
The Effect of Blog-integrated Writing Instruction on Enhancing Writing Performance and Writing Motivation

Xi Hongyan^{1,2}, Seah Siok Peh^{3*}

¹Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies,
City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 46100, Malaysia

²Faculty of Foreign Language,
YiChun University, Yichun, Jiangxi Province, 336000, China

³Faculty of Human Development,
Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI), Tanjung Malim, 35900, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: siokpeh.seah@city.edu.my

Abstract: *The research examined the effect of integrating blogs into the writing approach on writing performance and writing motivation. The study employed a quasi-experimental design to assess writing performance and motivation of the pretest and posttest for the two groups. Sixty EFL freshmen at a university in China were chosen as participants with purposive sampling. The participants were allocated into an experiment group (EG) and a control group (CG) based on the pre-test score. The EG received a writing course with blogs, while the CG received traditional writing instruction. The writing test from IELTS was used as both the pretest and the posttest for data collection to assess writing performance. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to assess the writing motivation of the two groups in the pretest and the posttest. The data obtained from the writing test were analyzed using both the independent sample t-test and the paired sample t-test. The data acquired from the questionnaire were analyzed employing the one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and the paired sample t-test. The results indicate that there were not any significant differences in writing performance between the EG and CG. However, intra-group analyses found that their writing performance improved for both groups. Although there is no obvious disparity in writing scores, it was found that the motivation of participants in the EG outperformed those in the CG, providing evidence that the application of blogs as a teaching tool in writing courses significantly improved writing proficiency and enhanced writing motivation. The findings stress the significance of motivation in language acquisition and creating an appropriate context to enhance students' writing motivation in an educational technology background.*

Keywords: *Blog-integrated writing instruction; Writing performance; Writing motivation*

1. Introduction

Nowadays there has been a notable expansion in employing educational technology in the Second Language (L2) teaching and learning (Fathi and Rahimi, 2022). Education technology empowers learners with unrestricted access to a variety of real texts (Hubbard et al., 2004). It cultivates real interaction among classmates and instructors and strengthens the sense of duty and ownership (Arslan and Şahin-Kızı1, 2010; Sun, 2009).

Writing is often regarded as the most difficult skill to acquire (Richards & Renandya, 2002) because writing is a complex process in which individuals need to develop ideas, opinions, and knowledge through the medium of written expression. Moreover, writing is an essential skill that empowers learners to effectively express their emotions, opinions, visions, observations, and knowledge on a specific topic in a well-organized and structured manner (Beyreli & Ari, 2009). The English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors are currently evaluating their own instructional methods and working actively towards incorporating educational technology, such as blogs, Microsoft meetings, Facebook etc., into their teaching (e.g., Marcoul & Pennington, 1999).

Blogs are extensively utilized websites for language learning in the L2 field. The blogs have a user-friendly interface and a design that is both convenient and easily accessible (Elola and Oskoz, 2017; Lee, 2008), supplying learners with various chances to participate in real interaction (Lee, 2020; Arena, 2008; Ducate and Richardson, 2006; Lomicka, 2005). Additionally, the improvement of teacher feedback and peer feedback is achieved (Lee, 2010; Murray and Hourigan, 2008; Campbell, 2003).

In the realm of L2 learning, some scholars have stressed the effect of blogs in promoting learners' writing abilities (Yousefifard and Fathi, 2021; Lee, 2017; Chen, 2016; Pham and Usaha, 2016; Sun, 2010). Some scholars have highlighted the effectiveness of blogs in enhancing writing motivation (Bui and Nguyen, 2022; Mir & Ghoreishi, 2020; Waller and Papi, 2017). However, certain controversial research findings concerning the utilization of blogs in EFL writing have no obvious differences in writing performance (Chen, Cheng, & Lin, 2020; Lin, 2012) and writing motivation (Özdemir and Aydin, 2020; Lin, 2012; Wu, 2008) compared with traditional writing instruction. Hence, more empirical studies are needed in this research field to identify the effect of writing instruction with blogs on writing performance from various perspectives. The primary objective of the study is to identify the effect of a writing approach with blogs on improving writing performance and enhancing learner motivation.

2. Literature review

The success of an online learning environment depends upon the participation and engagement of students. The challenges to online participation primarily stem from users' motivation and interest, rather than the accessibility of technology. According to Jenkins (2006), a digital division emerges due to a gap in participation and unequal motivations. Hence, the

motivation of learners to actively participate and engage in online activities has emerged as a vital concern in the educational setting facilitated by Web 2.0 technology (Deng & Yuen, 2012).

Motivation, from a broad perspective, can be conceptualized as the driving force behind individuals' involvement in an activity (Wakefield, 1996) and is a factor that can help to explain why learners choose to engage in a particular activity, demonstrate their ongoing commitment to it, and exhibit their determination to continue doing it (Dörnyei, 2001). Motivation for L2 writing originated from the theoretical framework of L2 learning motivation (Waller & Papi, 2017), is regarded as a dynamic process in improving L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2001), and includes external factors such as the learner's sociocultural and environmental background, and internal factors related to the unique features of individual learner (Williams & Burden, 1997).

The learning dynamic process and L2 learning contexts have been extensively studied by researchers (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016). According to Larsen Freeman (2016), it is widely regarded that the correlation between individual learner characteristics and the contextual factors within the learning environment is robust. The large amount of academic literature in the area of L2 writing highlights the importance of psychological factors that affect the L2 writing process (Piniel & Csizér, 2015).

The application of blogs in L2 writing courses has been found to create an online learning environment that emphasizes student participation and engagement within a social context. As a result, the writing motivation of students becomes a significant psychological factor to examine. Numerous researches have explored the influence of using blogs on student writing motivation (Kim & Kim, 2020; Yang, 2011). However, Lin (2014) questioned the validity of prior studies that supported the effect of applying blogs for L2 writing instruction. From an academic perspective, many of these studies exhibit methodological flaws, leading to an overestimation of their findings. In her research, a comparative study method was employed for learners who were divided into two groups: a comparison group that followed the classroom routine method, and an experimental group that received blog-mediated instruction throughout a 63-week course. The result of the data analysis suggested that there were not any significant disparities in writing performance and self-efficacy. The study results displayed that the learning motivation of the comparison group was higher in comparison to the experiment group. Ultimately, the researcher concluded that there were noteworthy contributions because it “discloses that the entire blogging format failed to meet its goal in the context of the ESL writing classroom” (p.11).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The present study employed a quasi-experimental design. Sixty intermediate EFL learners were selected from non-English major freshmen at a Chinese university using the approach of purposive sampling. They are taking the same English course at the university. Prior to enrolling in college, all participants had experienced a comprehensive English language program for six years in middle school using the same curriculum, and their English scores on the national examination for university entrance were above 110. The participants volunteered to take part in this study to improve their writing skills. Based on the initial assessment of writing proficiency using the IELTS writing test, the participants were allocated into an experimental group with 30 students and a control group with 30 students. The participants reported that they had not made use of blogs for writing before.

3.2 Procedure

Both groups received instruction from the same teacher, who possessed considerable experience in teaching writing. The writing instruction sessions were scheduled to take place over a period of ten consecutive weeks.

For the experiment group, the instructor established a teacher blog and conducted an introductory session to learn the blog's functions and procedures and submit their assignments. There was systematic writing course content divided into paragraph writing and essay writing on the class blog platform. Besides, hyperlinked websites were also presented on the teacher's blog, and the students could fully expose themselves to authentic text material they could make full use of while composing their written assignments. The participants in the experiment group were required to create their own blog linked to the instructor's class blog. They posted their assignments on their own blogs. Peers can visit each other's blogs and make comments on their peers. To be more precise, each participant was requested to post writing assignments on their own blogs and also made comments for at least 5 peers after finishing every writing class. The online assignments were assigned by the teachers based on the writing theme content of each session. The students were required to write a summary of each writing theme on the blog and make comments on other peers' writing posts. The instructor oversaw and assessed the submitted assignments, and students' remarks, and provided comprehensive feedback. On the other hand, for the control group, the teacher delivered identical writing themes and writing material to the students without the use of blogs. The process writing approach was applied and observed in the context of these students. In contrast to the experiment group which was exposed to the chance to gain feedback beyond the confines of the classroom, the students only got conventional, in-person feedback within the classroom setting. Peer feedback was not provided for their assignments, and the feedback they received followed a traditional written form.

The students from both groups were administered the posttest when finishing the writing course, which consisted of the writing test from the IELTS and a questionnaire for the L2 writing motivation scale.

3.3 Instrument

Writing performance test: A pre-test and post-test writing test were carried out to assess the writing performance. The writing test is to write an argumentative essay from an IELTS writing task (June. 5th, 2021) in a given 40 minutes in the classroom.

Writing assessment rubric: The assessment rubric utilized was based on the EFL composition profile proposed by Jacobs et al. (1981). The assessment is made up of five primary grading dimensions: appropriateness and relevance of content (30%), vocabulary (20%), language usage (25%), organization (20%), and mechanics (5%). The total scores were utilized for data analysis to assess students' overall writing performance in a comprehensive way in the study.

Writing Motivation Scale: The Second Language Writing Motivation Scale (SLWMS) was used to measure writing motivation, which was originally created by Waller and Papi (2007). The SLWMS comprises an individual's dedication, desire for L2 learning, motivation level, feedback on instruction, course content and structure, and peer feedback. All questions are formed on a five-point Likert scale. In this experiment, the scale was used as a pre-and post-test for both groups and the reliability coefficient was measured using Cronbach's Alpha formula, which is high ($r = .712$) in the present research.

3.4 Data analysis

The writing scores obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were conducted with the independent sample t-test to determine whether there are significant disparities between traditional writing classes and blog-integrated writing classes. Besides, a paired-sample t-test was carried out to compare the writing scores of the pre-test with post-tests within the CG and EG.

The writing motivation scores obtained from the questionnaire of the pre-test and the post-test were administrated with a one-way ANCOVA to check the change in L2 writing motivation. The post-test of writing motivation was viewed as the dependent variable, the two groups as the independent variables, and motivation in the pre-test as the covariate. Moreover, the paired sample t-test was carried out to investigate the potential significant disparities in writing motivation between the pre-test and the post-test for both groups.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, which provides a mean comparison between the pre-test and post-test results for the CG and EG. The mean score for the CG writing pretest is 73.17, and the posttest is 79.87. The EG writing score increased from 71.90 in the pretest to 80.20 in the posttest. It can be stated that EG exhibited the most notable improvement from the pretest to the posttest, while CG demonstrated a minor improvement.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of writing scores

Group	Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD
CG	Writing scores	Pre-test	30	73.17	5.17
		Post-test	30	79.87	4.77
EG	Writing scores	Pre-test	30	71.90	4.81
		Post-test	30	80.20	6.75

Table 2 illustrates that there are no statistically significant differences in the pretest scores for writing performance ($t [58] = .98$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .330$). Similarly, the post-test scores also do not exhibit any significant differences ($t [58] = -.22$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .826$). In other words, the findings of the study suggest that there was a similarity in the writing performance of students who utilized blogs compared to those who received traditional writing courses.

Table 2 Independent sample t-test rest of writing scores

	MD	t	df	p (2-tailed)
Pre-test writing score	1.27	.98	58	.330
Post-test writing score	-.33	-.22	58	.826

Table 3 displays a comparative analysis of the writing performance between the pre-test and post-test. The results indicate a significant difference in CG between the pretest and posttest ($t [29] = -11.40$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .000$). Similarly, there was also a significant difference in EG ($t [29] = -10.99$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .000$). The findings suggest that students from both groups demonstrated significant improvement in their writing performance.

Table 3 Paired sample t-test results of the writing scores

Group	M	SD	Std error mean	t	df	P (2-tailed)
CG	-6.70	3.22	.59	-11.40	29	.000
EG	-8.30	4.14	.76	-10.99	29	.000

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for the writing motivation of students in the pretest and posttest. The mean score for CG motivation in the pretest was 21.60. In the post-test, the mean score increased to 23.13. In contrast, the mean score for EG motivation increased from 19.47 to 27.63. It can be observed that the motivation of the EG experienced a significant increase from the pretest to the posttest, while the CG motivation showed a slight improvement.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics of writing motivation

Group	Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD
CG	Motivation	Pre-test	30	21.60	3.74

EG	Motivation	Post-test	30	23.13	3.83
		Pre-test	30	19.47	2.78
		Post-test	30	27.63	3.69

Table 5 displays the comparative analysis of motivation levels between the pre-test and post-test for the CG and EG. The findings suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in CG between the pretest and posttest ($t [29] = -1.51$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .142$). However, a statistical difference was observed in the EG ($t [29] = -9.04$, $p [2\text{-tailed}] = .000$). The results indicate that students in the control group did not present an increase in their writing motivation after receiving traditional writing instruction, while the experiment group showed obvious improvements in their writing motivation.

Table 5 Paired sample t-test results of motivation

Group	M	SD	Std error mean	t	df	P (2-tailed)
CG	-1.53	5.56	1.02	-1.51	29	.142
EG	-8.17	4.95	.90	-9.04	29	.000

Table 6 presents the results of a one-way ANCOVA by comparing the difference in writing motivation between the two groups. A significant difference was shown between the CG and EG in the posttest [$F (1, 57) = 17.036$, $P = .000 < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = .230$], demonstrating that blog-integrated writing instruction significantly enhanced writing motivation than a traditional writing class.

Table 6 One-way ANCOVA result for the writing motivation

Source	SS	df	Mean Square	F	P (2-tailed)	Partial Eta Squared
Between-subjects	242.220	1	242.220	17.036	.000	.230
Covariate (pre-test)	9.994	1	9.994	.703	.405	.012
Within-subjects	810.439	57	14.218			

4.2 Discussions

The result of the present study showed that the writing performance of both groups yielded comparable results in the writing post-test, with no statistically significant differences observed in their writing scores. Additional intra-group comparisons revealed that both groups exhibited improvements in their writing scores following the implementation of blog-integrated writing instruction and traditional writing instruction. In other words, the findings of the study indicate that both writing instructions were effective in promoting writing performance to a considerable extent. However, an obvious disparity in writing motivation was noted upon comparing the outcomes of the two different writing instructions. Furthermore, the findings from the paired sample t-test displayed that the EG experienced an obvious enhancement in their writing motivation, whereas the CG did not exhibit obvious progress in their writing motivation. That is to say, the result indicated that the writing motivation of the participants was significantly enhanced in the blog writing course.

This finding is consistent with the results of several prior studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing blogs as a means to enhance the motivation of EFL learners in their writing skills (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Özdemir & Aydın, 2020). In accordance with prior research, the present study provides a more detailed explanation of the factors that contribute to the enhancement of learners' motivation in L2 writing through the utilization of blogs. Firstly, it is worth noting that the utilization of blogs potentially contributed to the cultivation of favorable perceptions among the participants, thereby fostering an enjoyable experience that ultimately boosted the motivation of EFL learners in their writing endeavors. Secondly, the active engagement of students in offering comments and feedback to their peers, coupled with regular feedback from both teachers and peers, likely fostered an increase in their motivation to write in their L2. Consequently, they exhibited greater attentiveness when composing more elaborate assignments and creating more drafts. According to Dörnyei's conceptualization in Self-Determination Theory (2009), intrinsic motivation pertains to engaging in an activity for the inherent pleasure and enjoyment it provides, rather than being driven by external consequences. Conversely, extrinsic motivation involves undertaking an activity for its instrumental value, rather than for the sake of pleasure or enjoyment. Individuals may initially engage in an activity due to the presence of extrinsic rewards. However, as they progress in the activity, they may discover a sense of competence and satisfaction, leading to the development of intrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), educators place significance on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Motivation as a psychological factor needs to be considered when measuring the instruction effect. The blog platform can offer students opportunities to engage in writing and sustain their practice of L2 writing as a new writing learning experience, which motivates learners' curiosity. The learners experienced a positive writing process due to receiving favorable comments and regular feedback from their peers and teachers, which served as a source of encouragement or reward. Consequently, this facilitated the improvement of their writing skills and enhanced their motivation to engage in L2 writing, driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

This finding can also be supported by the motivation model put forward by Dörnyei and Otto (1998), which conceptualizes it as “a dynamically evolving and changing entity” (p.44). The model suggests that learner motivation is significantly influenced by the environment or context in which learning takes place. Drawing upon this model as a foundational framework, it could be assumed that the participants' new experience in the special context of blogs was effective in boosting the motivation of EFL learners (Mir & Ghoreishi, 2020). This discovery is also in line with Gardner's theory of motivation. According to Gardner's (2005) socio-educational model, there exists a strong association between an individual's motivation and ability and their achievement in the context of language learning; an individual's motivation to acquire L2 is connected to their integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation. Integrativeness refers to “an individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural or linguistic group” (Gardner, 2005, p. 7), which plays a significant role in shaping motivation. The factors that contribute to attitudes towards the learning environment encompass various components, such as educators, instructional methods, curriculum design, lesson planning, and assessment procedures. Hence, it is evident that blogs provide a unique platform for individuals to freely express their linguistic characteristics and foster integration among

group members. Besides, the attitude of learners towards the situation of blog writing also serves to enhance their motivation for writing. Besides, the blog writing class results in an interaction transition from the interaction between teacher and learner to interactions between learner and context (Yilmaz, 2017). This shift in dynamics also leads to a transformation in learners' roles, from being mere language learners to becoming language users. Consequently, this transformation impacts learning environments. Hence, an additional finding regarding the enhancement of motivation among EFL learners can be attributed to the utilization of the blog approach, which alters the conventional roles of learners and empowers them with a sense of responsibility, active engagement, and autonomy in control over their own learning process.

The findings of the current study suggest that blog-integrated writing approaches and conventional writing instruction are nearly equally effective in improving writing performance, which aligns with previous research findings (e.g., Chen, 2016; Lin, 2014). To a certain degree, this suggests that the enhancement of writing abilities may not be solely attributed to the utilization of blogs. That is to say, the enhancement of writing abilities, especially in a second language setting, may not solely depend on selecting instructional methods; other factors, like psychological factors, also affect writing performance. Motivation is "context-oriented", which means motivation is notably impacted by contextual elements (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). The learning environment, pedagogical strategies, and teacher behavior within situated contexts have a significant influence on student motivation. Özdemir and Aydın (2020) found that blogs only did not result in improved motivation, whereas they observed that combining the process writing approach with blog writing significantly boosted learners' writing motivation. That is to say, the appropriate educational context for affecting the effect of blogs is required to stress. In this context, it is possible that the online writing environment and the traditional classroom writing environment could have different effects on writing performance and motivation. The various blog functions and increased interactivity may have had an influence on learners' learning experiences in the blog context, which could have boosted their writing motivation. On the other side, the writing environment in a traditional classroom may have had a varying impact on motivation, potentially because of the special learning interactions and experiences and diverse instructional resources.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study provided evidence for the positive effect of blogs in promoting writing performance and enhancing the motivation of EFL learners by combining theoretical research on motivation with blog writing instruction. Hence, it holds some educational implications to a certain degree. Based on the obtained results, it is suggested that the approach to blogging writing should take into account the influence of learners' motivation on writing performance and the significance of an appropriate educational context in enhancing writing motivation. In future research, it is important to consider more psychological or affective factors, such as perception of the blog class and the teacher's role, when assessing writing performance.

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