An exploratory study of using blogs and social media in developing writing English

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the benefits of using blogs and other social media to develop English writing based on the readings of existing literatures in the field. Secondly, the paper looked at the reactions of Bangladeshi English language users and students on developing writing using blogs and other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The survey responses revealed both positive and negative feedback. A common trend in the responses was that almost everyone preferred online activities to real-life activities for developing their written English. However, one weakness of the survey was that most participants were readers of blogs and there were only a handful of participants who were bloggers. At the beginning, I identified the problem that is encountered by students while using blogs for developing their written English. In the purpose of the study I talked about the intent of the researcher to arrive at a solution to the problem by analysing literature and the responses given by participants using the questionnaire. One of my primary limitations in this study was that due to time constraint I was not able to visit an English language classroom and therefore had to totally depend on online participants. In Chapter 2, I reviewed relevant literature in CALL in order to get understanding of what other researchers in the field have done in this field before. In Chapter 3, I discussed the methodology of the paper and in it I also briefly discussed my theoretical framework; in which I mentioned the key considerations of the study. Finally, I analysed the findings of the study and arrived at a conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In Bangladesh, blogging in teaching English is still in its early days. Hence, it is expected that this study will contribute to the existing ELT literature a great deal because such a study in Bangladesh context was not done before.

Weblogs or blogs, online personal journals that are frequently updated, have existed in the cyberspace community since 1998. Since then, it has gained much popularity simply because even people without programming experience can easily update and publish their personal blog spots. Having this in mind, many foreign educators started using blogs to teach English and for that matter other foreign languages. Since the concept of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in Bangladesh is still in its infancy, most teachers are alien to the concept of using blogs in language teaching. (a) This paper will primarily look at the benefits of using blogs and social media to develop English writing in general based on my readings, (b) The responses of Bangladeshi English language users and students on developing writing using blogs and other social media sites. (C) Propose a solution to some of the problems encountered by students using blogs in learning writing English.

Founder of Copyblogger, Clark (n.d.) claims blogs are the modern form of social media. He also says that in the "modern" social media sense, blogs came way before social

networking took the world by storm with Facebook and Twitter. Blogs pioneered social media before Myspace and Friendster came and went.

Clark (n.d.) also reports that, contrary to popular belief, a blog is actually part of social media. The reason why people think it different from social media is because they often confuse social media with social networking. And since a blog is not a social networking site as such, people think it is different from social media.

1.1 Problem Statement

Ward (2004) pointed out, although students could be exposed to a variety of reading materials and genres of writing, there is a danger that the reading skills that are developed from scrolling the computer screen lead to an accelerated but superficial, and often inncurate, understanding of the content. This paper will seek to address the above problem by analysing theory and students' responses to survey questionnaire. But primarily, this study will focus upon providing the English teachers with an understanding of learner preferences.

1.2 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to find out the ways which could solve the problem pointed out by Ward (2004) and analyse the responses given by the participants concerning developing their written English using web 2.0 applications. At the beginning, the paper will review literature to derive the solutions and later it will critically analyse the survey responses.

1.3 Limitations of the study

One of the main limitations of this study was a time constraint. It was not possible to visit an English language classroom and do the survey of the students in the classroom. Due to this, there was not much choice but to make the survey online.

Moreover, most of the participants in the study were not bloggers. So it wasn't possible to get much information on their reaction about learning English using blogs. Hence, if more participants could be included in the study, the observations would have been more accurate.

Also, as convenience sampling was used the sampling might not be representative of the whole population. In addition, the responses might be biased by the volunteers in convenience sampling.

1.4 Operational definitions

This paper will look at Lemke's (2002) Semiotic analysis theory to observe the problem. To understand the theory one must first understand the definition of semiosis. The preliminary definition of semiosis is any action or influence for communicating meaning between signs which are to be interpreted by the audience.

Lemke (2002) defines hypermediality as the conjunction of multimediality and hypertexuality. Multimediality refers to content that uses a combination of different content forms and hypertexuality refers to text displayed on a computer display or other electronic device with references to other text which the reader can immediately access.

The reason why Lemke's Semiotic analysis was used in this thesis was because of the responses to a couple of questions in appendix 1. The students was asked if they thought very carefully before posting a status in English on Facebook—majority said they thought carefully and understood what they wrote. And then they were asked if it improved their writing English over the years, again majority of the students replied in the affirmative.

This shows that understanding may foster writing development. On that note, Lemke's hypermediality can greatly help the language practitioners. Hypermedia reading texts can be purchased or prepared so that students can click on unfamiliar words or phrases in a foreign language and then access all the information needed to understand the word or phrase.

Teachers using blogs to teach writing can use hypermedia for helping the students understand a word or phrases and then once they have understood the words or phrases they can be given a writing task.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the course of the study, the author came across several articles which talk about the use of blogs in developing writing. Each proposes unique ideas to teach writing English through blogs. However, as with every study, they also have some strength and some drawbacks.

Levy (2009) defines blogs by saying that blog is a web page with regular diary or journal entries, using text or video. With regard to writing, particular areas of focus are self-expression, innovation, ownership and community building (p. 773)

Thus, Levy (2009) suggests that regularity of updates is a distinguishing feature of blogs. If a blog is written sporadically, then it would lose the purpose of its existence. Maintaining regularity is especially important if it would be used for developing English writing skills. As the blog writer can always check back his latest writing with the previous one. That is, one cannot see the improvement of writing skill if he does not write frequently on his blog.

Fellner (2006) in his article 'Developing Writing Fluency and Lexical Complexity With blogs' mentions a study in which blogging was used as a CALL task. He reports that blogs are motivating for students because they allow a familiar pedagogical task in the English language classroom when presented in the new medium of the internet (p. 17).

Possibly, another reason why blogging was chosen as a CALL task was because it provided the instructors with a timely, efficient means of evaluating whether the learning

goal of improving writing fluency was achieved. Fellner's study was a seven-day intensive program and the instructors felt the limited time made it very difficult, if not impossible, to have any measurable effect or positive improvement in the student's written grammar and syntax. Therefore, blogging was the only suitable option to accommodate the task activities within the limited period of time.

However, the article only talks about the context of Japan in 2006 and does not provide any general information about other contexts. Understandably so, as it is beyond the scope of the article. It is a drawback of the paper as the situation in other contexts may not be similar in the sense that in that period of time blog was not really popular among the students.

Wu (2006a) mentions in his paper that with the development of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and the Internet, peer review and teacher feedback have not been limited to traditional face to face peer response in a brick and mortar classroom (p. 3). He also reports that online peer review and teacher feedback are not new to some L2 instructors. As blog features its easy-to-use interface, frequent text update, and interactive comment area, many educators have applied their blogs for reading and writing classes.

Stine (2010) says she personally decided to design a blended course, in which students attend class one week and work online the next, arose from both practical and pedagogical reasons: the need to save busy working adults' commuting time and, if possible, money, along with the hope that the online experience would provide these students with new opportunities while simultaneously increasing with the kinds of educational technology they would be facing in future courses (p.34). This balance

between the online and offline classes may solve the problem that arises due to the possibility that the students may not take work seriously if the course is solely dependent upon instant messaging and blogs.

Although Stine (2010) admits that she feels separated from her students as she sees them only half as often, by the end of the semester she feels she knows them better than her onsite students as a result of having read their various kinds of writing with particular care in order to make sure that her responses are as clear as possible, since she many not have an opportunity to have a follow up discussion (p.38).

As the teacher carefully reads the writings of her students she is easily able to figure out which student is not putting much effort and taking work less seriously.

Thus, combining these techniques mentioned by Stine may remove the problems that arise in teaching through instant messaging and blogging.

Vurdien (2011) reports a survey in her article which revealed that students developed collaborative skills more in discussion classes than through their interaction on the blogs, which may suggest that blogs foster personal than collaborative writing.

Tanti (2010) noted that the technological affordances of blogs make them a preferable technology for a broad image of educational purposes. For instance, blogs have been examined as a means to increase student outcomes in the English as a Second Language (ESL).

One great thing about blogs is that they are absolutely for free. Teachers can use blogs as a tool to teach English writing skills very easily. With blogger, it is fairly simple and uncomplicated to create a blog spot in minutes.

Bakar (2009) reports that blog use has been credited with developing student-student communication and interaction with their peers and the wider community, raised language awareness and development and also encouraged the use of different language patterns. Bakar (2009) further indicates blogs are individual and had been used to provide students with a personal writing space, blogging was able to increase student motivation and engagement, which in effect, expanded their critical thinking ability (as cited in Tanti, 2011, p. 134-135)

According to Tanti (2011), the opportunity to have a personal space to write is very important. When the student writes to pass an exam, he is especially careful about his writing structure and grammar in the fear of criticism. But blogging provides the same student with a personal space and a personal voice. He is no longer scared of criticism as he is not accountable for making mistakes in this case. Thus, the student becomes more focused on the content than its grammar.

Even though the student does not immediately understand the grammar mistakes in his post, later on when he reads it he can spot the mistakes and rewrite. So it does not really harm the student to keep writing without paying close attention to grammar.

Moreover, there are evidences that social media actually help students get a better grasp of writing. Gumilar (2003), an English teacher based in Indonesia, writes in his blog that using Facebook has provided amazing results among his students. Based on his

questionnaire, most students liked keeping in touch with their teacher in learning English writing and socializing with their friends over Facebook.

Gumilar (2003) talks about the facilities of a Facebook group, which allows him to have a special discussion with his students. Especially, using the group to give them specific instructions on improving their writing skills online.

However, the blog post does not address the disadvantages of using Facebook in teaching and how to deal with the issues. For example, generally the English used on Facebook is informal and most users do not feel they have to be very careful about their grammar. Hence, the language is filled with mistakes. Thus, the students could end up learning wrong English if not closely monitored by the teacher. Micro-blogging social media site Twitter can also greatly help one to develop his writing skills. Creative copywriter Blanchard (n.d.) points out that since Twitter has a restriction of 140 characters in a tweet, it forces the user into using as few words as possible. Thus, the user is forced to dust off their dictionary and thesaurus and find new words to use--words that are shorter, words that are more descriptive, and words that get the job done in 140 characters or less.

She also says that crafting a message on Twitter requires the user to "pump up" their words (replacing adverbs and adjectives with them), and discover a better, clearer and more concise way to say what they want to say.

A news report published on abcnews.go.com written by Stern (2013, July 16) to a study done by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project and the National Writing Project that found 78% percent of high school teachers agree that digital technologies "encourage student creativity and personal expression."

One reason why student creativity and personal expression are fostered on social media could be the fact that it is a public platform and the students feel they can reach out to the world by using social media. So when they write something on Facebook or any other social media platform they try to be creative and as articulate as they can possibly be.

Dame (2013, November 4) in a recent article published on USAToday.com refers to a study released in October by Pearson Learning Solutions and the Babson Survey Research Group.

The survey of over 8000 faculty discovered that 41% of college professors use social media as a teaching tool, up from around 34% in 2012.

The same report also talks about a lecturer by the name of Krista Jackman at the University of New Hampshire, who tells her freshmen writing students to join Twitter.

So why do the teachers love social media for developing writing skills of their students? It is because social media are fun and easy to use. And the key to using it effectively is making sure the students are relaxed and are not under any kind of pressure. The best way to ensure learning is when the students are not intimidated by the learning material.

Bernstein (2004) advocates 'frequent writing improves writing', 'writing for audience improves writing', 'writing that matters improves writing', and writing on a computer improves writing (as cited in Wen-Shuenn Wu, 2006, P. 428)

Individual writers can improve their English writing by doing the above. However, this may not be effective for EFL learners. Having said that, they can improve their writing

by writing frequently and at the same time by looking up dictionaries and corpus or use the internet to help them express their ideas clearly and correctly.

Wu (2006b) reports that the improvement of writing will be questioned if EFL students write English frequently, but present their ideas with the styles of their L1 (p. 428). He reports that in his study, 91% answered that they would look up an English dictionary or ask someone else when they didn't know how to express their ideas in English.

This finding reveals that these students want to present their thoughts in English, but when they can't, they take help from a dictionary or their friends. Also, the students do not feel threatened because with written English one does not need to hurry, there is all the time to reflect and write correctly.

Stine (2010) opines that teachers should be aware of the fact that students often associate blogs with informal writing style, so instructors must be explicit about what style they expect students to write on their blogs (p.45). This recommendation is crucial when teaching writing using blogs. Because it would make it clear to the students what is informal and what is formal. And good habits are created by following the formal writing practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology deals with three sections, namely consists of three sections, namely the research design, research instrument and data collection procedures.

3.1. Research Design

A mixed approach has been taken to conduct the study. The study consisted of a questionnaire which was delivered to English language users and students. There are several reasons why only a questionnaire was used in the study. First of all, a close-ended questionnaire is by far the most convenient tool to derive a dependable statistical data. In the second place, a questionnaire is objective as the responses are gathered in a standardised way, certainly more so than an interview. Moreover, in a questionnaire, essential information can be collected from a large portion of a group. Usually, it provides a convenient way to collect a large amount of data within a short span of time in a relatively cost effective way.

A convenience sampling was used in the study for several reasons. One of the primary reasons for choosing it was a time constraint. The questionnaire was created on a google doc and shared with people on Facebook.

The research is divided into two parts. A qualitative analysis of existing literature on developing English writing using blogs and social media, (2) The reactions of Bangladeshi English language users and students on using blogs and social media for

developing writing derived from a close-ended questionnaire, which is part of the quantitative approach of the study.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was constructed based on dealing with the problems encountered using blogs in developing writing English using Lemke's Semiotic analysis theory and the survey questionnaire delivered to students. Lemke's (2002) analysis makes three major points. First, regarding the organisational function, the way in which the sites, and the resources and tools involved in them, are organised. The guiding questions could be: How is the home page organised? What are the most frequent and the most prominent aspects? How are posts organised? What teaching resources are included and what spaces are they presented in?

Torlakovic and Deugo (2004) reports many aspects of work with the computer have an interactive element, which is missing in books, tapes, television and so on. Lemke's hypermediality offers a system by which students can click on unfamiliar words, terms or phrases in a foreign language and then access all the information needed to understand the word or phrase.

On that note, Lemke's (2002) Semiotic analysis theory can be a solution to Ward's (2004) point which argues that scrolling computer screen can lead to inaccurate understanding of the content. Hypermediality proposed by Lemke can work as a reading aid to the students.

Lemke's analysis concerns itself with the organisation of the page and its posts. Hence, the theory proposes hypermediality which provides the reader with links for further reading in an organised fashion.

Bikowsky and Kissler (2002) claims using computer can save time and work, with routine marking, for example that can then be used for more creative aspects of language teaching. This paper will reconcile this argument with findings at the end.

3.3. Research Instruments

The research instrument was a close-ended questionnaire which aimed to investigate English users' opinions about developing English writing using blogs and Social Media. The questionnaire was divided into: Background, general and context-specific questions. The questionnaire tried to explore the online activities of the English users and students who are involved in blogging and social media at some level.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

A quantitative approach was adopted for data collection through a close-ended questionnaire. The target population for this study consisted of 65 participants who are users and students of the English language.

3.5 Setting

The data was collected in an informal online setting. The participants were sent the link of a google doc form on Facebook and they filled it up from home.

3.6 Education

The participants in this study contain students who are currently enrolled as undergraduate students and also those who have completed their undergraduate degree.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4. Data analysis

According to the findings of the first question in Appendix 1, approximately 74% of the participants feel their English writing is good for their education level and about 26% feel their English writing is not good enough for their education level.

A weakness in this finding is that those who think their English writing is good may actually be in a delusion of having good writing skills for their level.

Answering to a question in Appendix 1, approximately 14% of the participants report that they have been using the internet for more than 8 years. About 32% say that they have been using the internet for 3 to 5 years and about 38% say that they have been using the internet for 5 to 8 years.

These findings about the participants exposure to the internet are significant. We find that the majority of the participants have been using the internet for 5 to 8 years. About 33% have been using it for 3 to 5 years and about 16% say they have using internet for fewer than 3 years. It is important for the study to start with because in the coming questions we can expect to get fairly educated answers from the participants about the blogs.

Answering to a question concerning their exposure to blogs (See Appendix 1), approximately 58% of the participants reported in the affirmative, while about 42% reported that they do not read blogs.

This finding also didn't come as a surprise as the participants in the study were supposedly people familiar with the blogs.

However, about 83% participants say they do not have a personal blog and only about 17% say they own a blog. (Appendix 1)

According to these findings, it is clear that even those who do not have a blog visit and read blogs.

It also reveals the fact that in Bangladesh people having a personal blog are less in number than the ones who do not have a blog. But it is important to know the audience of the blogs.

A blogger is likely to share their article with the close ones. Maybe it could be their friends and family. Maybe they could ask them to read and give feedback on the language of their article. Now, when someone asks a person to give feedback on their language style, then it could be understood that they already have good English writing skills. However, blogging is a skill in its own right and even people who already have good writing skills can read the blogs into further honing their skills as Babauta (2008) says we use as writers what we learn as readers. It is more so for the visitors of the blog who have poor English in the sense that they can get a model of good writing from their friends who blog and thus, improve their English writing skill.

The next finding tells us that about 37% participants who blog think that they are confident about the English they use on their blog, while only 16% think that they are not very confident about their English skill. Approximately, 47% do not have a reply to the question. (See Appendix 1)

A natural question would be what makes these 36% confident about their English?

Could it be that their English is carefree? Or could it be that their English has less or no grammatical errors? Whatever the reason may be, it is apparent that there must be some element in their writing which makes them believe they are confident about their English on blogs.

Babauta (2008) recommends reading great writers for improving one's writing skill as with every skill one has to follow the experts on the given field. Similarly, the 36% who are confident about their English are likely to have read other expert bloggers. We have previously seen that about 58% participants reported that they read blogs. And these participants include the ones who do not own a personal blog themselves.

Reading good blogs can take the users and students of the English language to the next level as about 74% of the survey takers report that they already have a good English writing proficiency.

Approximately, 37% of the participants say that it is quite easy to create a blog page on blogger, while 9% say that it is quite difficult to create a blog on blogger.

This should encourage those who shy away from creating a blog on the blogger, as most people report that it is very easy to create a blog space with blogger. Thus, the ones who do not have a blog, but have good English writing may consider opening a blog. Better yet, even someone who does not have good writing skills can create a blog spot and track their writing progress. Although, it should be mentioned that blogging does not guarantee writing improvement, it is a good way to be in the practice of regular writing.

When it comes to online writing instruction (See Appendix 1), about 38% survey takers report that they prefer online writing instruction to classroom writing instruction. While about 45% prefer both types of writing instruction, about 6% prefer classroom instruction and 11% do not have a say in this.

This finding reveals the preference of online instruction, in general. In fact, online instruction is preferred to classroom instruction by a wide margin.

Online preference among students may encourage the teachers to design their lesson plan mainly based on online instruction. The problem of inaccurate reading on computer screen as mentioned by Ward (2004) can be dealt with using Lemke's Semiotic analysis.

Students' preference should always be given priority over minute problems which can be dealt with through planning and lesson design.

About 66% participants say they are comfortable with learning through blogs in an English writing class, about 34% say they are not comfortable with learning through blogs. (Appendix 1)

In this finding, the numbers of participants who are comfortable with learning English writing through blogs are double the participants who are not comfortable with learning through blogs in English writing classroom.

The finding should encourage English writing instructors to use blogs for teaching.

Answering to a question in Appendix 1, approximately 42% say they use online dictionary when they write on their blog, while about 16% report that they do not use any online dictionary when they write a post. And about 42% tick not applicable.

The benefits of using online dictionaries do not merely help the users enrich their articles by using proper words with proper usage, but it also helps them to know and understand the context in which a certain word is used. Why because the dictionary would not simply give the meaning of a word but it would also give chunks of example sentences from popular newspapers, magazines, books.

Given the number of students use online dictionaries the teachers teaching through blogs can create links to unfamiliar words on their blogs using Lemke's (2002) hypermediality. Thus, the students will have a clearer understanding of the unfamiliar word or phrase.

Answering to a question in Appendix 2, about 43% prefer blogs to real-life writing, about 57% prefer real-life writing to blog writing.

About 43% participants who prefer blog say they prefer it to real-life writing because it saves time and 12% participants say that it is far more exciting than real-life writing. While about 45% do not mention any preferences.

Bikowski and Kissler (2002) reports using computer saves time and work and that saved time can be used for more creative aspects of language teaching. This finding implies that students prefer blog writing because it saves time and also the teacher uses the time to make the lesson more exciting using other creative aspects of teaching.

A good percentage of people think online correction is more helpful than classroom correction. About 62% people say they prefer online correction to classroom correction and about 38% people say they prefer classroom correction to online correction. (See Apendix 2)

Talking about Facebook and Twitter, about 89% participants think Facebook and Twitter can be a platform for learning English and only about 11% think otherwise. (See Appendix 2)

These social media platforms can really be handy for improving writing English. Although there are many people who oppose this idea, the findings above do reflect otherwise.

Mainly because if students like a method then it is more likely to be successful than a method which is disliked by them.

Besides, Gumilar (2003) has already given evidence backing the usefulness of social media through his survey.

In the next finding, about 69% report that they use a dictionary before writing a post on Facebook when they are not sure of a word or a sentence structure. And about 16% say that they do not use a dictionary to take help from on sentence structure or word before writing a post. (Appendix 2)

Using a dictionary before writing a post is useful because it raises the quality of the post. And when the post is free from mistakes and well-written, it gives others' an opportunity to develop their own writing and take help from them.

And the evidence behind this is found in the next response whereby the participants say they have actually improved their writing English by chatting online on Facebook. About 80% participants say they have improved their English by chatting and about 11% say their writing skill remained the same. (Appendix 2)

It has already been established that about 74% participants think their English writing is good for their education level. So it is possible that the participants who think they have improved their English are thinking based on their level of education.

About 88% of the survey takers say they think very carefully before posting a status in English on Facebook, about 12% of them say that they do not think carefully before posting a status. (Appendix 2)

A good percentage of people think careful thinking before posting has improved their writing English over time. Approximately, 94% people report that they have improved on their English by maintaining this practice of careful thinking before writing a status while only 6% parcipants say it has not helped. And it is likely that they tend to do the same before writing other notes or comments, too. (Appendix 2)

Answering to a question in Appendix 3, about 52% participants say they engage in the comment's section of blogs if it is a topic of their interest and 48% participants say they do not engage in the comment's section of blogs even it were a topic of their interest.

Although the feedback is almost equally distributed there, it is still important because it is likely that 48% who say they do not engage in the comment's section may not be the ones who have blogs. It is possible for the visitors to comment on blogs without having a blog, but one needs to be familiar with google or a gmail account to be able to comment.

And the 52% participants who do engage in the comment's section it is a sure way of fostering their language skills. Because commenting is different from writing an article, with articles one starts a topic of discussion. Whereas, with comments the visitor already has a background to focus upon. Thus, it is likely that a comment will typically be

flowing and carefree writing. However, it is not to say that comments will necessarily be ungrammatical. As one could always reread the comment they posted and re-post a better response, this time more grammatically sound.

On Facebook, it is way more convenient for the commenters as it gives the option to edit a comment without having to remove it all.

The continuation of the previous question is, if the participants engage in the comment's section of the other blog when it's a topic of their interest, then are they comfortable in engaging in a topic that is not particularly their field?

About 42% participants report that they are comfortable in a topic that is outside of their field, about 58% participants report that they are not comfortable in such a topic. (Appendix 3)

The finding reveals that about 42% of the participants engage in their topic of interest even if it is something they are not comfortable with.

In it is a clear implication that these people want to give all their effort into understanding the topic they are interested in, this is quite likely overcoming the first building block that turns many a learner off in their pursuit of not only mastering English writing skill but any skill.

This also shows that if the topic of discussion is interesting then the commenter overcomes the difficulty of engaging in a topic outside of their field.

Hence, there can be several ways in which an English user or learner may develop their written English. English language teachers may consider designing blogs for their

students to practice their English. They can post articles on the blog on a topic of student interest that is different from the students' expertise and ask them to comment on the comment's section. For example, the topic can be written English itself as the students are learning to develop their written English, it is not something they specialize in.

Of course, the students will make mistakes trying to comment on a topic they do not know much about. But the teachers can correct the mistakes and give them feedback on their writing.

As for the English language users, even if they do not limit themselves to classroom instruction for developing their written skills, they can still improve their skills by engaging in topics of discussion they are not familiar with. But for that they have to take responsibility for their development and ask for feedback from those who are experts in the field.

An English user or student can be benefitted by engaging in unfamiliar discussion in another way. When someone takes interest in a topic of discussion that is not unfamiliar to him, he tries to come up with a way to express his ideas in the discussion. Since he does not know the jargon of that field, he uses the words he has at his disposal to express his thoughts.

About 54% bloggers report that they use formal language on their blog and about 46% bloggers report that they do not use formal language on their blog. (Appendix 3)

This is actually a very hopeful finding. Because it shows that participants understand that they want to improve their written English by using formal language.

If one looked into the internet they would find that most blogs are written in informal English as typically blogs are written in an informal language. And frankly, they are not really helpful for improving the learners' written English.

However, there are also blogs that are written in good formal English. So the learner only needs to focus on quality over quantity. He needs to find blogs that are maybe run by literature or English language professionals dedicated to teaching the English language.

About 30% bloggers say that they follow the writing style of other blogs and about 70% say that they do not follow the English writing style of other blogs. (Appendix 3)

Of the several implications of this, firstly it could be that the bloggers who do not follow the writing style of other blogs are more confident than the ones who do follow other blogs. Secondly, they probably want their writing style to be unique from others.

However, following the other blogs' writing style does not necessarily mean less confidence. Some of the bloggers who say they follow others' writing style, could be beginners in the blogging. Therefore, they may have decided to follow the ones who already are better bloggers.

About 55% participants say that they rewrite their blog posts and about 45% say that they do not rewrite their blog posts. (Appendix 3)

Approximately, 86% participants write a post after thinking it out deeply while only about 14% write a post without thinking deeply about it.

Since it is already known that some participants use dictionary before writing a post, it is safe to say that combining deep thought and the help of dictionary will assist in producing quality English writing post.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Conclusion

This paper analysed the literature concerning the benefits of using blogs and other technologies in developing English writing skills. In addition, it examined the reactions of English users and students on developing English writing skills using blogs and other social media. Wu (2006a) reported in a study that about 91% English students use a dictionary when they could not express themselves in English clearly or asked their friends. This paper similarly found that about 69% participants use a dictionary when they are not sure of a word or a sentence structure.

Some of the findings in this paper are unique to the existing literature in the field. That is not simply because findings such as these have not been found previously. But it is not known if these findings had come out in the context of Bangladesh in the past. Firstly, about 55% participants say that they rewrite or edit their blog posts once it's published while about 45% participants say that they do not rewrite or edit their posts once it's published. Secondly, about 14% participants say that they write a blog post without thinking it out deeply while about 86% participants say that they write a blog post only after thinking it out deeply and with reflection.

5.1 Contribution to research

This paper contributes to the existing literature in CALL by revealing that using blogs and social media in developing writing English is possible in Bangladesh. Moreover, the

paper is unique in the sense that there are very few studies done on this topic in the context of Bangladesh. The paper also addresses the one of the problems encountered using blogs and proposes a solution to it. In addition, the findings reflected the significant role of blogs and social media influencing the lives of students.

5.2 Practical implication

The findings in this paper clearly imply that more and more students prefer learning writing using blogs. However, it is also noticeable that most of the students do not have a blog. This, in a sense, creates a conflict between the findings.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on what was found in this paper, it should be very rewarding for anyone to replicate the study in a wider manner. It is also recommended that the researcher personally interviews the participants.

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Appendix 1

Background Questions

1. Gender?

A. Male B. Female

2. Which grade are you in?

A. Bachelors (Enrolled) b. Bachelors (Completed)

3. What is your professional field?

A. Unemployed B. Work part-time C. Full time professional

4. Are you continuing work and study at the same time?

A. Yes B. No

5. Do you think your English is for your education level?

A. Yes B. No

6. For how long have you been using the internet?

A. More than 8 years B. 5-8 years C. 3-5 years

D. Fewer than 3 years

7. Do you read blogs?

A. Yes B. No

8. Do you have a blog?

A. Yes B. No

9. If yes, how often do you update your blog?

A. Once a week B. Twice a week C. Not applicable D. Rarely

10. Do you think you are confident about the English you use on your blog?

A. Yes B. No C. Not applicable

11. Do you think it is easy to create your own blog site with blogger?

A. Quite easy B. Quite difficult C. No opinion

12. Do you like online writing or in-class writing?

A. Online B. Classroom C. Both D. No comments

13. Are you comfortable with learning through blogs in an English writing class?

A. Yes B. No

14. Do you use online dictionary when you write your blog?

A. Yes B. No C. Not applicable

Appendix 2

General Method Questions

1) Do you like blogs better than real life writing?

 A. Yes B. No

 2). If yes, is it because it _____

A. Saves time B) is more exciting C. Not applicable

3). Which helps you more?

 A. Online correction or B. Classroom corrections

4) Do you think social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter can be a platform for learning writing English?

A. Yes B. No

5) Do you often use a dictionary before writing an email or a post on Facebook/Twitter when you are not sure of a word or a sentence structure?

A. Yes B. No

6. Do you think you have improved your English through chatting online?

A. Yes B. No C. I don't chat

7. Do you think very carefully before posting a status in English on Facebook?

A. Yes B. No

8. If yes, do you think it has improved your writing English over the years?

A. Yes B. No

Appendix 3

Context-Specific Questions

1) Do you engage in the comments section of others' blogs when it's a topic of your interest?

A. Yes B. No

2) If yes, are you comfortable in engaging in a topic that is not particularly your field?

A. Yes B. No

3) Do you use formal language on your blog?

A. Yes B. No

4) Do you follow English writing style from another blog?

A. Yes B. No

5) Do you rewrite your blog posts or edit it once it's published?

A. Yes B. No

6) When you write a post do you just keep writing or you think deeply before you write?

A. Write without thinking B. Write after thinking it out

Give your comments or suggestions below: