

Dedications

I dedicate this work to my beloved family, my father Rachid and my mother Ouiza. Without their help and support, I would not have succeed. To my dear sister Yasmine and my brothers Aziz, Amar, my aunt Razika, and my sister in law Thiziri. To all my relatives and friends. My cute binomial Soria. Special thanks go to my lovable fiancé Toufik for his patience, support and advice.

Hayet Si moussi

*To my loving family:
My father Ali and mother Ouardia
My brothers: Yacine, Lyes, and Yanis
Special thanks to my husband Yacine
To all my friends.*

Soria AMMOURI

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude and deep regard to our supervisor Mr. Madjid Chetouan, for his guidance, advice, support, constant encouragement and valuable feedback. His suggestions were of immense help throughout our investigation. His perceptive criticism kept us working to make this study in a much better way. Working with Mr. Chetouane was an extremely knowledgeable experience for us.

We would also like to acknowledge all the teachers of the Department of English for their guidance. Especially, the broad examiners who accepted to read and evaluate this work.

Finally, our gratitude goes to all the participating students in the present study, without which this research would not have been possible.

Abstract

Blog – an online journal-are being used widely on the Internet. This study is mainly concerned with students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill in EFL learning. It was undertaken in order to investigate the impact of blogs could have as a tool for improving the writing skill and to seek out the factors influencing students' use of this new technology. The research was conducted at MMUTO relying on Vygotsky's socio-constructivist approach, mainly the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and on collaborative learning theory. A questionnaire was administered to forty four (44) students of Master one Language and Communication speciality in the Department of English at MMUTO, and a semi- structured interview was conducted with one teacher from the same Department. While Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for statistical analysis, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was used to interpret and explain the results of the interview. The conclusions derived from this research showed that students had positive perceptions and attitudes towards using blogs to improve their writing skills, and they perceived it as an effective and a motivating tool. In addition to that, the findings revealed that there were many inhibiting factors that influenced the use of blogs, among them: "Difficulty to access to the blogs", "inability to use internet", and "lack of interest and confidence in using this platform".

Key words: *Blogs, Writing skill, students' attitudes, Vygotsky's theory, Collaborative learning theory.*

List of Abbreviations

- CLT: Collaborative Learning Theory
- CMC: Computer Mediated Communication
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- ELT: English Language Teaching
- ICT: Information and Communication Technology
- QCA: Qualitative Content Analysis
- SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences
- ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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Statement of the Problem

The area of education is witnessing important changes due to the rapid development in Information communication technology (ICT). Indeed, the advent of the internet provides people with a new way of teaching and learning. In the Algerian context, writing unlike the other skills is not practiced outside the classroom, so what is learned inside the class is practiced inside and has little chance to be developed outside especially in our Department of English at MMUTO. Thus, it is important to choose a form of computer mediated communication such as “blog” which may act as a useful tool for improving writing capability and which can offer opportunities for students to develop their communication skills through meaningful writing experiences.

Blog can be created for academic purposes, to allow students to exchange their ideas and thoughts with their teachers and peers using their writing skill. Furthermore, blogging is closely related to writing in language learning. It has been experimentally used as a tool to develop writing skill (Pinkman.2005:12-24), which means that the experience of writing on blogs may provide opportunities to help students to improve their writing and enhance their motivation and attitudes toward using it as a learning tool.

Writing is one of the most authentic and interactive ways of sharing ideas and thoughts with others. Harmer (2001) argues that writing is a way to communicate with others and express feeling through using language in written form. Moreover, writing skill is an important part of communication that should be mastered by every foreign language learner. However, writing in a foreign language is one of the most difficult and complicated skills compared with other language skills. Richards (2002) states that there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master .Furthermore, writing is a central element in the process of language learning since students need to write down notes and take written exam. Thus, they need much effort and serious practice in order to achieve a

proficient level. As a result, in EFL learning teachers develop many methods and techniques that help students to improve their writing skills and develop their awareness and attitudes toward writing through using web blog.

Many studies have been conducted about the use of blogs as a tool to develop Writing skill around the world (Campbell, 2003:33-35; Nadzrah and Kambajia, 2009). However, few Studies were conducted on the effect of blogging in EFL writing enhancement at the level of Algerian higher education such as University of Biskra, the work titled “Improving EFL Students’ Writing Skill through a Directed Blog Case of Students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra”, the results of this research concluded that learners felt comfortable by using blogs as a writing tool while the others still using the traditional method. In the Algerian context the study of Blogs as a learning tool to improve writing skill have received little and insufficient interest. Those studies did not address students’ attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill. This research is then the original in the fact that is the first research to be investigated at MMUTO. Therefore, the present paper attempts to investigate the impact of blogs on the students’ writing skill in the Department of English at MMUTO.

Aims and Significance of Study

The present study aims at investigating the effect of using weblog in language teaching and learning as a tool for writing development, that is how blogs contribute in the enhancement of writing and the improvement of students’ attitudes towards the use of blog as a learning tool to enhance their writing, relying on constructivist theory of learning by Vygotsky’s (1978) which points at blog as a construction learning tools with which students enhance their learning performance. In fact, this study has two main objectives. The first objective concerns evaluating the effect of blogging on developing students’ writing skill. As far as the second

objective is concerned, it seeks to identify students' attitudes towards the implementation of blogs as a learning tool to enhance their writing fluency.

It is worth conducting such a study at the level of the Algerian higher education since the implementation of blogs as a learning tool has received little interest. The importance of this investigation lies in the fact that it is the first research in MMUTO context that addresses Students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study aims at answering the following questions which are related to attitudes of the students towards the effect of blogs to improve their writing skill.

- 1) Can blogs help students to improve their writing skill?
- 2) Do students and teachers have positive or negative attitudes towards using blogs as a tool to improve their writing skill?
- 3) What are the factors which motivate EFL students to use blogs?

In an attempt to answer the above research questions, the following hypotheses are advanced:

Hp1: Blogs can help students to improve their writing.

Hp2: The attitudes of students towards blogs are positive, and they are accepted as a tool for writing enhancement.

H3p: The factors which motivate students to use blogs are: Curiosity, share information and free expression.

Research Techniques and Methodology

This work adopts a mixed method approach as a methodology which combines both qualitative and quantitative method for the collection and the analysis of data. Concerning data collection which are drawn from two main sources: the Master One language and communication students and from teachers in the Department of English at MMUTO.

For quantitative part, we administer a questionnaire to the students about their attitudes and perception towards the use of blogs to enhance their writing on the second language. This allows gathering numerical data through a statistical method of analysis.

For the qualitative part, we interpret and explain the results obtained from the interview conducted with the concerned teacher.

Structure of the Dissertation

The overall structure of this dissertation follows the traditional complex model. It is divided into four chapters in addition to the General Introduction and General Conclusion. The General introduction presents the statement of the problem, aims and significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, research methodology and structure of the dissertation. The first chapter is called “*The Review of Literature*” and reviews the main theoretical concepts upon which this study is based. The second chapter named “*Research Design*” presents and explains the procedures for data collection and data analysis and it introduces detailed information about the participants involved in the study.

The third chapter called “*Presentation of Findings*” provides the results of data collection and data analysis tools. Then, the fourth chapter “*Discussion of the Findings*” discusses the findings, the main results of the questionnaire and the interview and answers the research questions.

Finally, the dissertation ends with a General Conclusion which is a summary of the different findings; indicating the limitation of the study and suggesting teachers’ attitudes towards using blogs to enhance writing skill for further research in the area.

Introduction

The present chapter is a review of the literature relating to the issues of attitudes, blogs and writing. It aims at exploring the effect of using blogs in language teaching and learning as a tool for writing development and the role of attitudes and their effect on students' acceptance of blogs as a learning tool to enhance their writing skill.

This chapter will open with some definitions of attitudes and their important role in the study of language. Then, it introduces the importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language teaching, including historical perspectives and a detailed discussion around blogs in the improvement of writing skill. After that, it reviews the literature relating to the issues of the writing skill and it is followed by blogs and writing instruction in EFL. Finally, we clarify the theoretical framework upon which this work is based.

1.1. Attitude

1.1.1. Definitions

The term 'attitudes' comes from the Latin word 'aptus', meaning 'fitness' or 'adeptedness'. It is defined as "a psychological process which is shown in the evaluation on certain entities with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaikan, 1993). In other words, it is an opinion and feeling that everyone has about something either in a negative or positive way. It reflects the person's perception of the external world.

Brown (2000) points out that attitude is cognitive and affective. That is to say, they are related to both thoughts and feelings. "*It is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object*" (cited in Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Another definition was given by Mario and Haddock (2009) where they added a third component of the attitude which is the 'conative component'. So, according to them, attitudes have often been considered in terms of three components which are: a

‘cognitive component’ which refers to a person’s beliefs, perceptions and thoughts about any issue. That is, positive attitude about any object may involve a positive belief on the importance of that object and vice versa, for example. An ‘affective component’ meaning the amount of positive and negative feeling that an individual has towards something (an object, a person, an event,...).which means, they are subjective reactions of like or dislike, trust or distrust,...etc. and the last one is ‘the conative component’, also known as ‘The behavioral intention’ or ‘The readiness for action’ which refers to a person’s behavior towards an object. To summarize, attitude is viewed in language as a construct that explains linguistic behavior in particular. *“It is also seen as a learned orientation or disposition towards an object or change and how behavior can be influenced”* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2003). Thus, the belief that a person has towards an object determines his/her behavioral intention. For example, a student who show positive attitude toward his teacher will probably want to take that teacher in all modules. In addition to that, he might suggest that teacher to other students. On the other hand, if a student has a negative attitude toward a teacher may not want to take his courses.

Furthermore, Ellis (1994) states that, learners who shows positive attitudes towards blogs succeed in EFL learning. He also believes that learners’ with negative attitudes may be supported by lack of success. That is to say, positive attitude leads to the demonstration of positive behavior toward studying and students in EFL make a great effort to learn. Such students are also perceived to show more interest to solve problems, to learn what is useful for daily life, and to engage themselves. For this reason, attitude plays a crucial role since it DETERMINES success and failure in language learning.

1.1. 2.The Importance of Attitude in Language Learning

It is worth conducting that attitudes play an important role in the study of language. Therefore, it is considered as one of the major effective factor that influences language performance (Fakey, 2010). Thus, achievement in the target language relies not only on the

intellectual capacity, but also on students' attitudes toward that language. In other words, the ability of students to master a second language is influenced by the mental competence and language skills as well as the students' attitudes and perceptions towards the target language (Abidin et al, 2012).

Foreign language learning is facilitated by high motivation and positive attitude of students. Thus, if a learner does not have interest in acquiring the target language to communicate with others, this learner will possess a negative attitude and will not be motivated in language learning. Indeed, Attitudes lead individuals to reveal and present different emotions, feelings and beliefs towards different objects surrounding them. Baker (1992,pp:9) notes that a person may have different attitudes towards any language. Thus, it reflects the status, the value and importance of this language. For this reason, attitudes play a significant role in education, since it can only survive if learners show positive attitudes towards the issue.

Relating the author's sayings to the present work, the inclusion of blogs to enhance the writing skills development is something new for students. As a result, they may certainly show either negative or positive attitudes towards the issue.

1.2. Information and Communication Technology in language teaching

In recent years, the internet has increased rapidly, the diversity of learning program changed according to the needs of society. For instance, the growth of communicative skills in language learning requires social interaction between students and teachers and among the students themselves. Indeed, the computer is used by teachers and students in language learning for a long time as a support tool with regard to certain skill areas (Bandal, 2005: 16-23).

The acronym ICT emerged in the 1980's. It is the combination of two terms: (Information) and (Communication). ICT is defined as information devices that have the purpose of

transmitting or communicating ideas off- line (DVDs, CDs), as well as, on-line (Varela, 2008). In other words, The ICT term includes all technical materials that are used for the facilitation of the process of communication and the transmission of information, holding computers, hardware, and software (Celebic and Rendulic, 2011). They are a diverse set of resources and means used in order to facilitate communication between people and to create, store and manage information. Thus, the computer is considered as a significant tool in education, and it has a great impact on the process of teaching and learning environment.

In short, ICT is very important in education as it has a strong effect on teaching and learning process, it gives new opportunities for interaction between students and knowledge and accessing information. According to Nikolova (2003) and (Scheinin, 2004) computerized media and a multimedia environment facilitate learning foreign language vocabulary. The definition in fact, is better explained by Fujike (2004) where he has asserted that an online discussion is an excellent medium for arising social construction of knowledge in language learning.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in fact, includes Hardware approach which uses machines and materials and Software approach which is characterized by teaching of objectives in behavioral terms, methodology and principles of teaching and learning.

1.2.1. The Use of Blogs in English Language Teaching and Learning

1.2.1.1. Overview about blogs

The use of computers in language learning and teaching has increased greatly, and it is quickly becoming one of the learning tools used in language system (Nadzrah, 2007). Recently, blogs, this new practice, has become so popular among individual who use internet as well as institutions for varied purposes: personal, social, and political. In education, they are used as e-learning tools to allow people to share opinions, thoughts, experiences and views with other users. Blogs give students complete freedom to publish content on the web,

and help them to create an interactive social learning environment where they can learn from the ideas of others and share knowledge resources (Du & Wagner, 2007:1-16). However, this e-learning platform of the student's role changes from "lonely learner" outside the classroom to an active one who communicates with other learners (Bakar, 2009:45-57). Therefore, it is necessary to explore students' attitudes towards the use of blogs to improve their writing skill.

1.2.1.2. Definition of Blogs

The term blog comes from the word "weblog" which is derived from "computer log file" coined by an internet enthusiast, Jorn Barger (1997). It is a noun but also a verb "to blog". Weblogs or blogs have been defined differently by different authors. They are defined as a specific type of websites that a group of individual people posts regularly following the chronological order, they are a public site in which bloggers and readers can interact by using blog as a tool to post, comment or participate in long discussions (Campbell, 2003; Hashemi & Najafi, 2011). Therefore, readers can usually leave comments which lead to discussions about the blog content. Donath (2010), for instance, gives a simple definition as "*a website which can be created and updated frequently*". He argues that the possibility of updating blogs makes them a good communication tool. To summarize, it is a place to express yourself to the world where you share thoughts, knowledge, and opinions with others, daily readers can post and comment on other works.

Blogging can offer opportunities for students to develop their communication skills through the use of writing process. Thus, blogs is seen as a meaningful tool to develop the writing skill in language teaching and learning. In the study carried out by Blackmore-Squires (2010) regarding the use of blogs as a tool to improve writing in the second language classroom, it was found out that the use of blogs encouraged learning through collaboration by communication between students and teachers.

The learners can construct their knowledge by using blogs. Hence, they are authentic, interesting and communicative tool, by translating ideas into words build upon their reactions and feedback (Alvi,1994:50-74), this means that students are trained to work together and solve problems by posting or commenting and which in the end help them to construct their ideas and learn about their differences and motivate them. However, scholars have also reported negative points about blogging such as Blackstone et al (2007:1-20) who have highlighted that students who lack confidence may experience fear at having others read their posting because blogs are mostly exposed to public, and students feel embarrassed for fear that others identify their mistakes. In addition to that, Blackmore-squires (2010) explained that students who suffer from computer phobia may find themselves frustrated with the use of blogs and this will eventually influence their writing improvement.

To sum up, blog is considered as a tool with many advantages and benefits, it is used as an effective tool to develop and enhance their writing in the second language. However, every design form has its limitation, and drawbacks.

1.2.1.3. Types of Blogs

Campbell (2003) identified three types of weblogs which are used in language teaching and learning according to their functions and differing educational purposes: Tutor blog, Learner blog and Class blog.

✓ Tutor blog

The first category of blogs is the tutor blog. It is run by the teacher for the students, and its objective is to give reading practice to the students and promote exploration of the courses in English websites, it encourage online exchange between the learners by commenting , provide class or syllabus information, and serve as a resource of links for self-study. It contains information about the course, tasks, homework. it is a place where they share useful links for students, such as online dictionaries, online texts, books, and articles to be read and

various resources in terms of language learning purposes. According to Campbell (2003), this type of blog is like a personal library where students can find useful information and interest. That is to say, it is an effective tool which promotes self-study and increase learners' autonomy and motivates them for further research. Therefore, it gives daily reading practice to the learners and encourages online verbal exchange by the use of commentary. In other words, it aims to encourage student's participation in online communication.

✓ **Learner blog**

According to Campbell (2003) learner blog is the one which is used by the learner with her/his own ideas and thoughts. It is used as a platform for students to express themselves through free writing either by posting images, messages and other discussion topics. Learner blogs help in the improvement of reading and writing skills of the students as they update their blogs about what interests them. In addition to that, learner blog gives students the opportunity to express themselves in English as they are usually free to choose a topic. In this way, learners can write on their own specific interests.

✓ **Class blog**

Finally, the third category mentioned by Campbell (2003) can be considered as the best one since it involves collaborative work between teacher and students. As this type of blogs is the common product of the whole class and the teacher, they are especially useful for creating a sense of community in class and for supporting collaboration. Stanley (2005) asserts that this type of blog serves as an extra-curricular extension of classroom as it motivate students to do further research and to write more in depth about the topics mentioned in class. In addition, using this type of blog, gives the teacher the opportunity to facilitate project-based language learning. Students can create collaborative texts through using blogs and they can get correction and feedback from their friends and also the teacher. This effectively

contributes to their critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, students sometimes learn by mistakes from the unreliable information published on the websites.

1.3. Writing

Writing is one of the four skills in English that every foreign language learner must master, and to learn the writing skill, it is necessary to first understand what is writing. In its simplest form, writing is the process of using symbols, letters of the alphabet and punctuation to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form, it may be just reproducing in written form something which has been heard or read (Crystal, 2000; Harmer, 2001; Weigle, 2002). Various definitions of the term ‘writing’ have been proposed. Most of these definitions indicate that writing is a form of expression and communication that enables learners to communicate ideas, feelings and different attitudes.

Harmer (2001) defines writing as being “*a form of communication to deliver thought or to express feeling in the written form*”. In the same respect, Crystal (2000) suggests that writing is not merely a mechanical task, a simple matter of putting speech down on paper. . This definition as well as the previous ones comes to a common point which is that writing is nothing more than representing thought on paper.

In addition, writing can be an individual, personal and social endeavor. As it is reported by Miller (2001), “*even though the writing production is an expression of one’s individuality and personality, it is important to remember that writing is also a social endeavor, a way of communication of people*”. As being a social endeavor and a way of communication with others, Pinkas (1992) defines writing as a system of graphic symbols or the combination of letters that we produce while speaking. These authors go further to mention that writing is a genuine and interactive way of sharing ideas and thoughts with others using the written form. Harmer (2004) adds that writing is a process. That is, the stages the writer goes through in order to produce something in its final form.

1.3.2. Stages of Writing

According to Harmer (ibid), the writing process comprises four main stages which are:

- ✓ **Planning or pre-writing:** Is everything you do before you begin to draft the paper.

It is the stage where writing learners are encouraged to write by collecting ideas and information necessary as though brainstorming. When planning, writers have to think about three main issues. In the first place they have to take into account the purpose of their writing since it influences the type of the text they wish to produce and the language they use. Secondly, writers have to think about the audience they are writing for, since this will influence not only the shape of the writing but also the choice of the language (formal / informal). Thirdly, writers have to consider the content structure of the piece. That is, how best to sequence the fact, ideas or arguments which they have decided to include in their piece of writing.

- ✓ **Drafting:** Is the stage where the writer puts ideas and information he wishes to share on paper. The focus is usually more on the fluency of writing ideas rather than on the accuracy of grammar and spelling or the neatness of the draft.
- ✓ **Revising or editing stage:** When students revise and review their written productions by putting feedback from teachers and peers into consideration.
- ✓ **Final draft or final version:** The last stage is in which the writer produces the final version. Checking grammar and spelling accuracies, punctuation, and word choices.

1.3.3. The Nature of Writing

The ultimate purposes of learning any foreign language is basically to get learners use it to communicate with other individuals who speak the language. Thus, the main goal of ELT is to develop EFL learners' ability to communicate with people in English in real life situations and to express their opinions in this language as if it is their mother tongue (Brown, 1987).

Foreign language teaching and learning, with its four language skills is a complex process. And when teaching these language skills, teachers often follow the specific order; starting from listening, speaking, reading then writing (Hedge, 2000). Writing skill is often left till the end because it is the most complex and difficult to master even for the natives speakers. Nunan (1989:12) has estimated that “*it is easier to learn to speak than to write no matter if it is the first or the second language*”, he has also pointed that “writing is an extremely complex, cognitive activity for all which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously”.

Harmer (2007) states that foreign language skills can be divided into two main categories: the receptive skills (reading and listening) and the productive skills (speaking and writing). In terms of complexity and difficulty many researchers proved that language production is the most difficult. There are a number of reasons why students have found language production difficult (ibid). And as a productive skill, writing is considered as the most complicated and difficult skill. Tribble (1997:65) claims that “*writing is difficult skill to acquire*”. However, there are many factors that affect the writer and the different steps of the process through which the writers go when writing, such as: the lack of knowledge about the topic. In addition, writing is not only expressing thoughts and ideas in written format, but also a tool of learning.

According to almost EFL learners, writing in the target language is viewed as a careful job and need a great amount of efforts and attention. In this respect, White and Arndt(1991:3) view the writing process as “*a mental-effort which is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is a thinking process in its own right, it demands conscious intellectual effort which is usually has to be sustained over a considerable effort of time*”. That is to say, writing is a very complex cognitive activity in which writers must show control over content, sentence, format, vocabulary, structure, punctuation and spelling, i.e. writers must be

able to write coherent and cohesive paragraphs, essays and texts. In other words, writing is acquired through practice, training and cognitive effort (ibid). Numan (1989:36) has supported the same ideas, by providing less ambiguous definition of writing.

1.3.4. Blogs and Writing Instruction in EFL

In recent years, many studies have been done on the use of blogs to enhance the writing skill. Many researchers have claimed that blogs can improve writing skills .Wu (2005, pp. 3-104) states that blogs are used for many purposes such as: web publishing, journalism and in education. For instance, researchers have seen that blogs can follow for contributors to combine text with images, audio, video, hyperlinks and they digitally and chronologically achieve written contributions (Zhang, 2009; Hashemi & Najafi, 2011). In other words, with the use of blogs students could share their favorite things, post photos and videos directly from their cell phones; these enable them to add sentences to express their meaning and enhance their interaction and information exchange. In doing so, the goal is to encourage reading and writing in English language.

Campbell (2003) and Hiler (2002) state that blogs can be used by teachers and students as a forum in which students express their opinions, produce ideas and share interesting information in order to communicate in a social environment by using English as a second language. In other words, blogs motivate students to improve their writing by exchange of ideas and share each other's posts.

Since blogs can be read by both students and teachers, this offers students the possibility to see how peers react to their writings and also the teacher to use peer feedback and encourage communication. In the same respect, Zhang (2009) adds that "*Blogs have formidable potentials as a useful tool for the teaching of EFL writing classes*". This indicates that blogs offer a collaborative environment whereby students can read each other's posts. Therefore, students are essentially writing for an audience which is said to improve writing capacity.

They consider blogs as a platform which allows students to share ideas with others easily and which engage them in appropriate learning environment.

Campbell (2003), Hiler (2002) as well as Zhang (2009) advance the same view point when they assert that blog can be considered as a collaborative environment whereby students can exchange with one another and as a useful tool to improve their writing in English as a foreign language. All this, is better explained in Blackmor-Squires(2010) study where he has said that the use of blogs as a tool to enhance the writing in the second language classroom encourages learning through collaboration which is in terms of communication between peers and tutors, as through learner autonomy(Blackstone et al., 2007).

Nadzrah and Kemboja (2005) have found that blogs let students compose writing with specific purposes that can encourage them to enhance their writing in language. Bloggers use their own blogs to express their thoughts, ideas and empowerment. Then, this helps them to develop their critical thinking and thoughtful in their writing (Armstrong and Retterer, 2008). In other words, autonomous learners become highly motivated and the autonomy leads to better and more effective work. That is, the majority of motivated learners are more initiative and creative in learning; as a result, they will make the classroom instruction more useful.

Blogs have been used in the classroom for several years and it has a positive effect in enhancing learning in relation to the writing skills (Downes, 2004). In other words, blogs as a writing tool improves students' self confidence and emphasizes the fact that learners should be given more opportunities to think critically and to express themselves effectively. The understanding here is that writing on a blog encourages students to think about their own opinions and also consider how their views may be interpreted by others before they publish their post.

In conclusion, there are many reasons for using blogs as a learning tool in EFL classes. Stanley (2005) has suggested many reasons such as; providing extra reading practice for

students, providing a real audience for students' writing, encouraging the process approach to writing, increasing the sense of community in class. All these studies have dealt with the use of blogs as a useful tool to improve the writing skill, but none of them has been interested in students' attitudes and perception towards using blogs as a tool to improve their writing in English as a foreign language.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The current study aims to point out theories in education which are socio constructivism and collaborative learning, that have impact in the field of e-learning and which are suitable and appropriate to conduct our investigation about students' attitude towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill, to answer our research questions and analyse the results.

1.4.1. Social constructivism

Social constructivism has been developed from the theories of Bakhtin (1981), Bruner (1966) and Vygotsky (1978). According to this theory, knowledge is dynamic and learners construct their knowledge by engaging in collaborative activities with other students, instructors and learning environment. Chan and Ridgway (2006) described a blog as an environment where the learners have to *'engage actively in the co-construction of knowledge with peers and with their tutor'*. This statement reflects social constructivist approach.

According to Wertsch (1997), social constructivism not only like constructivism acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner, but actually encourages, utilizes and rewards learner as a fundamental part of the learning process. For instance, the social constructivist approach encourages students to use language in different situations such as; expression, explanation, negotiation and compromise with peers (Bakar and Ismail 2009: 46). Undoubtedly, all these entire components are used in the process of writing in which collaboration is implied. Furthermore, learners go from different stages when learning

writing. Initially the teacher may employ different activities to encourage students to write such as: writing a text for example, either through discussion or brainstorming which is an activity used to generate ideas in small groups.

In addition to that, Chan and Ridgway (2006: 2) consider 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. In this statement, the social constructivist approach to language teaching and learning is applied to the use of blogs to learn collaboratively in a social context. They have described a blog as an environment whereby learners have to engage actively in the construction of knowledge. In other words, learners comment on each others' work on the blog would be beneficial for learning and the development of their writing.

1.4.2. Zone of Proximal development

Learning is considered to be a repeated process of structuring, by which learners actively build their knowledge on their own or with the help of others. In other words, learning is a result of individual's interaction with the environment, and knowledge is constructed as the learners make sense of their experiences in the world which means that the content of learning is dependent on how learning is acquired; the context of learning and the goal of the learner. In fact, learning is an active process by which learners construct new ideas on the basis of their present and previous knowledge, (Bruner, 1990)

Vygotsky (1978) explains well the importance of interacting and collaborating with others through his notion of proximal development (ZPD). According to him, the social context in which the learning process takes place is of a great importance. For learning to occur, he affirms that it is through interaction with others, including learners and instructors that the learner succeeds to go beyond his/her present knowledge. This approach to learning supports learning environment where learners perform actively and collaboratively with peers and instructors. The latter would guide and control the learners in their learning process. In the

same perspective, Bruner (1994) supports the same idea when he argues that more help is given by tutor when the learner gets into difficulty and less help is provided as they gain proficiency. This can be applied to the use of blog and also to the use of comment/ feedback facility on the blog.

According to the constructivist learning theory, blog may act as a very useful tool to develop students' writing performance in EFL classes since the students in this learning environment are competent thinkers and meaning builders; whereas, teachers are just facilitators and advisers.

1.4.3. Collaborative Learning

Blogging is grounded in the Collaborative Learning Theory (CLT) (Bruffee, 1984), which emphasizes group interaction. This theory regards sharing as a fundamental feature of successful collaboration. Indeed, learning is considered to be more effective through interaction and cooperation with others rather than through individual work (Du & Wegner, 2005). In Vygotsky's (1962) view, language develops from social interactions and cooperation for the purpose of communication and also views interaction with peers as a sufficient way of promoting skills.

Considering these theories, for English language learning and practice, blogs are tools that can *"enhance learning by serving as a convenient 'conversational' medium for students to interact and share their learning experience"* (Du & Wagner, 2005). Several studies have shown that collaborative learning results in better learning outcomes compared with individual-oriented learning (Alavi et al, 1995; Piccoli et al, 2001; Wu et al, 2004).

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has presented the relevant literature which is used in the research. It defines attitude, blogs, and writing in English as a foreign language. While attitude is the person's perception of the world around him or her, blog which is a means of communication

and interaction with each other, is defined as a website which can be created and updated frequently. Furthermore, it is seen as a meaningful tool to develop the writing skill in language teaching and learning. Regarding the writing skill is a form of expression in language that enables learners to communicate ideas and thoughts in the written form. The review also has clarified the theoretical framework upon which this study is based.

Introduction

This chapter is methodological. It is concerned with the research design of the study. The section describes the research techniques used to investigate students' attitudes toward the effect of using blogs as a tool to enhance their writing skill in order to answer the research questions stated in the General Introduction. First, it describes the procedures for data collection which are: questionnaire which is administered to the Master One Language and Communication students in the department of English and an interview conducted with one (01) teacher of the same Department. Then, it explains the methods of analysis which are used for both qualitative and quantitative data.

2.1. Research Method

In order to carry out our investigation, we have opted for a mixed methods research in order to collect the appropriate data for our study. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. Its central premise is that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination provides better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:5). In the same perspective, Dornyei (2007:163) defines the mixed methods research as follows: “*A mixed method study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process*”. The main reason of choosing the mixed method approach for our study is to get a full picture and better understanding of the chosen topic comparing to the use of only one research method, whether that is qualitative or quantitative research.

2.2. Context and Setting of the Study

2.2.1. Setting and Participants

The inquiry is conducted in a real setting. That is, in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou during the academic year 2017-2018. The target Population of the study consists of a representative sample of forty four (44) Master I Language and Communication students who are studying in the department of English. These students are randomly selected.

2.2.2. Sample

The sample design of our study is random sampling. Biggam (2011:132) defines the concept of random sampling as follows, “*Random sampling is where you select, entirely at random, a sample of population*”. That is to say, each student of Master 1 Language & Communication has the same possibility of being selected. The total number of students who study Master One Language and Communication is (46) and the sample is made up of (44) students.

2.3. Procedure of Data Collection

In order to collect the appropriate data to answer the research questions of the study, a questionnaire and an interview are used.

First, a questionnaire is administered to Master I Language and Communication students. The students are handed over a questionnaire in which they are expected to provide their opinions and experiences with the use of blogs as a learning tool to improve their writing skill. Then, when the collected data from the students are analyzed, interview questions are developed in order to conduct an in-depth interview with teachers who work in the department of English. This interview questions are prepared taking into consideration students' answers in the questionnaire in order to obtain opinions on the effect of using blogs

on writing skill. Thus, the mixed method approach is suitable for this empirical study. Mayring (2014) states that the proper methodology is the one that serves to answer the asked research questions.

2.3.1. Questionnaire to Student

For the sake of gathering enough data for our investigation, a questionnaire is designed in accordance with the literature review in the first chapter of the present dissertation. It is used in order to obtain information about students' background, opinions and attitudes in relation to the issues highlighted in the theoretical part. A questionnaire is a set of structured items used by the researcher to gather information needed from the answer of the respondents. It is defined by Brown (2001) as *“any written tool that contains a series of questions and statements which the respondents answer either by using their own words or choosing answers from those they are provided with”*. Thus, it is an easier, efficient and faster instrument used to gather information. According to Dornyei (2003) this tool is one of the most popular instruments applied to social sciences. It is easy to construct, extremely and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information in short time and in a form “readily process-able”.

The questionnaire was designed and self-administered for Master I Language & Communication students. Forty six (46) questionnaires were distributed and forty four (44) of them were collected. The questionnaire is used to collect data on the students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill. It is made up of twenty (20) questions divided into two types: open-ended questions and are those which require more thought and more than a simple one -word answer, In this type of questions students are asked to give their own answers, while close-ended questions are those which contain answers from which the participant can choose or can answer by a simple “yes” or “no”. The questionnaire has three parts.

1. Students' profile which aims at identifying the learners' degree and speciality

2. General information about ICTs. It concerns the use of ICT in general and blogs in particular and consists of ten (10) questions.
3. Students' attitudes towards using blogs to improve their writing which contains eight (08) questions.

The qualitative data are collected through open-ended questions which give the opportunity for the students to express themselves in their own way about blogs as a learning tool to enhance their writing skill, their benefits and drawbacks. The quantitative data are collected from close-ended questions in order to gain more information about students' attitudes towards blogging as a writing tool.

2.3.2. Teacher Interview

The interview took place at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, more precisely with one teacher from the department of English. It was carried out with (01) one teacher in the last week of May 2018. We conducted the interview to make an exploration of the effect of using blogs to enhance students' writing skill. The interview was semi-structured, it contains (6) six ordered questions which were asked face -to-face with the concerned teacher.

Setting and participants

As explained earlier, the interview was held in the University of Tizi Ouzou and more precisely. It was conducted in a semi-structured way with one (01) English language instructor in the Department of English. The teacher answered kindly the questions of the interview which were related to her experience with blogs. The interview was conducted face to face with the participant; it was recorded and transcribed after being granted permission.

Procedures

During the interview an audio recorder was used to record the conversation with the teacher, she accepted to let us record the interview. The interview lasted from 10 to 30 minutes, and it included open-ended questions.

2.4. Procedures of Data Analysis

The information gathered through the questionnaires, especially the numerical data obtained from studying a sample of Master One Language and Communication students of the Department of English were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). While, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is adopted to analyse and interpret the open-ended questions and interview of this study.

2.4.1. Quantitative Analysis

As mentioned previously, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in order to analyse the data. For the quantitative data, close-ended questions generating numerical data, explore the students' attitudes towards blogs to enhance their writing skill. These data are calculated with the help of the computer program named the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This programme is defined as a "*general statistical software tailored to the needs of social scientists and the general public*" (Blumenthal, 2010). Therefore, it is used in social sciences helping in the description of statistical analysis. It is used generally for the analysis and the organization of information.

2.4.2. Qualitative Analysis

After the analysis of the numerical data, the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was adopted for the analysis of qualitative data. QCA is defined by Hsieh & Shannon (2005:2) as "*a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*". Indeed, QCA is a scientific

tool for data analysis since it gives more explanation about a particular phenomenon and provides new insights and information (Krippendorff, 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design used in the study. First of all, it has presented the research method, participants and the population sample. Then, it has presented the data collection procedures which consist of questionnaire and interview. For the analysis of data collected two main scientific tools that are frequently used in social sciences, have been adopted. SPSS is used as a statistical technique to provide a percentage of data obtained through a questionnaire while the Qualitative Content Analysis is used to interpret the open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the interview. The analysis has allowed us to gain new insights and understanding into the students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skills.

Introduction

This chapter is empirical. It presents the results reached through (44) questionnaires which are composed of three sections and administered to Master I students of Language and Communication of the Department of English and through the interview that contains eight (08) questions conducted with one teacher (the teachers of ICTs) from the department of English. This chapter aims to determine students' attitude towards the use of blogs as a tool to improve their writing skills.

Thus, for the sake of readability and visibility, the outcomes are presented in percentages and displayed in tables, diagrams and pies charts. This would facilitate the discussion of the results later on. The chapter is organized into two main sections. The first part presents the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires, and the second reports the results obtained from the analysis of the interview.

3.1. Presentation of the Results of the Questionnaire

3.1.1. Section one: students' profile

- **Q01: What degree do you hold?**

Degree: Master One.

- **Q02: What is your speciality?**

Speciality: Language and Communication.

3.1.2. Section two: General Information about ICTs

Q3: Do you have internet access at home?

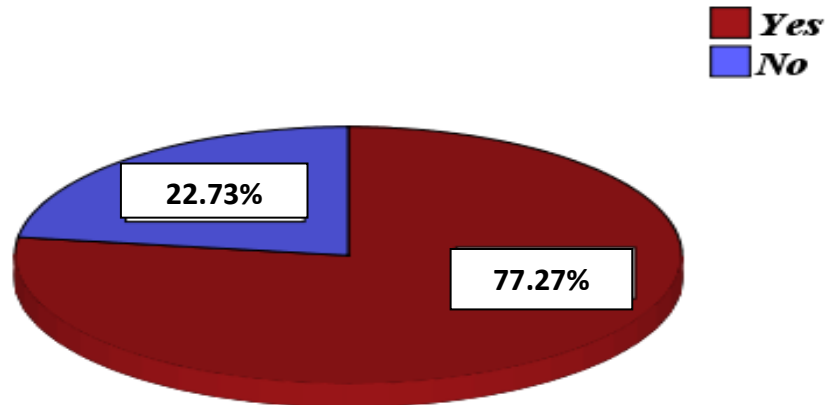


Diagram 01: Internet Access at Home

As it is apparent in diagram1, thirty four (34) students representing (77.27%) have claimed that they use internet at home. However, ten (10) of them (22.73%) are not equipped with the internet in their homes.

Q4: How often do you use internet?

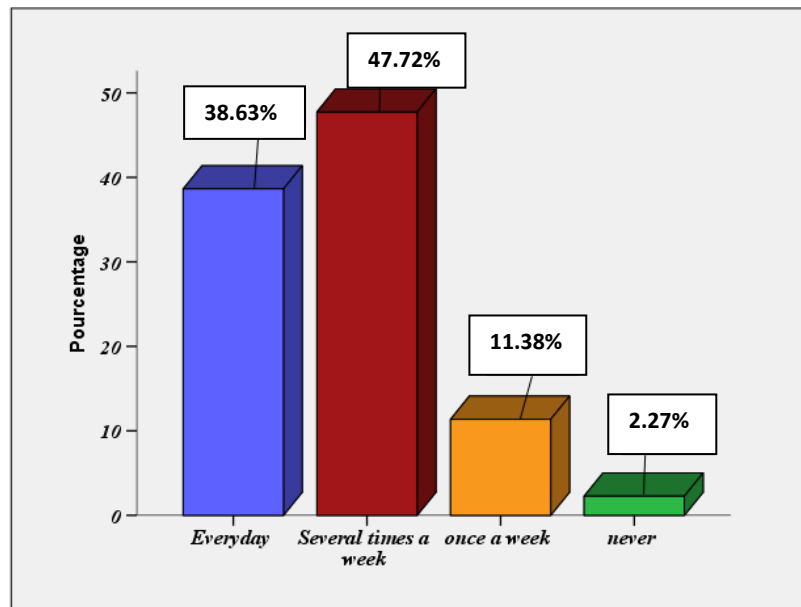


Diagram 02: Students' Frequencies of Using the Internet

As it appears in the diagram above, we notice that twenty one (21) representing (47.72%) access internet several times a week, seventeen (17) of the students representing (38.63%) use it every day, while five (05) of them (11.38%) once a week. Only one (01) of the participants representing (2.27%) has answered that he/ she does not use the internet.

Q5: The quality of the internet do you use is:

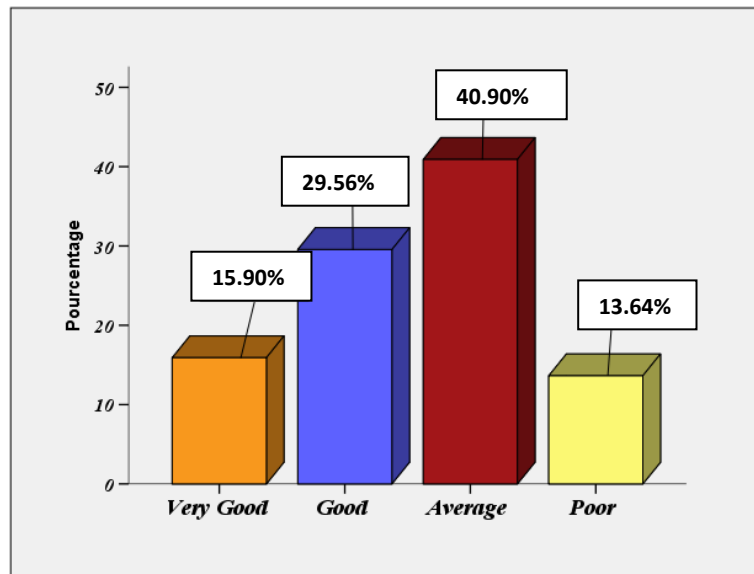


Diagram 03: The Quality of the Internet Used

According to the results shown in the above diagram, eighteen (18) of the participants representing (40.90%) are equipped with an average internet quality, seven (07) of the students representing (15.90%) have a very good quality and thirteen (13) of the students representing (29.56%) responded that their internet quality is good, while six (06) of the students representing (13.64%) access internet with a poor quality.

Q6: Do you use the internet for studying purposes?

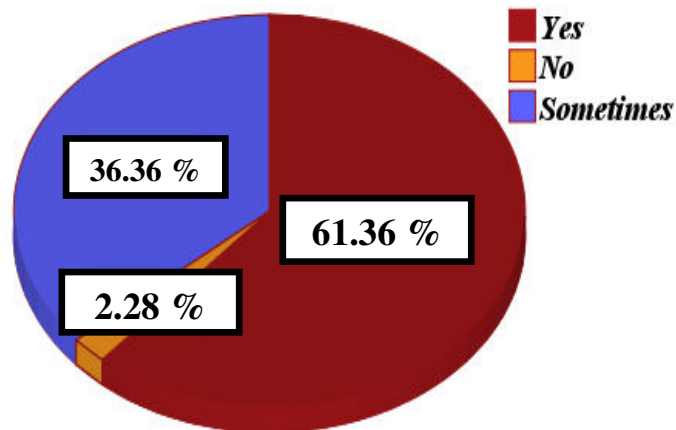


Diagram 04: Internet Use for Studying Purposes

Twenty seven (27) of the students representing (61.36%) use the internet for studying purposes and sixteen (16) representing (36.36%) answered with “sometimes”, only one (01) of the participants has answered that he/she does not use internet for studying purposes.

Q7: Do you have a personal blog?

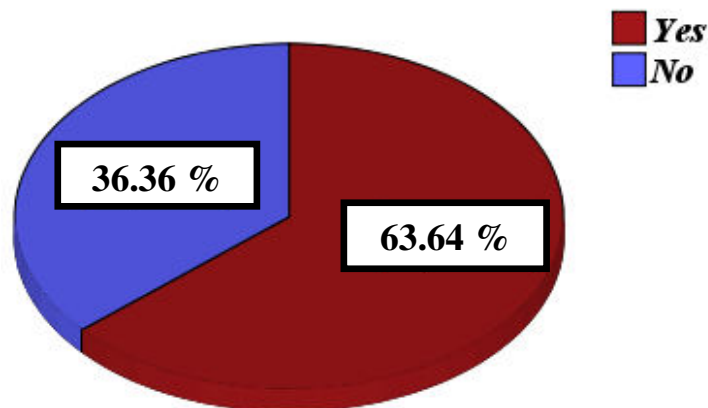


Diagram 05: Students' Personal Blog

The students' responses indicate that twenty eight (28) of them representing (63.64%) have said that they have a personal blog and sixteen (16) of them (36.36%) have said that they do not use it.

If no, why?

The answer	Response	Percentage%
Difficulty to access	4	25.00 %
Inability to use internet	5	31.25 %
Lack of interest	4	25.00 %
Lack of confidence	3	18.75 %
Total	16	100 %

Table 01: Factors Inhibiting Students to use Blogs

As indicated above, from the answers of the participants, five (05) of the participants representing (31.25%) point out “inability to use internet” as a barrier which prevents the participants from using blogs. Four (04) of the students representing (25.00%) indicate “lack of interest”, five (05) of them representing (25.00%) indicate “difficulty to access” as a factor that demotivates them to access blogs, while three (03) of participants representing (18.75%) say to be in “lack of confidence”.

Q8: What do you do when you access the blog?

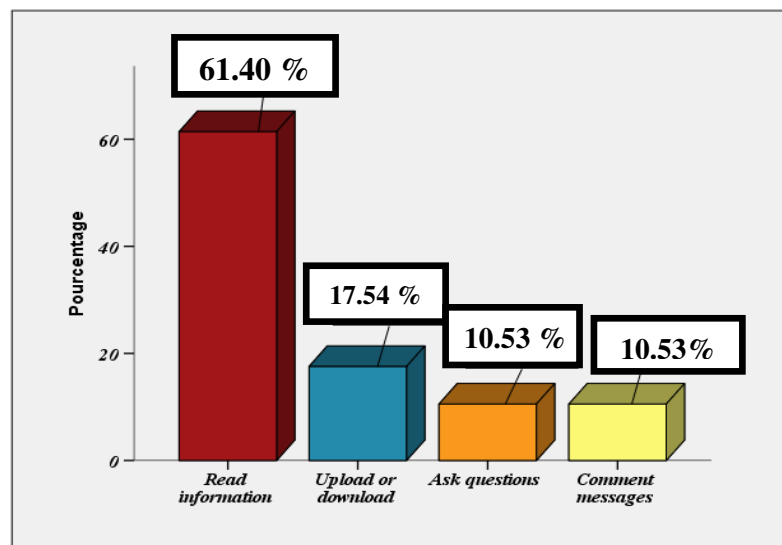


Diagram 06: Students' Tendencies of Actions in the Blog

As it is apparent from diagram 6, thirty five (35) of students (61.40%) access the blog in order to read information. Ten (10) of them representing (17.54%) of them they use it to upload and download, while six (06) that is (10.53%) of them have responded that they use blogs for asking questions and six (06) of them representing (10.53%) find that blogs is a place where they comment messages.

Q9: What is the role you perform in the blog?

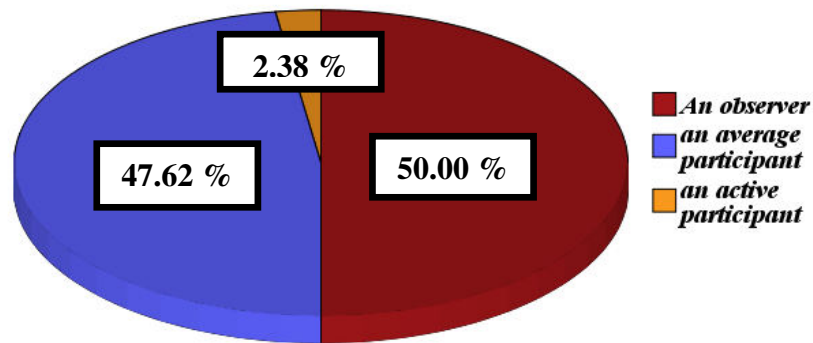


Diagram 07: Students' Role in the Blog

From the diagram above, we notice that twenty two (22) of the learners representing (50%) are observers on blogs and nineteen of them representing (47.62%) have responded that they are “average participants”. Only one (01) of them (2.38%) has answered as being “an active participant”.

Q10: How often do you read the posting?

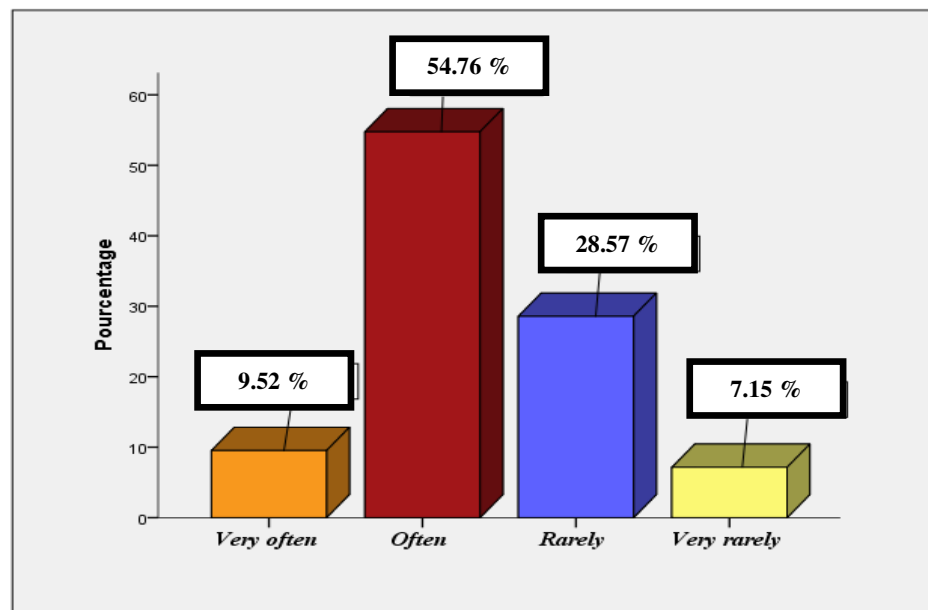


Diagram 08: Students' Frequency of Reading the Messages in Blogs

The above diagram shows the frequency of the students reading the posting in the blogs. Twenty three (23) of the participants representing (54.76%) “often” read the posting and twelve (12) of them (28.57%) do it “rarely”, four (04) of the students representing (9.52%)

have answered “Very often” while only three of them representing (7.15%) read it “very rarely”.

Q11: How often do you post in the blog?

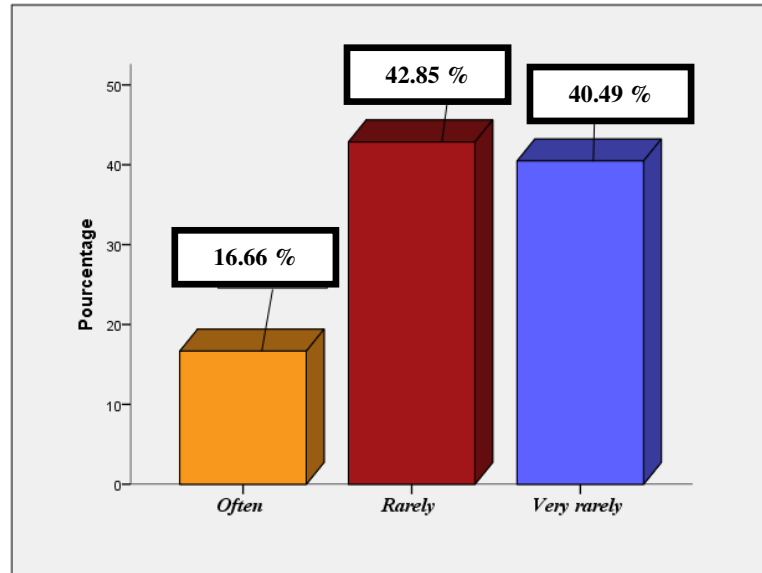


Diagram9: Students’ Posting in the Blogs

From diagram 09, we notice that eighteen (18) of the learners representing (42.85%) “rarely” post in the blogs and seventeen (17) of them representing (40.49%) claim that they publish “very rarely”, whereas seven (07) of the participants (16.66%) state that they “often” post.

Q12: Which language skill is the most difficult for you?

Choices	Participants	Percentage %
Reading	2	4.55 %
Writing	28	63.64 %
Speaking	10	22.73 %
Listening	4	9.09 %
Total	44	100 %

Table 02: Students’ Opinions about the Most Difficult Language Skill.

As it is apparent in the table above, students were asked to state which language skill is the most difficult for them. As expected, the majority (28) of the participants representing (63.64%) chose the writing skill as the most difficult skill. Ten (10) of them which represents

(22.73%) considered speaking as being difficult. Others (9.09 %) find that listening is the most difficult, and only two (02) students responded that they have difficulties with reading skill.

Q13: Your ability to write in English is:

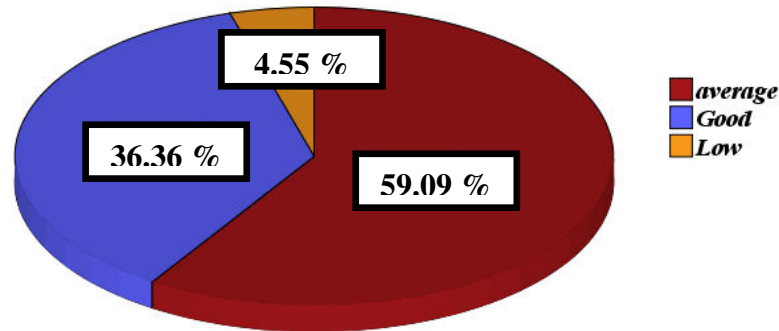


Diagram 10: Students' Ability to Write in English

From the diagram 10, it seems that twenty six (26) of the students representing (59.09%) have a good ability to write in English, whereas sixteen (16) of them representing (36.36%) have said that their ability to write is average. No more than (4.55%) of the learners have said that their ability is really low.

Q14: Do you think that it is important to develop the skill of writing in English?

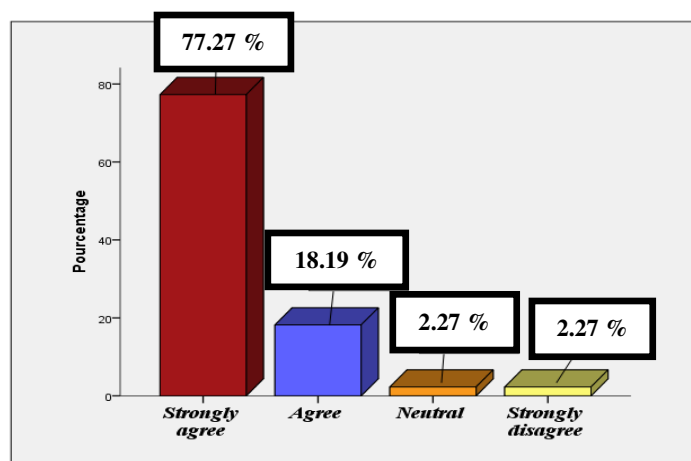


Diagram11: The Students' View about the Importance of Writing Skill

With regards to whether it is important to develop the skill of writing in English, thirty four (34) participants representing (77.27%) have responded that they “strongly agree”, whereas

eight (08) of them (18.19%) “Agree”. And only two (02) participants (4.54%) choose between third and the fourth propositions “neutral” and “strongly disagree”.

Q15: Do you think that writing regularly on your blog will be helpful to your writing development?

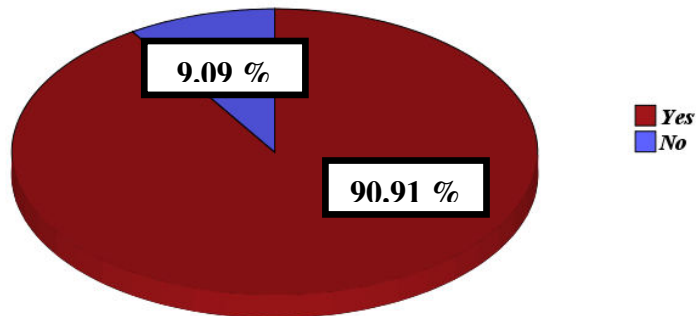


Diagram 12: Students’ Writing Development on Blogs

The students’ responses indicate that forty (40) of them representing (90.91%) have said that writing regularly on blogs is helpful in writing development. However, four (04) of them representing (9.09%) state the opposite that blogs do not improve their writing skill.

Q16: How did you find the use of blog as a tool to improve the writing skill?

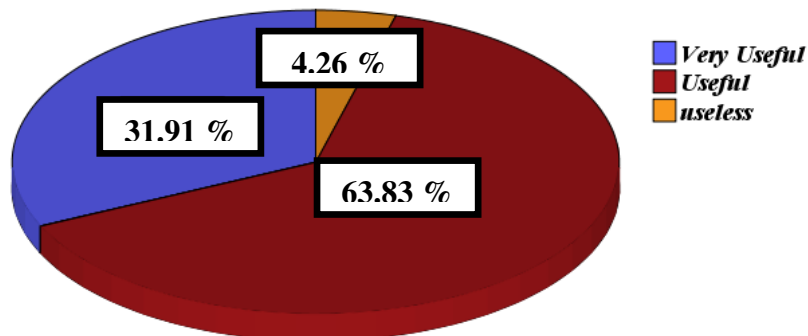


Diagram 13: The Usefulness of Blog for Writing Enhancement

The results from diagram 13 show that thirty (30) of the participants representing (63.83%) find blog as a useful tool to enhance their writing skill. And twelve (12) of the students representing (31.91%) find it as a “very useful” tool. Whereas, only two (02) of them representing (4.26%) of the learners state that it is “useless”.

Q17: How much are you satisfied with blogs?

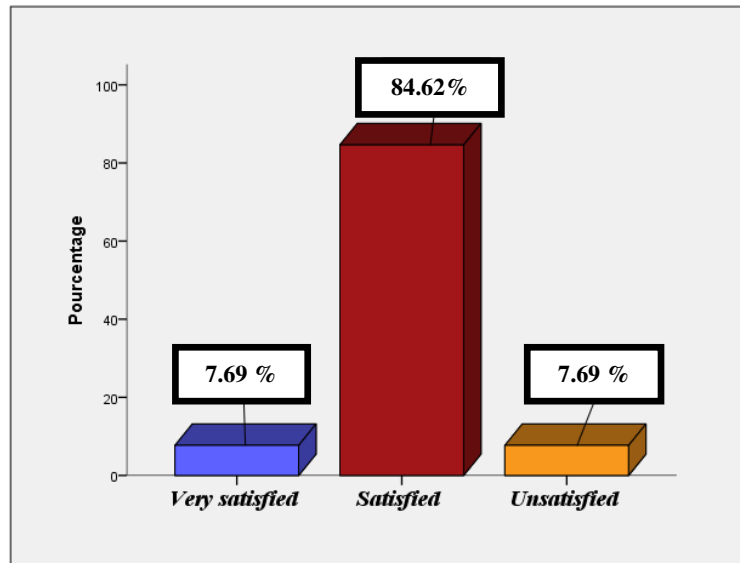


Diagram 14: Students' Satisfaction with the Blogs

As it appears in diagram 13, the majority of the students thirty eight (38) representing (84.62%) are “satisfied” with using blogs and three (03) of them representing (7.69%) respond that they are “very satisfied”. However, three (03) of the students representing (7.69%) claim that they are “unsatisfied”.

Q18: Does students' online feedback enhance your composition in English as a foreign language?

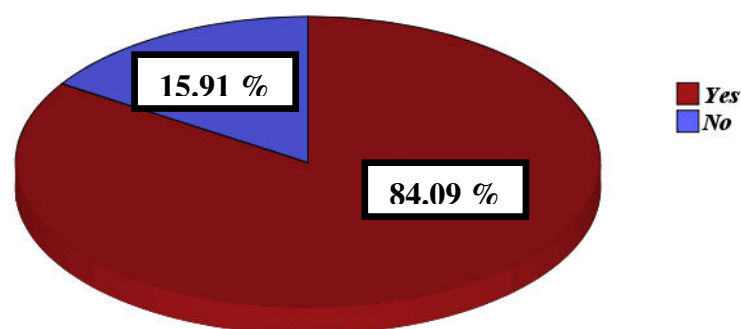


Diagram15: Students' Online Feedback Improvement of Writing Skill in English

From the analysis of the data, we notice that thirty seven (37) of the students representing (84.09%) affirm that students' online feedback has a significant role in improving writing production in English as a foreign language, while seven (07) of them (15.91%) disagree with this.

Q19: How does the blog platform help you in improving your writing skill?

The answer	Response	Percentage %
Vocabulary development	18	33.96 %
New techniques of writing	13	24.53 %
Improve the grammatical structure	10	18.87 %
Readers' correction feedback	7	13.21 %
Other	5	9.43 %
Total	48	100 %

Table 03: Blog Assistance in the Development of the Writing Skill

We notice from the table that the majority of the students eighteen (18) representing (33.96%) affirm that blogs serve as a platform which improves their writing skill as they give them the opportunity to develop their vocabulary and know new words, while thirteen (13) representing (24.53%) respond with "new technique of writing", (18.87%) "Improve the grammatical structure" and (13.21%) "Readers' correction feedback".

Q20: What are the factors which motivate you to use blogs?

Categories	Number of answers	Percentage %
Platform for timid students	10	27.78 %
Share information and free expression	13	36.11 %
Curiosity	5	13.89 %
Other	8	22.22 %
Total	36	100 %

Table 04: Factors Motivating Students to use Blogs

As it is apparent in the table above, the findings related to the factors that motivate students to use blogs indicate that (36.11%) are centered on "share information" and "free expression" whereas, (27.78%) claim that "platform for timid students" is a contributing factor to use blogs. However, a minority (13.89%) of the respondents affirms with "curiosity" and few participants name "other" factors that motivate them to access blogs.

Q21: What are the benefits of blogging?

Categories	Answer	Percentage%
Interaction and knowledge sharing	14	31.82 %
Language' skills development	13	29.55 %
Have access to new information	7	15.91 %
Other	10	22.73 %
Total	44	100 %

Table 05: The Positive Aspects of Blogging

As seen in the table above, the participants show that there are various positive aspects of blogging. Fourteen (14) of the participants representing (31.82%) argue that it is an area which allows “interaction”, “knowledge sharing”. Ten (10) others (29.55%) affirm that blogs is beneficial as it develops their language skill. For some other participants the online platform gives them the opportunity to access new information.

Q22: What are the drawbacks of blogging?

Categories	Number of answers	Percentage%
Time consuming	12	33.33 %
Unreliable information	8	22.22 %
Learning from mistakes	6	16.67 %
Other	10	27.78 %
Total	36	100 %

Table 06: The Negative Aspects of Blogging

The participants assert that blogs show some weaknesses. According to their answers, twelve (12) of the students representing (33.33%) find it “time consuming”, ten (10) others representing (22.22%) state that it may gives “unreliable information”. Nevertheless, six of the learners representing (16.67%) respond “learning from mistakes” and ten (10) of them (27.78%) name “other” disadvantages of blogging.

3.2. Results of the interview

The analysis of this section is based on data gathered through interview conducted with one teacher of the Department of English. The interview helps to gain more insights and to bring more details to be able to answer the research questions and hypotheses. Data, therefore, were analyzed following QCA and the results show below from the transcripts of the interview:

- **Question one:** Do you enjoy using technology for teaching your module?

The teacher, who was interviewed, answered that she enjoys using technology since her module is different from the others modules and she has to use different technological tools.

- **Question two:** Have you ever used social media such as blogs for teaching purposes?

As for the use of blogs for teaching purposes, the interviewee affirms that she had never used blogs.

- **Question three:** Have you received any special training on using blogs for teaching English?

The interviewee answered that she had never received any special training about the use of blogs for educational purposes, but she knows how to use it.

- **Question four:** What do you think of blogging as a teaching tool for writing?

The interviewee expressed her view by saying that blogs is a very useful tool which helps in the development of writing skill. Then, we had asked her if she recommended blogs or she preferred other tools. Her answer was that it depends on the module that you are teaching. For instance, it is a good idea to use blogs when teaching the writing module.

- **Question five:** Do you think that using this process can improve your students' writing skill?

She responded that it is a very motivational tool. Hence, students feel comfortable when writing online. They take care of their style, grammar, vocabulary and pay attention to their mistakes since they know that they are writing for an audience therefore they develop many aspects of writing.

- **Questions six:** Do you think that blogs are motivating tool?

The interviewee answered this question by yes, blogs is a very motivating tool since it gives learners the opportunity to develop their language skills and help them to create an interactive learning environment where they can learn from others' ideas.

- **Question seven:** What advantages do you think blogs will have for both students and teachers?

The respondent said that it is a great technique used in classroom because technology is something that students and teachers are usually attracted to everything new so this one helps them to develop their writing skill.

- **Question eight:** What are your suggestions to improve the use of blogs as a new tool for teaching in the Department of English?

Concerning the suggestion to improve the use of blogs in the department of English the interviewee answered by saying that the teachers should be updated and receives special training to be familiar with the use of blogs. So, it should start first by motivating teachers first and getting them becoming interested and then the students will be interested in that.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has presented the results obtained from the two research tools which are the questionnaire and the interview that were conducted with students and one teacher from the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. Our results indicate that the students and teachers did not use blogs. Moreover, the questionnaire

showed that the students have positive attitudes about the use of blogs in improving writing. These results in fact will be discussed in the following chapter by providing explanation and interpretation.

Introduction:

This chapter discusses the results of the study which are obtained from the students' questionnaire and teacher' interview. From the results, it is apparent that most of the students use blogs and they exhibit positive attitudes towards them since they have found blogs as a useful tool to improve their writing skill. The results in fact are discussed and interpreted in relation to the review of the literature presented in the previous chapter and the theories of education. They aim at responding to the research questions, confirming or disconfirming the hypotheses stated in the General Introduction. In order to further the discussion of these results, we opt for Vygotsky socio-constructivist theory which focus on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Collaborative Learning Theory (CLT).

This chapter is divided into three major sections; each section aims at providing an answer to the research questions asked in the General Introduction. It opens by discussing students' participation in the blog. Then, the second section of the chapter provides a discussion of the factors influencing learners' use of blogs. Finally, the third section discusses the benefits of using blogs as a tool to improve the writing skill.

4.1. Discussing the Findings from Students' Questionnaire and Interview

4.1.1. Students' Use of Blogs

The two data collection tools used in this study which are a questionnaire and an interview. The study, in fact, has revealed that the majority of the students have internet access at home (See diagram 1). Indeed, the research has illustrated that eighteen (18) of the participants representing (40.90%) access internet with "*an average quality*". Furthermore, they do not access internet on a regular basis. This is confirmed by the students response in which (47.72%) of them present to connect "*several times a week*", while (38.63%) have said that they access internet "*every day*", these results allow us to find out that the majority of the students (86.35% as a whole) access internet several times a week (See diagram 2).

Additionally, the findings clearly state that the students generally use internet for studying purposes (See diagram 4). In fact, internet give them the opportunity to have access to several courses, documents and communicate with both instructors and peers since it is considered as a source of knowledge and learning apart from books. This idea is well explained by Fujike (2004) where he claimed that “*an online debate is an excellent medium for generating social construction of knowledge*”. The results are also confirmed by Vygotsky (1978) who argue that learners construct their knowledge through collaborative work with other students, teachers and the learning environment.

The study, in fact, revealed that the majority of the participants (63.64%) have a personal blog, whereas (36.36%) do not have a personal blog and when they were asked about the reasons that demotivated them to use it, they responded by “*Difficulty to access*”, “*Inability to use internet*” and “*Lack of interest*” (See diagram 5). In the same respect, the interviewee has claimed: “I have a personal blog, but I have never used it for teaching purposes” and when she is clearly asked about training on using blogs for teaching purposes, the interviewee declared that she had never received any special training on the use of blogs for educational purposes, but she knew how to use it.

Furthermore, Students show different interests as forty four (45) of them representing (78.94%) participate through “*reading information*” or by “*uploading and downloading*”. That is to say, the majority of the participants are less actively engaged in terms of interaction which means that they are “lurkers” as they are called by Salmon (2004). While only twelve (12) of the students representing (21.06%) of them are considered as active participants since they perform either by “*asking questions*” or “*commenting messages*” (See diagram 6). Burner (1990) suggests in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), within this type of interaction, learning is “*...an active process by which learners construct new ideas on the basis of their present and previous knowledge*”. Thus, the learners in this situation show their collaboration

with others as they react in the discussion in terms of mutual exchange (See chapter one). In the same perspective, the results about students role in the blog show that half of the students argue to be “*an observer*” when they access blogs, whereas (47.62%) of them affirm to be “*an average participant*” and only one (01) of the participants representing (2.38%) of them seem to be “*an active participant*” (See diagram 7). More than half of the participants (64.28%) read the posting “*very often*” or “*often*”. However, the other proportion of the participants which corresponds to (35.72%) confesses that they “*rarely*” or “*very rarely*” read the posting (See diagram 8).

Other interesting findings are revealed from the analysis of data. We have found that the majority of the students (83.34%) have answered they “*rarely*” or “*very rarely*” post messages in the blog, while only (16.66%) of them often post messages. (See diagram 9).

In short, it can be noted from the results above that the majority of the students are mainly observers and passive participants since they are concerned with content of the posting and they read it without any reaction.

4.1.2. Students’ View about the Use of Blogs for Writing Development

Concerning question twelve (12) dealing with students’ opinions about the most difficult language skill, the findings show that twenty eight (28) of the students representing (63.64%), as expected, consider writing skill as being the most difficult skill compared with other skills. This confirms the idea of Tribble (1997) when he claims that “*writing is difficult skill to acquire*”. (See chapter one).

In terms of writing, nearly all the participants (77.27%) “*Strongly agree*” with the fact that writing is a very important skill that should be developed, while only (2.27%) of them “*strongly disagree*” (See diagram 11). In the same order, the results show that more than half of the students have responded by saying that their ability to write in English is “*average*”,

while (36.36%) of them have declared that they write in a good way and only few (4.55%) of participants have responded by “*low*”. Indeed, the majority of the students have assessed their writing ability as average. Furthermore, students use it as a platform to express themselves, share interesting information and exchange ideas through free writing.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the students in their majority (63.83%) find blogs “*Useful*”, (31.91%) of them affirm that the use of blogs to improve writing process is “*very useful*” (see diagram13). Besides, when interviewed, the teacher of ICTs confirms the results of the questionnaire. The instructor affirms that “*...blog is a very useful tool which helps students in the development of writing skill*”. Furthermore, the interviewee recommends teachers of the English Department the use of blogs for teaching writing module. This confirms the idea of Zhang (2009) “*Blogs have formidable potentials as a useful tool for the teaching of EFL writing classes*”. Consequently, blogs permit the creation of meaningful content and facilitate the learners’ involvement and interaction.

Blogs offer a collaborative environment where students can improve their writing by exchanging of ideas and sharing each other’s posts and this goes hand in hand with the idea of Du & Wagner (2005) that blogs are tools which can “*enhance learning by serving as a convenient ‘conversational’ medium for students to interact and share their learning experience*” (See chapter one). This is also apparent in the result of question eighteen (18) where the participants were asked if students’ online feedback enhance their composition in EFL. We have found that a great number of students (84.09%) have answered with “yes”, and only few participants say the opposite. Thus the majority of the participants confess that feedback is very important in online learning. In other words, the use of blogs develops students’ writing through collaboration by communicating between peers as well as their teacher. That is, they can get feedback and correction from their friends and also their teacher.

This communication tool serves to involve all students to correct each other and provide active participation by all the students,. (See chapter one).

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the majority of the students agree on the fact that blogs serve as a tool to improve their writing skill. And when we asked them in the question nineteen (19) about how does blogs improve their writing skill, most of the students say that blogs give them an opportunity to develop their vocabulary. For (24.53%) of the participants, blogs enhance their writing capacity as it supplies them with “*new technique of writing*”. They argue that blogs provide them with lesson on how to use various writing techniques such as the right spelling and right punctuation of words as well as the several stages writers go through when they write any documents in a foreign language.

As stated in the review of the literature, writing goes through four main stages, planning or pre-writing is where he/ she writer explores the topic and plans the structure and content of the text. Drafting, is the stage where the puts his/ her ideas and information into a complete thought. Then, the next stage is revising, where the writer revises and checks his / her piece of writing from errors. The last stage is final draft in which the writer produces the final revision. As confirmed by Jonah (2006) “*writing is a series of activities going on and involves several phases, the preparatory phase, and the content development and review, as well as revision of improvement posts*”.

In addition, other participants point to “*improve the grammatical structure*” as an important element that helps them to develop their writing fluency. That is, students when writing on blogs they take care about their grammatical structure and style of writing as they know the blogs are mostly public and every one can see their posts. For example: The interviewee said “*They take care of their style, grammar, vocabulary and pay attention to*

their mistakes since they know that they are writing for an audience therefore they develop many aspects of writing”.

Furthermore, seven (07) of the participants representing (13.21%) say that blog platform helps them in improving their writing skill through “*readers’ correction feedback*”, since blogs can be read by both teachers and students which gives the opportunity to see how they react to their writing. That is to say, readers’ comments are supposed to encourage their peers to develop their writing and support them to think about their errors and also consider how their views may be interpreted by others before they publish their post. In other words, online feedback or comments focuses on offering correction of students’ peers writing and which supports in improving their writing skill. One participant has declared “*getting feedback from readers was rewarding and motivating*”. Whereas, only five (05) of the students representing (9.43%) affirm that blogs do not help. The hypothesis issued in the General Introduction on whether blogs improve students’ writing skill is therefore confirmed.

On the whole, it can be noted that blogs is a platform which improves students’ writing skill. Indeed, the majority of the students affirm that writing is an important skill that should be developed by every foreign language learner. Furthermore, most of the students assert that blogs serve as helpful tools in their writing development.

4.1.3. Students’ Attitudes towards Blogs

In an attempt to determine whether the students are satisfied with the use of blogs the result in the study (see diagram 14) has revealed that thirty eight (38) of the students of Master One Language and Communication at MMUTO representing (84.62%) are “*satisfied*” with blogs and some of them are “*very satisfied*”. Thus, the responses inferred from this question are positive. That is, most of the participants have a positive attitude towards blogging as it helps them to be oriented in their learning process and enhance their writing fluency.

As stated in the review of the literature, the “*cognitive component*” of attitude refers to the person’s beliefs and thoughts about any issue; whereas, the “*affective component*” refers to the amount of positive and negative feeling that an individual has towards something (See chapter one). The latter is reinforced by the interviewee who said that blogs is a very motivational tool. Moreover, the responses have revealed that different kinds of feelings are aroused in students when using blogs such as confidence, enjoyment and pleasure in online writing. The results confirm the suggested hypothesis in the General Introduction that students have a positive attitude towards blogs and they are accepted as a tool for writing enhancement.

4.2. Factors Affecting Students’ Use of Blogs

4.2.1. Motivating Factors

Students show positive attitudes towards the use of blogs as a tool to enhance writing skill. Indeed, the majority of them agreed on the fact that blogs play an important role in the development of writing process. Therefore, when we asked them about the factors that motivated them to use blogs, most of participants (36.11%) have answered with “*share information*” and “*platform for free expression*”. That is to say, blogs is a place where students might engage in appropriate learning activities, they can express themselves freely and they are not restricted to any specific topic thus, they can share interesting information through free writing.

In addition to that, Ten (10) of the participants representing (27.78%) argue that blog serves as a “*platform for timid students*” since it helps them to overcome their timidity thus, their role changes from lonely learners inside the classroom to active participants in the blog. While five (05) of the students representing (13.89%) have responded by “*curiosity*” as motivational tool which encourages them to log in blogs. The students aim to know what

happens in the blogs, if there is any new piece of information or online lesson that is published by their instructors or peers.

Students' perception of blogs as a platform for educational purposes is very important; most of the participants were very motivated by the ideas of using this technological tool to improve their writing capacity and their EFL language skills as it keeps them in touch with the natives. For instance, one participant declared that he assessed his own writing ability in English as average and it is his weakest skill. In addition, he considered the use of blogs as a kind of friendly way to learn and enhance his writing skill since it allows him to identify problems with punctuation and structure.

Hence, this participant has a positive attitude towards using this new tool to improve his writing in the EFL. That is to say, the responses inferred from this question are positive. This student has shown more interest and desire to use blogs in comparison with the other students who said that they were not motivated and showed little interest towards blogs. Although, there is a portion who are not motivated to use blogs, a large percentage of the participants indicated that they were highly motivated to use this interesting tool for learning. This clearly means that almost students were interested and motivated to the use of blogs. The result is reinforced by question six (6) in the interview to ascertain if blogs are motivating tool. The interviewee answered this question by *"yes, blogs is a very motivating tool since it gives learners the opportunity to develop their language skills and help them to create an interactive learning environment where they can learn from others' ideas"*. The hypothesis stated in the introduction on this issue is therefore confirmed. The following section describes the major advantages of using blogs as a supportive tool in learning.

4.2.2. The Advantages of Using Blogs

As it is said earlier in chapter one, blogging has a positive effect on enhancing students learning in relation to writing. In an attempt to determine the benefits of blogging, the findings have indicated that blogs provide many advantages to the students. In fact, learners participating in the research have suggested major advantages of blogging activity that might help them in their learning. Fourteen (14) of the students representing (31.82%) assert that *“interaction and knowledge sharing”* is one of the most important advantages that attract them to use this platform.

Moreover, the participants have found blogs as an enjoyable learning tool which offers them the opportunity for collaborative learning from two way communication that is advance between a blogger and a reader, commenting on each other’s posts, sharing and acquiring knowledge are the main factors that encourage and motivate them to use blogs. Indeed, blogs give students the opportunity to express themselves effectively to the public and allows them to interact and exchange with one another, share their knowledge and ideas easily. One participant has declared *“the ability to interact and exchange with peers, correct each other’s mistakes or comment on solution is an advantage of blogging.”* Another participant has noted *“the main advantage of blogging was doing mistakes and getting feedback from peers”*. That is to say, the participants have found blogs as an effective means of encouraging them to be active participants since it motivates them to analyze and critique others that are the basis of social constructivist approach to learning.

Another advantage of the use of blogs, students are attracted by *“language skill development”*. This means that blogs is a platform where students are motivated by the fact that, while they express their ideas and opinions about what interests them online, their writing was in published, and could be accessed and anyone around the world can read it as it

promotes the development of their analytical and critical thinking skills by analyzing other works and commenting on them.

These results correspond to the statement made by Oravec (2002) that “*blogs develop online discussion forum and thus, encourage learners to become more analytical and critical*”. So, students generally monitor and take care of their writing and what they have read. As noted earlier, a number of participants have described their writing strategies such as planning their writing, checking grammatical structure and spelling mistakes. In the same respect, seven (07) of the participants representing (15.91%) of the participants “*access to new information*”, weblogs give students the opportunity to learn from others and to have access to new information. One participant has mentioned “*If I do not know how to solve a problem, I can look to the different ways of solving problems shared by peers and choose the easiest solution*”.

In short, blogs is a platform that provides students with an exciting and motivating learning environment where learners seem to be as an ownership and a readership. Furthermore, this communication technology can be used as a tool to enhance student analytical and critical thinking skills, create social interactions between students and their teachers, learners’ and their peers, and students and a large audience. Likewise, blogging encourages students’ writing and self-expression in English.

4.2.3. The Delimitation of Using Blogs

As stated in the review of the literature, many factors can affect students negatively from using blogs as a tool to enhance their writing in EFL classroom (see chapter one). The majority of the participants have not found any drawback of using blogs. However, some participants reported some secondary problems of using blogs as a learning tool. In this study, it is found that the main factors that prevent students from using this new technology are

“Time Constraints”, “Lack of confidence”, “Unreliable information” and “Learning from mistakes”.

As regards time constraints, the results have shown that students in blogs hoped to have a time to write on blogs for educational purposes. They have said that blogs take them much time since it is difficult to construct and publish. This idea is confirmed by Cobanoglu (2006) who indicates that time constraints is another disadvantage of blogging. Moreover, because students have the chance to practice and develop writing skill, this gives them the opportunity to express themselves any way they want to. Since writing is public not private, students are more conscious of making mistakes. Thus, the learners’ lacks confidence when using blogs and may feel fear at having others read their posts and find their mistakes. So, a learner who has writing problems may feel embarrassed by the prospect of the audience seeing his/ her mistakes online. For instance, Juwah (2006) argues that students need to be confident when writing messages online.

Furthermore, most students who have opted for *“Unreliable information”*, explain that blogs is a platform where people are exposed to other’s writing styles, opinions, new vocabulary or expressions. Nevertheless, most of the time people’s blog pages are full of mistakes to look at than others’ due to the bad quality and content published. Thus, students who have responded by learning from mistakes reflect the idea of unreliable information of blogs content.

Another factor that affects using blogs as a tool to enhance writing skill is the negative comments of the audience. Students in their blogs feel that feedback of their peers and tutors was not useful to improve their writing skill and most of the time they do not know how to give feedback while the collaboration between peers and teachers is so important in learning any given language. This point confirms what has been mentioned earlier in the research by

Chan and Ridgway (2006) that blogs “*engage actively in the co-construction of knowledge with peers and with their tutor*”.

In addition to that, only motivated students have responded to peers’ blogs with respect to grammar and meaning. Another point which is mentioned in the review of the literature, relates to learners who suffer from computer phobia and self-efficacy cannot use weblogs as they cannot feel satisfied with the use of blogs, and this eventually affects their writing improvement(Blackmore-squires;2010).

For further concerns of the research, the interviewee provides suggestion for the improvement of blogs as a new tool for teaching at the Department of English. Hence, she declared that the English teachers should be updated and should receive special training to be familiar with this new technology, which is very interesting and innovative way of teaching since it helps to deliver content in a short period of time. So, before the implementation of blogs at the Department of English it should start first by motivating teachers first and getting them becoming interested then the students will be interested in that.

Conclusion

This chapter provides clear answers to the research questions of the study. All of the hypotheses suggested in the General Introduction are confirmed. The results in this study show that students have responded positively and have enjoyed using blogs as a tool to improve writing skill. Furthermore, the findings reveals that blogs is a useful tool which students are satisfied with, the majority of students are rather passive in the platform as they use it just to “*read information*” or “*download documents*” rather than to comment or post messages. The collaborative learning environment established gives the students the opportunity to model and exposure to others’ learner ideas, opinions and perspectives. In addition to that, writing for the public requires self editing, revising stage and peer review undoubtedly theses elements affect the quality of students’ writing.

In an attempt to determine the factors influencing students' participation on blogs, the participants argue that the major factors that encourage them to use blogs are to receive and share information. Likewise, curiosity and timidity are also seen as motivating factors. On the other hand, the finding in this work show that the main obstacle that influence students from using blogs as a tool to enhance writing skill include "*time consumption*", "*unreliable information*" and "*lack of confidence*".

Although the implementation of blogs faces many problems, the majority of students remain motivated and show positive attitude towards it, in addition to that, students perceive the use of blogs as a tool to enhance writing skill as useful tool in language learning.

General Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs as a tool to enhance their writing skill in EFL learning. It attempts to find out students' attitudes towards the use of weblogs. It has also sought out to determine the effectiveness of the platform and the factors that influence it as an encouraging tool for learning. The research is, in fact, important in the sense that the subject is new in the MMUTO context, and it has been conducted drawing on the socio-constructivist approach to learning, mainly the zone of proximal development and also on the collaborative learning theory. The results confirm all the hypotheses proposed in the General Introduction that blogs enhance writing skill and students have a positive attitude towards it as well as curiosity, share information and free expression are the factors that motivate them to use blogs.

The investigation has focused on two major objectives. The first objective is to find out the effect of blogging on developing students' writing skill in EFL learning. The second one is to identify students' attitudes and perspective towards the implementation of blogs as a learning tool to develop their writing skill.

To answer the advanced research questions and to test the hypotheses of the research, a mixed methods approach has been adopted. This approach combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in analyzing the data. The findings have been drawn from forty four (44) Master One students in Language and Communication speciality from MMUTO who have been chosen randomly to answer the asked questions. In the same respect, a teacher from the same setting has been selected to be interviewed. For the analysis of the data, computer program (SPSS) has been chosen for the statistical analyses; whereas, the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) has been adopted to interpret and explain the data gathered from the respondents.

On the basis of the data analysis, the empirical results have been synthesized, and thus, provide answers to the research questions asked in the General Introduction. Concerning the development of students' writing skill; the results have revealed that weblogs is a platform where students improve their writing fluency by sharing and communicating ideas with others; that is, learners in blogs develop their critical thinking and are thoughtful in their writing. That is to say, they don't share anything without making a clear judgment and analyzing information. The results of this study confirm the assertion that blogging increases students' collaboration and reinforces writing in English EFL contexts. According to the collaborative learning theory, students learn through modeling and through exposure to other students' opinions, ideas and perspectives. This research finding is in accordance with previous studies of (Ward, 2004; Pinkman, 2005; Zhang, 2009) in which they argue that learners have a positive attitude towards the use of Weblog for improving their writing skills.

Furthermore, the implementation of blogs in EFL learning can provide a motivating and an exciting learning environment, where students have a sense of readership and ownership. This encourages students to do more practice in writing outside the classroom. Therefore, blogs can be used to create social interactions between learners and their teachers, learners and their peers, and learners and general audience. However, in this research, the focus is in the effect of blogs on writing in EFL learning.

Finally, the results of the study show that students in the Department of English at MMUTO have a positive attitude towards the use of blogs as a tool to enhance their writing skill in EFL. However, only a small number of students are active participants in using blogs, thus the majority of them are rather passive, and the implementation of Vygotsky's socio-constructivist paradigm to learning and teaching remains a challenge.

There are a few limitations facing the current study that should be considered in future research. First, this study has used a convenient sample of students of Master one language

and communication, gathering participants only from one university, which is MMUTO. Second, the students who have participated in the study have all been students from the same speciality in the Department of English at MMUTO. Third, all the participants are undergraduate students. Future investigation dealing with the same topic should rather concentrate on a different sample of students. It could also focus on teachers' attitudes towards using blogs as a tool to enhance their students' four language skills.

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Questionnaire addressed to students

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of a research study on students' attitudes towards the effect of using blogs to enhance their writing skill at MMUTO and more precisely in the Department of English. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential, and your contribution will be of great help for the completion of the research work.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a cross (X) to indicate your chosen answers and by providing a full statement when necessary.

Thank you in advance for your precious collaboration.

Section 1: Students' profile

Q1: What degree do you hold?

Q2: What is your Speciality?

Section 2: General information about ICTs

Q3: Do you have internet access at home?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q4: How often do you use internet?

Everyday ☐ Several times a week ☐ once a week ☐ never ☐

Q5: The quality of the internet do you use is:

Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Poor ☐

Q6: Do you use the internet for studying purposes?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q7: Do you have a personal blog?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, Why?

.....
.....
.....

Q8: What do you do when you access the blog?

Read information	<input type="checkbox"/>	Upload or download	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comment messages	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q9: What is the role you perform in the blog?

An observer ☐ an average participant ☐ an active participant ☐

Q10: How often do you read the posting?

Very often ☐ Often ☐ Rarely ☐ Very rarely ☐

Q11: How often do you post in the blog?

Very often ☐ Often ☐ Rarely ☐ Very rarely ☐

Section 3: Students' Attitudes Using blogs to Improve their Writing

Q12: Which language skill is the most difficult for you?

1. Reading ☐

2. Writing ☐

3. Speaking ☐

4. Listening ☐

Q13: Your ability to write in English is:

Good ☐ Average ☐ Low ☐

Q14: Do you think that it is important to develop the skill of writing in English?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐

Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

Q15: Do you think that writing regularly on your blog will be helpful to your writing development?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q16: How did you find the use of blog as a tool to improve the writing skill?

Very Useful ☐ Useful ☐ useless ☐

Q17: How satisfied are you with blogs?

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Unsatisfied ☐

Q18: Does students' online feedback enhance your composition in English as a foreign language?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q19: How does the blog platform help you in improving your writing skill?

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.....

Q20: What are the factors which motivate you to use blogs?

.....

.....

Q21: What are the benefits of blogging?

.....

.....

Q22: what might be the drawback of blogging?

.....

.....

Interview with teacher

Thank you for accepting this interview,

This interview is part of our research study on students' attitudes towards the effect of using blog to enhance their writing skill in EFL learning. The purpose of this interview is to obtain your view and perception about the use of blog as a tool to enhance students' writing in English language.

Q 1- Did you enjoy using technology for teaching your module?

Q 2- Have you ever used social media such as blogs for teaching purposes?

- If yes, how does blog platform help you in your teaching?

Q 3- Have you received any special training on using blogs for teaching English?

Q4- What do you think of blogging as a teaching tool for writing? Would you recommend blogs or do you prefer other tools?

Q5- Do you think that using this process can improve your students' writing skill?

- If yes, how? Please, specify.

Q6- Do you think that blogs are motivating tools?

- If yes, how?

Q 7- What advantages do you think blogs will have for both students and teachers?

Q 8- What are your suggestions to improve the use of blogs as a new tool for teaching in the Department of English?

Thank you.