

Language Teaching and Learning

Language Teaching and Learning:
New Dimensions and Interventions

Edited by

Ambigapathy Pandian, Christine Liew Ching Ling,
Debbita Tan Ai Lin, Jayagowri Muniandy,
Lee Bee Choo and Toh Chwee Hiang

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P U B L I S H I N G

Language Teaching and Learning: New Dimensions and Interventions,
Edited by Ambigapathy Pandian, Christine Liew Ching Ling, Debbita Tan Ai Lin,
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PREFACE

*Language shapes the way we think, and
determines what we can think about.*

—Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941)

In every discussion on the role that language plays in our lives, every orator – from prominent politicians and corporate figures to linguists, educational experts, and others – concedes that language is important in all spheres of life. Language is both personal and introspective as well as public and communal. Without it, we would not be able to communicate and articulate our thoughts and feelings to ourselves, to those in our inner circles, and to those in the world at large. Without it, we would not be able to establish partnerships and collaborations and to unite peoples of diverse backgrounds and intrinsic values. Without it, too, we would not be able to learn of new discoveries and knowledge that scientists continue to publish.

Against this backdrop, the nurturing of a language learning culture by all members of society, especially those in academia, must come to the fore to ensure that language teaching and learning supports the development of individuals, societies, nations, and populations. Language researchers, educators, and practitioners need to ensure that their learners are empowered to remain relevant. In other words, they need to produce critical and analytical thinkers, and successful language users in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Language practitioners, therefore, have to constantly look for new methodologies and techniques to make their lessons fun, exciting and relevant to their learners. Otherwise, they lose the golden opportunity to impart to their learners, ranging from pre-school to post-tertiary levels, a valuable skill that will empower them for life. These practitioners have been experimenting with a variety of approaches focusing on structure, form and meaning. Methodologies vary according to whether the language is being taught as mother tongue, national language, second language, foreign language, third language, or beyond.

The collection of chapters in this volume engages the readers in the sharing of inspirational accounts by educators and researchers in addressing teaching dilemmas in their unfolding narratives and draws their attention to challenges they have overcome and those they continue to

face. By sharing these chronicles, the writers advance our knowledge and visions for new approaches to teaching and learning, together with the tools that will help learners achieve social, economic, educational, and professional success. The book chapters here reflect the transcendence by language teaching and learning of ordinary boundaries, especially with the advent of the digital revolution, and provided new perspectives, pedagogies, and approaches that help shape ethical, responsible, and sustainable policies. It is hoped that the insights and research offered in this volume will help educators and researchers in exploring new identities, new instructional media for interactive learning, and new modes of meaning in diverse local and global environments. For the purpose of organization, the chapters have been categorized according to orientation, but readers should be aware that they complement each other to provide the ideal space for the deliberation on important language issues that have global implications and repercussions.

Language Teaching ...

This volume's opening chapter by **Zuraidah Ali** titled *ESL Students' Engagement with the Tutor's Blog: Three Phases of Immersion* heralds the latest trend of incorporating technology into teaching and learning by focusing on the experience of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners using an academic blog. The chapter's conclusion, that ESL teachers should avail themselves of the potential inherent in the ESL blogosphere for effective language teaching, is a clarion call for concerned and engaging language educationists.

Jinan A. Khaleel, in *Reflective Teaching as a Way of Improving Teaching*, proposes a method of intervention for language practitioners to use teaching journals for improved self-reflection to respond to learners' needs with immediacy and efficiency.

Language practitioners cannot deny the role that culture plays in their classrooms. This opinion is further expounded by **Athriyana Pattiwael** who examines the role of culture in teaching an international language and proposes a redevelopment of instructional activities and materials in the teaching of English in her chapter *Towards an Intercultural Competence in the World English Era: Some Emerging Issues and Considerations Regarding Culture in the Classrooms*.

From the perspective of Malaysian education, **Sachithanantham Tachina Moorthi**, in *English Language Teaching in Malaysian Teacher-Training Institutes: Issues and Challenges*, addresses the efforts of the Malaysian Ministry of Education in arresting the decline of the English

language and how this has affected educators in teacher-training institutions.

Kasthuri Veratharaju, G.K. Marriappen and Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan Abdullah propose the need for education authorities and policy makers to establish professional development programmes for English language educators to enhance their language teaching pedagogy and methodology based on their case study entitled *English Language Teachers' Professional Development Practices: The Amount of Time Spent and Support System Received to Participate in English Language Programmes in Penang*.

In their chapter *Appropriating English Language Teaching in Malaysia*, **Ambigapathy Pandian, Shanthi Balraj and Marcia Jane Ganasan** trace the history of English language education in Malaysia focusing on the evolution of ELT from the pre-independence era to the twenty-first century. They also illustrate how Malaysia is capable of becoming an international hub for EL teaching and learning with its array of diverse opportunities and resources.

Along similar lines, **Uthai Piromruen** introduces readers to the ELT scenario in the Kingdom of Thailand and traces the history of the influence of English back to the Thai–European connection from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the present day.

... Language Learning

Proficiency in English has always been a prerequisite in helping graduates secure jobs of their choice. The survey in **Praneet Thongpan and Vikrom Chantarangkul's** *Quality Standards in English Language Skills of Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya Graduates Majoring in Business Administration* reveals a huge disparity between the students' actual proficiency in English and the prospective employers' expectations. The researchers recommend that internship courses be made compulsory in all undergraduate programmes to expose students to the real world, especially where English is concerned.

In addition to the environment in language learning, the learners' motivation plays an equally important role. **Pei-Ling Lee and Vincent Pang** in their study *The Relationship between Motivation to Participate in Learning and Academic Achievement among Part-Time Adult Learners in Sabah* set out to explore the connection between part-time adult learners' motivation in learning and their academic achievement. For their learners, intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in influencing academic achievement compared with extrinsic motivation.

The learners' perspectives can be harnessed to help educators design and implement effective and engaging language programmes and teaching materials. **Chanitsara Thaveeprayoon's** study on *Linguistics and Oral Communication Difficulties of Personnel at the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives* reveal concrete factors influencing the standard of English of bank personnel when the latter use English for both personal and business purposes. Hence, the findings of her study could be used to improve the design and delivery of English training courses and suitable language training activities in accordance with the needs of the learners.

Learner autonomy is yet another contributory factor in effective language learning, especially among adult learners. **Chuah Hong Hoon** and **Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail** in their study entitled *Foreign Language Learning through Self-Directed Learning: A Learner's Experience* explore an individual learner's experience of learning a foreign language through SDL (Self-Directed Learning). They found that the learner was more successful in adopting direct strategies compared with indirect strategies in acquiring the target language, thus opening up the prospect of using SDL in language teaching as a tool for empowering students.

Academic writing appears to be a stumbling block for many second and foreign language learners. **Syed Zainal Ariff Syed Jamaluddin** and **Noordin Mohd Noor** provide a glimpse of the differences and similarities between two languages (Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia) and the difficulties Indonesian students experience in writing academically in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. In the same vein, **Ali Abdullah Alghail** and **Sarjit Kaur's** chapter sheds light on the academic writing difficulties faced by postgraduate students from Yemen studying at Universiti Sains Malaysia and explains the critical need to provide writing support to international students.

In their chapter, *The Role of Culture, Motivation and Interest on Reading Comprehension among Iranian University Students*, **Mahboobeh Mahboobi**, **Ambigapathy Pandian** and **Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail** discuss the uniqueness of Iranian university students whose diverse cultural background influences their motivation and interest in learning which in turn affects their performance in reading comprehension in EFL.

Akbar Solati's *Irregularities in English Spelling: A Concise Historical Analysis* looks into the difficulties of spelling in English and provides a detailed outline of the historical, political, and linguistic influences of other languages on English spelling today. These studies shed light on how learners can be further assisted as they grapple with learning a new language, especially in the writing skill of the target language.

New Dimensions...

This section's selection of chapters brings to light the innovative curriculum that incorporates language teaching and learning in the global perspective. **Shirley Tay Siew Hong's** chapter, *TT: Together Everyone Achieves More Teaching English Language in a Team*, takes a refreshing look at the concept and implementation of team teaching in teaching LEP (Low English Proficiency) students in the classroom. In this study, the researcher demonstrates an educational breakthrough not only in elevating the students' interests and attitudes towards learning and hence their performance in English but also in alleviating the teachers' workload and challenges in teaching low-proficiency classes.

Innovation cuts across language teaching and prevails not only in TESL but also in teaching language as a national language and also as a foreign language. **Aida Shuhaida Bt Mustafa, Lidia Ramírez Arriaga, Kim Taek Hoon, Khor Gek Suan and Ambigapathy Pandian**, in *An Experimental Approach Using Movies in Class for Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages (Mandarin, Spanish, Korean) and Bahasa Malaysia*, employ the use of movies to promote an interactive learning environment and students' acquisition of language skills.

Siti Waltraud Brigitte Mayr attests to the effectiveness of using another form of the performing arts, *viz.* theatre, in the foreign language classroom. Her learners engage voluntarily in SDL (Self-Directed Learning) after being exposed to the synergy of theatre pedagogy and language education that enables them to interact productively in a global setting.

Khong Hou-Keat and Ummu Salmah Rahamatullah advocate another avant-garde teaching approach in foreign language learning by engaging their learners in a non-threatening environment using customized "Amazing Race" games. Their description and analysis highlight the affective elements of the games and how the learners spontaneously speak up, learn and work in a team, without the barriers of language anxiety.

... New Interventions

The array of chapters in this section reflects the reorientation in terms of how educators and stakeholders view the pedagogies and methodologies of language teaching and learning, to ensure that learners are equipped with the relevant skills for effective learning. **Manesha Kaur Rajendra Singh and Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh's** *Creative Vocabulary Activities in an English Language Classroom* describes a variety of interventions to

expand vocabulary knowledge and increase the vocabulary size of their learners. The activities they propose create a conducive and dynamic environment for the students' class participation and increased enthusiasm in learning English.

Ma'ssoumeh Bemani Naeini, Zahra Zohoorian Vahid Baghban and Ambigapathy Pandian, in *Meeting Learners' Needs: The Effect of Multiple Intelligences-Based Activities on Listening Proficiency*, trace the potential effects of MIT (Multiple Intelligences Theory) on listening proficiency in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting. They suggest that multiple intelligences activities should be integrated in to the teaching methodology and that educators should not merely rely on learners' intellectual strengths and their quest for knowledge.

Ali Zahabi and Ambigapathy Pandian, in *The Use of Word-Guessing Strategy in Developing Reading Proficiency* and **Yeoh Phaik Kin** in *Making Sense of Non-Sense*, offer useful tips on developing reading schemata and proficiency skills as well as augmenting the learners' familiarization with grammatical and lexical density in textual comprehension.

Similarly **Reza Khorasani, Ambigapathy Pandian, Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail and Saber Alavi**, in *Looking into Accuracy, Complexity and Fluency of EFL Learners' Written Task Production and the Potency of Unguided Planning*, provide guidelines on the organization of sentences and the planning of ideas in producing logical and coherent writing which demonstrates the learners' understanding of multiple skills related to written expression.

Readers of this volume, be they language practitioners, students, researchers, policy- and decision-makers, concerned educationists, or any interested individuals, will gain new insights and experiences. The book chapters have been carefully selected to reflect not only language teaching and learning in its entirety but also the new dimensions and interventions that have been tried and tested by their researchers that may be adopted, adapted, or considered for implementation by other language practitioners.

Editors

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PART I:
LANGUAGE TEACHING

CHAPTER I

ESL STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TUTOR'S BLOG: THREE PHASES OF IMMERSION

ZURAIDAH ALI

It is currently a trend to incorporate technology into teaching and learning. In Malaysia, this is propelled by government ICT initiatives as well as the ESL teachers' passion and determination to enhance the virtues of the classroom climate. Indeed, academic blogging has been implemented and researched by many local researchers who have contributed to more effective lessons, better teacher–student rapport, and other personal and interpersonal gains. Nevertheless, one curiosity remains untouched: the cycle of experience of ESL learners using the tutor's blog. Hence, this study seeks to describe and define the phases of experience that the ESL learners go through as they are introduced to academic blogging as an educational tool, until they emerge contented. Data was collected via reflective journaling and interviews. The tutor's blog <http://www.speakup-avenue.blogspot.com> contributes to content analysis. Results from the qualitative inquiry show the ESL learner's acceptance of academic blogging as a tool to enhance their learning and experience. Most importantly, the findings depict three phases of academic blogging experience. The study concludes that ESL practitioners may want to capitalize on the third sphere of the ESL blogosphere.

Introduction

It is currently a trend to incorporate technology into teaching and learning. In Malaysia, this is propelled by government ICT initiatives as well as ESL teachers' passion and determination to enhance the virtues of the classroom climate. Indeed, academic blogging has been rigorously implemented and researched by researchers and ESL practitioners worldwide, which have contributed to more effective lessons, better teacher–student rapport, and other personal and interpersonal gains.

Since blogging has become a convenient and popular form of communication, it is well received by academia. Among others, Jones (2011) has discovered that weblogs serve as a pedagogical tool to promote autonomous learning in language learning. Anuratha and Pramela (2010) demonstrated that the use of weblogs as a form of ICT in education promotes information-sharing and encourages active participation in the virtual mode. Zuraidah (2011) proved that the use of blogs in ESL classrooms increases learners' self-confidence and helps to overcome shyness in THE expression of opinion among undergraduates.

Indeed, the benefits of ICT and weblogs in ESL classrooms surpass many traditional pedagogical tools. In the midst of articles and research affirmatives on the significant role of weblogs in ESL, one curiosity remains untouched: *the cycle of experience of ESL learners* using the tutor's blog. Hence, this study seeks to describe and define the phases of experience that ESL learners go through as they are introduced to academic blogging as an educational tool, immersed in the process, until they emerge contented. The tutor's blog in discussion can be accessed at <http://www.speakup-avenue.blogspot.com>.

Past Studies

Research in computer-mediated communicated (CMC) environments has presented ESL practitioners with a rich variety of pedagogical tools in and outside of the classroom. The use of online forum (Supyan, 2008; Pramela, 2011) and academic blogging (Nadzrah, 2009; Supyan et al., 2010; Zuraidah, 2008, 2011) are two local examples keeping abreast with other forms of CMCs like chat rooms, newsgroups, and multi-user domains (MUDs) that have made ESL classes more interesting and up-to-date.

Indeed, the recent development in exploring ESL pedagogical boundaries is the weblog or 'blog'. It acts as an easy-to-use and easy-to-understand technological package featuring instant publishing, safe postings, reader's commentary and reaction, archives, and hyperlinks

(Campbell, 2003; Huffaker, 2005; Di Zhang, 2009). In fact, ever since their inception in 1998, weblogs (or blogs) have won over the cyberspace community and a growing number of educators have applied this user-friendly technology to classroom instruction and language learning (Campbell, 2003; Johnson, 2004).

Numerous reasons have been cited for using blogs in education, such as providing a real audience for student writing, providing extra reading practice for students, increasing the sense of community in a class, encouraging students to participate, and creating an online portfolio of student written work (Stanley, 2005). In fact, anybody with access to the Internet can read blog entries and post comments on what they have read upon the author's invitation or approval. These interactive and public aspects of blogs have attracted teachers worldwide to explore the potential of this tool as a learning environment (Soares, 2008).

Some students express a preference for blogging interaction over the traditional face-to-face interaction because the former is a more comfortable learning environment for them. Students dislike interacting face-to-face with their classmates (Di Zhang, 2009). Indeed, blogging interaction serves as a virtual reality and students are allowed to join the community and yet hide their identity. Other than that, students report a climate more conducive to learning as well as some personal and interpersonal gains after a period of engagement (Zuraidah, 2011).

To date, blog authorship in ESL revolves around three common types as advanced by Campbell (2003). The three different types of blog are deemed to fit pedagogical purposes. They are: (1) the tutor's blog, run by the class teacher, (2) the learner's blog, run by each student in the group individually, and (3) the class blog, run by the teacher and students collaboratively.

This study is concerned with the implementation of the tutor's blog in the ESL classroom. According to Campbell (2003), the tutor's blog is unique as it can perform several functions as follows:

- i. It gives daily reading practice to the learners
- ii. It promotes exploration of English websites
- iii. It encourages online verbal exchange by use of comment buttons
- iv. It provides class or syllabus information
- v. It serves as a resource of links for self-study

In Malaysia, most researches have focused on either the learner's blog or the class blog. Indeed, there is a dearth of research exploring the impact of *the tutor's blog* among ESL learners. This study aims to fill this gap

and explore the experience described by the ESL learners as they were involved with ESL academic blogging.

Recent Study

The study is a longitudinal research which began in January 2008 when the academic blog was launched to reach out to ESL learners with the aim of encouraging them to speak their minds via writing and self-expression. As of today, there is a total of 101 articles written by the tutor. Most of the topics discussed in the academic blog are related to classroom discussions as well as real-life concerns. In this way, the academic blog content is deemed relevant as well as appropriate for use among the undergraduate cohort.

This study involved several cohorts of undergraduates taking the Foundation programme in Information Technology and Engineering. They were enrolled in the Foundation English course with the researcher. The course emphasizes two specific skills: academic writing and public speaking. At the start of the semester, the students were invited to visit the academic blog at <http://www.speakup-avenue.blogspot.com>.

The blogging process began with the students visiting the tutor's blog. After reading the article or post, the students configured a response to the issue raised or discussed by the tutor as author. Students were encouraged to express thoughts at the minimum length of a paragraph, and they were allowed to sign up using screen names or pseudonyms. Some time during the semester, they had to declare their identity, but only to the tutor (as researcher). Figure 1 illustrates the convenience of the process.

Students were advised to type their comments using Word and edit their composition using the resources available on the computer and the Internet (e.g. language check, online dictionary, synonyms, etc.) Once they were satisfied with their writing, they copied and pasted it into the comment box and published (with the approval of the author).

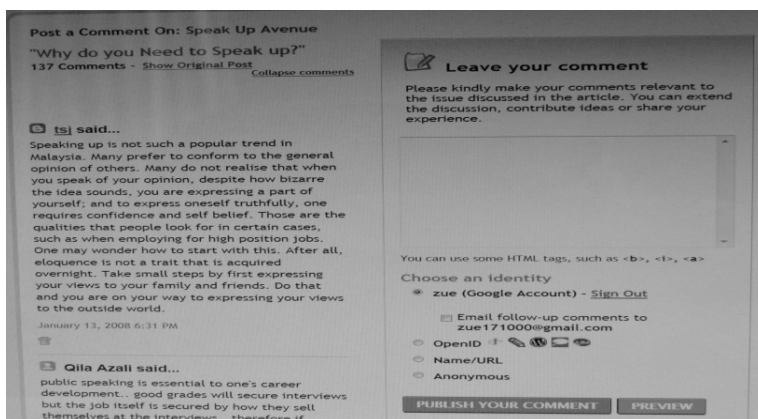


Figure 1: The Comment Page

For this study, each cohort was invited to share some feedback regarding their experience and immersion in the academic blogging process via e-mail or the blogosphere at the end of the semester. This participation was strictly voluntary. Students were told to submit their comments to two titles in the blog as follows:

- i.Rejuvenating academic blogging
<http://speakup-avenue.blogspot.com/2010/02/rejuvenating-academic-blogging.html>
- ii.Academic blogging: Speak up and write
http://speakup-avenue.blogspot.com/2008_01_01_archive.html

The most active blog participants were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Data collated from reflective journal, interview, and blog comments contributed to the final analysis and findings of this study.

To explore its niche, this study is guided by the following research question:

How do ESL learners react to the use of academic blogging via the tutor's blog?

Framework for Phases of Immersion in ESL Academic Blogging

Figure 2 maps out a framework to describe the academic blogging experience among ESL learners engaged in <http://www.speakup-avenue.blogspot.com>. Based on the reflective journals, semi-structured interviews as well as content analysis of blog commentaries from the learners, it can be said that the ESL learners who participated in the study exhibited three predominant stages of acceptance and reaction to the academic blogging immersion. The phase begins with random first reaction followed by engagement with the academic blogging process where they experienced the interactive nature as well as the benefits of academic blogging. Having gone through the process, the learners captured some lasting impressions with regards to the introduction of academic blogging in ESL classrooms.



Figure 2: Three Phases of Immersion in Academic Blogging

It is important to note that the three stages followed a clear demarcation of development process without any specific timeline. To some learners, it was observed that the first reaction lasted only for a while and they could immerse themselves in the ESL blogosphere almost immediately. Nevertheless, several cohorts took a while longer to adapt to the new approach and feel comfortable with the process. Towards the end of the course when the lecturer collected their feedback and response to the academic blogging immersion, learners would have already formed some lasting impressions of the approach.

Discussion

It was indeed gratifying to discover that all learners accepted the blogging activity as a learning experience which was indeed “intoxicating” and “rewarding”. From its inception in January 2008, it seemed that all learners who shared their feedback regarding their involvement with the blog as a pedagogical tool reported appreciation and improvement as well as transformation. Table 1 below illustrates several instances of the three phases of the learners’ engagement with academic blogging in ESL.

Table 1 describes the three phases of immersion in ESL academic blogging in greater detail. It is noted that the first phase labelled ***1st Reaction*** presents mixed feelings and reactions among the learners with regards to the introduction of the tutor’s blog in the ESL class. Some learners were excited that their lecturer also had a blog, very much like theirs. Perhaps they were counting on a diminishing gap between two distinctive generations. Furthermore, learners were impressed with the novelty of the approach and took it as a “fresh breath of developing one’s skill”. Still, there were several cohorts who felt nervous and also doubtful of their ability to participate in the tutor’s blog. More seriously, it would be their first time posting educational comments for a worldwide audience.

The second phase, labelled ***Experience***, brings more promise to the introduction of the tutor’s blog in ESL. Comments from learners showed some degree of excitement particularly in “encouraging” and “rewarding”. During this phase, learners experienced total immersion in the academic blogging climate where they would post at least one comment per week. Once approved by the tutor, their comments would appear in the blog, and friends or classmates could read and react to them. It was observed that learners in and outside of the class would notice certain commentaries more than the rest because of the composition style or novelty of ideas and opinions. This scenario reflects Deng and Yuen’s (2011) framework which proposed three social or psychological dimensions during blogging, *viz.* self-expression, social connection, and social interaction.

Table 1: Illustrative examples from Academic Blogging Corpus

Phase	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example evidence form Corpus
1st Reaction	Excited	Anticipation	I just can't wait to see your blog. I feel great and excited to visit and see what all about the blog.
		New idea	It's a fresh breath of developing one's skill. At first I was like..what?? This is something new.
	Nervous	Afraid	First I send my comment, I am feel afraid because of my language. I am bad when writing. I am afraid of laugh.
		First time	I was so nervous because it was my first time posting an educational comment and all my friend will read it.
	Doubtful	No idea	first time I saw it, I just blur. I don't know what should I do. I also shy to comment. I don't have any idea to comment.
		Lack of confidence	To be honest with you, I really3 afraid to speak up mdm zue. I don't have the strength to speak up. I don't have the confidence in me. Afraid with others thought

Phase	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example evidence form Corpus
Experience	Encouraging	Discussion	It is interesting because we can discuss a lot of thing and we can see other person opinion about the topic that we discuss...
		Improvement	It improve my writing skill and it also improve my skill express my opinion to other people.
		Shyness	Being able to share our thought with others and for those who shy to talk in front of public can post their comment without need to talk in front of people.
		Interest	YES!YES!YES! I totally agree with this academic blogs. Keep it up! It can increase students' interest to this subject and self-confidence too (just like me).
	Rewarding	Sharing	Yes,it's fun. I can express what I'm feeling. I can share my story to others
		Approved	It feels tremendously great when you approve my comment.
		Knowledge	By reading the blogs, I know how to write an essay. Some of the blogs gave me more information that is benefit to me
		Brave	And by writing comments, it teach me to be brave to give out any opinion to others.
		Acknowledged	I think that it is a perfect place or medium for those who are afraid to speak up in class. I feel very happy when people responding and appreciate my comments.

Phase	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Example evidence form Corpus
Lasting Impression	Positive Vibes	Encouragement	When I saw my friends keep on comment, I know that they really like your blog. Keep on posting.
		Transformation	Thanks a lot!!! You'd changed me. You create the new me. Ouhh..but I'm not showing you the changes in me in the class. Still got the shyness..
		Accepted	Students like it when they are approved of. It gives them a positive vibe. With this academic blog, nobody will feel left out. In fact, they feel more accepted and attached to one another as a community. It also produces individuals who speak their mind.
		Discover talent	In class, I noe that everyone is so shy to speak or to give their opinion. When you create a blog you can noe about our talent.
	Good Relationship	Care	Creating academic blogs for the student shows that the lecturers are really care about the student, about their academic course.
		Relationship	For me, it is one of the ways to develop relationship between students and lecturer.
		Hide identity	It also can help many shy students to express their opinion. By creating this blog I think many student can improve their skill in writing and they will not be shy because they can hide their identities.
	Meaningful Sacrifice	Interesting journey	By creating the academic blogs, the way you teach us in class and all the stuff that you did, made our journey as a student more interesting.
		Sacrifice	You really want to help your student and you sacrifice your time just for your student. I'm glad to have you as my lecturer.

Since most learners used screen names, their remarks were impartial and without prejudice. Most importantly, learners felt the freedom to express and share their thoughts with the blogging community, practised their writing and speaking-up skills, and mustered the courage to speak up. Also, they felt rewarded and appreciated the acknowledgement when the tutor approved their comment and put it “on air”. The following responses from two participants illustrate this notion:

“I think that it is a perfect place or medium for those who are afraid to speak up in class. I feel very happy when people responding and appreciate my comments.”

“It feels tremendously great when you approve my comment.”

The third phase wrapped up the challenge and pursuit with final remarks from the learners. After a semester-long involvement with <http://www.speakup-avenue.blogspot.com> as a tool for CMC in ESL, four themes were captured, namely “positive vibes”, “good relationship”, “hidden identity” and “meaningful sacrifice”. Learners appreciated the tutor’s initiative in setting up the blog for extended class practice on speaking their minds. Learners who were slightly weak in writing appreciated the writing practice as they expressed their opinion on the blogosphere. They also appreciated the audience-effect; and, most interestingly, shy individuals could make remarkable comments and still hide their identity.

The crucial point in responding to the tutor’s blog challenge is indeed authorship. Here, the learners realized the extra effort being put in by their tutor in writing articles which catered especially for their interest, curiosity, and concerns. In the tutor’s views and stance on the related issues, learners also had the opportunity to post their views and contribute to the debate and discussion. It was gratifying to discover that the ESL learners noticed and appreciated this little effort by the tutor. In their own words, this pursuit of setting up the blog, writing consistently and moderating comments, as well as endlessly encouraging learners to contribute and speak their minds is referred to as “sacrifice”.

“You really want to help your student and you sacrifice your time just for your student. I’m glad to have you as my lecturer.”

Conclusion

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is indeed the trend in our education system this century. Furthermore, academic blogging is a noble initiative and worthwhile educational investment which allows us to meet this expectation and cater to the needs and interests of the present cohort of ESL learners. Compared with the class blog and the learners' blog, the tutor's blog may not be as easy as it requires the tutor to serve as the writer and tutor. Nevertheless, it is important that more ESL practitioners explore their own thoughts and share their opinions with their students and the blogging community. This authentic experience allows the learners to communicate with their teacher and understand her views, philosophy, and perception. It also makes the teacher a significant part of the pedagogical process.

In this study, it is established that in introducing academic blogging using the tutor's blog, one may need to consider the three stages of engagement among ESL learners: *first reaction*, *experience*, and *lasting impression*. The concept may be surprising and intimidating in the beginning as learners may not be familiar with speaking their minds, and with speaking to an audience, even though virtually. As time goes by and as they become more immersed in the context, learners will appreciate the "experience" and the total impact it brings to the individual learner and the blogging community. "Lasting impression" matters and tutors will see ex-students still communicating with her and the blogging community even after they leave the university. Indeed, education continues beyond the boundaries of time and space in the ESL blogosphere.

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CHAPTER II

REFLECTIVE TEACHING AS A WAY OF IMPROVING TEACHING

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Every teacher wants to improve the teaching process. This may be done by initiating a way to understand and examine more clearly what took place each day in the classroom. This could be by writing daily in a teaching journal. Unfortunately, our teachers do not have teaching journals and are somewhat isolated in their classrooms. The aim of this study is to illustrate that teachers should have a positive role in improving the educational system in Iraq. The teaching journal will serve to inform the teacher of the various uses of this kind of reflective writing and thinking. As teachers are active thinkers and agents of change in schools, teaching can become more responsive to the learning needs of individual students in class. Conversations, notes, passing gestures, and posters on classroom walls are data in the researcher's quest to learn more about her and her colleagues' teaching process, students, and university. This process allows us to see the educational systems as patterns of behaviour that could be questioned, revisited, and modified.

What is Reflective Teaching?

Wisdom is learnt by three methods: (1) by reflection, which is noblest, (2) by imitation, which is easiest, and (3) by experience, which is bitterest (Confucius, Chinese philosopher, 479–551 BC). The practice of reflective teaching helps us, as professional teachers, to examine our work. Students' active participation in reflective teaching provides us with data and with procedures which bring coherence out of complex "cognitive processing" as well as shape to huge amounts of activity (Bailey, 1997).

With reference to “cognitive processing”, it should be mentioned that there are three perspectives of teaching. The first is the **behavioural view** that focuses on what teachers actually do. The second is the **cognitive view** that views teaching as a combination of thinking and doing, the emphasis being on the teachers’ thought processes. The third perspective is the **interpretive view** that sees skilled teaching as knowing what to do. Teachers interpret the available information in their own particular settings, make decisions, and act on them. Reflective teaching is addressed within this context (Freeman, 1996).

Thus, reflective teaching is a process of self-observation and evaluation. As Borg (2003) suggests, “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs”.

Within TESOL, there has been a growing realization of a need to understand, and account for, the underlying belief systems of language teachers and the influence on their classroom practices (Borg, 1998). Reflective teaching examines the underlying assumption and becomes a useful model to understand the interaction of “dispositions” (being), “practice” (doing), and “professional knowledge” (knowing). Knowing is constructed when awareness is created by: (1) observation and gathering information, (2) analysing the information to identify any implications, (3) hypothesizing to explain the events and guide further action, and (4) implementing an action plan (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). The model of reflection incorporates five categories of knowledge: (1) knowledge of self, (2) knowledge of content, (3) knowledge of teaching and learning, (4) knowledge of pupils, and (5) knowledge of context within schools and society. This knowledge that is based on inquiry is the main aim of all professional development activities (teaching and practical learning; that is teacher–student) (*ibid*). In other words; such knowledge will continually change our teaching process and develop it.

Kinds of Reflective Teaching

The question of how teachers can build practical professional work-related knowledge via reflective teaching may be answered by discussing three kinds of reflective teaching (Allwright and Bailey, 1991):

- (1) Reflection-on-classroom episodes. The teacher addresses the students’ needs by consulting research reports, and applying suggested solutions. The teacher might contemplate, at one point in time, the difference between two lessons based on the same lesson plan.