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The Impact of Integrating Weblogs into an ESP Classroom

Luiza Zeqiri

Language Centre, South East European University, Tetovo.

Email: **l.zeqiri@seeu.edu.mk**

Abstract

Researchers have investigated the role of information technology (IT) in learning but there is a need for studies investigating the impact of Blogging distinctively. There are previous studies which support the use of technology in the classroom and researchers who are arguing the opposite by expressing their concerns related to technology integration into the curriculum. This paper attempts to explore the impact and effectiveness of using weblogs in universities, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) environment. The participants in this study were 25 second and third year Communication Sciences students attending ESP one and two courses. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. Evidence was gathered in the form of student questionnaires, weblogs and teacher's analysis and evaluation of the process. The findings indicate that ESP students would not use their blogs effectively unless they are monitored and motivated by their teacher. It can be suggested that blogs can be used as an educational tool in different ESP courses and not only with ESP for Communication Sciences because their usage enhances student-student and teacher-student interaction and promotes discussions. Moreover, using Blogs in the classroom proved to be a good opportunity to promote students' self reflection, peer evaluation skills and also their critical thinking ability. Finally, weblogs encourage collaborative work; establish a rapport between the learners and the teacher, by building a learning community and enhancing learner autonomy.

Key words: *ESP, technology, blogs, communication, students*

Abstrakt

Edhe pse studiuesit kanë hetuar rolin e teknologjisë së internetit gjatë mësimdhënies dhe nxënies përsëri ka mungesë të studimeve, dhe në veçanti mungesë e studimeve në lidhje me ndikimin e blogjeve (blogs) në të mësuarit. Ekzistojnë studime të cilat e mbështesin përdorimin e teknologjisë në klasë dhe studiues të cilët argumentojnë të kundërtën duke shprehur shqetësimin e tyre në lidhje me integrimin e teknologjisë në programin mësimor. Ky punim tenton të eksploroj ndikimin dhe efektivitetin e përdorimit të web blogjeve në sistemin edukativ, më saktësisht në lëndën *Gjuha angleze për qëllime specifike* (ESP). Pjesëmarrësit në këtë studim janë 24 studentë të vitit të dytë dhe të tretë që ndjekin ESP 1 dhe 2 (Shkencat e komunikimit). Për mbledhjen e të dhënave janë përdorur qasje cilësore dhe sasiore. Provat u mblodhën në formë të pyetësorëve të studentëve, blogjeve dhe vlerësimi i procesit nga ana e mësimdhënësit. Rezultatet tregojnë se studentët i përdorin blogjet në mënyrë efektive vetëm nëse ato janë të monitoruar dhe të motivuar nga mësimdhënësi. Mundemi të sugjerojmë se blogjet duhet përdorur si një mjet edukativ në lëndë të ndryshme dhe jo vetëm me studentët e ESP-së për shkak se përdorimi i blogjeve e rrit komunikimin ndërmjet studentëve dhe komunikimin ndërmjet studentëve dhe mësimdhënësit. Për më tepër, përdorimi i blogjeve u vërtetua të jetë një mundësi e mirë për të nxitur vetë-reflektimin e studentëve, aftësitë e vlerësimit të kolegëve të tyre dhe aftësitë e të menduarit kritik. Pra, web blogjet inkurajojnë punën bashkëpunuese, krijojnë marrëdhënie ndërmjet mësimdhënësit dhe studentëve duke krijuar një mjedis të mësimnxënies dhe duke rritur autonominë e studentëve.

Fjalë kyçe: *ESP (Gjuha angleze për qëllime specifike), teknologjia, blogjet, komunikimi, studentët*

Апстракт

Иако истражувачите ја испитувале улогата на информативната технологија во учењето и претходно, сеуште има потреба од студии кои ќе го истражуваат ефектот на употреба на блогови. Постојат претходни студии што ја подржуваат употребата на технологијата во училницата како и истражувачи кои имаат спротивни аргументи изразувајќи ја нивната загриженост во врска со интеграцијата на технологијата во наставната програма. Оваа студија прави обид за истражување на ефективноста на употребата на интернет блогови на универзитет, особено во предметот *Англиски јазик за посебни намени*. Учесниците во оваа студија беа 25 студенти во втора и трета година, запишани на Комуникациски Науки кои следеа *Англиски за посебни намени* (АПН) I и II. При собирањето на податоци беа применети квалитативни и квантитативни приоди. Податоците беа собирани во форма на прашалници, интернет блогови и анализа и евалуација на процесот од страна на професорите. Резултатие покажаа дека студентите не ги употребувале блоговите ефективно кога не биле надгледувани и мотивирани од страна на нивните предавачи. Тука треба да се напомене дека блоговите може да се употребат како ефективно едукативно средство во различни АПН предмети и тоа не само со АПН студенти на Комуникациски Науки. Употребата на блогови ја подобрува интеракцијата меѓу студентите, како и меѓу студентите и предавачите и исто така потикнува и дискусија. Употребата на блогови на час се покажа како добра можност за промоција на самоанализа, вештини на оценување на соучениците како и способноста за критично размислување. На крај може да се каже дека блоговите поттикнуваат соработка, формираат однос помеѓу

учениците и предавачите градејќи заедница на учењето и подобрување на самоиницијативното учење кај ученикот.

Клучни зборови: *АПН (Англиски за посебни намени, технологија, блогови, комуникација, студенти*

Introduction

Information technology [1](IT) has become a very important and necessary tool to reinforce the quality of learning and teaching English as a foreign language. By integrating technology in teaching, teachers can help the students connect with each other and read, share, discuss or suggest ideas. Students today are dependent on IT, thus creating a technology learning environment is likely to make their learning more entertaining. Therefore, one effective way to involve technology in learning is to apply weblogs which can help students learn and practice English by reflecting on their classroom experience. Blogs provide a source for further development of communication skills and can be considered as a key element for practicing communication in a foreign language.

Definition about Blogs or Weblogs

According to Abdullah & Kuzu, (2006) blogs are easy to use since they do not require any knowledge of designing web pages, and blogs can help people post about different topics and then others can leave comments, as cited in, Istifci (2011, p.213).

Eastment, (2005) defines blogs as following:

> Online diaries; logs of thoughts, reflections; a space for individuals to write whatever they choose with an option for readers to comment on what they have read, as cited in Aljumah, F. H. (2012, p.102)

Theoretical and Practical Importance of the Present Study

At the Language Center technology and IT are already a part of the curriculum, but there is still a need for innovations in technology application. So far, technology is used for presentations, listening to songs, using the listening portions from the students' textbooks, using Libri as a LMS or for watching films. Being aware that students need trendy and active learning methods, something visual and even more dynamic which requires a higher order of thinking, I decided to try using blogs which have become a new trend at the LC in the last two years. Since majority of the students in the surveyed class were already equipped with laptops and computers, it was not a problem to make weblogs a part of our syllabus.

Technology can be used effectively to involve students in tasks which require a higher level of thinking such as creating blogs in order to practice their communication skills, to

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[1] According to Laura Schneider "information technology is the use of computers and software to manage information." Retrieved from: http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/careersintechnology/p/ITDefinition.htm

evaluate their own and others' work and to enhance self and critical reflection. Students should become responsible about their learning and thus they need to be aware of their learning and progress. I believe that blogs are a potentially very effective tool to help students with reflective learning by evaluating their own progress. This is in correlation with Rezaee & Oladi (2008, p.73) who show that while blogging students are engaged, they communicate and use different topics to reflect on.

Literature Review

There are teachers and researchers who support using blogs with students in order to help them improve their learning and communication skills. Some of their studies show the effectiveness of using blogs in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom (where ESP is included as well). On the other hand, there are only a few studies which point out the downfalls of using blogs in teaching. Generally, the existing studies reveal more positive results which support the use of technology in the classroom or more specifically they give arguments about the effectiveness of using blogs with students. For example, Bakar & Ismail (2009, p.53) state that through blogs students can practice all the skills, but most importantly writing skills "in an authentic learning environment." Moreover, Pinkman (2005) strongly stressed that blogs as fun and interactive resources can be of a big help in an EFL classroom, as cited in Bakar & Ismail (2009, p.47).

Some researchers have investigated a variety of methods in the field of IT and more particularly the effectiveness of using blogs in teaching, in order to examine the role of integrating weblogs into a classroom. For instance, Yang, S. H. (2009, p.14) mentions the different ways in which language teachers can use blogs, for example: teachers through blogs can ask their students questions, share ideas and communicate with them. Then, according to Achterman, (2006); Godwin-Jones, (2003); Ray, (2006) blogs can be used as an additional collaborative device, plus a resource for providing instructions in the education system, as cited in Tekinarslan (2008, p.402). Another form of using blogs with students is mentioned by Brandt (2008), who says that teachers and students benefit from blogs when they are used to give feedback and for reflective conversations, as cited in Yang, S.H. (2009, p.11). Finally, all these studies investigate not only the impact of blogs towards learning English or another language, but other subjects as well.

Even if many teachers claim that using blogs in the classroom is very creative and helpful, researchers such as: Portas, M.D., Rabaseda, S. S., Domenèch, L.G., Roure, M.S., Font, R.R., Aguilella, E. C. (2008, p.2) state that: even though blogs as educational tools are not very new, they are not used in universities very often. They also point out that teachers' blogs are important and they add that students learn while writing and arguing.

On the other hand, Williams, J. B. and Jacobs, J. (2004) in their study "Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector" mention some universities which had already started using blogs as an educational tool during the time when they were conducting their research; for example, the University of Iowa, Rice University and Harvard University, Stanford University, RMIT University in Melbourne. Researchers, Rezaee & Oladi (2008, p.73), state that: "Weblog, as a new opportunity for people to express their thoughts using Internet facilities, is gaining universal impetus among scholars and educators." To sum up, today there are more universities around the world which are aware

of the importance of integrating technology in teaching and which apply blogs in the classroom.

A few other researchers, Andrew K. Lui , Sheung-on Choy , Yannie H. Y. Cheung, Sandy C. Li (2006, p.248)   point out that: "Mandatory use of weblogs in a course is beneficial. It may be a long time before students are aware of the wonderful range of purpose afforded by weblogs." Nevertheless, they also say that students stop using their blogs as soon as the course ends.

Regarding students' feelings towards using blogs for academic purposes, Kavaliauskienė G. (2010, p.5) in her study 'ESP Writing: Weblogs or Wikis?' says that students like blogging no matter the difficulty of the tasks. Then, Williams and Jacob (2004) affirm that students have a positive attitude towards using blogs in learning because they "increase the interactivity and reflective activities, as cited in Nadzrah Abu Bakar & Kemboja Ismail (2009, p.47). Another researcher, Cobanoglu (2006, p.87) says that: students like to have their blogs graded and they would not be willing to do assignments on their blogs if they do not receive any credit for their work. Thus, Cobanoglu (2006) suggests that teachers should stimulate the students to do their blog assignments by evaluating them.

Lin, Yi-M., & van't Hooft, M., (2008) have concluded that if students feel safe using blogs then they can post "personal and sensitive topics online". Moreover, they add:

> The willingness to share more information
> encourages the development of communities,
> in other words, it links students together.
> Research in communities has shown positive
> relationships between community building
> and learning effectiveness. (p.837)

In summary, even though using blogs with students has been supported by many teachers and researchers around the world, and its value is evident, it is still a challenging method or tool which requires a lot of responsibility and commitment from both sides, the teacher and the students. It is a big responsibility for a teacher to use blogs with his/her students; however, all the effort shows good results at the end.

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the role and effectiveness of using blogs in an ESP classroom, to find out the advantages and disadvantages of blogging and to elicit the effects which blogging has on improving students' self-reflection, peer evaluation skills and their critical thinking ability.

Methodology

The research questions investigated for the purpose of this study are the following:

1. Does using blogs promote students' self-reflection, peer evaluation skills and critical thinking ability?
2. What are the benefits and disadvantages of using blogs for teaching ESP students?
3. What are the students' perceptions towards using blogs for their ESP for Communication Sciences course?

Participants and Setting

- Students studying Communication Science at South East European University.
- Albanian and Macedonian students aged 19-20 years old.
- A small group of eight students used blogs in-class and outside the classroom.[2]
- The bigger group was composed of 16 students who used blogs mostly outside the classroom. (These groups were small because the number of students enrolled in Communication Science is small).
- Data collection lasted for two academic years (both groups had ESP I during one semester and ESP II during the other semester).

Materials and Resources

Students' course packs, handouts, outside sources, internet, computers, laptops and the free website http://blogger.com.

Procedure

Blogs were used as a supplementary tool for teaching and learning ESP for Communication Science I and II. The students used blogs in-class and at home. Blogs comprised 15 % of the overall grade, 5% was for students' posts, 5% for comments on the teacher's blog and 5% for leaving comments on their colleagues' blogs, focusing on quality and quantity of their posts and comments.

The students used blogs to post their reflections during the semester, to save or share material, to read and respond, to interact with their colleagues and the teacher, to add pictures or audio files and share different hyperlinks. Students reflected on their learning on their blogs, they also wrote personal journals where they were free to write about anything they wanted. To make it easier for the students, the teacher chose topics for the students or the students could write their own reflections from the lessons. The teacher gave students a guide on the rules to be applied when blogging in order for the students to be role models of good communication. The students were asked to post to their teacher's blog, reply to questions on their teacher's post, then they had to post to their own blogs, read what others said and leave comments on some of their blogs. Students had to use academic language when posting to the discussions, i.e. they were told not to use informal language. I want to emphasize that

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[2] The number of students varied during these four semesters when the research was conducted.

students were frequently reminded that if they used information from somewhere else, to make sure to cite the source - give the URL or the title of the book in order to give credit to the author and to help their colleagues find more information if they want.

The students were introduced with all the steps necessary in order to open a blog. They were told to open http://blogger.com and to follow the steps in order to create their accounts. Some students created their blogs immediately; however there were students who needed additional help. All the students were assisted to create their own blogs, to add their classmates to their blog lists, they were shown how to post on their own blogs, how to leave comments on their followers' blogs, how to upload videos and post pictures. The students were asked not to keep their blogs private but to allow the other students to see their entries and leave comments if they want. In order to make the students post more frequently, the teacher had to motivate the students continuously by giving suggestions, commenting on their posts, giving feedback carefully and praising them.

The most reliable instrument for data collection was their actual work with blogs. The teacher kept an ongoing report of their progress (improved reflective posts and comments). When used in-class the teacher could check their technical problems and fix them together. The students could also contact the teacher by email about their difficulties while blogging.

Apart from teacher's analysis and evaluation of the process, the other instrument for data collection was a short student questionnaire administered to gather qualitative and quantitative data. At the end of the semester the students were given a questionnaire about their beliefs on using blogs. Finally, the students were interviewed by the teacher about the advantages and disadvantages of using blogs for educational purposes.

Results and Discussion

The results from the student questionnaires:

Regarding usage, (see appendix A) sixteen students out of 25 said that they used their blogs when they had free time, whereas seven of them said that they use blogs every week. It can be concluded that the majority of the students used their blogs when they had free time. Surprisingly, there was only one student who said that he/she used blogs regularly even though they were all asked to check their blogs and leave comments regularly. In spite of being told to use blogs frequently there was still one student who said that he/she never used blogs.

The following are some representative verbatim answers for the second questionnaire item: *Why exactly do you use blogs?*

> *"From the day when I started using blogs I am more informed about the lectures which we learn in class, we can share our opinion about the things we discuss in class about our ESP course."*

> *"Mainly I use my blog to post my opinions about learning. My Blog serves me as a diary. There I also read different articles from different subjects. I share ideas about a topic or anything that has to do with English classes."*

> *"Blogs are very creative, they let your imagination fly, you can give your opinion. Blogs are our own space to write, our own world. And sure best way to learn something, to know better our colleagues and our teacher."*

Four respondents said that they used blogs just because they wanted to get a higher grade.

The third questionnaire item: *Do you like blogging for educational (learning) purposes*?

The four respondents, who said that they used their blogs just to get a higher grade, said that they did not like blogging for educational purposes. Twenty-one students stated that they like blogging for educational purposes. Thus, majority of the students liked using blogs and were positive about blogging.

The fourth questionnaire item: *Do you think creating and using blogs is difficult?*

Even though more students needed help when they created their blogs, yet, only one out of 25 students said that it was difficult to create and use blogs. The student who said that it was difficult to use blogs in spite of all the teacher's attempt to help, never tried to develop his/her blog.

The fifth questionnaire item: *What do you like the most when blogging?*

Eleven respondents said that they like posting to their own profiles, five students liked commenting on their colleagues' posts and nine students liked commenting on their teacher's post.

When asked if they like reading their teacher's posts, all of the students were positive and very enthusiastic compared to the item 'leaving comments on their teacher's post'. It can be concluded that they all read their teacher's blog and found it interesting, but they did not feel very comfortable leaving comments.

The following is a summary of the answers from the sixth questionnaire item: *Do you like reading your teacher's comments? Why?*

> *"Yes, because I want to know how she values certain topics and I can make progress with my English. Her comments help me to improve my English skills and to understand my mistakes."*
> *"Absolutely! She checks my posts for possible mistakes and it makes me feel better. I like reading her comments because she gives me good feedback on my posts and this helps me understand if the teacher likes my posts or not."*

> *"They are very direct and give me the courage to post more. She put us together, all of us through her comments or posts. Great comments."*

> *"When I see my teacher's comments on my dashboard I know they can improve my thoughts about communication sciences. Surely, when I read her comments I gain clearer information."*

"They are educators, and every time they comment, they try to help us. Also the teachers through their comments express the personal opinions about the topic of the post. We need professional feedback and professional help and who can do that better than our teacher."

Questionnaire item number seven: *Do you like reading your teacher's posts? Why?* The following is some evidence collected from the students.

"Yes I do, because we always think that the teacher knows a lot about everything (that comes from childhood, when the teacher is IDOL for us) and it enriches our imaginations."

"Yes, they are more than helpful for me as a student because every time my teacher posts something it is very smart."

"Yes, as long as she has written something it means that it is important for us students."

"By reading teacher's blog I learn new things and they help me start thinking critically."

Questionnaire item number eight: *Has blogging helped you establish better rapport with your colleagues?*

Three students out of 25 answered with 'NO' and predictably these were the students who said that they did not like blogging for educational purposes.

Questionnaire item number nine: *Has blogging helped you establish better rapport with your teacher?*

Twenty-two students said 'YES' and three of them said that they did not like blogging.

Questionnaire item number ten: *What is that which you dislike when blogging?* The majority of the students answered with 'nothing'. The following are some representative student answers.

Student 1: *"Technical problems sometimes make me nervous. But I like blogging and it's a lot of fun."*

Student 2: *"I get bored when I have to post regularly."*

Student 3: *"It's a little bit difficult to follow each other on Blogs."*

Student 4: *"The new design."*

Student 5: *"Before posting I am confused what to post but after I post I think it's easy and I start enjoying it."*

Student 6: *"Sometimes I'm not able to find my colleagues in blogger and I can't find the notifications for the new posts."*

Questionnaire item number eleven: *Do you use blogs as a tool which helps you with critical thinking?* The majority of the students agreed and only three said 'NO'. The following are some verbatim students' responses.

Student 1: *"Yes of course, I use blogs as a tool which helps me in critical thinking. Because in every post, I can comment and I can criticize but with arguments."*

Student 2: *"Usually our professor is posting blogs to give us an additional information which are not just for the school projects or lessons, but also for our everyday life. We read others comments so we are prepared for critical thinking."*

Student 3: *"It helps us to reflect on different topics, and we learn how to agree, how to politely disagree. We try to solve problems, give insightful feedback etc."*

Student 4: *"Yes, blogging helps me come up with many ideas in a short time. First of all, it helps me become self-critic and then it helps me to give useful feedback to others."*

Questionnaire item number twelve: the following is only a summary of some students' comments related to using blogs in teaching and learning:

"I recommend blogging to everyone and for every lecture. Blogs are so effective, fun, very productive and easy to use. I think all English students should use blogs. We really need something like this, more effective than traditional teaching. On the other hand, facebook became boring."

"By using blogs you learn things which help you communicate better, you learn how to write formally and how to discuss about different topics."

"I think it's a very good way of learning because all that you learn in class you post on your blog as a summary, in this way we refresh our memory and remember things better."

"The problem with blogging is that I don't use it very often, and if I used it more frequently it could have helped me become a more responsible learner, and be updated with information and ideas."

In order to have more reliable results, I have taken the last verbatim posts from two students' blogs. The posts below show the rapport between students while they were blogging. (see appendix B for the URLs)

Student A:

Dear teacher and colleagues...

As I read in most of your blogs, you finished this part with a final note. I want to do the same. Firstly, I think I took a lot of acknowledgement on both classes of ESP. From our discussions, team work, presentations and all other activities that took part in class. With useful examples from real life and tough experiences. Second, I want to share with you the pleasure I feel for having as professor our very respected (teacher's name). You are a true role model of a professor with adorable attitude; well prepared and hard working person. You gave us more than you was supposed to and that's amazing. People rarely do that those days! The last one but not at least, thank you colleagues for everything, especially for making the ESP lessons the coolest classes ever!

All the best,

Student B:

Hi everyone,

In these late hours I wanted to tell all of you that during these two semesters we had a lot of fun together, we learned many interesting things and gain knowledge in every aspect of life not just in English language. I wanted to tell you that I am proud to have colleagues and professor like you. I hope that our relations and our lovely blogs are not going to disappear. I am going to miss all of you.

Wish you all the best,

The following post is taken from a student's profile and it provides a good evidence for students' preferences of blogging. (see appendix B for the URL)

Student C:

Hi everyone,

Wanted to ask you, do you feel different tonight?
There is no English class tomorrow.
BAD!
Anyway, I can feel now, these blogs are useful, good way to keep on touch!
Blogs are Treasure!
Do you believe this??? I mean, what I'm saying!!!

Conclusions

Conclusion for the first research question: *Does using blogs promote students' self-reflection, peer evaluation skills and critical thinking ability?*

It was concluded that blogs helped majority of the students to express themselves, reflect on different topics and evaluate each other's posts and ideas. Most of the students reflected on the material learned in class and through their blogs they evaluated their tasks by giving elaborate feedback. Some of them evaluated their own work by mentioning their strengths and weaknesses (for example see blog: http://venhar.blogspot.com/) based on real life or classroom experiences and also checked their colleagues' progress and gave them comments based on their results.

Thus, through their blogs students reflected on their own learning, evaluated each other's posts; they also gave feedback about their work done in-class (for example; interviews, presentations etc.). Students said that blogging helped them think critically; they had to think critically in order to accomplish their assignments which they had posted on their blogs. However, many of their posts show that they did not apply a very high level of critical thinking. Summing up, the results show that blogs are a great tool for creating an opportunity for discussions, evaluation (peer and self evaluation) and practicing self-reflection.

Conclusion for the second research question: *What are the benefits and disadvantages of using blogs for teaching ESP students?*

The results proved that blogs were effective, practical and interesting for the students. Students had an opportunity to create a collaborative learning environment. The teacher through blogs kept the students up-to-date by informing them about their assignments, quizzes, final exams, etc. In addition, blogging was helpful for the students who missed ESP classes because they read their colleagues' posts, articles or hyperlinks related to the lesson.

Through blogging the students created a better rapport between each other and the teacher, (see appendix B with the URLs of teacher's and students' blogs). On most of their comments they praised their colleagues and their teacher and gave insightful feedback. They gave positive comments to each other and motivated each other, moreover, they continued behaving like this during all the semester even when they were not blogging.

Blogs proved to be a perfect tool for Communication Sciences students because they already started getting acquainted with knowledge that they will apply in their future carrier as journalists, working for the media, reporting news, marketing/advertising, communicating effectively, etc. In summary, blogs showed to be a very effective learning tool for all ESP courses because students create a learning community and they practice their English by learning the content of the subject.

However, in spite of all the above mentioned benefits there were some downsides to using blogs. Blogs proved to be time consuming and required teacher's effort to motivate the students to post continuously. Low internet connection caused difficulties when trying to post from the classroom. Another disadvantage was that when students used their blogs outside the classroom it was impossible to know if they were the ones who posted information on their blogs or other people used their accounts. A more serious problem was that a few students would simply copy and paste material without summarizing the main idea or

paraphrasing it[3]. On the other hand, sharing these articles had a positive effect because the other students could read them and leave comments and stimulate a further discussion.

Conclusion for the third research question: *What are the students' perceptions towards using blogs for their ESP for Communication Sciences course?*

The majority of the students said that they liked blogging for their   ESP class. Many of the students not only said that they liked using blogs but they even recommended them to other teachers and students. There were a few students who were against blogging but at the end they changed their mind and said that blogs are really useful (they even posted this on their blogs) and they started being more actively engaged in blogging (for example, see Student C). However, regardless of the teacher's effort to motivate the students, there was a small number of students who were against blogging. Having finished the course there were students who continued posting on their blogs. On the other hand, there was a student who changed the privacy settings (we cannot check his/her post any longer) and a student who has closed his/her blog.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study together with previous research provide some imporant information for students and teachers who already use or want to use blogs with their students. However, it has a few limitations and there is a need for future research.

One of the limitations of this study was the time frame dedicated for blogging. Even though it was planned to use blogs more frequently in the classroom, it was impossible because of not having enough time to cover the material. Another restriction was the small-scale of student participants. Even though, a small group of participants is an advantage for using blogs in the classroom, it does not provide enough evidence for the research purpose.

There is a need for more quantitative and qualitative data to support the efficacity of integrating blogs in teaching, especially in ESP courses. There is a need for more empirical studies investigating the efficacy of blogs on teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Future research could focus on the effects of blogs on teaching different language skills separately. Different ways of how to apply blogging in the classroom can be investigated as well.

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[3] In order to avoid copying and pasting articles the teacher told the students to focus more on self-reflection and personal experience. They were also reminded many times to cite the authors and give references.

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Appendix A

Student questionaire

1. How often do you use your blogs?
    a) every week   b) every month   c)regularly   d) when I have free time
2. Why exactly do you use your blog?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Do you like blogging for educational (learning) purposes!
    Circle YES or NO.

4. Do you think creating and using blogs is difficult?
    Circle YES or NO.

5. What do you like the most when blogging?
    a) posting on your profile   b) commenting on your friends' posts
                    c) commenting on your teacher's posts

6. Do you like reading your teacher's comments? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Do you like reading your teacher's posts? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Has blogging helped you establish better rapport with your colleagues?

Circle YES or NO.
9. Has blogging helped you establish better rapport with your teacher?
   Circle YES or NO.

10. What is that which you dislike when blogging?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. Do you use blogs as a tool which helps you with critical thinking?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12. Your comments related to using blogs in teaching and learning:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

A few representative URLs of the students' blogs and the teacher's blog

http://commvjosa.blogspot.com/

http://toladauti.blogspot.com/

http://commzeki.blogspot.com/

http://venhar.blogspot.com/

http://rahimhusejni.blogspot.com/

http://rabije.blogspot.com/

http://commedona.blogspot.com/ her new blog http://comedona.blogspot.com/

http://tinaluma.blogspot.com/

http://argjend66.blogspot.com/

http://esp1commsara-sara.blogspot.com/

http://inasnotebook.blogspot.com/

http://gonushka.blogspot.com/

Teacher's blog: http://espcommunicationsciences.blogspot.com/

NOTE: The students were informed that their blogs will also be used for a research purpose.