A Case Study of Blog-Based Language Learning: An Investigation into ESL Learners' Interaction

Zarei, N.* and Supyan, H.

*School of Language Studies and Linguistics. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia*

ABSTRACT

Language learning is a continuous process that takes place not only in the classroom but also beyond the walls of the classroom with the help of technological tools. One of such tools includes the use of blog as an easily accessible gadget that can facilitate learners' language learning and improve their autonomous learning. The present study explores how the use of language learning materials and interaction in the Learning Management Blog (LMB) contribute to the language learning process. The samples of the study consisted of 14 ESL students studying at a local university in Malaysia. The researchers used the Response Analysis Tool (REAT) as a research instrument and data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis. The results of the study showed that the ESL students made use of meaningful interaction among them in LMB forum and improved their language learning. In addition, the findings of the study revealed that the students were eager to get involved in online interactions and develop different language skills and language patterns as well.

Keywords: Learning Management Blog, E-learning environment, ESL, interaction

INTRODUCTION

Since the 90's, online environments such as blogs, podcasts and web forums have provided learners with interactive environments to facilitate language learning anywhere and anytime. These technological tools can be integrated into English language classes as a scaffolding system to support learners' language learning. As an online learning platform, Learning Management Blog (LMB) can create opportunities for sharing information and providing rich inputs and supportive learning materials that learners can benefit from. Previous researchers emphasised the importance of sufficient language inputs in L2 acquisition

and learning, and highlighted the roles of interaction, participation and communication among learners and between learners and instructors in enhancing learners' L2 (see Collentine & Freed, 2004; Gore, 2005; Churchill, 2006; DuFon & Churchill, 2006). LMB can be used to share information and views through interactions which take place among LMB members. In addition, it can be a collaborative learning that provides an environment in which learners can learn in groups.

Blogs expand the opportunities for student interaction and the horizon of that "learning space" (Williams & Jacobs, 2004, p. 232; Blackstone *et al.,* 2007) exponentially, and provide student writers with a far greater audience both within and outside their classroom. Dieu (2004) 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" (p. 26). Learners can improve their collaborations by posting their tasks on blogs and make use of the online discussions with their peers. Wu (2005) also 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. Flatley (2005) also pointed out that blogs give learners a social space in which they can actively be involved in interaction with their peers, therefore, providing the learners with

an encouraging environment in which they pursue discussing various topics and issues and have almost an equal voice to speak or express their thoughts and knowledge. A blog is dynamically able to play a role of being a meaningful communicative platform for not only individual self-expression but also social connectivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different studies that have been carried out regarding the use of blogs in language teaching and learning. For instance, Eidswick (2007) examined students' attitudes towards using weblogs for English Language learning. He focused on the students' attitudes to teacher-independent, collaborative creation of weblogs. The samples of his study involved forty-nine sophomore students at a private university in Osaka, Japan. The students created their own blogs and wrote weekly entries on their weblogs during one semester. They were not allowed to work individually in order to support interdependence. Data were collected by using a Japanese-Language survey, with Likert-scale and open sections. The findings revealed that the students perceived the activity as enjoyable and useful. However, Eidswick's study has some limitations as the writing produced by the weblog groups was not examined for grammatical accuracy, lexical sophistication, word count, or other markers of proficiency. He did not focus on group and individual production of blogs and learners' feedback to them, and their impacts on the learners' learning.

A study by Hsua *et al.* (2008) investigated how the use of audio-blogs could help to meet an instructor's need to improve instruction in English as a second language. Data were collected via Likert-scale survey, open-ended questionnaires, interview and analysis of students' audio-blogs. The findings of the study showed that the use of audio-blogs met the instructor's instructional needs, provided an efficient and effective way to evaluate students' oral performance and permitted individualised oral feedback. Learners enjoyed the ease of using audio-blogs and believed that audio-blogs assisted their language-learning experiences. Moreover, the findings revealed that the instructor should use the audio-blog to give assignments regularly. The instructor should also provide the learners with constructive and accurate feedback which helps them correct their mistakes and problems. Dippold (2009) evaluated the usefulness of blogs for peer feedback on second language writing among German students. The focus of the study was on the students' perceptions as well as their peer feedback. The results of the study revealed that blogs were potentially valuable and helpful tools for the students' peer feedback.

Similarly, Yang (2009) investigated the use of blogs as reflective tools in the training processes of English as a Foreign Language among student teachers. The teachers made use of blogs as platforms to critically reflect on their learning processes. One of the focuses of the study was on the teacher trainers' roles in the process of blog. The samples of the study consisted of forty three EFL student teachers in two teacher training programmes at two Science and Technology institutions in central Taiwan. The class was to prepare prospective students the ability to converse in English at the workplace. The researcher applied the qualitative method and data collection was carried out via survey questionnaires and blog posts. Based on the results of the study, the blog played a significant role in a community of practice in that it was used by the participants as a discussion space. The student teachers participated actively in the discussion forum provided in the blog, and learned from each other via interacting with others.

In addition, Noytim (2010) carried out a study on learners' perceptions and attitudes towards using blogs in the Thai context. The focus of the study was on the potential value of blog use on English Language learning. The samples of the study consisted of twenty undergraduate English major female studentsin the Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes II course. Data were collected through questionnaires, interview questionnaires, as well as the students' blogs entries. The results of the study indicated that the learners perceived the blogs as a tool for the improvement of their English Language, with regard to aspects such as writing, reading, vocabulary, as well as recording their learning experience. In terms of students' perceptions towards using language learning blogs, Halic *et al.* (2010) also explored whether or not the use of blogs in a large lecture class would enhance students' perceived language learning. The samples included sixty seven undergraduate

students. The findings of the study showed that while a majority of the students reported that blogs enhanced their learning and led them to think about course concepts outside the classroom, fewer perceived value in their peer comments.

It is worth stating that Luo and Gao (2012) also examined students' learning experiences in a set of structured micro-blog-based class activities in an exploratory study with a small sample size. Data were collected via in-class discussion transcripts, micro-blog posts, pre- and post- survey results, and the after-class blog posts. The results of the study indicated that the structure provided by the instructor in the micro-blog activities allowed the learners to focus on the learning content as well as participate actively. Although all of the above studies were carried out among various contexts, they shared almost the same findings in terms of learners' attitudes and perceptions towards using blogs as English Language learning tools.

The above researchers agreed that the students perceived blogs as an enjoyable, beneficial and valuable platform for them to improve their learning. In addition, the students showed positive attitudes and perceptions towards the use of blogs for improving their English Language skills. Although there are existing studies and reviews on the use of blogs as an educational setting, further studies still need to be conducted especially with respect to the use of blogs in the second or foreign language learning and language acquisition processes outside of the classroom. This is because

most of the above-mentioned studies have focused on the "product of language learning" or language performance rather than the process of language learning and language acquisition.

In classifying these previous studies, Supyan (2011) suggested three different models of language learning using blogs in education as illustrated in Fig.1. Model 1 emphasises the students' search for already designed blogs and using the information for learning (blog uses as a source of information). Model 2 emphasises the learners' development of their own blogs for their prescribed assignments and tasks, and requires them to comment on their works posted in these blogs (blog used as a sharing tool). Model 3 focuses on teachers' or instructors' management blogs to scaffold language learning and language acquisition processes (learning management blog). Thus, most of the studies on blogs followed either Model 1 (Pramela *et al.*, 2010; Álvarez, 2012) or Model 2 (Nadzrah & Kemboja, 2009; Aljumah, 2012; Marsden & Piggot-Irvine, 2012; Sun & Chang, 2012). Only a scarce number of previous studies carried out focused on Model 3 (Izaham, 2008; Yang, 2009; Supyan *et al.*, 2010; Supyan, 2011), in which instructors create the blogs and scaffold learners in their learning processes. Model 3, which forms a theoretical framework for the study, is closely related to Vygotsky's (1978) idea of zone of proximal development (ZPD) that argues learners should achieve their learning objectives within their Actual Development Zone and yet, be able to extend their learning

process in the Potential Development Zone enhanced by scaffolding facilities. The present study, which adapts Model 3, attempts to investigate how the supporting learning materials and interaction in the LMB contribute to the language learning process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates how the supporting learning materials and interactions in the LMB contribute to the language learning process among a particular group of ESL students. The supporting learning materials in the LMB offer videos, audios and texts regarding English Language skills, as well as English Language tests and a forum. The students posted comments and provide their feedback to the administrators and classmates. They were also able to use the supporting learning elements in the LMB and improve their knowledge. In addition,

the students got involved in interactive communications in the forum and exchanged their opinions and information.

The methodology used in this study was qualitative analysis. The researchers used purposive sampling involving 14 undergraduate Malaysian ESL students who registered in the Academic Communication Course at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). The students' level of English proficiency was categorised as intermediate according to the coordinator and instructor of the course offered at the Centre of Liberal Arts, which is now known as CITRA. The intermediate level/modest user of proficiency, according to the Centre, refers to band 3 score that the learners gained in their MUET. It is worth mentioning that the students were familiar with using online environments as social networks such as blog, Facebook and Forum. Although they were acquainted with such online
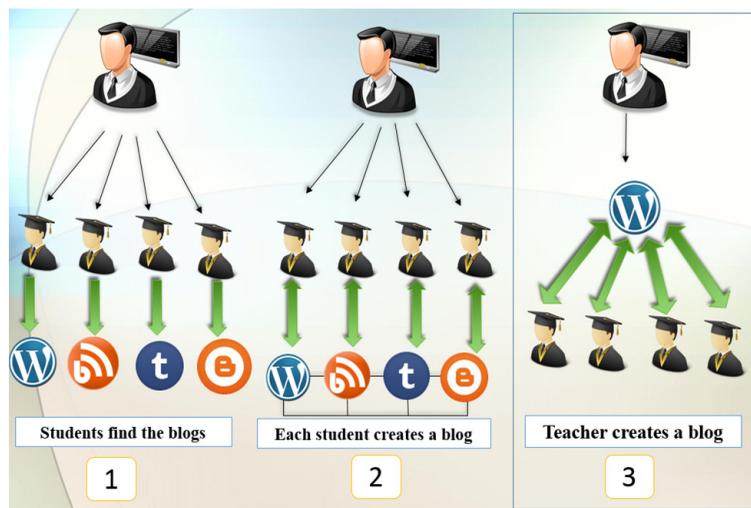

Fig.1: Models of language learning using blogs in education
Supyan (2011)

environments, a training session on how to use the LMB was still provided for them. Data collection was carried out via the Response Analysis Tool (REAT). REAT was employed through the students' online interactive or commentary exchanges and investigation of the students' comments in the discussion forum. REAT (see Appendix A. p. 256) included three categories, namely: A: students 'responses to the administrator's questions; B: students' inquiries; and C: students' small group discussions. The REAT was designed in order to collect data that would determine pattern of the students' participation and engagements in the LMB activities.

The researchers acted as participant observers and observed the students' activities, comments and posts everyday in order to complete the REAT during the 14 weeks of the semester. The observation was according to the REAT prepared beforehand. The researchers monitored the students' participation, engagements, communications and interactions in the LMB and updated the instructor of the course on the students' performance and engagements weekly. The researchers noted the data in the REAT every day. The data obtained from this study were analysed qualitatively using content analysis. For analysing the data, the researcher used the REAT to find out how frequent the participants communicated or interacted with each other and figure out the numbers of time that they posted their comments and answers on the LMB or responded to each other's messages. However, it is worth stating that the researchers' focus was more on the contents of the students' posts in the LMB because the quality of their comments was more significant than the quantity of their participations in the LMB activities. The LMB was designed using the learner-cantered approach, which allowed the students to decide on the frequency of their participation and also to decide when and how to use the English Language learning guides provided in the LMB in order for them to learn. The course required the students to participate in the LMB and the students were advised that by having 'meaningful' contributions in the 14-week period of the unit they could earn 10% of the total mark for the course from the teacher. In other words, the LMB observation was implemented through observing the participants' comments virtually and the researchers as participant observers frequently (every day) observed the forum in the LMB in order to collect rich and in-depth data needed for the present study. Therefore, the researchers monitored the participants' activities and interactions, as well as described the learning process in the LMB environment by using the REAT.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in four major themes. The first theme, A, which emerged from the analysis through the REAT included the students' responses to the administrator's questions. For theme A in the REAT (the students' responses to the administrator's questions), the students were asked 18 questions by the administrator.

The questions are related to the students' course objectives and assignments, as well as supportive language learning materials in the LMB. Based on the researchers' observations, it was concluded that all of the students replied to all of the questions during the 14 weeks. Some of the students' original excerpts to the administrator's questions are given in the following conversations:

> *Administrator: Have you read the tips on "How to Create a PowerPoint Presentation" in the blog? If so, please share your ideas about them.*

> *R4: Yes, I had read the tips. From my reading, the article reminds me on what should I do and what should I not do during the presentation also the preparation for presentation. The main point should be state out clearly so that the audience can understand the purpose of your presentation.*

> *R8: Yes, there are many ways to make effective presentation. First is the text must be big so that people able to see our slide clearly. The text must be simple and don't put so much details in it. Then, put some sound effects and picture to attract your audience's attention. The font, capitalization, number, bullet must be clear.*

> *R10: Yes, I already read the tips in the blog. Most of the tips based on the preparation to make the better*

> *slides and we are well exposed about the importance and uses of Microsoft PowerPoint.*

The second emerged theme was the students' inquiries in the LMB. Based on the obtained information via the REAT, it is obvious that the students were interested in commenting on their friends' posts, as well as answering the administrator's questions and getting involved in the interaction in the discussion forum. For theme B in the REAT (the students' inquiries), the researchers observed the questions that the students asked each other or the administrator during the semester. 11 out of 14 students asked questions regarding their class assignments and the supportive language learning guides in the LMB environment. The students asked for some guidance in order to improve their writing for their assignments. By asking questions, they gained some ideas on how to improve their course tasks. Some of the students' questions are as follows:

> *R8: Hi guys. Is anybody here to tell me my outline is correct? I am not confident. Thank you. Based on my article and outline, what do u guys thinks of our national crisis management in Malaysia? Is it efficient or should we really need to polish our management structure as it is not effective to this issue? Is there any other good way to handle this crisis if it involved the whole country, not only in Sabah?*

R4: Based on your article, I agree with her idea on how to restructure the national crisis in Malaysia. We should have a specialist to advice government on our country safety. It is really important to protect our home land. Just imagine, we have nowhere to go if they take our home land. Same goes to the Lahad Datu's issues, we have to find best way to protect Sabah because it is part of our home land! Don't let them find out a single part of our weakness.

R6: http://esllearners.wordpress. com/2013/03/21/group-2-stage-1-searching-for-information/ comment-page-1/ - comment-168 Hi. I have some suggestion. Your outline good but why don't you put it in number form, so that it make us easier to read your outline. Thank you :)

R5: http://esllearners.wordpress. com/2013/03/21/group-2-stage-1-searching-for-information/ comment-page-1/ - comment-240

I'm agree with NSR. Better in numbering form make us more easy to distinguish the main point and supporting details.

The third theme was the students' interaction to improve their course tasks and assignments. The students were eager to participate in the forum and share their opinions, ask questions and state their difficulties in order to have a better understanding on how to come up with their course tasks and writing. It is worth stating that the students showed their interest and willingness to participate in the LMB by sharing their ideas about each other's tasks. The students read each other's writing and commented on them. The interaction among them made them think twice and deeply about what they had written. Several of them changed their writing and posted on the forum again after revising their writing based on their friends' suggestions and opinions. The interaction among them helped them to have a better understanding of what they were asked to write for their course assignments.

R10: I think this is good but I need to know which part in your article that show the point of your outline. Can you add the article's sentences that show your point?

R12: Your outline is good but I think maybe you can add supporting detail for your outline like giving an example. Conclusion on how I improved my article.

R14: I have finished my final draft according to "Outline Tips and Videos tips" that is provided in this blog and also some suggestions in forum from my classmate and I have improve my outline better than my previous outline because I had put a few of supporting details for the main points in my outline. I used the materials in this blog to come

out with better outline and easy to understand because I have used the roman to numbered my main points and using alphabets for the supporting details.

The fourth emerged theme was "the students' small group discussions in the LMB". The students showed the willingness to participate in the forum in the LMB. According to their feedback, the reason that motivated them to get engaged in the discussion forum was the interactive communication that led them to improve their learning, course tasks and projects. The students' exchanging thoughts and opinions in the LMB were observed as well. Theme C in the REAT consisted of the students' small group discussions in the LMB. All the students participated in the interactive discussions with each other with regard to their posts and course assignments. They shared their opinions and views about each others' tasks and tried to help each other by reading each others' tasks and leaving comments about them. Several students mentioned that they improved their writing and tasks with their friends' help via the discussion in the forum. For example, two of the students' questions are as follows:

"For me the blog helped me to write a better assignments, because I read some lessons and I also improved my writing skill and English vocabularies by the blog. By improving my vocabulary and writing I improve my assignments". *(R1)*

"The blog was a good place for me to know about my friend assignments. Everybody posted their work in forum. I look at some of them and I got some ideas for my outline also. It was very good to see their writing and write comments for each other. I improve my writing and my class assignments with reading my friend writing and based on their comments and also the learning materials in our blog". *(R6)*

Some parts of the students' discussions in the LMB are given as follows:

R11: SBS this is a good article which our government and police should do. We should build a special bureau for missing children so that the bureau will only focus on the missing children cases.

R5: I agree with you AFA. If there is a special bureau for missing children, of course missing children problem can be minimise and also solve as well.

R12: I agree with your point that we should build a special bureau for missing children, but I think we can also build a bureau with the help of volunteers because we cannot expect 100% the helps from the government.

R3: Hi AFA, base on your article, I like the part on how to keep your children safe because the tips seems

simple but I think it is very useful to parents to keep their child safe.

R5: I agree with NSR. Better in numbering form makes us easier to distinguish the main point and supporting details.

R12: I think this is good for childrens to learn all these steps because sometimes we cannot depend only on one party, we all should think about something to prevent from this missing issues.

R5: You have a lot of points. I think this is good outline. But maybe you can add more supporting detail.

Based on the students' responses, it can be summarised that the students obviously improved their knowledge and information by interacting with each other in the discussion forum. They posed questions to each other in order to complete their tasks and improve their learning, shared their opinions about the tasks and guided each other in order to improve their writing.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the data collected from the interactions that were taking place among the students in the forum as well as their ideas with regard to the provided language learning materials in the LMB, it can be concluded that the students enhanced their language learning process by sharing their ideas and information with each other in the discussion forum. They had the opportunity to post their class assignments and tasks in order to get their classmates' opinions and views regarding their writing. At the same time, they were able to correct their mistakes either in terms of content or format. The interaction among them improved not only their understanding of the issues taught by the instructor in the classroom but also the tasks and assignments given. In addition, the language learning materials provided in the LMB were helpful for the students since some of them were used to enhance their language learning process. This phenomenon is a manifestation of the learning process as prescribed by Supyan's and Vygotsky's models. According to the data obtained from the students, they took the opportunity to go through the language learning materials they needed to improve their English Language skills. By reading the tips and techniques, watching the videos and doing exercises and drills in the LMB, they learned and acquired knowledge and gained extra information to improve their English Language and complete the course assignments.

Based on Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory, learners as active participants achieve understanding and make meaning from their surrounding environments. Supyan's (2011) models of language learning using blogs stated that the learners would be able to explain their Actual Development of learning into the Potential Zone of learning if they took the opportunity of using the scaffolding facilities provided by the instructors in the language course. The students participated in the LMB activities and interacted with

each other in the discussion forum, one of the scaffolding facilities.

The interaction among them improved their understanding of the lessons and assignments. They learned and acquired from each other, corrected their own mistakes and finally improved their writing and tasks. In other words, participating in the forum and having language learning guides in the LMB provided the students the opportunity to have access to more information and to do more practices on what have been taught by their teacher in the classroom. Therefore, the opportunity to use the supportive scaffolding enlarged the size of the ZPD and led them to enhance their language learning and language acquisition processes. In other words, the language learning materials in the LMB acted as external supportive learning mechanisms to support language learning and language acquisition processes. The students made use of the scaffolding materials to learn more, apart from learning from the teacher in the classroom. Based on Vygotsky's idea of constructivism, once the students have learned or acquired more input via the LMB, their potential zone will become wider and bigger.

Considering Vygotsky's ZPD and with the support of the LMB as a learning platform outside the classroom, the students took the opportunity of acquiring more input (information and knowledge) that complemented their language learning process within the potential zone. Applying the ZPD to the content classroom addresses process issues rather than product issues.

Students can learn most effectively by becoming active participants in their own learning process via exchanging ideas and information through interaction. Students can progress to their fullest potential when they are provided with scaffolding and supportive instruction. As a matter of fact, within the potential zone, language learning was enriched because the students made use of the language learning materials provided in the LMB as scaffolding. They exchanged their ideas and thoughts with each other in the discussion forum, which led them to gain feedback from one another through the interactions.

Flatley (2005, p. 77) stated that the technological medium provides a space where learners can interact with each other, and it can open up the classroom space "where discussions are continued and where every student gets an equal voice". Moreover, blogs can promote collaboration (Oravec, 2002; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Flatley, 2005). Vygotsky (1978) also believed that humans are social creatures. That is how people live and how they are best able to learn. Based on his theory, the students can learn more if they are able to discuss and share their ideas and thoughts with each other. In other words, depending on the social context of the classroom, learners may benefit from being able to interact socially with their classmates as they learn. According to Vygotsky's theory the socio-cultural context of learning and the environment outside the classroom must be considered.

The LMB, as a language learning platform outside the classroom, plays a significant role to enhance the students' language learning and language acquisition processes by giving them the opportunity to share ideas and information via the discussion forum as well as provide the language learning materials as scaffolding. That is where Vygotsky (1978) asserted that a teacher should be more of a guide and a facilitator, and not an instructor who merely dictates and dispenses information. Zaini *et al.* (2011) asserted that blogs offer students a high level of autonomy to interact with their peers and benefit them by allowing them to share their collaborative writing in an interactive social environment. As mentioned earlier, learners can develop their understanding and information through sharing their opinions. Vygotsky also emphasises that learners gain knowledge through the process of interacting with the teacher, fellow classmates and the socio-cultural environment. In other words, the major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. New paradigms in language teaching and learning are needed to encourage students acquire and improve their second language or foreign language proficiency in a social context (Vygotsky, 1978), which affects the nature and quality of language learning.

There are also other previous studies which showed that blogs can be used as a tool to improve language learning. For example, Kavaliauskienė *et al.* (2006) conducted a study on applying innovative techniques for written and oral communication in English classes. The results of the study revealed that the experience of writing for an audience gave a significant opportunity for learning the English Language. Moreover, Kang *et al.* (2011) investigated whether or not the blog-based instruction became an effective technology-enhanced learning environment. The findings of his study showed that the blogs provide the learners with the opportunities to socialise and construct their knowledge based on the social constructivist learning theory and a community of practice theory. Zarei and Al-Shboul (2013) found that EFL learners perceived the blog as an interesting and helpful learning tool since interacting via the blog helped them improve their English Language skills as well as their communication skills based on peer feedback. Finally, a study by Zarei and Supyan (2014) showed that the learning management blog assisted the learners to develop their independent learning interest and motivation to use the English Language learning materials in the blog.

In summary, based on the students' feedback, the LMB apparently plays a significant role in providing an environment for the students to exchange their tasks, thoughts, ideas and suggestions with each other. The interactions in the discussion forum helped them enhance their language learning. They made use of their classmates' experiences and views to correct their mistakes in their tasks. Nor Fariza, Afendi, and Embi, (2012, p. 251) also stated that "most tertiary students are able to learn well

via an online forum that even with minimal intervention from the lecturer, the students participated actively in the online forum". Moreover, they were able to read the English Language lessons, watch the videos, and listen to the audios provided in the LMB to enrich their knowledge and understanding of the issues taught by the teacher in the classroom. In addition, they gained more information with regard to the English Language skills to enhance their language learning and language acquisition processes. They were willing to take part in the LMB activities and post their ideas because they felt comfortable during the learning process. Getting engaged in the LMB activities and making use of the language learning materials in the LMB enabled the students to personalise their language learning process and finally make it meaningful and relevant to them. In addition, the students were able to make use of the discussion forum and become autonomous learners. Noriah *et al.* (2013) also asserted that the special e-forum activities not only assist the learners to be autonomous in learning but also enjoy their learning process.

The findings of the study are applicable to all ESL tertiary learners who are learning English Language, as well as English Language instructors and lecturers who are striving to present a better and more effective way of teaching English language.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to 14 undergraduate Malaysian ESL students studying at UKM. Therefore, the findings of the present study cannot be generalised to other groups of Malaysian ESL students and to other groups of students in other countries. The students' level of English proficiency was categorised as intermediate. Thus, generalisations of the findings obtained by the researcher are restricted and limited only to a particular group of the undergraduate Malaysian ESL context.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study indicated that the language learning guides and the forum provided in the LMB played significant roles in order to enhance the students' information, knowledge and interactions. As a language learning platform, the LMB contributed positively towards the students' language learning process. The students were enthusiastic in making use of the supportive language learning guides as well as the forum and had eagerly participated in the LMB. They found the forum section as the most helpful feature in the LMB due to the advantageous interactive communications. The interactive communications among the learners not only motivated them to improve their learning, but also helped to enhance their language learning processes. Therefore, it is recommended that lecturers and teachers use such online learning platforms such as the LMB in their language courses. Teachers and lecturers should be well-trained in preparing sufficient comprehensive and rich input in the LMB or any other online learning tools in order to enhance the students' learning processes.

As the present study adopted a qualitative method, i.e., a case study, similar research should also be carried out using other methodologies, including the quantitative approach to allow for richer and more in-depth findings to come forth. Moreover, the focus of this study is on learning aspect therefore, more research on using the LMB considering teaching aspects is required in order to have a more holistic view of teaching process using the LMB. Thus, it will be beneficial to find out the effects of using the LMB considering teaching aspects.

REFERENCES

Aljumah, F. H. (2012). Saudi learner perceptions and attitudes towards the use of blogs in teaching English writing course for EFL majors at Qassim university. *English Language Teaching, 5*(1), 100-116.

Álvarez, G. (2012). New technologies in the university context: The use of blogs for developing students' reading and writing skills. *Universities and Knowledge Society Journal (RUSC), 9*(2), 185-199.

Bignell, C. (2012). Talk for pupil empowerment: Seeking pupil empowerment in current curriculum approaches. *Literacy, 46*(1), 48-55.

Blackstone, B., Spiri, J., & Naganuma, N. (2007). Blogs in English language teaching and learning: Pedagogical uses and student responses. *Reflections on English Language Teaching, 6*(2), 1-20.

Churchill, E. (2006). Variability in the study abroad classroom and learner competence. *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts,* 203-227.

Collentine, J. & Freed, B. F. (2004). Learning context and its effects on second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition- SSLA, 26*(3), 153-171.

Dieu, B. (2004). Blogs for language learning. *Tesol Essential Teacher, 1*(4), 26-30.

Dippold, D. (2009). Peer feedback through blogs: Student and teacher perceptions in an advanced German class. *ReCALL, 21*(1), 18-36.

DuFon, M. A. & Churchill, E. (2006). *Language learners in study abroad context* (Second Language Acquisition). Clevedon, UK.

Eidswick, J. (2007). Student attitudes toward using weblogs for English learning. *Japan conference: Exploring theory, enhancing practice: Autonomy across the disciplines*, Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan.

Flatley, M. (2005). Blog for enhanced teaching and learning. *Business Communication Quarterly, 68*(1), 77-80.

Gore, J. (2005). *Dominant beliefs and alternative voices: Discourse, belief, and gender in American study abroad*. New York: Routledge.

Halic, O., Lee, D., Paulus, T., & Spence, M. (2010). To blog or not to blog: Student perceptions of blog effectiveness for learning in a college-level course. *The Internet and Higher Education, 13*(4), 206-213.

Hsua, H., Wanga, S., & Comac, L. (2008). Using audioblogs to assist English-language learning: an investigation into student perception. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 21*(2), 181-198.

Izaham Shah, B. I. (2008). An analysis of the utilization of weblog as a tool in teaching critical reading skills among selected pre-university ESL students. PhD thesis. Education International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia.

Kang, I., Bonk, C. J., & Kim, M. C. (2011). A case study of blog-based learning in Korea: technology becomes pedagogy. *The Internet and Higher Education, 14*(4), 227–235.

Kavaliauskienė, G., Anusienė, L., & Mažeikienė, V. (2006). Application of blog for learner development. *Journal of Language and Learning, 4*(2), 133-143.

Luo, T. & Gao, F. (2012). Enhancing classroom learning experience by providing structures to microblog-based activities. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice, 11*, 199-211.

Marsden, N. & Piggot-Irvine, E. (2012). Using blog and laptop computers to improve writing skills on a vocational training course. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 28*(1), 30-47.

Nadzrah, A. B. & Kemboja, I. (2009). Using blogs to encourage ESL students to write constructively in English. *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 1*(1), 45-57.

Nor Fariza, M. N. Afendi, H., & Embi, M. A. (2012). Patterns of discourse in online interaction: Seeking evidence of the collaborative learning process. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 25*(3), 237-256.

Noriah, I., Deepak, S. R. S., & Rafiaah, A.(2013). Fostering learner autonomy and academic writing interest via the use of structured e-forum activities among ESL students. *Proceedings of EDULEARN13 Conference.* 1st - 3rd July 2013, Barcelona, Spain. pp. 4622-4626.

Noytim, U. (2010). Weblogs enhancing EFL students' English language learning. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2), 1127–1132.

Oravec, J. A. (2002). Bookmarking the world. Weblog applications in education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 45*(7), 616–621.

Pramela, K., Supyan, H., & Nackeeran, S. (2010). Learner diversity among ESL learners in the online forum. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, International Conference on Learner Diversity.

Sun, Y. C. & Chang, U. J. (2012). Blogging to learn: Becoming EFL academic writers through collaborative dialogues. *Language Learning & Technology, 16*(1), 43-61.

Supyan, H. (2004). Web-based language learning materials: A challenge. *Internet Journal of e-Language Learning & Teaching, 1*(1), 31-42.

Supyan, H. (2011). Usig blog to enhance process writing approach: Is there anything new? *SoLLs. INTEC.11 International Conference. Language, Culture, & Literacy: Engaging Diversity in Challenging Times*, Hotel Equatorial Bangi, Selangor.

Supyan, H., Norizan, A. R., & Dalia S. Q. (2010). Developing blogs: New dimension in language teacher education. *Paper presented Teaching and Learning of English in Asia (TLEiA Three) November 18 to 20.* Brunei Darussalam.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and Society: The Development of Higher Mental Processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Original work published in 1930, 1933, 1935).

Ward, J. M. (2004). Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL): Push button publishing forthe pupils. *TEFL Web Journal, 3*(1), 1-16.

Williams, J. B. & Jacobs, J. (2004). Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in thehigher education sector. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 20*(2), 232-247.

Wu, W. S. (2005). Using blogs in an EFL writing class. *International Conference and Workshop on TEFL and Applied Linguistics, Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan University. 16*, 426-432.

Yang, S. H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society, 12*(2), 11-21.

Zaini, A., Kemboja, I., & Supyan, H. (2011). Blogs in language learning: maximizing students' collaborative writing. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 18*(0), 537-543.

Zarei, N. & Al-Shboul, Y. (2013). Participating in a blog: Jordanian EFL learners' voices. *English Linguistics Research, 2*(2), 53-59.

Zarei, N. & Supyan, H. (2014). Impact of learning management blog on students' language learning and acquisition. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies 14*(3), 51-63.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSE ANALYSIS TOOL (REAT)

Respondents	A: The students' responses to the administrator's questions	B: The students' inquiries	C: The students' small group discussions
R1	18	3	5
R2	18	4	10
R3	18	4	6
R4	18	4	14
R5	19	5	17
R6	19	6	12
R7	18	6	7
R8	18	4	10
R9	18	5	12
R10	20	4	11
R11	18	4	6
R12	18	6	12
R13	18	2	2
R14	18	5	10