

The Effect of Using Blogs to Enhance the Writing Skill of English Language Learners at a Saudi University

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the use of web blogs as a supplementary tool for teaching English. It focuses on studying the effectiveness of using blog exchanges for enhancing the Saudi female university students' English writing, especially the vocabulary usage. The participants of the current study were thirty-seven Saudi female preparatory year students from the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). Their ages ranged between 18 to 20 years of age. All participants were studying level 103 of the Oxford Headway Plus curriculum, at the third quarter of the academic year 2015-2016. The study hypothesized that there is a positive impact of using web blogs as a supplementary tool in improving the students' writing skill, especially the use of vocabulary. This research reports on an experimental design study using a quantitative approach. The study also used blog entries and pre/post-tests as primary data collection methods. The pre-test and post-test consisted of 50 vocabulary scale test items. They were taken to measure the differences in participants' writing performance after 7 weeks of intervention. A paired-sample t-test was utilized for statistical analysis to determine if there were any improvements in the students' writing performance. The findings indicated an improvement in the students' writing performance after using the blog entries. In addition, the research experiment contributed to the extension of their vocabulary knowledge.

Keywords: Writing skill, Vocabulary knowledge, Technology integration, Web blog, English Language Institute, Saudi students

1. Introduction

Internet utilization that allows learners to communicate widely and directly with other learners without time or place limitations has provided the language teaching field with many advantages such as increasing students' motivation, providing them with authentic material and allowing them to interact effectively in real and social contexts. Blogging is one of the internet utilizations that provides a great deal of advantages in teaching the foreign language. Richardson (2010) for instance, claims that web blogs are "easily created, easily updateable websites which allow the writer author (or student) to publish directly to the Internet forum from any Internet connection" (p. 9).

The need for literacy abilities attained through writing processes cuts across the geographical division suggesting that writing skills are essential globally. Thus, writing is an essential element of literacy because it forms a basis for communicating one's ideas, and feelings. Moreover, "writing is not merely a tool for transmitting knowledge; it is also a source of knowledge; it is not only a problem space but also a resource for dealing with language and thoughts" (Olive, 2008, p. 84). Accordingly, students should have knowledge and understanding of what makes comprehensible writing and the essential writing techniques depending on the topic and format requirements.

Despite the articulated use of writing, the student often lacks the adequate vocabulary and writing skills needed in the writing process making it difficult to create comprehensible texts. However, the use of different teaching methods and the use of varied resources can help in mitigating the writing skills issues. Integrating the teaching of writing skills with technology makes the writing process easy and more enjoyable for students. Therefore, teachers should be aware of which tool to use, and when and how to use them. Blogs, wikis, and web services are examples of web 2.0 tools, hence, using these tools and learning with them is two different things. Students need their teachers' help to beneficially use these tools to learn not only for entertainment. Teachers and learners use web 2.0 online tools because they are affordable and available to students anytime and anywhere on multiple devices (Solomon & Schrum, 2011).

Particularly, blogging, which is a platform for teaching and learning new ideas and people's opinions, could be an effective tool for enhancing the students' learning because of its interactive and critical elements. Blogs help learners to communicate directly and extensively with other students without time and location limitation, indicating that it is an effective strategy in the language-teaching sector. Essentially, the platform helps learners to acquire necessary writing skills and resources, gain writing motivation, and interact in real and social contexts effectively (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the functions associated with writing, a majority of people in the formal education sectors and professional settings face difficulties with their writing skills. For example, "students including L2 students are often required to write a thesis and, as growing literature reveals, L2 students often experience difficulties in the writing of this genre" (Bitchener &

Basturkmen, 2006, p. 4). Students who learn English as a foreign language also face some difficulties due to various reasons such as lack of interest in studying English, insufficient knowledge of writing skills, and exposure to inadequate teaching methodologies and writing skill resources. Some of the primary writing skill difficulties amongst the students are limited vocabulary, inappropriate use of idiomatic and conversational language, inept phrasing, and unconventional grammar use, word order and sentences structure issues, difficulties in spelling, understanding meanings and interpreting them on paper, and difficulties in rephrasing written content. Consequently, the identified difficulties in writing skills, lead to inappropriate and inaccurate written assignments and thus, the low scores in their assessments.

The methods and materials used to teach the writing process are essential such as teaching the aspects of the writing process, for instance, word and sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling. Consequently, teaching materials such as language textbooks should have adequate content concerning the teaching of the writing processes. Since teaching textbooks may have insufficient content that is required for teaching the writing process, the indicated resource through the use of supplementary teaching materials such as web blogging, can solve this problem. For instance, students can post blog entries to discuss their issues, writing techniques, and other pertinent information freely, and receive feedback concerning their blogs. Accordingly, technology provides opportunities to achieve writing skills with less intensive resources and processes.

Studies concerning the effects of integrating technology into normal teaching practices, especially blogging, focuses on diverse issues. For instance, Aljumah (2012) studies the learners' attitudes towards the use of blogging in English language writing. His study posits that blogging helps students to improve their writing skills in Saudi Arabia. A different research by Alaboudi (2014) suggests that blogs are effective tools in the teaching process because they facilitate higher learner expectancy levels and cooperative learning. Besides, Algrami (2012) reports that weblogs help students to establish a valid peer review culture as an integral part of the cooperative writing process based on his study involving Saudi female ESL students. The indicated studies focus on the effect of peer feedback on the improvement of learner writing skills through blogging in the Saudi context. However, they do not explore the effects of using blogs as supplementary instrument to aide textbooks for the improvement of the learners' writing skill in the Saudi context.

To attest the influence of technology on language learning in the Saudi Arabian context and to fill the literature gap regarding blogging and its effects, this study explores the Saudi female students' experiences of blogging in the process of writing. It also investigates whether blogging enhances the students' writing abilities particularly vocabulary use through giving them opportunities to publish written entries and obtain feedback from both other learners and instructors.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The aim of the current study is to explore the effectiveness of using blogs as a supplementary tool to enhance the writing performance of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) female

students particularly their vocabulary knowledge in the Saudi Arabian context.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The interconnectedness amongst students and professionals requires diversification in worldview and communication abilities suggesting that English acquisition is an essential aspect in Saudi Arabia. As a result of the academic and institutional requirements, Saudi students at King Abdulaziz University are increasingly gaining more interest in studying and mastering English as a foreign language. Consequently, this research explores some of the aspects that students face at the English Language Institute relating to their writing abilities. Accordingly, the study analyses the writing process and the written output; hence, the findings of this study are essential in uncovering the difficulties faced by female students at the English Language Institute in the English writing process in the Saudi Arabian context.

An analysis of the problems associated with writing skills among Saudi Arabian students requires practical and evidence-based solutions to the identified issues. For this reason, the study bases its focus on an experimental design to analyze the outcomes of supplementing English teaching methods with technology to validate the conceptual framework of the study and develop it on solid evidence. The experiment provides tangible evidence of the issues associated with the writing processes among students and describes the impact of blogging as a technological resource on students' performance.

Students often consider writing as a difficult skill in practice and evaluation and particularly when using the assigned textbooks at the English Language Institution. This difficulty is attributed to the lack of sufficient command in the English language and the inability to develop a rich vocabulary to sustain the writing process and expression of thoughts clearly. Improvements in the quality of writing among foreign language students and their writing attitudes are likely to facilitate the improvement of success and achievement rates among learners in the English language institutions. Hence, this study is significant in uncovering the aspects that are likely to improve success and achievement rates among learners of English Language.

It is also important for the educational administrators because it equips the learners with knowledge regarding the need and use of assistive technology in learning contexts. It is essential for education policymakers and curriculum developers because it highlights the need for writing skills, the inefficiency of the current instructional methods and resources, and the effectiveness of technologies such as web-based blogs.

The research question that guides the study and facilitates the achievement of the suggested objectives is:

1. Can the use of blogs as a supplementary tool that focuses on vocabulary knowledge improve writing performance of EFL students?

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Integrating Technology into Teaching*

In the modern world, technology affects almost every aspect of the human life. Therefore, a proper use of technology will assist students to acquire essential skills needed to survive in the current complex, technological, and knowledge-oriented economy (Frei, Gammill & Irons, 2007). The use of technology in teaching can particularly involve more than the mere use of computer software and skills in a separate computer equipped class (Edutopia, 2007). Specifically, technology integration in the teaching process should support four major elements in learning including group participation, regular interaction and feedback, connection to real-world expertise, and active engagement (Hew & Brush, 2007). Ostensibly, effective technology is attainable but only when the technology is transparent, routine, and supports extensive curricular objectives.

Effective integration of technology into the teaching curriculum allows the technology tools to improve learning. These tools are important because they not only provide for the teachers but also the students with methods of data collection, access to primary, up-to-date source materials, and opportunities for showing understanding through multimedia, training for presenting and publishing new knowledge, and learning what is relevant and authentic (Frei, Gammill, & Irons, 2007). Nevertheless, there are various types of technology that can be used in classroom integration including project-based activities that incorporate technology, online learning classrooms, learning with handheld devices, game-based learning assessment, web-based explorations, research and projects, and student-focused media such as slideshows, videos, or podcasts (Hamilton, 2015). All these integration tools can be effective if the students are allowed access to use them through a seamless provision to enhance their understanding of the teaching content.

2.2 *Web Blogs: Definition, Components, and Types*

A blog is a web publishing software which allows users to create and edit the content of a web page with minimal technical expertise (Holtz, 2006). The components of blogs are; the post date, category, title, body, trackback, comments, permalink, and footer. Blogs have two main features; first, they give people the choice to edit the blog by adding a text, hyperlinks, pictures, videos, and audio clips, and to comment or respond to the post displayed. Second, they have the robust archival features, i.e., blogs and posts can automatically be archived, with the public who are allowed to access, search and retrieve content (Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam, & Ng, 2010; Duffy & Bruns, 2006). Also, blogs are easy to set up, and posts are simple to comment on (Boas, 2011).

Campbell (2003) classified the use of web blogs into three main types for use in ESL classrooms, the tutor blog, the learner blog, and the class blog. The tutor blog refers to the blog that is run by a teacher to offer to teach resources, activities, and feedback. The learner blog is run by an individual student or cooperative group of students and usually used for reading and writing classes. The class blog is a type of blog that is run collaboratively by the whole class for facilitating project-based language teaching. The current research used the

tutor blog type since the researchers were mainly responsible for providing the content of the blog.

2.3 Blogs as Supplementary Tools in Different Contexts

Kitchakarn (2010) has conducted a study in Turkey which compares the students' performance before and after they have learned writing a blog. The research studied the effects of using blogs on the students' summary writing abilities and investigated the students' attitudes towards learning through blogs. The researcher found that using blogs in learning helped the students to improve their summary writing abilities. Most of the students claimed that feedback and comments from peers and teachers were very helpful for learners to improve their summary writing. They stated that they had gained cooperative working abilities and they also mentioned that they had learned new vocabularies from using the blog.

Lin (2015) conducted a study to evaluate how effectively a learner-centered blogging can approach the integration of the EFL writing classroom in Taiwan. The research results showed that students became able to use more words after the writing experience on the blog. Noteworthy, he stated that there were improvements in students writing, motivation and self-efficacy. Nonetheless, the students considered that the blogging experience was interesting and fun.

Ralmi, Rafek, & Hasni (2015) studied the learners' understanding of blogging usage in learning writing, at one of the Malaysian Universities, to support the development of this skill. The researchers found that the use of blogs made it easy for the learner to improve their writing skill. Writing on the blog helped the learners improve their essay organization skill. Learners also agreed that writing online actually facilitated generating ideas compared to writing on paper.

2.4 Previous Studies of Blogs as Supplementary Tools in Saudi Contexts

Algrami (2012) studied the use of blogs and a feedback checklist to involve students in an interactive online writing environment. Students reported that they had developed an ability to choose the topic that they were willing to write about rather than writing on a predetermined topic. Also, there had been a positive attitude towards writing on the blog and the feedback received from their peers. Students developed critical thinking and the ability to judge feedback received from others.

A study conducted by Aljumah (2012), examined the students' opinions about the use of weblogs in writing skill learning. The researcher discovered that only five percent of the students had experience with blogs and only nine percent had their own blogs. This finding showed that the use of weblogs was not well-known in Al-Qassim University among the young generation. The learners' attitude towards using blogs in learning writing activities was positive. The students said that writing on the blog was easy, interesting and enjoyable. They viewed the blog as an effective learning tool for the reason that they could share ideas and information with other group members. In addition, the students stated that blogging helped them to improve their second language grammar and acquire new vocabulary.

Alaboudi (2013) also conducted a study that examined the collective and individual perceptions of students towards the effectiveness of using blogs. The students agreed that using blogs in learning motivated the students to improve their writing. They also indicated an agreement that is writing online on the blog improved their competence in the grammar.

The current research study is driven by the lack of comprehensive quantitative studies that examine precisely the impact of the use of blogs on students' writing skill proficiency, especially on vocabulary knowledge. Taking into consideration the findings of previous research, the recent study aims at providing further empirical evidence in relation to the effectiveness of using blogs as a supplementary tool to enhance EFL learners' writing skill, especially vocabulary knowledge in the Saudi context and particularly at the ELI in King Abdulaziz University.

3. Methodology

The research method adopted for this study was an experimental design which used a quantitative approach to explore the outlined question and research objectives. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) indicated that quantitative research is the “explaining of phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)” (p. 18). Data collection methods involved pre- and post-test analysis of the vocabulary scale test. Here, a blog was used to gather data in which the participants were required to post weekly entries to find if there were any improvements in the students' performance. A paired-sample t-test then was utilized using the SPSS software to compare the two different groups whose results were measured before and after the treatment. Each before-and-after pair of measurements defined the mean of these changes and reported whether this mean of differences was statistically significant.

3.1 Participants

The study examined 37 Saudi female students who were studying their preparatory year in the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University. Their ages ranged between 18 to 20 years of age. The participants were studying level 103 of the Oxford Headway Plus curriculum at the third quarter of the academic year 2015-2016. Level 103 is equivalent to the pre-intermediate level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The sampling used for this research was the convenience sampling strategy. The participants were selected just because they volunteered for the study. The researcher did not consider selecting participants that are representative of the entire population.

3.2 Vocabulary Scale Test

An online vocabulary, Google form, scale test was used as pre- and post-tests to measure the students' vocabulary knowledge for them to be able to write on the blog. The test consisted of 50 vocabulary items derived from the learners' textbooks. The rating scale used in this test consisted of 4 options: *I do not know this word, I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning, I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little, I know this word.*

3.3 Experiment Procedure

Blogspot Website (<https://www.blogspot.com>) was chosen to create the web blog. The web blog was named as “Letuseenjoywritingwithamal.blogspot.com.” The web blog was created for the data collection of this research; it was used for experimental purposes only. Every week, the participants from the experimental group received an entry with materials including videos, images and other interactive content related to the topic processed in the class and were asked to write a small piece of text using the new words. They were asked to write at least five lines in the entries that contain writing tasks. The reason behind using web blog for fostering vocabulary knowledge as a supplementary learning tool in writing classes is the simplicity and ease of use. Blogging entries can be set up by people who have very little or no technology expertise (Duffy & Bruns, 2006).

This study went through different stages in order to collect the data needed for investigating the impact of web blog on the learning process of English writing skills amongst English language students. It examined their vocabulary background before and after the experiment of integrating technology with education.

At first, the students were divided into two groups. One group consisted of 19 students, whereas the other group contained 18 students, all from the same level. The first group was called “experimental group” and the other one was called “control group”. Both groups went through a pre-test and a post-test of the vocabulary scale test, and each group took the same test twice before and after the experiment. After seven weeks of intervention, both groups received the test link via their emails to fill and submit online in a test-oriented environment. The students were given a duration of one hour to finish the test. The students of the experimental group were the only group required to visit the web blog frequently each week for about seven weeks. The experimental group was required to participate in each blog entry that was related to their lessons. After every two or three units, a vocabulary quiz was made by b.socrative.com then posted on the blog to assess the learners’ lexical resource.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Students’ Answers Before and After the Experiment

The vocabulary scale test used in this research consisted of fifty question items. However, only eight question items are mentioned below as a sample of the test due to the journal word limitation.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of answers for both experimental and control group before and after the experiment

Vocabulary Scale Test Questions	Experimental Group (n=19)				Control Group (n=20)			
	Before		After		Before		After	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
A (lightning) bolt heats the air to about 30,000 C								
• I do not know this word	4	21.1	1	5.3	3	15.0	5	25.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	1	5.3	3	15.8	6	30.0	1	5.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	4	21.1	2	10.5	1	5.0	1	5.0
• I know this word	10	52.6	13	68.4	10	50.0	11	55.0
This pot is made of light (clay).								
• I do not know this word	10	52.6	3	15.8	10	55.0	13	65.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	8	42.1	6	31.6	2	10.0	2	10.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	1	5.3	4	21.1	3	15.0	0	0.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	6	31.6	5	25.0	3	15.0
It is (freezing).								
• I do not know this word	19	100.0	0	0.0	3	15.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	0	0.0	2	10.5	2	10.0	2	10.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	17	89.5	15	75.0	15	75.0
There is a (hotel) near where I live.								
• I do not know this word	19	100.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	0	0.0	2	10.5	1	5.0	1	5.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	17	89.5	18	90.0	17	85.0
I'd like to (book) a single room for three nights.								
• I do not know this word	19	100.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	0	0.0	1	5.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	0	0.0	1	5.3	1	5.0	1	5.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	17	89.5	18	90.0	17	85.0

Each room has (internet access).								
• I do not know this word	4	21.1	0	0.0	3	15.0	3	15.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	2	10.5	1	5.3	2	10.0	2	10.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	3	15.8	3	15.8	2	10.0	5	25.0
• I know this word	10	52.6	15	78.9	13	65.0	8	40.0

My grandmother house has a traditional (kitchen).								
• I do not know this word	19	100.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	0	0.0	1	5.3	1	5.0	0	0.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	0	0.0	1	5.3	0	0.0	1	5.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	17	89.5	18	90.0	17	85.0

I cannot live without my (gadgets).								
• I do not know this word	15	78.9	3	15.8	10	50.0	8	40.0
• I have seen this word before, but do not know its meaning	3	15.8	6	31.6	3	15.0	4	20.0
• I have seen this word before and know its meaning a little	1	5.3	0	0.0	2	10.0	1	5.0
• I know this word	0	0.0	10	52.6	5	25.0	5	25.0

It can be seen from Table 1, the frequency and percentage distribution sample for all the answers from both groups before and after the experiment is displayed. Further analysis is discussed in the results section below.

4.2 Students' Total Scores Before and After the Experiment

Table 2. Mean total scores for both groups before and after experiment with t-test

Group		Mean Score	P-value
Experimental Group	Before	162	<0.001
	After	178	
Control Group	Before	179	0.063
	After	166	

Table 2 shows the mean total scores for both groups before and after the experiment. The results show that the difference between before and after the experiment in the experimental group is significantly different ($p < 0.001$).

4.3 Results

The analysis of the results that were gathered, in the course of the research study, was sustained on two levels: the estimation of writing skills of EFL students from the moment the experiment starts and after all stages of the research were finished. In order to find out whether blogging can be effective as a supplementary tool, focusing on writing competence, the vocabulary scale test was used.

4.3.1 Attendance Implications

The first conclusion that may be made, based on test participation analysis, is that not every student took part in the pre- and post-evaluation. The experiment had initially set the goal that 20 members of the experimental group and 20 representatives of the control group will attend the pre- and post-evaluation meetings and complete a vocabulary score test. Besides, every participant from the experimental group was obliged to make a post in a web blog, based on the material that was learned, in classes, during the seven weeks of the experiment. However, the analysis on the involvement revealed that one student from the experimental group showed zero engagement with the procedure since she completed neither a pre- nor a post-test on vocabulary. Two students from the control group, although completed a pre-test, refused to take part in a post-evaluation. Conclusively, while on the first stage of testing the experimental group involved 19 participants and the control group had 20 participants, whereas, on the stage of post-testing, the experimental groups consisted of 19 members and the control group consisted of 18. The total number of participants turned into 37 instead of 40 as the researcher had set in the beginning (see Figure 1). Moreover, it was established that a large number of participants were reluctant to writing blog entries every week. Therefore, the level of activities were incomplete, which may indicate either a low interest in the experiment or little confidence of the learners, in their vocabulary expertise.

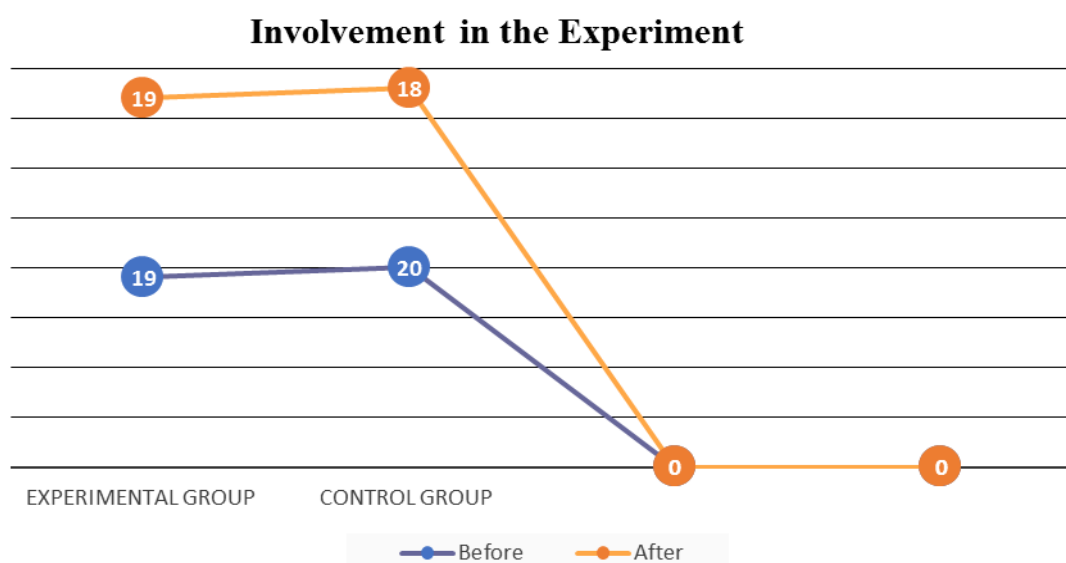


Figure 1. Involvement in experiment

4.3.2 Frequency Distribution of Answers in Two Groups

The frequency analysis of participant answers is based on the number of positive and negative responses to four types of questions, both in pre- and post-tests. The offered answers, related to the recognition of the word, identifying four forms of acquaintance with the given vocabulary knowledge, which implied knowing the word, not knowing the word, being acquainted with the word form, but not knowing the meaning, and being slightly acquainted with the meaning of the word. First of all, correlations between the negative answers before and after the experiment, in two groups have to be drawn. This analysis helps to identify whether the number of the unknown words becomes lower, in a group that uses blogging as a supplementary study tool, and whether the same happens, in a group, treated through the traditional instruction. According to the calculation of positive answers to the question “I don’t know the word,” it was established that there was a big decrease, in their number, on the stage of post-testing in the experimental group, which indicates a substantial change in knowledge of students, after using blogging. Specifically, when before the test, 229 answers, certifying unrecognition, were counted, the number decreased to 61, after the experiment. The level of not recognizing a word went down in the control group too, but to a lower extent (from 172 to 119) (See Figure 2).

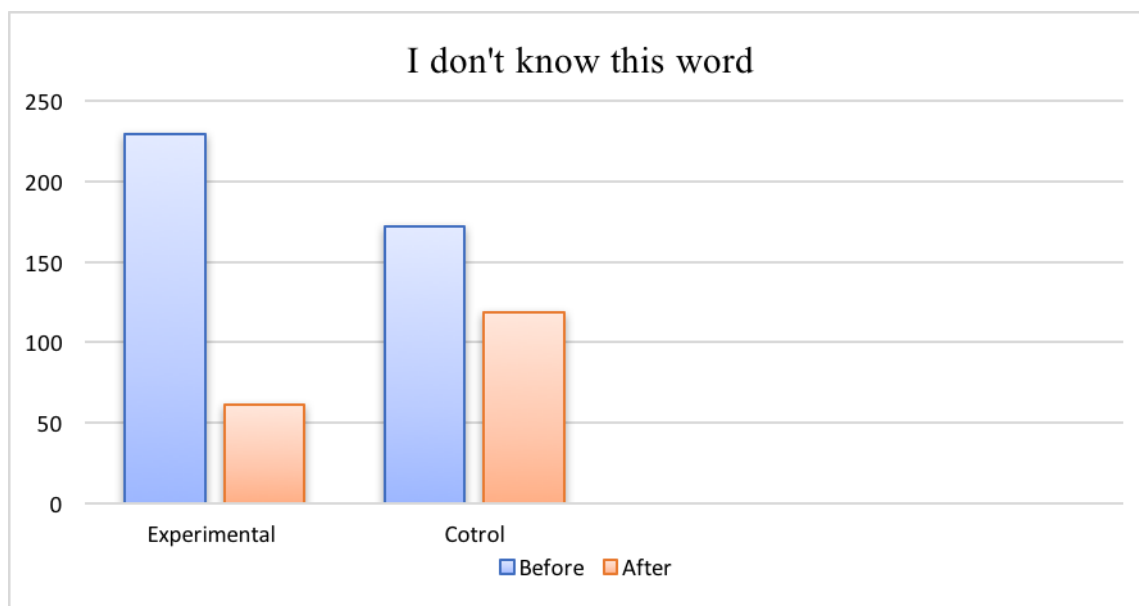


Figure 2. Frequency of answers to a question “I don’t know this word.”

In order to estimate whether the recognition of the words improved or, in other words, whether the vocabulary knowledge became better after using blogging or the traditional instructions, the positive numbers to the question “I know this word” before and after the experiment were counted. Due to the results of the calculation, the number of answers, indicating that a participant knows the word, equaled to 539 before the experiment in the experimental group and increased to 712, in the post-evaluation. In contrast, the recognition of the words went down, in the control group (from 652 to 623) (see Figure 3).

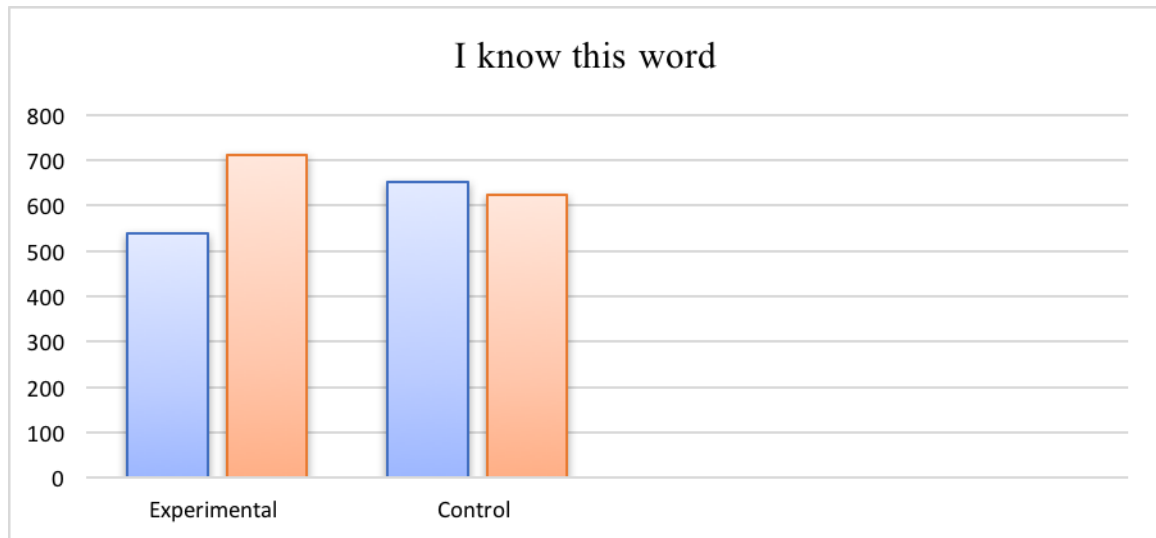


Figure 3. Frequency of answers to a question "I know this word"

So to give an average estimation of how the knowledge of vocabulary is developed in both experimental and control groups, the researcher calculated the frequency distribution of responses to all four types of questions and received mean scores for both scores (see Figure 4). The calculation of the P-value showed that the difference, in the experimental group, is vivid and positive (<0.001), while the control group is marked with a downward value (0.063).

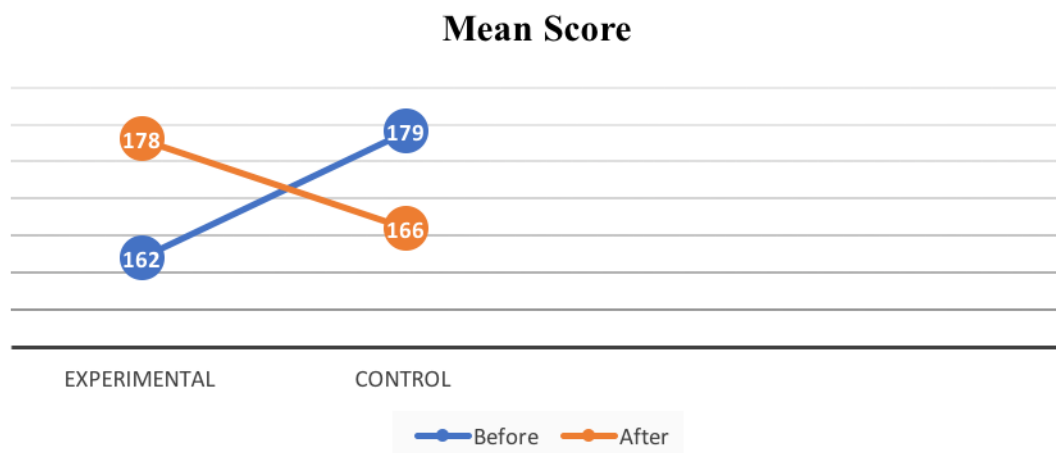


Figure 4. Mean score

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Integrating the Use of Blog in Teaching Writing Skill

By providing a response to the research question, it can be stated that the use of blogging as a supplementary tool, in the English Language Institute, within EFL studies, can substantially

improve the writing performance of female Saudi students. Specifically, this approach does not only develop the student's writing fluency, critical thinking, and ability to construct coherent texts; it also contributes to the extension of their vocabulary knowledge.

It is interesting to note that two groups were entered into the experiment, although having been instructed in the same way and having studied the same materials, possessed slightly different knowledge of vocabulary. Indeed, while an experimental group indicated 229 unknown words, in a pre-test, the control group recognized only 172 words. The same situation relates to the "I know the word" question: 539 words were recognized by the experimental group and 652 – by the control group participants. As the experiment progressed, the learners who were using blogging, developed a better knowledge of vocabulary units. On the other hand, the expertise of participants from the control group did not grow in value and even degraded, and this is evident by looking at the scale of word recognition before and after the tests (from 652 to 623). The difference between both groups consists not only in the idea that integrating blogging in traditional learning, is more exciting than learning from manuals, it also has a relation to the process-oriented approach. According to Hidayat (2015), two primary methodologies of learning assist in mastering a foreign language: a product- and a process-oriented method. While traditional education encourages only a product-based method, an integrated study in the form of blogging targets the process of developing writing skills since it involves all stages of the approach: planning, translating and reviewing.

The use of web-blogging is beneficial since it not only provides the means of studying something but also becomes a valuable asset for a young person, who lives in technology-oriented society. According to the study on adoption of computer technologies in large and small firms only 87% of workers, who are forced to interact with the computer in their workplace, possess enough knowledge to make it an effective working tool (Al-Gahtani, 2010). Consequently, if the work with computers will be fostered from the early years of study, every young person, despite the social status and access to technology at home will get a chance to master valuable skills, which will be effectively integrated in their future (Frei, Gammill, & Irons).

The experiment which was sustained with a web blog targeted not simply the entries that the learners can make in a blog due to their preferences, but also the specific vocabulary entries and phrases which were previously mastered by the students. Therefore, it can be stated that blogging served as a kind of an instrument for practicing skills. By writing on the blog, the learners mastered two new skills which were not employed by the participants from the control group. First, they were learning how to basically, extract theoretical knowledge of words from their memory and use them in different contexts. This ability fostered their ability to verify knowledge in practice. According to the academic research on vocabulary acquisition, every new word should be repeated and used in different sentences and phrases at least 20 times in order for it to be stored in the long-term memory (Schmitt, 1995). The use of blogging is helpful in the employment of the described strategy. The second skill in which blogging improves vocabulary knowledge is fostering the feeling of authenticity in students. It is scientifically proven that students better benefit from doing authentic activities in

authentic contexts, than from learning the structured data (Herrington & Kervin, 2007). This means that the best strategy for fostering knowledge is bringing some elements of real life into a classroom by engaging the learners with problem-solving tasks and encouraging them to pace the information and organize their learning process, in a convenient way. Indeed, computers for many young people are associated with a relaxed atmosphere and home conditions. Letting them interact with technology in class, eliminates stress and motivates learners to reach their goals.

The experiment with blogging entails social presence and collaboration. The owners of a web blog (students, in our case) have an opportunity to follow the activity of their peers, which fosters interaction in the classroom. The element of competition is present in blogging too and indeed, as our study reveals the level of engagement with blog writing increased as the experiment progressed. In the beginning, the participants had no desire to make entries, but then as they tried it once and followed the development of their peers, they progressed in their own engagement too. Thus, it may be said that using blogging in a class does not only help in vocabulary mastering but also assists in building an active learning community, in a group of students.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The research study involved some limitations and difficulties that may be further used as the starting point for elaboration and following researchers. Primarily, the study did not foster a full engagement of participants. As the researcher revealed, not every member of the experiment passed the post- and pre-tests. Moreover, it was hard to involve the learners in the process of learning since many of them did not show any interest in this activity may be, because the activity was initiated by the researchers not their course teacher knowing that their blog entries were not graded. The scientific study, based on the estimation of the students' opinions about web blogging, reveals that they majorly enjoy the activity. However, as they claim, this tool may be beneficial for them only under specific conditions: if they have an opportunity to provide comments to the posts of their peers or rate them and if they are not limited in text length (Aljumah, 2012). Despite developing writing skills which is a critical element of EFL, not every student is humanitarian in nature. For such people, writing an entry that is 3 pages long is not an entertainment but rather a torture. That is why; we recommend the use of blogging as a training tool allowing students to post entries in any form. Even when a student locates a 100-words text using 10 learned vocabulary units in it, is extremely beneficial for her/him.

6. Conclusion

In this work, a quantitative study of blogging use in an EFL class is sustained. The results of this quantitative research shows that students can benefit from making posts on web blogs in general by improving their writing performance and primarily by developing a good understanding of vocabulary learning. The major advantages in blogging relates to technology literacy improvement, social engagement, and practical fostering of learning. In particular, the current study approves that the use of digital products in class enhances digital literacy, which serves as a good preparation for matching the students' skills with the

demands of the modern technology-directed world. Having access to computers and web space smooths the difficulties of social inequality and help every young person connect to technology, no matter whether a student has a chance to use it outside a class or not. Secondly, blogging as a supplementary tool for EFL helps students to repeat the learned vocabulary units and use it in different sentences or contexts. This develops a good understanding of the word meaning and retains the unit in the long-term memory of a student. Additionally, it is approved that learning this type of writing appeals to learners, for it gives them the feeling of working with authentic contexts and performing real-life activities. Finally, blogging fosters higher social interaction of students with their peers, which is made possible through the concept of competition and the option of commenting on posts. The possible improvements and recommendations for blogging use include the adoption of creative tasks for bloggers, and encouraging higher engagement of students with web blogs.

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