

Impact of Learning Management Blog on Students' Language Learning and Acquisition

Nafiseh Zarei

nafiseh_zarei@yahoo.com

School of Language Studies and Linguistics

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Supyan Hussin

Supyanukm@yahoo.com

School of Language Studies and Linguistics

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In the modern language learning scenario, language learning and language acquisition experience can be enriched outside the classroom where students can engage in interactive activities. This is enabled by Web 2.0 tools such as blog, twitter, and computer mediated communication tools like email and chat. Web 2.0 tools can provide unlimited space and time for students. Blog as one type of Web 2.0 tools can be designed to manage the learning and acquisition environment which provides learning materials, relevant learning resources, and online discussion. This paper reports on the impact of a "Learning Management Blog" (LMB) environment on students' experience of language learning and language acquisition. The LMB was designed to function as a language learning platform for a particular group of tertiary students. Supplementary course materials that matched the objectives of the course were uploaded to the LMB. This qualitative study involved 30 Malaysian undergraduate ESL students at local university. A semi-structured interview was carried out to elicit responses from the students; then the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study revealed that the LMB has proven to be a useful tool to facilitate the language learning and language acquisition processes among the participants. The students had opportunities to use the language learning materials in the LMB as well as interacting with each other in the discussion forum. The learners developed their independent learning interest and motivation to use the English language learning materials and participate in the LMB environment.

Keywords: second language learning; second language acquisition; learning management blog; interaction

INTRODUCTION

In conventional language courses, students usually have limited space and time to interact with the teacher and among them. However, advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its applications to education have enabled the extension of language learning and language acquisition outside the "classroom" in a more systematic way. One of the major contributions of ICT is the easy access to new knowledge and to an array of resources for learning (Yusuf, 2005). Online language learning materials can help learners improve the mastery of the target language without the teacher's presence all the time. Besides their added value to learning, ICT provides learners with the opportunity to collaborate and interact among friends and with the teacher in the target language outside

classroom, thus assisting them to develop social skills and the manage challenges in classroom learning (Mason, 2000; Bottino, 2003; Bhattacharya & Sharma, 2007).

Blogs, once popularly known as web-based personal writing, can be exploited by teachers to manage a learning environment. Blogs can be designed to provide class notes, guidelines on learning, learning materials, and interactive exercises as well as to enable forum discussions between students and teachers, and among students. This type of blog is called “Learning Management Blog” (LMB), a new term coined for this research which may share some characteristics of a Learning Management System (LMS), used in many universities. Unlike LMS that is bound by university rules and limited by bandwidth and space, LMB, which is hosted by Wordpress, is easily accessible and more flexible in terms of interface design and space. Since most students are very familiar with blogs, an LMB would not be new to them, but the experience of using it for language learning may not be so familiar.

Many studies have investigated how students have improved their writing via blogs in various countries including Malaysia (Ward, 2004; Wu, 2005; Nadzrah, 2007; Nadzrah & Kemboja, 2009; Zaini, Kemboja & Supyan, 2011), but there has been no specific study on how students’ language learning and language acquisition experiences are affected by the LMB. A positive learning experience goes a long way towards encouraging continued, independent and effective learning; therefore, this study seeks to investigate how using the LMB impacts on students’ experience of language learning and language acquisition.

Krashen (1987) claims that there is a difference between language learning and language acquisition. According to Krashen (1987), learning is a conscious process in which learners attend to form and figure out rules. Learners are generally aware of their own learning process. However, acquisition is a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language. Usually, learners acquire or “pick up” and internalize the language aspects subconsciously while they are interacting with the target language, actively or passively. Although Krashen’s (1987) initial ideas in that learning and acquisition are two separate processes in theory, they may not be true in reality or practice (McLaughlin 1987). McLaughlin (1987) argued that learning and acquisition processes can take place at the same time in both formal and informal contexts. In other words, the two processes are inseparable. Supyan (2008) also added that learners who are learning a language in the classroom may also acquire some language aspects informally. Likewise, learners who live in an English speaking environment may acquire some aspects of language in their interaction and at the same time, learn other language elements consciously. Therefore, in an LMB environment, learners can extend their learning experience outside the classroom. At the same time, they would have opportunities to acquire the language when they engage in specific activities designed by the teacher. The least the learners would experience is that they will acquire the new knowledge and information in the discussion forum in the LMB through exchanging their ideas with one another and posting, commenting and interacting with each other. This phenomenon may be better understood when we look at some past studies.

A study by Hall and Davison (2007) with British students examined the role of blogging in fostering learners’ interaction using a module of an accredited library and information science degree program. The findings of the study provided evidence of how the integration of blogging into the curriculum can be useful for learners since it provides them with an interactive learning environment, conducive to better learning through interaction and discussion. Next, Ahluwalia, Gupta and Aggarwal (2011) investigated how Indian students perceived blogs as a supplementary aid for class language learning activities, and the students’ participation showed an overall positive attitude towards using blogs in their learning of English. Moreover, after one year, the same findings were confirmed by a follow-up study. One of the most important aspects is learners’ interaction, for instance, a study by

Kang, Bonk and Kim (2011) investigated the role of a weblog as an environment connecting individual learners. The participants who were Korean students were assigned to certain learning tasks and issues that demanded their interaction, participation and discussion via blogs. The findings revealed that blogs can be interactive learning environments in which learners' experience decentralized relationships among themselves. Moreover, the findings showed that blogging provided the learners with the opportunity to socialize and construct their knowledge, hence supporting social constructivist learning theory. Another study that supports the idea that blogs enhanced students' writing process is Krishnaiyer et al. (2012). They investigated the extent to which blog writing facilitates students' reflection and the effectiveness of teacher input to enhance their reflection. The study involved ten first year law undergraduates who were registered in a compulsory English course. The results of the study revealed that blog writing enhanced and facilitated the students' reflection and that introducing a model of reflection enhanced the quality of reflection in students' entries to a great extent.

While these studies focused on the role of blogs in enhancing ESL learners' writing skill, other studies investigated how blogs impacted reading and other aspects of learning. Nadzrah, Hafizah and Azizah (2010), for instance, examined the integration of blogs as a pedagogical tool in the ESL classroom. It was found that the participants responded positively and perceived blogging as an effective learning tool that helped them to improve their L2 learning. More specifically, the students reported their perceived development in reading and writing skills, self-confidence and their communication skills, and reduced anxiety levels since they were provided with the opportunity to assist each other in peer learning via blogs.

Muhamad (2010) studied writing apprehension among students who used the class blog in a language teacher training program. It was found that the majority of the respondents revealed that their apprehension level decreased after engaging in the discussions in the forum created in the class blog. They also stated that they had learned from having their own language errors and mistakes in their writing pointed out by their peers. In addition, they expressed their experience in acquiring new information and knowledge of language as well as writing skills when they interacted with friends in the blog. A related study was carried out by Supyan (2011) who found that students who made use of facilities such as class notes, selected articles, online discussion, and peer review of their essays believed that they had learned to improve their writing, and had acquired new information and language inputs from the class blog. Additionally, when Zarei and Al-Shboul (2013) conducted a study on Jordanian EFL learners' perceptions towards language learning via blog, they found learners perceived the blog as an interesting and helpful learning tool since interacting via blog helped them improve their English language skills as well as their communication skill based on peer feedback.

In summary, the mentioned studies used blogs as educational tools in various contexts using different research instruments for the purpose of data collection. However, it is worth noting that none of the above studies focused on the learning management blog and its impacts on students' experience of language learning and language acquisition among ESL learners.

THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were twofold: to investigate how using the LMB impacts on students' experience of language learning and language acquisition, and to explore how the scaffolding elements within the LMB were exploited by them to enhance their understanding of what was taught by the teacher in the classroom. The provided scaffolding elements in the

LMB such as: videos, audios and texts regarding the four skills in English language (reading, writing, speaking and listening), vocabulary practice, grammar practice, pronunciation practice, presentation tips, test, English language games, dictionary, discussion forum, individual logbooks and search tips, as illustrated in Figure 1, was designed to support the language learning environment in the LMB for this particular group of the ESL learners. The learners were able to exchange ideas and information about some issues and lessons taught by their teacher in the classroom in the LMB environment. It is worth stating that the learners were allowed to participate in the LMB at any time they needed to. In other words, there was no time limitation for the participation in the LMB. They were able to post their tasks, questions, ideas and information as well as share their experience and thoughts with peers in the discussion forum on the LMB. In addition, each of the students had his/her own personal logbook in the LMB in which they could report the activities they had done to the administrators of the LMB. They were able to explain what they had practiced or used in the LMB and share their feelings towards the provided language learning materials to the administrators. Moreover, they could ask any questions with regards to their course tasks, assignments and projects as well as any English language skills.

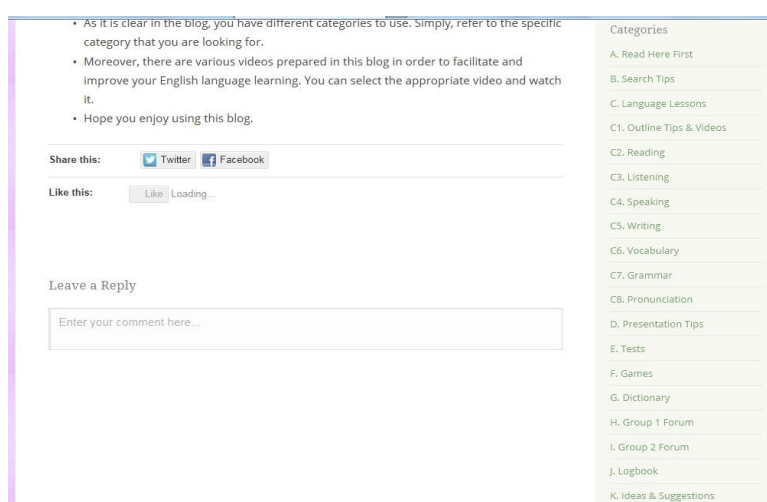


FIGURE 1. Learning Management Blog

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does the LMB impact on ESL students' experience of language learning and language acquisition?
2. How were the scaffolding elements within the LMB exploited by the ESL learners to enhance their understanding of what was taught in the classroom?

METHODS

The research design for this study adopts a qualitative method, i.e. a case study, which was carried out at a local university in Malaysia. A purposive sampling technique was employed to gather responses from 30 undergraduate ESL students (19 females and 11 males), ranging from 19 to 21 year old, who enrolled in an Academic Communication course. The students were from the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Science and Technology at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Their level of English proficiency was categorized as intermediate by the Center of Liberal Arts. The intermediate level of proficiency, according

to the Center, refers to Band 3 scores that the students gained in their Malaysian University English Test (MUET). All of the students were known to possess basic computing skills and internet skills. The study was conducted in one complete semester (14 weeks) in 2012. Prior to the actual data collection, the interview question set was piloted with a group of students as well as two experts for the purpose of checking its validity and reliability. The two experts are associate professors at UKM and specialized in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Next, in the study, a semi-structured interview (Appendix A, pp. 63) was carried out with all 30 respondents at the end of the semester in UKM. Each student was interviewed individually, and each interview took between 30 to 40 minutes. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and finally, analyzed qualitatively to answer the research questions of the present study.

The research procedures involved the following activities:

In the first stage, a need analysis was carried out with the Head of English Program and the coordinator/instructor of the course. They were interviewed to find out their needs and students' needs in terms of English language learning as well as to gain information on the curriculum and the course objectives. The researchers recorded and transcribed the responses which were related to the course objectives, difficulties and constraints experienced by the course. It was found that the teachers and students need to have more opportunities to interact with one another, the students need to access relevant learning materials, and needed some tips for learning and for doing their assignments. Hence, an open platform would be designed to cater to these needs in order to complement the existing face-to-face mode of learning.

In the second stage, the LMB was created to complement the teaching and learning activities for this particular course. Then, the Head of English Program, the coordinator /instructor of the course reviewed the content and the format of the LMB, and later verified it after it was revised.

In the third stage, the students were trained on how to use the LMB during the first week of the semester. They learned to log in into the LMB and use the contents in the LMB, which included English language materials and the forum. They were also guided to post question, message, and reply to the postings. The instructors of the course allocated five percent of the grade based on students' engagement in LMB, especially the forum. The participation in the forum was compulsory. The learners could participate in the LMB at anytime and from anywhere. The forum was moderated by one of the researchers as agreed by the course instructor.

In the fourth stage, the questions for the semi-structured interview were designed. The two experts verified the questions for the purpose of validity and reliability. The instruments were piloted with twenty students, and later, the instrument was modified as two questions were not clear enough to be understood by the learners. Finally, the actual study was carried out.

FINDINGS

During the last week of the semester, the researchers interviewed the students to obtain feedback for the study. The interview data was analyzed based on the objectives of the study. In response to the first question, "How does the LMB impact on ESL students' experience of language learning and language acquisition?" all the respondents expressed their agreement that the LMB was a very useful and helpful platform for them to improve their English language proficiency, mostly in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and writing. The first theme that emerged from the interview was the helpfulness of the language learning materials provided in the LMB. The respondents found the LMB as a very useful environment in which

they could practice their language. They felt that by exploiting the LMB, they were able to enhance their English language proficiency and also their level of understanding of the lessons taught by the teacher in the classroom. According to the respondents' feedback, the LMB supported their language learning and language acquisition in the classroom, as the following edited excerpts from their interviews showed:

"In my opinion, the blog is very useful and it is interactive too. The English materials in the blog really help us to improve our language. We can always learn something new from the learning materials. I have learned a lot of new English words and my English grammar has improved since using the blog. I can always learn something new outside the classroom which is really great." (R3)

"Actually I really like the blog, because it really gives a lot of help to me by using the English learning materials in the blog. I think they are very useful for me, as the materials can help me improve my English vocabulary, grammar and writing skill as well." (R5)

"To be honest, I really like this blog. I tried to participate in the blog because I really found it very helpful. The language learning materials in the menu are well categorised and it's really easy to go through them and learn more and more. They are very helpful to improve my English learning especially when it comes to academic writing." (R13)

"In my opinion, the blog is a very useful environment with a lot of new and helpful information to learn regarding English language. The menu includes a variety of language learning materials which lead me to learn more and more, specially the writing tips, videos and audios on grammar, presentation tips and search tips." (R27)

When asked about how they felt using the LMB and if their learning had improved, all the respondents stated that they had improved their learning and that they felt very satisfied. The second emerging theme from the interview was the students' feelings regarding using the LMB as a platform to enhance language learning and language acquisition. Based on the respondents' self-reflection, they felt very comfortable and happy to participate in the LMB environment and to make use of the language learning materials in order to supplement their understanding of what had been taught in the classroom. This can be seen in some of the interview excerpts below:

"I can say that after participating in the discussion forum or using the learning materials in the blog, I felt that I have completed my job which gives me a very good feeling. Because at least I am sure that I have learnt something to improve my English language. I feel like I have completed a good job on my own." (R1)

"Well, as long as the blog is very fun after using the language learning materials I felt very good especially after reading some tips, such as presentation tips, because I can improve my presentation skill or other skills which give me a good feeling of satisfaction. So far I have learned lots of new information and knowledge which really gives me a nice feeling." (R22)

"For me, after I used the language materials in the blog I was really glad, because I could learn something that I had not known before. I was more confident because there were so many tips, videos, audios and texts in the blog which were really helpful. So far I have learnt lots of new things. I always feel glad after using any language materials in the blog. I think my self-confidence has improved by using this blog." (R24)

The impact of LMB could also be seen on their stress and anxiety level. They all agreed that their stress and anxiety levels were much higher while learning in the classroom; on the other hand, when they were engaged in LMB, there were more comfortable and felt less anxious or stressed. Four examples of the respondents' interview data indicated this feeling:

"I found that the blog really releases my stress. Because I can open the blog anytime I am free and anytime I feel good to learn something or answer questions in the discussion forum, so there is nothing to worry about, while learning via the blog. Moreover, I am a shy person in class which really sometimes disturbs me in learning in the classroom." (R8)

"Actually I believe that the blog reduces my stress because I can play some games in the blog and then think about the answers to the questions in a relaxed way. I have enough time to think carefully about the questions in the discussion forum. The blog is a fun environment as well as a learning environment. I never feel stressed or anxious. That is why I can improve my learning." (R10)

"As for me, the blog really can reduce my stress and anxiety. I feel very relaxed while learning through the blog. When there is a question in the discussion forum, I can answer the question calmly and I can have enough time to think of the answer. Nothing pushes me. Unlike in the classroom, I have enough time to think deeply about whatever I am learning. My focus is much better. That is why I really prefer to comment and share my opinions in the discussion forum rather than the classroom. It is much better and it gives me much time to think better." (R11)

"As a matter of fact, the blog really reduces my stress, because in the online discussion forum we have enough time to answer the questions or participate, but in the classroom we have just two hours which makes me stressful. So no pressure while using the materials in the blog and improve learning. I feel very comfortable when I can use those materials anywhere anytime. I feel very good as I am not forced to learn any skills, I can choose what I really need or like to learn. It is all up to me to choose my category and go through it to improve my English skills." (R30)

As for the second research question, "How were the scaffolding elements within the LMB exploited by the ESL learners to enhance their understanding of what was taught in the classroom?", majority of the respondents stated that of all the scaffolding elements, the online discussion forum and the writing tips were the most useful or important ones. In this study, the students expressed how they had learned something from their participation consciously and, at the same time, acquired new information from the LMB. The third emerging theme was the helpful interaction which took place among the students in the discussion forum provided in the LMB. The learners' responses from the interview data revealed this:

"In fact, the most important section in the blog is the discussion forum for me. Because when you ask a question there, it is a very good chance to answer and start discussing with friends. To me, this is a real learning process. In other words, sometimes we transfer whatever we have learned in the classroom into the discussion forum in the blog to answer the questions. Most of the questions are related to the course we are taking this semester. So it is very good practice for us to write in our words, moreover, we are able to see what others have posted. We can learn from our friends also. Discussion forum is very useful as we are in touch with the administrator and friends as well. It is good to be in touch with the administrator as it is very difficult to see our teacher and talk to him face to face in order to ask him questions and problems. So we can ask our questions to the

administrator in the discussion forum. The interaction among us really leads us to learn a lot of new knowledge and information to improve our English language.” (R6)

“To me, the most important section in the blog is the discussion forum where all of us share ideas and opinions and learn from each other. For me, so far I have learned many new English words as well as getting lots of information about the class subjects through my discussion with my classmates in the discussion forum. I believe that the comments and the responses provided by my mates helped me improve my English language.” (R15)

“Well, there are two elements in the blog that are the most helpful ones. One is the writing tips. We can learn how to write academically. Those tips are very significant and helpful. The links regarding writing tips are easy to go in and the materials are very useful and easy to understand. The second feature for me is the discussion forum. Actually I am more motivated to learn when I can see all my classmates share their thoughts, ideas and information with others. That really makes me more enthusiastic to learn more and more. I always learn from my friends’ posts in the discussion forum. It is really good and useful for all of us.” (R19)

Some of the students also mentioned that the sections dealt with English vocabulary and grammar tips were useful elements in the LMB. For instance three respondents stated that:

“For me, among all of the language practice materials, vocabulary and grammar tips are the most useful elements in the blog because they can help me improve my speaking skill in English language. I can watch videos regarding grammar and vocabulary or read the tips to learn more and become able to understand how to speak English correctly.” (R9)

“I think grammar tips are the best part for me because my English grammar used to be very weak before. However, I can feel that my English has really improved by reading the grammar tips in the blog. Now I am able to speak and write in English much better.” (R14)

“Actually the vocabulary section is the best among the language learning materials in the blog. Even playing vocabulary games in the blog helped me become familiar with many new English words which I did not know before. A wide range of new words helped me to speak better so that others can understand me better.” (R26)

Based on the findings, it was found that the respondents liked the discussion forum and writing tips, the most, in the LMB. The interactivity in the discussion forum made them feel motivated to participate more and learn more. The writing tips helped them to improve their class assignments and tasks, especially in the writing of outlines.

The feedback showed that all but one of the 30 respondents preferred using technological tools in addition to the traditional way of learning in the classroom. They believed that they could improve more by using a language learning platform or environment outside the classroom because there was no time and space constraint. They all agreed that learning on their own was very useful since they were the ones who were aware of their own weaknesses in English. In addition, the employment of technology outside the classroom enabled them to digest the course subject in a better way. According to their responses, they felt free to choose what they were eager to learn or what aspects of the language they needed to further work on. Two examples of excerpts from the respondents indicated this feeling:

“Basically, I prefer the traditional way mixed with the technological way of learning. We can learn from the teacher in the classroom but having an online environment can complete the learning. Because the teacher cannot focus on all of the students in the classroom all the time, so in the online forum he/ she can monitor all of us one by one. Moreover, I think the teacher is not able to teach each aspect in detail due to shortage of time so we can learn in depth and in detail via the blog.” (R2)

“Personally I like to learn on my own through using technological tools like blogs, ifolios, and etc. I like learning via these platforms. But learning in the classroom is also important, because teacher can show us what we really need to do to learn something. But having both beside each other is a great idea. Because by having the blog we can have a better understanding of what we have learned in the classroom. So I guess we can bring what we have learned in the classroom to the online environment and discuss with our friends. Sharing ideas and opinions is the best thing that we have in the blog, unlike the classroom because in the class we do not have sufficient time for interaction. That is why we can get some more strong ideas from the blog rather than the class.” (R16)

However, one respondent who shared a different view from the rest believed that the traditional way of learning in the classroom was the best way for her to learn the English language skills.

“Teacher is the best person when it comes to learning. Therefore, I think attending the sessions during the semester would be sufficient for me to learn and improve my English skills.” (R7)

Overall, the findings showed that LMB had left positive impacts on the students' experience in language learning and language acquisition processes. They expressed that they participated in the discussion forum to exchange ideas and post questions, learn from one another in the forum, make use of the scaffolding elements (i.e. various tips) prepared to help them with the assignments, and feel less anxious while engaging in the LMB.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research questions for the present study were formulated to find out the experience held by undergraduate Malaysian ESL students towards the language learning and language acquisition processes in the LMB. The findings of the study provide evidence that the LMB was regarded as a useful language learning and language acquisition platform for the learners to enhance their English language especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar and writing. This is in line with the result of a study by Mynard (2008). The results of his study demonstrated that blogs could be a kind of tools for educators to use in order to encourage learners to reflect on their learning. Besides, the learners use blogs as media to reflect on specific aspects of their language learning. Kelley (2008) also believed that the students who used blogs honed their writing skills when they write in blogs. Therefore, blog as an educational tool could enhance the academic writing of second language international students, as well as facilitate the instruction of academic writing. Finally, Zhang (2009) also proved that blog was an effective platform for learners to develop and facilitate English writing skill.

In addition, the LMB was able to complement the learners' language learning and language acquisition in the classroom. The discussion forum played a very significant role with regard to the learners' discussion and interaction. The interaction among the students led

them to learn and acquire knowledge and information while exchanging ideas and experience with one other. As discussed in the findings, it was during the interaction that students learned about their own strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, they acquired new information and skills to improve their writing tasks. In other words, the interactivity in the discussion forum made the learners become motivated not only to participate in the LMB activities but also to learn and acquire much knowledge and information. This is akin to the results of some of the previous studies such as a study by Kuzu (2007), which investigated the impact of course blog on supporting instruction and sustaining social interaction. The result of his study revealed that blog use empowered the students' social interaction with their peers as well as the course instructor. Nadzrah (2009) also believed that blogs could provide platforms for language learners to use the language actively and that the students could be more motivated to use the language by making use of the interaction via blogs. Finally, a study by Rivens (2010) proved that real interactions which occurred in the blog permitted a rich and argumentative exchange. Thus, undoubtedly, blogs can permit the development of meaningful interactions.

The findings of the study revealed that it was easier for the learners to learn the language when they were not tense, anxious, or bored. According to the students' feedback, some of them used to experience stress and anxiety while participating in the class activities in the presence of the teacher and classmates; however, while participating in the LMB environment outside the classroom, their tension and stress levels were reduced and they felt relaxed while participating and engaging with others in the platform. The lower filter of anxiety among the students made them more open to the LMB inputs. Moreover, learning and acquiring the language became easier for them and led them to have a better understanding about the language that was being learned. They were also encouraged to interact more with the peers in the discussion forum. Eventually, it is worth stating that the findings of the study showed that learners were satisfied to learn independently outside the four walls of the classroom, and they were satisfied and comfortable to participate in the LMB environment and make use of the language learning materials. This is in line with the findings of the studies by Pinkman (2005) and Iida (2009). Pinkman (2005) believed that learners can be motivated by taking advantage of authentic environments outside the classroom in order to practice language skills and communicate with others as well as assist foreign language professionals interested in developing learner independence in their own learners by using the blog. Iida (2009) also believed that weblog-based individual learning can help the Japanese EFL learners to become self-directed and help them develop their language skills on their own. In other words, the application of weblogs provided them with opportunities to reflect on their learning styles, which was necessary to improving autonomous learning.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study reveals that the ESL learners make use of the language learning materials in the LMB as well as the interactive discussion forum in order to improve their information and knowledge. The learners were enthusiastic to participate in the LMB as they could learn and acquire more information through the scaffolding elements and their peer feedback as well. In addition, this study demonstrates that language learning and language acquisition via the LMB was perceived positively by this group of Malaysian ESL undergraduates. This suggests that teachers should create similar language learning and language acquisition platform for students to provide a scaffold for learning and acquiring language, using rich language learning materials outside the classroom in order to enhance their language learning and language acquisition processes. It is suggested that a set of guidelines for using the LMB be drawn up for teachers, course designers and facilitators, and

for learners as users. Students should be further exposed to the growing potential of how the LMB could contribute to their language learning and language acquisition processes because the LMB is not merely for sharing knowledge, ideas and experience but also for promoting learning. It is concluded that the LMB is a useful and an important supplementary online language learning platform for learners to enhance their language learning and language acquisition processes outside the classroom. Thus, it is appropriate to recommend the use of the LMB or its application to all ESL tertiary learners who are learning English language as well as English language instructors, lecturers or coordinators who are striving to present a better and more effective way of teaching English language. Furthermore, it may be of interest to other parties involved in language teaching and language learning processes that include higher institution administrators, curriculum developers as well as web designers.

REFERENCES

- Ahluwalia, G., Gupta, D., & Aggarwal, D. (2011). The Use of Blogs in English Language Learning: A Study of Student Perceptions. *PROFILE Journal*. 13(2), 1-12.
- Bhattacharya, I. & Sharma, K. (2007). India in the Knowledge Economy an Electronic Paradigm. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 21(6), 543- 568.
- Bottino, R. M. (2003). ICT, National Policies, and their Impact on Schools and Teachers' Development. In C. Dowling and K.-W. Lai (Eds.). *Information and Communication Technology and the Teacher Of The Future* (pp. 3-6). Springer US. 23.
- Gurleen Ahluwalia, Deepti Gupta, & Deepak Aggarwal. (2011). The Use of Blogs in English Language Learning: A Study of Student Perceptions. *PROFILE Journal* 13(2), 1-12.
- Hall, H. & Davison, B. (2007). Social Software As Support In Hybrid Learning Environments: The Value Of The Blog As A Tool For Reflective Learning And Peer Support. *Library & Information Science Research*. 29(2), 163-187.
- Inae Kang, Curtis J. Bonk & Myung-Chun Kim. (2011). A Case Study Of Blog-Based Learning In Korea: Technology Becomes Pedagogy. *The Internet and Higher Education*. 14(4), 227-235.
- Jo Mynard. (2008). A Blog as a Tool For Reflection For English Language Learners. *The Philippine ESL Journal*. 77.
- Kelley, M. J. (2008). *The Impact of Weblogs on the Affective States and Academic Writing of L2 Undergraduates*. Ph.D thesis. University of Virginia.
- Krashen, S. D. (1987). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Prentice Hall International. Oxford.
- Krishnaiyer, S. S., Mushahar, R., Hanani, R., & Ahmad, N. (2012). Using Blogs as a Tool to Facilitate Students' Reflection. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*. 12(3), 939-960.
- Mason, R. (2000). From Distance Education To Online Education. *The Internet and Higher Education*. 3(1), 63-74.
- McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of Second Language Learning*. London: Arnold.
- Mudasiru Olalere Yusuf. (2005). Information And Communication Education: Analyzing The Nigerian National Policy For Information Technology. *International Education Journal*. 6(3), 316-321.
- Muhamad Yahya, R. (2010). *An Investigation On The Effects Of C.M.C. Applications On ESL/ESL Writing Anxiety Among Postgraduate Students at UKM*. Unpublished Master thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia.

- Nadzrah, Abu Bakar. (2007). Using Blogs To Develop Interests Among ESL Students: A New Paradigm In Language Education. Paper presented at 5th Asia TEFL International Conference, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), Kuala Lumpur.
- Nadzrah Abu Bakar (2009). E-Learning Environment: Blogging as a Platform for Language learning. *European Journal of Social Sciences*. 9(4), 594-604.
- Nadzrah Abu Bakar & Kemboja Ismail. (2009). Using Blogs To Encourage ESL Students To Write Constructively in English. *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 1(1), 45-57.
- Nadzrah Abu Bakar, Hafizah Latif. & Azizah Ya 'acob. (2010). ESL Students Feedback on the Use of Blogs for Language Learning. *3L: Language Linguistics Literature®*, *Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*. 16(1), 120-141.
- Pinkman, K. (2005). Using Blogs in the Foreign Language Classroom: Encouraging Learner Independence. *The Jalt CALL Journal*. 1(1), 12-24.
- Rivens Mompean, A. (2010). The Development of Meaningful Interactions on a Blog Used for the Learning of English as a Foreign Language. *ReCALL*. 22(03), 376-395.
- Supyan Hussin. (2008). Creating A Bigger Z.P.D. For ESL Learners via Online Forum. *The College Teaching Methods and Styles Journal*. 4(11), 1-9.
- Supyan Hussin. (2011). Using 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.
- Ward, J. M. (2004). Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL): Push Button Publishing For The Pupils. *TEFL Web Journal*. 3(1), 1-16.
- Wu, W. S. (2005). Using Blogs In An EFL Writing Class. In *meeting of the 2005 Conference and Workshop on TEFL and Applied Linguistics, Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan University*. 16, 426-432.
- Zaini Amir, Kemboja Ismail & Supyan Hussin. (2011). Blogs In Language Learning: Maximizing Students' Collaborative Writing. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 18(0), 537-543.
- Zarei Nafiseh & Al-Shboul Yasser. (2013). Participating in a Blog: Jordanian EFL Learners' Voices. *English Linguistics Research*. 2(2), 53-59.
- Zhang, D. (2009). The Application of Blog in English Writing. *Journal of Cambridge Studies*. 4(1), 64-72.

APPENDIX A

1. How do you like the LMB? Why?
2. How do you feel after using the language learning materials in the LMB? Please explain more.
3. How do you feel while answering the questions in the LMB? Why?
4. Which section of the LMB was the most useful one to help you in learning? Why? Please elaborate your answer.
5. What is your idea about learning on your own by using the LMB? Why?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nafiseh Zarei is a doctoral candidate at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Supyan Hussin, an Associate Professor at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, is currently an associate fellow at the Center for Teaching and Learning Technologies, UKM.