

---

The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS), 2016

Volume 5, Pages 244-246

ICRES 2016: International Conference on Research in Education and Science

## DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS VIA BLOGS

Muge Gunduz  
Middle East Technical University

**Abstract:** The main goal of English language teaching (ELT) is to develop learners' skills to communicate with other people in real world situations and to express themselves in English (Brown, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Yang and Chen, 2007) (quoted in Fageeh 2011, p.1). According to Pinkman (2005) blogs can provide interesting, authentic and communicative resources that can serve a variety of purposes in language classroom and they can also be used to encourage interaction among students and between teachers and students (Yang, 2009). In this study, the participants were 1st year university students (n=103) who created their group blogs in order to share their ideas during their oral communication classes. Students interacted with their peers via blogs simply by reading and commenting on each other's blog posts. The data was collected from the blog entries and a questionnaire administered at the end of the project in order to understand the perceptions of students on effectiveness of using blogs in developing their writing and critical thinking skills. It is hoped that the findings of this study provides some food for discussion on a number of pedagogical and theoretical issues.

**Keywords:** Blogs, language classes, writing skills

### Introduction

As Matheson (2004) suggests Web 2.0 technologies, including blogs, are presenting both teachers and learners with new horizons in the field of language teaching and learning and they can easily be adapted for ELT purposes.

### Theoretical Background

Previous studies have attested to the valuable role played by blogs in enhancing students' language learning skills. In a study on the use of blogging as a platform for ESL learning (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2009), the findings indicated the use of blogs encouraged the students to communicate and interact with their peers using different language patterns. It emerges that blogs can be used to develop students' writing skills. Ward (2004) implemented a blog project into his reading/writing class at university level and concluded that blogging provides an alternative way to teach and assess authentic writing and reading skills and also using blogs might increase student interest in their reading and writing. Moreover, McLeod (2001) suggests that blogs help students explore and assimilate new ideas, create links between the familiar and unfamiliar and also explain things to the self before explaining them to others. Warlick (2007), who has studied blogging as a method for developing literacy, highlights that it gives the students opportunity to learn through communication. Some studies also concludes that Weblogs are a powerful tool, particularly for developing reading and writing skills and regular blogging results in more creative writing (Noytim, 2010; Lee , 2010).

### Methodology

The aim of the study is to explore students' interpretation on the effectiveness of integrating the use of blogs in developing their writing and also their critical thinking skills. The data for the present study was collected during Oral Communication classes. In this study, the participants were 1st year university students (n=103) who created their group blogs as a project for their Oral Communication class. The group work project lasted for 8

---

- This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

- Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the conference

\*Corresponding author: Muge Gunduz E-Mail: gmuge@metu.edu.tr

weeks and the students in the project published their posts and carried out discussions on the topics selected in their blogs in order to share their ideas with their peers. In this study, the data was mainly collected by a survey questionnaire, consisting of 30 statements, from 1st year students in a university in Ankara. The questionnaire was adapted from Abu Bakar, Latif and Ya'acob (2010) and administered at the end of the semester.

## Data Analysis

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (1=Strongly disagree) to 5 (5=Strongly agree). The questionnaire data were analysed in terms of “the effective use of blogs to enhance writing skills” and “developing critical thinking skills”, as Vurdien (2013) did in her research study.

## Findings

In this section, the main findings are reported using categories derived from the related items of the questionnaire: “the effective use of blogs to enhance writing skills” and “developing critical thinking skills. Student’ responses to these items are shown in the tables below. Table 1 illustrates the students’ perspectives on the effective use of blogs to enhance writing skills.

Table 1. Students’ perspectives on developing writing skills

	Valid	Missing	Mean
I am more confident with my writing ability	102	1	3,84
Blogs help me express my ideas freely.	103	0	3,99
I think blogging has built up myself confidence in using the English language.	103	0	3,56

As illustrated in Table 1, most of the students reported that the project enabled them express their ideas freely and helped them build confidence in their writing.

Table 2 below illustrates the students’ perspectives on the effective use of blogs to develop their critical thinking skills. Evaluating, analysing and synthesizing the information gathered foster the development of critical thinking skills. Engagement in negotiation of meaning among peers and providing views on each other’s blogs on several issues might promote students’ critical thinking skills. Most of the students responded in their questionnaires that they were encouraged to use their critical thinking skills while blogging.

Table 2. Students’ perspectives on developing critical thinking skills

	Valid	Missing	Mean
Reading comments given by my friends help me to think critically on the topic discussed.	102	1	<b>4</b>
I think critically on the topic discussed before I post my comments/ideas.	103	0	<b>3,98</b>
I am able to use my critical thinking skills when blogging.	103	0	<b>3,83</b>
I now realize that think skills are important when reading academic articles.	102	1	<b>4,05</b>
I now realize that thinking skills are important when writing.	103	0	<b>4,16</b>

## Conclusion

This study provided some insight into how the integration of blogs into language learning context can contribute to the development of students’ writing. It emerged that blogs can be useful tools to motivate students by encouraging them to interact with each other and express their ideas freely. The use of blogs in writing process also gave students the opportunity to foster their critical thinking skills by thinking about the content of their blogs and expressing their views on their peers’ blog entries.

## References

- Abu Bakar, N. (2009). E-Learning Environment: Blogging as a Platform for Language Learning. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(4), 594-604.
- Abu Bakar, N., Latif, H., & Ya'acob, A. (2009). The implementation of blogs in ESL classroom for low proficiency students. Kongres Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran UKM 2009, Langkawi.
- Abu Bakar, N., Latif, H., & Ya'acob, A. (2010). ESL Students feedback on the use of blogs for language learning. *3L The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 16 (1), 120-41.
- Fageeh, A. (2011). EFL learners' use of blogging for developing writing skills and enhancing attitudes towards English learning: an exploratory study. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 2(1), 31-48.
- Lee, L. (2010). Fostering reflective writing and interactive exchange through blogging in an advanced language course. *ReCALL*, 22(2), 212-22.
- Matheson, D. (2004). Weblogs and the epistemology of the news: Some trends in online journalism. *New Media & Society*, 6(4), 443-468.
- McLeod, S. (2001). The pedagogy of writing across the curriculum. In G. Tate, A. Rupiper & K. Schick (Eds). *A guide to composition pedagogies*, pp. 14-164. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press.
- Noytim, U. (2010). Weblogs enhancing EFL students' English language learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 1127-1132.
- Pinkman, K. (2005). Using Blogs in the Foreign Language Classroom: Encouraging Learner Independence. *The JALT CALL Journal*, 1(1), 12-24.
- Vurdien, R. (2011). Enhancing writing skills through blogging in an advanced English as a Foreign Language class in Spain. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-18.
- Ward, J.M. (2004). Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL): Push button publishing for the pupils. *TEFL Web Journal*, 3(1), 1-16.
- Warlick, D.(2007). *Classroom blogging: A Teacher's Guide to Blogs, Wikis, & Other Tools that are Shaping a New Information Landscape*. North Carolina, U.S.A. The Landmark Projeit Raleigh
- Yang, S-H. (2009). Using Blogs to Enhance Critical Reflection and Community of Practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(2), 11-21.