Research Article

Writing Online: An Analysis on the Features of Students' Blog Posts

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ABSTRACT

Writing online has influenced the way people communicate and write. The integration of this innovative electronic device into the language classroom provided students with writing opportunities. This study aims to analyze the features of the students' blog posts. This study employed a general qualitative approach utilizing the blog posts of the BSED second-year students enrolled in a language class, which were drawn randomly as the corpus of the study. The content analysis technique was used to characterize a student's blog post. The study revealed that the features of the students' blog posts were blogging attitude, content, connections with the audience, and innovativeness. Student bloggers communicated to the readers with excitement, motivation, interest, or emotions. Student bloggers generated ideas, opinions, concepts, and thoughts about the topic, provided useful and important information from various sources, and took a position on the topics and concepts that were discussed. Furthermore, students communicated in innovative ways by using figurative language, idioms, and powerful words. This study concluded that blogging is a trend in writing that allows creativity and an opportunity for students to improve their writing skills. Thus, the teacher may use blogging as one of the flexible assessments that can be utilized in the new normal of teaching by evaluating the authentic work of the students. Students may also be given an infographic called "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging" to help them figure out what makes a good blog post.

Keywords: blog posts, content analysis, features, social media, writing online

Introduction

State universities and colleges across the country have accepted the new normal, which has resulted in a transition from face-to-face connection with students toward a flexible learning environment. Students can choose how, what, when, and where they learn with this system. Students' learning is measured by their outputs, regardless of the learning medium they choose. One of the suitable flexible

assessments that must be used in a language course is the ability to write essays, descriptions, and other publications. Nonetheless, one of the difficulties posed by this plan is that teachers do not have enough time to cover all aspects of writing. Due to time limits, there is inadequate time left to teach metacognitive thinking and idea development concepts and ideas (Kixmiller, 2004 as cited in McGrail and Davis, 2011, p. 417). In fact, traditional grammar lessons were rated as the least effective way to help students get better at writing.

The use of blogs in classrooms as a fresh technique and tactic in training students to enhance their writing skills is the new trend in teaching writing. An online diary or educational website called a "blog" (short for "weblog") presents its articles in reverse chronological order, with the most recent ones appearing at the top. It serves as a forum for writers or groups of writers to discuss a certain subject (Minaev, 2021). The fundamental purpose of a blog is to introduce you to the appropriate audience. Another is to boost website traffic and produce top-notch leads. As your blog postings become more frequent and of higher quality, your website's chances of being found and visited by your target audience rise. Writing online not only allows kids to communicate, but also allows young writers to develop ideas that interest them without being constrained by time limits if the blog post is well-crafted and well-written. This blogging platform could benefit elementary school instructors by allowing inexperienced writers to participate before a broader audience. Because writing may now be viewed by anybody, and readers can react and give their thoughts, blogs can bring a different degree of dynamic to the classroom if the language teacher wants to track the students' writing improvement. Writing as a result develops on its own (Boling, 2008; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Penrod, 2007).

The use of blogs in reflective writing, classroom engagement, and online communities is supported by Ray and Hocutt's (2006) research. The benefits that blogs could provide in secondary and higher education are the main focus of the debate over whether or not they should be used as a form of computer-mediated communication (Boling, 2008; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Less study has been done on the qualities of student blog posts, though.

This study aims to investigate the features of blog posts written by BSED second-year students taking the "Teaching and Assessment of the Macro Skills" course. The findings of this study will give students and teachers a general understanding of what makes an excellent blog post. Furthermore, the research will indicate how to use blogging as an effective technique for students to improve their writing skills. The study's research results will be used to make an infographic called "Writing Online: How Blogging Can Help You Get Better at Writing."

Review of Related Literature

Web-based education is one of those breakthroughs that have a long-term impact on society. (Sadikin & Saleh, 2016, p. 60, citing Franklin & Peat, 2001). It is critical to consider how online technology affects students, courses, and institutions whenever it is employed in an educational setting (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Furthermore, teachers can adjust a selection of internet content to support a wide range of instructional activities to meet their learning outcomes. Computer use has been shown to help and enhance the social, intellectual, linguistic literacy, and literary ability of young students. As a conclusion, advances in abstract reasoning, planned behavior, visual-motor coordination, and visual memory are associated with adult supervision of children's computer use (Primavera, Wiederlight, & DiGiacomo 2001; Nir-Gal & Klein 2004, cited in Sadikin & Saleh, 2016, p. 60).

Blogs, as an example of multimedia technology, feature a wealth of interactive information, some of which can be used in the lecture room. A weblog's main advantage, particularly in terms of communication skills, is that it provides authentic resources. Teachers can use blogging to connect pupils to the "real-life" character of English lectures. Students can be assisted in exploring a world of online English learning opportunities by providing context from online materials. 2016 (Sadikin & Saleh).

A weblog is an electronic logbook or diary that is hosted on a website. Blog content typically includes text, pictures, movies, motion graphics, and even copies of old tangible offsite

notebooks, memoirs, or other hard-copy writings. Because a blog can be used for private purposes, providing data to a select group or engaging the public at large, a blogger can set up their webpage publicly or privately. Blogs serve as a kind of social interaction. Many people are sociable animals by nature. They actively seek out other people for connection, for knowledge and perspective sharing, whether locally or online. Even many people who are anti-social in person love communicating online with their genuine identities as anonymous personalities through social networks. People who write or read blogs have a better way to communicate with individuals who didn't exist before because a blog is a social tool (Spencer, 2021).

Thomson (2018) provided six strong justifications for why students should blog. As a result, blogging has many benefits, especially for young people. They will constantly develop their thinking abilities, have a better understanding of the world around them, and be able to improve their writing in ways that will last a lifetime. For instance, blogging enables self-expression, builds confidence, strengthens communication skills, and provides income. Regular writing also improves brain function.

The use of academic blogging by instructors in the classroom fosters a variety of literacy processes, including critical thinking, reflection, questioning, modeling, social practices, discussion, and development (Merchant, 2005, as cited in Alsamadani, 2018, p. 45). Additionally, blogging enables you to capture and later develop on-the-spot ideas (Davies and Merchant, 2007). In terms of academic blogging, authors can work together to develop and support their communities (Miller and Shepherd, 2004). Literacy includes all interpersonal behaviors that start at home and then evolve with greater interactions with others, such as blogging, despite the fact that humans are naturally driven to learn in a social setting involving collaborative tasks (Lamonica, 2010 as cited in Alsamadani, 2018, p. 45). A major advancement in teaching writing is the shift from conventional methods like teacher- and student-centered methods to learning-centered approaches. This suggests that in a sociocultural situation where instruction is present, people learn best when they engage and collaborate.

It has been said by several authors (Boling, 2008; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Penrod, 2007) that this is a brand-new genre that is constantly developing and changing. By making writing public, participatory, and ongoing, blogs can bring new dynamics into the classroom when they are focused on helping students enhance their writing. Academic research has looked into the use of blogs in educational settings, although largely at the secondary and college levels (Boling, 2008; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Additionally, some research has supported the benefits of social networking, classroom dialogue, and blogs for reflection (Ray & Hocutt, 2006; Khourey-Brown, 2005).

Posting blogs has the potential to turn into a literacy issue in schools rather than a technology one since it brings outside-of-classroom literacy activities into the classroom (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). (Leu, 2005). Because it "leverages the strengths of real writing, the power of the writing process, and the engagement of collaborative writing," this is the case (Boling et al., 2008). Blogs can also support literacy development through storytelling and conversation since their format allows for self-expression and the relaying of personal events to the blogger community in contexts other than oral ones (Huffaker, 2005). When seen in this context, blogging becomes about connection and communication.

Methods

A qualitative research design was used in this study. To reduce variance, the corpus is limited to the blog entries of BSED second-year students enrolled in Teaching and Assessment of Macro Skills at Jose Rizal Memorial State University for the Academic Year 2020–2021, who also happened to be the students of the researcher.

Prior to the students creating their blogs, the instructor delivered an overview of blogging, demonstrated how to blog, and explained the benefits of blogging as a new form of communication and writing method. She also told the pupils to go to www.wordpress.com and make a website. The instructor produced a blog

post to help students comprehend the project and published the link in the group chat, asking them to read it and give comments. The students were given complete freedom to share their thoughts and opinions on the blog entry. Following that, the kids wrote their own blog posts.

The students' blog posts were the primary sources of data. The corpus of the study was chosen at random from 10 blog entries by the researcher. A qualitative content analysis was used to describe the characteristics of student writing. The investigation began with the creation of a coding scheme that included significant codes (domains) and their descriptors. In this study, the coding scheme functioned as an analytical framework for data analysis. The following topics of interest in student writing were included in these domains, according to McGrail and Davis (2011): attitude, content, voice, connections and relationships, thinking, and craft. The main topics were focused on literature on new writing, blogging, and writing development. Before deciding on the final codes and themes, the researcher examined each code and discussed areas of resemblance and contrast with a language teacher.

Table 1. Domain on the Features of Students' Blogging

Domain	Categories	Definition
Attitude	Motivation	Demonstrate a desire to write and communicate with others
	Excitement	Expresses feelings of anticipation and joy
	Confidence	Demonstrates self–belief as a writer/reader/thinker, etc.; finds composing easy
	Interest/ Emotions	Shares with the audience passions, experiences, and feelings
Content	Concepts /Ideas	Generate ideas, opinions, concepts, and thoughts
	Research	Seeks information from various sources (print and/or non-print
	Analysis/ synthesis	Takes disparate concepts and ideas and compares/contrast them in a coherent manner.
	Point of view	Takes a stance with respect to the content and ideas discussed
	Skills/ literacies	Makes connections to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and other aspects of English language arts
Voice	Empowered	Feels confident and capable
	Reflective	Thinks back and evaluates one's ideas and writing
	Questioning/ inquiring	Asks questions, invites the reader/audience to consider other issues/points/ideas, confronts other's perspective
Connections/ Relationships with audience/ peers	Intended readers	Has the intended audience in mind, speaks directly to them and engages them in a conversation/dialogue
	Networking	Seeks support, dialogue with the feedback givers and blogging community, or makes friends with other writers
	Peers	Addresses other peer/group writers on similar assignments
Thinking	Critical	Engages in the process of evaluating one's own and other people's thinking and ideas to arrive at an objective conclusion
	Creative	Thinks and communicate in original and innovative ways using figurative language, such as analogies, metaphors, or idioms
	… Ahead	Plans for the future and interaction with the reader

Domain	Categories	Definition
Craft	Vocabulary	Uses bigger and richer words
	Elaboration	Develops, explains, or illustrates ideas and thinking
	Transition/ linking	Uses a variety of connecting words and phrases
	Sentence structure	Moves beyond the subject verb and object sentence structure
	Organization	Writes in a clear, purposeful, and sequential way
	Mechanics	Spells and punctuates accurately

Note. These domains and categories are adapted from the study of McGrail and Davis (2011).

Results and Discussion

The researcher looked at ten (10) students' blog postings that were based on their reactions to the short films that were shown. After the study, important factors like the blogger's attitude, the blog's attitude, the connection with the audience, and the bloggers' willingness to try new things came to light.

Blogging attitude

Blogging is a mindset. A blog is more of a personal look at the writer than it is about the company's feelings. You can't assign a story to a blogger and expect that the public won't notice that they have no idea what they're talking about, or worse, that they don't care (Dalrymple, 2012). According to the study, one of the characteristics of the students' blog entries was their blogging attitude. By beginning their blogs with excitement, inspiration, and interest or emotions, student bloggers hoped to communicate with their readers. This means that student bloggers expressed their excitement and joy over a specific issue. They also expressed their feelings and experiences with the audience. One of the most important blogging attitudes they've demonstrated is being open about their emotions. According to Staff (2020), being honest is one of the best dispositions a blogger can have if he or she wants to have a good blog post. This mentality was exemplified by Maria's excerpt.

December 06, 2019 a very memorable day for me for I have witnessed to watch the movie entitled "Forsaken" directed by Ms. Mary Reagen Apostol a student from Jose Rizal Memorial State University this movie really catches my attention because I never expected that a student can make a movie that is so jaw dropping.

After watching the film, I was so amazed and impressed because of its horrible and hair-raising characters, lightning effects, audio effects, and even the characters are so suitable to its rule and place that makes you applause because of its similarity to the real setting. It also thrilled me, to the point that I need to cover my eyes because of the scary musics and effects! This scene was really touch my heart because she died or commit suicide because of a jerk boy , an irresponsible father. After watching the film, I just love everything about it: the feeling of wanting more, the feeling of missing.

Another blogging attitude can be seen in the example above. It was all about me. The student blogger began by sharing her personal experience with the film and concluded by sharing her personal feelings and experiences. This is due to the students' understanding that "blog" is derived from an earlier version of "weblog," which was originally referred to as personal online journals. They started writing blogs as a way to share their private views with the world. This personal touch, on the other hand, has remained the blog's most important feature to date. According to Moffett (1989), as stated in McGrail & Davis (2011), being self-centered focuses primarily on the bloggers' own needs as learners and writers rather than the needs of readers.

Student bloggers who demonstrate confidence and motivation in their writing have a

blogging attitude of empowerment. They have the confidence to take chances and experiment with new topics in their writing. Like Mario, the student bloggers began their work by questioning and inquiring:

> *Did you laugh because you knew someone was in a bad situation because of you?*

In this extract, the student blogger poses questions or challenges readers to examine alternative points of view or ideas. Blog entries, according to Skrba (2019), should constantly inspire debate. As a result, the comment box is usually found at the end of each piece, where readers can join in a conversation and provide honest comments. The capacity to make readers think and desire to connect is what they value the most.

This implies that in order to provide opportunities for the students to pour out their emotions, demonstrate confidence and motivation, and share their personal experiences, the language teacher may provide topics to the students that trigger their excitement. These may include topics about their interests, their hobbies, the dos and don'ts of dating, ways of having a healthy relationship, fun facts about their idols, etc.

Blog content

It is a waste of time to write a blog post that has no relevant information, no matter how well-written or instructive it is. In their writing, the student bloggers appeared to consider relevance. This indicates the student bloggers felt competent as writers as they generated ideas, opinions, concepts, and thoughts on the topic, provided relevant and significant information from a variety of sources, and took a position on the content and ideas addressed. This also meant that the students' attempt to take a position on the subject and concepts covered reflected their empowerment as writers and learners. This means that in order to stand out from the crowd, you'll need to take a fresh approach to the themes you'll be discussing. This can be accomplished by presenting your point of view as evidenced by research.

According to Collins (2012), the goal of the blog should be to assist and educate your audience while also providing useful takeaways. People enjoy actionable knowledge, and if you constantly provide items that are not just relevant but also useful, they will return to your blog. Furthermore, according to Scrba (2019), every high-quality blog article necessitates time and effort spent on research. The more time you spend researching, the easier it will be to create the post. You can learn about other people's perspectives on the subject by conducting research. You'll delve deeper into it, making it easier for you to develop your own distinct perspective on it. Second, every claim must be supported by proof, which necessitates the use of links and citations from reliable sources. As an example, consider the following extracts:

> *Teenage pregnancy is one of the major factors that could leads depression to teenagers nowadays. (idea)*

> *Love is a complex set of emotions, behaviors and beliefs associated with strong feelings of affection, protectiveness and respect for each other. (idea)*

> *The film reminds us that too much of affection could somehow lead us to the wrong path in life. (point of view)*

> *Good company in a journey makes the way seem shorter. — Izaak Walton (research)*

This implies that the language teacher may provide some tips on how to make their blog posts substantive, comprehensive, and informative by providing factual information, figures, statistics, citations, or links to support their views and opinions regarding the topic or issue.

Connection with the audience

In the current study, active involvement with the public via the commenting feature enabled our student bloggers to recognize that there was an audience other than the teacher and that they, as authors, had a relationship

with this audience (McGrail & Davis, 2011). Establishing active engagement with the audience through networking is a key component of the students' posts. "So that all fellas," most of the blogs concluded with statements or lines seeking support. Thank you for taking the time to read it. Don't forget to subscribe and follow me. "Thank you for joining me!" and a conversation with the feedback givers, "Thank you for joining me!" Fill in the blanks with your thoughts or remarks. This indicates that the student bloggers were aware that they had an audience other than their teacher, and that they, as authors, had established a relationship with this audience. This audience, referred to as the intended audience, talks directly to them and initiates a conversation or dialogue with them. Carlo highlighted the feeling of togetherness and social engagement towards the end of his post, demonstrating this form of connection with the audience:

> *"And for all the teenagers out there, to avoid committing suicide, do not depress yourself, and to avoid depression, be careful with your actions. Because everything starts with our doings. And, always remember that every problem has its own solution; you just have to find it, wait for it, and work for it."*

According to Collins (2012), great blogs build relationships. The entire point of a blog is to build a relationship with an audience. There's no point in writing a blog if no one is going to read it. A strong blog fosters a person-to-person connection, with real human interaction. A great blog transfers knowledge, ideas, and experiences. Based on this premise, the language instructor may include some useful methods in their blog articles to boost audience participation, such as promoting on social media, adding photographs, inserting links, providing social sharing buttons, inserting videos, and so on.

Blogger's innovativeness

Craft and inventiveness were the final characteristics discovered in the analysis of the students' blog posts. By employing figurative languages such as metaphors, similes, and idioms, the student bloggers think and communicate in novel ways. This indicates they employed a range of connecting words and phrases in their work, as well as a larger and richer vocabulary. Their voices were powerful, empowered, and confident as a result of the powerful written words. The student blogger was fun with her words, and compared marriage to a lovely box to explain her point of view on the challenges. The findings were similar to those of McGrail and Davis (2011), who discovered that with elaboration, transition, and organization, students' writing became more deliberate and complicated.

Anna's writing was powerful and insightful in this piece. "Mostly believe in a myth that when someone offers you a marriage it is a beautiful box to enter because of the things that we longed for," she wrote in her post. Tony, too, used idioms in his writing to make his voice more alive and interesting to the readers, as proven by his writing, "*This movie really caught my attention because I never expected that a student could make a movie that is so jaw-dropping.*"

In addition, student bloggers, like Linda, used a lot of words and phrases to come up with, explain, and express ideas.

> *"This is a story of a girl named Samarah Agoncillo who got pregnant at a young age and her boyfriend Rafael Borromeo, who promised that he was willing to take the responsibility of a father and he would marry Samarah, but at the wedding, Rafael did not come and Samarah was very sad and hurt, causing her to commit suicide."*

The students' use of forceful and colorful words and phrases demonstrates their ingenuity and artistry. Thus, the language teacher may incorporate some figurative language, idioms, vocabulary, and technical terms into the material, learning activities, and assessment in teaching English as a second language. Oral and written exercises may be provided for the students to become familiar with the expressions and their meanings.

Content Creation for Blogging in the Form of Infographic Material

In light of the study's findings, it's important to stress that any language teacher who teaches a writing course should also have experience writing blogs. Language teachers will be able to transmit knowledge, skills, and attitudes through blogs thanks to the writing experience gained by writing online. Blogging improves students' writing skills and allows them to communicate their views, ideas, and expertise about certain situations and themes. As a result, the teacher must give the pupils a lesson on how to write blog articles. She or he must also explain the various aspects of blogging, as well as the characteristics of a successful blog post. Before beginning the writing process, the teacher may outline some of the advantages that students may have in creating blogs, such

as the fact that, like other bloggers, they may be able to make money by publishing blog articles.

According to research, young writers must learn to recognize and leverage the reader-writer relationship and audience expectations to their advantage as they create meaning for their readers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1978, as cited in McGrail & Davis, 2011, p. 416). The study's result, which is graphic material on writing online, is suitable for use as a guide for students enrolled in English writing courses. Based on the study's findings, a pamphlet titled "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging" was created. This article covers the basics of blogging as well as the characteristics of a good blog post. This content is intended to act as a reference for pupils who are writing online.

Figure 1. Front Page of the Infographic Material

Note. This is the output of the study which contains the characteristics of a good blog post.

Figure 2. Back Page of the Infographic Material

Note: This is the other side of the material that contains the short introduction.

Conclusion

To make their writing come alive, student bloggers communicated to the readers with excitement, motivation, interest, or emotions. Student bloggers generated ideas, opinions, concepts, and thoughts about the topic, provided useful and important information from various sources, and took a position on the topics and concepts that were discussed. Furthermore, students communicated in innovative ways by using figurative language, idioms, and powerful words. This study concluded that blogging is a trend in writing that allows creativity and an opportunity for students to improve their writing skills. Thus, the teacher may use blogging as one of the flexible assessments that can be utilized in the new normal of teaching by evaluating the authentic work of the students. Students may also be given an infographic called "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging" to help them figure out what makes a good blog post.

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