Language Blogging Community: Fostering the Learning Attitudes and Writing Skills of EFL Students

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Abstract

This paper empirically studies a group of first-year EFL college students in a blog-supported composition class in Taiwan. To improve their writing skills, the participants kept journal blogs within a language blogging community (LBC) where users could receive free help (e.g., corrections/comments) from native speakers regarding entries written in a second/foreign language (in this case, English). Students' writing skills and learning attitudes (anxiety about writing) were assessed (by multifaceted examination) before and after the classes. The results show that over the sessions the participants formed active blogging patterns and expressed themselves better, using more linguistic information. These encouraging signs echoed the students' improved compositional skills and reduced writing anxiety. The pedagogical suitability of blogging in EFL writing classes is discussed and topics are suggested for future studies.

Keywords: language blogging, blog-assisted language learning, EFL writing, learning anxiety

1. Introduction

Classroom blogging has long been considered a promising approach to teaching in language classrooms (cf. Halic, Lee, Paulus, & Spence, 2010; Hung & Huang, 2015a). The approach is popular in the specific field of teaching English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) writing (Lin, Li, Hung, & Huang, 2014) although blogs have also been used in teaching other skills, such as reading (Lee, 2015) and speaking (Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2015b). Many studies provide empirical support for using writing blogs in English classes (Kung, 2015). However, some researchers citing counterproductive cases have questioned its effectiveness in this context; it sometimes enhances student bloggers' anxiety over writing (e.g., Lin, Groom, & Lin, 2013), hindering the development of their writing skills and learning attitudes (Lin, 2014). Additionally, the increased workload on teachers who manage class blogs has not hitherto been fully addressed (cf. Levy, 2009; Lin, 2016). Thus, blogging's effects are difficult to determine (Lin, 2016).

Given these inconsistencies and limitations, before blogs can establish a robust footing in ESL/EFL writing classes, additional research is required. One possible solution is to ask students to keep a blog journal explicitly for language learning. This overt goal, it is anticipated, would maintain the efficacy of blogging while addressing its hindrances and their possible causes. These ends are realised by involving learners in a *language blogging community* (LBC), that is, an online blogging platform on which everyone's aim is to exchange or learn language. Here the members blog in the second or foreign language being learnt, but support one another using their first language. These opportunities encouraged an experiment involving a group of EFL students in an intensive English composition class supported by an online language-blogging platform. Since no contrast group was recruited, the writing skills and learning attitudes of the participants were comprehensively examined before and after the experiment. The study addresses the research question *whether keeping a blog journal in an online community with the specific purpose of language learning an effective approach for EFL students to learn writing*.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical and Empirical Support for Blog Use

The various effects of blogging are primarily ascribed to the nature of the blogosphere giving bloggers individual spaces to express themselves freely (Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011), in particular in written language. Thus,

blogging is a suitable means for practicing writing. The specific character of a blog as an easily accessible online platform also increases readership with ample of interaction between the blog's writers and readers (Chen & Brown, 2012; Lin et al., 2014). Receiving more attention received and more communicative interaction may together encourage student bloggers to persevere (Chen & Brown, 2012). As Lin et al. (2013) and Lin (2015) conclude, the advantages may mutually reinforce themselves and thereby lead student bloggers to a positive cycle of writing improvement such as modern motivation theories describe (cf. Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Hadfield, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

In fact, much empirical evidence has suggested that classroom blogging is an effective approach to teaching writing. On the one hand, most student writers taught in a blog-supported classroom have reacted favorably to the approach (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Kung, 2015; Lin et al., 2014; Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011). On the other hand, the blogging approach has been reported to trigger interaction between readers and student writers (Miceli, Murray, & Kennedy, 2010; Mompean, 2010), nurture the writer's sense of a community of practice (Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; Miceli et al., 2010), enhance learner motivation to write (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Lin, 2015; Sun, 2010), strengthen the self-efficacy of student writers (Lin, 2016), and ultimately successfully improve students' writing skills (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Chen, 2016; Lee, 2015; Lin, 2015; Lin et al., 2014; Sun, 2010).

2.2 Limitations of Classroom Blogging

Despite its many endorsements, the actual pedagogical effectiveness of blogging in EFL/ESL writing classes has been challenged. First, while student improvements through blogging is unassailable, the gains may also come from the associated increase in the teachers' workload (cf. Levy, 2009), making the specific effects of blog use hard to determine (Lin, 2014, 2016). Resolving this issue is important because maintaining an active class blog is labor-intensive and appears sufficient drawback for certain teachers to ban educational blogs in their classes (Lai & Chen, 2011). Such maintenance includes the provision of technical support, managing the electronic content for all concerned, and, not least, meeting students' needs in learning development (cf. Hourigan & Murray, 2010), given the constant and instant feedback/comments that students expect (Lin, 2012).

Contradictory findings in the literature on student learning performance also undermine the desirability of blog use in EFL writing classes. Many early studies (e.g., Chiao, 2006; Lin et al., 2013; Wu, 2008) consistently noted that student writers rarely produced active blogging patterns. Although such inactivity may stem from poor teacher supervision (e.g., monitoring/requiring student engagement) (cf. Chiao, 2006; Sun, 2010; Lin, 2012), Lin et al. (2013), finding similar results in a separate experiment, provide a striking explanation: blogging students were deeply inhibited by anxiety about writing. Specifically, Lin et al.'s students were described to have constant apprehension regarding peer and public criticism of the linguistic quality of their entries or the comments they left for others. The vicious cycle of trepidation about being ridiculed and avoidance behavior (i.e., blogging less) may explain why Chen's (2016) EFL students, after attending a blogging project, displayed less self-efficacy in writing than those enrolled in a conventional writing class. The same explanation may also account for the empirical findings of Lin (2014), who found that compared with those who kept traditional pen-and-paper journals, EFL student bloggers not only developed by no means superior writing skills but also were significantly less motivated to write after the blogging experience.

Lin et al. (2014), however, reasoned that those unfavorable outcomes may also have been caused by disregarding "the very nature of blogging as a form of online diary writing" (p. 423). As they observe, educational blogs were often treated as a forum for online discussion among peers, a platform for posting writing exercises, or a class portal for announcements. Forcing the inclusion of these activities in the blogging may undermine the potential effects of the blogging approach on students' writing development. In fact, by restoring the focus of blogging to online diary writing, Lin et al. found that the student bloggers became less anxious about writing than others writing pen-and-pencil journal entries and that they outperformed the latter in terms of writing skills.

While Lin et al. (2014) seem to have enhanced blogging effectiveness, here improvements in the blogging formula are sought. First, Lin et al. adopted an on-campus blog server whose audience was primarily restricted to students and teachers registered at the experimental site, thus delimiting the generally public nature of the blogosphere and leaving the potential of blogging indeterminate. Second, Lin et al. alleviated the teaching burden of using blogs, but did so by asking students to keep a blog journal entirely unaided, obviating suggestions or feedback. Given that linguistic skills were what Lin et al.'s students most desired to improve by joining the blog project, they still expect comments, guidance, or corrective feedback from someone able to offer them, such as teachers or advanced language users, regardless of the problems previously reported of keeping a public blog journal. Although this outcome sounds contradictory to the belief and practice of Lin et al., it is not

entirely surprising since, as Mompean (2010) concludes, classroom blogging is after all not a "real life" practice but a pedagogical gambit. Highlighting this, however, the present writer is not suggesting a retreat. Instead, what is recommended is to redefine how blogging and its purposes can be introduced to ESL/EFL student writers such that student learning attitudes remain undamaged and blog teachers' workloads get no heavier.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

This experiment, at a Taiwanese university, involved 24 first-year college students who attended a three-week composition course intended to help them develop organized paragraphs in different genres of English writing. The course occupied two 50-minute lessons on three consecutive days per week, and the teaching covered the development of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences, but not language use or vocabulary in general. The participants, mostly aged 18, had diverse academic backgrounds, namely, majors in English (six females, two males), French (two females), German (two females), Japanese (three females), Russian (two males), Spanish (two females, one male), Business Management (one female), Computer Science and Information Engineering (one male), Educational Technology (one male), and Transformation Management (one male). Before this course, the participants had studied EFL for 8 to 10 years, and their proficiency mostly reached level A2 (10 students) and B1 (12 students) of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages; only two students had reached level B2.

3.2 Treatment

Before the experiment, the participants were introduced to the project's free blog server: *Lang-8* (http://lang-8.com) (Figure 1). Like typical blogs (e.g., *Wix*, *Blogger*), *Lang-8* is an open platform on which Internet users can create accounts, publish entries online, make comments, and network with other users. However, unlike most blogs, *Lang-8* primarily serves as a language-exchange platform on which registered "users write in a [second/foreign] language and get [corrections/comments] from native speakers" (Massung & Zhai, 2016, p. 168), focusing on writing skills. As Lin (2015) comments, it can offer this because of *Lang-8's* large membership (over 1,600,000 registered users as of December 2018) from many native-language backgrounds (over 90 different languages). Users can give corrective feedback or comments directly on one another's entries (Figure 2) through a pre-installed *Lang-8* application (called *Tracker)*. *Lang-8's* unique functionality and increasing membership relieves language teachers f the extra effort or time requirements of blog-supported classes reported in previous studies and also implement a live LBC, as in this project.

Figure 1. *Lang-8* homepage

Start My Plan Again

Aug 18, 2015 13:19   🌐   ● 33   💬 1   ✅ 1   ✏ English

It has been a long time since the last time I went to gym with my friend. Both of us want to be in a nice shape before we enter the university. We started our plan for a few weeks, and it really worked! We were so glad to see our changes. Not only we can have a beautiful body shape, but also it does good to our health. And I feel that my face turned more flawless and rosy. But later, we got other things to busy with and didn't have time to continue the plan. Maybe it was better to say that we got lazy and felt tired to go to the gym regularly. Now, we have more time and both of us think it's time we started our plan again. I enjoy when I sweat a lot, it seems that I really try hard on exercising. My next goal is to run twenty minutes without taking a break. I know it's a piece of cake to many people, but to a person who doesn't even want to have PE classes in senior high school like me, it's really a challenge.

m____   ⓘ Report this content.   Aug 18, 2015 22:58

✏ It has been a long time since the last time I went to gym with my friend.
✅ It has been a long time since the last time I went to **the** gym with my friend.
✏ Both of us want to be in a nice shape before we enter the university.
✅ Both of us want to be in a nice shape before we enter the university.
✏ We started our plan for a few weeks, and it really worked!

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!
✏ We started our plan for a few weeks, and it really worked!

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!
✏ We were so glad to see our changes.

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!
✏ Not only we can have a beautiful body shape, but also it does good to our health.
✅ Not only we can have a beautiful body shape, but **it is also good for our** health.
✏ And I feel that my face turned more flawless and rosy.
✅ And I feel that my face ~~turned~~ **became** more flawless and rosy.
✏ But later, we got other things to busy with and didn't have time to continue the plan.
✅ But later, we got **busy** with **other things** and didn't have time to continue the plan.
✏ Maybe it was better to say that we got lazy and felt tired to go to the gym regularly.
✅ Maybe it was better to say that we got lazy and felt **too** tired to go to the gym regularly.
✏ Now, we have more time and both of us think it's time we started our plan again.

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!
✏ I enjoy when I sweat a lot, it seems that I really try hard on exercising.
✅ I enjoy when I sweat a lot, it ~~seems that~~ **feels like I'm** really **exercising hard.**

💬 or "I'm really trying hard." or "I'm giving a lot of effort."

✏ My next goal is to run twenty minutes without taking a break.

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!
✏ I know it's a piece of cake to many people, but to a person who doesn't even want to have PE classes in senior high school like me, it's really a challenge.

This sentence is perfect! No correction needed!

⭐ Thank you for your correction!

L____   Aug 19, 2015 01:12
Thank you!! Your correction is great^^   👍 + 📖

Figure 2. Snapshot of the *Tracker* function in *Lang-8*

After the introduction, the consenting participants created their personal *Lang-8* account and were expected to begin an intensive blogging pattern of 10 journal entries during the project. Blog entries could be written daily or every other day on any subject they pleased. Students were also encouraged to read peer articles, comment on one another's work, and network with users other than peers. Because blogging formed part of their composition course, all such activities were tasks for the participants' free time. They were judged feasible because the participants claimed access to PCs, laptops, or smartphones,

Finally, because *Lang-8* was judged useful for a practicing LBC where many registered users could help one another in their own native languages, the instructor (the present writer) in this experimental project provided no corrective or other comments/feedback on his students' entries. This in turn allowed him to objectively judge whether the participants' improvements in linguistic features (e.g., grammar) were attributable to blogging efficacy.

3.3 Writing Tests

To evaluate student writing performance after the experiment, pre- and post-tests were administered. Each test was a 25-minute in-class paragraph-writing task in which the students wrote at least 120 words on a general issue in student life. In the pre-test, the participants wrote about the use of smartphones on campus, and in the post-test, about part-time jobs for students.

Both writing tests were assigned two marks by two trained English composition raters, not the researcher. Before assessment, the raters agreed on the criteria of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) writing rubric adopted for the task. The GEPT is a popular test in Taiwan launched in 1997 (www.gept.org.tw). Its writing section is assessed by a 5-band holistic rubric, with 1 indicating the lowest proficiency and 5 the highest. The scores generated by the raters were later examined using Pearson's *r* for inter-rater reliability. The results revealed high agreement between the raters' marks (pre-test samples: $r = .73$, $p = .000$; post-test scores: $r = .76$, $p = .000$), ensuring the validity of the raters' scores for subsequent data analysis, for which the scores were averaged.

To assess more thoroughly, both the pre- and post-test compositions were analysed in two other ways. First, basic linguistic features in the writing samples—types and tokens of words—were counted. Second, the participants' command of grammar was assessed by linguistic error analyses counting errors per 100 words. Such measurement is needed to evaluate how well the design of the project's blogging platform allowed users to comment on other entries. Assessing the participants' grammatical proficiency in turn might generate further evidence of the effects of blogging, especially when linguistic features were not part of the main content taught in class.

3.4 Questionnaire

Previously, the student bloggers had experienced anxiety (Lin et al., 2013), which was claimed to impact negatively on their practice of blogging and observed to abate when the blogging formula was improved (Lin, 2014). However, anxiety has rarely been quantitatively investigated, particularly compared to factors such as motivation. In this regard, anxiety can be an important variable reflecting student writers' perceptions of the blogging experience, and studying anxiety can enrich the current literature on blog studies. Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was administered to participants before and after the experiment. SLWAI uses a highly reliable valid five-point Likert-scale questionnaire with three subscales that probe three essential components of L2 writing anxiety: one for Somatic Anxiety (SAS, seven items), one for Cognitive Anxiety (CAS, eight items), and one for Avoidance Behavior S (ABS, seven items). SAS measures people's perception of their physiological reactions to anxiety; CAS examines their mental perception of their anxiety, including negative views or concern about others' comments; and ABS measures avoidance behavior when anxious.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the writing assessments and the questionnaires were analysed using paired-sample *t*-tests to determine whether the treatment improved students' writing performance and attitudes to learning. To complement the inferential statistical results, a descriptive analysis of the word counts was conducted using WordSmith 5.0.

Student blogging activities were reported as well, to indicate actual student engagement in the experiment (cf. Lin, 2015; Lin et al., 2013), including the numbers of views, comments, and corrections the students received. Such descriptive reports are useful because as Lin (2015) comments, blogging patterns may give some idea of students' perceptions of blog-assisted language learning. In turn, this information may guarantee the validity of

the LBC described here.

4. Results

4.1 Learning Anxiety Toward Writing

Table 1 reveals some significant differences between the entry and exit questionnaire outcomes. First, a statistically significant difference was found in the overall questionnaire ($t(23) = 5.18$, $p = .000$) with a substantial effect ($r = .73$), suggesting that, in general, the treatments significantly lessened the student bloggers' anxiety. This change is supported by the statistical results of the underlying subscales (SAS: $t(23) = 2.80$, $p = .010$; CAS: $t(23) = 4.63$, $p = .000$; ABS: $t(23) = 4.06$, $p = .000$), which were accompanied by great effects ($r = .50$; $r = .69$; $r = .65$). This outcome means that the treatment allowed the participants to write with physiological reactions, mental perceptions, and avoidance behavior that were considerably less anxious.

Table 1. Paired-sample *t* tests for student learning attitudes

Items	Test	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	r*
Overall Questionnaire	Pre-test	24	65.83	12.75	23	5.18	.000	.73
	Post-test	24	59.29	10.49				
SAS	Pre-test	24	20.50	4.67	23	2.80	.010	.50
	Post-test	24	18.71	4.02				
CAS	Pre-test	24	25.42	4.44	23	4.63	.000	.69
	Post-test	24	22.67	4.20				
ABS	Pre-test	24	19.92	5.08	23	4.06	.000	.65
	Post-test	24	17.92	4.04				

Note. *The effect size r was calculated using the equation r = √t2/√(t2+df) (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2012).

4.2 Writing Performance

Students' writing performance also reflects improved attitudes to writing anxiety; they could write using more linguistic information than before the treatment (137.71 tokens and 85.75 types per article/person) (see Table 2). On average, each student produced 39.25 more words and 11.17 more types in the post-test. These increases are more noteworthy because they occurred in *timed* tests. They also signify that after joining a writing course featuring an LBC the students became more capable of expressing themselves in writing.

Table 2. Basic linguistic features in student writing samples

Items	Tests	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Tokens	Pre-test	24	99.00	191.00	137.71	22.85
	Post-test	24	129.00	251.00	176.96	31.62
Types	Pre-test	24	61.00	108.00	85.75	11.84
	Post-test	24	81.00	152.00	96.92	16.02

Table 3 supports this inference. A significant difference in student writing performance ($t(23) = -3.12$, $p = .004$) was found between the pre- and post-tests, large in effect ($r = .55$). This indicates that after the experiment, the participants statistically improved their overall writing skills substantially.

Table 3. Paired-sample *t* tests for the overall writing test results

Items	Test	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	r
Writing tasks	Pre-test	24	2.52	.58	23	-3.19	.004	.55
	Post-test	24	3.04	.72				

Table 4 also shows enhanced grammatical skills (from 13.68 errors per 100 tokens to 11.61), in a nearly significant improvement; the difference between the pre- and post-tests was only marginally statistical ($t(23) = 2.05$, $p = .052$), with a medium-sized effect ($r = .39$).

Table 4. Paired-sample *t* tests for the writing qualities of grammar (Mean: errors per 100 tokens)

Test	N	Total errors	Total tokens	Mean	Min.	Max.	SD	df	t	p	r
Pre-test	24	449	3305	13.68	6.25	25.25	.050	23	2.05	.052	.39
Post-test	24	481	4247	11.61	4.23	17.16	.037				

4.3 Blogging Patterns

The blogging patterns shown in Table 5 correspond to the previously reported improved anxiety avoidance behavior and endorse the validity of the LBC. On average, each participant posted 9.92 journal entries over the three-week project, collected 114.83 views (11.58 per journal entry), had approximately 50% of entries corrected (5.29 articles per person), and received 3.21 comments. This blogging frequency may have encouraged student learning and linguistic skills.

Table 5. Overview of student blogging patterns

Student[*]/Gender	CEFR	Scores in pre-/post-tests	Total entries	Views received	Entries corrected	Comments received
S1/F	A2	3.00 / 3.00	10	157	10	4
S2/M	A2	2.00 / 2.00	10	116	4	3
S3/F	A2	2.00 / 2.00	10	87	4	2
S4/M	A2	2.00 / 3.50	10	126	6	3
S5/F	B1	2.50 / 3.00	10	118	6	1
S6/F	B1	3.50 / 4.00	10	127	7	8
S7/F	B1	2.00 / 2.50	8	96	4	2
S8/M	B2	2.50 / 3.00	10	111	7	3
S9/F	A2	2.50 / 3.00	10	103	4	2
S10/M	B2	1.00 / 4.00	10	86	1	4
S11/F	B1	3.00 / 4.00	13	120	5	2
S12/F	A2	2.50 / 4.00	10	100	5	2
S13/F	B1	3.00 / 3.00	9	142	8	5
S14/M	A2	3.00 / 2.00	10	116	3	2
S15/F	B1	2.00 / 2.00	11	106	4	1
S16/F	B1	2.00 / 3.00	10	150	5	2
S17/M	B1	3.00 / 4.00	10	142	7	4
S18/F	B1	3.00 / 3.50	10	96	5	4
S19/F	A2	3.00 / 4.00	10	89	5	2
S20/F	A2	3.00 / 2.50	9	162	9	11
S21/F	A2	3.00 / 3.00	10	102	3	0
S22/F	B1	2.00 / 2.00	9	106	4	4
S23/F	B1	3.00 / 3.00	9	101	7	4
S24/M	B1	2.00 / 3.00	10	97	4	2
Average	A2-B2	2.52 / 3.04	9.92	114.83	5.29	3.21

Note. *Participants are called S1 … S24 to preserve anonymity.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the pedagogical value of a language blogging community supporting a Taiwanese EFL writing class. Multifaceted quantitative examinations yielded consistent results favoring the approach. After the treatment, the participants significantly improved their general writing skills, and felt less anxious about writing. Their blogging patterns also affirmed the feasibility and efficacy of a functioning LBC. The findings echo previous claims by Arslan and Şahin-Kızıl (2010), Chen, Liu, Shih, Wu, and Yuan (2011), Lee (2015), Lin (2015), Lin et al. (2014), and Sun (2010) that blogging-assisted language learning strengthens EFL students' writing skills and supports the early empirical evidence of learner attitudes improved by blogging (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Lin, 2015, 2016; Sun, 2010). The frequent blogging pattern reported here recalls observations by Chen and Brown (2012), who discern intensified interactivity between (blog) writers and readers, and supports the belief of Kang et al. (2011) and Miceli et al. (2010) that blogging reinforces the sense of communities of practice.

The significant lowering of anxiety among participants further justifies the methodology and blogging formula employed. That is, classroom blogging is by nature pedagogic (cf. Mompean, 2010). Improving students' writing skills by blogging journals not only fulfils the purpose of blogging as a form of journal-writing but helps diminish their concerns over being criticized for it. They also benefit by satisfying their expressed educational need of linguistic feedback (see Lin et al., 2014). In this regard, it may be claimed that combining these refined elements creates a relatively suitable and sensible way of using blogs for EFL purposes, developing students' learning.

As this study shows, another merit of blogging in an LBC is to advance the existing blogging formula in the literature. Despite receiving no teacher supervision, comments, or feedback, believed to compromise the effectiveness of classroom blogging (e.g., Chiao, 2006; Lin, 2012; Sun, 2010), the present approach, insisting on frequent blogging, improved avoidance behaviour by removing writing anxiety. This outcome produced more objective evaluation of the strength of the blogging approach and suggests that it is effective.

Despite improved writing skills in general, one improvement was revealed as only marginally statistically significant, that of accuracy. To rigorous statisticians, this seems to constrain the blogging efficacy discussed above. However, grammar is after all a challenging area for many student writers (Lin et al., 2014) because it comprehends numerous linguistic aspects, such as the use of vocabulary for different parts-of-speech, collocations, tenses, and even punctuation marks, among many others. The full development of grammar skills usually takes months and sometimes many years. Therefore, given the improvement over such a short period (10 blog entries over three weeks), it may not be premature to claim that the gain of grammatical accuracy found here lends support to the blogging approach.

While the discussion has hitherto augmented the legitimacy of integrating an LBC into EFL writing classes, several aspects await further investigations before this prescription can be confidently adopted. First, the student writer's overall experience of blogging in such an online community has not been qualitatively examined here although the quantitative results have suggested the blogging approach suitable for EFL writing classes. A qualitative inquiry should also determine the underlying factors that empower students to learn writing in such a blog-supported writing context. In particular, probing student bloggers' in-depth perceptions/perspectives of the corrections and comments they receive on their journal entries would yield useful insights. Tackling this specific issue should help clarify the concerns raised regarding the language learner's view of non-teacher feedback. As Peng (2008) observed, student bloggers did not trust the quality of non-teacher comments. To a degree, Peng's finding reflects an early warning by Nelson and Murphy (1993), who cautioned that "[language] students who view the teacher as the 'one who knows' may ignore the responses of [others]" to their writing because they might not believe that peers are sufficiently knowledgeable to provide worthwhile feedback (p. 136). Thus, whether students would perceive feedback from native speakers differently is an interesting yet fundamental question, especially for blogging approaches similar to that examined here.

Second, although this study presents an effective method to decrease student blogger writing anxiety, further insight into the overall effectiveness of blogging on students' learning attitudes can be achieved from looking at the longitudinal development of learner autonomy. To date, little empirical evidence has suggested that blogging stimulates the autonomous development of students (e.g., Lee, 2011; Sun, 2010). Most data are based on the fact that students actively formed regular blogging patterns on their own schedules. For example, the blogging frequency observed in this study would be treated by certain researchers as evidence of learner autonomy. Although it is encouraging that a number of studies have expressed confidence in blogging's potential to boost autonomy, the validation of this assertion demands added empirical evidence. This question is particularly important given that participants in early blogging studies (e.g., Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Trajtemberg & Yiakoumetti, 2011) stopped engaging themselves in further blogging activities once the research projects concluded, regardless of whether their efforts had positive or negative results. It seems to be a common phenomenon that the learning activities of a subject/course end when the subject/course finishes. However, this outcome is unwelcome with respect to blog use considering that one of its purposes is to train student bloggers to become independent, self-directed autonomous learners, with or without teacher presence or course requirements. Therefore, an abrupt abandonment of blogging by student bloggers may connote scant learner autonomy. A long-term investigation is required.

Third, different from previous studies in which the experimental courses were semester-long or required (e.g., Chen, 2016; Kung, 2015; Lee, 2015; Lin, 2012), this research performed a case study on participants who volunteered for a short-term, intensive writing program. This may suggest that the student writers studied here had stronger determination or more enthusiastic learning attitudes regarding improvement to their compositional skills. Thus, they were probably prepared to put in the blogging practice that their teacher recommended and do so frequently. In addition, such learning characteristics may have nurtured the development of their learning attitudes during this experimental course and helped them overcome certain obstacles, such as reluctance to be mocked for their writing skills or a hesitancy to blog (cf. Chiao, 2006; Lin, 2014; Lin et al., 2013; Wu, 2008). Whether similar results can be found for learners in regular composition classes who blog in a similar language community would be a fruitful line of inquiry. Likewise, considering student learning styles and preferences when performing an experiment like this would advance our understanding of the effectiveness of blogging, particularly given that recent research (e.g., Lee, Yeung, & Ip, 2016) has observed a meaningful correlation

between certain learning styles and the use of computer technology for English language learning.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that even though this study included participants from various college majors, the sample came from a single experimental site. Moreover, the sample size was smaller than is generally suggested for quantitative inquiries (i.e., 30 individuals) (Dörnyei, 2007). These factors may limit the generalizability of the results. Similarly, no contrast groups were available from which to ascertain how far the study results were exclusively subject to blogging effects, since in-class writing instruction itself should also help students with certain compositional skills. Future investigations which consider these aspects should have much to contribute.

Acknowledgments

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