



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Blogs as Learning Tools: Investigating Students' Attitudes in Education**

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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to assess the usage of blogs for education purposes by the students enrolled in a Linguistics course at postgraduate level at University of Sargodha. The study encompassed a total of 50 participants, selected randomly from a total population of 150 students. Over the course of a semester, these students were assigned various blog-related tasks and encouraged to engage in discussions concerning their responses. The topics covered in the lectures included second language learning, multilingualism, research methods and sociolinguistics. Towards the conclusion of the term, a survey questionnaire comprising 16 questions regarding blog utilization and its impact on their learning was administered. The study is quantitative in nature and the data was collected through questionnaire. The responses were collected on a Likert scale. The data was processed on SPSS for statistical analysis. The study's outcomes indicated that leveraging the blog platform supported students in self-guided learning, fostered a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, facilitated improved self-expression compared to traditional classroom settings, and enhanced comprehension of linguistic topics.

**Keywords:**      Blogs, Language Education, Multilingualism, Statistical Analysis

**Introduction**

During the past few decades, the impact of online technologies, including wikis, blogs, podcasts, instant messengers, online social groups (e.g., Instagram, Meta), online video sharing (e.g., YouTube), and online video and audio conferencing tools (eg., Zoom, Teams, etc), on teaching and learning has garnered significant scholarly attention. This study specifically delves into the influence of blogs on the comprehension and educational experiences across various subjects within a University course focused on Linguistics. Blogs are operationally defined as personal or institutional web pages organized in a sequential manner, with the latest entries making their way at the top of the page. These entries often consist of links, media, commentaries, personal reflections, essays, papers, and ongoing dialogues (Medic, 2020). Numerous researchers have examined the educational potential of blogs, approaching the topic from multiple perspectives (Garcia, 2019; Boling et al., 2008; Curren & Marshal, 2011; Wassell & Crouch, 2008, to quote a few). The findings of these inquiries underscored that educators incorporating blogs in their courses were able to devise diverse activities engaging students in discussions while also providing constructive feedback on their contributions. Moreover, the integration of blogs encouraged students to deepen their understanding of a wide array of topics, prompted thoughtful reflections on acquired information, and fostered collaborative discourse through participation on peers' blogs. Furthermore, these studies highlighted the role of blogs in enhancing literacy skills and promoting social and peer interactions.

Blogs distinguish themselves from traditional classrooms by providing users with increased opportunities for reflective engagement with others' opinions and active participation in discussions. This study was initiated to investigate the potential positive impact of blogging on students' engagement in discussions. Students in this study, characterized by limited proficiency in English, often experience discomfort and apprehension in voicing their thoughts within the classroom, impeding their ability to express themselves effectively. Additionally, the complex terminologies and concepts in Linguistics present an added challenge. The anticipation was that incorporating blogging would motivate students to share their perspectives more frequently on topics covered in class. Another crucial aspect influencing student engagement in blogging is time. Given the students' struggles with English fluency, they find it challenging to promptly articulate their thoughts during classroom discussions (Kambar & Hameed, 20128). Blogging, however, allows them the necessary time to reflect on others' perspectives and construct appropriate responses. Furthermore, blogging is perceived as a valuable activity for enhancing writing skills. Through blogging as a mode of self-expression, students can refine their writing abilities. This proves especially advantageous in courses where in-class writing opportunities are limited, positioning blogging as a powerful tool for students to articulate their opinions and ideas in written form.

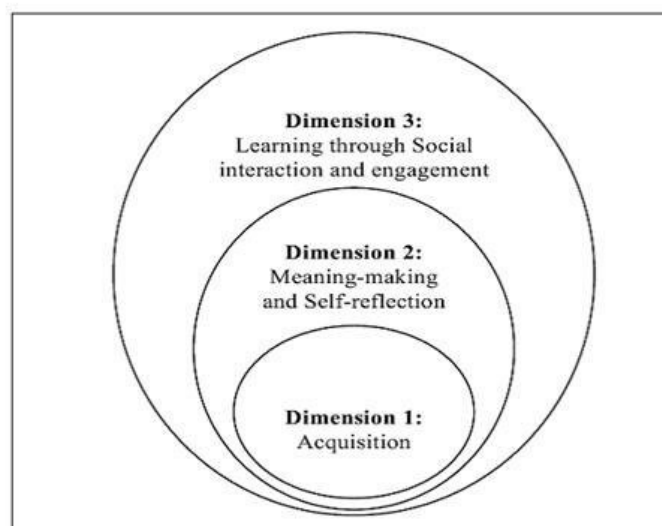
### **Literature Review**

Various viewpoints regarding the effectiveness of utilizing blogs in the realm of education have been explored. Fessakis et al. (2008) conducted a study where learners collaborated to create an artifact using a blog and found that the online environment offered extensive opportunities not typically attainable in a conventional classroom setting. Effective communication and monitoring were stressed, but the absence of a notification system within the blog was noted as a drawback, potentially resulting in unanswered queries. The authors recommended further research involving a larger and more diverse participant pool, along with extended analysis duration, to enhance participation, especially with a wider array of materials and diverse ideas. In a separate study, Park et al. (2011) discovered that blogging proved valuable in accumulating knowledge, expressing opinions, and becoming more engaged in specific areas of interest. Learners predominantly perceived blogging as a process focused on acquisition and reflection. Many reported shifts in their personal thought processes, alterations in social relationships, and overall personal development due to blogging. Additionally, they indicated that blogs influenced how they handled information. Furthermore, blogs were identified as facilitating easier access to and reflection on information, encouraging peer and social interaction, and ensuring feedback and equitable information access—a conclusion corroborated by the results reported by Yang (2009). Participants in the study by Fessakis et al. (2008) conveyed that blogs enabled more efficient task completion, facilitated monitoring of others' work, and allowed direct communication among peers. They expressed contentment with learning outcomes, a sense of collaboration, and an elevated sense of responsibility. Avcı and Aşkar (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of blogs as useful apparatus in computer courses. The outcomes highlighted perceived efficacy as the primary factor for incorporating blogs into the teaching and learning process.

The concept of cooperative learning, as outlined by Medic (2020), suggests that maintaining motivation is facilitated by the social connections formed during collaborative or individual endeavors. Both shared works and blogs serve as excellent platforms for not only publishing material for critical feedback but also for perusing examples of others' work. Blogs afford students an opportunity for reflection, revision, commentary, and refinement of their work, aspects that may be constrained within the confines of a classroom. Moreover, individual learning through blogs allows students to establish an online presence, enabling them to critique others' work and engage with online communities to enhance their writing skills. Participation in these online communities is vital for the acquisition of tacit

knowledge, which forms the core of learning through this medium. Additionally, blogs offer flexibility in terms of curriculum, granting students the autonomy to choose what they wish to learn, be it through reading or writing. However, for blogs to effectively serve as platforms for self-directed or collaborative learning, they require careful structuring and guidance; otherwise, they may merely serve as repositories of content. A potential drawback, highlighted by Lin et al. (2013), is that excessive time spent on blogging activities may diminish motivation among language learners. Hence, it is imperative for instructors to educate learners on providing constructive feedback and emphasize that blogs prioritize substance, fluency, and expression over mere accuracy.

Many researchers have conducted comparisons between formal learning within classrooms and informal learning facilitated through blogs to assess the effectiveness of blogging. In a study by Heo et al. (2012), the focus was on investigating how blogging influences informal learning. The authors highlighted that blogs have the potential to enhance informal learning due to their inherent flexibility, providing learners the opportunity to engage with course content under the guidance and encouragement of their instructors. The study introduced a tripartite framework for understanding learning, a framework that also holds true for learning through blogs. For example, through the use of blogs, learners engage in self-reflection and meaning-making by reading and writing comments on each other's posts. Moreover, this platform facilitates social interaction, an aspect less prominent in traditional classroom environments.



(Adopted from Heo et al. 2013, p.142)

In a study by Novakovic et al. (2013), an investigation was conducted to discern the disparities between conventional writing methodologies and the utilization of social media concerning learning outcomes. The authors underscored the pivotal role of feedback in augmenting engagement and task involvement. Another study, conducted by Park et al. (2011), explored the distinctions between informal learning facilitated through blogs and the more structured formal learning within an academic environment. The study elucidates that learning via blogs provides an extensive arena of unrestricted learning opportunities. While granting learners absolute freedom might not always be optimal, traditional school-based learning can be organized to allow for greater autonomy or collaborative learning among peers. The authors advocate for a balanced approach, advocating for a certain degree of liberty through project-based learning, while still offering optional topics for assignments. They emphasize the integration of self-regulation and self-determination in the learning process, striving to nurture learners' capacity to make independent decisions and achieve autonomy in their educational journey, thus alleviating the monotony often

associated with learning. Khurshid (2019) opined that blogs play a significant role in students learning.

Themes	Learning through blogging	Learning at Institution
Learner's role	Self-directed	
	Self-meaning making	Passive
	Active	Non-voluntary
	Voluntary	
Characteristics of learning contents	Practical and tacit knowledge	Theoretical knowledge
	Social and everyday life	Structured and organized
	Situated	Curriculum based
	Subjective	Disciplinary
	Unlimited	Non-practical
Learning process	Multiple directions	Fixed
	Self-regulated	Guided
	Open	Structured and organized
	Flexible	Fixed
	Process-oriented	Outcome oriented

(Adopted from Park et al (2011, p. 158))

### **Difference of Characteristics between informal learning through blogging and formal education**

Scholars have investigated the influence of anonymity on students' expression in the context of blog usage, revealing that students tend to articulate their thoughts more effectively when their identities are concealed. Lu and Bol (2007) conducted a study that compared the effects of identifiable and anonymous feedback on 92 undergraduate students enrolled in general English writing courses at the college level. The participants were randomly assigned to identifiable and anonymous groups for their regular classes. The findings indicated that students in the anonymous group exhibited superior writing skills and provided more critical peer feedback compared to those in the identifiable group. Furthermore, anonymity in writing courses enhanced student engagement (Miyazoe et al., 2011) and enabled students to engage in critical reflections with the guidance of teachers (Yang, 2009). However, it is important for both instructors and students to be mindful that anonymity may also lead to irresponsible behavior (Kessinger & Berge, 2009).

### **Material and Methods**

The current investigation was conducted within the Department of English at University of Sargodha. The study's principal objective was to examine the perspectives of learners concerning the utilization of blogs, focusing on whether blogs could facilitate a better understanding of content and enhance expressive abilities compared to conventional in-class sessions.

The participants selected were postgraduate students enrolled in Linguistics course, prior to their research dissertation. The courses included stylistics, syntax, semantics, and phonetics, followed by second language acquisition, multilingualism, and sociolinguistics in the subsequent semester. The data was collected after the end of second semester after their counselling during the second semester. The number of the participants was 50, all female postgraduate students aged between 22 and 26. The study employed a random sampling approach.

## Data Collection

The duration of the course was 16 weeks, during which students were given tasks on designated topics weekly and expressing their perspectives through blog entries. Additionally, they were encouraged to engage in discussions by providing comments on their peers' responses. This approach was adopted due to the observation that students incorporating blogs into their course requirements often lacked enthusiasm in personalizing or consistently managing their blogs (Mabalane, 2021).

When the semester was going to close, the scholar administered a questionnaire containing 16 propositions assessing the utilization of the blog and its impact on the learning outcomes. The questionnaire, borrowed from the work of Yoo and Huang (2011), employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with intermediate options indicating degrees of disagreement, neutrality, and agreement. The questionnaire encompassed diverse themes, encompassing collaborative learning, writing proficiency, and attitudes towards the use of technology. However, the central aim was to investigate the benefits of employing the blog as a tool for learning. It was expected that the students, considering the public nature of the blog and the potential evaluation by peers and others, would engage in writing with greater criticality and precision than they might in a traditional classroom setting.

## Results and Discussion

This section expounds on the findings derived from the survey responses collected from the participants employing a Likert scale. A detailed account of the responses to each question is presented, followed by an analysis and interpretation of the data, including its statistical significance. The analysis utilized SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Percentage-based statistical analysis was employed to analyze the dataset.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

Questions	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I found using a blog useful when learning about the Linguistics subjects.	50	1	2	1.68	.471
Using a blog to read others' ideas helped me understand the Linguistics subjects	50	1	4	2.00	.857
It was easy for me to use a blog.	50	1	4	2.34	1.118
When I used a blog I expressed my ideas better than I expressed them in class.	49	1	4	2.29	.816
It was a good idea to use a blog to learn the Linguistics topics	50	1	4	2.30	1.093
Using a blog made it more interesting to learn the Linguistics subjects.	50	1	4	2.58	1.032
I like learning with blogs.	50	1	4	2.08	1.007
Using blogs helped me improve my internet skills.	50	1	3	1.82	.629
Using a blog can help me finish my assignments quickly	50	1	4	2.10	.707
Responding to the questions in the blog helped me learn on my own.	50	1	2	1.76	.431
I felt intimidated when I used a blog for the Linguistics course.	50	1	4	2.26	.803
I felt apprehensive about using blogs for the Linguistics course.	50	1	3	1.72	.640
Using blogs helped me understand the Linguistics subjects while reading others' ideas.	50	1	4	2.34	.939
I would use blogs with my students when I become a teacher.	50	1	4	2.24	1.080
I believe that all English teachers should use blogs in their lessons.	50	1	4	2.02	.654
People who influence my behavior think that I should use blogs.	50	1	4	1.88	.918
Valid N (listwise)	49				

The descriptive statistics above (Table 1) represent the choices of the participants. The minimum and maximum values show the spread of choices of the part participants

given in response to each question. Minimum value 1 stands for Strongly Agree while Maximum value 4 stands for Disagree. The mean value shows the tendency of the participants which clearly indicates agreement in response to each question. In the table below, sample frequency table is given for the first question. The table below (Table 2) shows that all the participants showed agreement with the proposition asked in the question. The frequency and the percentage for all the questions were calculated using SPSS and on the basis of those results, the conclusions are drawn.

**Table 2**  
**Sample Frequency Tale for Question No 1**

Likert Scale Choices	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	34	68.0	68.0	68.0
Strongly	16	32.0	32.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The sample t-test for question 1 and 2 (Table 3) shows that the responses of the participants are significant (i.e.  $P > 1$ ) and relevant to the study. The 95% confidence interval (CI) of the difference authenticates the validity of the data that it is 95% correct. T-tests were performed for all the questions and the responses remained statistically significant (i.e.  $P > 1$ ) for all the responses. Similarly the 95% CI of the difference validates the data sample for each of the questions.

The analysis encapsulates a prevailing positive disposition among the participants regarding the assimilation of blogs into their educational sphere. The vast majority of participants exhibited a favorable outlook on this integration. A significant percentage acknowledged that engaging with a blog motivated and facilitated self-directed learning, with 83% explicitly recognizing its pivotal role in promoting independent academic exploration. Moreover, a substantial 70% of participants found that the use of blogs markedly improved their comprehension of complex Linguistics topics. Of notable significance is the collective affirmation (69%) of blogs being viewed as valuable tools for in-depth exploration of Linguistic subjects. Additionally, a significant majority (66%) acknowledged the benefits of leveraging blogs to enhance their understanding of Linguistics topics by engaging with the perspectives and responses of their peers. This acknowledgment highlights the intrinsic value of peer interaction and collaborative learning facilitated through the blog platform. Equally notable is that half of the participants (60%) believed that engaging with blogs contributed to honing their internet proficiency, emphasizing the ancillary benefit of improved digital literacy arising from such pedagogical engagement. These insights collectively affirm the positive impact of incorporating blogs into the academic landscape, providing diverse avenues for enhanced learning and skill development.

**Table 3**  
**t-test and 95% CI of the Difference**

Questions	Test Value = 1					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	the Difference		
					Lower	Upper	
I found using a blog useful when learning about the Linguistics subjects.	10.204	49	.000	.680	.55	.81	
Using a blog to read others' ideas helped me understand the Linguistics subjects	8.250	49	.000	1.000	.76	1.24	

The summarized findings shed light on crucial outcomes. More than half of the respondents (57%) perceived the utilization of a blog as intuitive and easy to navigate, showcasing the user-friendly nature of this digital platform. Likewise, 55% of the participants believed that they could articulate their ideas more effectively on a blog

compared to a conventional classroom setting. Furthermore, an equivalent proportion (55%) expressed a strong intent to integrate blogs into their instructional strategies once they embark on their teaching careers, underscoring the potential long-term influence of incorporating this digital tool in educational contexts.

Moreover, a considerable number of participants conveyed a positive transformation in their learning experiences. Specifically, 71% found that utilizing a blog heightened their interest in learning Linguistics subjects, suggesting that the blog platform injected engagement and excitement into their academic pursuits. Similarly, a noteworthy 41% also professed an affinity for learning through blogs. Furthermore, 59% acknowledged that employing a blog expedited the completion of their assignments, indicating perceived efficiency attributed to the blog medium.

In terms of educational implications, a significant insight emerged. A quarter number of the respondents maintained a neutral stance on the widespread integration of blogs by all English teachers, implying a balanced perspective regarding the applicability and universality of this digital tool in language education. Interestingly, 65% remained receptive to the influence of individuals shaping their behavior, exhibiting a moderate inclination toward, rather than against, the recommendation of incorporating blogs. Additionally, it is noteworthy that a substantial segment of the participants (62%) neither harbored apprehensions nor felt intimidated (68%) about incorporating blogs into their Linguistics course. This absence of apprehension suggests a level of comfort and readiness to embrace the digital platform, potentially paving the way for a more widespread acceptance and utilization of blogs in educational contexts.

## **Discussion**

This study conducted a thorough examination of the educational implications arising from the integration of blogs into a Linguistics course, focusing primarily on postgraduate students. The objective was to explain the advantages and challenges associated with employing blogs as an educational tool in the field of Linguistics, seeking to gather insightful perspectives from students. In the context of modern education significantly influenced by technological advancements, the incorporation of blogs into academic domains has fundamentally transformed the manner in which students interact with academic content and engage with their peers. Blogs, functioning as interactive online platforms, provide students with a dynamic space to articulate their thoughts, engage in discussions, and share insights on various academic subjects.

The findings revealed a prevalent optimistic outlook among the participants, acknowledging that a blog significantly enhanced their understanding of Linguistics topics, and encouraged a proactive approach to self-directed learning. The results and findings correspond with Garcia (2019) and Koc and Koc (2016).

## **Conclusion**

The results highlight the beneficial impact of combining course blogs on educational outcomes, motivating instructors to consider them as a valuable educational tool. With an appropriate pedagogical approach, blogs can significantly enhance the overall educational quality. The study demonstrates that integrating blogs into a course enriches students' grasp of the subject matter, and encourages learning from various sources. Students acknowledged the positive influence of blogging on their learning approach. Therefore, it is vital for teachers to comprehend the potential impact of blogging and seamlessly integrate it into their teaching methods. Blogs can facilitate guided discovery and knowledge construction by enabling collaborative knowledge building post-individual research.

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