

EFFICIENCY OF USING BLOG IN DEVELOPING SOME FUNCTIONAL WRITING' SKILLS AND REFLECTIVE THINKING FOR EFL MAJORS AT-AL-MAJMAAH UNIVERSITY

Dr. Fatma Farid Fakhary Tharwa

Lecturer of Curriculum & Instruction (TEFL) Faculty of Education
New valley – Assuit University

ABSTRACT

The present study attempted to instigate the effect of using blog in developing some functional writing' skills and reflective thinking for EFL majors at Al-majmaah university, Saudi Arabia. The study used a pre- test / posttest one group design .The results of the study assured that no a statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of students' writing skills favoring the post application. And, no a statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of reflective thinking scale favoring the post administration. It was concluded that using blog had a significant effect on developing functional writing skills, and reflective thinking, of EFL majors' students. Based on these results, the related study recommended that: using blogs should be used in teaching EFL writing at the college, students should be given enough opportunities to use modern technology in their learning, teachers should encourage students to take part in the evaluation of their writing, and teachers should give students writing activities related to their thinking.

Keywords: Blog, Functional Writing' Skills and Reflective Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language, spoken in many countries both as a native and as a second or foreign language. Therefore, many non-English speaking countries promote English proficiency as an effort toward modernization and internalization. Teaching English as a second or foreign language has been a constant challenge due to the interference of the first language. Endeavors to propel learners should first investigate the showing strategies among others, as actualizing the traditional method for showing English was observed to be unpropelling. Especially when they are restricted to classroom learning (Allum, 2002) which would expose them to a limited scope of knowledge (Nadzrah & Kemboja, 2009), the situation does not reflect a positive trend in teaching and learning English.

In recent years the use of new technologies in educational systems has expanded worldwide as personal computers, internet, and easy-to-use software have turned out to be accessible to instructors to harness the digital world. The effect of new technologies in educational contexts has been mostly positive as new technologies have given educators the opportunity to enhance their knowledge, skills, and therefore enhance the standard of education. Fast improvement in data and communication technology has precipitated various changes pertaining to the methods of educating and learning. For instance, the use of computers in the classroom has increased tremendously and it is quickly becoming one of the learning tools in language classes (Nadzrah, 2007). More recently, blog, which is a type of web distributing, has become established communication tools and has been used by millions of users for variety purposes. The existence of blog has opened up a space for writers to share articles or

materials in the weblog that are open for view to the audience with an internet access. This has given language learners the chance to express and share their thoughts to the unlimited internet community in the World Wide Web. Such components of blog make it exceptionally prevalent and normal in this period of innovation progression. Blog is one of the innovative pedagogical approaches that can engage students in deep and meaningful learning. It is a web-based space for writing where all the writing and editing of information is managed through a web browser and is immediately and publicly available on the Internet (Godwin, 2003). On the Internet, a blog is an individual or professional journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption.

In language learning, blogging has been tentatively used as an instrument to develop writing skills (Pinkman, 2005). Experience of writing on blogs may give chances to help students to enhance their knowledge in writing. Nadzrah and Kemboja (2009) found that blogs let students compose writing with particular purposes that can encourage them to enhance their writing in language. Most blog authors utilize their blog as a platform for self-expression and empowerment, and this helps them to wind up distinctly more mindful and basic in their written work (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008). According to Burns & Axel and Joanne (2006), using Blogs in EFL/ESL teaching and learning meets many criteria of assignment propriety; blogs provide students with real learning opportunities and they fit with students' interests and varying English levels. Blogs also meet a third criterion, meaning, as the students are responsible for making sure to write their blog entries clearly enough for their classmates to understand. In addition, blogs provide both students and teachers with authentic tasks. The fifth criterion, which is impact, is also met, as the blogs provide students not only with opportunities to acquire and use new vocabulary but also with new and useful computer skills. Blogging meets the criterion of practicality in that it imposes no extra financial burden on either the university or the students. Finally, blogs met the criterion of improvement in that they are much more practical to use than paper-based diaries. For Wu (2006), using blogs in TEFL has enormous advantages to both EFL teachers and students; they have the potential to be a truly transformational technology in that they provide a teaching and learning stage where students enjoy a high level of independence and good opportunities for greater interaction with peers and the teacher directs his teaching with high efficiency.

The structure of blogs grants (1) comments to be left by readers and links to other blogs; (2) they also allow the "feeds", which are automatic publications of content from other sites and blogs, and (3) the content of a blog may be sent to other blogs for publication.

According to Leaning (2010), internet communications, including blogs, are a constantly changing and changing arrangement of social practice, given the media is constantly being transformed and changed by new technologies. Blogs are viewed as a media technology that will change life and the social practices that we participate in.

For several years, educators and researchers have attempted to incorporate Web 2.0 tools in their instructional approaches exact activities in order to promote students' writing skills and motivation to write (e.g., Lin, Lin, & Hsu, 2011; Richardson, 2009; Wang, 2014). Among the best-received applications have been blogs, which have successfully gained a foothold in education (cf. Sun Y, 20092) and have been widely seen as an effective approach to teaching writing to EFL/ESL students in particular (e.g., Halic, Lee, Paulus, & Spence, 2010; Lin, Li, Hung, & Huang, 2014; Vurdien, 2013; Ward, 2004). Specifically, it has been recommended that the use of blogs could augment student interactions via written language, improve their learning motivation towards writing, and ultimately improve their writing performance

(Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Blau, Mor, & Neuthal, 2013; Halic et al., 2010; Nguyen, 2012; Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011; Taki & Fardafshari, 2012; Vurdien, 2013). Additionally, blogs have been viewed positively by EFL/ESL students as a novel, interesting, and creative platform on which they can freely blog their thoughts (Chen, Liu, Shih, Wu, & Yuan, 2011; Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Nguyen, 2012; Noytim, 2010; Pinkman, 2005; Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011; Wu, 2008).

Writing is one of the most important language skills. It is a critical skill for students in school, college, and lifelong (Warschauer, 2010). Writing is also important for the instruction of foreign and second language learners for three reasons. First, writing well is a vital skill for academic or occupational success (National Commission on Writing, 2004), but one that is especially difficult for foreign and second language learners to master. Second, writing can be an effective tool for the development of academic language proficiency as learners all the more promptly investigate progressed lexical or syntactic expression in their written work (e.g., Warschauer, 2010). Third, writing across the curriculum can be invaluable for mastering diverse subject matter, as written expression allows learners to raise their awareness of knowledge gaps, abstract problem-specific knowledge into schemas that can be applied to other relevant cases, and elaborate mental representations of knowledge that can be more easily retrieved, while simultaneously permitting teachers to better understand the students' state of knowledge and thinking process and thus adjust instruction as necessary (Yih and Nah, 2009).

Similarly, Witte (2007) stated that students showed little enthusiasm in classroom writing activities and assignments. Many reviews have also demonstrated that it can be difficult to motivate language learners when it regards to writing (Kajder and Bull, 2003; Davis, 1997). Moreover, the students are not motivated to write with the audience in mind because a single teacher is the audience for generally assignments. Furthermore, according to Mat Daud, Mat Daud and Abu Kassim (2005) and Yih and Nah (2009), the students' writing performance is related to anxiety as a result of their absence of writing skills.

Writing plays vital role in EFL personal and professional lives (Corgill, 2008) and is considered one of the most important skills that EFL students need to develop. In this manner, command of good writing is increasingly seen as fundamental to prepare learners for success in the 21st century because the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global network is crucially dependent on good writing (Hyland, 2003). Also, writing is a continuing process of discovering how to locate the best language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether writing in one's native language or in a second language. Yet, as adult English as second language (ESL) learners put their thoughts on paper, see their ideas in print, and share them with others, they find they develop a powerful voice in their new culture (Peyton, 1993; Tran, 1997). Writing also improves language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and larger chunks of writing to convey their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class (Bello, 1997).

Functional writing as a type of writing skill upgrade an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that embowers one to operate confidently, effectively and independently in school, life and work. It obliges learners to be able to communicate in ways that make them effective and convey their ideas and opinions clearly in a wide range of meaningful contexts; learning, in life and their communities. Language competence is therefore key. It includes meaningful use of the language and on language in context. The

KIE syllabus (2002) indicates that the vocabulary, grammatical structures, text forms and social conventions necessary form part of language competence. Other than formal letters and inside memos, functional writing includes aspects of writing such as report writing, book reviews, articles, announcements, speeches, invitations, condolence messages, notices, advertisements among others.

Functional writing predominantly to communicative-pragmatic uses of English while writing to accomplish some sensible objectives /needs. That is, the writing activities carried out resemble those done in real life for practical purposes. Hence, functional writing is about applying writing to real examples, situations and tasks, and accordingly, learners should produce realistic and meaningful documents (Kuhlemeier & Bergh, 1997; Maroko, 2010; Salem, 2013; Williamson, 2013).

The term functional should requires learners to be able to communicate in ways that make them effective, operate confidently and convey their ideas and opinions clearly in a wide range of meaningful contexts; learning, in life and their communities. As a teacher, one is assume to know all the specific tasks that learners will be face with in their lives that will require them to use their functional writing skills. So, one can help learners apply their skills to maximum effect. Thus, helping learners to become functional in writing means helping them to: choose appropriate communication methods, ensure their communication methods are fit for the purpose, they communicate in ways that meet the needs of the audience and situation, apply writing English skills in a range of meaningful contexts and become increasingly independent in their learning. It is also essential to think of learners becoming functional in their English, as well as being aware that there is a vital body of knowledge known as functional writing. This therefore is likely to require a serious approach to teaching and learning which focuses on intensive learning. Within the English lessons, learners need opportunities to apply their skills to a range of real and realistic topics, relevant to class, life and work. Teaching functional writing should reveal that English used in life enabling learners to gain experience of breadth of applications of the subject. Writing should be applicable to real life examples, situations and tasks and learners should produce realistic documents that are meaningful to them.

There is a relationship between writing and reflective thinking because; it is a part of the critical thinking process referring specifically to the processes of analyzing and making judgments about what has happened. Dewey (1933) suggests that reflective thinking is dynamic, diligent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge, of the grounds that support that knowledge, and the further conclusions to which that knowledge leads. Learners are aware of and control their learning by actively participating in reflective thinking – assessing what they know, what they need to know, and how they connect that gap – during learning situations.

Problem of the study

Despite the importance of functional writing skills and reflective thinking for English major students, the researchers believe that students in the Faculty of education in Al Majmah University have some difficulties in these aspects. This belief was based on the following:-

- A. the researcher's experience as an EFL teacher at some of students major in the faculty of education - Al Majmah University.
- B. the results of many studies that investigated the functional writing skills and/or reflective thinking of students at different education stages.

C. The results of a pilot study and writing test conducted by the researcher on a sample of students in the faculty. Consequently, the researcher found problems in their writing. The researcher surveyed recent instructional and assessment techniques hoping that they would find one that might help improve the writing skills and reflective thinking of these students. The researcher surveyed many methods. However, the one that caught their attention most was the blog. Therefore, this study is an attempt to improve their functional writing skills and reflective thinking that help them to communicate with the others by using blog.

Statement of the problem

The problem of the study summarized in the following statement:-

EFL Majors at faculty of education - Al-Majmaah university suffer from low level of English functional writing' skills .This might be due to the methods used in teaching English language at this stage and other factors .Therefore, the present study attempts to use blog for developing some functional writing' skills to EFL majors and attempts to find out its impact on their reflective thinking. This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the functional writing skills for EFL Majors at faculty of education - Al-Majmaah University?
- 2- To what extent would using blog to raise the EFL Majors at faculty of education- Al-Majmaah university ' functional writing skills?
- 3- To what extent would use blog to develop the EFL majors 'students' reflective, thinking?
- 4-What is the effect of using blog on developing functional writing skills and reflective thinking for EFL Majors at faculty of education - Al-Majmaah university?

Aims of the Study

The present study aims at:-

- 1- Identifying the use of Blog to develop the functional Writing skills for EFL Majors at faculty of education - Al-Majmaah University.
- 2- Identifying the use of Blog develop Reflective Thinking for EFL Majors at faculty of education - Al- Majmaah University .

Hypotheses of the study

The researcher hypothesized the following:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of students' writing skills favoring the post application.
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of reflective thinking scale favoring the post administration.

Significance of the Study

The importance of the current study can be summed up in the following points:-

1. It may help in developing functional English writing skills for EFL Majors at Al-Majmaah University.
2. It is an attempt to draw teachers' attention to their real roles as facilitators and supervisors for their students.
3. It offers EFL teachers a manual for using the Blog in teaching writing skills.

Tools and materials of the study

- 1- List of functional writing skills
- 2- A survey about using blogs
- 3- A scale of using reflective thinking
- 4- TWE (Test of written English)
- 5- A blog <http://drfatmafarid.blogspot.com.eg/>

REVIEW OF LITERATURE**BLOG**

Blog is a short for web log. It is a bit like an online diary or journal, except blogs aren't necessarily private; instead they're created for an audience. It resembles a diary or journal, a blog is relaxed, making it a simple and comfortable way for students to get writing. Blogs are written on all types of topics from A to Z. Readers can usually leave comments, which prompt to discussions about the blog's content.

What is a blog?

A blog is a type of website. The word is a contraction of web + log. Blogs empower users to post regular entries (or blog posts) and these can incorporate news, comments, and descriptions of events, photos or videos. In a blog, entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order, with the most recent at the top. There are many free blog services, and blogs are very easy to use and have a clean, professional look that makes them exceptionally to use. To blog is also a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a specific subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites, and makes them particularly attractive in teaching and learning.

An Internet-based weblog, also known as a blog, is essentially a homepage managed by a writer. McIntosh (2005) expands this definition in the following way: Historically, a weblog, or 'blog' for short, is perceived by its regularly updated, time and date stamped posts, running down the computer screen in chronologically reverse order (i.e. the most recent post comes first). Crucially, there is an 'Add Comment' feature so that readers of posts can leave their opinions, questions or thoughts. Finally, there is a writing style element: blogs are written by one individual who gives his or her thoughts in a generally relaxed, 'spoken' style. According to Williams & Jacobs (2004), "...Blogs' have evolved along similar

lines to other forms of human communication in that they are a product of convenience rather than design" (p. 232). Lamshed, Berry, & Armstrong (2002) connect blogging with journal writing, stating that "like a journal, a blog can be a continually updated resource that grows over time with the accumulation of writing and other content. This archived information is accessed using a simple calendar that highlights the dates on which entries were made" (p. 9). These and various other researchers (Hiler, 2002; Thorne & Payne, 2005) have also recognized blogging as "a set of... phenomena" that has, since its inception as a manner of producing anything from online diaries to academic and reflective journals, emerged to have the ability to "engage people in collaborative activity, knowledge sharing, reflection and debate" (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 232).

The key elements of blog

As mentioned before, the cycle of blogging exercises that was implemented included students setting up blogs, collaborating with blogging (some within a delegated gathering of colleagues called “blogging groups,” but others not), making blog posts, then reading classmates’ post and commenting. The ease with which a student or any other blogger can set up a blog has been discussed in the section above. This section addresses blog posts, peer reviews and peer comments on blogs posts, blogging groups, and the blogging buddy method. It also includes a summary of the common aspects of blogging that were covered in our various sources.

Why would I want to use blogs in my teaching?

Blogs are a useful tool to use in your teaching, both a source of reading material and as a way to structure writing activities and peer reviewing. For language teachers, blogs “can fulfill many of the needs identified for the effective teaching of writing.” Indeed, a blog provides “a genuine audience, is authentically communicative, process driven, peer reviewed, provides a disinhibiting context and offers a completely new form with uncharted creative potential” (Ward, 2004: 3).

In particular, you might want to use blogs and blogging in your teaching:

*** To scatter student generated content:**

A blog can be a window into your classroom. You can encourage your students to post their work there (especially if you use the blog for a particular project): students often get an immense sense of satisfaction from having their work “published”, and blogging is indeed a form of publishing.

*** For sustained, regular writing:**

Blogging regularly has been shown to have a positive impact on learners’ writing fluency and to increase their motivation to write for a broad audience. You might want to encourage your students to keep a blog that they post to regularly (like a diary or journal), or set up a class blog and encourage students to take turns to write blog postings.

*** For discussion and peer review:**

Blogs offer students an opportunity to interact with peers and to learn from each other. Because they enable readers to post comments to blog postings, they offer a forum for discussion. For instance you could encourage students to post about culture, politics, travel, or other areas of personal interest, and ask other students to comment on posts they find interesting. Feedback from your peers on your blog posts can be enormously motivating.

*** To increase opportunities for interaction outside the classroom:**

Students can comment on each other's blog posts outside the classroom. This contributes to creating a sense of community, and takes learning and peer interaction outside the confines of the classroom.

*** For reflection and assessment:**

Blogs are used as a tool for reflection. For instance, students can have a personal blog that they use as a journal of their learning experience. This has been used quite successfully for students spending a period abroad (e.g. during an Erasmus study visit).

*** As a portfolio:**

Because they can include photos and videos, and links to other sites, as well as “regular” text postings, blogs are an easy way to get students to produce a multimedia portfolio, documenting their work during a course or a work placement, for instance. You as teacher (and fellow students) can comment if appropriate and, like any other portfolio, it can be submitted as component of the assessment.

Benefits of Blogging

We believe that it is necessary for teachers to be writers and to share our strategies, lessons, and resources with one another, as we are able to provide glimpses into our daily lives, while sharing effective ideas that are realistic and classroom-tested. In the past, teachers would submit articles to various teaching journals, wait several months for approval, and then finally see their work published. Now, blogging has become a fast, effective, and easy way for teachers to become writers and publish content.

When blogs first began in the 1990s, they were mainly used to share interests and hobbies or to become an online journal. However, circumstances have changed, and you can now find a blog on practically any topic. According to, by the end of 2011, there were “over 181 million blogs around the world, up from 36 million only five years earlier in 2006.” This dramatic increase in the number of blogs and blog readers shows how significant blogging has become for people to learn new things, share ideas, and express their ideas.

Blogs have other benefits of blogs in education for both students and instructors:

- (1) Students that have no personal websites may connect with others using blogs or cyberspace community;
- (2) Students can also practice their writing skills on the web, and they will be cautious if they know someone will comment on their work;
- (3) Blogs engage students to become more analytic as well as critical;
- (4) Students have the opportunity to write on the blog and document their work. Documenting saves the work during the course period and reflects their developments;
- (5) Students can discuss with the others on the course topics and reflect their views with others on the blog;
- (6) Students can interface to link their blogs to other resources of learning to gain knowledge. They may link their blog to other blogs or any other related media to the subject;
- (7) Students can converse and discuss with their teachers;
- (8) Instructors can provide course details on the blog;
- (9) Instructors can review and check students' work;
- (10) Students have an opportunity to collaborate and interact with the wider community of students and teachers on the Web;
- (11) When used for warm-up activities, blogs help instructors guide the classroom activities, as teachers can adjust the organization and content in accordance with the students' current knowledge (JUANG, 2008);
- (12) Blogs enable the students to learn construction of social and cognitive knowledge (Wagner & DU, 2005); (13) Blogs support class interaction (CHANG, et al., 2008) and discussions as well as enhance class presentations;
- (14) Blogs use an automatic dating system, which helps tracks assignment submission. This dating system helps in searching and locating postings on a certain date.

So, using blogs helps students in navigating the English websites (Campell, 2003), which increases their English language knowledge by chatting and interacting with other bloggers, students or even teachers, and makes them be able to read more articles online which builds their language capabilities. WU (2005) highlighted the effectiveness of using blogs in English writing as EFL (English as a Foreign Language). In WU's report, he stated that students are posting more than eight articles online during one semester. The majority of the students are happy with that method of teaching the English language. Similarly, Bernstein (2004) described in his blog posted online titled “Do blogs improve writing?” that, writing frequently online improves students' skills of writing. The scholars suggested that EFL students should use blogs as well as dictionaries or the Internet to see their vocabularies and

express their thoughts and feelings obviously. As EFL learners, students who write frequently online and express their thoughts will improve the writing style in English language. According to the above survey, 91% of the students interviewed told that, they will look up the dictionary or the Internet and sometimes ask friends when they are not aware of how to express their thoughts in English language writing. In this study, there are two advantages that can be pinpointed for the purpose of active participation in blogs between students and their peers: (1) The activities of posting articles, assigning works or even general knowledge topics and inquiries, frequent visits, commenting on these posted data on the blog, receiving comments from other colleagues will increase the rate of collaboration between the learners using EFL writing class. (2) Students will get involved writing good English due to its importance in cyberspace community as an international language, for a student should work hard to write understandable and correct English language to post on his/her website. The study presented in this paper builds upon previous studies in the literature. It reports on the students' experience of using blogs for pre-class readings and post-class reflections.

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

Simsek (2009) investigated the effect of weblog integrated writing instruction on students writing performance. Also students perceptions toward weblog used in their writing courses has been examined Seventy undergraduate students in the Department of Primary Education at Marmara University participated in this study. Data were collected through students, written products and weblog perception questionnaires. The finding indicated that weblog integrated writing instruction improved the writing performance of students. Moreover, students had a favorable perception towards weblog use.

Ellison and Wu (2008) in their exploratory study explore student perceptions of blogging in the classroom regarding (a) which specific characteristics of educational blogging (writing an entry, reading other students' blogs, or reading other students' comments on one's blog) are most helpful for understanding course content and (b) other aspects of the instructional blogging experience, such as the process of providing and receiving peer feedback. Quantitative data analysis revealed that reading other students' blogs were believed to be most helpful for understanding course concepts. Analysis of the open-ended responses revealed a need for more guidance regarding the process of reviewing and commenting on the work of peers and appreciation for the way in which blogging exposed students to more diverse viewpoints from their peers. Pragmatic guidelines for instructors wishing to incorporate blogging into their classroom activities are discussed.

Pinkman in his study (2005) seeks to determine the usefulness of using blogs in the foreign language classroom, and to assist foreign language professionals interested in developing learner independence in their own learners by using this relatively new computer-based learning forum. Findings suggest that learner-perceived benefits of using blogs included increased interest and motivation to use English because of interaction with, and feedback

from, classmates and teachers. There is also indication, however, that although the project helped to improve reading and writing skills, some learners were more interested in developing oral communication skills not directly addressed in the blog project. The findings also suggest that learners who participated in the blog project were interested in continuing to blog even after the semester finished.

Kavaliauskienė, G. (2006) stated that as an effective educational resource, the electronic tool has not only changed the composing process, but also strengthens participation in writing activity. He continues that one reason for this is that e-mail and online chats is non-threatening atmosphere in which writers are not restricted in expressing themselves and encourages even timid students who usually avoid speaking in face-to-face discussions to participate actively in online chats. Another reason is that the Web provides a field for writers to present their work to a real and larger audience that spreads beyond classroom and school frames.

Other studies have also shown that blogs motivate many students to write well in the target language (Rodzvilla, 2002; Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Liaw, Chen, and Huang, 2008). Through blogs, one can write and also comment on what one writes in expectation of a little discussion and a quest for common interests and individual differences. By responding on blogs, students can get feedback from other audiences throughout cyberspace. Students have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they truly wish to write, thereby determining their own texts in language education and combining text with conversations in a very personal and stimulating way.

Many researchers, such as Downess (2004) and Hall and Davison (2007), have claimed that students' writing skills improve when they blog. Another study conducted by Kavaliauskienė and Vaičiūnienė (2006) indicated that the experience of writing on blogs (for an audience) provides opportunities to help students improve their knowledge of English. Nadzrah (2007) found that blogs let students compose writing with specific purposes that can encourage them to enhance their writing in the language constructively. Abu Bakar, Latif & Ya'acob (2010) also indicate that through blogging, students are able to express and share thoughts, ideas and information with the wider public. Blogs are user-friendly websites, which are easy to maintain and frequently updated by their owners. Furthermore, blog provides a safer and more relaxed environment for language learners, especially for the shy or less confident ones (Hanson-Smith, 2001).

Blog also enables individuals to express their thoughts at their own pace and in their own space so that, in contrast to traditional classroom settings, blog learners do not have to compete with their classmates for the instructor's attention (Bloch, 2004). Blogs expand the opportunities for student interaction and the horizons of that "learning space" (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 232; Blackstone, Spiri and Naganuma; 2007) exponentially, and provide student writers with a far greater audience both within and outside the classroom. To illustrate, Pinkman (2005) writes that blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as writers who write and post, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers' posts, and as writer-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts. Dieu (2004, p. 26). Reaffirms this by stating that blogging gives a learner the chance to "maximize focused exposure to language in new situations, peer collaboration, and contact with experts"

FUNCTIONAL WRITING SKILLS

Shorofat (2007) defines functional writing, as opposed to academic and creative writing, as that kind of writing which aims at conveying a specific, direct and clear message to a particular audience. It includes several areas for example, writing instructions, formal letters, notes, invitations, advertisements, and reports. For the present research purposes, functional Writing is defined as "a language practice that fits in within the pragmatic and functional use of English. It is writing that is meant to fulfill real-life purposes, such as: making demand or giving advice, inviting someone and applying for something."

For the purposes of the study, functional writing skills are perceived as those tangible, concrete aspects/components of linguistic performance that indicate a learner's mastery of functional writing in English for realistic everyday-life purposes (e.g. writing a short report, jotting down some personal notes into a reflective diary, and writing down a formal complaint to present to someone).

Writing skills are necessary to learners who require them in their everyday communications in school and even after school. When writing skills are needed in everyday communications be it in school or after school, they take an instrumental or a functional role and are therefore alluded to as functional writing skills. The functional writing skills (KIE 2006:82) are defined to include writing of minutes, agenda and notifications, reports, e-mail, memoranda, notices, advertisements, business letters diaries and completion of forms, packing lists, shopping lists, journals, recipes, directions, instructions, thank you notes, posters among others. Much of the world's commerce is today known to be conducted to a significant extent in the written medium of communication. To be able to operate effectively in commerce, one has to be equipped with functional writing (Lunsford and Connors, 1989) Writing is neither easy nor a spontaneous activity (Byrne, 1980; Mojica, 2010). It requires some conscious mental effort: 'we think out' our sentences and consider various ways of co mining and arranging them. One may write several versions of a text before being satisfied with the result - this is because writing includes the encoding of a message.

REFLECTIVE THINKING

It is a progression of coherent balanced steps based on the scientific method of defining, analyzing, and solving a problem.

Reflectiveness implies the use of metacognitive skills (thinking about thinking), creative abilities and taking a critical stance. It is not just about how individuals think, but also about how they construct experience more generally, including their thoughts, feelings and social relations. This requires individuals to reach a level of social maturity that allows them to distance themselves from social pressures, take different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their actions.

Gelter ,H,(2003), identify reflective thinking as to reflect situations actions and problems that faced the students and framing it in appropriate titles , in order to analyses it and put plans and procedures to achieve aims .

In addition, many characteristics of environments and activities prompt and support reflective thinking as following:-

- 1- Provide enough wait-time for students to reflect when responding to inquiries.
- 2- Provide emotionally supportive environments in the classroom encouraging reevaluation of conclusions.

- 3- Prompt reviews of the learning situation, what is known, what is not yet known, and what has been learned.
- 4- Provide authentic tasks involving ill-structured data to encourage reflective thinking during learning activities.
- 5- Prompt students' reflection by asking questions that seek reasons and evidence.
- 6- Provide some explanations to guide students' thought processes during explorations.
- 7- Provide a less-structured learning environment that prompts students to explore what they think is important.
- 8- Provide social-learning environments such as those inherent in peer-group works and small group activities to allow students to see other points of view.
- 9- Provide reflective journal to write down students' positions, give reasons to support what they think, show awareness of opposing positions and the weaknesses of their own positions.

What is the role of reflection in the learning process?

Students sometimes view reflective writing as an annoying interruption to the serious business of developing content knowledge in their subject area. However, there are sound reasons why reflective writing is included in student assessment.

"Reflection is indicative of deep learning, and where teaching and learning activities such as reflection are missing... only surface learning can result." Biggs 1999 in King 2002.

Reflective writing tasks are given to students to help students learn through reflection, precisely because of the established link between reflection and deeper learning. As well as facilitating learning and monitoring learning, the intention is to produce graduates who have acquired the habit of reflection as a means of continuing to learn and grow in their professions. Reflection can lead to:

- self-improvement
- professional growth
- meaningful change.

"Reflection leads to growth of the individual – morally, personally, psychologically, and emotionally, as well as cognitively". Branch & Paranjape, 2002, p. 1187

Reflection can help you to:

- better understand your strengths and weaknesses
- identify and question your underlying values and beliefs
- acknowledge and challenge possible assumptions on which you base your ideas, feelings and actions
- recognize areas of potential bias or discrimination
- acknowledge your fears, and
- identify possible inadequacies or areas for improvement.

Reflection can lead to greater self-awareness, which in turn is a first step to positive change – it is a necessary stage in identifying areas for improvement and growth in both personal and professional contexts. Taking time to reflect can help you identify approaches that have worked well, and in that way reinforce good practice."

Components of reflective thinking

"In an academic context, reflective thinking usually involves:

1. looking back at something (often an event i.e. something that happened, but could also be an idea or object)
2. analyzing the event or idea (thinking in depth and from different perspectives, and trying to

explain, often with reference to a model or theory from your subject)

3. Thinking carefully about what the event or idea means for you and your ongoing progress as a learner and/or practicing professional.

So, Reflective thinking is a NOT a school subject, as critical thinking is in Reflective thinking is an emphasis on teaching to think as opposed to learning lexical knowledge. Reflective thinking is not about logic, especially not about formal logic. But it is a very useful and enlightening study. It is meant to be a multidisciplinary or complex subject, and a course in multidisciplinary studies, a theory as well as practice related to cognition, computing and language. The difficulty in writing about reflective thinking or thinking at all lies in the speed of thinking and the tendency of thoughts to flow, hence blocking the effort for self-inspection, or introspection with any tangible result to record the process apart from saying or writing a part of the ongoing stream of consciousness.

There are many studies about reflective thinking, like , Mahardale ,Neville, Jais & Chan ,(2007) investigated a comparative study to know the reflective thinking levels between students who learned with traditional way and students who learned with problem solving way .The sample of this study consisted of 56 learners as a control group and 54 learners as an experimental group .the results indicated that the reflective thinking for the experimental group higher than the control group and there are a statistically significant difference d between the mean score of the control group and that of the experimental group favor to the experimental group .

Phan' study ,(2008) aimed at recognize the effect of learning environment in developing students' acievment and reflective thinking .the sample of the study consisted of 298 students in Sydnny city .the results of the study indicated the efficacy of leaning invironmnt in developing acievment and reflective thinking for the students .

Also , Lohyer & Thivierge' study ,(2004) stated that reflective thinking deals with working pace and reinforcement attitudes .Also this study assured that there are many problems to practice reflective thinking as no warring of reflective thinking' importance . Birmingham' study ,(2003) aimed at constructed a thinking model consisted of teaching , reflective thinking ,culture and moral values. The results of this study assured the thee is a relation among them and to applied this model it require mental flexibility ,and a warring of learning situations .

Knowles ,Z , Gilbourne & Others , (2014) showed the definition of reflective thinking, its limitations , its levels , and its relation with learning and social context .The results of this study indicated that reflective thinking affected on teacher and students ' performance .Also Cunningham ,A &Benedetto' study (2006) , aimed at recognize the relation between reflective thinking and using technology in learning .The results assured the importance of reflective thinking to use technology and applied it in curriculum .

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The Experimental Design of the Study

The study used the one group pre-post design.

Participants of the study

The participants in this research were 35 undergraduate students in The Department of English Language at Al-Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia. Total number of respondents

was 35 females aged 19 to 23. The period of research on application of blogging in the writing course lasted one term, fall 2015. In a computer lab, learners were shown a sample blog created by the instructor. The group was selected according to major criteria: the results of the students' performance on the various tests in the English language. In addition, learners in this stage can benefit from their experiences and their knowledge is formed through sensual experiences. The employed methods of gathering data consisted of administering specially designed questionnaires, analyzing students' responses, carrying out blogging activities, providing feedback to learners, evaluating learners' performance in various online activities, and analyzing the utility of blogging.

Procedures of the Study:

The following procedures were followed to conduct the study:

1. Reviewing related literature.
2. Designing the materials and tools of the study.
3. Selecting the participants of the study
4. Pre testing the participants using the writing test and a scale of reflective thinking.
5. Implementing the experiment based on using Blogs.
6. Post testing the participants using the writing test and a scale of reflective thinking.
7. Analyzing learners' scores on the tests statistically using a t- test.
8. Reporting and discussing results.
9. Presenting recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

Materials and Tools

Functional writing skills

1- To answer the 1st study question, (*What are the functional writing skills for EFL Majors at Al-Majmaah university?*) the following procedures were followed:

a) Conducting a thematic-qualitative analysis of relevant literature and some Internet-based resources to generate a categorized list of some functional writing skills. The proposed categories emerged as themes (e.g. report writing, writing for descriptive purposes, writing to guide and direct others) on a developmental, iterative fashion. That is to say, some preliminary minor themes were merged with other relevant themes, while some minor points/items were expanded to act as wider themes. Initially, 4 themes emerged at the preliminary thematic analysis stage, which were finally developed as 9 main themes/categories.

d) Adapting the list of functional writing skills and preparing the final version (*see Appendix 1*).

As the appendix (1) illustrates, 8 main categories were obtained to act as headings/themes under each of which a set of functional writing skills were assigned. They were obtained throughout a prototyping, grounded theory-based thematic analysis process in which case themes continuously developed, rephrased, and revised till a final product was reached. More specifically 4 preliminary themes emerged during initial analysis of some documents (e.g. writing reports, writing memos, writing directions to others, and writing descriptive accounts). Out of those preliminary themes, further themes emerged each of which worked as an independent theme/category on its own right (e.g. writing to inform others and writing for reflective purposes). Each skill or item of the 28 items in the list was phrased as much clearly and accurately as possible to indicate a narrow, specific component that can be assessed based on learners' writing test.

A survey about using blogs

The questions in survey were quantified by a Likert-scale of 1 to 2 (1 = Disagree, 2 = agree). The reliability of the second part was determined using Cronbach's alpha (.90). The questionnaire reached a high reliability. The questionnaire was administered during class in the last week of the semester (the students would have already completed the writing course) to get their feedback on the developing their English Functional writing skills, the advantages and disadvantages they might have faced when doing the experiment, as well as their suggestions to improve it. With their consent, a random number of students were invited to take part in questionnaire so that the teacher could get more in-depth information on their use of blogs. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency analysis and percentages and the results were then tabulated .

*** Purpose of the survey**

A survey was designed for the purpose of this study and it was pilot-tested on a group of students to check its validity and reliability. Improvement on the piloted survey items were then made based on the students' feedback.. The survey enabled students to score their pre- and post-attitudes towards using blogs.

The survey was constructed in the light of the following:

1. Reviewing related literature concerning language survey under the condition that repetition was avoided (i.e. Campbell, 2003; Pinkman, 2005; Eastment, 2005 and Walker (2005).
2. Suitability and clarity of the statements concerning EFL Majors at-Al-Majmah University .The researcher necessarily modified and added items to make the questionnaire relevant and appropriate for the Saudi students learning English as a foreign language.

*** Description of the survey**

The final version of the questionnaire had three major parts. The first part consists of three items. It included basic information about the participants, such as experiences in using the Internet. In the second part, thirty two questions were designed to elicit participants' attitudes toward the use of blogs in learning writing. The last part contained two open discussion questions for participants to give their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of using blogs in learning English, which showed the difficulties and benefits students encountered in using a blog.

*** Piloting the survey**

Two weeks before the experiment, a group of (15) students was selected randomly for piloting the survey. Piloting the survey helped determining the following:

*** Survey' validity**

To measure the survey' validity, it was given to lecturers to respond to some criteria for validating the survey. The survey proved to be valid as the jury approved most of the criteria and suggested some modifications.

***The internal consistency:-**to expense the internal consistency, the researcher used (SPSS) program by the correlation coefficient between each statement and total score for the survey.

Table (1) The value of the correlation coefficient between each statement and total score for the survey and its statistical significance.

Statements	correlation coefficient
First dimension	.820
1	.829
2	.878
3	.724
Second dimension	
4-35	.895

Third dimension	.876
36	.846
37	.676

***Survey' reliability:**

In order to estimate the internal consistency for the scale, Cronbach's alpha was used through an SPSS programme (standard version 10.5). The value of alpha coefficient was .854, indicating a high value of the scale reliability.

Table (2) Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each point and total score for the survey

dimension	1	2	3	total
Cronbach's alpha	.832	.837	.835	.844

Setting up a Blog Site

The English Writing Course is a compulsory course to be taken by the students in the Faculty of Education, Al- Majmaah University, KSA. The course runs for three hours per week over a period of 14 weeks in a semester. Its main objective is to equip the undergraduates with the writing skills which will enable them to cope with the academic demands while at the university. During the first week of the semester, the researcher was opened the blog and then posted a general welcome message, instructions on how to write comments to the entries and a slideshow about the content of the writing course. Instructors frequently mentioned topics in the blog posts and motivated students who had read the posts or done the activities to share their experiences with the class. Based on these uses, four specific goals for the use of the class blog were created:

1. To write using a variety of genres both personal and academic
2. To discuss and negotiate a variety of issues related to academic writing
3. To provide a space outside the classroom for students to collaborate and argue
4. To create texts that could both express students' own viewpoints and be used by other students to critique or support their views.

How can you get started with student blogging?

1. Choose a purpose.

The researcher decides what she want students to write about, and then work from there. Choose any focus that supports the students' learning—but make it specific and stick with it. This clear focus is crucial, especially first time around, and especially with students.

2. Decide on a format and an online Form

To set up individual blogs, the researcher created a blog which called (write and enjoy) <http://drfatmafarid.blogspot.com.eg/> .This blog included introduction , purpose of the blog , some topics which are important for the students like (how to write, types of paragraph) . Also the blog included, some activities, students did it and write their comments. There are two tests on the blog (pre and posttests of writing) students did it online. The researcher reminded her students that blog offer readers a chance to see their best work—work that has been drafted, edited, and revised. Leaving comments and responding to them are important parts of the blogging experience. Once the students wrote on the blog, the researcher required them to read and comment on one another's work.

3. Guidelines and Expectations for blogging:- the researcher give students some guidelines to use it when blogging such as : (*Be Realistic , Read other Blogs, Be Consistent*)

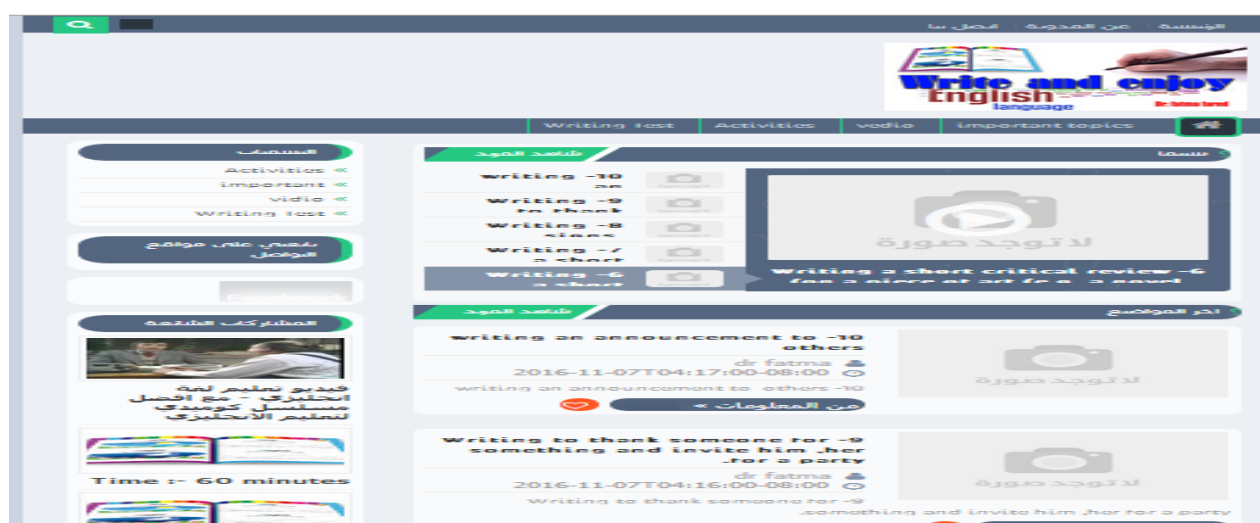


Figure (1) Print screen of the site of the Blog <http://drfatmafared.blogspot.com/>

Reflective thinking scale:-

In this study the researcher implemented reflective thinking scale which prepared by Kember et al . (2000) which is translated . This scale consisted of 16 statements divided in fifth scale and the students will answer about each statement by choose from (**strongly agree**) with 5 marks , (**agree**) with 4 marks ,(**Uncertain**) with 3 marks , (**disagree**) with 2 marks and (**strongly disagree**) with 1 mark .So ,the total mark for the scale between (25-125) .The scale divided into two demansations , the first demansation (**Habitual action**) involved statements (1,5,9,13,18), the second demansation (**understanding**) involved (2,6,10,14,20,21,23) ,the third demansation is (**reflection**) involved (3,7,11,15,17,19,24) the fourth demansation (**critical reflection**) involved (4,8,12,16,22,25). The researcher **judged the scale with** A jury of EFL teachers, supervisors, and EFL experts was consulted to judge the content, form and validity of the scale. The scale was piloted twenty students with two weeks as a breaking time. Here we have summaries about each demansation of the reflective thinking scale:-

1. Habitual action: Activity that is learnt through frequent use. Later, it is performed automatically or with little conscious thought.
2. Understanding: Thoughtful activity of individuals in which they use their existing knowledge and get comprehension of different things/phenomena. Kember et al. (2000) elaborate that the construct “understanding (U)” comprises an understanding of a concept without reflecting upon its significance in personal or practical situations.

3. Reflection: The critique and appraisal of assumptions about the content or process of problem solving. It differentiates problem posing from problem solving and raises questions regarding the validity of the problems' solutions.
4. Critical reflection: This is a profound level of reflection. Kember et al. elaborate that it involves testing of a premise. It reviews reflection evidence on the bases of conscious and unconscious prior learning. This level of reflective thinking is not observed frequently.

To expense the internal consistency, the researcher used (SPSS) program by the correlation coefficient between each statement and total score for the scale, see table (3) .

Table (3) Correlation coefficient between each statement and total score for the scale

Number of statement	Habitual action	Understanding	Reflection	Critical reflection
1	0.69			
5	0.72			
9	0.57			
13	0.58			
18	0.77			
2		0.58		
6		0.69		
10		0.63		
14		0.76		
20		0.65		
21		0.75		
23		0.78		
3			0.80	
7			0.90	
11			0.88	
15			0.90	
17			0.94	
19			0.92	
24			0.90	
4				0.90
8				0.88
12				0.89
16				0.94
22				0.92
25				0.90

Scale' Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used through an SPSS programme to compute the correlation between the scores obtained by the students on each dimension of the scale. The reliability coefficient was (0.87). According to Heaton (1988), Allam (2000), it was suitable.

Table (4) Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each question and total score for the test

Dimension	1 Habitual action	2 Understanding	3 Reflection	4 Critical reflection	Total
Cronbach's alpha	0.74	0.76	0.89	0.92	0.87

- The last step, the researcher editing the scale in its final form, Refer to **appendix (3)**.

Test of written English (TWE)

Test of Written English (TWE) is the writing section of Test of English as a Foreign Language were used in the pretest and posttest. The test was designed according to the objectives of the study. The test was constructed in the light of the following:

1. Stating the Aim of the Test

According to the overall aims of the study, the test aims to:

- a) Assess EFL Majors at-Al-Majmaah University use of the stages of the blogs in learning writing.

2. Preparing the Instructions of the Test

Instructions were written in a clear simple English language, and the examiner discussed them before starting the test. They include all information needed by students to complete the test; items of the test, scoring points, time allowed and how to give answers.

3. Constructing the Test

The first set of test was taken as the pretest of the participants before starting the treatment and the second set was the posttest of participants that was taken after the treatment. The TWE (Test of written English) is a 60-minute writing test. This test requires the test takers to write a short essay on one topic in 60 minutes from their TWE test book to show their ability to “generate and organize ideas, support ideas in writing with examples or evidence and use standard written English formats” (ETS Website, 2011). Selecting two essays topics from the four optional ones in the pretest and posttest was the participants’ task to do. The essays were rated by two raters using the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel and Hughey, 1981). It is a weighted analytic scoring test developed for rating second language learners writing task and the descriptors are clear. It is one of the most widely used scoring tests for evaluating ESL writing (Bailey, 1999) since aspects of the writing are reflected in the test. There are five basic features which constitute the analytic writing test namely content (30%), organization (20%), vocabulary (20%), language use (25%) and mechanics (5%). The points given to each of the five domains would be added to yield a total score for each writing sample. The use of analytic test in evaluating students’ essays is deemed practical and reliable as it provides clear descriptors of the test and the quality of a written piece is seen from various aspects (Bailey, 1999). In the pretest, the participants of both groups (n = 35) were given four topics to choose from. The time limit for the test was 60 minutes and the word limit was at least 200 words. The mode of writing pretest was by blogging.

The pretest namely the writing test was administered at the beginning of the study to tap the students’ pretest scores. The posttest, which was administered at the end of the study, had the same structure as the pretest but with different topics. The instruments of this study namely writing tests were validated by two experienced English teachers in order to determine whether the tests are appropriate for Saudi graduate students for measuring their writing performance. They confirmed TWE as a standard test which is appropriate for the Saudi graduate students.

4. Scoring the test.

The full mark of the test was 40 marks; twenty marks for each essay.

5. Piloting the Test

Two weeks before the experiment, a group of (20) students was selected randomly for piloting the test. Piloting the test helped determining the following:

(a) Test' Clarity:

The test was found to be very clear and learners answered the questions without finding any ambiguity.

(b) Test' Validity:

*Face validity:

According to Heaton (1988: 153) "if a test item looks right to other testers, teachers, and moderators, it can be described as having at least face validity". A jury of EFL teachers, supervisors, and EFL experts has approved the test to be valid and consistent with the objectives aimed to be measured.

- **The internal consistency:** to expense the internal consistency, the researcher used (SPSS) program by the correlation coefficient between each question and total score for the test.

Table (4) shows, the value of the correlation coefficient between each question and total score for the test and its statistical significance.

Table (5) Correlation coefficient between each question and total score for the test

Question	1	2	3	4
Correlation coefficient	.610	.710	.508	.608

(a). Test Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used through an SPSS programme to compute the correlation between the scores obtained by the students on each question of the test. The reliability coefficient was (.799). According to Heaton (1988), Allam (2000), it was suitable.

Table (6)

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each question and total score for the test

Question	1	2	3	4	Total
Cronbach's alpha	.711	.724	.709	.724	.799

(b) Item Difficulty level

The value of the difficulty level of the test items ranged from 0.2 to 0.73. According to Heaton (1988) & Allam (2006) , these values are very suitable and within the acceptable levels .

- 1- Preparing the final form of the test. In the light of the jury modifications and the results of the pilot study, the test was built in its final form to be used in the basic experiment.

Preparing the Final Form of the Test

In the light of TEFL experts' modifications and the results of piloting the test, the test was built in its final form to be used in the basic experiment. **(Refer to appendix "4")**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After using blogs for one semester, the participants were to write six essays in an eight-week treatment and submit them to the researcher in order to obtain feedback and rewrite based on the feedback. The sample of the study (n=35) wrote their essays on the blog in the form of entries. The entries were checked by the researcher and the feedback was given in the comment section. Moreover, the blogging participants could ask their questions regarding writing or technical problems of the blog in the comment section. The researcher read and corrected the students' errors based on the five domains of writing performance within a week. The group was post-tested using writing test. Two different raters scored students' answers of the writing test. At the experimental design of the study depended on comparing students' scores in the test before and after using blogs. Therefore, it was concluded that the resulting differences regarding the dependent variables were due to the experimental treatment and accordingly to the independent variable. "T" test formula was used to analyze the differences between means of scores of the study subjects in the Pre and the Post-measurements.

Testing Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one predicted a statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of students' writing skills favoring the post application. Table (7) shows the results for the pre-post testing of the sample's writing skills.

Table (7) "T" test and the level of significance of the differences between the pre and post writing test of group as well as the effect size (the value of (η^2)) and the strength of influence (d) (n = 25)

Variable	Post test		Pre test		T value	η^2	d
test	Means	Standard Deviation	Means	Standard Deviation	4.377 ^{-a}	0.45	1.8
	32.56	6.042	17.60	3.305			

*it dedicated in 0.05 and 0.01.

It is clear from table (7) that there were statistically significant differences between the pre and posttests mean scores favoring the posttest application, and it indicated that the objective of the experiment are achieved in raising the level of the students .

Also, It is clear from table (7) that the size of the impact in the writing test before and after the experiment by the value of double ETA ((0.45)), and the strength of impact (d) is (1.9), and these values indicate a very significant effect for the writing development through using blogs, according to Fouad Abu Hatab and Amaal Sadiq (1996.443), and Reda Aser (2003.672):

If the value of double Eta is = 0.15, this indicates a large value (0.15) .The variance in the dependent variable can be due to the impact of the independent variable).If the value of Eta is = 0.20, this indicates a very significant impact (0.20).The variance in the dependent variable can be traced to the impact of the independent variable).

Testing hypothesis two

Hypothesis two predicted a statistically significant difference between the means of the students' scores on the pre-posttest of reflective thinking scale favoring the post administration. Table (8) shows the results for the pre-post testing of the students' reflective thinking scale .

Table (8) "t" test and the level of significance of the differences between the pre and post application of the group in the student reflective writing scale as well as the effect size (the value of (η^2)) and the strength of influence (d) (n = 25)

Dimension	Application	Means	Standard Deviation	t value	η^2	D
Habitual action	pre	13.53	2.223	4.378 ^{-a}	0.45	1.9
	post	22.52	4.611			
understanding	pre	15.76	3.218	4.212 ^{-a}	0.44	1.72
	post	25.28	4.345			

reflective	Post	11.60	2.121	4.293 ^{-a}	0.45	1.9
	pre	71.80	12.169			
Critical reflective	pre	4.80	1.080	4.375 ^{-a}	0,45	1,9
	post	8.84	2.135			
Total	pre	14.28	2.407	4.374-a	0.45	1.9
	post	39.52	6.029			

it dedicated in 0.05 and 0.01

It is clear from table (8) that there were statistically significant differences between the pre and post application mean scores favoring the post application, and it indicted that the objective of the experiment are achieved in raising the level of the group. Also, It is clear from table (8) that the size of the impact in the students' reflective thinking scale before and after the experiment for the group of the study by the value of double ETA ((0.45), the strength of impact (d) of (1.9), and these values indicate a very significant impact for the development of the reflective thinking through using blogs .

Implicated the survey of using blog

When discuss the findings of the survey of using blogs in learning English .The results of the survey given to the student participants are important for a number of reasons. First, it appears that within our classes the percentage of students who liked writing in general (82.4%) also liked blogging as an activity (81.4%). About the same percentage (78%) stated that they liked posting classroom assignments on their blogs. This seems to underscore the obvious:

Students who like to write will probably like blogging, while students who do not like writing might not like blogging.

Second, the responses seem to indicate that whether students liked writing or not, they enjoyed reading what their classmates write (93.1%) and having their classmates read and comment on their own writing (97%). This again supports the notion of the blogging activity as a student-centered, peer-focused exercise (Chiddo, 2006; Glogoff, 2005). At the same time, students did not see the teacher as excluded from this process. In fact, since 100% indicated that they appreciated their teacher's comments on blog posts, input from the teacher can still be considered vital within the context of these "blogalogues." Finally, from the survey results it seems clear that students truly appreciated the need to improve their writing and considered having an editor and being an editor valuable. While 85.5% expressed satisfaction with peer review activities in general, 93.8% indicated that having a blogging buddy was more effective for improving their writing than not having one. 96.6% also indicated that being a blogging is a good learning experience.

able (9) The survey of using blog

N	statement	Agree		disagree	
1-	I had previous experience in WWW , email, chats, social networks and blogs	31	88.6	4	11.4
2-	I spend many times on the Internet	35	100	0	0
3-	I heard about blog and had own blog before this course	10	28.6	25	71.4
4-	I am glad that I have my own English blog.	34	97.1	1	2.9
5-	I think I have no difficulty in using my blog.	32	90	3	10
6-	I feel comfortable using the blog.	29	82.9	6	17.1
7-	Writing on weblog was enjoyable and interesting.	31	88.6	4	11.4
8-	I think the learner blog is a waste of time.	7	20	28	80
9-	It is fast and convenient to update information on the blogs.	31	88.6	4	11.4
10-	I like posting many articles and photos or clips of films on the blog	25	71.4	10	28.6
11-	I like to invite my classmates to read my blogs.	27	77.1	8	22.9
12-	Reading the comments and entries of my peers on the blog helped me to learn and improve my own writing	26	74.3	9	25.1
13-	I like making comments on my classmates' posts	24	68.6	11	31.4
14-	I like having classmates make comments on my posts	30	85.7	5	14.3
15-	I don't have to worry of what my friends would think of my language when I blog in English	28	80	7	20
16-	I like reading my classmates' written posts.	32	91.4	3	8.6
17-	I feel uncomfortable about my peers' comments.	21	60	14	40
18-	I feel that blog is a useful tool for me to share ideas with others online	30	85.7	5	14.3
19-	I prefer to practice my writing in the blog rather than in the class.	25	71.4	10	28.6
20-	I feel that I can write longer when writing on my blog than on paper	25	71.4	10	28.6
21-	I prefer the blogging way of submitting my assignments to the traditional way of submitting assignments	32	91.4	3	8.6
22-	I have improved my writing skills since I began blogging	29	82.9	6	17.1
23-	In general I feel that my English grammar has somewhat improved since I began blogging	28	80	7	20
24-	I learn more new words when reading my friends' postings	32	91.4	3	8.6
25-	I am more active in checking up meaning of difficult words in the dictionary when blogging	21	60	14	40
26-	I think content writing for blogs contributed to my writing skills related to organization ,paraphrasing ,referencing ,etc.	27	77.1	8	22.9
27-	Using writing blog can increase my productivity.	23	65.7	12	34.3
28-	I think it is a good idea to use blogs to practice writing skills in English	35	100	0	0
29-	I am more careful with my writing when blogging	21	60	14	40
30-	Using blogs increase the sense of community in the class	30	85.7	5	14.3
31-	I like blogging as an activity.	34	97.1	1	2.9
32-	Using blogs encourage shay students to express themselves	28	80	7	20
33-	When I write on the blog I don't worry about mistakes .	31	88.7	4	11.3
34-	Blogs help teachers and students to know each other's through communication	29	82.9	6	17.1
35-	Without an English or composition class, I will still use my blog in the future.	34	97.1	1	2.9

1- Regarding the survey for the writing course, after thirty-five students completed it, the results showed that before the course, most students (88%) had experience with the Internet: 86% had experience with emails, 76% with chats, 72% with social networks, but only 5% had had experience with blogs. This finding was consistent with the results of the previous surveys by Perseus (2005) who indicated that only 5% of over 30 year olds were weblog

active. When asked to comment on how they had heard about blog or had their own blog before this course, Quiet a number (71.42%) of respondents hadn't heard about what a blog was before I asked them to create one; 4 (11.43%) had heard about it, but had no idea what it was; 3 (8.57%) had heard about it and also had a rough idea what it was. Only 3 (8.57%) respondents had their own blog. This indicates that blogs are not well-known around the young generation in Saudi Arabia.

In The second part of the survey, all the students felt that using blogs in the class as a writing tool was a good idea. The students benefited a lot from this activity. They indicated that when using blogs they were able to write better because they (60%) were more aware of the need to check their writing before posting , and when writing on papers, some of them (27.1%) did not are fully check their grammar . Most probably, they realized that when writing online, the Web site is open for everyone to read, and they tried their best to write using correct grammar and sentence structure.in item #29 "When I write on the blog, I don't worry about mistakes", most students (88.7%) expressed agreement. This finding is similar to that have been reached by Cobanoglu (2006) who Said that the participant in his study don't worry about mistakes when they write on the blog. On item #27, "Using web logs for writing can increase my productivity. "Almost two thirds of students (65.7%) expressed their agreement. This finding is supported by Galien and Bowcher (2010) who state that there was significant improvement in the writing quality of each paragraph as students progressed through the editing process with the pre-service teachers. Editing is one of the most difficult steps in the writing process. This is true from both the writers' and the teacher's perspective. It is a challenge to conference with every student and to provide the time and attention he or she deserves. After all, there is only one teacher. At the same time, the more attention each student receives, the better the end result. When asked if "they enjoy using blog , the majority of the students (97.1%) agreed with the view. This finding supported the results of Pinkman (2005) who highlighted that all of the learners interviewed responded that they enjoyed the blog overall. When asked about the advantages of the blog, reasons why they enjoyed using blogs in the classroom, and what they learned from the project, learners reported a variety of responses. Eight learners agreed that they enjoyed interacting with classmates and learning from them. Seven learners cited that they thought their writing skills had improved from participating in the experience.

The students' perceptions towards using blogs as a platform for writing in order to develop their functional writing skills in English . A high percentage of the students (74.3%) responded positively to using the blog. They agreed that having their own the blog encourages them to write better . This finding goes in line with the results reached by Miranda Bella (2005) who concludes that weblogs can enhance students' writing skills and abilities. The students are aware that their written work is published online for the whole world to see, and this becomes an effective motivator. They realize that anyone can read their writing, especially their parents, other family, and friends. The presence of a real audience encourages them to produce high-quality work. The students also like the idea that their work will be published instantly. This is rewarding for them. They understand that all their hard work and effort is worth the end results. When asked if their writing skills have been improved since they began blogging , the students (82.9%) agreed to the view. Students' Responses toward Blogging and Learning Grammar and Vocabulary, blogging appeared to have provided the students with the opportunity to learn grammar and develop vocabulary independently . A considerable number of them (80%) strongly agreed that they had learnt and improved their L2 grammar while 91.4% of them perceived that they had acquired new vocabulary when reading their friends' blog postings . Likewise, 83.2% of them generally

agreed that their skill in guessing words meanings had improved through blogging , and 77.1% thought that they were able to use different word forms in English .

- **Intention to Continue Blogging** Of the thirty - five learners participated, twenty-nine agreed that they would continue blogging (On item #34). This finding is consistent with that of Abu Bakar, Latif & Ya'acob (2010) and Pinkeman (2010) who indicated that most of the students wanted to continue blogging after they completed the course, and all of them suggested that writing on blogs should be a class requirement.

To sum up, the benefits of using blogs can be seen not only in developing the students' writing skills, increasing their motivation, improving their background knowledge, helping them learn autonomously, building a community of learners, but also providing powerful feedback tools.

- **The Advantages of Using Blogs in Learning English** In the open discussion questions, two questions were included. They are: What do you think that the advantages of using blogs in language learning? And What do you think that the disadvantages of using blogs in language learning? The participants were asked to list down any advantages and disadvantages that they found while using the blog in their English writing. The answers were synthesized into different categories. Table (9) shows the percentages and rankings. About 34.5% of the participants thought that the merit of blogs was to give participants an opportunity to practice writing. Another valuable advantage was free writing. Participants could write down whatever they wish. This finding affirms the results of Tseng's study (2008). A third advantage reported by a reasonable number (30 out of 35) is that the blog provides the avenue for students who are struggling or uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person. Students may be embarrassed and lack self-confidence to speak in class. Even though all the courses in the faculty are taught in English, all of the students are not native English speakers. This concurred with the findings of Cobanoglu (2006), affirming that blogs provides an alternative voice for students who were not native English speakers. This is also evident in some of their comments:

It's easy to voice out your opinions than speak it face to face. For people who are not good at speaking out their opinion in public, a blog offers them an opportunity to convey their thoughts without having to come in contact others face to face.

The fourth advantage was that blogs were helpful in learning new vocabulary. learners responded that the project assisted them in learning and using new vocabulary. The same finding has been reached by Song and Chan (2008).

The easy use of blogs was the fifth advantage. 25 out of 35 learners write that blogs are very easy to use programs, there is nothing confusing in creating and editing a blog page. Advantage No.6 was convenience. Participants could maintain their blogs whenever they were in the mood or inspired. Many students (23 out of 35) thought that blogs were more convenient and effective tools for disseminating information than traditional methods such as using folders and printed copies. This traditional way of submitting assignments is time consuming, expensive and requires too much work in comparison to electronic way of submitting assignments such as blogs and email. They could just go online at any time and write down their thoughts. This finding is consistent with that reached by Richardson (2006) who interviewed a group of students in his study.

Table (10) The advantages of using blogs

responses	(Total No. of Students = 35)
1. Blog gives participants opportunities to practice writing	27
2. free writing	24
3. Blog provides the avenue for students who are uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person.	30
4. Blog is helpful in learning and using new vocabulary	28
5. Blog is easy to use	25
6. Blog is convenience	23

-The Delimitations of Using Blogs in Learning English

As in Table 10, when students were asked about what they thought the disadvantages of using blog were, four learners responded that they found that the lack of feedbacks and corrections was one of main limitations. As participants practiced writing on their blogs, it was difficult for the teacher to make corrections one after another, especially for a large class. The amount of workload for the teacher was high. But the participant thought it was better for the teacher to give them feedbacks or made corrections of each post. Another limitation reported by many students (17 out of 35) was that blogging activity was too time-consuming. Learners commented on that they found the time-consuming or wished they could have had class time to complete the assignment. This finding is similar to that reached by Cobanoglu (2006) who indicate that time constraints is another disadvantage of blogging. It could be suggested that time constraint is an excuse not to engage in the blog experience rather than a reason despite similar findings in a study by Ding (2008). A third disadvantage was failing to log in and create a blog represents one of the difficulties that learners encounter in using blogs. Quite a number of participants (16 out of 35) thought their lack of technical experience was a big problem when they were creating their blogs. The fourth limitation, as reported by fifteen students, is that some teacher blogs lack regular updating and fail to respond to learners' questions without delay, which affected learners' enthusiasm and initiative in ELT. The establishment of teacher group blogs might solve this problem through cooperative teaching. This finding supported the result of Ding (2008). The fifth limitation mentioned by a considerable number of students (12 out of 35) was that they don't follow the traditional format of writing the paragraph or essay when blogging. This goes in accordance with the results of Tekinarslan (2008) who report that people do not care about the traditional format (like opening, developing, chafing and concluding--the four steps of classic writing); however, once forming the bad habit of it, people will forget how to write an essay on a piece of paper in good order. The sixth ranking reported by a reasonable number of students (10 out of 35) was lack of participation and physical contact with students. This was one of the difficulties that impede the use of blogs in EL instruction. This finding is similar to that of Ho (2009) who cited that lack of continuous and spontaneous communication as another shortcoming of a blog.

Table (11) Disadvantages of using Blogs in learning English

responses	(Total No. of Students = 35)
1. lack of feedbacks and corrections	20
2. The assignment was too time-consuming and/or should have been done in-class	17
3. the problem of logging in and other technical difficulties	16
4. some teacher blogs lack regular updating and fail to respond to learners' questions without delay	15
5. lacking traditional format	12
6-Lack of participation and physical contact with students	10

DISCUSSION

Upon reviewing the data and analyzing the results, the following points were concluded:

1. Students appeared more motivated which was sustained over using blogs. Students appeared more enjoyed, and engaged in many activities than previously. Even students who had previously been fairly passive in the class became more involved. Also, the researcher was impressed by the persistence of the group to ensure that each member of the group had achieved a thorough understanding of whatever was being discussed.
2. Using blogs helped to establish a positive relationship between reflective thinking and their writing performance. A learner who displayed low reflective thinking displayed low writing performance and vice versa. This conclusion is consistent with the conclusions of other studies such as that of This finding is consistent with that of Abu Bakar, Latif & Ya'acob (2010) and Pinkeman (2010). This conclusion can be elaborated as follows:

A. Since a positive attitude change occurred due to the introduction and implementation of using blogs in this study, it is important to realize that teaching writing by using blogs encouraged students to become writers. Students learned by being active participants rather than by passively absorbing information. Using blogs encouraged students to become participants in their learning. They were required to take charge of their writing by selecting their own topics to write about, by deciding how their topics would be developed and what the finished product would be. A focus on using blogs provided the natural development of written language. It allowed for the growth of functional writing skills because the blogs activities took place in a non-threatening climate where students were not afraid to take risks. It was within this environment that students developed their own style and choices.

B. Through making writing purposeful, students became better writers because they had a sense of audience. Additionally, the purpose is motivated by writing on topics that affect them (friendly letter, describing one's hometown), it was then that their writing became purposeful. Hence, proposing writing that is real and meaningful was essential in creating a writing-rich environment. The researcher hoped to make writing an everyday reality for students.

3. Using blogs provided the kind of climate conducive to the growth of writing sub skills and meeting the individual needs of the students. Having supplies and materials available (such as sheets for pre-writing activities, checklists for editing and revising and

means of publication) for the students when they needed avoided wasting time and kept the motivation level high.

4. □Students wrote to communicate their ideas and information to an authentic audience other than the teacher, not only to receive a grade for their pieces of writing but to get comments from the audience as well. Obviously, this helped the students improve their writing skills.

5. The change in the EFL teacher's role from the traditional role which has been evaluating the learner's first draft as if it were the final product, and assuming the role of a consultant, facilitating the learner's step-by-step creation of the piece of writing, is crucial in helping students write better.

6. Providing safe, encouraging, non-threatening environment, i.e. creating settings that motivate students' writing, helps them improve their writing. Pupil-writers need to feel support and acceptance from the teacher and peers to take the kind of risk involved in the process of producing good writing. When they feel safe from criticism, they become eager to write and to share their writing. Therefore, the class becomes a community of writers and students respond positively to a supportive writing atmosphere. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as Tai Po Old Market Public School (2000) and Hill (2000).

CONCLUSIONS

The use of the internet as a resource in language education is rapidly expanding, and opening up exciting avenues for developing foreign or second language skills (Song and Chan, 2008 and Galien and Bowcher, 2010). One of these avenues is the blog. A weblog is an innovation of the Internet. It is authentic, and it provides students with a real-world activity. However, the emergence of the Weblog as a recent innovation can serve as a valuable tool for the teaching of foreign language writing (Yih and Nah, 2009). However, the current study attempts to pursue the students' attitudes towards the use of blog in English language writing. Similar to Fellner & Apple (2006) and Pinkman (2005) Ding, 2008; Galien and Bowcher, 2010, I found that blogging helped the students improve their writing skills. The data obtained from the study also proves that the students formed positive attitudes toward using blogs in English writing classes. The findings of the present study also prove that blogs can be popular in the language classrooms, especially for Saudi students who learn English as a foreign language. As demonstrated by the attitudinal survey data, the majority of students stated that they enjoyed posting, reading their classmates' posts and making comments on those posts, they almost unanimously stated that they liked having their classmates and the teacher write comments on their posts. Students feel more comfortable with blogs as they post messages. A large majority also found the blogging system useful, motivational and effective for improving their writing. On the other hand, the study provided teachers with insights into the disadvantages (e.g. lack of feedbacks and correction, passive behavior, distraction, time-spent, and computer problems) of using blogs in language teaching. By solving disadvantages of using blogs, I hope to improve the efficiency of English teaching by using blogs and students will be more willing to write, and share their blogs with classmates and people all over the world. This study proves that blog is an effective tool that can be used to encourage students to write. However, for blogs to be effective, the following must be considered: (1) The instructor's presence should be more apparent; (2) The timing of the activity should be suitable; (3) The difficulty level of the writing assignment should be suitable for students to write; (4) The suitability of the writing assignment for discussion is important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are presented with the purpose of contributing to the improvement of students:-

- * using blogs should be used in teaching EFL writing at the college.
 - students should be given enough opportunities to use modern technology in their learning
 - Utilizing a variety of instructional aids in order to teach writing.
 - In successful writing classes students need to be reminded of the purpose for their writing: publishing and communicating. Teachers are expected to help students make connections between writing in the classroom and in the world at large.
 - Students-writers should choose their own topics of writing that are of interest to them and their lives.
 - teachers should encourage students to take part in the evaluation of their writing
 - teachers should give students writing activities related to their thinking .
- When using the blogs in EFL classrooms , teachers are advised to take into account the following :-
 - Keeping records of what happens in the classroom for the purposes of regular reflections.
 - Exposing the students to the various types of word knowledge instead of emphasizing only one of them
 - Identifying the problems that face the students in learning how to write to overcome them while teaching .
 - Teachers need more training in writing, especially on using technology
 - Teachers need to encourage their students, guide and support their hesitant steps, reassure them it is acceptable to make mistakes on first drafts and remind them the purpose of the initial writing is to communicate ideas.
 - As mastering the functional writing skills can be achieved gradually, students need periodical experiences to practice it. Frequency of writing increases fluency. Therefore, sufficient time to writing instruction is needed.
 - As an interested audience is helpful and effective, it is recommended to adopt a sense of audience other than the teacher and classmates, such as family members.
 - Teachers should view students as authors and real writers and give them the opportunities to engage in writing as "professionals" do.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following points are suggested for further research:

- 1- Using blogs for developing students' other language skills and sub skills
- 2- Replacing this study with EFL Majors at various educational levels.
- 3- Conducting a comparative study of using blogs and other teaching approaches to investigate the most effective in developing writing skills of EFL students.
- 4- Examining the effectiveness of using blogs in developing translation sub skills for students.

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