

EFL Arab Learners' Peer Revision of Writing in a Facebook Group: Contributions to Written Texts and Sense of Online Community

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated peer writing revision among English as foreign language (EFL) Arab students in a Facebook group. Specifically, it aimed to identify the text revisions made by the learners and to determine their contributions to the learners' written texts and sense of online community outside the college classroom context. Being framed within the situated learning approach (Wenger, 1998), the current study was carried out among 14 EFL Arab university learners from Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Sudan and Egypt. A purposeful sampling was performed to achieve a heterogeneous group of EFL learners. A qualitative content analysis of the learners' written paragraphs (original and revised drafts), online interactional exchanges and responses to the post-revision reflection discussions was employed in this study. The findings showed that addition, substitution, deletion, permutation, consolidation, and distribution were identified as the main revision operations made by the EFL learners. These revisions operations and changes contributed to enhancing learners' end-products or texts in terms of content, unity and organization, language and mechanics. The learners' engagement in the online revision activities fostered their sense of online learning community by creating an interactive friendly learning environment, building and nurturing new relationships based on shared interests and developing a sense of belonging.

Keywords: online peer revision, revision changes, EFL learners, facebook, community

1. Introduction

Recently, there has been extensive research on peer writing revision in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom contexts which has highlighted the role of peer revision in assisting ESL/EFL learners to enhance their writing skill (e.g., Tsui & Ng, 2000; Lam, 2010). Yet, to our knowledge, there has been little research on peer revisions so far in the EFL Arabic context (Razak, Saeed & Ahmed, 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2014b). This is attributed to the lack of peer review application to writing courses at colleges in the EFL Arabic context. In this regard, several previous studies have addressed some challenges faced by instructors in implementing peer revision in writing courses especially at university levels. This is more likely attributed to the environmental restrictions that limit learners' interaction and group work including in writing (Al-Badwawi, 2011). In the EFL Arab university context, due to the wide number of students in each class, students do not have enough opportunities to be involved in group activities where they can interact and communicate using English. This has even restricted learners' roles to only receivers of feedback on their writing from the traditional source, the instructor, rather than providers of feedback (Razak & Saeed, 2014b). Although in such traditional learning environment, the instructor is the only source of corrective feedback on learners' writing, it is still more challenging for instructors to provide scaffolds and feedback on each individual learner's work at the same lecture in the EFL Arab context due to the wide number of learners in each class and the insufficient time (Razak & Saeed, 2014b). This suggests the need for engaging learners in peer revision. Previous research has emphasized the role of learner-learner interaction in such group work in their language learning development as they learn the language by using it for meaningful interaction, communication and negotiation (Yang, 2011).

More recently, with the emergence of Social Networking Services (SNSs) and Web 2.0 including blogs, wiki, MySpace, Facebook as an interactive learning environment for peer work including peer revision, researchers' interest in exploring how these new technologies assist ESL/EFL learners' collaborative revision activities in

writing has increased (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; Kessler, 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Razak et al., 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2014b). Yet, most of these recent studies that have dealt with online revision activities almost neglected how the learners' engagement in online peer revision fosters their sense of online community (Razak & Saeed, 2014a). While some previous studies indicated that engaging learners in online learning supports the social phenomenon of a community (Brook & Oliver, 2003a; Andrew, 2010), studies incorporating the community perspective in online writing programs are still scant (Andrew, 2010). Furthermore, while Facebook can provide instructors as well as learners with the opportunity to "track the actions, beliefs and interests of the larger groups to which they belong", so far, only a few studies have examined the ESL/ EFL learners' writing through Facebook (Shih, 2011; Majid et al., 2012; Razak et al., 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2014b; Yunus et al., 2012). Therefore, the present study is an attempt to enable EFL learners to revise their written texts outside the university classroom context as to overcome the previously stated challenges in the traditional learning settings and at the same time, bridge the above research gap by looking at online peer revision among EFL Arab learners in a Facebook group from the community perspective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) provides the basis for peer writing revision since it emphasizes the role of scaffolding and assistance offered by more capable learners to less capable learners to reach a particular level of learning. This scaffolding can be expert scaffolding (from teacher or instructor to learners), mutual scaffolding (from learners to learners either from more capable learners to less capable ones or vice versa) and self-scaffolding (a learner scaffolding himself/herself) (Holton & Clarke, 2006; Santoso, 2010). These types of assistance especially expert and mutual scaffolding can be achieved through collaboration and social interaction among learners as well as between learners and their instructors. However, this necessitates the integration of peer writing revision in an online community where they feel that they share the same concern, mutual engagement, diversity engagement and sense of belonging (Razak & Saeed, 2014a). The concept of community was introduced by Wenger (1998) in a detailed discussion of the social nature of learning. Since that time, it has undergone further expansion and further definitions along with situated learning. In its most well-known definition, the concept of community refers to a group of people "who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002). This situated learning approach emphasizes the social nature of learning and knowledge in a community of practice (CoP) where engagement is the core element of learning and knowledge construction (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). In this sense, the theory is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) learning theory since it assumes that learners' engagement in meaningful interactions enhances their learning process and assists them to construct and re-construct their knowledge.

2.2 Previous Research on Peer Writing Revision

Within this process approach, peer review is an essential stage in the writing process (Ferris & Hedgcock 2005). Its pedagogical value is attributed to its role in motivating learners to become sources of corrective feedback rather than the instructor (Hu, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Peer revision plays a role in assisting learners to revise their texts in terms of vocabulary, organization, content (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011; Hansen & Lui, 2005) and meaning (Berg, 1999). As learners engage in peer revision, they modify re-conceptualize their ideas as to match the expectations and needs of the audience (Tsui & Ng, 2000), genre or topic, strengthen their ideas and correct grammar (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). In a study by Lundstrom and Baker (2009), overall, results showed that peer review resulted into enhancing learners' texts by making more global text revisions (organization, development, and cohesion) than local ones (grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics). However, this differed according to learners' levels in English as learners with higher levels of English made more global text revisions than learners with lower levels in English.

Recent research has pointed out at the potential of SNSs and Web 2.0 technologies in engaging ESL/ EFL learners in the process of writing and assisting them to attend to their final products through meaningful virtual interaction (Hoopingarner, 2009). In investigating online peer revision, many researchers (e.g. Min, 2006; Berbach, 2007; Mak & Coniam, 2008; Choi, 2008; Arnold et al., 2009; Kessler, 2009; Hadjerrouit, 2011; Woo et al., 2011; Horne, 2011; Yang & Meng, 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a) have found that learners made text revisions: addition, substitution, deletion, permutation (re-ordering or re-arranging), consolidation (combining elements) and distribution (breaking up combined elements). Other revision strategies include scaffolding exchanges such as suggestions and using the first language (L1) (Santoso, 2010; Razak & Saeed, 2014a), meaning negotiation and content discussion (Liang, 2010). Peer revision through SNSs and Web 2.0

technologies contributes to learners' texts in terms of grammar and accuracy. For instance, Choi (2008) and Kessler (2009) reported that learners focused on how to make the meaning clearer in their revised texts, thus, attending to fluency rather than accuracy. Other studies reported that learners focused on conclusion and sentences or ideas relative to the text in their final drafts (Arnold et al., 2009; Yang, 2010), content (Hadjerrouit, 2011), organization and cohesion (Alshumaimeri et al., 2011) and more language related contributions (LRCs) than non-language related contributions (NLRCs Kessler et al., 2012). This role that online peer review plays in assisting learners to contribute to their written texts has been also reported in other studies as well. For instance, Yang (2010) compared self-correction and peer review and found that whereas self-correction enabled EFL learners to make local text revisions, virtual peer review assisted them to look at their writing from the audience's perspective and allowed them to produce more global text revisions such as content, organization and style text revisions. Similarly, according to the results of Ho (2015), EFL learners produced more global text revisions on content, idea development, and organization than local text revisions at the word- or sentence-level in online peer review.

The findings of these previous studies underlie the potential of online peer review in providing ESL/EFL learners with an interactive environment where they can enhance their writing through revisions. The value of online peer review is even higher especially when it is combined with good pedagogical practices including training and explicit instruction provided to learners by the instructors (Razak & Saeed, 2014a). However, these studies have not paid attention to the community perspective in online peer revision. Online learners need to establish a sense of online community (Kessler et al., 2012), a need that is similar to what other few researchers called for while investigating peer work in writing as learners need to build up and maintain relationships as an online learning community members (Elola & Oskoz, 2010). This indicates that the potential of these SNSs in peer revision needs to be adequately searched from the community perspective.

2.3 The Educational Value of Facebook for ESL/ EFL Learners

Several previous studies have highlighted the educational value of Facebook as one of the most well known SNSs among ESL and EFL university learners (e.g., Boyd & Ellison, 2011; Kabilan et al., 2010; Yunus et al., 2012). These studies emphasized the role of Facebook in forming online learning communities where learners can engage in shared activities based on their shared needs and interests. Moreover, Facebook groups facilitate ESL learners' writing process (Haverback, 2009; Shih, 2011; Majid et al., 2012). Other few recent studies (Razak et al., 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2015) have set up good examples of those studies in exploring how EFL learners utilized Facebook groups as online learning communities for further development of their English language learning beyond the classroom context. Razak et al. (2013) focused on EFL learners' use of Facebook groups in their writing, thus, concluding that such SNSs provide learners with opportunities to practice writing outside the classroom context as well as pose challenges for them. Razak and Saeed (2014a) found that Facebook groups were used by EFL learners as online CoPs that could facilitate their revision process by fostering their participation and engagement in online collaborative revision activities, especially those newcomer learners (new members) through friendship building, a supportive learning environment and developing a sense of autonomy among them. Therefore, the current investigated modeling writing revision among 15 EFL learners coming from different Arab countries in a Facebook group beyond the classroom space. Moreover, Razak and Saeed (2014b) reported that Facebook played a role in assisting the EFL learners to be engaged in pre-writing stages including topic selection, generating ideas, reflecting on their ideas and outlining their argumentative essays, thus, coming to a conclusion that interaction via Facebook fosters learners' cognitive processing in writing such as reflection and interpretation of their ideas and texts.

3. The Study

3.1 Research Questions

The purpose of the current study was to fill the above addressed needs represented by the scarce research on peer revision in the EFL Arab context and the neglected community perspective in previous research on online peer revision by investigating the EFL learners' peer revision via a Facebook group. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following three research questions:

- 1). What types of revision changes did the EFL Arab learners make in revising their texts online?
- 2). What aspects of their written texts did the EFL Arab learners enhance through these revision changes?
- 3). How did the EFL Arab learners' engagement in the online revision activities foster their sense of online community?

3.2 Research Design

In carrying out this study, a qualitative research design was adopted because it can provide a researcher with the opportunity to obtain better understanding of how humans or respondents react to and experience what is implemented. It is also believed that by adopting this method, researchers attempt to approach respondents so that they can better understand their views (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, this seems to suit the purpose of this study as it aims at seeking deeper insights and further understanding of the EFL learners' revision strategies as situated in the current EFL CoP via a Facebook group.

3.3 Research Context

The current study focused on a Facebook group (Figure 1) as an online learning environment for its wide use among EFL university learners, its capability in facilitating their collaboration and participation and its value as a space for learning beyond classroom. The Facebook group (Figure 1) was jointly created by three EFL instructors and the researcher in June 2011. It aims to provide EFL learners with an out-of-classroom space where they can use and practice English by creating, sharing, exchanging content and information in the various language skills. The group with an open access to new members who would like to further enhance their English has attracted many EFL learners from different Asian and Arabic countries through the useful posts and activities posted by the instructors daily. The number of the members joining the group reached 51,117 by September 15, 2015.



Figure 1. The facebook group

In selecting the research site, Burgess (1984) stated that it is important for a researcher to consider a few questions concerning whether the participants are willing to participate and cooperate in a given study, whether it is convenient to access the perspective participants, and whether there is a need for carrying a study in that setting. Therefore, this group was selected as the context of this study since it is a joint effort between lecturers and the researcher, and therefore, accessing and tracing the EFL learners' participation in these revision activities through comments and exchanges to collect the necessary data was convenient and easy. Moreover, it represents a wide EFL context because the members came from different Arabic countries including Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Jordan, and other Arab countries. Another reason for selecting this group is the scant research on Facebook for peer revision. Facebook as the most well-known social network among university students especially EFL students (Majid et al., 2012) can facilitate learners' communication, collaboration (Shih, 2011), participation and engagement (Haverback, 2009), and useful for out of classroom work (Razak et al., 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Razak & Saeed, 2014b). Finally, Facebook groups enable learners to construct knowledge and work together through meaningful interaction (Kabilan et al., 2010).

3.4 Participants

The present study adopted purposive sampling which aims to seek certain criteria or characteristics in the samples being pre-informed by certain theories (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The notion of scaffolding implies the importance of variation among the learners (less capable and those who are more capable as to be involved in scaffolds and interaction). Many previous empirical studies on ESL collaborative writing (Maftoon & Ghafouri, 2009; Brooks, 2010; Yu & Choe, 2011) were carried out among ESL learners as heterogeneous groups (different levels in English, different locations, different backgrounds, etc.).

These studies provided evidence of the usefulness of heterogeneous groups in helping ESL struggling learners to be assisted by more capable learners in writing skill, and at the same time, this can be useful for those more advanced learners in the sense that they can articulate their knowledge of writing. The current study is also partially informed by the situated learning approach (Wenger, 1998). Learning as a social practice within this framework is not necessary to be located exclusively within the individual; instead it is situated communally and involves the differences of perspective among participants (Hanks, 1991). This implies the importance of variation among the EFL participants. Thus, the participants in this study were 14 EFL Arab university students (12 females and 2 males Table 1) who regularly attended and participated in these revision activities. They represent a heterogeneous group in terms of their backgrounds, gender, levels of English at college and levels of membership in this group. While the core and active core are those old-timer learners who had participated in previous activities prior to the revision activities reported in this study, the peripheral learners are those learners who were still newcomers.

Table 1. Profiles of the samples in the current study

Id Name	Country	Gender	Membership Level
S1	Sudan	F	Core
S2	Syria	F	Core
S3	Yemen	F	Active
S4	Algeria	F	Active
S5	Yemen	F	Peripheral
S6	Tunisia	F	Core
S7	Egypt	F	Core
S8	Yemen	M	Peripheral
S9	Yemen	M	Peripheral
S10	Yemen	F	Active
S11	Algeria	F	Active
S12	Yemen	F	Peripheral
S13	Tunisia	F	Peripheral
S14	Yemen	F	Peripheral

3.5 Procedure and Data Collection

For the writing revision activities, the online instructor of the only for English Learning Group and researchers decided to introduce paragraph writing activities as part of the weekly activities posted in the group. In the first week, the instructor instructed them on how to write a paragraph in English. He also trained them on how to revise their written texts by providing corrective feedback and making sample text revisions as modifications to solve the problems identified in their texts. Following this, the participants were assigned to individual writing: writing a paragraph on a topic of their own choice in free writing, and they submitted them to the online instructor. After submission, the instructor announced the peer writing revision activities. The EFL instructors scheduled the days and time for the peer revision sessions. Thus, this study covered five sessions of the revision activities in which the participants revised a number of eight paragraphs. The study used three sources of data collection; students' written texts (original drafts and revised or final drafts), their interactional exchanges and comments during the revision activities and their written responses collected from the post-revision written discussion. Their written responses represented their reflection on their experience on online peer revision from the community perspective.

3.6 Data Analysis

For qualitatively analyzing the EFL Arab learners' original and last revised drafts as well as their interactional exchanges, the current study combined three different taxonomies adopted from previous studies (Table 2). The first taxonomy of revision changes includes six types of operations: (1) additions, (2) deletions, (3) substitutions, (4) permutations (re-ordering), (5) distributions, (6) consolidations (combining). They were adopted from

previous researchers who used the same taxonomy in analyzing learners' revision operations or changes (Berbache, 2007; Horne, 2011; Yang & Meng, 2013; Razak & Saeed, 2014a). The second taxonomy of revision changes includes changes at six levels: (1) below word, (2) word, (3) phrase, (4) clause, (5) sentence and (6) paragraph. The third taxonomy of revision changes focus on the aspects of contributions: (1) content, (2) organization and unity, (3) language (form & meaning) and (4) mechanics. These taxonomies served as the main codes and sub-codes for the qualitative analysis in this study. The unit of analysis used varied from word to sentence while the samples were used in the form of full sentences or paragraphs. Thus, following these taxonomies, the researchers read the drafts and interaction comments carefully, highlighted these revision changes and assigned them to these codes and sub-codes in terms of operations, levels of revisions and contributions. Then, since the study used a qualitative analysis, only samples that reflect the various categories according to these three taxonomies were selected to report the findings. In analyzing the EFL learners' responses to the questions in the online post-revision discussions by which they reflected in their experience concerning the community perspective, the same procedure of analysis (coding, categorization, description, and interpretation) adopted from several researchers (Yang & Meng, 2013) was carried out. Moreover, emerging categories and patterns were identified. Finally, the revision changes in terms of their focus areas or contributions were quantified for the purpose of determining the area having the learners' most and least attention when revising their paragraphs online.

Table 2. Taxonomies of revision operations/ strategies, levels of changes and contributions

Revision Strategy Taxonomy	Taxonomy of Revision Change Levels	Taxonomy of Revision Focus Changes
Additions	Below word Level	Mechanisms
Deletions	Word Level	Language (form & meaning)
Substitutions	Phrase Level	Organization and unity
Permutations	Clause Level	Content
Distributions	Sentence Level	
Consolidations	Paragraph Level	

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the current study according to the three research questions:

4.1 What Types of Revision Changes Did the EFL Arab Learners Make in Revising Their Texts Online?

The qualitative analysis of the EFL Arab learners' revised drafts showed that the learners added to their texts by incorporating various elements into the first drafts from a word-level to a sentence level (Table 3).

Table 3. Sample excerpts from original & revised drafts for addition

Excerpts from Original Drafts	Excerpts from Revised Drafts
(1) The funniest thing in this story that we ...	S3: The funniest thing in this story <i>is</i> that we.....
(2) My friends were too busy taking photos of me.	S6: My friends were too busy taking photos of me <i>that moment/ in the meantime)</i>
(3) I can't remember the newest one.	S1: I can't remember the most recent funny situation <i>that I have been through.</i>
(4) Null	S6: <i>Eventually, I threw it.</i>

Note. *Italics indicate the changes of revisions made by the learners and their focus.

This finding conforms the findings of previous studies (e.g. Berbache, 2007; Choi, 2008; Kessler, 2009; Hadjerrouit 2011; Woo et al., 2011; Razak & Saeed, 2014a) that learners made such additions to incorporate additional information to their writing. It also helped them to correct the errors in grammar and mechanisms (Horne, 2011; Yang, 2010).

As one of their revision changes, the EFL learners engaged in substituting different linguistic elements especially at word level as shown in Excerpt (1) provided by S3 and phrase as well as sentence levels as in Table 4:

(5): S3: "Some corrections that I have noticed in your paragraph sister: 1- my self >>> *myself* (I think it should be one word*) 2- is >>> That *was* (in the past)".

Table 4. Sample excerpts from original & revised drafts for substitution

Excerpts from Original Drafts	Excerpts from Revised Drafts
(6) I have also fell in the market but I controlled myself.	S1: I <i>was almost going to</i> fall in the market but I didn't.
(7) That made all the eyes in me to see who's the hero who did that.	S9: <i>They wanted to see who did that.</i>

Previous researchers including Berbache (2007); Yang (2010); Horne (2011); Woo et al. (2011) and Razak and Saeed (2014a) reported that this substitution was most frequently used by ESL/EFL learners to correct grammar errors and enhance the meaning of their texts.

Deletion which is removing items at different levels from the texts is an important revision operation identified in this study. Table (5) presents samples of deletion at word level to correct the misuse of the conjunction "but" and sentence level to delete an irrelevant idea or a repeated idea.

Table 5. Sample excerpts from original & revised drafts for deletion

Excerpts from Original Drafts	Excerpts from Revised Drafts
(8) Although the first lecture starts at 9:00 am, <i>but</i> forgot it that totally.	S3: Although the first lecture starts at 9:00 am, I totally forgot that.
(9) This is where he stayed and then went to university. Later, when he was a teenager, his family decided to stay in Australia. <i>On weekends, the family used to go out, and he had fun with his family as to get relieved from school stress.</i> On weekends, the family used to go out, whereas he used to have fun with his Australian friends.	S6: After a few years, he started his primary school, and went to one of the best primary schools there. Later, when he was a teenager, his family decided to stay in Australia, this is where he stayed and then went to university. On weekends, the family used to go out, whereas he used to have fun with his Australian friends.

The EFL learners' comments also show that they seemed aware of this deletion as they provided further explanation of what was seen by them as unnecessary and needed to be deleted (Excerpt 2):

(10): S6: I still prefer to omit that sentence ("On weekends, the family used to go out.....etc.") as i feel some repetition of the fragment: " On weekends, the family used to go out.....etc." with the other similar sentence I `ve put later in my paragraph".

According to Horne (2011) and Kessler et al. (2012), this revision operation, deletion, focused on the local meaning of the text without affecting the content. However, this study showed an example of sentence-level deletion that affected the meaning of a section of a paragraph as shown above.

The findings of this study indicate that the EFL learners also focused on the logical order of these different items either words, phrases or even sentences and the unity of the text through the permutation (Table 6). It is apparent that the learners re-organized elements such as words and phrases to correct the errors in word or phrase order, clause level to enhance the meaning (e.g. introducing the effect clause and sentence level to achieve a unity of the text (e.g. coherent and cohesive ideas in the paragraph).

Table 6. Sample excerpts from original & revised drafts for permutation

Excerpts from Original Drafts	Excerpts from Revised Drafts
(11) That day, I still remember it.	S9: <i>I still remember that day.</i>
(12) It was Thursday, so we finished our classes earlier.	S10: <i>We finished our classes early, because it was Thursday.</i>
(13) This is where he stayed and then went to university. Later, when he was a teenager, his family decided to stay in Australia. On weekends, the family used to go out, and he had fun with his family as to get relieved from school stress. After a few years, Sam started his primary school, and went to one of the best primary schools there. On weekends, the family used to go out, whereas he used to have fun with his Australian friends. =	S2: <i>After a few years, he started his primary school, and went to one of the best primary schools there. On weekends, the family used to go out, and he had fun with his family as to get relieved from school stress. Later, when he was a teenager, his family decided to stay in Australia. On weekends, the family used to go out, whereas he used to have fun with his Australian friends. This is where he stayed and then went to university.</i>

This supports the findings reported by previous research (Berbache, 2007; Horne, 2011; Kessler et al., 2012; Razak & Saeed, 2014a; Woo et al., 2011) indicating that this revision helped learners to attend to coherence and flow of ideas most frequently.

The findings of the study showed that the EFL learners combined two or more elements together in their revised paragraphs such as sentences (Excerpt 3) to change the sentence into a complex sentence, thus, enhancing the structure of the sentence:

(14): S5: sis Tunisiano Ib we can write "my friends and I were exhausted, longing for a cup of tea on our way home "because the original one is "my friend and i were exhausted. We were longing for a cup of tea on our way home". We can use such a sentence when we combine two sentences to make a complex one. But we should focus on verbs to be in the second sentence to be deleted .We have to put a comma at the end of the first sentence.

It was also found that the learners used the distribution strategy in which they had to split or break up two combined elements into two separate ones (Excerpt 4) as a way of simplifying the structure:

(15): S2: Hi: "The human race affects on the balance of the planet, and that could be a huge threat on the sustainability of life on Earth". So we can say "*the human race affects the balance of this planet. (This effect) that could be a huge threat on the sustainability of life on Earth.*

The qualitative analysis of the EFL Arab learners' interactional exchanges showed that the students were involved in the distribution at the text level when they engaged in a content-discussion strategy (Excerpt 5):.

(16): S6: but sorry there are so many scattered and scrambled ideas. I think we must focus on one (single) embarrassing situation.
 - S11: I think they are 2 paragraphs because of 2 topics no?
 - S2: falling in the market Yes they are 2:1 falling on the stairs during the Chemistry exam and
 - S1: there are two paragraphs because each paragraph carries a different main idea and talks about a different embarrassing situation!!!!
 - S12: I think 2 because there are two ideas.
 - S13: yes because they are two funny situations.
 - S2: since we agreed that they are 2 main ideas, separation suits them more!

Thus, while most of these previous studies conducted on online revision strategies did not include consolidation and distribution strategies in their findings except Berbache (2007) and Horne (2011), the present study revealed that with these two latter revision operations, the EFL learners could maintain a logical progression of ideas or events, achieve a variety in the structure and enhance the meaning of the texts. What seemed more interesting is that the distribution strategy was used at the text level or global level (e.g. distributing two paragraphs according to their main ideas and supporting ideas).

The EFL learners also engaged in meaning- negotiation interaction. They negotiated the meaning of the linguistic elements that they used as alternatives for other linguistic elements in the original drafts (Excerpt 6):

(17): S6 : I think “*peer* through the window to see what is going inside”
 S2: I don't think he *intended to look inside* the window. He was just passing by and he *glanced* the teacher still there.
 S6: yes i find it *more logical* as it *justifies* why the teacher got so angry
 S1: *can* we say “to take a *quick look*”?
 S6: yes we *can* use “to *glance inside* = to peer = to glimpse.
 S7: we *can* use *peep*.
 S2: “When the teacher saw me *peeping through* the window, he said " Go home little boy "
 ///// yes i like it :)
 S1: yes and it actually makes the sentence *sounds funny*!!

Previous studies on online peer revision (DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001; Liang, 2010; Razak & Saeed, 2014a) showed that meaning negotiation engaged learners in different patterns of linguistic behavior including agreement, disagreement, justification, clarifications and confirmation requests.

Scaffolding which is a type of verbal assistance provided from a learner to another learner is one of revision strategies identified in the EFL learners’ online interaction (Excerpt 7):

(19): S3 Great! But I have a remark: we should say “ordered” and came in the past.
 S4: sorry I'm not focusing well :(*He ordered me to return home?* Just like this?
 S1: I agree with Iman about using *the indirect speech*!! It will make the paragraph *more unified*!!

4.2 What Aspects of Texts Did the EFL Arab Learners Enhance through These Revision Changes?

This section presents the findings concerning the contributions of these revision changes to the EFL learners’ paragraphs. The findings of the study indicate that these revision changes contributed to various aspects of the EFL learners’ paragraphs (Table 7). The highest percentage of their revision changes contributed to the language form (grammar) (44.29%) followed by the meaning or appropriate lexical items (18.60%), the unity and organization (15.90%) while the lowest percentage of such revision changes focused on the content of their texts (8.90%).

Table 7. Quantified occurrences of revision changes according to their focus areas

Focus Areas	Content	Unity & Organization	Language (Meaning)	Language (Form)	Mechanics
No	111	206	241	574	164
Percentage	(8.56%)	(15.90%)	(18.60%)	(44.29%)	(12.65%)

Based on the qualitative analysis, as the learners engaged in various revision changes at different levels, they paid attention to the content of their paragraphs. Excerpt (8) presents a sample of learners’ content related revision in terms of adding the conclusion to the paragraph, and hence enhancing the content:

(25 A): S13: In *conclusion*, *school uniform is a symbol of equality, facility and complaisance*.

(25 B) S2: Hey sweet friend. Here are some suggested ideas to elaborate: *I come from my mother, and that I belong to my mother. She is the one who has always been there for me. Moreover, she is the one who raised me up. Unless she had been there for me, I would not have been who I am right now. Although I am not a photocopy of her, I will always have her inside of personality. I will always be thankful to her.*

These revision changes also contributed to enhancing the unity and organization of the the texts. The learners' attention paid to the unity of the texts is also evident in their discussion of thesis statement, topic sentences and main ideas in revising their paragraphs. Excerpt (9) of their interactional exchanges shows how the discussion was initiated, advanced and facilitated to evaluate the unity of the entire text globally. They engaged in clarification, seeking clarifications, elaboration and justification to negotiate the relevance of such ideas to the main idea.

(26): S8: I'd like to *focus* on one point I noticed in paragraph which is the coherence.

-S2: Sorry Brother Mohamed, if u give it a close look, you'll find that *paragraph* is not about the advantages and disadvantages of reading but about *the causes behind the teenagers' negligence of reading*.

-S8: What about *the topic sentence* Tunisiano?

-S6: We can divide the introduction likewise: S1 "Reading is the most useful hobby => Thesis statement: S2 "However, it has been neglected for many reasons." => *Topic sentence*: the reasons behind the teenagers' negligence of reading.

-S8: Reading is *the topic* and .reasons of negligence seems *the controlling idea*. The rest of the paragraph should support this idea while the teenagers' negligence of reading is *a very different topic*.

- S2: I agree that the 1st sentence was used as *an introduction to the topic*. Thus, it doesn't carry the main idea of the paragraph and "Reasons behind teens' negligence of reading" is *the topic sentence* here as most of the paragraph's sentences support it.

These above revision changes at sentence and text levels assisted the EFL learners to express their ideas well, organize these ideas in each paragraph logically and attend to the relevance of these ideas as part of the content of the entire paragraph. Similar findings (Berbache, 2007; Mak & Coniam, 2008; Woo et al., 2011; Razak & Saeed, 2014a) showed that substitution and re-organization strategies were more related to content and unity of the texts rather than language. This is an indication of how these revision activities seemed to encourage the EFL learners to move from the traditional classroom writing practices that limit their focus on language or form to further global aspects of paragraph writing.

With respect to the contributions of these various revision changes to the language, the findings show that the learners were able to attend to accurate meaning. This can be noticed by the learners' word and phrase-level changes and especially substitution. This example of the original sentence (I tried to catch the desk to help me to stand up.) and the revised one (I tried to catch the desk to *regain my position and remain standing*.) is a clear example in which S6 used the phrases "regain my position and remain standing" as alternatives for the part of the sentence "help me to stand up". This seemed to attend to accurate lexical items as to enhance the meaning.

These revision changes especially substituting words and phrases assisted the EFL learners to focus on the language form or grammar. The analysis of their original and revised drafts supports this finding as they paid more attention to word substitution to fix errors related to verbs and tenses (Excerpt 10):

(24): S2: Okay, I can see that I missed a lot Tunisiano. Why r using the *present perfect* in (she have lost her shoe?) and if so, it's *has not have*.

S6: Thanks alot Zaina. These *silly mistakes* I'm used to doing are really killing me sweetheart.

Finally, such revision changes especially below word and word levels were intended by the learners to fix the

use of mechanics including spelling and punctuations. This can be evident from Excerpt (11) in which the learners added missing commas and spaces.

(21): S9: Salsabeell observed that most of you aren't aware here to put *period, commas,* etc.) If you use these *punctuation marks* no space between the words.

S3: Okay I will try my best to pay *attention to punctuation,* and I will focus in punctuation in your comments .From you we get a lot of benefits .Thank you so much.

Tuesday at 9:01am • Unlike •

Previous researchers (e.g. Kost, 2011) showed that most of strategic operations at word and phrase levels used by EFL learners tend to correct errors in mechanics, lexis, word ending morphology and grammar. However, this is not striking as the findings of this study revealed that the EFL Arab learners also used these word and phrase-level changes to elaborate the ideas by incorporating more information about the events, the places or time of the events, enhance the meaning and establish coherence among these small linguistic units in a sentence. As pointed out by Berbache (2007), words which are the smallest semantic units in writing can enhance the meaning of the text if appropriately selected. This can be also an important indicator of the EFL learners' fluency levels in English since strategies at word and phrase levels helped the students in the present study to play with words in a way that they in some sessions came up with two different revised versions of one original paragraph (See Appendix A).

4.3 How did the EFL Arab Learners' Engagement in the Online Revision Activities Foster Their Sense of Online Community?

By analyzing the EFL Arab learners' responses to the questions of the post-revision discussions, the findings revealed that as the EFL learners engaged in revision activities beyond the classroom context, they perceived the Facebook group as a supportive learning environment that enabled them to be active in the learning process. They found themselves in a friendly home-like environment where they felt comfortable, less stressed, and free to articulate their ideas. This motivated them to collaborate in these revision activities. As stated by S4, "*During the writing revision activities, it is good for a member to feel comfortable to participate in it. An encouraging atmosphere would help them feel less stressed and freer to express their ideas*". Engaging in such online revision activities, the EFL learners got the opportunity to socialize and communicate. According to S5, this group "*offers us a very good chance to strengthen our social skills and in communication*". Previous research has pointed out at the importance of as an asset-based learning environment in CoPs in particular (Lieberman & Wood, 2003; Pearce, 2010; Wenger, 1998).

Relationship building was also realized by the learners as a major component of their experience in participating in online revision activities. This is because these relationships are built among helpful, kind and supportive members. It was reported by S6 that: "*One of the characteristics that I like about this group is that making new friends who are helpful, kind and caring*". Therefore, the learners' common interest played a positive role in making them feel much closer and mutually accountable. This was articulated by S8 as she said "*It's clear when someone asks a question or a problem, could find a response or a solution for it*". These relationships were also seen by most of the EFL Arab learners as good opportunities to mediate their learning which can be noticed in the responses by S4 who stated: "*Knowing that my friends whom i have spent much time with will criticize my writing based on their will to help me improve my writing skills*". According to Wegner (2006), learning in CoPs concerns the whole person's participation and engagement and his/her relation with others in an ongoing, social and interactional process.

Finally, engaging in the online revision activities, some EFL learners fostered a sense of community or feeling part of the group. As articulated by S10, "*Here, really, I don't feel like I'm in a Facebook group, but it's like I'm within my friends and family. I do feel a sense of belonging*". Thus, within time, as members of a certain CoP are increasingly involved in practices that are cognitively, emotionally and socially oriented, they develop the feeling of self-belonging (Wenger et al., 2002).

5. Implications and Conclusion

There are several limitations in this study that need to be addressed for future research. The first limitation is the small number of EFL Arab learner participants, and therefore, the findings of the present study cannot be generalizable. Secondly, the focus of the investigation was limited to paragraph writing. Therefore, the kinds of

revision changes might vary depending on the nature of other types of genre (e.g. essay). Moreover, the study did not aim at evaluating the effect of these revision activities on the students' performance in writing. However, it was intended to investigate how these various revision changes and comments could assist the EFL Arab learners to attend to the various aspects of paragraph writing. Therefore, this peer work limited the access to trace or record each individual learner's contributions to the texts. Finally, the findings showed that the revision changes endorsed by the EFL learners in this study contributed to their paragraph writing at the global level (e.g. content or distributions of paragraphs). Yet, the attention devoted to revising this area was still insufficient. This could be attributed to the limited focus of the study (the study only focused on revisions of paragraphs rather than essays, thus, limiting the opportunities of involving the participants in substituting, adding, deleting or re-organizing paragraphs or an entire part or section of the text). This could be also due to the lack of sufficient training prior to the main study and the limited time of the investigation which made them unable to focus sufficiently on changes in this area.

The findings of the present study have several pedagogical implications. First, the current study stands in sharp contrast to that generalization that EFL learners are passive learners in terms of selecting the appropriate revision strategies and producing texts with relevant and organized ideas as claimed by previous researchers (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Al-Badwawi, 2011). This is because the findings reported that the EFL learners used various effective revision strategies that enhanced their paragraphs. Moreover, the findings imply that utilizing newly emergent technologies for engaging EFL learners in group learning beyond the classroom as a community of learners is useful because they can learn and engage in social aspects simultaneously. This contributes to their pursuit of their own learning for the sake of further language development beyond the college context.

To conclude, it would be more useful to provide the learners with the opportunity to work in two modes of revisions: first, to work in small groups of three members and second, to work in one group. This approach would minimize the effect of the entire group and would provide further understanding of how such revision activities would assist the learners to become active learners.

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Appendix

Sample of the EFL learners' original drafts & last revised drafts: first online writing revision session

Original Draft (1)	Last Draft (2)
<p>Once when I was in the second level of the elementary stage, it was Thursday, so we finished our classes earlier. I came at a window of another classroom, the teacher was still in. When the teacher saw me he said, go home little boy. The school is not yours, I answered. What are you saying? the teacher shouted angrily. I ran away. I caught my classmates and I was telling them what went on. Suddenly, I turned around and to my surprise the teacher was running towards me. I tried to escape but no way. He caught me and carried me with the help of another student to the manger's office.</p>	<p>A: Once, when I was <i>at</i> the second level of the elementary school, we had finished our classes early because it was Thursday. So after finishing our classes, I passed by a window of another classroom while the teacher was still in. When the teacher saw me <i>peeping through the window</i>, he said "Go home little boy". "<i>The school is not yours</i>", I answered. "What are you saying?" The teacher shouted <i>at me</i> angrily. I ran away. I caught my classmates and I <i>told</i> them what had been going on with me. Suddenly, I turned around and to my surprise, the teacher was running towards me. I tried to escape but no way. He caught me and <i>sent</i> me with the help of another student to the <i>principal's</i> office.</p> <p>B: Once, when I was <i>at</i> the second level of the elementary school, we had finished our classes early because it was Thursday. So after finishing our classes, I passed by a window of another classroom while the teacher was still in. When the teacher saw me peeping through the window, he ordered me to go back home. However, I replied to him in an inappropriate way, so he shouted angrily at me, and I ran away. I caught my classmates and I was telling them what had been going on with me. Suddenly, I turned around and to my surprise, the teacher was running towards me. I tried to escape but I could not do so. He caught me and carried me with the help of another student to the principal's office.</p>

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