Learning Through Blogging

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Abstract: Blog is an online diaries or journal for individuals who loves writing and as business entries for companies or individual in running business. It has been widely used since it can be published in the website for free. The objectives of the study were to identify and discuss the use of blog writing from the perspective of Korean learners learning the Malay language as a foreign language. The samples of the study consist of 60 male and female volunteered subjects from six classes of Malay language. The subjects had the experience in writing in the blog from the previous semester. The subjects were given a set of questionnaire and interviewed based on their opinions on blog learning. The results of the study revealed that more than 80% of the male subjects while more than 65% of the female subjects stated that they wrote in the blog for literature, language and multimedia learning. The results also revealed that all the subjects had increase in motivation and confidence in writing specifically in the Malay language. It is hoped that future research will focus on other technology to enhance writing in the second language.

Key words: blog, motivation, confidence, literature, language.

INTRODUCTION

Blog is a discussion in the form of formal or informal writing. Blog can be for personal use as in journals or diaries and for business purposes as in promoting or advertising the products. Blogs are user-friendly websites which are easy to maintain and frequently updated by their owners. As a social networking and medium for communication, blogs enabled the users to interact not only with the computer, but also with other bloggers (Li & Chignell, 2010). As for students at the universities, blog will be used for writing diaries or journals in the target language. Thus, writing in the blog can be a useful activity in not only to increase the confidence in writing but also to motivate them in learning creative writing. Students would also feel comfortable to write in the blog since it can be made as private when only invited readers could open the blog and read. On the other hand, blog can be shared with others by leaving the comments for the readers to read and write pertaining to the post. Blogs, started online in 1991 in the World Wide Web, as a mode of sharing information. Early blogs had three primary features, contained links to other areas of interest on the web, commentary on the links and are interactive and interconnected.

Blogs are a medium for dialogues between bloggers and readers, and readers with other readers, and bloggers with other bloggers and their readers. Researchers have suggested that blogs and blogging meet the writing requirements (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004). Educational blogs employ technology to offer practice, thoughtful feedback, and revisions based on feedback and the fundamental steps in the writing process to improve student writing (Williams, 2004). Nowadays, students at schools and university preference technology are not limited to a particular instructional tool. They are willing to use new technologies to integrate learning in various channels of communication (Saeed, et al, 2009). Despite teachers’ less experience in ideas about teaching using the technology, the rapid development of blogs in education is helpful (Martindale & Wiley, 2005). Wang & Woo (2008) state that blog is a technological tool that offers opportunities for users to organize information, post and share ideas, get feedback, give comments, evaluate others’ posting, learn from others, take responsibility for their writing and learning, and put their thoughts in writing.

According to Nowson (2006), blogs are web pages frequently updated with posts in reverse chronological order and the language used is informal and less constrained. This is further supported by Levy (2009) who states that blogs encourage self-expression, creativity, ownership and community building through informal writing. Zaini et al, (2012) have shown that use of blogs was able to develop students’ writing skills in language learning. It also allows bloggers to learn from one another in terms of ideas, grammar and structure, vocabulary and organization of their writings. Therefore, when students use blogs as individuals, they have full control and ownership of the content. Hence, students will be careful in writing and considering the sensitivity of others. Moreover, when they use blogs to collaborate with others, they work interactively (Shahsavar & Tan, 2011).

Zaini Amir et al, (2012) postulate that according to past researches, there were differences in language use between males and females. With this, Zaini Amir et al, (2012) investigate the differences of language use by female and male Malaysian teen bloggers. The language used by the bloggers is informal and similar to spoken language. This study had used that qualitative approach. The findings show that there are differences between
male and female bloggers in five language features suggested by Lakoff’s theory (1975) which are intensifiers, hedging and tag questions as well as empty adjectives and adverbs. The results of the study show that differences in language use among teenage bloggers may largely be attributed to gender. Zaini Amir’s et al., (2012) had similar findings with Akhmaliah Abd Rahim’s (2009) where the females would prefer to write in the blogs compared to the male. Akhmaliah Abd Rahim’s (2009) study focusing on Malaysian undergraduate female students (between 20 to 23 years old,) who frequently updated their blogs. She used Lakoff (1975) features and identified only four features. These features are lexical hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, and avoidance of taboo language. Thus, she concluded that the three features appearing in female blog posts which conformed to Lakoff’s (1975) theory were lexical hedges, intensifiers and tag questions. The results also revealed that the use of blogs had showed collaboration with others and they work interactively. Wang & Woo (2010) postulate that blogs give students the increase in flexibility in writing. Blogs elicit interactivity to create a two-way communication between students or between students and the instructor to complete a task or to maintain a social relationship (Wang, Woo & Zhao, 2009). These interactions expose learners to authentic uses of the target language which can inspire and challenge them in ways that classroom experiences cannot (Campbell, 2005).

Blogging has become popular due to the privacy and unique way of expressing ideas. Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2007) analyzed two blogs written by Malaysian women. The results of the study showed that both women had written a lot in their blogs. They had used the best words and these women did not get the chance to express themselves in face-to-face relationships. The results of the study cannot be the representative to all women. In addition, the two blogs highlight the sense of energy, optimism and empowerment in virtual culture. On the other hand, Drexler et al., (2007) examined a K-12/university blogging collaboration between preservice teachers and third grade students in the United States. This study has different perspective as Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2007) where this study concentrates on blog between teachers and students. This study shows that the research assistance and writing feedback was provided in order to help third graders in completing a five-paragraph essay and online presentation of a Native American tribe. The results of the study revealed that collaborative blogging between teachers and students had improved students’ attitudes toward writing. Feedback generated from the collaboration had increased students’ motivation to write and hence increased their self-confidence (Nadzrah Abu Bakar et al., 2010). Collaborative blogging improved students’ writing and the development of related skills and the dissemination of knowledge. Students obtained and transferred knowledge learned during the collaborative project to other academic and social facets of the classroom (Drexler et al., 2007).

Nadzrah Abu Bakar et al., (2010) proclaim that blog writing should therefore develop self-confidence. This study provides ways of blog as a pedagogical tool in the ESL (English as Second Language) classrooms and reports on the students’ feedback and perception to enhance their L2 (second language) learning. Data was collected by using a survey questionnaire involving a selected cohort of low proficiency ESL students at tertiary level. The students carried out several stages of the blogging activities in the English for Social Sciences Course. The results of the study revealed that students gave positive responses regarding the use of blogs in L2 learning activities. They stated that the use of blog had generally enhanced their L2 skills such as reading and writing, developed their self-confidence, improved their communication skills and reduced their anxiety when learning and using the language with their peers.

McLeod (2001: 152) postulates that blogs help students or individual explore and assimilate new ideas, create links between the familiar and unfamiliar, mull over possibilities, and express to the self before explaining them to others. Existing studies and reviews on the use of blogs in second language learning and language learning were to enhance communication (Zahra Shahsavar & Tan Bee Hoon, 2011), language learning (Hourigan & Murray, 2010; Nadzrah Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Herring et al., 2005); an educational tool blogging as a platform for ESL learning (Nadzrah Abu Bakar, 2009); usefulness of blogs in developing students’ writing in ESL context (Nadzrah Abu Bakar & Kemboja Ismail, 2009; Normaliza Abd Rahim et al., 2008); content analysis in blog writing (Ruzy Suliza Hashim, 2007); learning materials and learning process (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004); pedagogical tool in the classrooms (Richardson, 2009, 2006, 2005; Pinkman, 2005; Downes, 2004); reading and writing (Wells, 2006; Ward, 2004; Kajder & Bull, 2003); and attitude in blog writing (Shahsavar et al., 2010).

Based on numerous studies on blog writing, it can be said that blog should be introduced among Korean learners learning the second language. Therefore, the objectives were to identify and discuss the use of blog writing from the perspective of Korean learners learning the Malay language as a foreign language.

Methodology:

The samples of the study consist of 60 male and female volunteered subjects from six classes of Malay language. The subjects had the experience in writing in the blog from the previous semester. The subjects were given a set of questionnaire and interviewed based on their opinions on blog learning. The questionnaires were piloted with different students at the university. It was confirmed that the questionnaires were viable for this
study. The questionnaires were analyzed by using the percentage while the views and opinions from the interviews were analyzed by using the discourse analysis method by Brown & Yule (1983). Selected extracts from the interviews were analyzed for the purpose of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of the study were divided into three parts. The parts related to the objective of the study were blog in literature learning, blog in language learning and blog in multimedia learning.

Graph 1: Blog in Malay Literature Learning.

Blog in Malay Literature Learning:

Graph 1 above showed subjects’ perspective on blog in literature learning. The Malay literature genres involved were poem, short stories, drama script and quatrain. It can be seen that most of the subjects had chosen the genres as their preferred writing in the blog. As for poem, 66.7% (20 male subjects) and 80% (24 female subjects) of the subjects had stated that blog was the best way to write poems. The percentage showed that the female subjects preferred poems in their blogs compared to the male subjects. The results also showed that both male and female subjects suggested that poem was appropriate to be written in the blog. The subjects also stated that the poem was based on their emotions towards someone. The subjects uttered,

1. I like to write love poems for my boyfriend.
2. I write poems to thank my parents.
3. I write short poems so that people who read can understand.
4. I dedicate the poem to my special someone.
5. I practice writing poems for my Malay literature class.
6. Poems are good for practicing my Malay words.

The above views and opinions by the subjects showed that they used the blog to write love poems, for parents, short poems, dedication, Malay literature class and for practicing Malay words. It seemed that the subjects were happy to write in the Malay language and blog would be an appropriate tool for this purpose. The subjects also mentioned that the poem writing was for someone special and it showed that the subjects were trying their best in making sure that the writing is readable and appropriate. The writing of poem in the blog not only increases their level of confidence but also motivate them in writing in the Malay language.

As for short stories (Graph 1), 86.7% (26 male subjects) and 96.7% (29 female subjects) of the subjects had stated that blog was the best way for writing short stories. The results showed that the female subjects have higher percentage compared to the male subjects but both male and female subjects have high percentage (more than 80%). The subjects mentioned that they would write short stories in order to improve the Malay writing skills. They also stated that short stories were easy to write and the message in the story would be understood by readers. The subjects said that the short stories were merely about children story since they know that children should be interesting. The subjects also uttered,

1. I like writing short stories in the blog.
2. Short stories are all interesting.
3. I practice my writing skill by writing a short story in the blog.
4. I would read short stories from my friends’ blog.
5. Short stories would make wonder in a different world.
6. I can imagine when I write short stories in the blog.

The utterances above showed that the subjects were keen on writing short stories in the blog. The subjects mentioned that writing short stories would make them practice in the Malay language. The subjects said that they would like to read their friends short stories in the blog. They stated that by reading and writing the Malay short stories, it would make them wonder in a different world and they were able to imagine when they write. This showed that the subjects’ imagination when writing in the blog would increase and therefore it would also increase their motivation and confidence in writing.
Other than that, script in Malay language was also suggested by the subjects. 76.7% (23 male subjects) and 93.3% (28 female subjects) of the subjects stated that script writing by using the Malay language was appropriate and suitable to be written in the blog. The percentage of female subjects were higher than the male subjects might be due to the fact that the female subjects were enthusiastic in sharing their ideas and views in script writing compared to the male subjects. The subjects also stated that the script writing has helped them in imagining the stories that they wanted to write. The subjects uttered,

*I prefer to write good script in my blog and this help my Malay language writing skill.*
*I want to share my script with the other through my blog.*
*I have so much to write when I started writing the script.*
*I can even imagine wonder when I start writing the script.*
*The scrip that I wrote would be read by other and I am excited.*
*I can write anything in the script since it is my story.*

The utterances above showed that the subjects loved writing scripts in the blog. The subjects mentioned that they would share their scripts through the blog and they would be able to write anything in the scripts. The subjects have so much to write in the scripts since they have loads of ideas for the story. This showed that the subjects were keen in writing the scripts in the Malay language. The utterances showed that the subjects had gain the confidence in writing the scripts in the Malay language. They subjects were also motivated when they knew that the scripts were read by other through their blogs. Therefore, according to the subjects, the scripts in the blogs have helped them in the writing in the Malay language.

Malay quatrain was also mentioned by the subjects. 66.7% (20 male subjects) and 86.7% (26 female subjects) of the subjects had chosen the Malay quatrain that was suitable to write in the blog. It can be seen that there were more female subjects compared to the male in choosing the Malay quatrain in blog writing. This was due to the fact that the male subjects found it difficult to write in the Malay quatrain. The female subjects seemed to be satisfied with the Malay quatrain since they knew how to write the two verse quatrain very well. In fact, the female subjects were comfortable in writing the quatrain to leave messages to their friends in the blog. The subjects uttered,

*I knew the two verse Malay quatrain really well.*
*I would leave my Malay quatrain in the blog for people to read.*
*Maly quatrain is good to leave messages to friends.*
*It was really romantic to read loving quatrain in the blog.*
*I can write Malay quatrain very well.*
*I can understand Malay quatrain when I read one.*

The above utterances showed that the subjects were keen in writing the Malay quatrain in their blogs. The subjects stated that they understood the Malay quatrain well and they would write it for people to read. On the other hand, the subjects stated that Malay quatrain was best to be read by friends and they would want to read others as well. As for most female in the study, the subjects stated that they loved to read romantic quatrain since they would imagine that the quatrains were dedicated for them. This would actually motivate them, not only in reading other quatrain but also to write good quatrain for people to read. It can be seen that they had gain confidence in both reading and writing of Malay quatrain especially from their own blogs and others.

**Graph 2:** Blog in Malay Language Learning.

**Blog in Malay Language Learning:**

Blog writing has also been chosen a tool in language learning among the subjects. Graph 2 above showed that percentage of both male and female subjects in language learning using the blog. According to the subjects, the language learning could be learnt through writing letters, expressing feelings, riddles and critical thinking from the blog. As for letter writing, 80% (24 male subjects) and 83.3% (25 female subjects) of the subjects had chosen the letter writing as a language learning process through blog writing. The percentage showed that the
female subjects obtained higher percentage compared to the male subjects. This might be due to the fact that the female subjects were keen in writing letter to their special partner of to their parents. The male subjects might not like the idea of writing since they would rather be vocal to the other person. The subjects uttered,

- I love to write special Malay language letters in the blog.
- I like to read romantic letters dedicated to someone else.
- I want to receive a letter in someone’s blog.
- I would want to write thank you letter to my parents.
- I love reading the letter dedicated to me from my friends’ blog.
- I write good letter to my special friends and parents.

The above utterances showed that the subjects were keen in writing letters in the blog. The subjects also stated that by writing letters, they would gain their confidence in writing. The subjects said that they love to write and receive letters through the blog since it gives more satisfaction. The female subjects stated that romantic letter for others or for themselves were nice to read and full of feelings. Letters to parents were also stated and mentioned by the subjects since they knew that the letters were sincere and parents would love to read them. Although the letters were in the Malay language but they said that the thought of leaving a letter in the blog would be appropriate. The subjects seemed to be motivated with the letter writing and at they gain their confidence by reading and writing the letters.

As for writing to express feeling in the blog, 66.7% (20 male subjects) and 100% (30 female subjects) of the subjects stated that blog was the best way in expressing their feelings. The percentage of female subjects was higher than the male was due to the fact that the female subjects were sentimental and according to them, writing in the blog to express their feeling would be best. As for the male subject, they might not be interested to express their feelings in the blog since it will be read by others and this would make them embarrassed. Hence, there were still 20 subjects that stated that they were keen in writing in the blog in expressing their feelings. The subjects uttered,

- I like to write when I am angry, sad and happy.
- I was to read my friends blog so that I know how they felt.
- I like to write when I want to express my feelings.
- I want to write about how I feel every day.
- I will know what others feel by reading their blog.
- I gain my confidence in writing in the blog

The utterances above showed that the subjects were really keen in expressing their feeling by writing in the blog. The subjects said that they use the blog for personal writing and to express the feeling that they had on that moment. The subjects also mentioned that they would like to read their friends’ blog since they wanted to know how they felt. Most male subjects were not really bothered to read their friends blog but they would rather write about their feelings towards football games or about their university lives. Overall, it can be seen that the subjects had gain their confidence in writing when writing about their personal lives. They felt happy when their friends had left comments in their posts.

As for riddles, 93.3% (28 male subjects) and 96.7% (29 female subjects) of the subjects had stated that writing riddles in the blogs were their favorites. It can be seen that the female subjects had higher percentage than the male subjects. Thus, the number of subjects for both male and female were nearly the same. The subjects stated that they liked riddle might be because the subjects received a lot of comments in the post by readers. The comments consisted of answers for the riddle. This has helped to increase in motivation for the subjects to write more riddles in the Malay language. The subjects uttered,

- I have written a number of riddles.
- I have so many comments from readers to answer my riddles.
- I was actually surprise to receive comments from reader about my riddles.
- I like to solve riddles from my friends’ blog.
- Malay riddles were interesting and challenging.
- I wish to create new riddles in my blog.

The utterances above showed that the subjects were really keen in writing riddles in the blogs. The subjects stated that they were excited in solving the riddles from their friends’ blog. They mentioned that they liked to write riddles for people to solve and excited and surprised when they received comments from others pertaining to the riddles. The subjects uttered that the Malay riddles were interesting and challenging since most of them had tried to solve the riddles. In fact, they were discussing about the riddles with their friends in the classroom. This showed that the riddles in the blog have helped them in reading and solving in the Malay language. Thus, riddles have motivated them in creating new riddles and finding for the answers.
Graph 3: Blog in Technology Learning.

Blog in Technology Learning:

Graph 3 above, showed that blog writing would helped the subjects in the process of technology learning. The subjects favored that video, audio and photography to be included in the blog. The subjects seemed to be excited with the insertion of videos, audios and photos in the blogs. They stated that the technology had motivated them to try new things in the blogs. With the insertion of the technologies, they would have a complete post in the blog. They would feel contented to read their post again. As for video, both male and female subjects obtained 100% and stated that the insertion of video in their blogs had made satisfied and contented. The subjects stated that the music videos that they had chosen were suitable and related to the story that they had written. The subjects uttered,

*The videos in my blog were awesome.*
*I would put short stories videos in every post.*
*Videos would explain my mood for that day.*
*Some of the videos in my blog were my favorites.*
*The music video clips in the blogs were really good.*
*Good songs and clips in the videos.*
*Documentary videos were great in my blog.*

The utterances above showed that the subjects were really keen in putting music video clips in the blogs. The subjects also preferred to put the video clips of short stories or documentary in the blogs. This showed that most of the subjects took their time to choose the most suitable videos to be put in the blogs. The subjects also uttered that the videos that they had chosen were their favorites and they also watched the videos from their friends' blogs. Therefore, it was clearly seen that the videos were the favorites for all the subjects.

As for audio, the number of percentages for both male and female were the same. Both male and female subjects obtained 100% for inserting audio in the blogs. This showed that audio has been their likings since all the blogs consisted of their favorite songs and the songs were put in the playlists. All the subjects have at least 10 songs in the playlists which will automatically play when the blog was opened. This clearly showed that the audio was also important to be put in the blogs. The subjects uttered,

*I put all my favorite songs in the playlist here in my blog.*
*All sentimental songs in my blog.*
*I would change to new ones after several months.*
*My blog is incomplete without my favorite songs.*
*I have all techno songs in my blog.*
*I would want sentimental songs.*

The utterances above showed that all the subjects were really keen in putting audio in the blogs. They put the audio in the playlists since it would easier for them to shuffle or chose the songs that they want for the day. The subjects stated that they liked sentimental songs. This might be because they would rather have a serene environment when they start writing in the blog. They stated that sentimental songs would give them the inspiration to write. Another subject mentioned that he preferred techno songs which were really rare among students in Korea. The male subject stated that the techno songs would make him actively thinking and write creatively. This was clearly shown when the writings in the blog were interesting.

As for photographs, 93% (28 male subjects) and 100% (30 female subjects) of the subjects had stated that putting photos in the blogs would complete the posts. The number of percentage for the female subjects was higher that the male was because the female subjects were keen in using the mobile phones to take the photos and sent it to the blog straight away. The subjects stated that they did not have to use another extension wire to transfer the photos to the computer. Since most of the subjects have the Samsung and I-phones, they did not have any problems in transferring the photos to the blogs. The small number of male subjects did not like to put
photos because they said that they did not a camera and their phones did not have any cameras. The subjects uttered,

_I would put new photos in every post._

_The photos will tell the story in my blog._

_It is a photo blog now._

_The mobile phone is really helping with my photos._

_The photos tell the story well._

_I love to read blogs with photos in it._

The utterances above showed that the subjects were really keen in putting photos in the blogs. The subjects uttered that blogs with photos would be more interesting. The subjects also mentioned that the photos would tell the story in the blog. They also said that the mobile phones that they had helped them in putting photos that they want in the blog. The subjects stated that they would put new photos in every post. This might be because they want to show their emotions in the photos as well as in the post. The photos in the blogs helped them in increasing their motivation to write more. They also gained confidence when their blogs were read by their friends.

To sum up, the above results for blog in the Malay literature learning, Malay language learning and technology learning showed that majority of the subjects involved in the study had gain their confidence in writing in the blog. The results also showed that the subjects were motivated with the reading in their friends’ blogs to their blogs being read by others. They were satisfied with the achievement that they had during the writing process. Therefore, the blog writing has helped them in Malay literature, Malay language and technology learning. The results of the study were similar to the findings by Zaini Amir et al. (2011) where blog has helped learners in increasing their confidence in writing and also maximizing students’ writing activities. The study also has similar results with the findings of Nadzrah Abu Bakar & Kemboja Ismail (2009) where blogs encourage students in the process of learning the second language.

**Conclusion:**

The results of the study clearly showed that the blog has helped the Korean students in learning the Malay literature, Malay language and technology learning. Blog writing also increase the motivation and confidence in writing in the Malay language. This study implicates educators in considering blog writing as a teaching tool in second language learning. Also, this study helps educators in considering the literature, language and technology learning take place at the same time. It is hoped that future research will focus on other technology to enhance writing in the second language.

**REFERENCES**


