

Integration of Blogging in Classroom Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the integration of blogging in classroom instruction, focusing on teachers' perceptions of its usefulness. Twenty-four teachers in Zamboanga City participated in hands-on activities, specifically, creating blogs on their topics of interest and critiquing them. Semi-structured interviews and a researcher-made questionnaire were employed to gather qualitative and quantitative data.

The findings revealed positive reactions from teachers toward incorporating blogs into classroom instruction. They cited benefits such as increased student motivation, real-world learning experiences, and enhanced writing skills. Despite acknowledging challenges in planning and implementation, uncertainties in utilizing blogs due to technological intimidation, concerns about overwhelming students' activities, doubts about effectiveness, limited computer and internet access, and suitability for younger students; teachers emphasized the positive impacts of blogging on student learning.

The questionnaire results, analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation, indicated an overall positive perception of blogging integration. Each mean score was interpreted as "Agree" to "Strongly Agree." The grand mean score further affirmed agreement on the perceived usefulness of blogging in classroom instruction. The small standard deviation suggested minimal variation in teachers' responses, indicating an agreement on the positive impact of blogging as an instructional tool.

In conclusion, the integration of blogging into classroom instruction was perceived to be useful. Moreover, the study contributes valuable insights into existing literature about blogging; emphasizing the perceived usefulness of blogging in classroom instruction.

Keywords: Blogging, integration, instruction, perception,

INTRODUCTION

Today's classroom has undergone a profound transformation in just the past decades, due to the continual evolution of technology. These advancements not only provide students with unprecedented learning opportunities but also equip teachers with numerous options for effective instruction. Among the available tools, one that stands out for its educational benefits is the blog.

But what is a blog? Many definitions can be given to the term "blogs." Online Merriam-Webster dictionary

defines a blog as a “website on which someone writes about personal opinions, activities, and experiences. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the noun ‘blog’ means “A frequently updated website consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary.”

A blog, short for "weblog," is a dynamic online platform where individuals or organizations regularly publish content, typically in the form of articles or posts, often organized chronologically, Garcia, et al (2019). A blog is a personalized website that is a collection of entries. The entries may be commentaries, videos, pictures, or similar to journal entries. Readers can stay updated on new entries by subscribing to the blog. Blogs allow individuals to share writing samples, pictures, and videos with friends, family, and strangers. Other people may leave comments on a blog, allowing for collaboration. Using a blog in the classroom not only taps into student’s digital inclination but also increases motivation, challenges critical thinking skills, aid in differentiated instruction, extends the classroom walls, and serves as an avenue to empower all students, including the more reserved ones, by granting them a virtual space for self-expression Sawmiller, Alison, (2010).

In teaching, a blog serves as a tool that extends the boundaries of the classroom, allowing teachers to share assignments and communicate with students and parents. If students have Internet access at home, teachers can encourage them to research and contribute to the blog remotely. This means that learning opportunities can happen anywhere with Internet access, transforming homes into extended classrooms. Technology, coupled with blogging, facilitates parental involvement in their child's education, as parents can access and observe firsthand what their child is learning in various subjects like science. Research suggests that students with actively engaged parents tend to achieve higher levels of academic success, (Andrews and Pate 2006).

In the study of Yih-Rueh (2006) on the effectiveness of a blog-based learning tool, called Learning Blogs; students and their teachers blogged both in warm-up activities and in the lesson review. Students reported that blogging had promoted interactive discussion and helped them understand the target learning activities, while the teacher concluded that responding to the students’ blogs had helped evaluate course instruction and plan future instruction.

Although blogging has become much more commonplace throughout the Internet, as an estimated 27% of online users read blogs (Clyde, 2004; Rainie, 2005), there remains some question about whether a blog adds to the integrity of a course. Blogging rather than hard copywriting provides a space where students can interact with one another and can promote collaboration (Beeson, P. 2005; Ducate, C & L. L. Lomicka, 2005). Using a blog has been claimed to encourage students to write more thoughtfully, Beeson, 2005.

Objective of the Study

This study was designed to explore blogging as an instructional and learning tool. Specifically, to determine the perceptions of teachers on the usefulness of blogging integration in classroom instruction.

This study contributed to the existing literature on classroom blogging as an effective instructional strategy, providing valuable insights for teacher education programs. The findings highlight the potential for impactful and purposeful instructional experiences in 21st-century classrooms. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of more research in this area, emphasizing the benefits of blogging as an instructional tool and its potential to bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and the evolving educational needs of the digital age.

Adopters of blogging showcase the wide variety of ways blogging can be used in the classroom to enhance and expand teaching and learning (Richardson, 2012). The flexibility of classroom blogging provides many opportunities to implement identified constructivist learning principles such as critical and analytical thinking,

collaboration, and reflection. In addition, blogging provides students with opportunities to connect with others within and beyond the classroom walls, Ebrecht, B. and Ku, Heng-Yu (2014). The value of blogging lies in the many ways teachers can use this collaborative tool to enhance students' creative thought processes while encouraging students to develop valuable literacy and technology skills (Penrod, 2007).

The rationale behind blogging is that it is very convenient for users to check changes one has made to his/her blog. While with other tools, a user needs to "check in" occasionally to see if there is any new content posted, blogs make use of a "publish-subscribe" model, in which the subscribers receive notifications when new content has been posted. In the writing classroom; therefore, blogs are qualified as a pedagogical tool [5]. They can replace the cycle of steps in developing an essay: brainstorming, writing, submitting, receiving feedback, revising writing, and resubmitting. Blogs benefit the writing classroom. Blogs enable the instructor and students to communicate through and about writing. Both sides easily update online writing promoting blogging as a new form of enhancing class discussion and creating a community outside the classroom.

(Boling, 2008) Blogs can result in increased motivation and literacy engagement as students read, write, create, and produce for meaningful and authentic purposes. Blogs can be used in place of paperbound journals to record thoughts, respond to literature, reflect on class work, and create writing pieces. It is entirely up to the teacher on how to use blogs in the classroom. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills in a technology-rich environment. Increased motivation and engagement in authentic activities will encourage students to write and strengthen their literacy skills while enjoying learning and interacting with peers as well. Using blogging in the classroom can benefit students in many ways and promote traditional literacy skills.

There are numerous reasons for using blogs in education, such as to provide a real audience for students writing, to provide extra reading practice for students, and to encourage learners to participate. The novelty factor of blogging creates learners' interest in starting to use blogs. It is usually claimed that blogs work best when learners get into the habit of using them. If learners are not encouraged, blogs can quickly be aborted. Blogs are well suited to serve as online journals for bloggers, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking with various types of files. Blogs are often linked and cross-linked to create larger online communities, Sattar (2015). Based on the possibilities proposed for classroom application, one might expect blogs to offer many reading and writing incentives for English learning and writing because blogging places emphasis on content, the possibility of effective feedback, and the freedom of working with both words and images and the ability to use follow-back links to relate one post to another.

Apart from that, blogging provides examples for students to model and learn from. Kim (2011) suggests that blogs can enhance students' communication contexts. Publishing reflective commentaries on the Internet is an effective way for students to share each other's opinions and thoughts. Not only will readership increase, but when bloggers see each other's content, they can learn from one another, thereby motivating them to produce better content next time. Furthermore, the creation of online portfolios on the web amounts to a showcasing of their works over the development period of their learning. These are a display of the learner's growth and reflection on their learning. When a sizeable number of interested visitors give comments and input to a blog, a community of bloggers/ learners may be formed automatically. Blogging also has a positive effect on the student's quality of writing. Currently, blogging is slowly making an impression as one of the effective ways to create an e-learning environment, and many educators seem to consider blogs as an important writing tool since "it occupies a prominent role in a pedagogical model that stresses the importance of [...] the process of students taking control of their destiny" (Brown, 2004)

Grewling (2004) and Pinkman (2005), blogs give learners more control over their learning and when created by students themselves, blogs can also give students the feeling of ownership of a personal space, a sense of belonging that is not so easily achieved in any face-to-face environment. In addition, Panday (2007) assures that blogs offer many benefits to students since they help to enhance the skills of communicating, sharing,

analyzing, reflecting, reading, writing, and keeping records as well as promoting collaboration among people and peers. Hence, blogging is a process of Reading/Listening to thoughts, views, and experiences, reflecting on thoughts, views, Analyzing, Questioning, Critiquing, Reacting, Agreeing/Disagreeing, Writing/Recording your reflection, and sharing your reflection.

Sanyat Sattar (2015), the application of blogs as a learning tool has created a new means for online constructive learning as blogs provide more opportunities for learners to construct their learning actively. Therefore, blogs as a tool for language learning can provide learners with a constructive and conducive language-learning environment. Writing on blogs offers students a way to improve their writing skills and encounter new ideas through interaction with others who are reading the blog. Online writing gives these students an authentic and enjoyable learning environment. Blogs also allow students to easily link to resources that support their assertions and thereby encourage critical thinking.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted within the last few years on the topic of blogs. Blogs are first and foremost a social activity (Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004). Academic blogging provides a good environment for literacy processes of various kinds, such as critical thinking, reflection, questioning, modeling, social practices, discussion, and development, when teachers adopt it for classroom practices (McGrail & Davis, 2009). Blogging also provides a space for writing down ideas in their embryonic stage to be refined later (Davies and Merchant, 2007). As practical tools, blogs create wonderful opportunities in an EFL environment both for teachers and for learners (Aydin, 2014).

METHOD

Twenty-four teachers from Zamboanga City served as the subject of this study. In a seminar workshop, they learned about the concept of blogging, its uses, and how it could be integrated into classroom instructions. The teachers were asked to explore different helpful blog sites and the steps to create a blog were also demonstrated. They were then asked to create and publish their blogs on topics that interested them. Their output underwent thorough efficiency tests by asking the participants to choose teacher-made blog topics and participate in the blogging activities. Each teacher then was requested to critique these blogs.

A semi-structured interview with the participants was also conducted, to share their thoughts and opinions concerning the positive and negative aspects of blogging and the perceived impact on learning and usefulness in classroom instruction. After the interviews, they were given a researcher-made questionnaire with 10 questions and 5 response options (1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree), for them to answer. The structured questionnaire aimed to assess their perception of the usefulness of blogging integration in classroom instruction.

The study had both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data from the interview were synthesized into meaningful outcomes. The quantitative data from a researcher-made questionnaire were subjected to Mean and Standard Deviation. Means were used to compute the average score for each question, and for the overall questions to give insight into how teachers perceived the usefulness of blogging integration in classroom instruction. Standard Deviation was used to measure the degree of variation in the participants' answers from the overall Mean response. Before calculation, the scores obtained for negative statements in the questionnaire were reversed.

RESULT

In the conducted interviews, participants expressed positive reactions to the integration of blogs in classroom instruction, citing benefits such as increased student motivation, real-world learning experiences, and enhancement of writing skills. Accordingly, sharing views and experiences was important in understanding,

and organizing thoughts on a specific concept; which in turn, contributed to collective learning and enhancement of knowledge acquisition.

Participants also pointed out some challenges encountered during the planning and implementation stages. They also provided reasons for uncertainty in integrating blogs in the classroom which include technological intimidation, concerns about overwhelming students' workload, limited computer and internet access, suitability for younger students, and the perceptions that blogs may no longer be considered new, were mentioned as factors that might influence instructors to opt for alternative teaching methods to meet instructional goals.

Nevertheless, they emphasized that the perceived positive effects of blogging on student learning exceeded any potential drawbacks. That, blogging could be a valuable instrument for cultivating a more reflective and meaningful learning experience.

Table: Perception of the teachers on the usefulness of blogging integration in classroom instruction

Item	Question	Response					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	The use of blogs enhances student engagement in the learning process.		1	2	14	7	4.041667	0.026406
2	Blogs effectively support higher-order thinking skills, such as critical analysis and/or reflection.			3	8	13	4.416667	0.288906
3	Blogging provides an authentic learning experience for students.		2	4	10	8	3.833333	0.002101
4	Blogs encourage active and interactive learning among students.		2	4	12	6	3.75	0.016684
5	The opportunity for peer interaction and collaboration on blogs is valuable for student learning.			3	12	9	4.25	0.137517
6	Using blogs in teaching motivates students to participate more actively in class.			6	11	7	4.041667	0.026406
7	Blogs provide an effective platform for students to share their views and ideas.			4	13	7	4.125	0.060434
8	The advantages of engaging in blogging surpass its drawbacks.		3	4	10	7	3.625	0.064601
9	Overall, I believe that the integration of blogs into teaching is beneficial for student learning.		4	4	10	6	3.416667	0.213906
10	I would recommend the integration of blogging in classroom instruction to my colleagues.		5	3	10	6	3.291667	0.345156
Grand							3.879	1.182

Response: 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

For description, the following mean scales were used:

0.1 - 1= strongly disagree

3.1- 4= Agree

1.1 - 2= disagree

4.1 – 5= strongly agree

2.1 - 3= neutral

The data from the result of the questionnaire obtained means ranging from 3.291 to 4.416 (Table 1) which were interpreted to be “Agree” to “Strongly Agree”. This implied that participants agreed to strongly agree that the integration of blogging in classroom instruction is perceived to be useful. When the average of these means was computed, a grand mean score of 3.879 (Table 1) was obtained and interpreted as “Agree”. This implied that participants agreed that the integration of blogging was perceived to be useful in classroom instruction.

When the mean for each question was subjected to Standard deviation to determine the degree of variation of the participants’ answers to the mean score; the result showed a grand S.D. value of 1.182 which was relatively close to the grand mean. A small standard deviation indicates that data points tend to be close to the mean, suggesting low variability. This implied that the teacher participants had almost similar answers in the questionnaires and “agreed” on the perceived usefulness of integrating blogging in classroom instruction.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the integration of blogging in classroom instruction has both positive and negative impacts. However, the focus was on the positive impact on student learning, which was deemed more significant than any potential drawbacks.

In conclusion, blogging integration in classroom instruction was perceived to be useful.

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