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USING WEBLOGS IN TEACHING[1]

ABSTRACT

In recent years we have seen the Internet become an inherent part of our lives, not only as a source of information, but also as a means of communication that allows us to replace traditional correspondence with new ways of communication, such as email, instant messaging, chat, and also weblogs. The Internet influences not only the way of communication, but also the language we use in this virtual environment. We are aware of the importance of mastering foreign languages in the knowledge-based economy, and the intensive development of information technology may help learners to master them. In the paper we focus on using weblogs in teaching, and their influence on improving writing skills. The Weblog is an appropriate complement to traditional teaching in the classroom because this medium is based mainly on texts and provides students with the opportunity to write posts, publish them, read them and archive them. It is a tool facilitating teaching writing in the ESL (English as a second language) classroom.

Key words: Weblog, information technology, reading, language skills

ABSTRAKT

WYKORZYSTANIE BLOGÓW W NAUCZANIU JĘZYKÓW OBCYCH

W ostatnich latach Internet stał się nieodłączną częścią naszego życia. Jest nie tylko źródłem informacji, lecz także środkiem komunikacji, który pozwala zastąpić tradycyjną

1 Project: KEGA 005EU-4/2018.

korespondencję nowymi sposobami komunikacji, takimi jak poczta elektroniczna (e-mail), wiadomości błyskawiczne (instant messaging), czat oraz blog. Internet wpływa także na język, którego używamy w tym wirtualnym środowisku. Jesteśmy świadomi znaczenia, jakie przypisuje się znajomości języków obcych w gospodarce opartej na wiedzy, a intensywny rozwój technologii informatycznych może pomóc uczącym się w przyswajaniu wiedzy. W artykule koncentrujemy się na wykorzystaniu blogu w nauczaniu języka obcego i jego wpływie na poprawę pisania i innych umiejętności językowych. Blog jest odpowiednim uzupełnieniem tradycyjnego nauczania, ponieważ to medium opiera się głównie na tekstach i zapewnia uczniom możliwość pisania postów, publikowania ich, czytania i archiwizowania. Jest to narzędzie ułatwiające nauczanie i uczenie się języka obcego, głownie pisania i czytania ze zrozumieniem.

Słowa kluczowe: blog, technologia informacyjna, czytanie, umiejętności językowe

Weblog

Web blogging started around 1993 as a forum for the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA). However, the term 'weblog' was not uttered until 1997, when an internet enthusiast, J. Barger, decided to rename his 'website' (Robot Wisdom), a 'weblog', and used the term to refer to websites that are continuously being updated[2]. In 1999 Merholz shortened the term to 'blog'[3].

Nowadays, weblogs are becoming more and more popular, and they can also be used in education as a tool that facilitates teaching, e.g. foreign languages, literature, geography, etc. From a linguistic point of view, the blog is a short form of weblog, and weblog is a word composed of two words – web and log. Web refers to the Internet, and log means a diary, so the word weblog means an Internet diary, and a blog author is called a weblogger or blogger.

As a noun, a blog is also known as an online journal or web diary, as well as a content management system or an online publishing platform. As a verb, "to blog" means to write on one's weblog[4]. Blogging is the act of keeping a diary or journal online.

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2 J. Ward, *Blog assisted language learning (BALL): Push-button publishing for the pupils*, "TEFL Web Journal" 2004, nr 3 (1).

3 C. C. Loving et al., *Blogs: Enhancing links in a professional learning community of science and mathematics teachers*, "Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education" 2007, nr 45 (4), s. 323–333.

4 W. Chengyi, *Blogs in TEFL: A New Promising Vehicle*, Luoyang 2006.

This online journal or blog with dated entries is linked to other sites on the web, usually other blogs, thus creating a virtual community[5]. A. P. Campbell[6] defines a weblog as an online journal that an individual can continuously update with his or her own words, ideas and thoughts through software that enables them to easily do so. Ward[7] defines weblog as push-button publishing. This definition depicts weblogs precisely, and we can take it literally because weblogs are very easy to use, and to publish a post we only need to push a button.

We should be aware of the fact that blogging is interwoven with reading. This means that a weblog can also be used as a tool for facilitating teaching reading comprehension. As Zamel[8] stated, "Just as reading provides comprehensible input for writing, writing can contribute comprehensible input for reading", i.e. blogs provide students with opportunities to improve not only their writing skills, but also reading comprehension.

Campbell[9] suggested three types of blogs: the tutor blog, the learner blog, and the class blog. We add to these blogs another type – a team blog, which we used in our research.

Although the research in this field is still tentative, there are enthusiasts (teachers, scientists) who see in this "blogging software" a way to make teaching more interesting.

Advantages and disadvantages of Weblogs

Using blogs in the classroom has many benefits for both students and teachers, but it also has some disadvantages.

The benefits of a blog are:

- it creates a connection between the lessons, i.e. the teacher can publish the materials used during the lesson, materials for revision, etc.,
- as an online notice board. It can save time, e.g. the teacher can publish information about changes in lessons, assignments, etc.,
- it is an excellent communication device that delivers authentic content,
- it motivates,
- it provides students with the opportunity to write and read,

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5 J. Jones, *The tech dude: All about blogging*, "The Santa Fe New Mexican" 2003, s. C-1.

6 A. P. Campbell, *Weblogs for Use with ESL Classes*, "The Internet TESL Journal" 2003, nr IX (2).

7 J. Ward, *Blog assisted language...*

8 Zamel V., *Writing one's way into reading*, "TESOL Quarterly" 1992, nr 26, s. 463–485.

9 A. P. Campbell, *Weblogs for Use...*

– the content of the posts can be judged by classmates and teachers,
– it provides a real audience (the blog is public, i.e. people who are not students can join the discussion, so students theoretically write their contributions not only to other students but to everyone who is on the web, and they are aware of the fact that their posts can also be read by someone else),
– it facilitates collaboration and discussion outside the ESL classroom,
– it helps create connections between students with diverse opinions and interests[10],
– students are better prepared for the lessons, and they are more self-conscious,
– the blog that serves as an online magazine is less formal and allows students to write freely, and their contributions also show their thought processes,
– it can be used as support for distance learning,
– posts are archived, and students can read them again at any time, anywhere, and they can also see how their writing skills have changed,
– it reduces plagiarism because students are aware of the fact that anyone who is on the Internet can read it, and the author of the original post can be among the readers,
– it is easy to set up and administrate,
– Weblogs make all types of resources (text, images, video, etc.) easier to publish to the web when compared to traditional web publishing[11].

Disadvantages of blogs:
– connection to the Internet is necessary,
– may contain inaccurate or biased information,
– updating blogs is time-consuming,
– not suitable for questions that need to be answered quickly,
– they are not confidential. Everyone on the Internet can open and read them, and everyone can critically comment on the written post, which may demotivate or hurt the author of the post,
– students may not want to blog unless they are forced to do so, because it takes some time,
– students can take what is written in blogs as true, and it can only be a personal opinion of the author,

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10 S. Luján-Mora, S. de Juana-Espinosa, *The Use of Weblogs in Higher Education: Benefits and Barriers*, [w:] *Proceedings of the International Technology, Education and Development Conference*, Valencia 2007, s. 1–7.

11 Ibidem.

– not every student is interested in learning new technologies,
– students with weaker computer skills may have problems[12],
– if the weblog is public, it may suffer troll infestations, people that intentionally try to cause disruption by posting messages that are inflammatory, insulting, incorrect, inaccurate, or off-topic, with the intent of provoking a reaction from others[13].

Using weblogs in teaching

The weblog or blogging has evolved from a simple online diary for self-expression to a complicated educational tool as academic writing[14]. On Wrede's weblog[15], Stephane Downes argues that "if we have to convince people to blog, in some way grade them or mark them, then in so doing we lose what is essential to blogging". On one hand, we can agree with this statement, but on the other hand, we think that using weblogs in teaching and assessing students for their work, for publishing posts on weblogs, can be motivating. We see in weblogs not only how to use information technology in teaching, but we see it as a way to help students improve their language abilities, and how to help them to become self-confident in writing.

Since the invention of weblogs in 1999, the influence of blogging on students' writing skills has been the subject of several studies. Most of them confirmed that blogging improves students' writing skills[16]. Research by Fellner and Apple[17] was aimed at twenty-one low proficient and low motivated Japanese students who attended a seven-day English course during which they had to blog for five and a half hours a day. By the end of the course there

12 Trimarco R., *Use of Blogs in Online College Classes*, [w:] *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*, B. Hoffman (red.), 2004, [online] http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/blogonlineclass/index.htm [dostęp: 17.11.2019].

13 S. Luján-Mora, S. de Juana-Espinosa, *The Use of Weblogs...*, s. 1–7.

14 M. Cequena, *Does blogging facilitate the development of students' writing skills?*, "Philippine ESL Journal" 2013, nr 10, s. 126–147.

15 O. Wrede, *Weblogs and discourse: Weblogs as transformational technology for higher education and academic research*, Vienna 2003.

16 J. Jones, *Blogging and ESL writing: A case study of how students responded to the use of weblogs as a pedagogical tool for the writing process approach in a community college ESL writing class*, Austen 2006; M. J. Kelley, *The Impact of weblogs on the affective states and academic writing of L2 undergraduates*, Virginia 2008; D. Anderson, *The effect of blogging and electronic journal on writing skills development in high school freshmen*, Walden 2010.

17 T. Fellner, M. Apple, *Developing writing fluency and lexical complexity with blogs*, "The JALT CALL Journal" 2006, nr 2 (1), s. 15–26.

was a nearly 350% increase in the number of words used in students' blog entries, as well as a substantial increase in the number of 2000 word level and even lower frequency level words. The researchers proved that using weblogs in teaching ESL had a positive impact on students' writing skills.

In order to develop reading and writing skills, the weblog, an online journal, is especially useful, allowing learners to read and respond. In our applied quantitative research, we decided to explore the use of this website in teaching ESL, and its impact on writing skills. The subjects were 60 freshmen studying ESL at the University of Economics. Based on the assumption that there are some writing shortcomings in experimental and control groups, the task for researchers was to prove that by regular, intense blog publishing we could remove or at least reduce these shortcomings.

At the beginning of our experiment, we had to identify the level of writing skills by testing the subjects of experimental and control groups. Based on the conclusions of the theoretical study of writing skills, we decided on a personal letter to a friend. Our aim was to test the content of the text, the fulfillment of the task, the composition and structure of the text, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary. Before starting the experiment, students were thoroughly familiar with the course, as well as the fact that the test results were to be used in research and would not affect the results of their assessment at the end of the term.

The entrance test was performed at the beginning of the experiment. Students wrote, as we already mentioned, a personal letter of advice to a friend about a holiday (a student's task was to recommend a suitable holiday place, give advice about what to do, and give other necessary information). We decided on the range of 120 to 200 words, which met the essential requirements for the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The first partial goal of the experiment was to evaluate letters of advice, which served as entrance (diagnostic) tests and were completed by students from both experimental and control groups. In evaluating the results of the tests, we used the correction symbols by J. Harmer[18] (Table 1) and the grading scale from 1–5 (1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – sufficient, 5 – insufficient) for the length and content of the text, text structure, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary (Table 2).

The evaluation of the entrance test shows that the experimental group committed 362 errors in 30 personal letters. The number of errors and their percentage scores is shown in Table 2. The average number of errors per student

18 Harmer J., *How to Teach Writing*, Harlow 2007.

Table 1. Correction symbols[19]

Symbol	Meaning
S	A spelling error
WO	A mistake in word order
G	A grammar mistake
T	Wrong verb tense
C	Concord mistake (e.g. subject and verb agreement)
ʎ	Something has been left out
WW	Wrong word
{}	Something is not necessary
?M	The meaning is unclear
P	A punctuation mistake
F/I	Too formal or informal

Table 2. The number of errors and their percentage expression

Symbol	Experimental group		Control group	
	Number of mistakes	%	Number of mistakes	%
SS	32	9%	33	10%
G	81	22%	46	13%
WW	95	26%	91	26%
WO	9	3%	10	3%
ʎ	63	17%	92	27%
C	10	3%	3	1%
T	16	5%	20	6%
P	5	1%	6	2%
( )	21	6%	16	5%
?M	30	8%	25	7%
Total number of errors	362	100%	342	100%
Median	12.06		11.4	

[19] Ibidem.

from the experimental group was 12.06. The control group committed 342 errors in 30 personal letters of advice. The number of errors and their percentage scores is also shown in Table 2. The average student error rate from the control group was 11.4. In the grammatical area, errors such as incorrect use of *there is / there are*, *omission of articles*, or using an article "*the*" in the wrong place, e.g. "*the Poprad*". Other mistakes that students committed were, for example, using incorrect prepositions, words, etc., e.g. *Greece kitchen* instead of *Greek kitchen*, *beatch* instead of *beach*, *paradice* instead of *paradise*, etc. Students did not commit many mistakes in tenses because they wrote the letters mainly in the simple past tense and the simple present tense. They avoided using more complicated grammatical structures.

Table 3 shows the evaluation of the written work of the experimental group using the grading scale from 1–5. The worst results are in grammatical accuracy, where the average mark is 3.33. After averaging the mean values we received a total average mark of 2.72 per student.

Table 3. Evaluation of the written work of the experimental group using a grading scale from 1–5

Mark	Length and content of the text		Text structure		Grammatical accuracy		Vocabulary	
	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%
1	8	27%	7	23%	1	3%	2	6%
2	6	20%	10	34%	8	27%	12	41%
3	11	36%	10	34%	8	27%	10	34%
4	3	10%	2	6%	6	20%	4	13%
5	2	7%	1	3%	7	23%	2	6%
Median	2.5	100%	2.33	100%	3.33	100%	2.73	100%

Table 4 shows the evaluation of the written work of the control group using a grading scale from 1–5. The worst results are likewise in grammatical accuracy, where the average mark is 3.3. After averaging the mean value of all evaluated parts we get the average mark 2.91.

The results we obtained show that the control and experimental groups are approximately at the same level. The obvious difference between these groups is in the sections Length and content of the text, and Text structure because several students from the control group did not respect the length and form

Table 4. Evaluation of the written work of the control group using a grading scale from 1–5

Mark	Length and content of the text		Text structure		Grammatical accuracy		Vocabulary	
	numerous-ness	%	numerous-ness	%	numerous-ness	%	numerous-ness	%
1	7	24%	9	30%	1	3%	3	10%
2	1	3%	5	17%	8	27%	12	40%
3	6	21%	7	23%	6	21%	9	30%
4	10	35%	6	20%	11	38%	4	13%
5	5	17%	3	10%	4	13%	2	7%
Median	3.06	100%	2.63	100%	3.3	100%	2.66	100%

of the letter, and consequently did not accomplish the level set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The results of the evaluation of the writing task proved that students had problems in writing, and the goal of our research was not only to eliminate the mistakes they made during writing, but also to dispel students' fears of writing, create a writing habit, and build their self-confidence by publishing contributions on the weblog over three months.

We decided on the three month period on the basis of our experience from previous research, where we had found that a longer period was counter-productive because students gradually lost motivation for fulfilling tasks, in spite of the fact that they liked it at the beginning.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the evaluation of the written task, the observation and the pedagogical practice, we determined the most convenient methodological procedures for achieving the stated research goals:

a) setting goal-improving writing skills by creating a portfolio of student work on a weblog in a foreign language,
b) identifying the needs of university students – put students at their ease, i.e. overcome their fear of writing, create writing habits, eliminate mistakes they make during writing,
c) the determination of the skills that are necessary to achieve our goal,
d) regularity of practicing writing skills – students will systematically, at least once a week, practice these skills via publishing their contributions on the weblogs over 3 months,
e) data collection,
f) data analysis.

The course of the experiment

Sixty freshmen studying the English language as L2 (second language) at the University of Economics took part in the experiment. Students were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. We informed students in the experimental group about the blogs, how they work, and how to publish their posts, but we decided to set up the group blogs for them, because they had not had any previous experience with weblogs, and consequently we gave them access as users to their group blogs. They were also warned not to infringe the copyrights of other authors and not to copy and publish them as their work. They were informed that the blog is a public site, i.e. anyone who is on the Internet can open this page and read its content.

The experiment was performed in two groups, the experimental and the control. In the experimental group, students attended regular English lessons supplemented with an additional activity, which they had to fulfill in their free time. They were divided into 6 teams. In each team there were at least 5 students and a maximum of 7. Their first task was to create an online journal on the blog. As a part of this task, students also devised the names of their blogs. After completing the first task, they took on the second task, splitting the blog roles, i.e. they had to decide who would write about news, sports, culture, lifestyle, or the economy. Students chose the issues they had a positive attitude to. If a student wanted to digress from the topic he/she had chosen to write about, because he/she wanted to write about something different which was at that moment more interesting for him/her, he/she could do so. By giving them this freedom to choose the topic, we wanted to motivate them to write more. In each group they chose the main editor, whose role was to take care of the formal side of the posts on the weblog and also to check the members of the team to ensure that they had published their posts. Students should publish their articles at least once a week. Every student had created a portfolio of his/her work.

The total number of posts in all teams was 518, i.e. every student published on average 17.2 posts. The time and the place where they wrote their posts depended only on the students, i.e. they chose when and where.

The choice of materials which their contributions proceeded from depended on the students themselves, i.e. each student himself/herself chose what he or she wanted to use in writing his/her contribution, whether it was an English-language newspaper or a newspaper in any other language, or their own production without the help of newspapers or the other media. Strictly speaking, the aim was to create contributions which were authentic and interesting. The length of the contributions was limited to 120 words. Students' ublished

posts were edited by teachers who gave students feedback via e-mails. If students are not provided time to reflect on and edit their writing, one can hardly justify attaching importance to grammatical accuracy[20]. Many researchers in task-based teaching have pointed out that a focus on accuracy, while not necessary for students to communicate effectively, is beneficial[21].

The experiment took, as we as mentioned above, only 3 months due to the fact that publishing was time-consuming and there was a high probability of demotivating students to continue in publishing their posts.

We were continuously informed about the fulfillment of individual tasks by checking weblogs.

Data collection

Data collection took place in the three-month experiment period. It included the data from the questionnaire, the entrance test, the final test, the evaluation of the number of contributions that they had published, and the final questionnaire. The entrance tests were done during the first week when the experiment started, and the final tests were done during the last week of the experiment. Students were acquainted with the fact that the results of their work would be processed and published, and they were also assured of preserving their anonymity.

Students had been publishing their posts on five blogs (Dream Team, Extra, Friends, It's Up to You, Just Kidding) for three months. The number of published posts per student and the month of publishing are shown in Table 5.

The data in Table 5 show that the students were most active in publishing in March. During this month they posted 209 articles. In February, they published 117 and in April 192 posts. In March, the median of contributions was 6.9, and in February the average number of contributions was only 3.9. We think that this low figure was caused by the fact that students started publishing after starting the term, and it was the second week of February, and the number of days for publishing was lower than in the rest of the months. Students also familiarized themselves with the weblogs and their options during this period. In the three-month period 518 posts were published by students. From this number of posts, we calculated a mean value of 17.2,

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20 Fellner T., Apple, M. (2006), *Developing writing fluency and lexical complexity with blogs*, "The JALT CALL Journal", nr 2(1), s. 15–26.

21 Long M., Robinson P., *Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice*, [w:] *Focus on form in classroom SLA*, C. Doughty, J. Williams (red.), Cambridge 1998.

Table 5. Number of posts

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15
February	5	5	3	3	2	6	5	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	4
March	7	8	10	10	9	8	9	8	4	9	10	8	8	8	9
April	10	10	9	8	6	8	6	9	6	6	6	10	9	7	8
Total	22	**23**	22	21	17	22	20	21	13	19	19	23	21	19	21
Median	7.3	7.6	7.3	7.0	5.6	7.3	6.6	7.0	4.3	6.3	6.3	7.6	7	6.3	7.0

	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20	S21	S22	S23	S24	S25	S26	S27	S28	S29	S30	Total
February	5	4	5	5	3	2	5	5	3	2	3	5	6	2	2	117
March	8	5	7	8	8	1	8	7	10	3	4	4	8	3	0	209
April	9	4	6	9	7	0	7	6	3	1	4	10	8	0	0	192
Total	22	13	18	22	18	3	20	18	16	6	11	19	22	5	**2**	518
Median	7.3	4.3	6.0	7.3	6.0	1.0	6.6	6.0	5.3	2.2	3.6	6.3	7.3	1.6	0.6	17.2

Legend: Student (S)

which means that over a three-month period, each student published an average of 17.2 posts. The highest number of posts was 23 and the lowest number of posts was 2.

Evaluation of the final test

At the end of the experiment we tested the subjects' knowledge and skills in writing after three months of intense blogging in the experimental and control groups. In the final test, in order to maintain the same conditions and structure of the entry test, we decided on a personal letter to a friend about their favourite movie or book (Task: Write a letter to your friend about a movie you have seen or about a book you have read and enjoyed). We decided on the range of 120 to 200 words, which met the essential requirements for B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The evaluation shows that the experimental group made 189 errors in 30 letters, i.e. it is about 173 errors fewer in comparison to the entrance test. The number of errors and their percentage is shown in Table 6. The average number of errors per student is 6.3. The control group made 385 errors in 30 letters. The number of errors and their percentage is shown in Table 6. The average number of errors per student is 12.83. Students made the most mistakes in using the

wrong word e.g. "*loose*" instead of "*lose*" (the term "lose" should have been used in the given context). The second most frequent group of mistakes they made is the omission of prepositions, and definite/indefinite articles, e.g. "*It's a story a woman...*". The third group of mistakes they made involved spelling mistakes, e.g. "*inteligent*", "*beautifull*". Other mistakes are related to incorrect using of tenses, forgetting to add -s in the 3rd person singular, using active voice instead of passive voice, e.g. "*Last week I have read...*", "*he own*", "*he loose*", "*my mother give me*", "*It calls*" instead of "*it is called*"... etc.

After comparing the results of the final test with the entrance test, we can observe a significant improvement in grammatical accuracy, where improvement is the most noticeable, and in using correct words. The subjects also improved their knowledge and skills in other areas, but these improvements are not so significant.

Table 6. Evaluation of the final test

Symbol	Experimental group		Control group	
	Number of mistakes	%	Number of mistakes	%
SS	24	13%	39	10%
G	16	8%	88	23%
WW	56	30%	79	20%
WO	2	1%	13	3%
l	46	24%	85	22%
C	2	1%	6	2%
T	21	11%	6	2%
P	5	3%	21	5%
( )	10	5%	11	3%
?M	7	4%	37	10%
Total number of errors	189	100%	385	100%
Median	6.3		12.83	

For detailed documentation of the tests, we also decided to evaluate the results of individual students. We compare their results from the entrance test and from the final test. In Table 7 we see the results of the first 15 students from the experimental group. We mark them S1–S15, figures express the number of mistakes they made, then we also state the mean value of mistakes they made during the three months of publishing.

Table 7. Evaluation of the results of individual students in the experimental group (1)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15
ET	12	15	8	8	7	16	11	6	19	12	12	16	13	11	10
FT	8	2	2	3	8	6	5	9	6	6	9	4	4	6	7
T	20	17	10	11	15	22	16	15	25	18	21	20	17	17	17
M	10	8.5	5	5.5	7.5	11	8	7.5	12.5	9	11.5	10	8.5	8.5	8.5

Legend: S – student, ET – entrance test number of errors, FT – final test number of errors, T – total, M – median of errors made in the entrance and final tests.

Table 8, in contrast to Table 7, shows the marks received in the entrance and final tests of the first 15 students from the experimental group. Table 8 also presents the achieved average marks from the entrance and final tests.

Table 8. Received marks in the entrance and final tests of individual students in the experimental group (1)

	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		S7		S8		S9		S10		S11		S12		S13		S14		S15	
R	3	3	4	4	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	3	2	1	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	4	3	1	1	1
S	2	2	4	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	2	2
G	4	2	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	1	3	2	2	2	5	2	3	1	5	2	5	1	3	2	3	1	3	2
V	2	2	4	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	1	2	1
M1	2.75		4		1.25		2		1.75		3.25		1.75		2.25		2.5		2.5		3.5		2.75		3		3		2	
M2	2.25		2		1		1.25		1.25		1.25		1.5		1.5		1.25		2		2.5		1.25		2		1.25		1.5	

Legend: S – student, R – range, S – structure, G – grammar, V – vocabulary, M1 – average mark from ET, M2 – average mark from FT. Below each student we can see two columns. The first column shows the marks achieved in the ET; the second column shows the marks achieved in the FT.

In Table 9 we see the number of errors made by the second group of 15 students from the experimental group. We mark them S16–S30.

Table 9. Evaluation of the results of individual students of the experimental group (2)

	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20	S21	S22	S23	S24	S25	S26	S27	S28	S29	S30
ET	12	5	9	4	19	15	7	14	9	15	15	10	25	13	14
FT	4	1	4	4	10	14	6	10	4	11	4	7	5	10	10
T	16	6	13	8	29	29	13	24	13	26	19	17	25	23	24
M	8	3	7.5	4	14.5	14.5	7.5	12	7.5	13	9.5	8.5	12.5	11.5	12

Table 10 presents a comparison of the scores achieved by the second group of 15 students from the experimental group.

Table 10. Received marks in the entrance and final tests of individual students in the experimental group (2)

	S16		S17		S18		S19		S20		S21		S22		S23		S24		S25		S26		S27		S28		S29		S30	
R	1	4	4	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	5	4	4	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	1	1	5	4	3	4
S	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	4	3	2	2	1	3	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	2	5	3	2	3
G	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	4	2	4	4	5	2	4	2	2	1	3	3	5	2	3	2	5	1	5	4	3	4
V	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	4	4	5	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	1	5	3	3	2
M1	1.75		2.25		1.5		1		3.5		4.25		4.25		2.75		2.5		3		3.25		3		3		5		2.75	
M2	2.5		1.75		1.25		1		2		4		2		1.5		1.25		3.25		2		2.25		1.25		3.5		3.25	

We observe from the results that most of the student improved their writing skills, but some students, on the other hand, achieved worse results in the final test, e.g. S16 had a better result in the entrance test than in the final one. We would like to point out that this negative result is relative because S16 did not respect the instructions, and this affected marking.

We evaluated the control group in the same way. In Table 11 we present the results of the first 15 subjects from the control group. We marked them SC1–SC15. The number of mistakes they made in the entrance and final written tests are entered, and also the mean value of the mistakes.

Table 11. Evaluation of the results of individual students in the control group (1)

	SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4	SC5	SC6	SC7	SC8	SC9	SC10	SC11	SC12	SC13	SC14	SC15
ET	5	22	12	3	6	16	11	11	12	6	14	11	7	17	16
FT	11	17	13	9	4	17	17	14	13	19	20	8	5	16	13
T	16	39	25	12	10	33	28	25	25	25	24	19	12	33	29
M	8	19.5	12.5	6	5	16.5	14	12.5	12.5	12.5	12	9.5	6	16.5	14.5

Legend: SC – student, ET – entrance test number of errors, FT – final test number of errors, T – total, M – mean value of the number of mistakes they made in the entrance and final written tests.

Table 12 shows the achieved marks in the entrance and final tests of the first 15 students from the control group, and it also presents the mean value of the marks from the entrance and final tests.

Table 12. Achieved marks in the entrance and final tests of individual students in the control group (2)

	SC1		SC2		SC3		SC4		SC5		SC6		SC7		SC8		SC9		SC10		SC11		SC12		SC13		SC14		SC15	
R	4	1	5	1	5	3	1	1	1	1	4	3	4	1	3	1	2	1	5	1	3	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	4	1
S	3	1	5	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	5	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	1	3	2	1
G	2	2	5	4	4	4	1	2	2	1	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	5	4	3	2	2	4	4	4	3
V	2	2	5	5	3	3	1	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	5	5	2	3	3	2	1	1	2	2	3	2
M1	2.75		5		4		1		1.5		4		3.5		2.25		2		5		3		3.75		1.5		2		3.25	
M2	1.5		2.75		3		1.5		1.25		3.25		2.75		2.25		2		3.25		2.75		2.5		1.5		2.5		1.75	

Legend: SC – student, R – range, S – structure, G – grammar, V – vocabulary, M1 – average mark from ET, M2 – average mark from FT. For each student the first column shows the marks achieved in the ET; the second column shows the marks achieved in the FT.

In Table 13 we see the number of errors made by the second group of 15 students from the control group. We mark them SC16–SC30.

Table 13. Evaluation of the results of individual students in the control group (2)

	SC16	SC17	SC18	SC19	SC20	SC21	SC22	SC23	SC24	SC25	SC26	SC27	SC28	SC29	SC30
ET	11	7	18	13	12	14	7	9	17	4	12	8	17	13	11
FT	13	9	17	15	13	17	5	10	20	5	11	10	13	12	19
T	24	16	35	28	25	31	12	19	37	9	23	18	30	25	30
M	12	8	17.5	14	12.5	15.5	6	9.5	18.5	4.5	11.5	9	15	12.5	15

Table 14 presents a comparison of the achieved marks of the second group of 15 students from the control group.

Table 14. Achieved marks in the entrance and final tests of individual students in the control group (2)

	SC16		SC17		SC18		SC19		SC20		SC21		SC22		SC23		SC24		SC25		SC26		SC27		SC28		SC29		SC30	
R	4	4	4	3	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	3	1	5	4	1	2	4	2	4	1	5	2
S	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	4	3	1	2	3	2	4	2	5	3
G	3	3	2	2	5	5	4	4	3	3	4	5	2	2	2	2	4	5	2	2	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	5	5
SL	3	3	2	2	3	4	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	4	1	1	4	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	4	3
M1	3.5		2.75		3.5		3		2.75		2		1.5		1.75		3.25		1.75		4.25		1.5		3.5		3.5		4.75	
M2	3.5		2.5		3.25		2.25		2		2		1.25		1.75		3.75		1.25		3		2		10		2.25		3.25	

After analysing collected data related to the number of errors made in the final tests by students from both the experimental and control groups, we proceeded to evaluate collected data on the scoring scale from 1–5 of the final test. In Table 15 we see the evaluation of the received marks for the final test of the experimental group.

Table 15. The experimental group – evaluation of the marks received in the final test

Mark	Length and content of the text		Text splitting and construction		Grammatical accuracy		Vocabulary	
	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%
1	12	40%	11	36%	9	30%	19	64%
2	6	20%	14	47%	18	60%	6	20%
3	6	20%	3	10%	1	3%	4	13%
4	6	20%	2	7%	2	7%	1	3%
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Median	2.2	100%	1.86	100%	1.73	100%	1.56	100%

Table 16 presents marks for the achieved results of the control group in the final test in all sections.

Table 16. The control group – evaluation of the marks received in the final test

Mark	Length and content of the text		Text structure		Grammatical accuracy		Vocabulary	
	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%
1	19	63%	8	27%	1	3%	4	13%
2	5	17%	13	43%	8	27%	14	46%
3	3	10%	8	27%	9	30%	8	27%
4	3	10%	1	3%	6	20%	2	7%
5	0	0%	0	0%	6	20%	2	7%
Median	1.66	100%	2.06	100%	3.26	100%	2.46	100%

The control group greatly improved in both the Length and content of the text, and Text structure. In the section Length and content of the text the improvement is the most pronounced. The average mark achieved in the entrance test is 3.06, but in the final test it is 1.66. In sections Grammatical ac-

curacy and Vocabulary, after analysing the achieved results we can see only a slight improvement. After averaging the mean values, the overall average mark is 2.36.

Conclusion

With the facilitative effects of blogging on students' writing competence, language teachers, therefore, may introduce blogging as a platform for students' writing of essays online. In that way, students may find writing enjoyable and fun, because aside from the satisfaction they may feel in having a wide readership, it will also boost their confidence in their writing abilities[22].

The evaluation of written tests, entrance and final, in the experimental and control groups, confirmed that Weblog-supported teaching improves students' writing skills. It is clear from the statistical evaluation of the entrance and final tests that the students in the experimental group achieved better results in 3 sections in comparison with the control group, which achieved better results only in one section, Length and content of the text.

The results of the conducted research demonstrate that the potential of using blogs as a supplement to language learning is justifiable.

The results of the experiment have shown that the students greatly improved their writing skills by publishing written posts on their blogs. The weblog has an impact not only on improving writing skills, but also on motivating students. The students appreciated the novelty of the media and its options, which allowed them to present themselves on the Internet. The students themselves stated in their answers to the question "What are the benefits of using a blog in studying languages?" that the weblog had an impact on improving their writing skills and vocabulary. Furthermore, it allowed them to read other posts, and also allowed them public self-expression.

The weblog is suitable for all age and language levels. Its only disadvantage is the fact that it is time-consuming, not only for the students who write the papers, but especially for the teacher who tries to check all the contributions and their comments. One of the feedback solutions for students is to get them acquainted with the mistakes they make.

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22 M. Cequena, *Does blogging facilitate the development of students' writing skills?*, "Philippine ESL Journal" 2013, nr 10, s. 126–147.

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