchronous conference should focus on discussing the e-tutees' drafts focusing on important points, answering e-tutees' questions, and asking clarifying

questions.

Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis was treated as part of the study design. According to Maxwell (2005), any qualitative study requires decisions about how analysis will be done and those decisions are best made in harmony with data collection. For this study, the data analysis process was parallel with the data collection process in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study by reducing the time between collecting the data and analyzing it. Analyzing the data immediately after collecting it made the process easier and hopefully would increase its validity as I tried to discover and resolve some of the challenges that may rise in the data collection phase.

Due to the nature of the data itself and the different methods of collection, I used different techniques to analyze and interpret the data. The two main purposes of the study constitute two different sets of data; students' experiences using e-tutoring and the tutors' experiences and role(s) in the e-tutoring process.

For clarification purposes, I have summarized below the data that I expect to collect in this study come from:

Primary data sources:

- Interview Transcript.
- Research Journal.

Secondary data Sources:

-Draft-related Information (Essay instructions, students' questions, students' concerns, and any relevant information that the student provide to the e-tutor to better understand the draft and its context)

- Original Draft.
- Tutors' asynchronous feedback.
- Synchronous Record of communication between tutor and tutee.

Secondary data sources were used as a backup to clarify situations and issues when analyzing data from primary data sources.

All data was coded and analyzed using a cross-case approach rather than a case-by-case approach. The cross-case approach helped in formulating a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The codes were created after finding similar patterns in the transcripts and the process started as soon as data collection began and codes were continuously modified.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of this study will be based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) elements of trustworthiness which are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Each element will be briefly discussed in relation to this study. Also, in order to establish trustworthiness, I used the "member checks" method in which the participants had the chance to read the data to make sure that I have represented what they said correctly without any modification. I also tried to maximize neutrality in my role by not participating in any form in any of the asynchronous and synchronous sessions. I originally intended to do the e-tutoring myself, however, this could have raised a serious neutrality threat to the trustworthiness of this study. Instead, I recruited e-tutors in order to maximize neutrality, minimize bias, report the experiences of e-tutors.

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is to convince the readers that the results of the research study are accurate and the findings are credible. This can be achieved either by 1) prolonged engagement, 2) persistent observation, 3) and/or triangulation (p.301).

In order to establish credibility in this research study, I used multiple sources for data collection (i.e. triangulation of data). The study was designed to allow me to collect data from multiple sources (analysis of moodle archives, research journal and interviews). This procedure would hopefully contribute in making this study more internally valid.

Transferability

Transferability indicates the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to other contexts. The findings of this study have the potential of being generalized to Arab ESL/EFL contexts, possibly non-Arab EFL contexts, and some non-Arab ESL/EFL contexts. This is due to the fact that ESL and EFL contexts are closely related in nature due to the fact that English is taught in these contexts as an additional language besides the native language.

It is also worth mentioning that some findings of this study can hopefully be generalized to e-tutoring native speakers of English especially in the technological aspects of the study.

Dependability

Dependability means that if this study is to be replicated in a similar context, similar results will be produced (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The multiple methods of data collection in this research study should make it reliable and, if replicated, similar findings will be reached. In other words, if this study is to be conducted again on the same population, or on another similar population, using the same methods and procedures, the results and findings should be similar to this research study's findings.

Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability refers to objectivity in doing qualitative research. In order to be objective in my study while analyzing data obtained from this research study, I will be cautious not to let my biases affect the results and findings. The results of this research project should be as bias-free as possible to ensure confirmability. This will be accomplished by: 1) Collecting data from multiple sources (triangulation), 2) consistently reviewing the data, 3) and starting the data analysis process as soon as the data is collected.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed methodological issues relevant to this research study; I discussed and provided justifications for issues related to sampling, site selection, participants, instruments, procedures of data collection, and data analysis. I also discussed issues that would increase the study's trustworthiness. Chapter four will state the results of the study and will discuss significant findings.

Chapter Four

Results and Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the current study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is threefold; 1) to evaluate and report the experiences of Arab ESL academic writers/tutees using asynchronous and synchronous e-tutoring, 2) to evaluate and report the experiences of e-tutors delivering the asynchronous and synchronous e-tutoring, 3) to report on benefits, problems, and issues that emerge from the e-tutoring process.

This study attempts to answer the following two research questions:

1. What is the experience like for Arab ESL academic writers who receive asynchronous e-tutoring and synchronous conferencing services on their written drafts?
2. What is the experience like for e-tutors who provide asynchronous e-tutoring and synchronous conferencing services to Arab ESL academic writers?

Twelve participants participated in this study; nine ESL students were in the e-tutees group and three English

doctoral students were in the e-tutors group. This chapter will report the findings according to the four major themes of the study:

- E-tutees experiences with the first stage, asynchronous tutoring.
- E-tutees experiences with the second stage, synchronous conferencing.
- E-tutors experiences with the first stage, asynchronous tutoring.
- E-tutors experiences with the second stage, synchronous conferencing.

When providing the findings for each theme, I will focus on 1) general features, 2) advantages, 3) disadvantages, and 4) recommendations for each mode of e-tutoring. In each theme I will also state the method used for data collection and will provide relevant quotes from the data to support major findings.

All data sources were processed using Nvivo 9 qualitative data analysis software. The data did not require extensive coding as it was straightforward and semi-structured throughout the interviews. The data

analysis process started as soon as the data was collected and memos were added to the data to ensure accurate analysis. I also used the moodle archives as a backup when an issue was unclear in the interviews.

Note on the Use of the Research Journal

Although I kept a research journal throughout the study, I used it only to take notes either to write relevant questions to be asked in the interviews with the participants, or to take notes and jot down ideas that are relevant to the analysis of data and discussion of results. I followed this technique to help crystallize key observations in the study. The use of the journal helped me in activating my role as an observer of the whole process.

Overview of e-Tutees

In this study, I recruited 9 Arab ESL e-tutees to receive feedback on one of their written work. Abdul, Nayef, and Bader were enrolled in ENGL 101 (College Writing). Their majors were respectively, Business Management, Computer Science, and Mathematics. Tariq, Ali, Thamer, and Mohamed were enrolled in the advanced level in the American Language Institute (ALI), taking writing classes in the ALI, finished the TOEFL requirement, and were ready to enter the University the following semester.

Tariq intends to study Pre-Engineering, Ali's major is undeclared, Thamer wants to study Food and Nutrition, and Mohamed wants to major in English. Yasser and Abdulaziz were enrolled in ENGL 100 (Basic Writing). Yasser did not decide on a major yet and Abdulaziz wants to study Physics. All e-tutees have been in the US for more than one year.

Tutees' Previous Experiences with Online Classes

Before presenting the findings of this study, I would like to present the e-tutees perspectives on online courses. Out of the nine e-tutees who participated in this study, only two took formal/official online classes at the college level. The other e-tutees, however, had previous experience with e-learning and had used computers/ the internet to self-improve their language.

When asked about their experience with online classes, the two e-tutees showed their high enthusiasm about the experience. For example, Abdul said:

Online classes are nice and convenient. They also speed up your course of study so you can graduate faster. For example, last summer I took five classes and two of them were online. Whenever I was free, I

would log in to the course and study. There is no need for me to be physically present in the class.

Abdul also mentioned that there would be sometimes students who have difficulties understanding some points in an online class and when they ask the instructor they would not fully understand the points. He said "Sometimes you may ask the instructor online and won't have the same degree of understanding when you meet the instructor in-class."

Thamer also commented on his online class experience:

I think that the experience was 100% positive and very valuable. I took the online course with a professor who taught me a regular class on campus. And I found that our communication with him whether in-class or online was the same.

The other e-tutees had also learned through online modules or informal classes. Although they did not take any formal/official online courses, they had interactive online learning experiences that were positive.

Bader, for instance, did not take any online classes because his sponsor will not pay for the expenses; he said:

I didn't take any online courses because the Saudi Arabian cultural mission would refuse to pay for them, but I took non-credit courses back in Saudi Arabia. I took a language course using Paltalk for a month and there were many students. I used to send my homework and would get feedback on grammar, spelling, and idea development. This was very helpful as it was free and I did everything from home. I also joined some free trial courses but couldn't continue as I had other commitments.

Too, Mohammed did not attend any online class, but the internet helped him develop his fluency. He said:

I didn't take any class online, but I used to log in with one of my friends to MSN and Yahoo chat rooms and talk to native speakers; this helped me increase my fluency and learn colloquial English.

Although Tariq did not take any online classes before, he used technology to communicate with his instructors when he took non-credit courses at the college level in Saudi Arabia. He said:

I communicate with my instructors via email. I used to send them assignment before class time in order to get

some feedback and I think that online learning is beneficial because the student digs out the information by himself and this will help him advance in research and gives him a chance to self-develop his skills without relying on the instructor or the class.

Description of Students' Papers

Each e-tutee submitted one draft to be reviewed by his designated e-tutor. All papers submitted were originally written for writing classes that tutees were taking in the same semester. Since all tutees were in their undergraduate studies, all subjects were generally known to the tutors. The average length for all papers was 350 words. Although tutees were advised to send the paper requirements along with the paper, only 5 of the 9 students submitted the requirements.

An example of the draft submission form filled by Mohamed is attached below:

What is the assignment about? Provide as much details as possible. You can type/paste the assignment requirements/instructions below.

It is a paper in which we have to compare two short stories. The page limit was 2-3 pages.

What kind of help do you think you need in this paper? For example, organization, development of ideas, revision, sentence structure, etc...

I have a problem of "getting direct to the point" without having the reader realize the situation. I need to improve my introduction. I need to improve writing a clearer thesis statement.

Is there anything else you would like the e-tutor to focus on or comment on in this draft?

I think my grammar mistakes affect the idea I wanted to deliver.

Description of Chat Sessions

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the chat sessions was to enable the tutees and the tutors to communicate with each other regarding the tutees' drafts. Since the aim of the study is to examine participants' views towards the e-tutoring experience, I will only provide a brief, general description of the nature of the chat sessions. The average time each chat session lasted was 22 minutes. In general, the chat session started by the tutor and the tutee greeting each other. Then they would discuss the draft.

Tutees usually asked questions about the tutors' feedback and how to improve the draft. Tutees sometimes asked the tutors to provide them with an overall evaluation of the draft by asking them to give them a grade. A chat record of one of the sessions is provided in Appendix (B).

Tutees' Perspective on Asynchronous Tutoring

In order to provide an accurate description of this stage, three artifacts were used as sources for findings; 1) the tutors' feedback, 2) the tutees' interviews, and 3) the tutors' interviews. As a part of this study, I conducted interviews with the e-tutees and I asked them to talk about their experience with the first stage of this study; Asynchronous Tutoring. E-tutees in this mode received asynchronous feedback on their written drafts through moodle.

Advantages of Asynchronous Tutoring

According to the participants, the stage of asynchronous tutoring had a number of advantages. These advantages are summarized in the following sections:

1. Easy location of mistakes:

Some participants reported that the mistakes were easy to locate and the feedback was clear and legible. On this point, here is what Mohamed said when asked to describe his experience in the first stage:

This stage was very good for two reasons. I tried the written feedback and sometimes it doesn't show the exact location of the mistake and sometimes the hand writing is not legible. This sometimes makes me go back and ask the instructor about some points because of the bad hand writing. What is good about the feedback I received that the mistakes are highlighted and there is an arrow that explains what needs to be done. This is nice and it makes the revision process easier.

On this point, Thamer added:

I liked how the tutor used new techniques in Word. He underlined certain areas and highlighted other areas. He also wrote some feedback on the right side of the document. The tutor gave me feedback on my grammatical mistakes and dealt with some issues in my style. He also helped me organize my idea and format my paper academically. The tutor also helped me in using

correct citation and headings. He helped me in understanding the process and gave me a lot of feedback that contributed to the development of my draft before I submit it to the professor.

Bader also commented:

If I'm going to use this service, I don't need to meet the instructor face to face. I will send the draft and the tutor will read it and comment on it at his own time. I don't have to spend any time with him as I have other commitments in life.

2. Convenient and Time-saving:

Another benefit of the feedback reported by the participants in the first stage was that it saves tutors' and tutees' time. Abdul, for example, said:

The feedback helped me a lot and I didn't have to go to the writing center this time. I sent the draft to the tutor and he helped me. The feedback was very clear and to the point. There are some things that I noticed after I got the feedback.

3. Provide beneficial and helpful feedback:

The third reported benefit was that the feedback was beneficial and helpful for the tutees especially when it was provided from an experienced person. Tariq said:

To be honest, this stage was a shock to me. I am not used to get feedback on my writings. I thought the draft I submitted was perfect and didn't have any errors. When I got the feedback, I found that the draft had a lot of feedback and I was surprised. When I read the written feedback before the chat, I found out that there were some things that I should have done and some missing things. I consider this something good to know my mistakes. I shared this draft with some friends and they told me that the draft was good. I asked my friends because I knew they are better than me. It's different when you get feedback from an expert who knows all the strategies. There is a big difference.

4. Overcomes the Distance Barrier:

Another benefit of this stage is that it overcomes the distance barrier between tutees and tutors. Thamer, for example said:

The distance between me and the tutor was 13 hours driving when I submitted the draft and received the feedback. There was also one hour time difference between the two of us. I submitted the draft online and he looked at it at his own time. We communicated comfortably.

Disadvantages and Suggestions for Asynchronous Tutoring

In addition to the advantages that e-tutees mentioned, some disadvantage were also articulated regarding asynchronous tutoring. In order to get feedback on this stage, I asked the participants for their opinions to improve this new service. The participants provided several comments about the disadvantages which would help improve this stage.

1. Comments' Quality and Quantity:

One of the disadvantages reported by some participants was that the tutors provided too many comments. One participant also commented that the feedback he received was above his level. Abdul said:

The tutor sent me too many comments and his evaluation was of high standard, I am still an undergraduate student.

I believe this was due to the fact that Abdul is not used to getting detailed feedback on his written work as he told me in the interview.

2. Comments Unclarity:

Another reported disadvantage at this stage was that some comments were not clear. For example, Ali said:

Some points in the tutor's feedback were unclear to me. The tutor told me that I don't have an introduction in my essay and he also advised me not to use contractions. And when we met in the chat room, I explained to the tutor that my essay doesn't need an introduction because it's a general topic and he understood the requirements of my draft.

I believe that some confusion occurred because Ali did not submit a detailed requirement of the draft he wrote and the tutor. The situation was clarified when Ali chatted with the tutor.

Yasser also commented on this point saying:

The positives outweigh the negatives in this stage.

There were some points that the tutor tried to make in

his comments but I couldn't understand them. But generally the experience was good.

Suggestions for Asynchronous Tutoring

E-tutees reported a number of suggestions regarding this stage. The technique that I used in order to get feedback on the tutoring service and the areas that need improvement was that I asked the participants for their suggestions to improve this new service. Their suggestions are categorized as:

1. Multi-mode Draft Discussion:

One of the suggestions provided was that the tutor should discuss the draft in two modes. Mohamed said:

I think this stage serves the purpose for now. If I want to see improvement, why doesn't the tutor provide feedback in two modes; the first mode to discuss language problems, and the second mode to discuss the organizational issues?

2. Mandating the Submission of Paper Requirements:

Another suggestion was that tutors should carefully read and inquire about the requirements and the context of the paper. Abdul said:

I have some suggestions and remarks. If the tutor would ask for the requirements of the paper that would give him a better idea. Another thing is that when the tutor wants to evaluate a paper, he needs to know who wrote the paper. Is it a doctoral student, a Master's student, or an undergraduate student? There is a difference among doctoral students, master's students, and undergraduate students. The tutor needs to take it easy a little bit..... Not too easy nor too tough.

On this same point Ali commented:

I think when the students submit their drafts they should explain in details the requirements of the essay. Is it a general essay? Or is there anything in particular that needs special attention? Because if I don't send this information the tutor will not understand the background of the essay.

3. Two Phases of Feedback:

Another suggestion was that the tutor needs to provide feedback in phases. Tariq, for example, said:

It was hard for me to understand all the feedback at once. I think the feedback should be provided in phases so that I would better understand. If the feedback was repeated over and over, the outcome will be better for me. But if it is like that, I will understand some of it and some of it may be lost.

4. Continuous Service:

Another suggestion that Tariq made that clarified his previous suggestion was to make this stage a tool for continuous assessment throughout the semester. He said:

The feedback should be continuous and active with me as a student. If this stage is conducted step by step, I will develop. I want to know my mistakes from the beginning of the semester and not only at the end of the semester.

5. Overall Evaluation/Feedback:

Another important suggestion made by Yasser and some other participants is that the tutor should provide an

overall evaluation of the points of strength and points of weakness. He said:

I think that the tutor should provide general advice that may help in improving the student's writing skill. Technically, there were no problems, but I think it would be good if the tutor provides a general evaluation of the points of strength and weakness in the student's writing as it will motivate the student and will be a self-study guide.

Tutees' Perspective on Synchronous Conferencing (The Chat Stage)

The second major theme to be addressed by this study is the advantages and disadvantages of the second stage of e-tutoring, the chat stage. Synchronous conferencing was the second stage in the e-tutoring process where each e-tutee has chatted individually with their designated tutor for about 20-30 minutes.

I will begin this section by summarizing the nature of the chat sessions. Then, I will provide an overview of the advantages, disadvantages and suggestions from the tutees perspective for this stage by providing some quotes from the transcribed interview transcripts.

Advantages of Chat Sessions

Tutees reported a number of advantages in regards to their experience with the chat sessions. The main advantages of this stage are summarized below:

1. Easiness:

One of the main benefits of synchronous conferencing was the easiness of the process. Mohamed reported that the nature of electronic conversations was more comfortable to him than face to face conversations. Mohamed said about his chat session with the tutor:

My time with him was very good, because it was comfortable sitting behind the keyboard and writing whatever I think about without any embarrassment in discussing my mistakes with the tutor. Sometimes face to face communication forces a sort of respect; eye contact may cause some embarrassment which may lead you to disregard some important points during the discussion.

Tariq also commented that the chat session was convenient because he was able to communicate from anywhere. Tariq said:

The tutor may be far away from the student's place, but he can chat with them anytime from anywhere.

Yasser in this regard also commented on the chat stage and said that it is better than the first stage because the feedback was instant. When I asked him about the second stage, he said:

I think it's better than the feedback, because it's instant and fast feedback. I asked about more than one item in the feedback and I found all the answers when I chatted with the tutor. I think that the chat session is better than the feedback because I asked questions freely and got some advice in general. I benefited a lot because it's live.

2. Fluency/ Better Communication:

Another benefit reported by Mohamed is that in synchronous conferencing, the fluency level may not be an issue if compared with face to face conversations. He said:

Sometimes I may not be as fluent as the tutor when talking, but in writing I can deliver the points I want without stuttering or stammering. This also helps in increasing the self confidence because you read the feedback and you can save it to read it later.

3. Enhanced Feedback:

The third benefit reported by several tutees was that the chat sessions helped in clarifying the points raised in the asynchronous feedback. For example, Abdul said:

The chat was the most important stage and more important than the first stage. As I told you before, there were things I couldn't understand in the feedback. There must be chat communication between the tutee and the tutor to know the problems exactly.

Thamer also added:

The chat was important as it made things that needed more explanation clearer to me. Now I got the feedback and I needed to ask about the feedback. What kind of things will work better for my paper? The chat helped me discover things that didn't come to my mind before.

4. Improved Communication:

Another benefit reported was that the chat session helped the students to develop their communication skills. Tariq mentioned how his keyboard skills improved from using the e-tutoring service to communicate faster. He said:

The chat stage benefited me. First, the use of keyboard will develop more and more and will be faster. I also have the chance to write in English.

5. Mistakes Awareness:

Several tutees mentioned that the feedback they got benefited them in knowing their mistakes and helped them to learn useful strategies in avoiding making such mistakes.

Tariq mentioned how he was satisfied with the tutoring experience as he wished that all international students could have the same opportunity in order to be aware of the mistakes that they make. He said:

I wish that the current international students can experience the same process. All of us need help in this area, and we won't reach the level of those who were before us unless we know our mistakes. If we don't find the necessary help that would help us know our mistakes, we may continue to make the same mistakes without even knowing they were mistakes. I think the website is good and I benefited from it. I reviewed the feedback more than once and know my mistakes.

Bader also talked about this advantage:

The conversation was very good. There were some minor mistakes and a problem with redundancy and we tried to overcome all these issues in our conversation. The tutor provided me with some beneficial ideas and how I can rephrase some sentences.

Thamer added on this same point:

The tutor helped me know things that weren't known to me like how to organize my paper academically and how to build my ideas using good support. He also clarified that my research paper should be focused around my own research and my own understanding of the readings.

5. Raise Motivation:

Some tutees expressed how the chat session raised their intrinsic motivation to improve their writing through paper drafting and the final revision. Thamer said:

The tutor clarified to me that academic research should include previous research studies and should be organized in a logical way keeping in mind that I have to mention my critical opinion in the paper. All of this made me enthusiastic to develop this paper into a bigger paper.

Disadvantages and Suggestions for Chat Sessions

The tutees reported some disadvantages and several suggestions to improve the service. As mentioned before, I elicited responses for this theme by asking the e-tutees to provide suggestions to improve the service. The suggestions/disadvantages are summarized below.

1. Delay/lag: One irritating disadvantage was that the tutees experienced lag when sending and receiving messages. Most tutees reported that after they clicked "Enter" or "Send" the message it took 2-3 seconds to appear on the screen which made it irritating as it interrupted the flow of the conversation. Ali, for example, said "I experienced some delay when I was chatting with the tutor. When I type something it doesn't appear right away. It takes 2-3 seconds to show up on the screen."

2. Simple Interface: Another disadvantage mentioned by Mohamed was that the graphics used in the chat room were too simple and not clear. He commented:

There are many chatting program that use Java and have a professional interface that can be used and they are instant. This chat was a little bit slow and this sometimes creates misunderstanding - sometimes you reply to a point and then receive a response after that. The design also is not professional and it has a lot of empty spaces, but it serves the purpose.

3. Using Audio Chat: Bader also suggested that in the future an audio chat feature can be added to the synchronous session as this will provide a good opportunity to slow typers to be involved in such services. He said:

Suppose that I'm slow in typing, this will be a waste of time for the tutor and the tutee. When I knew that I'll be chatting in a certain time, I prepared a set of questions to speed up the process.

Tariq added:

I suggest adding an audio chat service. This will help me improve my English and I wish they can comment on my sentence structure and my pronunciation. For example, I have difficulty pronouncing the letter "r", so I think I'll get better if I practice my language with a tutor.

4. Status Indicator Feature: Yasser also suggested that a status feature indicator would be helpful. Yasser suggested that the chat room will be better if it shows when the other person is typing. He said that this will help understand what the other party is doing.

5. Organizing Features: Yasser also suggested adding in the future an option that can show the draft alongside the chat screen for easy reference to the draft. He mentioned:

It will be better if the text appears next to the chat screen. This will be better for both sides. If I want to discuss with the tutor note # 2, he needs to go back to the word file and open it and this takes time.

If the text is next to the chat screen I will remember things faster.

Mohammed added:

I also think that if there is software that would automatically number the paragraphs and lines that would make it easier for the tutor. He may suggest that a certain sentence to be placed in a certain place.

Tutors' Perspective on Asynchronous Tutoring and Synchronous Conferencing

To answer this question, both tutors' perspectives, whether positive or negative, about the tutoring experience are reviewed. The format for reporting the results for this question will be chronological; starting with the asynchronous stage first followed by the synchronous stage. I combined the two themes/stages in this section because of their interconnected nature.

Tutor Fouad

Tutor Fouad is a PhD candidate in the English Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and has been working for three years in the writing center. He also taught writing in Indonesia for several years and worked as an Arabic-English translator. Fouad said that his

experience in teaching/tutoring writing is six years. He also had some experience in electronic tutoring in the form of asynchronous feedback and proofreading.

Fouad differentiated between tutoring writing and teaching writing as he views tutoring writing as a specific task that requires one-to-one attention, where in teaching writing the individualized component is not always available. He said:

Teaching isn't one-to-one and; you aren't so focused on individuals, where in tutoring you really devote your time to, you know, whatever you have in a session to the individual having known what their problems are. I think tutoring is in a way more effective and more specific; it's more task specific. For example, a student or tutee will come and bring a specific thing or a specific paper to look at and then have questions and concerns to ask questions about and we work on those things, but the classroom setting doesn't really provide those ideas in detail.

Fouad was familiar with using Microsoft Word for quite a while to respond to students' writing before participating in this study. This is what he said when I asked him about the technique he used when responding to students asynchronously:

Because I had a lot of work ... I had used Microsoft review feature for quite a while, I didn't find any technical problems with that, I was able to give comments and mark things on their papers electronically, the problem that I had was I spent some time thinking how much feedback I would need to provide here. At first, with the first tutee, I put so much detail which I then regret because I thought it was not very informative that makes students become lazy, because I put a lot of details and pinpoint what they needed to change, what they needed to add which is not very constructive; but with the second tutee and the third tutee I sort of reduced the detail a little bit and save the detail for the chat session. Fouad also elaborated on the way he provided feedback on form and content. He said:

My primary concern was high order concerns; things like organization and I look in a paragraph specifically and see how students construct their sentences. Sometimes, I find that sentences are disconnected from each other and the story doesn't flow; that's what I tell them and that's what I write when I give feedback I tell them that there is a sequence that we have to follow; that you start a

sentence you have to make sure that this sentence meant something and it's there for a reason, and I tell them to make sure that their sentences should be coherent and cohesive so that I can easily follow. And I tell them things like they need to use connectives linking words all these things I comment on.

As for the synchronous conferences, Fouad commented that he tries to emulate the same procedures he follows in traditional conferencing. He said:

Due to time constraint, and you know time passes very quickly, at first I tried to do things that I do when I do face-to-face tutoring like introducing yourself and, you know, trying to be polite with them and try to make them comfortable and try to know what their problems are but with the first tutee I thought I lost a lot of time but with the second and the third I didn't do that, I jumped straight to the point but still with being polite at the same time. I needed to look back to the draft again and look over it again because it was 1-2 days difference that I might have forgotten things, just a quick glance I know immediately what the problems were.

One of the disadvantages of moodle was that there was a delay in sending messages in the chat room. This disadvantage was expressed by all three tutors. Fouad said:

Nowadays they have a lot more advanced technology like GoToMeeting or do a lot of things of this sort where we can chat very quickly without any delay.

Another issue that Fouad raised was time constraints and time management. He mentioned:

I am used to having forty or fifty minute sessions when I worked at the IUP writing center; I used to have forty five fifty minutes sessions but when I was online doing this, that isn't enough. I think I went over a couple of times... way over few minutes and a lot of time was used for doing it online not like if I do it face to face. One person when I asked him have you read the draft, the comments that I have given you then this person said "no" so I have to wait until this person is familiar with the feedback, and some technical things. So all that takes away the time that should have been used for others...

In order to address this issue, Fouad made two suggestions; the tutees should thoroughly read the tutor's comments, and extend the chat time. He argued:

Even if we double the time, that is what I think from my personal opinion, we still need to emphasize to the tutees that when they come to the chat session that they are ready. They are ready which means that they have read the comments that we provided and that they have at least some ideas what will happen in the session. If we have to wait for them to finish reading then this will take some of the time and as I said before typing is time; it takes time, so if we doubled the time then I think it will be sufficient.

Fouad also made some suggestions to further improve the e-tutoring service. He suggested that we can find alternative options other than moodle to provide e-tutoring services because there are other learning management systems and software that are faster. This is what Fouad said when asked to provide some suggestions for future improvement:

Well, in general, I think we don't have to stick to moodle. In reality, in real life situation, I think there are other options that we can use to communicate with tutees..... well if I can suggest I will suggest that they add a voice to text technology where you can just speak to computer and software will transcribe everything you say into text and then that will go to

them. Then it will take us closer to the real life, to the real face-to-face tutoring.

Tutor Yusif

Yusif graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2011 with a Ph.D. in Composition and TESOL. He started teaching writing to ESL students in 2003 and now teaches writing to College students at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. As for his tutoring experience, Yusif commented that he did not specifically tutor writing, but he said that some of his students throughout his teaching experience would visit him in his office and discuss their papers one-to-one.

Yusif's experience with electronic tutoring was informal. He said:

I remember there were a couple of times, and those weren't students, they were people that I know that would send me stuff and I'd look at it and send it back, and that was online because they were not where I lived.

Yusif perceives teaching writing and tutoring writing as two different things; he sees teaching writing as

focused on teaching general writing skills and on helping students become better writers. He said:

From my experience in teaching writing last semester, I was actually focusing on teaching general writing skills and to help students become better writers. In tutoring, from my experience, we focus on specific issues on the papers. It's more of an immediate concern, rather than when I taught writing it was mostly focused on certain set of skills that are required for writing in college. So when I teach writing, I teach general skills that would improve their writing in general, while in tutoring, I focus on a specific skill in a specific paper for a specific assignment. In tutoring, you only have one person and one specific assignment. The students I tutored would say: "look I'm writing this paper for this purpose." While in a writing course you may teach over twenty students. The context of teaching writing is general, and tutoring is very specific; I personally see it that way..

Yusif has been using technology in his writing classes for several years. Not only does he use learning management systems, but he has also developed a program that helps him manage the paper load. He mentioned that his extensive

knowledge of Macromedia Flash and programming languages enabled him to develop a citation machine for writing styles, and a program that enables him to insert comments in students' drafts. Yusif commented about his program that helped him in providing written feedback:

As you know that I have developed my own software for that. Actually I would cut and paste the student's paper in the program in order to give them feedback. In the case of your participants, I didn't follow a specific guideline to provide feedback. The main focuses were on idea development and the organization, also with little attention to mechanics like grammar and style. The reason why I used my program because it allows me to number my comments so when I go through the paper with my student, he would just say to me 'I want to ask you about comment no.6'. So this program made it a lot easier to me.

It is worth mentioning that Yusif did not face any difficulties at the asynchronous stage, and he attributed that to his experience in providing such feedback for a long time to his students.

As for the second stage, Yusif used a similar approach like Fouad; he would greet the tutees and then start discussing the draft. He said:

First of all, I tell them that I read your paper and how enjoyed reading their paper which I really did. Then I ask them what aspects of the paper or what comments you go through? Or do you have any questions? Then I allow them the opportunity to ask me anything about the feedback I gave them or do they have any issues to discuss about their writing? Or were there anything that I commented on the paper that they didn't understand? I did things at this stage how can I help you with the paper or how can I help you with my comments or is there anything you want me to comment on.

The main problem that Yusif faced at this stage was the lagging issue in the chat feature in moodle. He mentioned that the system itself never froze or crashed, but the problem of delay was irritating. He also mentioned that there were a couple of times where the tutees would not get the point he was discussing. However, he said that he would provide them with some examples to explain and illustrate his comment.

Yusif prepared for the chat sessions by reading the drafts and comments before the beginning of the chat. He said that by doing so, he would refresh his memory and remember the main points he wanted to discuss with the

tutee. Yusif also said that he would encourage the tutees to do so in order to fully utilize the time of the chat session.

Yusif had a couple of suggestions to make in order to improve the e-tutoring service. He suggested that the interface of the chat should be improved in terms of design. He suggested that the usernames of the users should be in different colors for easier identification of written text. He also suggested that the chat should be customizable and the only option he noticed was the auto-scroll feature. Yusif also suggested adding a feature that would allow the tutees to see the range of times the tutors would be available instead of arranging that through emails.

When asked if he had more suggestions, he proposed adding a resource section that the students could refer to. He also suggested that the chat sessions should be goal oriented. He said:

Something that would be done to make this system more efficient would be to have the chat be controlled. To set a goal for each chat like to discuss the thesis and organization.

Yusif also commented on the timing of the chat sessions mentioning that he spent an average of forty

minutes in each chat session discussing the draft with each tutee. Overall, Yusif felt that the electronic tutoring experience was positive although he did not have any experience tutoring electronically.

However, with respect to his perspective on the feasibility and applicability of e-tutoring in the Arab world, Yusif argued that "it would be a good addition if all the needed elements are met." He elaborated on this point and said that such a service should be well-established and under close supervision in order for it to be successful. He also commented that e-tutoring can be a very good option for conservative societies especially for female tutees as the tutors can be anonymous.

Tutor Mohannad

Mohannad has been teaching writing for more than 10 years in Egypt as an EFL instructor and in the US as a teaching associate teaching college freshmen. Throughout his experience, Mohannad noticed that students do not like writing and some of them even hate writing. This, in turn, encouraged him to make his teaching fun by discussing interesting topics in class in order to keep them engaged.

Mohannad's experience with informal tutoring started when he began to help some of his friends with their

writing. He mentioned that prior to participating in this study, he did not have any formal electronic tutoring experience.

Mohannad's view of the differences between teaching writing and tutoring mainly lie in the fact that teaching writing is learning in the long run and is more thorough and effective than learning things instantly like in tutoring. However, Mohannad believes that writers better develop their identities through e-tutoring because they do not have to experience the anxiety caused by face-to-face tutoring sessions. Mohannad also pointed out that instructors and tutors, in order to have an effective influence on students, need to build up students' self-confidence and identity and encourage students to write spontaneously.

When asked about his view of using moodle as a platform for providing e-tutoring services, Mohannad replied:

It was so very private and this is very important because the students always worries about their face being jeopardized they don't like anxiety; there was no anxiety at all, students like to read and ask any questions, sending questions that were trivial, they expressed sending emoticons like sending me a smiley

face sometimes a crying face if they felt they went wrong so it has its own intimacy and it was successful especially because it was about writing so you don't really have to see the person that you interact with them because it isn't about speaking English it's about written English and written language in general so it's nice to deal with the students without seeing him or her because this saves their face and makes them really ask questions more courageously and they express themselves better also.

Mohannad wanted to respond and address all issues in the papers he tutored. The mechanism he followed when e-tutoring was as follows:

The mechanism that I have followed is that I looked at the text the students' had written then I'd fix errors and I'd really want to do it all through the paper but with some very long papers I couldn't do that so I just directed some grammatical mistakes and some organizational errors as well, content errors, but what was very important to me is the remarks section which I wrote of words , it's a 1,2,3,4,5 sections with each point denoting certain aspect, it doesn't have to be negative because sometimes I refer to the positive aspects as well, like for example the idea is

'very,very good' or 'the title is too broad', it doesn't have to be negative all the time but even if its all negativities, you need to write something that is positive, you and give examples of what the students should have wrote in academic writing and give examples from the writing itself, although I have corrected that previously, for example when a student write 'I wouldn't', I will write you should wrote 'I would not' which is better for the presentation in academic writing, I give that example again with other ones if I could add other ones as well, that was the mechanism I used with correction.

Mohannad also mentioned that he would fix some errors in-text and then refer to the broad lines in the remarks section. However, Mohannad was not in favor of using any specific feature in Microsoft Word; but he only used simple text to write his comments.

Mohannad mentioned that he did not face any major difficulty using moodle even though he did not have previous experience with moodle; he stated that the tutorial I gave him in the beginning was sufficient and the whole process of e-tutoring was very easy.

Mohannad estimated that he spent an average of one hour and fifteen minutes on each draft. He said that the

average length of each draft is 10 pages, and if he were to fix all mistakes he would spend at least five hours on each draft.

The form and the content of writings were the areas where he paid more attention to when he tutored the e-tutees. He said:

Anything that is really attracting me as a reader, as a cautious reader, critical anything that makes me stop at, I refer to it whether it has to do with the form or content.

As for the second stage, Mohannad said that he would start the chat session by greeting his tutee and letting them know that he enjoyed reading their paper. Then, he would discuss the major issues in the paper and try to point out that improvement occurs through learning from one's mistakes and trying to help students build their self-confidence about their writing and let them know that learning through making mistakes is natural. He said:

While chatting with him and I said 'once my professor said we come to learn throughout our mistakes', so its natural. You should really foster that section; the emotional psychological section of the writer, that side needs to be addressed otherwise you'll be destroying the guy or the girl writing, I mean why

should they write at all if they have this idea that they are not good as writers, you see, so it's about presentation. They also ask questions about do you think that was good? Sometimes they generate ideas that would surprise me about their writing as well and sometimes when I found them getting things confused I clarify and make sure they understand things right.

Mohannad made a couple of suggestions to improve the e-tutoring service; he suggested that tutees should always read the feedback and the comments they receive from their tutor. He said that there was one instance where he felt that the tutee did not read the feedback he gave him, so he asked him to go back and read the feedback and waited for him until he finished. Mohannad further suggests that tutees should prepare some questions for the chat session, so that they benefit to the fullest extent from the chat session. Mohannad also suggested that the tutees should correct their errors and mistakes and write them over again in order for them to learn from their mistakes.

When asked if he would like to see any sections added to the service, Mohannad commented that a reading section would be beneficial to the students. He further elaborated that one of his tutees asked for a piece of advice on how

to become a good writer, and Mohannad suggested that he should read kids-age books. Mohannad said:

I told him to improve your writing, you need to read. But what is really important to know is what to read, and I would recommend kids books for you ages 8-15; because it has simple English that you can pick up easily and you can learn and after what you read that you need to write about what you understood precisely did so something like that and I felt that was really ridiculous and I had to add that I used that technique with my students back home who are older than you and it was very successful so don't down play this books and say they are for kids, the language in them is what you need if you read complicated English that would really disappoint you as a writer, you see. I asked them to go to Martins® to check the kids' section, the children's section for short stories and things like that so you can provide a short story on moodle, a dictionary, a writing book accessibility but it's very important to recommend that students should really expose themselves to a larger resources.

Mohannad mentioned that the average length of the chat session was twenty minutes. He told me that he tried to cover the most important points and issues in twenty

minutes because he felt that after the first twenty minutes he would not have more stamina and the student would not reciprocate with the same feeling.

One of the annoying disadvantages Mohannad stated about moodle was the delay in sending and receiving responses during the chat sessions. He complained:

Something technical about moodle I would like to stress which is very negative in my opinion is that when you type something it doesn't appear right away, it takes about a couple of seconds during which time you can receive a message or two from you partner the other side so I would write something and he would ask a question and then forget about what I have written I had to address his question! So I ask the question and then we had to go back for I have written first time, this I am not sure who can fix it but that was really irritating.

In the same route, Mohannad commented on the applicability of utilizing this service in the conservative countries in the Arab world. He said that text-based chat will be a better option than audio chat. Mohannad explained that if the chat was audio and the tutor was a male, then girls from conservative societies would not want to participate in the process.

In addition to that, Mohannad stressed on encouraging students to rewrite their drafts using the feedback they received from the tutor.

Tutees' Suggestions to Improve the Service in General

The tutees made some very useful suggestions that will help in enriching the tutoring experience in the future. These suggestions do not necessarily fall in one category but they aim at improving the overall usability of the service. These suggestions range from general suggestions to very specific suggestions.

The first suggestion was concerned with providing specialized tutoring or focusing only on areas that tutees need. Mohammed, for example, commented on that saying:

Why do I bother the tutor if I have a specific goal in mind? For example, I'm interested in organization only, why not have tutors who are specialized in certain areas. So in this case I will send my draft to a tutor who specializes in organization. The same applies to grammar. There can be specialized tutoring services and general tutoring services.

The second suggestion has to deal with providing paid tutoring services. Mohammed said in this regard:

If I have a thirty-page paper, who will provide tutoring to me without being paid. Service providers can charge a minimal fee. There are tutors who may be willing to work part-time to make some money.

Thamer built on that suggestion saying:

This service can be taken to a commercial level; people who specialize in writing can have websites that help students by reading their papers and giving them feedback. In Saudi Arabia, it's hard to find somebody to provide professional tutoring services without being paid. Even if you are willing to pay, sometimes you won't find somebody willing to help.

The third suggestion revolved around adding relevant resources to the e-tutoring platform as resources to help students whenever they need. Examples of these resources may include guides on grammar and punctuation. Abdul commented on that suggestion saying:

You can add links just like the one the tutor sent me on how to do citations. These links can be permanent instead of the tutor sending them every time. I think putting sites on how to write properly and how to do research in MLA and APA.

Bader also recommends adding sites for reliable online dictionaries and other resources. He said:

When I took an online course last semester, there were sites for scientific articles, online dictionaries, sites to help students in their writing, and resources for grammar and idea development. All of these sites are beneficial. This is an effective use of technology as well.

Additionally, Ali recommended adding sections that contain models of good writing examples. He said:

I suggest adding examples of good student writings from the TOEFL and IELTS. This will help the students have an idea about good writing. I also think if we add Arabic clarification to that, it will help weak students. I also think students will benefit if you add grammar and punctuation rules that are explained in Arabic.

Nayef also suggested adding media, grammar, and reading sections to the e-tutoring platform, he said:

I think you can add a media section. I also think it'll be beneficial to add resources or articles that help students develop their reading skills.

The fourth suggestion was concerned about the stages of the e-tutoring process itself. Some tutees suggested that the two stages should be very close in terms of timing. Tariq said:

I'd like to stress on that the time between the feedback and the chat should be very close in order to get the most benefit. This work is perfect and I think students will benefit a lot from it.

The last suggestion deals about identifying the goal of the assignment before starting the e-tutoring process. Knowing what is exactly required in the assignment, in some participants' perspectives, would greatly help the tutor to provide suitable tutoring as they will be able to understand the context of the paper or essay. Abdul, for example, said:

I think the tutor should always take the requirement of the paper. This will help the tutor know the level of the paper and what the teacher expects from the student. It will also help him when he provides feedback.

Ali also argued:

In the very beginning when the student submits an essay, he should clarify in details what is the essay is going to be about. Are you talking about a topic in general? Is there anything in particular you'd like the tutor to focus on?

Implementing the Service in the Arab World

I asked the tutees about their opinions on implementing this service in the Arab world especially in conservative societies where the interaction between the two genders is limited. Many tutees expressed their interest in having such a service implemented in the Arab world. Some tutees mentioned that they have never seen such a service in the Arab world.

Mohamed suggested that this service should be incorporated in the Preparatory Stage in the college level in Saudi Arabia. He said:

The idea of this service is brilliant. It can be very beneficial to Preparatory Year Students as it will make the process easier for the students and the instructors. Instructors love to see their students writing and I think they also love to see a third party review the students' work in a collaborative manner.

Abdul also has a similar opinion. He said:

I think it's a good idea to have the service in Saudi Arabia. It will help students improve their papers and the students will learn. When I received the paper, it wasn't edited. It had several comments that I have to

do this and correct that. This will help students improve a lot in writing.

Ali said that this service will be a good success in the Arab world. He said:

This idea will succeed because it has a high objective which is learning. I think that we don't have this service in the Arab World and anything that's new gets very successful in our countries.

E-tutoring Services in Conservative Societies

One of the questions that came up in the interviews was the applicability of this service in conservative societies and the degree of acceptance of conservative societies that are gender-segregating to this service. The e-tutees had several views in this regard. Mohamed, for example, said:

I think that there won't be any problem as long as everything is monitored and the chat is recorded. To be honest with you, in our conservative society want to avoid direct contact between males and females without any monitoring. If everybody knew that the service is monitored and there are strict regulations, I think it will be an excellent service.

Abdul commented on this point and said:

I don't see any problem. I see it as giving students help online so there won't be any talking or meeting with the tutor because everything will be online. A female student will join the service to learn. They can also have female tutors or male tutors with supervision.

Tariq pointed out that this service will be beneficial to female students and students who are shy to interact with others. He said:

I think the service will be very successful in Saudi Arabia especially for females. Females will be able to communicate with the tutor freely because there is distance between them. I think this service will also help some people who have difficulty interacting with others because they have a psychological barrier or fear. Some people don't like others to see their mistakes because they are shy or embarrassed when making mistakes. This will be a good idea if it was applied in the society.

Thamer added:

I think the service will be very successful in terms of segregation - because the communication will be electronic, not oral. And electronic communication

between both genders does not usually cause any problems especially if this help is for the purpose of learning.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the major findings of this study and supported them with relevant quotes/data from the participants. The findings were presented according to the four major themes of the study which are:

- E-tutees experiences with the first stage, asynchronous tutoring.
- E-tutees experiences with the second stage, synchronous conferencing.
- E-tutors experiences with the first stage, asynchronous tutoring.
- E-tutors experiences with the second stage, synchronous conferencing.

In Chapter Five, I will be discussing the emergent themes out of the collected data and will be discussing these themes with relevant theories and research studies in the field.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Limitations, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The previous chapter presented the results of the study based on the data collected from the participants and used relevant quotes from the participants to support the findings. This chapter will discuss important themes related to these findings. The discussion will be in the light of other relevant research studies in the field.

Significance of Findings

I argue that this experience was very important for two main reasons: first, it paves the way for people who still resist e-learning as a new mode for learning to officially consider using it or at least recognize it. I believe that the effective and successful implementation of e-tutoring in universities and institutes of higher education will encourage hesitant/reluctant universities and stakeholders to seriously consider implementing such programs and services. If we look into the situation of distance learning and e-learning degrees in the Arab world in particular, we will find that these degrees are not recognized in many Arab countries. Two of the participants, Bader and Thamer, in fact talked about this problem and said that they are not allowed to take online classes as

their sponsor, the Saudi Arabian Cultural mission, does not allow them to take more than 6 credit hours in online classes for their entire degree.

This distrust of online education is due to the fact that a number of people got their diplomas from degree mills. Lantero (n.d.) defines degree mills as institutions that give diplomas and degrees to people based on their life experience rather than their accredited academic work. Unfortunately, a large number of people were granted such degrees in the world in general and in the Arab World in particular and this caused distrust and contributed to the distortion of the image of distance learning, open learning and e-learning degrees and institutes. E-tutoring in this respect can help pave the way for e-learning to be recognized, e-tutoring can be a tool to enhance learning, communication, and interaction between learners and tutors in the electronic mode.

Second, the current study, in addition to other research studies, points to the fact that e-tutoring can be a strategic choice for many higher education institutes in the near future (Lewis and Allan 2007; and Salter and Krawczynski 2010). It also reveals the need to take e-tutoring as a serious initiative to develop learning modes. Based on this study, this initiative should be organized,

developed, fully utilized and must attend to students' needs and cultural factors. In addition, it should address issues like attitudes and motivational factors to tackle some difficulties arising from its implementation. In this chapter, I will analyze these factors based on the analysis and the findings of the study.

Despite the limited number of participants, the responses and the attitudes of both tutors and tutees to e-tutoring sessions show that e-tutoring is a stimulating experience for both parties. This experience was new to most participants and it is believed to help them develop new self-learning strategies. In the following sections, I will elaborate and discuss some of the main themes related to the data.

Stages of e-tutoring

This study had two main stages; the asynchronous feedback stage and the synchronous conferencing stage. All participants in the study, with varying degrees, agreed on two main points. 1) The importance of having the chat session shortly after getting the feedback, and 2) both sessions complementing each other in the e-tutoring process.

This interconnectedness of the two stages seems logical due to the fact that the tutees felt that the chat session helped in identifying some unclear points in the asynchronous feedback. It is important to know that providing sufficient feedback in the chat session alone is time consuming to the tutor and the tutee; the tutee may not receive enough feedback on their draft because of the time constraint of the chat session. On the other hand, relying only on asynchronous feedback may not be enough because of the lack of interaction and negotiation/discussion between the tutor and the tutee.

In this respect and as a way for improving the e-tutoring service in the future, service providers need to consider incorporating and expanding the usage of asynchronous and synchronous modes in exposing non native speakers to authentic language usage. One way of doing so is by arranging communication workshops between EFL students and some tutors in the USA and the UK. Those tutors could, after sufficient training, be hired and employed online; making up for the shortage of teachers and tutors in some Arab universities. There are non-native speaker teachers/tutors who are highly qualified, but unfortunately most English departments in the Arab world are understaffed. For example, in the past few years, the

English Department at the University of Bahrain used to employ some native speakers like housewives to expose students more to the natural use of language and it was a successful experience. This could reduce costs, expose the students to native like environments, and improve their writing and speaking abilities. The current number of credit hours for a B. A. in English in Arab universities will in no way enable students to become very proficient in English unless they spend more time on self learning and self development. Pilot studying of synchronous and asynchronous modes will certainly yield new ideas to implement such modes in improving learning situations. In addition, it might help create friendships based on intercultural communications and could eventually reduce the cultural gap among different cultures.

In addition, modern and rapidly changing, cost effective technological inventions and innovations can be utilized fully to come up with new ideas and implementations. For example, online and video conferences can be fully utilized to expose teachers and students more to the native-like environments. Modern technologies can be utilized to improve the educational system in many third world countries. However, educational funding is important

and is considered a key factor in developing solid educational systems.

Mobile learning now has become a suitable choice to reach distance areas deprived of education; the need to have solid technological infrastructure in third world countries in general and the Arab world in particular became a necessity that cannot be overlooked or postponed any more.

Tutor and Tutee Training: A Key Factor for Success

One of the key factors for success in e-tutoring is the skillfulness of e-tutors. If the e-tutors are skillful and are professionally trained to provide e-tutoring services, they should be able to provide successful tutoring sessions which can result in more satisfaction on the e-tutees' side. In this study, the tutors had enough experience in providing feedback and holding conferences with writers throughout their teaching writing experience.

By the same token, I believe that e-tutees need to undergo successful tutorials to acquaint them with the most effective process of e-tutoring. These tutorials should be customized according to the level of technological literacy of the tutee and which platform service providers are using

to provide e-tutoring services. In general these tutorials should focus on the following:

- Demonstrate how the service operates.
- Explain to the tutees what kind of feedback they should get on their draft.
- Familiarize them with different roles in the service; the tutors, the tutees, and the technical support providers.
- Explain to the tutees that this service is not an editing service; it is a service for helping the tutees to become better writers by learning how to solve writing problems.

In an interesting article that serves as a guide to online tutors, McPherson and Nunes (2009) stress the importance of training tutors and tutees before starting any online tutoring sessions. They point out that "pedagogically sound delivery models and training of both tutors and students are critical to the success of e-learning" (p. 433).

This technique was implemented in this study, and as I mentioned in the first emergent theme, the need to implement modern technological tools in education must be supported by proper and sufficient training for users.

Various problems can arise because of lack of training; this is particularly true with beginning students who do not have enough background in using computers and the internet. When setting up a large-scale e-tutoring service, administrators and service providers must assume that not all students are of the same level of proficiency in using technology. Some people avoid technology because of their fear of failure in using it. In addition, problems of frustration and avoidance can occur if trainers are impatient with their trainees. This means that training should be comprehensive and delivered in a very user-friendly way in order not to overwhelm the students. In this study I sat with each participant and explained, using a laptop, how to use the e-tutoring service and answered the questions they had. I believe that this technique helped the participants and reduced any chance of technical difficulties. However, this technique does not seem to be practical with a large student body. Therefore, administrators should think of effective, practical ways to orient students on the use of e-tutoring.

One way administrators can face this challenge is by designing self-tutorial programs and distributing them on CDs or putting them in the e-tutoring platform. Another option is to provide orientation sessions to students at

the beginning of each semester; the aim of these sessions is to provide comprehensive information on how to use the e-tutoring service and provide institution-specific guidelines for the service.

Administrators should also think of another level of orienting students because some service users need special ways of training particularly the hands on experience. Giving users a CD tutorial or a worksheet may not work with all. Students and tutors must be followed up with to address any difficulties. In addition, some people may not have enough time to read and understand the instructions and they may soon lose interest. Also, since e-tutoring may not only be a support service and can be used by writing instructors to provide feedback to their students, training becomes essential especially for instructors who are not very proficient in using technology.

Unfortunately, there are a number of instructors in many Arab universities who still do not have very basic computer skills and this often leads them to become resistant to using technology in teaching. Those instructors must be taught and trained on the value of using technology and new communication tools as this may reduce their resistance. The world of education is changing due to the digital revolution, so everybody in the

educational field must catch up with the new technologies in order to make the educational environment a relevant one to students. Training should always be institutionalized and must become part of the requirements for quality teaching. Training courses, sessions and programs must be scheduled, graded, structured and evaluated in order to assess and evaluate the outcomes of the training itself.

Technical Support

Since this study was conducted on a small scale and IUP's moodle system is well-structured, neither the tutors nor the tutees faced major technical difficulties. However, it is important to note that technical difficulties may arise as a result of having large numbers of service users.

Also, service administrators should seek regular feedback from service users in order to deal with any technical difficulties or suggestions as soon as they learn about them. Feedback can be sought by electronic complaint/suggestion forms that can be put on the service website. I also believe that technical support should be provided by phone or as a walk-in service during university business hours. This is extremely important, especially in the Arab World because of various technological literacy

levels, in order to build a trust relationship and increase the reliability of electronic services.

The data analysis showed that most participants complained about delays in receiving and sending messages while chatting in the second stage. I researched this problem and found out through moodle's official discussion boards that a fairly good sized of moodle users are facing the same problem. As a solution, some users suggested installing third-party plugins that may work better than the original moodle chat feature.

Thus, one finding of this study is that technical support in implementing e-tutoring is a vital component to the success of e-tutoring. As we are aware, many problems and bugs may take place in computer programs and online services. This may lead to embarrassment and frustration. Thus, backup plans and emergency plans must be taken into consideration. One good thing about the new programs, chat rooms, portals and communication tools is that people now exchange experiences online and ask about problems by posing questions to user web sites of certain programs on certain issues. This must be encouraged by the technical support teams to create an independent technical supporting environment or virtual help-desk. The information and details posted by users on the net about the types of

problems and solutions is really helpful and comprehensive. This is a healthy phenomenon and can be utilized more to encourage users to learn about types of problems and what to do about them.

In a nutshell, serious consideration of remarks and suggestions made by any technological service users helps in making sound judgments on programs and tools used by such services. In the end, the aim of any service is to serve the users.

E-tutoring and Conservative Cultures

The e-tutoring experience has been successful in many conservative countries. For example, Salter and Krawczynski (2010) report on their study in Qatar where the tutors developed a highly effective approach to e-tutoring using the social technology, Skype, and, by the end of the academic year, hosted 30% of the over 1,500 hours of writing tutoring this way. This is encouraging as a practical example of implementing e-tutoring. Great benefits have been attained by e-learning and e-tutoring for some closed and conservative cultures. In certain countries like Saudi Arabia and some Arab and Gulf countries, women are not allowed to mix with men for religious and cultural reasons. In Saudi Arabia, for

example, male teachers deliver lectures to female students through video conferencing where the female students can see the instructor but not the other way around. They submit assignments through a drawer and get them back the same way. Although this method addresses the religious/cultural issue, it does not allow proper interaction between the students and their instructor and does not guarantee participation. To address this issue and adhere to the cultural/and religious values, proper implementation of LMS's can improve the situation. Students can interact with their instructors and among themselves. They can also get feedback synchronously and asynchronously on their work and performance and that may help in motivating them.

In addition, many learners, particularly in public schools avoid participating in classroom discussion due to fear of making mistakes and being mocked or bullied. This is seen in their inability to communicate freely with instructors and peers in English. In this study a number of tutees said that they did not feel the pressure as they had time to write and review their responses.

In addition, many Arab students are influenced by the rote learning model, learning by memorization, which inhibits creativity, innovation and critical thinking. E-

learning and e-tutoring modes, whether synchronous or asynchronous, once properly implemented can significantly enhance student learning and help students become independent learners. The proper implementation of technology will also reduce the fear of direct communication in mixed classes/sessions and minimize the passive attitude towards classroom participation.

Another benefit of using technology in tutoring/teaching writing is to enable shy EFL students to start discussing their writing including their mistakes with others and start to realize that such discussions are healthy and beneficial to their improvement as writers/learners. In this study, some of the tutees said stated that they did not feel pressured when chatting with the tutor because the tutors was not communicating with them face-to-face, so they felt more comfortable discussing their mistakes and were not afraid of losing face. Teachers/tutors should truly let students realize that it is normal for them to make mistakes and learn how to correct them. E-tutoring can also encourage students learn from their mistakes in an informal, non-authoritative setting, which will hopefully encourage them to be active in terms of language production and use and not fear making mistakes and errors whether in class or outside the class.

Staffing and Training

One of the main problems in providing supplementary services like e-tutoring services is the issue of staffing. This problem is challenging mainly because of budgetary limitations, and with the growing numbers of students, the matter gets even more complicated.

In this study, I originally wanted to have a decent number of tutors and tutees. However, it was hard for me to find tutors who could dedicate some of their time to provide e-tutoring services free of charge. The question to be asked is how can this problem be solved when implementing future large-scale e-tutoring services? In my opinion, there are several options that might work depending on the number of students. One option that might work well is to invite English departments to participate in the recruitment of tutors by offering a practical training course, similar to internship courses, to seniors who can assist in providing e-tutoring services to beginning students under the supervision of the writing center and qualified faculty. This could help significantly reduce the cost for establishing and maintaining such a service. It could also provide a valuable training experience to senior students of English as they would be closely supervised by faculty member while providing e-

tutoring services to e-tutees. Senior students from other departments could also participate in the e-tutoring process as e-tutors provided that they were well trained and qualified.

Another option worth considering is the option of adding a minimal fee to the students' tuition fees to help pay for the costs of maintaining such a service. This fee can be a percentage that the student has to pay, or it can be a set amount. An addition to all students' fees could certainly help in supporting the budget of the service.

In order for the service not to have an overwhelming amount of students, service administrators can limit it to 2-3 tutorials a semester. If the students want to get more tutorials, they can pay a minimal fee for each additional tutorial. Also, e-tutoring administrators can limit the size of papers for each tutorial in order to make the workload reasonable. Some e-tutees in this study expressed their willingness to pay for such a service because they believed it was helpful to them. Also, one tutor complained about the length of one paper submitted by a tutee, so I think it would be helpful to set a page limit when implementing such services in the future.

Positive attitudes towards e-tutoring

Almost all participants found the process of e-tutoring easy to use, and those who had some difficulties adapted themselves easily to the situation. They all expressed their willingness to apply the experience back home. This positive attitude must be used to develop and promote active learning methods.

Tutors' Attitudes

Tutors expressed that the e-tutoring experience was interesting. In fact, they showed interest in the process and provided some suggestions to improve it. They said that providing such a service is convenient and flexible. They also stated that a fully-functional service of this kind requires time and effort dedication. I believe that this dedication can definitely be sustained if the tutors are paid reasonably and are provided with flexible timetables.

Some of them expressed their worry as it requires more time for preparation and follow up. In fact, this is the nature of e-learning in general when a course is taught the first time. After the course is developed it becomes less time-consuming since it is posted on the LMS. It is a little bit different with e-tutoring since e-tutoring is personalized. In the context of e-tutoring, however, I

think that tutors can inspire each other and discuss issues and challenges in order to make the process easier and more socially-constructed. One way to improve and facilitate e-tutoring and empower e-tutors is through creating forums that would help tutors identify problems and effective practices for others. I also suggest that we have to develop and design a training course for tutors based on the best practices in e-tutoring. Issues like delay time in tutor's responses, the difficulty in communication, and weak responses from tutees can be collectively discussed and explored. This can create what Wenger (2007) calls a community of practice for e-tutors and hopefully could serve as a database or information bank which could be very helpful especially for new e-tutors. Lewis and Allan (2007) state that belonging to a virtual learning community (VLC) has a number of benefits which can be summarized in the following figure:

Box 1.1 Benefits of membership of a VLC

- Access to information and expertise at a time and place to suit me
- Access to like-minded individuals
- Access to mutual support
- Opportunities to collaborate with and learn from others
- Shared perspectives
- Opportunities to interrogate data and theory with input from others
- Dynamic new approaches to learning
- Working 'out-of-the-box' more creativity
- Opportunities to try out new ideas
- Empowered to challenge accepted institution/organization assumptions
- Opportunity to find innovative solutions to complex problems
- Sense of identity and group membership
- Support and friendship
- Opportunity to 'let off steam' in a safe environment
- Improved group outputs
- Collective responsibilities
- Confidence building

Figure 6: Benefits of Membership of a VLC

If a virtual learning community is created for e-tutors, most of the benefits mentioned above will contribute to the improvement of the service and the professional and social improvement of the tutor. If the tutors feel that they belong to a team or group that helps and supports them, they should hopefully have the motivation to improve their skills and share ideas with others so that all members of the group can benefit.

Tutees' Attitudes

As the analysis shows, feedback to students' drafts should be immediate or they may lose interest and can easily be frustrated. Based on this study, two points must be taken into consideration: 1) Students expect immediate response but may not be aware of the fact that tutors sometimes cannot attend to the tutees' drafts immediately as they have other tutees and have other duties, and 2) if not carefully controlled, tutors might be overwhelmed with the amount of emails and assignments submitted to them; particularly in long pieces of writing which require careful marking. In order to solve these issues, I think that clear instructions should be given to tutees as to what to expect from their tutors. In addition, students should be encouraged to use peer review methods and cooperative learning. They must be instructed to start self-criticism, self editing and evaluation, and they should also be taught that the more developed the paper, the better for them and the tutor. This can help improve a tutee's performance and interaction. In fact it will guarantee that less time is spent on e-tutoring by tutors. Moreover, self awareness of a tutee's errors and self correction can yield sound and encouraging feedback from tutors.

Drafting and Mechanics of Writing for Arab ESL/EFL

Students

I found that e-tutoring can be effectively used to classify tutees' errors and build a database for student writing corpora that can be built specifically to identify writing errors. This can help educators find solutions and build predictions on these errors. This can be of great help if a database for tutees' errors can be put online as a corpus.

Arab students are influenced by the way they were taught writing in Arabic. Usually, teachers do not ask them to write drafts in Arabic composition. When they are asked to write in English, they face the problem of not revising and editing their drafts as most Arabic teachers treat writing as a product not as a process. This is in line with Raimes' study (1987) which showed that L2 Turkish lower-mid proficiency writers "did not appear to be inhibited by attempts to correct their work." (p. 439). This dilemma must be addressed and brought to the students' attention because drafting and revising are essential parts of the writing process. A process writing approach should be introduced and incorporated when teaching writing to students as early as possible so that they can practice

staged writing and understand the writing cycle and apply it properly.

Also, in the study I observed that there is a lack of criticality and creativity when students write in English. I believe, this is due to the fact that students do not plan their essays carefully. Akyel (1994) found in his research study about writing planning in Turkish and English that lower proficiency Turkish EFL students had poor planning skills when they wrote in English. I believe that most of the issues mentioned above are related to the absence of process writing in Arab EFL writing classroom. Students are not taught how to plan effectively and they do not edit/revise once they write a piece. Many Arab EFL students treat a writing piece as a product. In order to address this issue, Seow (2002) suggests that instructors should lead students through the various stages of the writing process. He also suggests that teachers should also teach students problem-solving skills connected with the writing process which will help students realize specific goals at each stage of the composing process (p. 316). On the same token, Krashen (1984) explains that process writing is not sequential, meaning that "writing of a draft maybe interrupted by more planning, and revision may lead

to reformulation, with a great deal of recycling to earlier stages." (p. 17).

The essence of this study is to encourage the process approach to writing. The aim of getting feedback in the asynchronous tutoring stage was to let the tutees realize areas where they need to pay more attention to. Then, in the synchronous conference the tutee could discuss the feedback and get more ideas and insights on how to modify and improve the draft.

Limitations of the Study

Based on the analysis of data, the findings and results of the whole study, I include the following limitations. I hope to address these limitations in future research that I will conduct and for other researchers to take them into consideration when conducting similar research studies. Also, all findings and discussed themes of this study should be considered in light of these limitations:

1. This study is only an attempt to understand the implementation of an e-tutoring service at a local level and it is not comprehensive and final due to the small sample size and lack of funding. Large-scale

studies of e-tutoring need full-time paid tutors and large scale funding to get the service up and running.

2. Due to cultural barriers, this study included only male participants. This is due to the fact that it was hard for me to find Arab female students or female tutors who were willing to participate in the study as this study due to the conservative nature of the Arabic culture. I believe Arab female participants will not have any problems participating in such services if these services are affiliated with official institutions which was not the case in this study. It is hoped that similar studies will be conducted in the future to include female participants as tutors and tutees.

3. It was hard for me to test the service in other learning managements systems due to the lack of access to these systems. The only available option for me was moodle as it was the main platform for delivering electronic content at IUP. However, I do not believe that there will be major differences if the service is used in different LMS's.

4. This study examined only text-based tutoring and did not involve any audio or audiovisual tutoring. In the future, I hope to develop and research similar e-

tutoring services utilizing audio or audio-visual chat when funding and resources become available.

5. Some tutees and/or tutors may have negative views of the service and they did not want to express them fearing to affect their relationship with me as a researcher. However, I tried hard to elicit any negative views the participants had about the service by stressing the fact that this service is in its preliminary stage and I need their feedback to improve it.

Recommendations for Further Research

After conducting this research, I had a number of ideas, concerns, and recommendations that I believe are relevant to language educators, textbook developers, administrators at educational institutions, and information technology specialists who are interested in this area of study. The recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. Future studies need to be implemented with a larger number of tutors and tutees and perhaps in different contexts. This would help further expand our knowledge of e-tutoring. Due to time and resource limitations, it was hard for me to carry out this study at a larger scale.

2. Cultural issues are to be taken seriously as e-learning and e-tutoring are sound solutions to conservative cultures which have restrictions in mixed education.
3. Use of technology in e-tutoring should be enhanced, simplified, and implemented in various disciplines with the intention to assist students to become independent learners.
4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies should devote some of their efforts and funds to enhance such studies and its uses in education as the feedback from tutors and tutees provide them with sound ideas to develop their products in the field of e-learning.
6. E-tutoring should be taken seriously in terms of training tutors and tutees on what is expected of them to achieve to make it successful and relevant.
7. Employment of communication tools should be utilized fully to enhance the learning process. This is based on the concept what students like will make them excel in it.
8. Text book writers and curriculum developers should take into consideration the changing nature of the learning environment in the Arab world and elsewhere.

Students are now immersed in mobile technologies and the use of smart phones and tablets (e.g. ipads and iPhones.) Text book writers and curriculum developers must find out new methods to develop their products to make them compatible with the learners' current skills and capabilities.

9. Students need to be encouraged to be creative critical thinkers as this is the best way to improve their writing skills. They need to be taught how to think and express their thinking logically and linearly.
10. Reinforcement should be used as a facilitating factor to encourage students to be more productive rather than inhibitive. As this study suggests tutors and tutees expressed their happiness to receive encouraging remarks and feedback.
11. E -Tutors should take into account the needs of their tutees in order to facilitate e-tutoring.
12. Graphic designers and courseware authors should see into ways and methods to make their e-materials attractive and sustains tutors and tutees interest and enthusiasm. A study on time factor in e-tutoring and page design and layout should be investigated for further research.

13. I am fond of databases and I suggest that a database for e-tutors and e-tutees responses be made to be utilized by other users in this field.
14. Utilizing corpus linguistics to classify Arab learners' writing errors by building a corpus of errors that can be used by researchers to come up with theories and practical solutions to help Arab ESL writers.
15. Tutors and teachers of Arab learners should be aware of Kaplan's (1966) theory of cultural interference patterns of writing and its influence on how some students write in English. This will help tutors and teachers locate inconsistent organizational areas that the Arab learners transferred from the Arabic language writing style.
16. While some findings of this study were expected, I believe two major findings are new to me and unexpected. The first is the importance of providing the two modes of e-tutoring, asynchronous and synchronous, and providing them within a short time, and 2) the participants' views of applying this service in the Arab world were unexpectedly positive. Further research is necessary to the field in general

and the applicability of the service in the Arab world in particular.

Future Research Studies

Having conducted this study, I plan on conducting similar qualitative research studies that either report ESL/EFL students' experiences and reactions towards the use of technology in language learning, or quantitative research studies that attempt to measure whether or not technology can contribute to the improvement of ESL/EFL students.

One of the emerging interests that I have is to study the effects of mobile technologies in language learning. Four years ago, smart phones and tablets just came to exist and now they are dominating humans' lives. Their users use them to interact with each other and download applications, mostly in English, to stay connected with their friends and the world. This new mobile revolution is changing the way people, whether native or non-native, are communicating with each other. This new form of technology dictates the necessity to research this new and rapidly changing area. The use of mobile devices or smart phones can be employed effectively as supplementary study materials. Currently, I am teaching English for Business courses and use some

iPhone applications that help me prepare some business terminology for my classes. For example, Apple's App Store, the store where you buy applications for Apple products, offer a wide variety of dictionaries and language applications at low and affordable prices. The paper versions of these dictionaries are more expensive and do not offer audio pronunciation and quick search options like their electronic versions. These apps are also available in Android's market and other smart phones' electronic stores.

As for my next research study, I am currently in the process of conducting a joint quantitative research study with Zain e-Learning Center in the University of Bahrain. The aim of the study is to measure whether or not students improve when electronic supplementary materials and activities are posted on Blackboard. The electronic content focuses on vocabulary and grammar in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) class use. This study is going to involve a control group and an experimental group with the same in-class instruction and taught by the same teacher. The only difference is that the experimental group will have access to Blackboard and will be able to do some extra-curricular vocabulary and grammar activities. A pre-test and a post-test will be administered to both groups to

see whether or not there is a valid degree of improvement in the experimental group's performance.

Final Thoughts

Reflecting at the different stages of this research study, I believe that I learned a lot and I also grew as a researcher. Through the phases of conducting this research from writing the chapters, editing, paraphrasing and restructuring many thoughts, I felt at times that I could not continue. Then I realized that these moments of frustration were the birth of other new thoughts. I describe this experience, though stressful and time and effort consuming, it was very beneficial. Not only to my academic development as graduate student but to me as a teacher and researcher.

Unlike what I expected prior to conducting this study, the most rewarding phase in this research study was the data analysis phase in which I started to realize and live the true meaning of doing research. When I started to notice patterns and to make connections among the various responses provided by the participants, I realized the importance of research and how research studies like this one can contribute to the field.

I believe that the whole experience was successful but not perfect. This is due to the limitations stated earlier. My aim now as a researcher is to develop a long-term plan that will help me learn from the difficulties I faced and try to find areas in the field of technology and language learning that need more exploration and analysis in different contexts. It is through continuous levels of research, whether in small scale or large scale, that we develop and prosper as human beings. To summarize my point, I believe that researchers do not only contribute to their own development, they exceed that to contribute to the inspiration of the lives of others, explicitly and implicitly, to make the world we live in a better place.

Summary

In the first section of this chapter, I discussed the main themes that emerged from the study in the context of Arab ESL/EFL students. Discussion included various aspects of the process of e-tutoring, main cultural factors, writing strategies, and the importance of process writing.

In the second section I stated the limitations of the current research study and included recommendation for further research. I also summarized my future plans in

terms of research in the field and a reflection on the whole study.

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APPENDIX (A)

Screenshots of the e-tutoring platform.

WARNING: Only enter your credentials if the address above begins with exactly <https://webso.iup.edu/>



IUP Indiana University of Pennsylvania
WebSO

IUP Web Single Sign-On Login

The requested web resource, <https://moodle.iup.edu>, requires you to identify yourself.

Username:

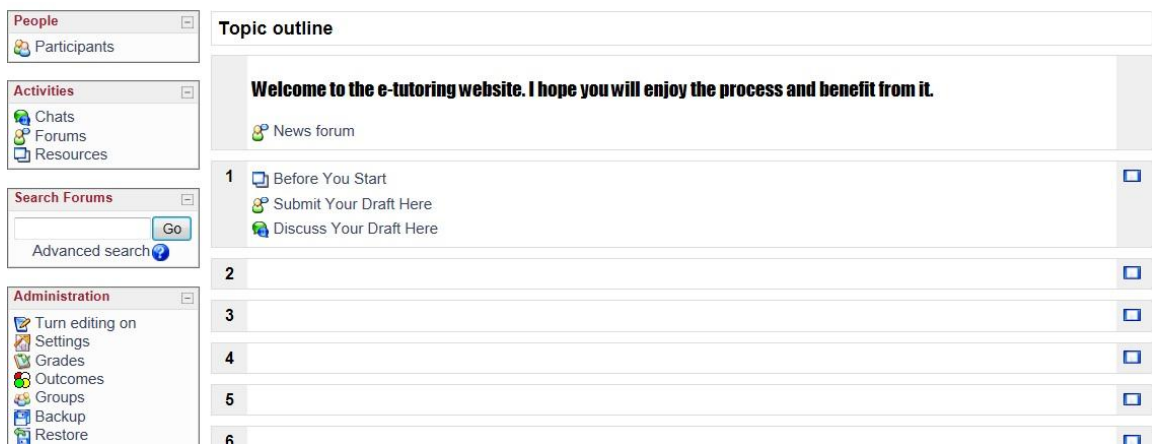
Password:



Unauthorized Uses and Access Are Prohibited!

[Login Failed?](#) [WebSO Help](#)

The main screen where tutors and tutees login to moodle.



People
Participants

Activities
Chats
Forums
Resources

Search Forums
Go
Advanced search

Administration
Turn editing on
Settings
Grades
Outcomes
Groups
Backup
Restore

Topic outline

Welcome to the e-tutoring website. I hope you will enjoy the process and benefit from it.

News forum

- Before You Start
- Submit Your Draft Here
- Discuss Your Draft Here
-
-
-

The main page for the e-tutoring service. There are three main links:

Before you start: contains general information about the service.

Submit Your Draft Here: The tutees click on this link to submit their draft submission form and their drafts. Tutors retrieve the drafts from here as well.

Discuss Your Draft Here: The tutees and tutors click on this link when they want to have live chat session (synchronous conferencing).

APPENDIX (B)

Example of a Chat Session

11:31 Yasser: Welcome Dr. Yusif

11:32 Yusif: Hello

11:32 Yasser: hello

11:32 Yusif: Thank you, how are you?

11:32 Yasser: I am good, yourself?

11:32 Yusif: I am good! Thanks for asking, and sorry about being late...Had to do something

11:33 Yasser: it is ok

11:33 Yusif: I need a minute to take a look at your paper. Just one minute

11:33 Yasser: ok

11:34 Yusif: OK. So how can I help you with this paper? You can refer to my comments by number so it is easier to find which feedback you need to me to explain. Also feel free to ask about other things I did not mark

11:36 Yasser: ok. let's start with the second comment, I used "montly rentals" as rent payments, is there a way to use rental to express the situtation in a fewer words than "montly rent payments"

11:36 Yasser: ?

11:37 Yusif: Are you still there?

11:37 Yusif: OK.

11:37 Yusif: YOu can say "monthly payments"

11:38 Yasser: so rental is always an adj .. ok

11:38 Yusif: Or, simply, rent

11:38 Yusif: or monthly rent

11:38 Yasser: ok

11:39 Yusif: OR,

11:39 Yasser: let's check Number 6

11:39 Yusif: YOu can change the sentence to :

11:39 Yusif: Having my own place, I would not have to pay rent which will help me save some money

11:40 Yasser: that sounds better

11:41 Yasser: ok Number 6

11:41 Yusif: Your original sentence is not bad. It just needs to be reworded. In American English, people pay rent (they do not need to explain that it is monthly. Most of the time it is)

11:41 Yusif: OK Number six

11:41 Yusif: What about Num 6?

11:43 Yasser: you suggested add some points to illustrate the sentence before, it is about a busy area.. I think it can be either busy or normal place

11:43 Yasser: adding *

11:44 Yusif: My comment has to do with balancing your ideas. You say leasing that land will get you money. That is the positive side. On the negative side, when you have land in a busy area, you must deal with other issues like noise, crime, crowdedness, etc

11:45 Yusif: So, adding these points will help your essay be more balanced

11:45 Yasser: aha, so it is about including negative and positive points to get balanced

11:45 Yusif: Absolutely

11:46 Yusif:

11:46 Yasser: ok # 9

11:46 Yasser: I mean a building with many rooms that used as small stores.. complex maybe

11:47 Yusif: OK. Say I will build a complex with several units that can be used as stores or apartments, and I will make them available for rent

11:48 Yusif: Or rent them to people

11:48 Yasser: Great. the last issue I want to discuss is generally about the style

11:49 Yusif: OK

11:49 Yasser: I want my writing to be academic... tense sometimes give a style and command of the writing, so any peices of advices?

11:50 Yusif: Hmmm..

11:51 Yusif: Well, you do not want ALL of your writing to be academic. "Academic writing" is a one type of writing. Your writing only needs to be academic when you are writing an academic essay. You dont to write academically all the time.

11:51 Yusif: Sometimes, you may write a descriptive essay, where you describe something, a place, an experience, a feeling, etc. This does not need to be academic

11:52 Yusif: Your emails to your friends do NOT need to be academic

11:52 Yusif: Nonetheless, if you need advice with writing academic essays, here is what you can do

11:53 Yusif: 1. Consider your audience. Good academic writing takes into account the audience, the people who will be reading your essay

11:54 Yusif: For example, if you are writing an essay about the importance of being religious, you need to assume that your readers will be familiar with the terms you use, and the logical sequencing of ideas.

11:54 Yusif: 2. Academic writing is balanced.

11:55 Yusif: You need to make sure to think of the two sides of an issue, the positives, and the negatives.

11:55 Yusif: 3. in academic writing, you need to make sure that your claims are based on facts that can be supported, not just opinions

11:57 Yusif: 4. In academic writing, you need to be less biased. You need to look at the issue from several perspectives

11:57 Yusif: and be open minded in your essay

11:57 Yusif: Read A LOT OF ACADEMIC WRITING

11:58 Yusif: The best way to become a good writer in general is to read a lot

11:58 Yusif: The more you read, the more proficient writer you will be become

11:58 Yusif: Writing is a skill. It takes times to develop. Keep revising, drafting, and indulge in some free writing as well

11:59 Yasser: Ithanks. Finally,based on your reading to my writing, what areas you think I need to improve?

11:59 Yusif: Talk with other people about what you write. Like what we are doing right now. YOu will learn a lot, and your writing will be better

11:59 Yusif: OK

12:00 Yusif: I like your writing a lot. I like the logical reasoning in your essay

12:00 Yusif: I liked how you attempted to convey some complex ideas in your paper. This is a brave essay

12:00 Yusif: Here is a sugggestion:

12:01 Yusif: Try to include as many details and examples as possible

12:02 Yasser: any grammer areas?

12:02 Yusif: Use personal examples as well if they help you get the point. For example, in your essay, you did NOT talk about whether or not you are renting right now or not. Therefore, you can use your personal story in this essay. For example, you can say, I am renting right now, and I pay so much money for rent that does not leave with a lot of money to spend on my family or myself. Therefore, if I had my own house, I would not

have to pay that much for rent, and I would be spending the money elsewhere

12:03 Yusif: Your grammar is OK. Do NOT worry about grammar.

12:04 Yasser: so mainly it is about developing the essay

12:04 Yusif: Yes

12:04: Yasser has left this chat

12:04 Yusif: developing the essay is most important

12:06: Yasser has just entered this chat

12:06 Yasser: sorry the chat is hangging

12:06 Yusif: That is ok

12:06 Yasser: I appreciate your feedback and valuable comments in this chat. Thank you so much

12:07 Yusif: YOu too Yasser. Good luck to you and have a nice day

12:07: Yasser has left this chat