

Inspiring Writers through Using Blogs

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Abstract

This paper focuses on how writing through blogs motivates students. The researcher conducted a study on randomly selected 30 students of tertiary level EFL classes Of Private University in Dhaka city. Questionnaire consists of both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions has been employed for the respondents. A Mix method of analysis has been applied by the researcher which shows that students are motivated in improving their writing skills through blogs. In the future the paper will introduce a writing through digitalization.

Introduction

With the increasing use of computer technology and networks, the Internet is one of the greatest inventions that shape language learning and teaching. The Internet is significantly expanding learning opportunities and leading students to connect with the world, especially for EFL learners. Many Internet tools, email, discussion forums, and chats are familiar to many language teachers and learners. A recent innovation, the Weblog, provides students with a real-world task and learner-centered environment where they have autonomy, extensively use their previous knowledge, and add new ones. This study intends to shatter the myths of using Weblogs in language learning, and to demonstrate how the uses and benefits of blogging to EFL learners. 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. The paper is not only focus on how blogging improves but also motivates learner to write.

Literature Review

Blog is a website which enables students to create their own weblogs where they can post their essays, poems and other creative works. According to Campbell (2003) Weblog is an online journey that an individual can continuously update with his or her own words, ideas and thoughts through software that enables one to easily to do so.(Para. 1)

Research suggests that teachers today have focused their attention on using language learning technology following the social software technology. The use of a blog encourages learning through collaboration and autonomy. They are gradually being used more and more as a pedagogical tool in the second language classroom because they are considered to take on, *“a more communicative role than the less interactive CALL applications”* (Pinkman, 2005,p.14) . However, (Mckillop, 2006) argues that, *“a supported and pedagogical approach to blogging environments I needed for them to be educationally effective”*(p.1). Therefore, in order to fully understand how learning is constructed through blogging it seems necessary to understand social constructivism and the theories that include the role social context has to play on developing learning and the writing skill in particular.

Blogs as a way of allowing students to share ideas with others easily, as a useful platform where students might engage in appropriate learning activities. They have described a blog as an environment whereby students have to, “*engage actively in the co-construction of knowledge with peers and with their tutor.*” which reflects very clearly the constructivist ideas. Blogs have been described as, “*I, I, me-me-me environments*” by Thorne and Payne (2005, p. 382). However, Campbell (2003) identified three types of weblogs for use in the ESL classroom. He distinguishes between the *tutor weblog*, the *learner weblog* and the *class weblog*. Each of these blogs can be used in different ways and has a different purpose. According to Campbell the tutor blog is a blog that is essentially run by the tutor and aims to encourage students to participate in online communication. In contrast, the learner blogs are run by the learners themselves and are used as a platform for students to express themselves through free writing. Finally he defines the class blog as a blog run by the entire class and is therefore the collaborative effort of the class (Campbell 2003, p.51-62).

Blogging as defined by is short for web logging. Blogging is the act of keeping a diary or journal online. Blood,(2002,) defines blog as online public writing in which postings (p.99-122).To investigate the impact of blogging on the writing

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fluency. Fellner and Apple (2004) conducted a study in which Japanese students participated in a seven day intensive course for five and hours a day. Each session included listening and speaking activities each student were expected to write his her reaction about the topic discussed previously for twenty minutes and their outputs were sent via email to class blog. Results of the study reveal that blogging provides the opportunity not only for self expression but also for writing practice (p.15).

Fageeh (2011) investigated the effect of blogging on writing proficiency and attitude among undergraduate students of English Department in King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. The Weblog is perceived as a tool used for developing their English in terms of their attitudes toward writing and their writing proficiency by the students. They also regarded weblog as a tool that gives the freedom and opportunity of self-expressing in English, maintaining an interactive relation with real-time readers, and writing or global as well as local audiences creating interactive and active social exchanges in blogs. Generally, the attitude of students toward the employment of weblogs was positive. (p.15)

Blogs have been considered as an online free space for computer users to implement in different fields. For language learning, all four language skills

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(writing, speaking, listening and reading) can be used by implementing the weblog.

Beside these features, it is place for pronunciation check via uploading different softwares which can be used online and a place for vocabulary building (Du & Wagner 2005, p.5). By using weblogs, students can also share a posted topic, not just with a teacher, another classmate, or the whole class, but also possibly with any eager reader online. The use of weblog as an effective way to teach different skills and alleviating learning problems has been a focal point in teaching foreign languages in recent years. By using weblogs in and outside the classroom the students have the opportunity to work more on different tasks and to reflect on their own learning.

Sun and Chang (2012) mentioned that blogging not only encourages students actively and reflectively engage in knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and the development of numerous strategies to cope with difficulties encountered in the learning process. (p.43)

As an effective educational resource, the electronic tool has not only changed the composing process, but also strengthens participation in writing activity (Kupelian, 2001, p.1). Kupelian(2001) emphasizes that one reason for this is that e-mail and online chats is non-threatening atmosphere in which writers are

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not restricted in expressing themselves and encourages even timid students who usually avoid speaking in face-to-face discussions to participate actively in online chats. Another reason is that the Web provides a field for writers to present their work to a real and larger audience that spreads beyond classroom and school frames (Karchmer 2001,p.10).

Blogging most significantly augments traditional paper-based activities when it provides students with the opportunity to participate in a meaningful, largely autonomous forum where they can exchange ideas, while practicing previously learned skills and developing new ones. For this reason, a strong follow-up activity to having students post writing on their blogs is to have their classmates read those posts and respond with comments, whether informal feedback or assessments based on pre-determined criteria.

In addition to posting a writing assignment on his/her blog, each student is required to read and respond to a set number of classmates' posts. As this peer commentator reads those posts and responds with his/her own viewpoints, sometimes in accordance with a classmate, and sometimes not, a number of written dialogues are initiated. This step underlies the notion of the blogging activity as a student-centered process, one in which "active learning, student engagement, and student responsibility" are central (Darabi, 2006, p.53). Ideally, each student writer would also return to his/her own post of any particular

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writing assignment, review the commentary left by classmates and then, if so motivated, leave them a response. A member of one blogging group notes that “a kind of reciprocity (was) expected because I read others’ blogs, so I have to make my contribution” (Nardi et al., 2004, p. 45) In this way, the blog realizes the vision to “provide a forum that reaches beyond the scope of a university subject and which augments the knowledge creation occurring throughout a student’s enrolment in a higher education program” (Nardi, p.11)

Halic, Lee, Paulas and Spense (2010) in this concern, have adeptly noted that:

“The popularity of blogs among young people has made the map peeling to educators seeking to integrate computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools at the university level. These tools are seen as having the potential for enhancing student engagement and providing an environment for collaboration and creation of knowledge” (p. 1).

According to Eastment,(2005), weblog is among the most promising and newest internet applications in relation to effective writing instruction (p.358-361) .

Hewett (2000) and Pelletary (2000) emphasized on the positive impacts of weblogs on the enhancement and improvement of grammar fluency and proficiency (p.265-288, p.59-86) . The fact that the motivation and interest of students in writing and reading is increased, and the autonomy and

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independence of learners is promoted with the employment of blogging in the context of EFL has been confirmed by recent studies (Pinkman, 2005, p.12-24).

In this vein, Sun (2009) believes that weblogs can create a dynamic forum which encourages extensive language practice and results in the development of learning strategies, authorship, and learning motivation (p.88-103). Furthermore, weblogs can enhance the critical and analytical thinking skills of the students (Oravec,2002, p.616-621)

Wang (2006) suggested that Internet-based writing has some advantages such as easy publication and modification, rapid writing and immediate interaction (p.122).

According to Lou, Wu and Shih (2010), blogs involve all of the above functions and characteristics (p.898-916).“In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, one can find blogs for professional development, class blogs, and students’ individual blogs, among others” (Arena & Jefferson, 2008, p.1-7). Arena and Jefferson (2008) also add that releasing the blog potential for learning language is directly related to the teacher’s understanding of the pedagogical benefits of such a tool (p.1-7). Yang (2007) indicates that blogging application in instruction is beneficial for enhancing the exchange between

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students and instructor, creating knowledge, reducing misspelling and strengthening writing skills (860-879).

In recognizing the weblogs' value in a writing class, Levey (2003, cited in Ward, 2004, p.4) declares that "some of the best characteristic and features of peer review are built in blogging". Besides allowing the students to review the writing of their peers, weblogs enable them to view the feedback teachers give to other students which in turn helps them in gaining a better understanding of and effective and successful writing. Armstrong and Retterer (2008) state that since blogging is easy to use and its format is conversational and informal can be a tool which engages the students in subject matter; however, employing blogs during a course does not guarantee better performance of students in writing or automatically makes them more proficient. However, the obvious fact is that through more frequent writing; and probably more informal writing, students were reported to have gained a sense of confidence in their ability to write in the target language. It has also been added that, in the same vein as various new technologies that can be employed in the classrooms, blogs provide an additional means for foreign language interactions (P.233-251).

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

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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 (p775).

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 study was a seven-day intensive program and the instructors felt the limited time made it

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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.

Wu (2006) mentions in his paper that with the development of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and the Internet, peer review and teacher feedback has 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 it's easiness to use interface, frequent text update, and interactive comment area, many educators have applied their blogs for reading and writing classes.

The advantages of using blogs in an educational setting have been well documented. Blogs enable students to enter into dialogue on specific topics (Wheeler, 2009, p. 4), in particular providing a forum for students who find it difficult to express themselves orally in class (Miceli et al., 2010). Research has demonstrated that students who take up blogging witness improvements in a range of skills, such as writing and debating (Hall & Davison, 2007, p. 164).

A blog can be used as a class blog or as a group blog or each learner can have their own blog, it can focus on one topic or it can touch on many topics (Bloch 2007, Oravec 2002). According to Murray & Hourigan (2008) blogs are suitable for general learning purposes because they are easy to set up, the software is free and easy to access, the learners can publish their content immediately and they develop and improve their general ICT skills. When learners make comments on other blogs they also develop their analytical and critical thinking. By interacting with others through making posts and comments they develop their sense of empowerment and personal identity as well as their literacy skills (Jones 2006, Oravec 2002). Blogs also give opportunities for collaborative learning and learners can have access to them whenever and where ever they want, blogs also promote creativity (Huffaker 2004).

According to Murray and Hourigan (2008) blogs are suitable for language learning purposes in particular because the blog hosting sites are available in many languages and this gives learners access to many texts written in the target language and it is also easy to interact on the blogs. In her case study on blogging and ESL writing, Jones (2006) found that blogging improved the students' writing, gave the students opportunities to meaningful learning and a purpose for their writing and the fact that they were publishing their writing increased their motivation and interaction.

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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.

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 (p.15). Tanti (2010) noted that the technological affordances of blogs make them a preferable technology for a broad range of educational purposes. For instance, blogs have been examined as a means to increase student outcomes in the English as a Second Language (ESL) (p.42).

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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)

Stanley (2006 p.42) notes that “(Blogs are) a way of opening up the classroom walls and showing the wider world what is happening... thus creating a small language learning community.”

Similarly, while relating the findings of a series of interviews with bloggers in the Stanford

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University area, Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz (2004) relate how a rhetoric instructor/researcher using blogs explained that for students “blogging created a sense of community that would be less likely to emerge in a conventional classroom setting” (p. 41). Murray (2007) notes that a key feature of a “blog community” is that all community members have easy access to each others’ blogs. This can be accomplished with moodle, a class wiki page, or the blog community’s homepage (which might also be called a ‘blog magazine’) (p.51).

Pinkman (2005) writes that blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as writers who write and post, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers’ posts, and as writer-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts (p.10).

Dieu (2004) reaffirms this by stating that blogging gives a learner the chance to “maximize focused exposure to language in new situations, peer collaboration, contact with experts” (p. 26).

Moreover, the exchange can be almost instantaneous (during class time) or at the leisure of the student bloggers. This combination of planned and

spontaneous communicative exchanges inside and out of the classroom makes blogging a meaningful and engaging social exercise. It is within this context that Williams and Jacobs (2004) contend that blogging has “the potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning” (p. 247).

The teacher has been the traditional source of power in the second language classroom, particularly for the writing classroom. A student’s paper is often corrected, commented on, and graded only by the teacher. Peer review activities diffuse some of that power, giving students a sense of responsibility and accomplishment both as readers and writers. Cho, Christian, & Charney (2006) note that, “Peer feedback appears to bring about a higher perception of meaning-change revision while most teacher influenced revisions happen at the surface level” (p. 270). Yang, Badger, & Yu (2006) found similarly that while peer feedback, as a supplement to teacher input, may have less influence on improved student writing, it seems to both impact development of writing skills and to increase learner autonomy (p.20).

Shi-Jer Lou et al. (2010) indicate, blogs enable students to interact and cooperate with each other. Yang and Chen (2007) believe a number of benefits of blogging applications in instruction to be: knowledge creation, the construction of learning files, enhancement of writing skills and reduction of

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misspelling, enhancement of school reputation and administration efficiency, and the enhancement of the exchange between the instructors and students. It has also been indicated by Du and Wagner (2007) that these blogs allow individuals to make their thoughts public in web pages and thus share their knowledge and thoughts. Because of the potential effect blogging has on the sharing and expressing of knowledge, blogging has a positive impact on learning and instruction (Brownstein & Klein, 2006; Dippold, 2009; Goldman, Cohen & Sheahan, 2008).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

3.1 Objective

The purpose of the study is to find out how blogging helps learners to improve their writing skills

3.2 Research question

To investigate how blogs help in learning English, and their attitudes toward using it, the present study would answer the following research questions:

- How can blog be used effectively in improving writing skill
- How do blogs contribute in increasing motivation level of students?
- How do the students perceive the experience of using blog in writing?

3.3 Methodology

A mixed method combining quantitative and qualitative analysis has been taken to conduct the study. The study consisted of the questionnaires which were

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delivered to English language users and students. There are several reasons why only a questionnaire was used in the study.

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.

The advantage of using a questionnaire rather than an interview is that it allows reaching large numbers of people more easily. Sampling was chosen as the convenient way to collect data.

3.4Instrument:

The research instrument consists of some open ended and close-ended questionnaire which aimed to investigate English users' opinions about developing English writing using blogs and Social Media. The terms such as "Yes", "No" were used in some open ended so that participants find it easy to fill these questions.

3.5Participants

The questionnaire tried to explore the online activities of the English users and students who

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are involved in blogging and social media at some level. Study includes 30 participants who are enrolling in an undergraduate and post Graduate level.

Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

Table 1

Using Blog

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	20	68%
No	9	32%

Answering to a question concerning their exposure to blogs, 68% of the participants reported in the affirmative, while about 32% reported that they do not read blogs.

Table 2

Creating a blog page

	No of Respondents	Percentage
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Easy to find	17	57%
Quite difficult	9	32%

Over 50% participants say that they find easy to create a blog page on the website named Blogger. While about 32% reported that they do not read blogs.

Table 3

Using Dictionary

	No of Respondents	percentage
Yes	18	62%
No	4	16%
Not applicable	9	32%

More than 50% participants say they use online dictionary when they write on their blog. On the contrary 16% participants say they don't use online dictionary.

Table 5

Interest in engaging in commenting of a topic

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	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	65%
No	10	35%

Findings in the table shows that 65% participants say they engage in the comment's section of blogs if it is a topic of their interest and 35% participants say they do not engage in the comment's section of blogs even it were a topic of their interest.

Table 6

Re-editing posts

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	20	68%
No	9	32%

Over 60% participants like to re-edit their posts, while 32% participants state that they don't like to re- edit their posts.

Table 7

Experience of using blog

	No of Respondents	Percentage
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Making comments on other people's blog	15	50%
People making comments on your blog	15	50%

Findings reveal that 50% participants agree to the statement that they enjoyed reading other blog post of other people. On the other hand 50% participants state that they enjoyed making comments on other people's blog.

Table 8

Preference to blog

	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	12	43%
No	17	57%

43% prefer blogs to real-life writing, about 57% prefer real-life writing to blog writing.

Table 9

Preference to feedback

	No of Respondents	Percentage
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Online correction	18	62%
Classroom correction	12	38%

About 62% people say they prefer online correction to classroom correction and about 38% people say they prefer classroom correction to online correction.

Table 10

Using Face book or Twitter as a mode of Learning English

	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	26	89
No	4	11

Talking about Face book and Twitter, about 89% participants think Face book and Twitter can be a platform for learning English and only about 11% think otherwise.

Table 11

Using dictionary while confusing about a word

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	No of Respondents	percentage
Yes	21	70%
No	9	30%

When 70% participants state that they use dictionary, before writing an email or a post on Face book/ Twitter when they are confused about a word or a sentence structure.

Table 12

Attitude toward blog discussion

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Excellent		
Very Good	21	75%
Good		
Fair	9	25%

Regarding the attitude toward blog discussion, 75% participants view blog discussion as positive .On the other hand, 25% participants consider blog discussion as fair.

Responses to Close ended questions

While answering the question regarding the preference to Online or Classroom writing, 77% participants reveal that they like writing through online; on the other hand over 20% participants prefer writing in class.

Regarding the reason of considering blogs as better, 57% participants state that blog saves time and engages students actively to participate in the lesson.

Among participants, 50% participants reveal that the advantage of blogs is to give participants opportunities to practice writing, while 30% participants state that the second advantage of using blog is free writing. Participants can write down whatever they wish. A blog was also a good tool for peer learning. Because participants had to post their messages on the blogs, their classmates can read their posts. One benefit is that they could check whether people are copying their articles since it happened before that one classmate copied the work of others and the student was being caught. On the contrary, 20% participants reveal the fact that the other advantage of using blog is peer learning and convenience. Participants can maintain their blogs whenever they were in the mood or inspired. They could just go online at anytime and write down their thoughts. Since blog is not used by many teachers, participants find it interesting to create their English blogs.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The findings suggest that blogging served as motivation for students not only in making specific improvements in content and organization but also in correcting careless mistakes.

The findings discovered from item 1 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.

Kennedy (2003) in Barlett-Bragg stated that; "*Web publication gives students a real audience to write to and, when optimised, a collaborative environment where they can give and receive feedback, mirroring the way professional writers use a workshop to hone their craft.*"(p.3).

Lee (2011) states that Blogging is the best way to keep track of thoughts over time. It's like writing a personal online journal that gives you freedom to express yourself and reflect upon everyday experiences (p.11).

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Amir et al. (2011) mentioned blogging as one of the tools in which it facilitates the process of writing research projects. As far as writing a journal is individually laborious and a “painful experience”, writing these projects within a group can be outstandingly incredible.

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.

Over 60% students replied to the fact they engage in the comment's section of blogs if it is a topic of their interest. While in conversation, whether it is face to face or over social media learners want to express their ideas which interests them.

Topic which interests them leads them to motivate in engaging actively in exchanging ideas. Mynard (2007) investigated the role of weblog writing on reflection on language learning and learner autonomy. He concluded that this can be a tool to encourage students to reflect on their learning (p.10). According to Kavaliauskiene and Mazeikiene (2006), the practice of blogging can improve learner autonomy by “raising awareness” of what they are doing through the activity (p.10).

According to the Researcher, People want to engage actively in the conversation on the topic which interests them.

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A good percentage of people (62%) think online correction is more helpful than classroom correction. Furthermore, as it is desired, blog is a tool for peer correction. It is highly recommended by many scholars to implement as a tool to involve all students in order to correct each other and to provide an active participation by all students (Mynard 2007 p.15; Noytim 2010; p.20, Dippold 2010, p.30). The appeal of a Weblog lies within the fact that it enhanced by its „multimodality“ which includes texts (profile, reflections, and feedback), colors, images, audio and video files, and hyperlinks of websites of the author's interests (Smith & Baber; 2005; p.49, Du & Wagner, 2005; p.50) In order to post weblogs, bloggers create their writings and monitor them carefully because they know their works will be published online and the rest of students can view it, therefore, it is very easy to be a target of criticism. After reading the weblogs, readers try to give feedbacks to blog writers by providing same sort of feedback. Dippold (2010) investigated the amount of feedback students give while using the weblog. It was concluded that both the teacher and students enjoyed and benefitted from utilizing blogging inside the class (p.16). Wu (2006) investigated the students' reaction to two different kinds of monitoring in the blogging experience which are peer correction and teacher correction. Wu concluded that blogs can be used as an effective instrument which can “provide a forum for social interaction, learning collaboration, negotiation of meaning.” (p. 137). Wu investigated the students' reaction to two different kinds of monitoring in the blogging experience which are peer correction and teacher

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correction. Wu concluded that blogs can be used as an effective instrument which can “provide a forum for social interaction, learning collaboration, negotiation of meaning.” (p. 137). Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011) emphasized the role of blogging in elevating students’ “interaction”. They differentiated the difference between the student-initiated and teacher initiated interactions. It was concluded that in many cases, the student-initiated interaction were more effective in improving students “self-expression” and “self-evaluation” (p.438).

Participants (50%) show their positive attitude towards blog by making comments. Making comments and replies to each other encourages mutual interactions.

This result is consistent with the study administered by Simsek (2009) which investigated the effect of weblog integrated writing instruction on students writing performance among 70 undergraduate students of Marmara University (p.10). The finding of Simsek (2009) showed that blogging had significant effect on the students’ content and organization among five categories of writing namely content, organization, language use, and vocabulary. It proves that compared to the control group, greater degrees of attention were paid to writings’ content by the blogging group (p. 40). The relationship of this finding with blogging can be explained through mentioning that blogs have the potential to generate a sense of audience within students which ultimately is what causes

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a better content (Kitzmann, 2003; Wu, 2005 p.14). Besides, the control group did not have the chance to read their peers' essays. They only met the researcher and gave her their essays. However, the blogging group could have their group members' feedback via weblog as there was time and place restriction for the use of weblog.

Findings suggest that it is the motivation of learners which makes them interested to learn English. They state that during English classes they actively participated in class lectures and do their homework regularly. On the Other hand learners who are not confident about their English skills were belonged to Bangla Medium and they did not receive so much exposure English language. Especially they felt shy scared of making mistakes.

In addition, the blog posts seemed to serve as motivation for students to make specific improvements in content and organization and correcting careless mistakes. Some students were undoubtedly motivated by the fact that, while posted online, their writing was in essence published, and could be accessed and read by any number of classmates, the teacher, and indeed anyone around the world with an internet connection. Several students even stated that because of the "public" nature of blogging, they felt more immediate responsibility for what they wrote, which would presumably lead them to do higher quality work.

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The findings from item 9 also suggest that participants can learn a lot from the posts of other people. So Blogs are served as a good source of peer learning. For example when one of the participants sees one of the students post on blog with enriched vocabulary and Standard style he/ she may try to adopt these structures. Reading others' blogs gives the opportunity to students to know their classmates.

In addition to working with the posts of their blogging group members, students would also do other activities as a group, such as peer reviewing various homework exercises or carrying out content discussions. In this way, they could further cultivate a sense of meaningful social continuity with their group members.

These findings imply that Participants prefer learning writing using blogs. 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

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and rewrite. So it does not really harm the student to keep writing without paying close attention to grammar (p.36).

Sun (2010) investigated a study in which the participants' overall writing performance was enhanced in their last three writings comparing to their first three ones (p.10). Moreover, this study is in accordance with Simsek (2009) study in which he found that the writing performance of university students was improved and enhanced by weblog integrated writing instructions (p.15).

Blogging most significantly augments traditional paper-based activities when it provides students with the opportunity to participate in a meaningful, largely autonomous forum where they can exchange ideas, while practicing previously learned skills and developing new ones. For this reason, a strong follow-up activity to having students post writing on their blogs is to have their classmates read those posts and respond with comments, whether informal feedback or assessments based on pre-determined criteria.

In addition to posting a writing assignment on his/her blog, each student is required to read and respond to a set number of classmates' posts. As this peer commentator reads those posts and responds with his/her own viewpoints, sometimes in accordance with a classmate, and sometimes not, a number of

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written dialogues are initiated. This step underlies the notion of the blogging activity as a student-centered process, one in which “active learning, student engagement, and student responsibility” are central (Darabi, 2006, p. 53).

Ideally, each student writer would also return to his/her own post of any particular writing assignment, review the commentary left by classmates and then, if so motivated, leave them a response. A member of one blogging group notes that “a kind of reciprocity (was) expected because I read others’ blogs, so I have to make my contribution” (Nardi et al. 2004, p. 45). In this way, the blog realizes the vision to “provide a forum that reaches beyond the scope of a university subject and which augments the knowledge creation occurring throughout a student’s enrolment in a higher education program” (p. 11).

Therefore, writing weblogs can create a sense of “critical thinking” (Noytim 2010, p.1128). Research on weblog had clearly proved that this instrument has the capacity of elevating learner autonomy.

Additionally, the use of such devices is without any restriction and learners can use them in order to interact with other participants like their friends or more global audience. The philosophy of using blogs in writing and vocabulary

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classes lies behind the fact that it ultimately improves students' level of language. Many studies mentioned the usefulness of blogs in order to maximize the students' collaborative writing. (Du & Wagner 2005, Mynard 2007). Using blogs in language classes is a good way to improve and promote the cooperation between peers in different skills (p.50).

Findings from Item no 12 supports the idea of Johnson (2004) who points out that the application of blogs is a useful supplemental aid to teachers.

From any computer connected to the Internet, teachers can create, edit, or delete their teaching handouts such as notes, homework assignment, and review materials. All these teacher's messages will be organized in a reversed chronological order with the latest postings on the top.

Blogs can promote exploration of English websites (Campbell, 2004). Since it is quite simple for teachers to put English materials on line with links to their source websites, students have more chances to read related articles.

The feature of automatic date-stamping for each post is quite useful.

Students' emails may, for some technical glitches, not reach their teachers or be carelessly deleted by their teachers. With the automatic date-stamping function, both teachers and students know clearly when students turned in their assignments. On the other hand, the automatic archive of past posts by

date or theme can help teachers and students easily locate the message they are searching.

If students do not have their own personal websites, an easy-to-use blog is a good start for them to interact with users of the cyberspace community. As Campbell (2004) emphasizes that simple customization of templates can help students build “a sense of ownership and unique online identity”. Most students will write more carefully if they know that they are going to publish their articles online for authentic readers who may comment on their postings.

Teachers can easily use the blog to organize a collaborative learning environment in which students can peer edit others’ postings (Dieu, 2004; Mitchell, 2003). Students should be encouraged to comment their partner’s postings, which can also be shared by other classmates.

Pedagogical Implications

The current research proposes the following implications 1. Weblog is a great tool which has to be included in higher education and language learning syllabuses for language learning and other fields of study. 2. It is evident that without the proper education and instruction, students remained to be confused about the goals of the instruction by using weblog. Therefore, organizing classes

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before the experience is necessary. During workshop classes, students will be familiar with different facilities of devices like weblog. 3. The use of online electronic resources should be encouraged as it was clearly seen that three grammar checking instrument and one vocabulary enhancement software could result in outstanding findings with blogging medium. 4. Students feel more confident and relaxed with electronic and online devices and it is a time saving device to make writing exercises creative. This research clearly showed that weblog writing is a robust way of leading classes to be more student-centered and interactive. 6. Although, blogging seems to be a bit time-consuming at the beginning, but students will find it user-friendly later on. 7. Blogging is a great tool for assigning different tasks for collaborative learning environment. 8. Blogging can be used in e-learning classes as well. The interactive nature of blogging helps students and teachers to be actively engaged with learning. It is a great tool to enhance accuracy for different skills especially reading and writing.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

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The Internet is one of the major innovations of the twentieth century. It has had a profound impact on language teaching and learning. Apart from classrooms, students need more opportunities to practice English. The study found that students formed positive attitudes toward using blogs in English classes. It proves that blogs can be popular in the language classrooms, especially for students who learn English as a foreign language. On the other hand, the study provided teachers with insights into the disadvantages (e.g. lack of feedbacks and correction, passive behavior, and distraction) and difficulties (e.g. poor English, time-spent, and computer problems) of using blogs in language teaching. By solving these disadvantages and difficulties, the researcher hope to improve the efficiency of English teaching by using blogs and students will be more willing to write, and share their blogs with classmates and people all over the world.

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Appendix 1

Name:

Date Of Birth:

Gender:

Level of Education:

Medium of Teaching:

Duration of Using Internet:

1. Do you have a blog?

A. Yes B. No

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

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

3. Do you like online writing or in-class writing? Please explain

4. Are you Confident in your English skills that you use on your blog? If yes please explain.....

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

A. Yes B. No C. Not applicable

6. Do you feel comfortable in engaging in commenting of a topic that is a topic of your interest?

A. Yes B. No

7. Do you edit your posts?

A. Yes B. No

1. What did you enjoy about doing the blog?

A. Making comments on other people's blog

B. People making comments on your blog

C. Reading other people's blog post

8. Did you enjoyed reading other peoples blog posts?

A. Yes B. No

9. Did you feel nervous about other people reading your blog

A. Yes B. No

10. Do you like blogs better than real life writing?

A. Yes B. No

11. If yes, is it because it _____

12. Which helps you more?

A. Online correction or B. Classroom corrections

13. Do you think social media websites such as Face book and Twitter can be a platform for learning writing English?

A. Yes B. No

14. 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

15. How do you view blog discussion in improving discussion skills in English?

A. Excellent B. Very Good C. Good D. Fair

16. Blogging is useful to practice writing skills because.....