

**THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**BLOGGING TO IMPROVE EFL WRITING:**  
**A Case Study at Bouzareah Teacher Training**  
**College in Algiers (ENSSH)**

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**Presented by:**

**Ms. Hassina Salhi**

**Supervised by:**

**Professor Faïza Bensemmane**

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## **Board of Examiners**

**Chair:** Dr Kamel Khaldi , University of Algiers 2 Aboukacem Saadallah

**Supervisor:** Prof . Faïza Bensemmane, University of Algiers 2 Aboukacem Saadallah

**External Examiner :** Dr Fatma-Zohra Nedjai, Higher College of Fine Arts, Algiers

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Date: 16 June 2014

Signed:

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Dedication**

To my beloved sons, Mohamed-Zakaria and Mohamed-Adam.

## **Abstract**

The use of blogs in the foreign language classroom is gaining more and more support from the academic community. This study is an attempt to explore the use of blogs by first year undergraduates in an EFL writing class conducted in a pre-service teacher training college in Algiers, and their potential benefit for the academic community: teachers and students. This case study that ran for two months approximately was meant to examine whether the blogging practice can improve students' writing skills. Based on the constructivist theoretical framework, the study involved a sample of five first year participants who were assigned different tasks during the experiment. The posting task was assigned to two participants who were in charge of maintaining individual blogs to display their written production, and the reviewing task was assigned to the three others participants who had to review their classmates' posts by making comments about them. For data collection, four research instruments were used: written assignments, blog entries, reviewers' comments, and questionnaires

The results indicate that although the students perceived blogging as a stimulating activity not only for the development of their writing skills but also for their overall English language proficiency, their micro and macro writing skills did not improve significantly. The blogging experience was beneficial for the content and organization of their writing, but it did not prove to be highly effective for improving features like use of correct grammar and mechanics in the participants' writing. Still, this experience was perceived by the participants (bloggers and reviewers) as positive and

motivational. This study as many other studies around the world calls for the integration of blogs as a technological element of the EFL writing course with specific local adjustments. Indeed, it has proved that blogging is effective to develop and improve undergraduates' thinking skills. However, unlike the experimental design chosen in this study, for first year students, the blogging practice should always be supported by some kind of teacher intervention inside or outside the writing class, especially for the development of micro skills.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

BALL: Blog Assisted Language Learning

ESL : English as a Second Language

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

ENS : École Normale Supérieure

HTML : Hyper Text Mark up Language

WWW : World Wide Web

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## **General Introduction**

In departments of English all over Algeria, writing is often perceived as difficult to teach and learn from both instructors and students' perspectives. Consequently, delivering adequate instruction to achieve high learning outcomes is quite challenging. This critical issue is at the onset of this investigation, a study which turns to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for promising answers. It focuses on the potentially positive use of weblogs, internet-based software, in the EFL writing class. This section of the dissertation presents the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, the theoretical framework, the outline of the dissertation, and the definitions of the terms used in the dissertation.

### **1. Background to the Study**

Even if it is not yet fully tangible in Algeria, technology and more particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are changing the face of our rapidly progressing globalized world. This situation imposes citizens worldwide to become technology-literate in more and more media-saturated environments. The field of education in general and language education in particular cannot ignore the fact that ICTs can be major agents of change for language education, too. This pervasiveness of ICTs has imposed writing as an essential skill to be mastered not only in L<sub>1</sub> or mother tongue but also in L<sub>2</sub> whether second or foreign. However, language teachers know how the road toward the mastery of writing is strewn of pitfalls, but it is a fundamental

competence in second/foreign language acquisition. Actually, the likelihood for proficient writers to succeed academically is high, and writing is an effective tool for the development of overall academic language proficiency. In addition, as a transversal skill used across the curriculum, it is invaluable to develop language learners' cognitive and metacognitive skills, which are necessary for the acquisition of critical and high order cognitive skills.

Second/foreign language teachers who are in constant search of up-to-date and academically approved ways to assist their students in their language learning can take advantage of the growing array of tools like: discussion boards, instant messaging, chat, wikis, RSS, or social networking tools, and the resources offered by ICTs and the new web-based technologies to move beyond traditional in situ classrooms to richer technology-mediated learning environments.

The overall purpose of this research is to make these two worlds, technology and writing instruction and learning, meet to achieve better EFL learning outcomes. Indeed, technology today has become part of a whole range of tools EFL teachers can use to improve their students' writing skills, and blogging among other tools has key features that captured our attention.

Our interest in blogs as potential aids in EFL composition started from the observation of some skill building classes in higher education in Algeria. In our department of English o the Pre-service Teacher Training College of Bouzareah (ENS), the allotted time of six weekly hours in the curriculum for a skills-building course as important as writing seems not to be sufficient to ensure satisfying learning

outcomes. English composition teachers always advising students, especially first year undergraduate students, to practice their skills outside classroom settings by maintaining journals for example, suggests that they know that for a fact. This situation is not circumscribed to our department, and many teachers in various departments of English around the country regularly report similar conditions. Additional plausible reasons to these poor outcomes, like heavily anchored teacher-centered pedagogies or large classes, are frequently put forward to explain this situation.

Basing our study on these assumptions, the overall aim of this research is to provide university teachers of English with potentially viable and applicable answers to this situation by exploring the benefits of blog usage in the EFL composition classes delivered to first year undergraduate students. Blogs are among the newest internet-based communication systems. Even if their creation and design were not initially meant for educational purposes, they may be used to serve them.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In 1996, Warshauer summarized the history of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in three major phases: behaviouristic/structural CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL, each underlying different pedagogical and methodological approaches. The body of literature accumulated throughout these various phases of CALL refers to the use of computer-based or computer-mediated communication tools for L<sub>1</sub> instruction, like word processors, grammar checkers, chat, and so on. There is another whole body of research on second language writing

presenting existing pedagogies as process or genre pedagogies. Comparatively, the ratio for the research on the use of technology in Foreign and Second language writing is negative, even less on weblog pedagogy for writing.

Part of the literature we consulted revealed some interesting perspectives relevant to this study. A large number of studies support the idea that blogging is generating more than mere enthusiasm among the academic community (Jones, 2006; Nazdar and Kemboja, 2009; Sahin-Kızıl and Arslan, 2010; Fageeh, 2011). This genuine interest is not provoked by the newness of software itself as we might think but by the virtual interaction and cultural practices that it allows between weblogs users. These particular characteristics of blogs instances for unstructured learning (Halavais, 2006: 1215) paved the way for their use in educational settings. Many studies using blogs for learning purposes attempted to design appropriate models of classroom integration. There were encouraging findings in favor of their infusion in the writing composition classroom. If their impact on students' motivation to write is regularly reported (Nadzrah & Kemboja, 2009), their positive effect on students' written productions has yet to be established, and more investigation in various contexts is needed in research. The purpose of this study is to deepen our understanding of this issue.

### **3. Research Questions**

Throughout my years of teaching practice, I have developed strong beliefs that 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogies of second/foreign language writing should integrate ICTs. Weblogs among all the aforementioned available technologies today seem of particular

interest to develop or improve second/foreign language learners' writing skills. In fact, weblogs should be used at early stages of higher education for the benefit of both teachers and students. For the purpose of this study, we selected a small group of five first year Algerian undergraduates to experiment their use in the EFL writing class. The following research questions underpinning our study:

- RQ 1. Does blogging have an effect on the participants'/bloggers' writing?
- RQ 2. Does reviewing student bloggers' post have an effect on peer reviewers' own writing?
- RQ 3. What are both blog writers and peer reviewers' perceptions of their blogging experience?

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

In Algerian higher education, learning outcomes are still evaluated through pen-and-paper tests. As a matter of fact, developing students' writing abilities is a top priority for skills teachers. Already a daunting task in L<sub>1</sub>, it is even more so in L<sub>2</sub> instruction. Technological interventions for this purpose are not new in themselves, and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) pedagogies have been adjusted to various learning theories throughout time. Internet and its myriad of applications have opened new horizons for the future of CALL. Our focus of attention on weblogs is a modest contribution to a better understanding of the impact of weblogs on foreign language learners' writing. Blogs, as most web-based applications, have not been designed initially for educational purposes. However, having written communication as its backbone can position weblogs as a potentially valuable tool for the development

of the writing skill in L<sub>2</sub> as there is an immense need for bridging the gap between traditional and modern approaches to teaching and learning.

## **5. Overview of the Methodology**

To inform the research questions stated above, and confirm or invalidate initial assumptions, we have opted for a qualitative case study approach for this research. The present study aims at investigating the integration of weblogs in the writing curriculum. Five first year undergraduate students of the researcher's writing class were selected to participate in the study. Seeking to produce valid and reliable results, about factual learning outcomes, we have collected data from five different instruments .A pretest and a post-test were used to evaluate the participants' writing before and after the experiment. Bloggers' entries were analyzed to examine the changes in their writing. The analysis of the reviewers' comments helped determine a typology of comments made, and whether those comments generated improvement or not in the bloggers' writings but the peer reviewers' own writing too. Finally, an open-ended questionnaire was used to obtain the participants' perceptions about their experience

## **6. Theoretical Framework**

The research design draws on two important theoretical frameworks which will be discussed in detail in the review of literature. The first view is Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Learning Theory (1978), and the second one which builds on the first one is Lave's Situated Learning Theory (1991). The basis of social constructivism is that learners actively construct knowledge rather than acquire it through

accumulation. This knowledge acquisition requires two pivotal elements: interaction and collaboration. Indeed, learning can only take place if learners not only interact with their environment but with others. Likewise, Situated Learning integrates constructivist tenets, but adds such notions as activity, context, and culture. The two theories state that learning is the result of interaction and collaboration in a real world situation or authentic context. Accordingly, blogs can be viewed as potentially viable language learning tools provided they meet these two basic conditions; interaction and collaboration.

## **7. Outline of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters. The general introduction briefly presents the background and context of the study. It not only explains its purpose and its significance but also refers to the contributions to the field and the gaps that have led to the present research questions.

Chapter one provides an overview of the relevant literature including the learning theories that support the use of blogging in the EFL classroom. It also examines weblogs as potential learning and teaching tools for the EFL writing course, and reports on research studies in the field of web-based learning.

Chapter two describes the methodology adopted for this research, in terms of approach, tools, and the rationale for their use. Data collection procedures and method of analysis are also described. Chapter 3 is devoted to the presentation of the results that will be discussed in Chapter 4. The pedagogical implications and

recommendations emerging from this study are addressed in Chapter 5. A general conclusion ends this study.

## **8. Definitions of Terms**

Because it is aimed at exploring the relevance of technology use for language learning and the development of writing skills specifically, in the present study we have used a number of terms to describe this phenomenon such as Computer Assisted Language Learning, Blog Assisted Language Learning, student- blogger, or peer reviewer. A definition of these interrelated terms seems important in order to prevent possible confusion between them.

**CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning)** generally refers to the areas of technology and second language teaching and learning. Beatty (2010:7-8) defines it as “any process in which a learner uses a computer, and as a result, improves his or her language”.....” CALL has come to encompass issues of material design, technologies, pedagogical theories, and modes of instructions”

**BALL (Blog Assisted Language Learning):** refers to the area of CALL specifically devoted to the use of blog for any aspect of EFL learning and teaching.

**Student blogger;** refers to the participant in charge of maintaining an individual blog by posting entries regularly.

**Peer reviewer:** refers to the participant in charge of commenting and reviewing a student blogger’ blog entries.

**Weblog or blog:** these terms are used interchangeably to refer to a text-based internet application with specific key features selected as the technological learning environment for the experimentation.

**Curriculum:** A whole program of study for a degree

**Syllabus:** refers to the program of study for a course in the curriculum

CHAPTER ONE:

**OVERVIEW OF  
THE RELATED LITERATURE**

## **Chapter 1: Overview of the Related Literature**

Technology has found its way into the second/foreign language classroom for many decades now, and worldwide the number of educators using web or non-web-based technologies at hand to support language teaching and learning has been increasing with technology growth. Our own interest in technology for foreign language teaching and learning is at the origin of this study. We are particularly interested in evaluating the use of blogs, an internet-based technology, for the potential improvement of Algerian undergraduate students' writing skills. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature pertinent to our research. The questions guiding this review and deriving from our research questions are: (1) what are blogs? And what justifies their use in second/foreign language education? (2) What is the theoretical background laying the foundation for the pedagogical use of blogs in the EFL language classroom? (3) Are there any studies that support the use of blogs for second/foreign language teaching and learning of writing? If any, how did students react to this infusion of blogging into their learning environment? To answer these questions, this chapter has been divided into five sections. The first section is a general presentation of blogs and blogging. The second section introduces the learning theories behind blogs. The third section gives an account of current studies on blogs in EFL writing. The fourth section is devoted to peer reviewing in the blogging context. The last section presents studies on students' perceptions of the use of blogs in the EFL writing class in higher education. For the purpose of this review, this reporting is limited to studies related to the use of blogs for the development of EFL learners' writing skills in higher education.

## **1.1. Blogs and Blogging**

Technology in its broader sense has always been more or less used for language learning and teaching from the out-of-date blackboard to the overhead projector, the audiotape, to early computer software programs. Each one has been the state-of-art of the technological development and played a cogent role in rethinking the teaching and learning landscape of their time. However, the enthusiasm these tools have provoked is not comparable to the excitement blogs and blogging are creating today within the academic community.

### **A- Blogs as a Web 2.0 Technology: Historical Overview**

Weblogs are very different today from what they were when initially coined by John Bagger in 1997 (Blood, 2000) .Weblogs, more frequently referred to as blogs, in their latest form are the outcomes of the development of Web 2.0 technologies which came as an upgrading of the already existing Web 1.0 version of the internet. The two versions developed subsequently with the technological refinements of computer exploitation systems and languages, allowing the expansion of an array of available internet applications. Figure 1 below shows the time span of the progression of these internet technologies:

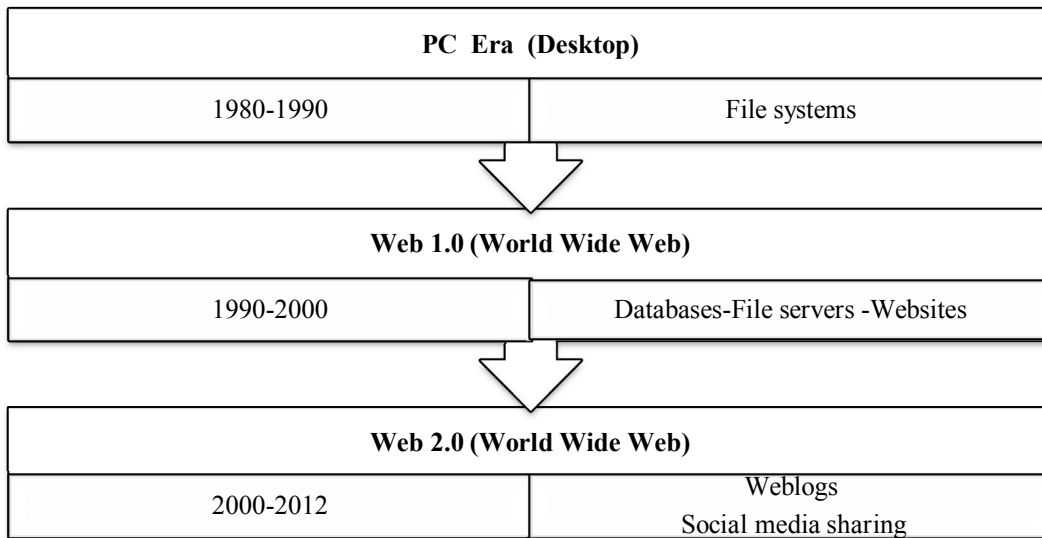


Figure 1: Evolution of Computer Technologies.

If Web 1.0 technologies were primarily information based and created essentially by few initiated authors to supply a majority of users who were mainly content-consumers, web 2.0 technologies, a term popularized by O'Reilly in 2005, democratized content-creation on the web to anyone, even those with no web-design or publishing skills. The following table shows the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 technology:

<b>Web 1.0</b>		<b>Web 2.0</b>
<b>DoubleClick</b>	→	<b>Google AdSense</b>
<b>Ofoto</b>	→	<b>Flickr</b>
<b>Akamai</b>	→	<b>BitTorrent</b>
<b>mp3.com</b>	→	<b>Napster</b>
<b>Britannica Online</b>	→	<b>Wikipedia</b>
<b>personal websites</b>	→	<b>Blogging</b>
<b>evite</b>	→	<b>upcoming.org and EVDB</b>
<b>domain name speculation</b>	→	<b>search engine optimization</b>
<b>page views</b>	→	<b>cost per click</b>
<b>screen scraping</b>	→	<b>web services</b>
<b>publishing</b>	→	<b>Participation</b>
<b>content management systems</b>	→	<b>Wikis</b>
<b>directories (taxonomy)</b>	→	<b>tagging ("folksonomy")</b>
<b>stickiness</b>	→	<b>Syndication</b>

Table 1: Comparison between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technologies (O'Reilly, 2005)

This table shows how the web shifted from being informational to being social, allowing users to create, share, interact, and collaborate with each other to generate content or build virtual communities. In the language classroom, this shift provided teachers with tools more likely to foster students' engagement in their own learning than during anterior computer-technology periods. Here is Warshauer's brief overview and description of the consecutive periods of CALL (2000):

<b>Stage</b>	<b>1970s-1980s: Structural CALL</b>	<b>1980s-1990s: Communicative CALL</b>	<b>21st Century: Integrative CALL</b>
<b>Technology</b>	Mainframe	PCs	Multimedia and Internet
<b>English-Teaching Paradigm</b>	Grammar-Translation & Audio-Lingual	Communicate Language Teaching	Content-Based, ESP/EAP
<b>View of Language</b>	Structural (a formal structural system)	Cognitive (a mentally-constructed system)	Socio-cognitive (developed in social interaction)
<b>Principal Use of Computers</b>	Drill and Practice	Communicative Exercises	Authentic Discourse
<b>Principal Objective</b>	Accuracy	And Fluency	And Agency

Table 2: The Three Stages of CALL

Even if not initially designed for educational purposes, web 2.0 technologies and tools, many pioneer educators from different fields have adopted it to support their constructivist views of learning. Weblogs are the tools predominantly utilized for this purpose. Before moving to the constructivist pedagogy behind the use of blogs, we will describe what weblogs and blogging are.

### **B-Definition of Blogs**

Blogging falls within the scope of computer-mediated communication (CMC). This expression labels the various communication systems using the computer

and internet. For a better understanding of what CMC involves, we can turn to December's (1996) comprehensive definition of the term (cited in K.M.Lee, 2002:2):

“Internet-based, computer-mediated communication involves information exchange that takes place on the global, cooperative collection of networks using the TCP/IP protocol suite and the client-server model for data communication. Messages may undergo a range of time and distribution manipulations and encode a variety of media types. The resulting information content exchanged can involve a wide range of symbols people use for communication.”

Some attempts were made to conceptualize weblogs. Drawing on the views of developers, media, researchers and practitioners, Boyd in 2006 concluded that “early definitions of weblogs focused on structure and content of the output”, and did not consider its substance as “a medium through which communication occurs”. Yet, if a weblog has to be defined in one sentence, it would be as “a hierarchy of text, images, media objects, and data arranged chronologically that can be viewed in an HTML browser” (Winer, 2003). However, this definition ignores some of December's aforementioned essential notions of network, time, and information content exchange. Today, blogs and blogging are no longer at a blossoming stage as described in Blood's (2000) historical perspective of blogs , and have become media in their own rights. The process of creating and maintaining personal pages having been simplified in the late 1990s .Since then, the number of interconnected blogs has been raising exponentially by millions all around the world, steadily shaping what is known today as the “blogosphere”. In this network, time is asynchronous as communication, if originally intentional, is delayed in opposition to synchronous communication, which is instantaneous or real-time. In terms of content, weblogs allow the exchange of informative content as eclectic as stories, pictures, digital data, or hyperlinks. Despite

all these general considerations, it is of cardinal importance to differentiate blogs from other web 2.0 tools by identifying their key features.

### **C. Key Features of Blogs**

Blogs have certain characteristics that distinguish them from other computer-mediated communication systems of the first generation of the WWW. Essentially; blogging platforms provide their potential users with the possibility of posting any piece of information relevant to their interests, on a regular basis. Depending on their interests, bloggers may or may not be willing to publicize to an audience. The frequent updates of posts are arranged in reverse chronological order with most recent post at the top (Ward, 2004). In 2003, Paquet and Winer identified four other major traits: personal editorship, hyperlinked post structure, archival and free, public, access to the content. The powerful archival feature assigns permanent links to posts for further content search, and the retrieval feature allows for keeping track of the author's thoughts and reflections. These features make blogs very different from traditional web pages of the early years of the internet. Traditional web pages were similar to a book with multiple pages of accessible static content designed for navigation. If blogs are set-up like traditional websites, they contrast by their dynamicity, which means that the content changes regularly. Blogs and conventional web pages also differ in their creation process. Indeed, the creation of a web page is not accessible to a neophyte; it necessitates at least being familiar with HTML editors or web site programs (Blood, 2000). Blogs, on the other hand, are easily initiated and maintained by a population of non-technically informed users, like the population of users targeted in this study.

In his article entitled “*What makes a Weblog a Weblog?*” Winer (2003), a blogger himself, described the specific features of a blog from the writer’s perspective. According to him, the most important non-technical feature of blogs is the notion of ‘voice’ , more transparent in non-business related blogs .This makes blogs places where ‘the personalities of the writers come through’, and genuine spaces for self-expression.

## **1.2. The Learning Theories behind Blogs**

Current approaches to teaching and learning are deeply rooted into three broad consecutive perspectives on learning: Behaviorism, Cognitivism /Constructivism, and Situated Learning. The behaviorist view sees learning as observable and measurable behavior whereas the cognitive/constructivist perspective views learning as the construction of knowledge and meaning .The situative view states that learning is reinforced by social practice. The integration of technology into the second/foreign language classroom followed the same path of development as explained by Warshauer (1996).Most of the studies that use blogs for foreign language learning endorse constructivist and situative views of learning because as previously mentioned blogs allow interaction and collaboration.

### **A. Constructivism**

Comprehensive definitions of constructivist and social-constructivist learning theories are provided by Pritchard and Woollard (2010:8)

This theory [*constructivism*] is based on the central notion that as learners we construct our own understanding of the world around us based on experience as we live and grow. We select and transform information from past and current knowledge and experience into new personal knowledge and understanding.

*Social constructivist learning theory*:[...] is a subtheory – though it is also important in its own right – which emphasises the role of others and all forms of social interaction in the process of constructing knowledge and understanding.

From the above constructivist and socio-constructivist perspective, learning can only take place under certain contextual conditions. Driscoll (2000, cited in Can, 2009) summarizes those conditions as follows:

1. Embedded learning in complex, realistic and relevant environments (Duffy & Jonassen, 1991; Cunningham, 1991; Honebein, 1996)
2. Provide for social negotiation (cooperative and socio-moral atmosphere) as an integral part of learning (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1966; De Vries, 2002).
3. Support multiple perspectives and the use of multiple modes of representation (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996; Honebein, 1996).
4. Encourage ownership in learning (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996; Honebein, 1996).
5. Provide adequate time for learners' investigation and in-depth engagement (De Vries, 2002).
6. Nurture self-awareness of the knowledge construction process (Jonassen, 2003; Duffy and Cunningham, 1996).

Can (2009:65) concludes that achieving these conditions in the language classroom only is not possible, and that internet technologies can serve as supplementary aids to fulfill the constructivist conditions for learning. Blogs and blogging with their specific features and when appropriately integrated in the EFL classroom have the necessary requirements for the implementation of constructivist paradigms in the second/foreign language learning classroom.

### **B. Situated Learning**

When dealing with technology use in the second/foreign language classroom, the construct of situated learning is as important as the construct of constructivism. Situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) not only endorses the tenets of constructivist learning, but also emphasizes the notions of activity, context, and culture.

For learning to take place, knowledge needs to be contextualized in authentic settings and situations where this particular knowledge is typically involved. Additionally, social interaction and collaboration reinforce the learning process. Indeed, from the situative perspective, knowledge is socially distributed and situated in communities of practice ( Lave,1991;Wenger, 2012) where learning outcomes are the results of individuals' abilities to participate in those practices successfully (Dabbagh,2005).

From research, Herrington (2006) identified eight characteristics of situated learning:

1. An authentic context that reflects the way the knowledge will be used in real life
2. Authentic activities
3. Access to expert performances and the modelling of processes
4. Multiple roles and perspectives
5. Collaborative construction of knowledge
6. Reflection
7. Articulation
8. Coaching and scaffolding.

All these conditions assembled imply that the learning environment should provide participation to social practices of enquiry and learning. It should support the development of identities as capable confident learners and allow dialogue that facilitates the development of learning relationships (Mayes & De Freitas, 2004:14).

The ideal learning conditions for English language learners would be to move to an English-speaking country, which is practically impossible for the majority of them worldwide. Computer technologies, like blogs, can provide economical alternatives to access or recreate real authentic contexts, and facilitate these indispensable learning interactions (Comas-Quinn, Mardomingo, Mardomingo & Mardomingo, 2009:12).

There is still no definitive model of blog-integration in the second/foreign language writing class. The model we have used focuses on specific aspects of constructivism and situated learning i.e. authentic context. Blogs are text-based

environments, which not only foster purpose and motivation to write, but also provide continuously available room for practice outside the classroom. Blogging is an authentic activity. As computer-mediated communication tools are more and more available today, users, bloggers, and reviewers have the opportunity to achieve their own learning objectives or learning objectives established by teachers.

### **1.3. Recent Studies on Blogging in the EFL Writing Classroom.**

The first study using blogs in the language classroom was undertaken by Jones (2006). She used blogging in her ESL writing class for adult learners to examine its academic benefits as a supplemental instructional material for all the stages of the writing process. The research took place in a community college in San Antonio, Texas, which integrated constructivist and student-centered active learning. To give support to this policy, the college provided its students with a technology-rich environment. The five students she sampled in her case study set individual blogs. They were provided with various sources of feedback, inside and outside the classroom, to revise their blog entries, too. Her qualitative action research study added to the growing body of literature in favor of the use of blogs for instructional purposes. However, though most of her participants perceived the benefits of blogging for learning overall, some of them did not. Their reactions described throughout her study showed that sometimes the first obstacle to the integration of this technology comes from the student themselves, despite technology-enthusiastic teachers.

Nazdar and Kemboja (2009) showed in their study in Malaysia that writing online was definitely a motivation for students to hone their writing skills as it allowed them to gain confidence in their ability for writing. Consequently, they were capable

of expressing themselves in a more and more elaborate language. However, despite these positive results, some of their students though agreeing that blogging was an effective tool for self and free expression raised the question of its true benefit in the development of their writing skills. Indeed, they thought that blogging allowing unlimited time to write, to revise, and edit could not give a real picture of their writing ability. They still perceived writing under pressure in the classroom as more likely to provide a faithful account of their written proficiency than blogging.

Sahin-Kızıl and Arslan (2010) designed a quasi-experimental study in Turkey to inform their research question on how blog software used as an additional tool for the writing process enhances students' writing performance. The experiment was done with twenty-seven (27) undergraduate participants. They had to maintain two blogs: one for publishing their work, and the other for follow-up activities. The instruction was blended, delivered equally in the classroom and through tutor blogs. Classroom instruction was meant to introduce both paragraph types and the related grammatical structures and vocabulary. The tutor blog provided the online additional study materials to support in-class instruction. The control group received in-class process-based writing instruction while the experimental group received process-based writing instruction through blogging essentially. The study concluded that the use of blogs in teaching writing results in better quality writing. However, these conclusions were drawn from the students' perceptions only, collected from a post-instruction perception questionnaire constructed around students' evaluation of five aspects of their writing: content, organization, language use, and mechanics (conventions of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).

In 2011, using a triangulated research approach combined with an experimental research method and a descriptive design, Fageeh explored the effectiveness of blog integration in an EFL writing class in Saudi Arabia. Two equal groups of twenty-five (25) students were created. The control group received traditional lecture-discussion instruction, whereas the experimental group was assigned blogging activities including: (1) visiting blogs and posting their own entries, (2) reflecting on the blog entries sent by peers (3) reflecting on the comments received, and (4) writing a self-reflection portfolio on the experience. The post-test assignment showed that both experimental and control groups which started the experiment with equivalent writing proficiency, ended the sixteen-week experimentation with contrasted results. The experimental group demonstrated significant improvement of their writing proficiency over the control group which proves that active participation in blogging impacts positively on students' writing skills.

One of the latest studies on blog integration is Cequena's study (2013). She tried to ascertain the already existing positive view of blogging as a facilitating activity for the development of the writing skill, by its impact on the writing performance of forty-one (41) first year students of the University of Manila (Philippines). The English course was designed as an integrated skills course with a writing component supplemented by a reading component. Each taught component was taught by a different teacher. The academic writing classes used weblogs where students were required to write different types of essays. Using the free of charge Blogger platform, Cequena (2013) used pre and post written tests, within which students have to create their own individual blogs to showcase their academic writing production after a pre-

writing stage performed in class and submitted to peer and teacher's critique. The triangulation of the results obtained from the research tools: pre and post-tests, blog entries, response logs, reflections, and interviews, showed that the students indeed improved their writing skills. In addition, specific rubrics were utilized by three different raters to assess the learners' writing performance on the following criteria: content, organization, style (diction), grammar, mechanics, spelling, and punctuation. Her findings reveal that students' writing performance improved significantly in terms of content and organization, but less significantly for the other criteria. Her study is another study which corroborates previous conclusive studies (Jones, 2006; Zhang, 2009; Fageeh, 2011) on the benefits of blogging for improving writing skills.

#### **1.4. Blogging and Peer Reviewing**

##### **A- Peer Feedback**

Assessment is an indispensable component of the learning process. Brown (2005:81) suggests that assessment should always "fit for purpose", i.e., the *Why* is as important as the *What* and the *How* (p.81). She adds that the learning process could benefit the most from assessment if it is learner-centered and part of a learner-centered curriculum. She writes:

"[Assessment needs] to be efficient in terms of staff time, cost-effective for the organizations concerned and should ensure that learners find the tasks they are set manageable, relevant and developmental. We cannot simply expect our students or ourselves to just keep working harder and harder; where possible we must make best use of the available technologies to make assessment more efficient."(p.83)

Giving feedback with the use of technology is a good compromise to support the learning process under the conditions mentioned previously by Brown. Having

feedback on one's writing performance is essential for the development and improvement of writing skills not only in L<sub>1</sub> but also in L<sub>2</sub>. Indeed, well-timed feedback draws the learners' attention on their weaknesses and allows them to make the necessary adjustments before high-stake evaluation during exams for example. However, if teacher feedback on students' writing is important, peer feedback can be just as important. Peer feedback has been defined as 'a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards (Liu & Carless, 2006:280). This communicative process can only exist if second/foreign language teachers create spaces for peer feedback not only inside the classroom but also outside it. Blogs by their nature and page structure encourage feedback because they involve both a reading and a writing activity (Goodwin Jones, 2003). The reading activity characterized by the comment feature of blogging can be performed by teachers but also by peers. This type of peer feedback may engage readers towards self-assessment as stressed by Nichol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006). Indeed, by identifying errors and correcting them against standards or objective criteria, learners are more likely to apply them to their own work. This process of peer feedback is a mutually rewarding learning experience for all the peers involved in the discussion. Its value for higher education should not be overlooked as it is claimed that with peer feedback, students are likely to receive more feedback more rapidly than when provided by teachers only (Liu & Carless, 2006:281). As a matter of fact, higher education instructors complain regularly about the heavy workload which typically increases with class size. Peer feedback may then address these issues to the benefits of both students and teachers; Paz Dennen (2005) explains that:

The process-when done effectively-ensures that everyone receives feedback in a timely manner without requiring that the instructor do it all. And it has the added bonus of being pedagogically worthwhile for students providing the feedback, who are learning to critique or be evaluative within the content domain they are learning. (p.1)

Paz-Dennen made several suggestions for online peer feedback: online portfolios, research and writing buddies, conference track groups and others, but peer editing is the most relevant to this study. However, the suggestions have two critical caveats. The first one is on the manner feedback should be provided. Thus, to avoid any undesirable and unproductive comments, and increase the benefits of this communicative process, teachers should provide models or samples of appropriate feedback expectations. The second caveat is that giving feedback is a time-consuming and effortful activity and can result in overwhelming students with work, but Paz-Dennen suggested making it part of the course requirements (2005:4). However, there is a need for models of feedback integration especially in online language learning environments. Some attempts have been made to evaluate the effectiveness of online peer feedback on students' learning outcomes, as discussed in the next section.

### **B- The effectiveness of Online Peer Feedback.**

A comparative study undertaken by Moloudi (2011) investigated the effectiveness of face-to-face and online peer reviewing on ESL writing skills of some Iranian undergraduate students. Before the thirteen-week experiment, the 124 selected participants were required to answer two questionnaires: a Computer Attitude Scale and a Writing Attitude Scale and were pretested on their writing proficiency with the TOEFL Test of Written English. For the experiment the participants were divided in two groups: one group performing face-to-face peer reviewing (FFPR), the other group

online peer reviewing on their classmates' writings (OLPR). Both groups were trained on how to use peer review guidelines to facilitate the peer review process. The face-to-face and on line peer review sessions were conducted concurrently with the regular lectures delivered for EFL writing. A second TOEFL Test of Written English with the same format was used as a post-test to end the thirteen week experience .The results of this study showed that both types of feedback were not only perceived as extremely effective by Iranian students but they also demonstrated that undergraduates' writing improved significantly. However, the study also showed that there was no significant difference in terms of efficiency between the two types of peer reviewing formats i.e. FFPR and OLPR. Similar conclusions were drawn from a comparative study by Chong, Goff & Dej (2010). In addition, in Moloudi's study (2011), some of the participants' perceptions are worth noting here. Some interviewed students perceived teacher feedback as intimidating and felt more comfortable sharing their writing with peers in both peer reviewing formats. Surprisingly, this affective factor of peer reviewing contradicts a previous study done by Wakabayashi (2008), on the effects of peer reviewing on the writing of EFL Japanese university students who perceived their experience differently. If they did not deny the positive impact of this type of collaboration, they were not comfortable with exchanging comments especially with unknown partners (Wakabayashi, 2008). This important cultural aspect of interaction in second/foreign language writing was highlighted by Ware and Warshauer (2006) in their meta-analysis on the role electronic feedback in second language writing. Another interesting insight brought in by Moloudi's study stressed the fact that some students believe that peer reviewing is ineffective if performed by peers of lower

English proficiency. Therefore, students' perceptions should be considered when implementing feedback activities as they could be quite illuminating.

Another interesting experimental study was undertaken by Ciftci and Kocoglu (2012) on peer reviewing through blogs. Two groups of fifteen Turkish students each participated in the experiment. The control group attended a traditional classroom-based writing course with oral peer feedback. The experimental group attended a computer laboratory writing class which integrated blog peer reviewing in the writing process. The analysis of students' first and revised drafts showed that if both groups improved their writing the experimental outperformed the control group, which implies that online peer feedback which happens asynchronously can generate significant improvement in students' writing.

A recent study undertaken in Thailand by Kitchakarn (2013) also sought to examine the impact of using peer feedback on students' writing abilities through blogs. The research was conducted on a single group of thirty-four (34) undergraduate students tested before and after the blogging experience. A comparison of students' scores in pre and post tests indicated significant improvement of students' writing skills. These results corroborate the conclusions reached by the aforementioned studies on the effectiveness of peer feedback/peer reviewing in blog environments.

### **1.5. Learners' Perception of the Use of Weblogs.**

Beliefs on the power of ICTs to foster learning are strong, and we generally take for granted that the very fact of using them is a panacea for language learning. If the studies reported previously integrated some measurements of students' perceptions of

online language learning, other studies were specifically devoted to students' perceptions of the use of blogs and blogging for this purpose. Indeed, building on participants' feedback, a number of studies give evidence that blogging practice is perceived as very positive on various aspects of the learning process. Still, some more scholarly researches report more positive responses (Nadzrah, Hafizah & Azizah, 2010; Blackstone & Harwood, 2011). Alm (2009), for example, argues that students describe weblogs as protected spaces where they can express their voices freely. This corroborates the non-inhibitive effect of blogs previously mentioned by Ward (2004) compared to face-to-face interactions. In her case study research, Jones (2006) wrote that her participants preferred blogging interaction to face-to-face-interaction because they perceived blogs as a more comfortable learning environment. All these studies posit that blogs can alleviate negative affective factors like anxiety and feelings of frustration, apprehension, worry, or uneasiness students may experience in the language classroom, factors that can impact on students' performances to a great extent.

In conclusion, the studies reviewed in this chapter illustrate the growing interest for blogs and blogging in the ESL/EFL classroom, an interest that has never declined since the advent of Web 2.0, and is increasing as more and more ESL/EFL teachers around the world are in constant search for effective answers to their classroom issues. Blogs are flexible internet-technologies which can be used for a variety of purposes. This flexibility is greatly appreciated by English language instructors. The specific features of blogs offer opportunities to implement effective constructivist language

learning environments as the interactivity they allow is built on the principle of constructivist knowledge construction.

Specifically, this text-based internet tool has been mostly utilized for improving students' writing skills. The experimental studies with blogs reported in this chapter provide interesting results on ESL/EFL language learners' writing proficiency. They suggest a process-driven approach to writing where peer reviewing is either performed in class or online through the comment feature of blogs. However, the blogging practice was not equally beneficial for writers and readers of blogs. Generally, those students involved in the writing part of the blogging practice were those who benefited the most from their online writing experience, whereas the commenting or peer reviewing part of the blogging practice resulted in less significant results on the peer reviewers' writing proficiency. Nevertheless, whatever the experimental setting, all studies reported the positive perceptions of students' blogging in the ESL/EFL writing classroom.

Despite their conclusions, these studies fail to provide a model of blog integration that would be transposable to any type of setting. For example, Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL) research is still in need of a universal and workable model of integration. Our research design seeks to replicate these studies, but the Algerian participants have used individual blogs. If in the studies described earlier, the participants were blog writers and blog readers simultaneously, in the present study we have opted to separate these two processes in order to determine which one leads to significant benefits on students' writing performance.

CHAPTER TWO:

**METHODOLOGY**

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

In this attempt to investigate the use of blogs and blogging in an EFL undergraduate writing class and the students' perceptions of the application of this internet-based tool, we have made some methodological choices in terms of approach and design. This chapter describes and explains the research methodology in seven sections. The first section introduces the context of the study. The second section describes the participants: their selection and profiles. The third section presents the adopted research approach.. The fourth section is devoted to the description of data collection instruments .The fifth section explains the data collection procedure. The sixth section describes the pilot study which led to the implementation of the final experimental design presented in the last section of this chapter.

### **2.1. Context of the Study**

Whenever the integration of ICTs is involved in pedagogy, there is a need for a thorough description of the context. A description of the Pre-service Teacher Training College (ENSSH) at Bouzareah (Algiers) providing background information on the teaching of English in this institution, and on the researcher seems of utmost importance to have a full picture of the context.

#### **A-The School**

For practical reasons, the study was conducted at Teacher Training College of Bouzareah (École Normale Supérieure de Bouzareah). This institution is a service-provider for the Ministry of Education and is in charge of training/educating future teachers in diverse fields of the humanities for the three levels of the Algerian

educational system: primary, middle, and high school levels. However, the department of English hosts future middle and high school teachers only.

This Teacher Training College is an independent entity that operates under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In terms of technology equipment, the campus has Wireless Internet access for both students and teachers and four computerized rooms devoted to the teaching of computer skills with internet access. One of them is specifically devoted to distance learning .For the purpose of this study, we have used one of the computer rooms with internet access.

### **B-The Department of English Curriculum**

The aims of the five-year curriculum of English is to develop the overall English language proficiency of the students and deepen their knowledge in content areas required for the teaching of English as a Foreign language including content courses in Arabic like Adolescent Psychology or School Legislation, (See Appendix A:p.132). In the first two years of the end degree curriculum, prominence is given to the skills acquisition (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar) with a coefficient of three for each skill and one for reading. The students enter the institution with an average score in the national examination (Baccalaureat) determined each year by the Ministry of Higher education .Then, they take an additional Placement Test based on speaking and writing in order to orient them as future middle school or high school student teachers. The degree curriculum includes teaching/learning skills across the four or five years of study.

### **C- First Year Writing Techniques Course Syllabus**

As mentioned previously, the skill-building course in writing is essential for first year students (See course description in Appendix B: p.135). The primary goal of this annual course is to help students develop their writing skills at paragraph level. Faculty use a textbook, (*Great writing 2: Great paragraphs* by Folse, Muchmore-Vokoum,& Vestri,2010) as a course support material, which emphasizes process writing. Students learn to generate different types of paragraphs from expository to argumentative. Together with good paragraph traits like unity and coherence, they learn the appropriate conventions of written English in terms of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Their grammar skills are regularly reinforced by instruction and practice of some discrete points necessary for effective writing. This course has an allotted time of four hours and a half (4h30) weekly.

### **The Writing Techniques Class**

The disparity between different higher education institutions in Algeria makes the description of the instructional setting indispensable to have a full picture of the learning environment within which the participants evolve. This describes the course syllabus framing the instruction of the writing techniques in the department of English of the Bouzareah Teacher Training College (Cf. Appendix B: p.135). For this class, the teacher and the students meet twice a week that is a total time of 4 hours and a half per week .Class time is organized into 3 hours devoted to writing techniques and 1 hour and a half to the of grammar writing. The teaching staff has selected a textbook specifically designed for international students to support the EFL writing course (Folse, Muchmore-Vokoum & Vestri Solomon, 2010), which is based on a process approach. Students are introduced to the various steps of paragraph writing from

generating ideas to final drafting. The textbook also provides abundant activities and writing practice. It presents contextualized grammatical activities to help students identify and correct their own writing. The textbook also focuses on vocabulary and includes vocabulary expansion activities. Finally, the course allows students with opportunities for much output and interaction.

#### **D- The Researcher's Background**

In all types of qualitative researches and particularly in the case study framework adopted for this investigation, the researcher's beliefs and status need to be revealed for the credibility of the results. Indeed, it is crucial to clarify her role during the experiment as the researcher is not only in charge of the data collection and analysis but also of its interpretation. In this research, the inquirer is not a full participant in the blogging experience, yet as the instructor of the writing class, she is indirectly involved.

The researcher has always been a strong believer in the potential of technology for teaching and learning purposes. As early as 2006, we participated in two intensive training sessions for the integration of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into teaching: one training session on the conception, development, and use of a web-based course, and the other on mentoring students online. The knowledge acquired during these training courses boosted our curiosity for technology infusion in the higher education settings in which we are currently working. We took this hands-on experience to a higher level, with a supplementary training course in 2007 on how to implement an entire distance-training program from inception to conception. We sustained our experience with technology in a further

program, the E-Teacher Program with the University of Oregon in 2010. This program was a ten-week online training for international teachers on building teaching skills through the interactive web. Its goal was to improve the quality of English language teaching throughout the world. For this purpose, English teaching professionals worldwide received instruction in the most recent English language teaching methods and techniques. This was the beginning of our journey with Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL). The implementation of a technology-based project was the climax of this intensive training. The goal of this project was to try a technology tool or technique we had not done before and to document it. This program allowed us to experiment with a variety of technological tools and techniques as eclectic as web searching, skill building websites, lesson planning, Project Based Learning (PBL), online-tools for enhancing learning, or PowerPoint, but to us weblogs seemed to be potentially the most effective tool for learning and teaching in the EFL classroom, especially for the writing class. Having found our niche for years in teaching the Writing Techniques course in our college, we seized this opportunity to make students struggling with their poor writing skills benefit from a technology-enhanced learning environment and implemented a class blog. The rationale at that time was that students generally do not write outside the classroom, except when they are given assignments or homework. If the latter are not graded, only 30 % of the students fulfill the task. This first blogging experience motivated us to dig deeper into the field of Computer-Assisted-Language Learning (CALL) in general and Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL) in particular.

## **2.2. Participants**

## **A- Selection Procedure**

The selection process involved a sample of the various levels of student writing proficiency existing in our class. Only students who joined the university for the first time after succeeding in the Baccalaureat examination were selected. Their age ranges from 18 to 20 .The assumption for selecting this population of students is that being freshmen in higher education they would be more willing to participate in a learning experience with technology because we noticed throughout our teaching experience that it is very difficult to make students participate in such experiences they often see as extra work (See section 2.6:p,49).In addition , first year students have a computer science course integrated in their curriculum, which aims at providing them with computer-literacy skills.

These students were interviewed and tested on their writing abilities in order to identify their proficiency level, before any instructional intervention or experimentation took place. Then, five volunteers were integrated in the sample with the assurance that they will have easy access to internet outside the institution. It is important to mention that none of them was rewarded in any way for his/her participation. The participants' proficiency level derived from the pre-experiment writing test. In this evaluation the same criteria for the pre and post-experiment writing tests were used. These criteria were integrated in a marking scheme which was used for the pre and post writing tasks (See Appendix E: p.140).This scheme is based on three major areas of concern for teachers in relation to the writing skill:

(a)-*Elaboration and support of the answer*: it evaluates the student's ability to respond efficiently to the writing prompt given to him. It includes good composition

traits like the presence of topic and concluding sentences, and the presence and the quality of the support in terms of unity and coherence. Two minor criteria were added:

(i) relevance of the composition to the instructions and (ii) the layout.

(b)-**Command of language**: this criterion refers to the student' ability in terms of word choice, and sentence fluency (sentence structure and sentence variety).

(c)- **Use of writing conventions**: This criterion deals with the student' mastery and proper use of grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

Table 3 below shows in details the distribution of the grades between the different criteria:

Criteria	Elaboration and Support						Command of Language		Writing Conventions		
	Pap	Layout	Ts	Bstces	Cs	Chrnce	Wrd C	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
Gr/Criterion	1	1	1,5	5	1,5	1	1,5	3	4,5 (minus 0,25/ mistake)		
Gr/20	11						4,5				

**Table 3 : Correspondence between Grades and Criteria in the Marking Scheme**

\*PaP=Paper answers Prompt \*Ts=Topic sentence \* BStces = Body sentences \*Chrnc= Coherence

\* WrdC =Word choice \* Stce F= Sentence Fluency \* Gr = Grammar \*Sp=Spelling \* Mech= Mechanics

The participants' levels of writing proficiency were evaluated according to their overall grade in the pre-writing task. Table 4 below describes the evaluation scale for the profiling of the participants:

Level of Proficiency	Very poor	poor	Below-average	average	Above average	Good	Very good
Grades/20	0-4	4-7	7-9	9-11	11-13	13-16	16 and above

**Table 4: Evaluation Scale for the Profiling of Participants**

## B- Participants' Profiles

### (i) The Bloggers

#### -Student blogger 1: Mohamed-Amine

**Mohamed-Amine** is an 18-year-old boy from Bouira. This student enrolled the Teacher Training College in the ENS as a baccalaureat holder in Experimental Sciences (science major) with an overall mark of 14.03/20 and an average mark in English of 18/20, his educational background did not correspond to the students' profile commonly accepted by the College. The majority of students hold a Baccalaureat in Foreign Languages. Despite this background, we based our evaluation of his writing skill proficiency on the pre-blogging writing assignment. This evaluation is displayed in the following table:

Mohamed-Amine	Elaboration & support						Command of language		Writing conventions		
	PaP	Layout	Ts	BStces	Cs	Chrnc	WrdC	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
	No	None	below average				average	average	average		

Table 5: Mohamed-Amine's Initial Writing Proficiency

\***PaP**=Paper answers Prompt \***Ts**=Topic sentence \* **BStces** = Body sentences \***Chrnc**= Coherence \* **WrdC** =Word choice \* **Stce F**= Sentence Fluency \* **Gr** = Grammar \***Sp**=Spelling \* **Mech**= Mechanics

The marking of his pre-writing assignment has revealed an '*average*' level of writing proficiency. Indeed, he had a balanced writing profile with no real insurmountable weaknesses.

**- Student-Blogger 2: Nedjemeddine**

**Nedjemeddine** is a 19-year-old boy from Boufarik registered in the ENS as a first year student of English (High School teacher profile). He got his Baccalaureat in Literature and Philosophy (literature major) with an overall average of 12.62/20 and an average in English of 16/20. Our own assessment of his writing skill proficiency through the pre-test writing assignment is shown in Table 6 below:

Nedjemeddine	Elaboration & support						Command of language		Writing conventions		
	PaP	Layout	Ts	BStces	Cs	Chrnc	WrdC	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
	No	None	average				Below average	average	Very poor		

Table 6: Nedjemeddine’s Initial Writing Proficiency

\***PaP**=Paper answers Prompt \***Ts**=Topic sentence \* **BStces** = Body sentences \***Chrnc**= Coherence \* **WrdC** =Word choice \* **Stce F**= Sentence Fluency \* **Gr** = Grammar \***Sp**=Spelling \* **Mech**= Mechanics

When answering the pre-test writing prompt before the blogging experience, he was able to write a lengthy composition with good supporting ideas unlike other candidates. However, there were countless spelling mistakes, which weakened his performance that corresponded to a ‘*below average*’ level of writing proficiency. (cf. Evaluation Scale, p.34).

**(ii) The Peer reviewers.**

**-Peer Reviewer 1: Feriel**

**Feriel** is an 18 year-old girl from Aïn-Defla .She is a first year undergraduate students registered in the ENS within the high school teacher profile. She succeeded in the

Baccalaureat exam in Experimental Sciences (science major) with an overall average of 12.67 /20 and an average in English of 15/20. Compared to the other participants, she stood out of the crowd that is why we evaluated her initial writing skill proficiency as follows:

Ferial	Elaboration & support						Command of language		Writing conventions		
	PaP	Layout	Ts	BStces	Cs	Chrnc	WrdC	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
	yes	yes	Above average				Average	Good	Below average		

Table 7: Ferial's Initial Writing Proficiency

**PaP**=Paper answers Prompt \***Ts**=Topic sentence \* **BStces** = Body sentences \***Chrnc**= Coherence \* **WrdC** =Word choice \* **Stce F**= Sentence Fluency \* **Gr** = Grammar \***Sp**=Spelling \* **Mech**= Mechanics

In fact, in her pre-test before the blogging experiment, she was the only one to present her paper with adequate layout expected in academic writing. Her answer was quite relevant to the writing prompt. Moreover, her command of language and her mastery of writing conventions were more than acceptable for a freshman with less instruction in English than those of the Foreign Languages stream and who had not received any instruction yet. Her performance was quite '*above average*'.

#### **-Peer Reviewer 2 : Wassila**

**Wassila** is an 18 year-old girl from Aïn-Defla registered in the ENS as a first year undergraduate student of English (Middle School teacher profile). She passed her

baccalaureate examination in Foreign Languages (Literature major) with an overall average of 12.17/20 and an average in English of 10.50/20.

Table 8 below shows how we evaluate her initial writing proficiency:

Wassila	Elaboration & support						Command of language		Writing conventions		
	PaP	Layout	Ts	BStces	Cs	Chrnc	WrdC	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
	No	None	Below average				Poor	Poor	Very poor		

Table 8: Wassila's Initial Writing Proficiency

**PaP**=Paper answers Prompt \***Ts**=Topic sentence \* **BStces** = Body sentences \***Chrnc**= Coherence \* **WrdC** =Word choice \* **Stce F**= Sentence Fluency \* **Gr** = Grammar \***Sp**=Spelling \* **Mech**= Mechanics

This severe evaluation has an explanation. The writing prompt for the pre-test was general enough for candidates who were not prepared to be tested. Yet, they were expected to produce acceptable coherent pieces of writing. For Wassila, this exercise was troublesome. Her passage was incoherent and lacking unity in spite of interesting ideas. However, her real problems were with the command of language and the use of writing conventions. The mistakes she made almost obscured the meaning in her composition. According to our evaluation scale, her level of proficiency was 'poor'.

### -Peer Reviewer 3: Amine

**Amine** a 19 year-old boy from Algiers registered in the ENS as a first year undergraduate student of English (High School teacher profile. He got his Baccalaureat in Foreign Languages (Literature major) with an overall average of 13.04

/20 and an average in English of 11/20. We evaluated his writing skill proficiency using our scale (p.34) as follows in Table 9:

Amine	Elaboration & support						Command of language		Writing conventions		
	PaP	Layout	Ts	BStces	Cs	Chrnc	WrdC	Stce F	Gr	Sp	Mech
	Yes	None	Below average				Poor	Below average	Poor		

Table 9: Amine's Initial Writing Proficiency

**PaP**=Paper answers Prompt \***Ts**=Topic sentence \* **BStces** = Body sentences \***Chrnc**= Coherence \* **WrdC** =Word choice \* **Stce F**= Sentence Fluency \* **Gr** = Grammar \***Sp**=Spelling \* **Mech**= Mechanics

Establishing Amine's writing profile was not an easy task. As the writing prompt did not really inspire him, he gave up easily and wrote his answer in a few lines. Nevertheless, we corrected his short answer with the same marking scheme we used for the other participants. Our conclusion was that his writing profile was between 'poor' and 'below average'. We were not certain that in terms of the validity of the results, he could integrate the group, but he wanted so badly to be part of the experience that we decided to let him join the group.

### 2.3. Research Method: Case Study

In this research, we try to find out about effective ways to develop students writing skills and measure their effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes. In our search for an appropriate research methodology to achieve our goal, case study came out as a valuable method. The rationale behind this decision was to try to understand

the impact of blogging on students' writing outcomes by obtaining precise and accurate descriptions of the progression of the participants' writing throughout the experiment. This is definitely a primary advantage of case studies. Case study research is commonly defined as follows:

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 2009:18)

In the light of this definition, blogging being a contemporary phenomenon studied in the context of an EFL writing class, a case study is an appropriate approach to adopt for this study, reinforced by the possibility for weblogs to become effective language learning artifacts more than meaningful in the context of the study. Indeed:

“...exposing student teachers, also known as preservice teachers, to a variety of teaching scenarios gives them the knowledge needed through experience to handle these situations effectively and appropriately if they arise during their teaching careers.”(Mills, Eurepos & Wiebe, 2010:99)

#### **2.4. Data Collection Instruments**

Our aim in this study being the investigation of students' use of blogs to improve their overall writing ability, and their perceptions to the use of weblogs in the EFL writing classroom, we used four types of research instruments: (1) writing assignments,(2) blog posts (3) comments, and (4) questionnaire , for data collection in order to answer our research questions (cf.introduction,p.5):

- RQ 1.Does blogging have an effect on the participants'/bloggers' writing?

- RQ 2. Does reviewing student bloggers' post have an effect on peer reviewers' own writing?
- RQ 3. What are both blog writers and peer reviewers' perceptions of their blogging experience?

### **A-The Written Assignments for the Pre and Post tests**

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), the most accurate form of evaluation of one's writing skills is by giving opportunities for responsive and extensive written performances. Students were given written assignments meant to diagnose their writing ability (Pretests). The pretest assignment consisted of a written task based on writing prompts (cf. Appendix C: p.138). Students had to write a short composition to answer the writing prompt. This first written assignment determined the participants' proficiency level in writing prior to the blogging experiment. The second written assignment was the post-test writing task (cf. Appendix D; p.139). This post-test consisted of writing a paragraph using writing prompt, too. These two tests were evaluated through a specifically designed marking scheme (cf. Appendix E: p.140). The first phase of the data analysis procedure actually started at the onset of the study for the identification of the subjects for this study, using the marking scheme to determine the students' writing profiles (cf. Appendix E: p.140). Our objective was to select those students who could sample the diverse writing proficiencies existing in the class. In this marking scheme, we considered the characteristics that come into play when writing responsively and extensively to produce an effective short composition. They are: (a) elaboration and support, (b) good command of language), and (c) appropriate use of grammar, spelling and mechanics (i.e. writing conventions). The

choice of these criteria is a compromise between Primary Trait Scoring and Analytical Scoring (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010: 285), and this to evaluate not only the effectiveness of the composition to answer the writing prompt in terms of content and organization but also other elements important to consider when assessing writing like vocabulary , syntax, and mechanics.. Table 10 below gives the distribution of grades for each criterion:

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
<b>Elaboration and Support</b>	<b>11/20</b>
<b>Command of language</b>	<b>4,5/20</b>
<b>Writing conventions</b>	<b>4,5/20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20/20</b>

Table 10: Distribution of Grades Given to Each Criterion

A detailed description of the sub-components of the three aforementioned criteria is provided in Appendix E (p.140). The same criteria and grades were used to assess the post experiment assignment. It is worth mentioning that between the selection process and the inception of the experimental phase, there was no data collected though the students were given written assignment as post class activities. This important to notice because the participants did not receive from the teacher/researcher any kind of feedback on their writing, feedback we wanted to be from their peers.

### **B-Blog Posts/Entries**

The second type of research tools involves the blog writing tasks performed by the students on the blog online environment. These tasks involve the production of written texts as blog posts or entries by the two student bloggers. Our main purpose in collecting these data was to note any improvement or otherwise of our participants' overall writing ability through the blogging experience (i.e. writing a post and

receiving reviewers' feedback). The student bloggers' posts as well as the peer reviewers' commentaries were analyzed (see chapter 3) to see if the students' writing improved and to identify if so, which aspects of their writing ability were enhanced after the experience. To achieve this aim, each entry was assessed, using the same marking scheme utilized for the pen and paper assignments. These entries were copied and pasted on a word processor, printed, and analyzed by hand.

The blogging activity was guided by preliminary instructions for students to follow. The expectations were that student bloggers would use their blogs to express themselves freely on any topic of their choice, but trying to make their online texts coherent pieces as required in the writing course syllabus. A close reading of each post by the researcher helped to assess the three criteria mentioned earlier and to see whether improvement ensued. The students wrote many posts but for the analysis, some posts were discarded: the first entry in which students introduced themselves and the posts were published after the first term writing techniques examination, which served as post blogging experience test.

### **C-The reviewers' comments**

The peer reviewers' comments on their classmates' posts were also used as research tools for the same purpose as for the blog posts. Indeed, the teacher being an external observer during the whole blogging phase, student bloggers received feedback on their posts exclusively from their peers. This feedback in the form of comments was analyzed and classified by types for each student bloggers' post (see next chapter).

## **D- The Questionnaire**

Questionnaires are generally used to measure “factual, behavioral, and attitudinal data”, (Dörnyei, 2003:8). The aim of the questionnaire used for this research was to uncover information about the participants which could not be revealed through the other three research tools. Thus, two questionnaires, one questionnaire specifically addressing the student bloggers and the other peer reviewers, include information relating to students’ perceptions of this experiment. It is important to mention that because of time constraints the interviews initially planned and favored by the researcher had to be replaced by questionnaires. The questionnaires were in English, but in order to increase the validity of the results, another version in Arabic was provided to students. The respondents were free to answer the questions in whatever language they felt comfortable with.

Both questionnaires student bloggers and peer reviewers consist of closed and open-ended questions addressing pre, during, and post experimentation. Most questions relate to the blogging experience, but a few focus on the students’ former experience of writing.

The open-ended questions gave students the opportunity to voice their own views about their experience. For e.g.:

***After your experience of blogging, what are your feelings about technology for learning in the language classroom?***

The students’ answers provided valuable insights on how technology could be successfully infused in our traditional classrooms.

The procedure of data collection includes yes/no questions, too such as:

***Have you ever used technology for learning purposes at school?***

These types are followed by clarification questions, such as:

***Do you think blogging has improved your writing skills? If yes, why?***

### **(i).The Questionnaire to the Bloggers**

The questionnaire intended for the student bloggers includes ten open-ended questions, some of which are coupled with yes/no questions (See Appendix F:p.141).The first five questions refer to their previous experience in writing, technology use, and blogging.

***Question 1: “How would you describe your writing skills before coming to university?”*** is meant to know how the respondents perceive their writing ability in English prior to the investigation. This gives them the opportunity to self-assess their writing skill.

***Question 2: “Do you have any previous experience in writing? a) in English? b) in your mother tongue’ c) What kind?”***refers to the students’ experience in writing .The underlying objective is to see what the participants think of writing in general and how they use this transversal skill not only in English but also in their mother tongue.

***Questions 3: “Have you ever used any technology for learning purposes at school? If yes, what kind?”*** and ***question 4: “Have you ever used blogging before? If yes, for what purpose?”*** address the participants’ use of technology for learning purposes in general and for blogging in particular, during their schooling.

**Question 5:** “*After your experience of blogging, what are your feelings about technology for learning in the language classroom?*” asks the respondents about their post-experience of blogging and elicits their opinions about the use of technology in the language classroom.

**Question 6:** “*Do you think blogging has improved your writing skills? a) If yes, why? b) If not, why not?*” requires the participants to appraise of their own writing skills after blogging.

**Questions 7:** “*Did you like the fact of having your classmates commenting on your posts? a) If yes, why? b) If not, why not?*” and

**question 8:** “*Did you value their opinions for revising your posts? a) If yes, what corrections did you make to your posts after your peers’ revisions? b) If not, why did you ignore their comments / recommendations?*” refer to the blogging experience itself: whether or not they appreciated the fact of having classmates commenting on their own posts, and whether or not they took into consideration their commentaries.

**Questions 9:** “*How has this experience affected your overall language proficiency?*”

and **question 10 :** “*What suggestions would you make to future users of blogging for the English writing course?*” ask the students to evaluate not only their overall language proficiency after the experiment but also whole blogging experience .They are also required to offer suggestions to future users of this web-based software for the English writing course.

## **(ii).The Questionnaire to the Peer reviewers.**

The questionnaire designed for peer reviewers is similar except for the questions relating to the experimental phase of the study (See Appendix G: p.143). Like their blogger peers, they have to answer questions about their previous experience in

writing, technology use, and blogging before coming to university in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, as peer reviewers are in charge of commenting on their classmates' posts, they have to answer questions about their reviewing task per se. In **question 6** they have to say whether they enjoyed doing the task or not and why or why not:

***“Your task was to review and comment on your classmates’ blogs. a) Did you enjoy doing it? b) Why/why not?”***

**Question 7** asks: ***“What kind of mistakes did you correct? a) Vocabulary, grammar, mechanics? Ideas? c) If you did not correct any mistakes say why?”*** This question is meant to identify at what the level of correction was involved i.e. surface or content and also to find out reasons for doing so.

**Question 8** asks: ***“Do you think you have improved your ability to write from the comments you made on your classmates’ posts? a) If yes, how have you improved? b) If not, why not?”***

In this question, the respondents have to self-assess their writing skill and whether or not this was the outcome of their reviewing task on the blog.

**Question 9** and **10** are the same as the questionnaire to the bloggers. It asks students to evaluate their overall language proficiency after the blogging experience, and make suggestions for the use of blogs in the EFL writing class.

## **2.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

This investigation using the case study format allowed very detailed descriptions of the experiment. For recall, the data were obtained from (a) the written assignment at the pre and post experimental stages; (b) online digital data consisting of the bloggers' posts and the peer reviewers' comments, and (c) questionnaires.

This type of study amasses a wealth of data arduous to interpret without an appropriate methodology. For the pre and post written assignments the analytical procedure was identical: both were assessed using the marking scheme designed for this purpose. The same criteria of evaluation were applied to the blog posts because the participants had to write same short compositions after classroom instruction; the same kind of compositions required in the post written assignments. For the peer reviewers' comments, a content analysis was done. The comments were divided into positive and negative. Then, we tried common patterns were identified to sort out the type and number of comments made by each peer reviewer for each blog entry. The purpose was to see if the peer reviewers' post-experiment compositions reflected improvement in the aspects of the writing they, themselves, identified as needing improvement in their classmates online compositions. To make sense of the 'unstructured data' obtained from open-ended questions, we transcribe and read it several times and developed an initial coding system to identify emerging themes. The questionnaires were meant to triangulate the data gathered from the other research tools by providing insights about the participants' views and opinions after their blogging experience. This opportunity for expressing themselves generated a diversity of responses. Not all respondents had the same ability of expressing themselves and some of them produced more lengthy answers. This data were analyzed following the same procedure previously described. The questions were clustered according to the kind of information they elicited. This helped organizing the data into readable material for interpretation. The first five questions were grouped together as they elicited general information about the subjects, tapping into the participants'

background. All the questions inducing information about the students' retrospective perceptions of their blogging experience were classified in the same category. The questions referring to what students did during the experiment formed another cluster. Only one question could not have been aggregated to the other two categories as it elicited post experiment suggestions more than self-reflections. Then, we created charts and diagrams to display the data permitting conclusion drawing. This process of identifying, categorizing, and displaying the pre, during, and post experiment data was used to shed light on all the aspects of our research questions. (Boulton & Hammersley, 2006:243)

## **2.6. Pilot Study**

An attempt to implement this blogging experience in 2011 provided valuable insights and helped us identify practical logistical problems related to the planned experiment on blogging. Trying out the study in context enabled us to identify a number of deficiencies in the blogging cycle, and to make decisions about the experimental study to carry out. The changes made concerned the selection of the subjects and the assigned tasks. Firstly, in the pilot study, the selection of the participants was arbitrary. The researcher, herself, made the decision on whom to integrate in the project, and this undoubtedly was detrimental to the success of the study in the sense that the participants were not committed to the tasks assigned to them because the blogging tasks were time-consuming, taking place outside of the class. Secondly, in this first piloting blogging experience, the students were both bloggers and peer reviewers, and this gave them too heavy workload. Therefore, they gave up after two weeks of blogging. Besides, most of them had very good writing

skills, and did not feel the need to improve them through extra writing work. Having these facts in mind, we decided to call for volunteer participants with diverse writing profiles and to integrate two weekly blogging sessions into their writing class. To reduce the workload and avoid task confusion, we divided them into bloggers and reviewers, the former doing the writing tasks and the latter reviewing and commenting on their peers' posts. Thus, the blogging experimentation was more structured, as each participant in the blogging cycle had a separate role.

### **2.7. Description and Implementation of the Experimental Study**

As explained above, the subjects designated as “bloggers” wrote a post on their respective blogs, and the ones designated as “peer reviewers” were assigned peer-reviewing tasks, i.e. making comments on their classmates' posts. There was no teacher intervention whatsoever during the blogging experience.

The study was conducted during the first semester of 2012 (December-February) at Teacher Training College of Bouzareah. The experiment was initially to start in October 2012 simultaneously with the writing techniques course, but the reason for this delay was the inoperative internet connection in the College. Nevertheless, forthwith its reactivation, the experiment started in December. The first stage of the experiment was to establish the students' profiles in the writing skill under investigation. To determine these profiles, the pre experiment writing assignment was used (See Appendix C: p.138). At this stage, the students had not received any instruction in writing.

#### **The blogging Experimental Procedure**

When the blogging cycle started, the class had already five weeks of instruction in the writing techniques. For this experience, we planned to meet the students twice a week in the computing lab. The first session was devoted to the presentation of weblogs and the blogging platform (WWW.BLOGGER.COM), we were going to use for the study. Then, participants created Google accounts to easily access the platform. The students created their individual blogs, and we modeled their behavior: how to write and post their compositions in the blogging platform, how to comment, how to edit, how to copy and paste their posts when first written on a word processor. The instructions about what they were expected to do during these blogging sessions were then explained. This was the first and last time the teacher researcher intervened in the blogging phase. Then, the group functioned as an autonomous entity as students started respectively started blogging or peer reviewing on their own. Figure 2 below shows the blogging experience just described:



Figure 2: The Blogging Experimental Cycle

These blogging activities were blended to the Writing Techniques course as shown in the following diagram:

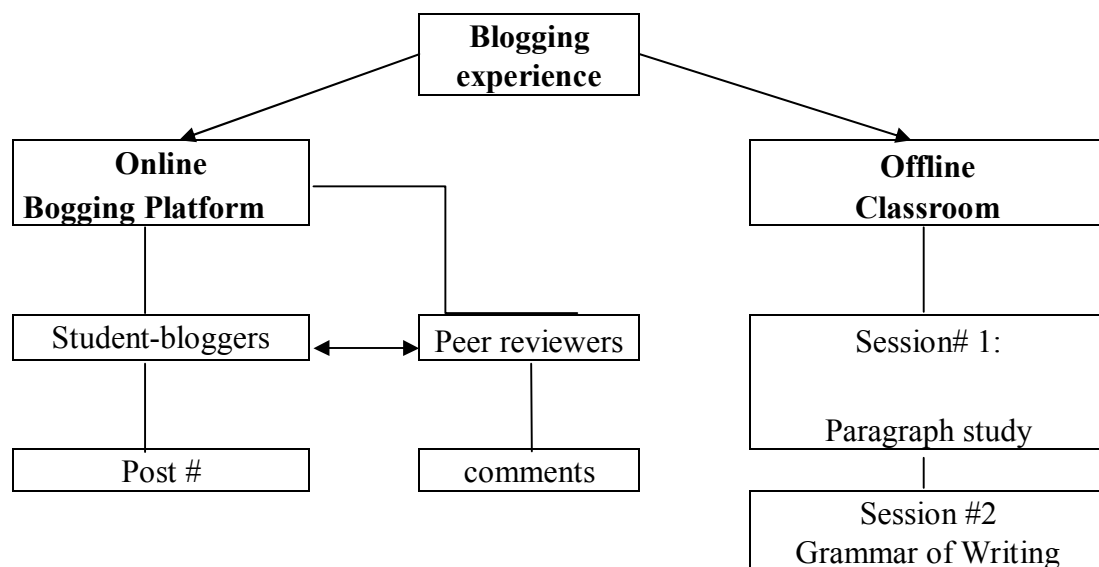


Diagram 1: The Blended Blogging Experimentation

In addition to their blogging activities, the five participants attended their regular classes to be instructed in paragraph writing and peer reviewing.

### **Conclusion**

The current study took place at the Teacher Training College of Bouzareah (ENS) where a group of first year undergraduate students was introduced to blogging in relation to an EFL writing course. The research was conducted under the qualitative case study format and provided a large amount of data. Five students were selected to participate in our project. The data generated from the blogging activities and questionnaires were collected. The results are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE:

# **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **Chapter 3: Data Analysis and Presentation of the Results**

This chapter is devoted to the data analysis and presentation of the results obtained from the four research instruments described in chapter 2. It is divided in five sections. The first section presents the analysis of the bloggers' written assignments. The second one presents the peer reviewers' assignments. The data processing of the questionnaire follows with section three dealing with the bloggers' responses and section four dealing with the peer reviewers' responses. The last section presents the analysis of the blogger-reviewer interface. These results will ultimately allow positive or negative answers to the research questions underlying this study (cf. introduction:p.4). This chapter deals with the analysis of the five cases described in chapter 2: two student bloggers and three peer reviewers. The first student blogger is called student blogger 1 or Mohamed-Amine. The second one is referred to as student blogger 2 or Nedjemeddine. The first peer reviewer is called peer reviewer 1 or Ferial, the second peer reviewer 2 or Wassila, and the last peer reviewer 3 or Amine.

#### **3.1. Analysis of the Bloggers' Written Assignments (Pre and Post Experiment Tests)**

As explained in the methodology chapter, the purpose of this study was to examine the students' writing ability before and after the experimentation and see whether or not improvement happened. This latter was materialized through the pre and post experiment tests. The evaluation of these tests was based on the marking scheme currently used for the writing techniques course and exam writing assignments. This scheme is described in details in section 2 (p.34). It evaluates

specific characteristics expected in the students' compositions (cf. Appendix E: p.140). This section of the analysis deals with Mohamed-Amine's production, then with Nedjemeddine's production

### A-Mohamed-Amine's Production

As mentioned in chapter 2, the first written assignment before the blogging experiment was used to profile the participants' writing proficiency. For Mohamed-Amine, this pre-test revealed a balanced average profile. The comparison with his post-blogging written assignment was done to find evidence of progress in his writing skills before and after the experiment. This comparison is presented in diagram 2 below:

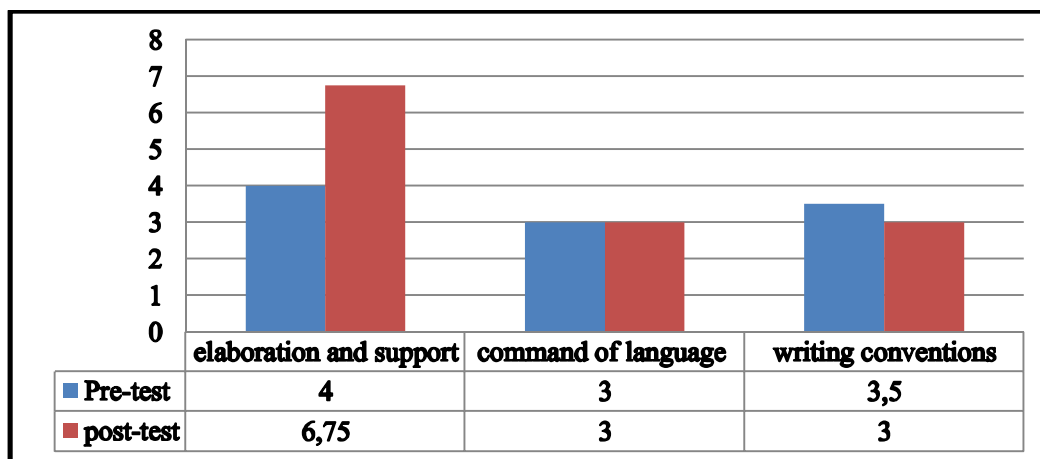


Diagram 2: Comparison between Mohamed- Amine's Pre & Post-tests

\*Total: Pre-Test= 10,5/20 Post-Test=12,75/20

\*Elaboration /11 Command of language/4,5 Writing Conventions/4,5 = 20/20

The comparison of his pre-and-post-tests does not show significant improvement in his command of language and his use of writing conventions. This is comprehensible as tremendous vocabulary expansion, mastery and use of various sentence-types are laborious to attain at his level of proficiency. Nevertheless, his

writing reveals a better understanding of the requirements of academic writing at his stage. It is evident in the results of his post-test .This post-test corresponds to the first semester examination in writing, administered in the conditions of an exam which means for students : writing under pressure within limited time and not being allowed to use a dictionary or any other electronic device for help. Even if the students could choose among a number of provided topics, this was much less effective when students were free to use any sort of assisting resources for blog writing. Thus, the students could mobilize their knowledge and skills to write more effectively. The assessment of Mohamed-amine's post-blogging assignment reveals some significant improvement in the elaboration and support of his writing, making his grade reach 12,75 /20 which approximately matches the grade of 13/20 he got for his last post on his blog .This means that his writing performance improved from an initial 'average' level of proficiency to an 'above average' one ( cf. section 2. Table 3: p.34)

### **B-Nedjemeddine's Production**

When answering the pre-test writing prompt before the blogging experience, he was able to write a lengthy composition with good supporting ideas unless other candidates. However, as he himself mentioned it in his self-evaluation of his writing skills, there were countless spelling mistakes, which weakened his performance. He obtained 08/20 which corresponds to a below average level of writing proficiency (cf. Profile, p.36). The comparison between his pre-and post-blogging written assignments presented in diagram 3 below gave evidence of the amelioration of his initial overall writing proficiency.

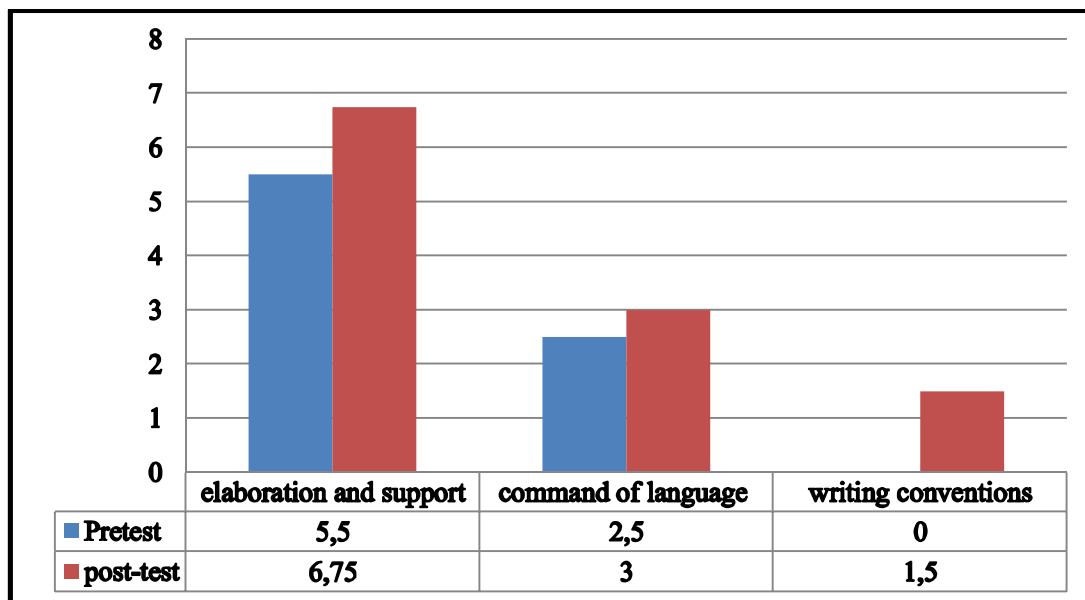


Diagram 3: Comparison between Nedjemeddine's Pre and Post-Tests

\*Total: Pre-Test= 08/20    Post-Test=11,25

\*Elaboration /11 Command of language/4,5 Writing Conventions/4,5 = 20/20

In the three areas of his writing, Nedjemeddine improved overall .From 08/20 in the pre-blogging writing assignment his grade raised to 11, 25/20. This is quite surprising because in the blogging experience he deviated from the academic-like posts and followed his own agenda for writing. It is evident that he still has problems with the writing conventions, but in the second semester, his examination writing (post-test) revealed that his skills shifted easily and successfully from blog free writing to writing under pressure with specific topics. If we refer to his grades in the pre-and post-tests, we can say that Nedjemeddine’s overall writing proficiency evolved from a ‘*below average*’ ability to an ‘*above average*’ one. (cf. Evaluation Scale, p.34)

### 3.2. Analysis of the Peer reviewers’ Written Assignments (Pre and Post Experiment Tests).

To answer Research Question 2 about whether or not the reviewing task on the blog actually has an effect on the peer reviewers' writing proficiency, a similar comparative analysis was used between the peer reviewers' pre and post-tests.

### **A-Feriel's Production**

In the pre-test before the blogging experiment, Feriel really stood out of the crowd. She was the only one to present her paper with adequate layout expected in academic writing. Her answer was quite relevant to the writing prompt. Moreover, her command of language and her mastery of writing conventions were more than acceptable for a freshman with less instruction in English than those of the Foreign Languages stream and who had not received any instruction yet. We scored her performance 13,5/20 which is quite '*above average*' ( cf. Evaluation Scale,p.34).Her grades before and after the blogging experiment as shown in Diagram 4 below:

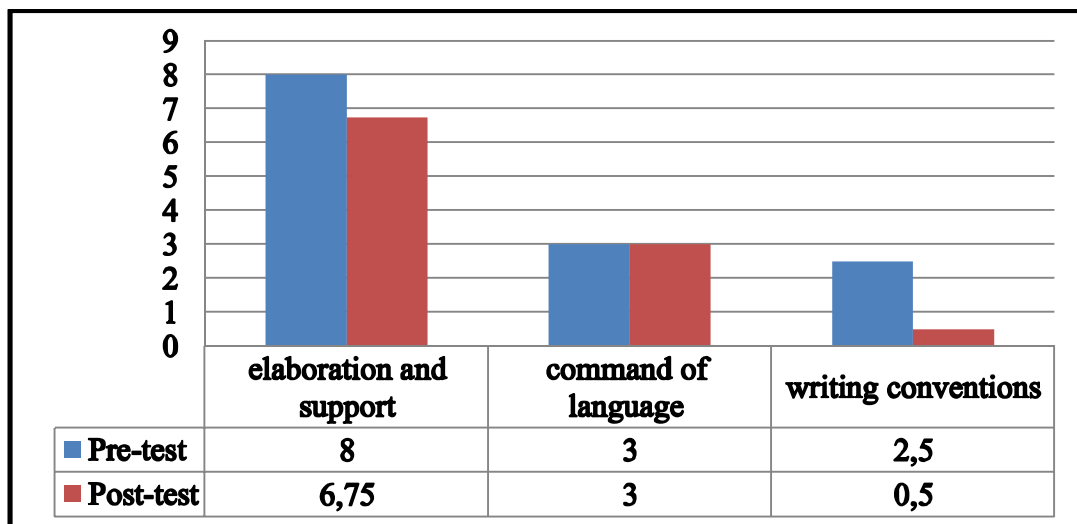


Diagram 4: Comparison between Feriel's Pre-& Post-Tests

\*Total: Pre-Test= 13,5/20 Post-Test= 10,25/20

\*Elaboration /11 Command of language/4,5 Writing Conventions/4,5 = 20/20

The comparison show unexpected results. If she scored 13, 5/ 20 in her pre-test, she scored considerably less 10, 25/20 in her pot-test. Her command of language remained unchanged, but her ability to elaborate and support her answers diminished. For the writing conventions, we might have been somehow lenient towards some spelling or punctuation mistakes in the pre-test, but she still made too many mistakes proportionally to the required length of the paragraphs in the post-test (See Appendix D:p.139). We expected her to equal at least her pre-test not to draw back.

### **B-Wassila's Production**

For the pre-test, the evaluation of her written performance was severe and can be explained by the fact that the writing prompt for the pre-test was general enough for candidates who were not prepared to be tested. Yet, they were expected to produce acceptable coherent pieces of writing. For Wassila, this exercise was troublesome. Her passage was incoherent and lacking unity in spite of interesting ideas. However, her real problems were with the command of language and the use of writing conventions. The mistakes she made almost obscured the meaning in her composition, so we scored her passage 05/20, which for us corresponds according to our scale to a poor level of writing proficiency. Diagram 5 compares between Wassila's pre-test and post-test results:

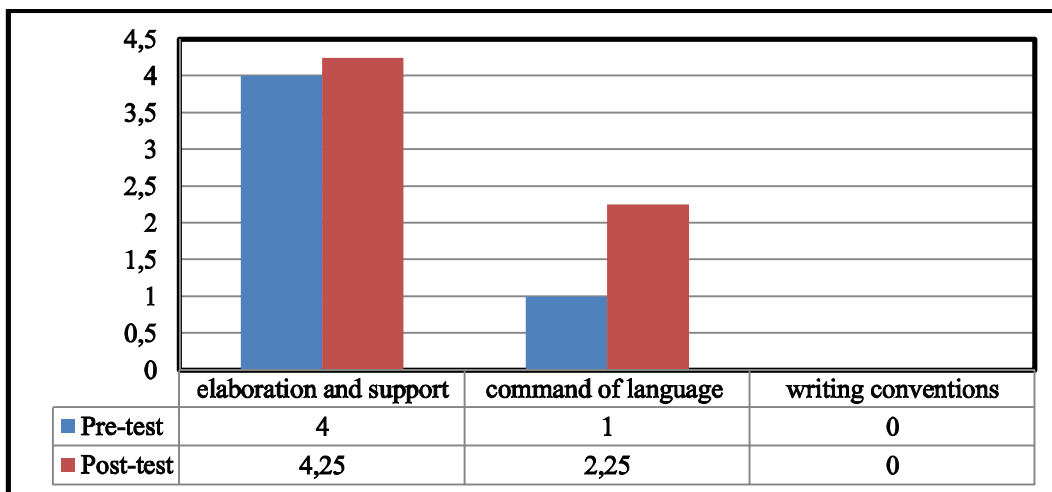


Diagram 5: Comparison between Wassila's Pre & Post-Tests

\*Total: Pre-test= 06/20 Post-test =06,5/20

\*Elaboration /11 Command of language/4,5 Writing Conventions/4,5 = 20/20

The results show that Wassila did not significantly improve her writing skills in the post-test that scored 06, 5/20. There is some improvement in her command of command of language in terms of word choice and sentence structure and fluency but not substantial enough to upgrade her overall writing proficiency level.

### **C-Amine's Production**

The same procedure was used to seek for evidence of improvement in Amine's writing. The comparison of Amine's pre and post-tests is presented in diagram 6 below:

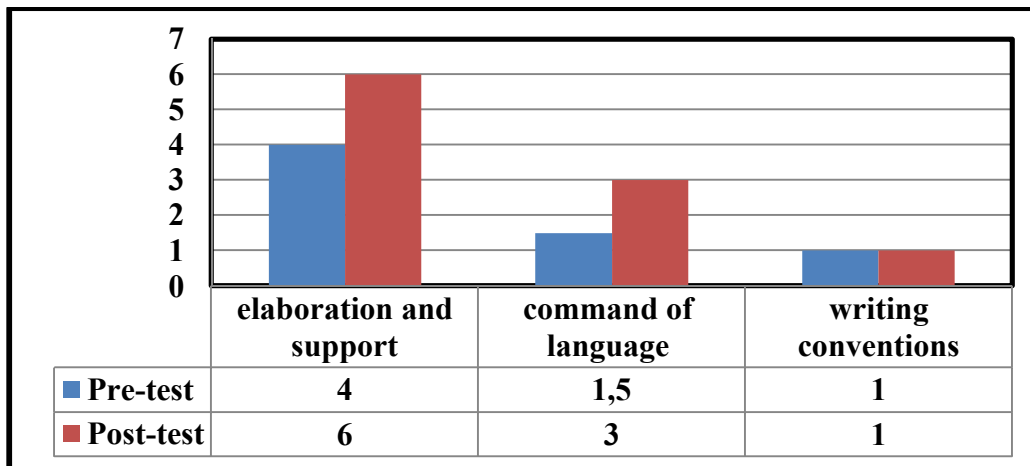


Diagram 6: Comparison between Amine's Pre and post-tests

Total; Pre-test= 06,5/20 Post-test=10/20

\*Elaboration /11 Command of language/4,5 Writing Conventions/4,5 = 20/20

Indeed, his post-test showed significant improvement. In the post-test, Amine had been able to tap into the basic requirements of academic paragraphs, something he did not do in the pre-test. His ability to elaborate his answers slightly improved, but less than his command of language, more specifically in his use of sentence- patterns and variety. As for his use of writing conventions, his skill remained unchanged. He still made too many mistakes proportionally to the length of his paragraphs. When we brought all these observations together, his post-test scored 10/20, the average passing grade.

### 3.3. Analysis of the Bloggers' Responses to the Questionnaire

For the recall, the first four questions were common to the questionnaire addressed to both student bloggers and peer reviewers (cf. chapter 2:p.44). These

questions aimed at describing the context of the participants' writing: their background, , familiarity with technology in general, and with blogging in particular.

**Question 1** expected participants to self-evaluate their writing skills in English prior to coming to university.

**Question 2** elicited information about their previous experience in writing and feeling about writing in general

**Questions 3:** and **4:** asked about the subjects' use of technology for learning and blogging

**Pre- blogging context: Student Bloggers' Background**

Student blogger 1 considered his writing skills before coming to university as, **“poor, insufficient for writing a single sentence. In brief, I did not have the basis.”** This contradicts the teacher's evaluation of his pre-writing assignment which revealed an average level of writing proficiency with no insurmountable weaknesses. As many students, he underestimated his writing aptitude. To a certain extent, this lack of confidence is understandable because of his educational background in Experimental Sciences which does not correspond to the foreign languages profiles of the students generally enrolling the Teacher Training College. However, his self-assessment did not refer to any specific strength or weakness in his writing ability. Even if his experience with writing remained school-related, his answers to question 3 and 4 showed that he was a technology enthusiastic .This was a drive in volunteering to participate in the blogging experience. He was eager to use technology for learning purposes, especially to improve his writing skills. His knowledge of technology was quite broad as he already maintained a blog about one of his favorite artists.

Comparatively, student blogger 2 had a different background. In his self-assessment of his writing, Nedjemeddine slightly overestimated his writing ability and was satisfied with his writing skills before coming to university, evaluating his skills as average, which goes against the below average evaluation of the teacher. Indeed, for question 1, he wrote:

‘I was having some problems in writing specially spelling mistakes .in term of expressing I wasn’t bad I developed my way of writing but I’m going to work harder specially in spelling mistakes’

However, he was self-conscious of his weaknesses and could identify spelling as a central issue in his writing. His response to question 2 showed that writing his an important part of his life as he wrote that it was an essential means for expressing himself , adding to school writing a lot of creative writing, and this not only in his mother tongue but also in English. In terms of technological background addresses in questions 3 and 4, he had none.

#### **During-blogging activities:** student bloggers’ responses

*Question 7: “Did you like the fact of having your classmates commenting on your posts? a) If yes, why? b) If not, why not?” and question 8: “Did you value their opinions for revising your posts? a) If yes, what corrections did you make to your posts after your peers’ revisions? b) If not, why did you ignore their comments / recommendations?”* These two questions in the survey addressed bloggers’ opinions about their blogging tasks.

Student bloggers’ responses to question 7 revealed that both of them liked their peers’ comments. They both wrote that this was very helpful for their future posts.

Although we anticipated these responses, we noted that they had antagonistic views of what types of comments the students really liked. Student blogger 1 deplored that most of the comments were on form not content whereas student blogger 2 did not appreciate comments on his content which he thought was as an extremely personal matter not open to criticism.

**Question 8** completes the previous one by looking at what the student bloggers did after reading their classmates' observations and whether they change anything to their entries.

Both student bloggers stated that they took into account the comments and recommendations about spelling and grammar, and made the necessary corrections, but student blogger 2 ignored the comments on his content and the recommendations on how to rewrite his posts, and kept his position of changing only their form not the content.

### **Post-Blogging Context:** Student bloggers' Perceptions

In the questionnaire, **question 5** addressed students' perceptions of technology and **questions 6** and **9** students' perceptions of their writing skills and overall language proficiency after their blogging experience.

After their blogging experience, the respondents had positive feelings about the use of technology in the language classroom. Student blogger 1 wrote :” It was a magnificent experience” arguing that young people of their generation like technology in general, so why not use it in the language classroom. Indeed, learning with technology could be highly motivating for students. Student blogger 2 added the

dimension of comfort easiness for learning with technology, especially when it can be used at home.

To find out about the bloggers’ post experiment perceptions of their overall proficiency in English and writing skills in particular, we analyzed questions 6 and 9 together. The analysis of the two student bloggers’ responses helped to identify two main areas of improvement i.e. vocabulary and writing skills as Diagram 7 below indicates:

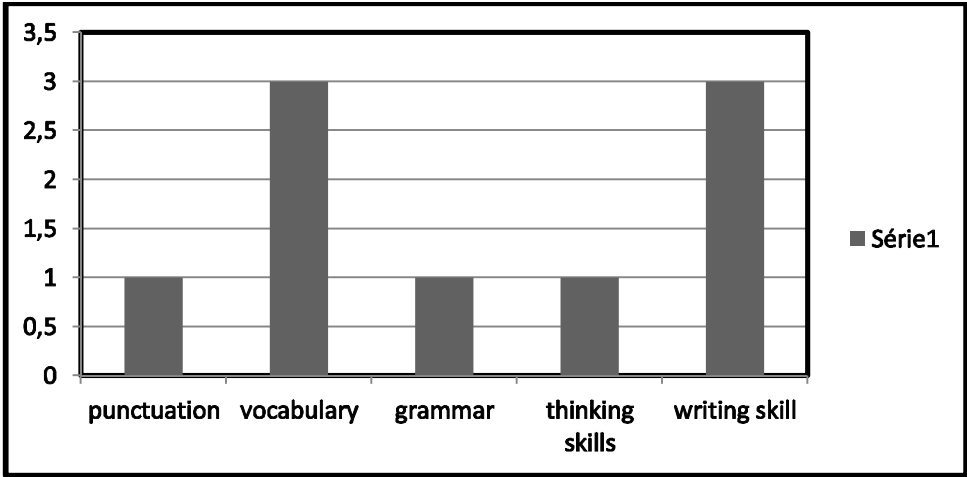


Diagram 7: Areas of Improvement Cited by the Participants

These perceptions are understandable. For student blogger 1, this was somehow predictable. His position as a writer in the blogging cycle required an extensive use of vocabulary which might have given him the feeling that he was improving in this area. It is also not surprising to have the writing skill mentioned as an area of improvement too, the blogging experience having been designed with this ultimate purpose in mind. Punctuation and grammar, cited respectively once, are associated with the writing ability. However, it is worth noting that student Nedjemeddine wrote that his blogging experience actually bettered his thinking skills. He wrote that

working on combining and organizing his thoughts for a long time before posting on his blog helped him very much during the exams. This is a good illustration that writing is a core skill indispensable to mobilize one's thoughts and practice effective writing as writing is a thinking process.

### **Summary and Conclusion of the Analysis of the Student Bloggers' Questionnaire**

From Mohamed-Amine's responses to the questionnaire, we can say that he was very excited of his blogging experience and saw only advantages in using weblogs in the EFL classroom in general and in the writing classroom in particular. He thinks that as technology lovers are legion today, the Algerian educational system would benefit from its integration in the language classroom, especially as a motivating factor. He genuinely thinks that this blogging experience improved his writing skills and has many advantages. He saw blogging as a solution to large classes where teachers have difficulties to provide individual guidance, so essential to learning, because of limited time available. With blogging, restricted time is no longer an issue, and teachers can provide tailored feedback outside the class if they integrate blogging in their array of instructional tools.

From Nedjemeddine's responses to the questionnaire, we can say that he did not show real excitement for the use of technology in the language classroom, but he thinks that blogging is an interesting way of learning as students can learn from home. He did not explain how his writing skills improved, but having an audience was definitely a stimulus to do his best, 'to show himself' and more importantly, to exhibit all his written work. He said he improved his thinking skills because he could

contemplate his posts before submitting them to the scrutiny of an online audience. This notion of audience was, we think, very important to him because as his peer blogger Mohamed-Amine, he continued to write on his blog after the blogging experimentation.

### **3.4. Analysis of the Peer reviewers' Responses to the Questionnaire**

#### **Pre- blogging context: Peer reviewers' Background**

In response to question 1 about their writing skills background peer reviewers did not refer to specific strengths or weaknesses and remained generally approximate in their evaluation of their writing skills in English, unlike student blogger 2. Peer reviewer 1, Ferial, assessed her writing skills as good, but after one full academic year at the school, she moderated her opinion and wrote in her questionnaire:

‘Before coming to university I use to think that’s I’m good in writing but, actually I was not that good that I think I can give my self 5 from 10’

From the very beginning of the experiment, Wassila, peer reviewer 2, was self-conscious of her weaknesses, so when asked to describe her writing skills before coming to university she wrote ‘very weak’ which was approximately, how we evaluated her writing proficiency (cf. chapter 2:p.37). Amine, peer reviewer 3, had the same opinion ‘very weak’ about his own writing skills in English. As seen with student bloggers, students had a tendency to overestimate their writing abilities; consequently. This type of self-evaluation cannot be taken as a sole indicator of their genuine writing proficiency as they reflect only opinions generally based on the grades

they had in high school. In addition, this self-evaluation cannot be taken as predictive of future performances in the writing class.

Replies to questions 2, 3, and 4 indicate that the participants share more or less the same background in writing. Most of the respondents have no other writing experiences than those imposed by the school system during exam sessions or for homework. However, Ferial mentioned her use of English for communicative purposes, more particularly on social networks with non-speakers of Arabic and with her teacher of English. In terms of technology, Wassila asserted that she had never used it for learning purposes, but Ferial and Amine presented some of the most prevalent technology uses among students in educational contexts, internet for research and spelling checker software. None of them was familiar with blogging for learning purposes, but Amine knew about it before the study and even used one as a discussion board. A summary of students' responses to the first four questions is provided in Appendix H (p.145).

#### **During –Blogging Activities: Peer reviewers' Responses**

Questions 6 and 7 of the peer reviewers' questionnaires refer to the commenting tasks during the blogging experience.

**Question 6: *'Your task was to review and comment on your classmates' blogs.***

***a) Did you enjoy doing it? b) Why/why not?'***

They all answered positively, but their answers on what made this task agreeable differ. Ferial put forward that the learning benefit she got from this activity was what made it agreeable. She learned not only from the student bloggers' mistakes but also

from the way they organized their compositions. It was also enjoyable because she acquired knowledge or new vocabulary in every single post. Reading her classmates' blog entries also helped her discover their personalities. This is surprising as student bloggers and peer reviewers already knew each other as classmates, but this 'virtual writing class' (weblog) seems to have revealed other aspects of their personalities, intentionally or unintentionally. It is worth pointing out that in a traditional class, classmates can spend years of their college life together without having the opportunity to better know each other or even talk to each other. As a matter of fact, this "new" type of learning environment, the blog, can fill this gap, improve learning through interaction, and help discover the "other"

**Question 7:** *'what kind of mistakes did you correct?'* was meant to specify the kind of mistakes peer reviewers corrected. The table 11 below displays their responses to this question:

MISTAKES SUBJECTS	FORM			CONTENT
	VOCABULARY	GRAMMAR	MECHANICS	IDEAS
Peer reviewer 1	yes	yes	yes	No
Peer reviewer2	yes sometimes	no	no	yes once
Peer reviewer 3	yes	no	yes	Yes

Table 11: Types of Mistakes Corrected by Peer reviewers

It is worth noting that the answers to this question do not match our analysis of the students' actual comments made to the bloggers. This might be explained by the fairly long period of time gap (four months) between the end of the blogging experience and the date of the administration of the questionnaires, a too long period

for students to recall exactly what they did. However, their responses show that they more frequently corrected vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics than ideas, and why they did so. Wassila explained that she tried to correct as many mistakes as she could, but her lack of experience in peer reviewing was at her disadvantage. Amine wrote that he corrected some vocabulary and punctuation mistakes, but he did not dare correcting grammatical mistakes because he thought he had poor grammar skills himself. However, he confessed that by searching answers elsewhere to correct the grammatical mistakes, he actually improved his English while still remained focused on the content mainly.

**Post-Blogging Context:** To find out about the peer reviewers' post experiment perceptions of the use of technology for learning, we analyzed question 5 .Their perceptions of their overall proficiency in general and writing skills in particular were uncovered by the analysis of questions 8 and 9.

**Question 5:** *'After your experience of blogging, what are your feelings about technology for learning in the language classroom? '*

Participants' replies to question 5 showed that after their blogging experience, peer reviewers had the same positive feelings about the use of technology in the language classroom as student bloggers. However, Peer reviewer 3 toned down this globally positive appreciation by writing that this experiment was very stressful in the beginning. Yet, all of the students seemed convinced that it could prove effective in the language classroom.

**Question 8: “Do you think you have improved your ability to write from the comments you made on your classmates’ posts?”**

The peer reviewers’ responses show that they had globally the same feeling of improvement of their respective writing ability. Ferial answered that her task of commenting was beneficial. According to her, correcting the mistakes seemed to be a good way to avoid them yourself because if someone wanted to correct efficiently, he needed to do his homework first, for example by looking up the words in the dictionary. Wassila had the same view. Her active participation in the commenting process convinced her that she improved her writing skills. According to her, correcting the mistakes in her classmates’ posts helped her to avoid the same mistakes in her own writings. As far as his writing skills were concerned, Amine thought that they had improved even if not completely at least a little.

**Question 9: ‘How has this experience affected your overall language proficiency?’**

Like the student bloggers, when identifying which aspects of their overall proficiency benefited from this blogging experience, vocabulary and overall writing ability came definitely first for peer reviewers. However, the peer reviewers, not directly involved in the process of producing texts in the blogs might have learnt new vocabulary incidently through their reading tasks which provided them with valuable input. It is also not surprising to have the writing skill was mentioned as an area of improvement too.

**Question 10: ‘What suggestions would you make to future users of blogging for the English writing course?’**

This question common to the two surveys came to wrap-up the study. It sought to elicit suggestions from the participants in order to integrate blogging in the EFL writing course. Their lengthy answers were analyzed and interpreted. Some suggestions for students and teachers came up.

### ***Suggestions for Students***

One recurrent remark was that a successful blogging routine in the writing course should come with a minimum of commitment and discipline from the students. Indeed, motivating students to a non-scored task is difficult for a teacher. This is something we have already experienced in our first attempt to implement blogging in a previous writing course which was inconclusive. Another interesting suggestion was to use the weblogs as notebooks where students could write any interesting idea. Moreover, blogging providing intensive and extensive writing practice could be potentially effective in improving students' writing skills. Student blogger 1 proposed to strengthen the writing practice offered by blogging by taking advantage of all the available instruments and websites available on the WWW specifically designed to improve one's writing proficiency, such as online thesauruses or skills-building websites.

### ***Suggestions for Teachers***

The respondents made more specific suggestions on how teachers could take advantage of weblogs in their writing classroom. Student blogger 2 suggested that blogging should not be limited to only few students, but should give the opportunity to a larger number of students to exhibit their writing abilities. This means that blogs are

virtual portfolios accessible not only to the student bloggers or teachers but also to an audience other than the classroom actors. Peer reviewer 2 suggested that blogs could be spaces for integrating literacy skills, in this case reading and writing. Future student bloggers could report on their readings and therefore improve both reading and writing. The two suggestions made by peer reviewer 2 are quite interesting. Her first suggestion was to give different topics to each student. This, indeed, can allow for tailored tasks addressing diverse learners' styles. Her second suggestion was to impose ethical rules for writing like forbidding racism. She is the only student to have made this recommendation, which underscores her concern for abiding by rules of respect and politeness for online communication, just as one would do for other forms of communication. This caveat of peer feedback should not be overlooked when implementing online learning experiences. It was also noticed by Paz Dennen (2005).

### **Summary and Conclusion of the Analysis of the Peer reviewers' Questionnaire**

From Ferial's responses to the questionnaire, we can deduce that because of her love for technology, she was predisposed to enjoy her experience with technology in general and blogging in particular. This way of learning was for her more attractive than learning in the traditional classroom. Nevertheless, we cannot say that her writing skills benefited from her task as a peer reviewer. In spite of regular contributions to revising her classmates' posts, she had not been able to transpose what she learnt from this experience in her post-test. As a matter of fact, she implicitly gave a plausible explanation in the suggestions she made for the integration of blogging in the English writing course. She wrote that being a reader in blogging is not sufficient to improve

one's writing skills, to have significant learning outcomes students should be readers and writers at the same time.

Her responses' to the questionnaire showed that with Nedjemeddine, Wassila was the only students who said she had no background of technology use for learning purposes that was why she was eager to jump at the opportunity offered to improve her writing skills by this blogging experience. She saw writing as daunting task ,and he wrote in her questionnaire:

“Writing is something hard it's requir good vocabulary and good back knowledge of grammar and mechanics”

We can see that her perceptions changed with this experience as she wrote:

“After. My own experience of blogging I feel much better because this experience benefited me a lot it's allowed me to enjoy writing, and to look for more.”

This was the only benefit she got from her experience as a peer reviewer in this experience as her writing skills did not really progressed. A conceivable rationale she put forward was her lack of experience not only in writing as her previous experience was limited to examination writing but also her insufficient knowledge. In other words, she thought she was not qualified for the job.

From the questionnaire, we learnt that Amine has not only already used technology for learning purposes but also blogging as a communicative tool. This was interesting information though he did not mention whether he maintained his own blog or collaborated to one as a follower. This technological background did not seem to have given him an advantage over his other learning partners. He wrote in his questionnaire that learning with technology and in particular with blogging had been a

stressful experience. Because having an invisible audience, the students and the teacher, which might make remarks, led him to be more cautious about what he was going to do. Despite being oppressive, he considered that this experience had been profitable. On the other hand, with regard to his writing skills he was not entirely convinced that those improved significantly. The benefit he recognized to blogging was that he was in constant requisitioning of his English language skills while comparing himself to the other peer reviewers.

### **3.5 Analysis of the Blogger-Reviewer Interface**

This section of the analysis deals with the close examination of the blogger-reviewer interface. As explained in the methodology chapter to achieve the purpose of this research study, it is necessary to examine the participants' writing on the blog. The analysis of the student-bloggers' writing is presented in the first section, followed by the analysis of the reviewers' comments on the bloggers' writing.

#### **A- Bloggers' Posts Writing**

The first step of the analysis consisted in examining the two student-bloggers' posts and determine the typology that emerged from each blogger's posts. The second step consisted in analyzing the online blog entries. The evaluation was based on the same marking scheme utilized for the evaluation of the pre-blogging written assignments.

#### **Typology of Genres**

Table 12 displays Mohamed-Amine's types of blog posts and table 13 displays Nedjemeddine's.

Mohamed Amine			
Post Nbr	Title	Type	AbI
post # 1	<b>Football in our lives</b>	effect	Yes
post # 2	<b>The Dream Team</b>	opinion	Yes
post # 3	<b>Heart of the Art</b>	opinion	Yes
post # 4	<b>Happy New Year</b>	wishes	No
post # 5	<b>The Straight Way to a man's heart</b>	Pro/con	Yes
post # 6	<b>House Music</b>	Definition	Yes

Table 12: Typology of Mohamed-Amine's Posts

\*AbI= Abiding by the Instructions

Nedjemeddine			
Post Nbr	Title	Type	AbI
post # 1	<b>The Eyes</b>	Description	Yes
post # 2	<b>The One and Only</b>	Reflection	No
post # 3	<b>Life is a Boat</b>	comparison	No
post # 4	<b>Who Am I ?</b>	poem	No
post # 5	<b>Trust</b>	Definition	Yes
post # 6	<b>Save Yourself</b>	poem	No
post # 7	<b>Home!!!</b>	Definition	Yes

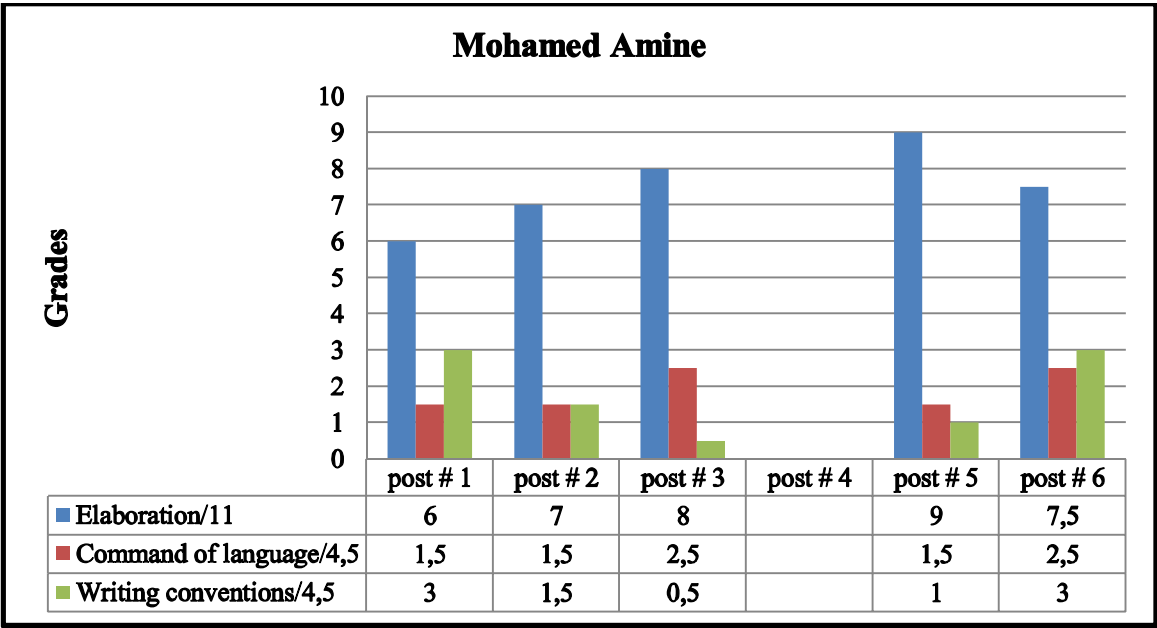
Table 13: Typology of Nedjemeddine's Posts

The comparison between the two tables reveals individual differences between the two student bloggers. Indeed, the two learners approached the writing task differently. If Mohamed-Amine followed the teacher's instructions carefully i.e., he wrote compositions corresponding to the type of paragraphs studied in class, Nedjemeddine decided to produce different types of writings of a non-academic-like type. His decision of not completely meeting the objective of the task and having his

own plan of action for the blogging activity can be explained by personality factors. Indeed, the two student-bloggers were observed for attitudes and behaviors during the regular writing sessions. Mohamed-Amine can be described as an extrovert and Nedjemeddine as an introvert (Brown, 2000; 154). Both student-bloggers had different goals in mind and therefore performed their blogging tasks accordingly, the introvert student showing more freedom in his decisions (Dörnyei, 1998; 120).

**(i) Mohamed-Amine’s Blog Post Writing**

As previously mentioned, each student-blogger’s paragraphs on the blog were reviewed and graded on the basis of three main writing characteristics, i.e. elaboration, command of language, and writing conventions. Diagram 8 below displays Mohamed-Amine’s grades for each aforementioned criterion. The numbers correspond to the specific grades given to each of the features of the post, and the bars show their variations from one post to another:



Overall Grade/20	Post #1	Post #2	Post #3	Post #4	Post #5	Post #6
	10,5/20	10/20	11/20		11,5/20	13/20

**Diagram 8: Variation of Mohamed-Amine’s writing through his Blogging Experience**

The above diagram shows that Mohamed-Amine's writing skill evolved regularly throughout the different posts. The most significant progress concerns his ability to develop his thoughts and ideas within the paragraphs (=elaboration) . Elaboration improved steadily until it reached a peak in post #5. Post #4 was deliberately left blank as the student did not write a paragraph related to our writing class, but wrote a message to address his best wishes on the occasion of the New Year. However, Mohamed-Amine 's command of language ,i.e, his ability to use elaborate vocabulary and a variety of sentence patterns did not show much progress. Nevertheless, despite the fact that he made use of a variety of adjective , adverbial ,and noun clauses , his weak mastery of punctuation made him produce several fragments and comma splices. Finally, his ability to use English writing conventions (grammar, spelling , and mechanics) properly in his paragraphs was uneven . Grammar mistakes like subject-verb agreement or wrong sentence parallelism were quite numerous, followed by mistakes in mechanics, mainly punctuation and capitalization. There were also a great deal of spelling mistakes which might be due to typing , possibly because the posts were written directly on the blogging platform and not copied and pasted from a word processor which generally underlines misspelt words to grab the writer's attention. Nonetheless, these mistakes did not obscure the meaning of the posts.

Diagram 9 below gives a more precise picture of the evolution of Mohamed-Amine's writing through his blog entries:

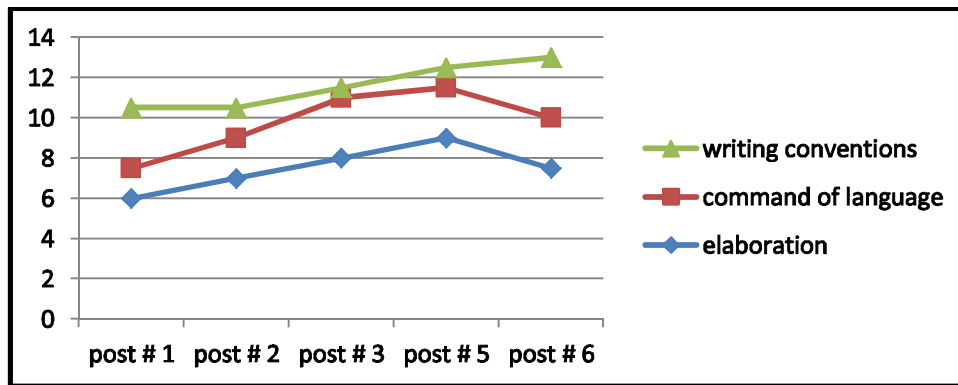


Diagram 9: Analysis of Mohamed-Amine's Blog Posts

The lines show that in spite of the change of grades across the three variables used to assess the posts (writing conventions, command of language, and elaboration), the overall quality of his writing constantly progressed through the five posts. The progression is confirmed by the grades obtained (see Diagram 9 above). The examination of his post-blogging writing assignment gave additional evidence of this progress in his writing skills (Cf. section 3.1:p.34). The improvement of his writing throughout his blogging experience is the result of his constant will to apply the knowledge he got from the Writing Techniques Course. The picture in Figure 3 below illustrates how Mohamed-Amine has done his best to meet the requirements of academic writing (See the word copy in Appendix J: p.147)

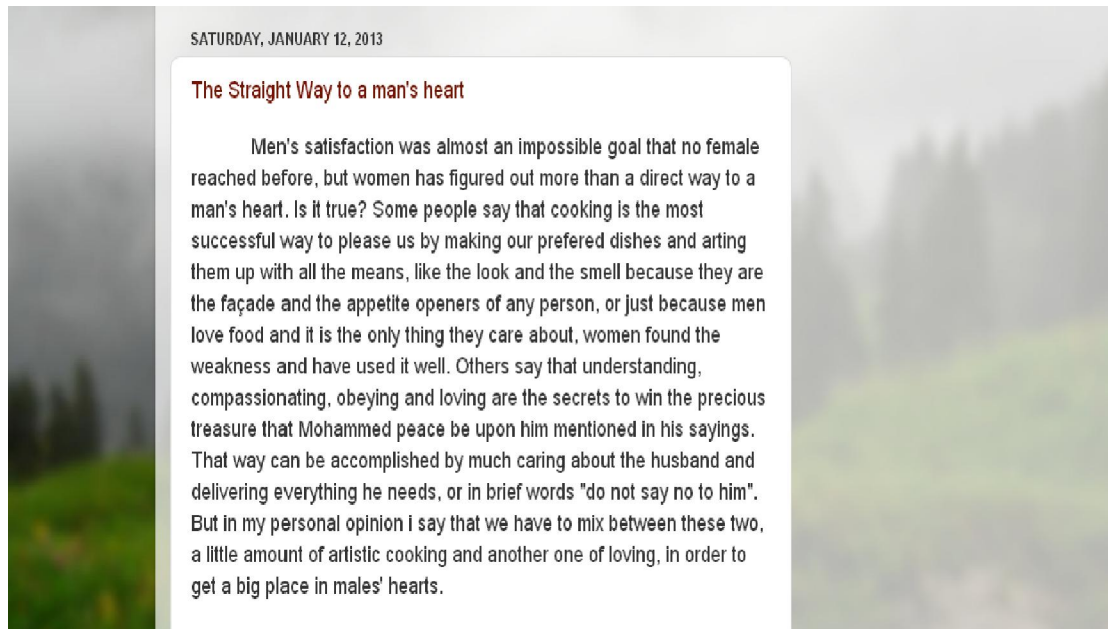


Figure 3: Image of Mohamed-Amine's Post #5

Another characteristic of Mohamed-Amine's post writing is that his knowledge of internet technology was transparent in his blog. It seemed quite sophisticated as he embellished his posts with images illustrating the topics of his posts. Below are some illustrations used by Mohamed-Amine for the topic 'The Straight way to a man's heart'

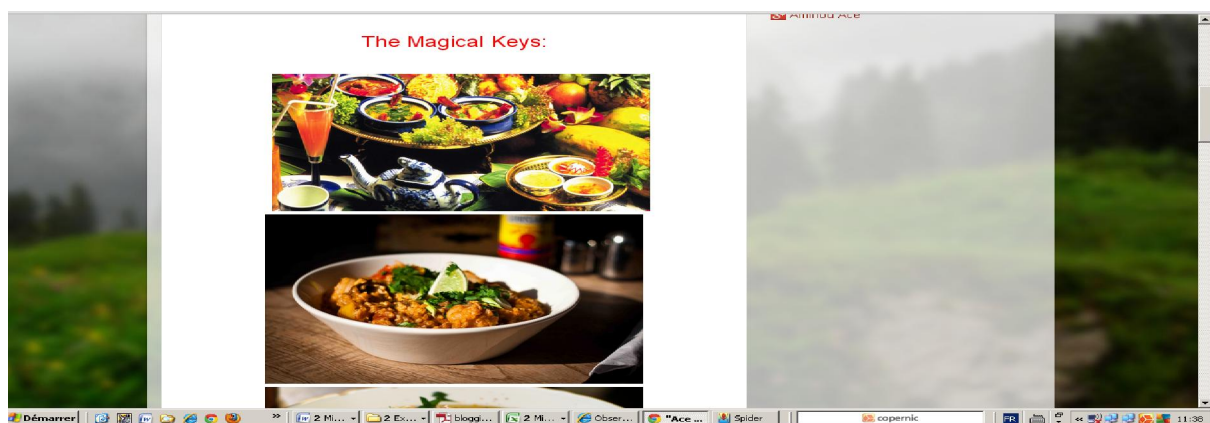


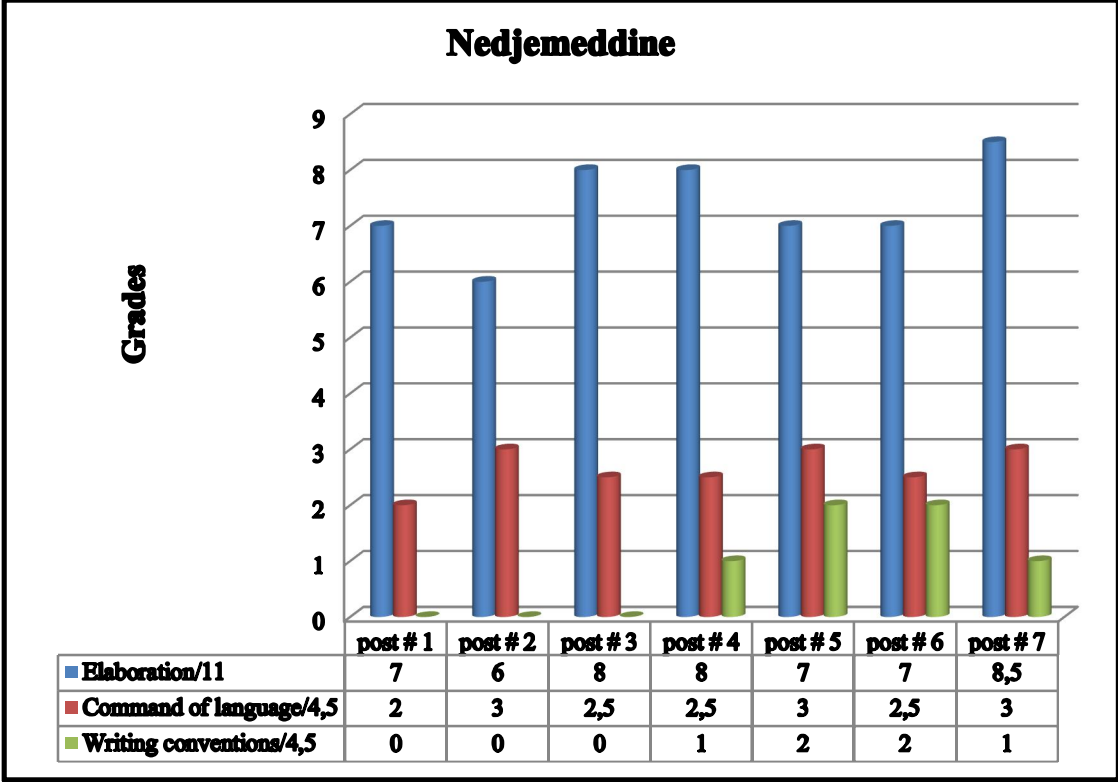
Figure 4: Illustrations in Mohamed-Amine's Blog

Mohamed-Amine's enthusiasm continued after the experiment. Indeed, the design chosen for the experiment made the teacher an invisible observer, and from her observations on the blogs she provided feedback beneficial to the whole class. To benefit from this aspect of blogging Mohamed-Amine continued writing on his blog even after the termination of the experiment and achieved impressive results in the second semester exam in which he obtained the best grade of his group 16, 5/20.

### **(ii).Nedjemeddine's Blog Post Writing**

The same procedure was used for the examination of Nedjemeddine's blog entries. However, in comparison, Nedjemeddine 's posts were more difficult to evaluate using the criterion-based marking scheme as he tended to drift away from the expected objective of the blogging activity .It should be stressed that the individual blogs were meant to be the extension of the classroom and give students more room for writing practice. However, even if he did not practice the academic writing genre taught in class, Nedjemeddine's intention was to express himself through writing, so his posts were evaluated according to this goal .The ability to write good and well-balanced paragraphs was assessed, but as his purpose was to convey his feelings about certain events of his life, he made very detailed descriptions of them and gave personal definitions of things that mattered to him. For his command of language, he used vivid vocabulary and sentence patterns more likely to communicate his emotions.Nevertheless, the weakest aspects of his writing is definitely his use of writing conventions. He made a large number of grammatical mistakes. namely ,i.e, subject-verb agreement, missing verb, improper use of tenses, articles,...etc. Punctuation and capitalization were also issues, but the most debilitating feature of his

writing was the countless number of spelling mistakes in each post. A problem we already noticed in his pre-blogging writing assignment. After post#3, some improvement was noticed as shown in Diagram 10 below :



Overall Grade/20	Post #1 09/20	Post #2 09/20	Post #3 10,5/20	Post #4 11,5/20	Post #5 12/20	Post #6 11,5/20	Post #7 12,5/20
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Diagram 10: Variation of Nedjemeddine’s writing through his Blogging Experience

To confirm the improvement noticed in Nedjemeddine’s writing, analysis an in-depth-analysis of his blog entries was done. This is displayed in Diagram 11 below:

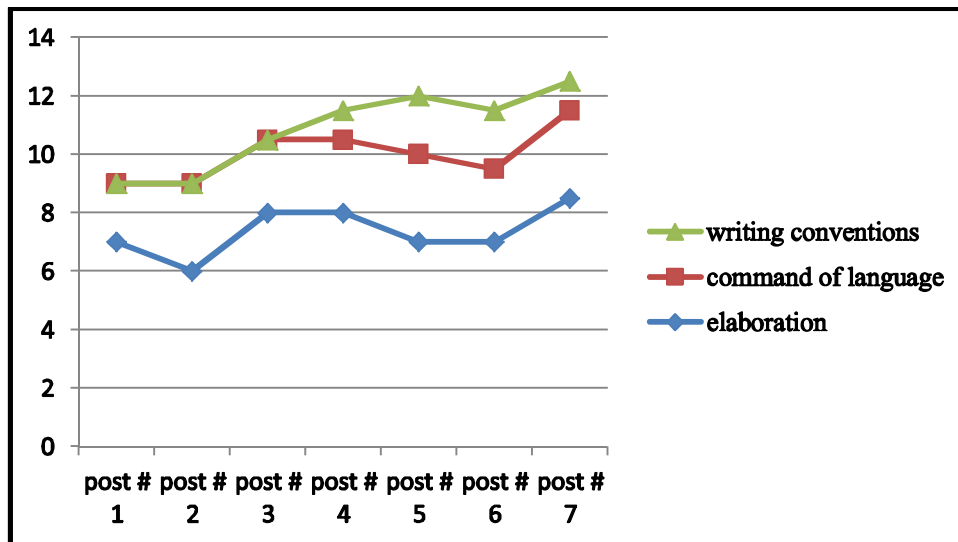


Diagram 11: Analysis of Nedjemeddine's Blog Posts

As it has already appeared in Diagram 10 above despite some variations in the three major criteria for evaluating writing, Nedjemeddine's writing improved steadily all through the blogging experience. The grades in diagram 11 reflected this improvement.

In conclusion , the two student bloggers'posts revealed the following features : elaboration for both student bloggers improved significantly throughout the posts. Indeed,both participants seem to have developed an awareness of the requirements for English composition in terms of content and organization.However, the improvement is less tangible for the other two criteria:command of language and writing conventions.Their command of language ( word choice and sentence fluency) did not improve as significantly as elaboration.However, the use of rich vocabulary with more attention paid to sentency fluency (sentence structure and variety) were noticeable but not sufficient to produce excellent and adequate posts.The last criterion

‘Writing conventions’ showed the least conclusive results. Both student bloggers made too many grammar , mechanics, and spelling mistakes for such short posts.

### **B- Reviewers’ Comments: Positive and Negative Feedback**

After the blog entries analysis , we turned to the comments made by peer reviewers on these entries. Table 14 below distinguishes between positive and negative comments ones in relation to the three criteria used to assess the blog posts. However, the peer reviewers often failed to give specific feedback as their comments were rather general. A content analysis of the peer reviewers’ comments and remarks helped to identify the type of the comments : positive or negative .Any comment peer reviewers made about what they liked in the bloggers’posts is considered as positive .What they did not like is negative:

	<b>Types of comments received by the reviewers</b>		
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Student blogger 1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Student Blogger 2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>53</b>

Table 14 : Positive and Negative Comments among Student Bloggers

This table shows that the comments for student blogger 2 outnumber those for student blogger 1. The reason is that not all posts made by Mohamed-Amine received comments whereas Nedjemedine received more comments for his posts. Yet, there is an almost even distribution of the positive and negative comments for each student blogger, which indicates that the peer reviewers followed the teacher’s instruction which was to give feedback not only on what was not successfully achieved in the

paragraphs but also on what they liked in their classmates' compositions .Appendix H (p.142) provides examples of positive and negative comments.

Another interesting point that emerged from the comment analysis is that peer reviewers made different types of comments both positive and negative.(See Diagram 12 below):

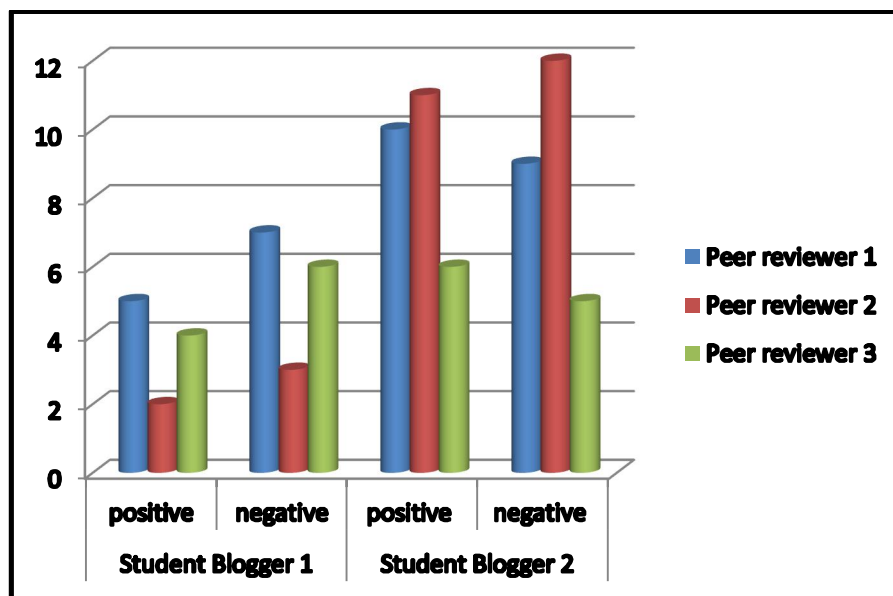


Diagram 12: Positive and Negative Comments Made by the Three Peer Reviewers

The results confirm that Nedjemedine' s posts triggered more responses from his peers than Mohamed-Amine's.However, in terms of distribution of positive and negative comments both student bloggers received an even ratio . The analysis of the comments in terms of the eight subcategories used for assessing the bloggers'posts (style , elaboration, coherence, vocabulary. grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) criteria used for assessing the bloggers' posts reveals some interesting findings.(See Diagram 13 below):

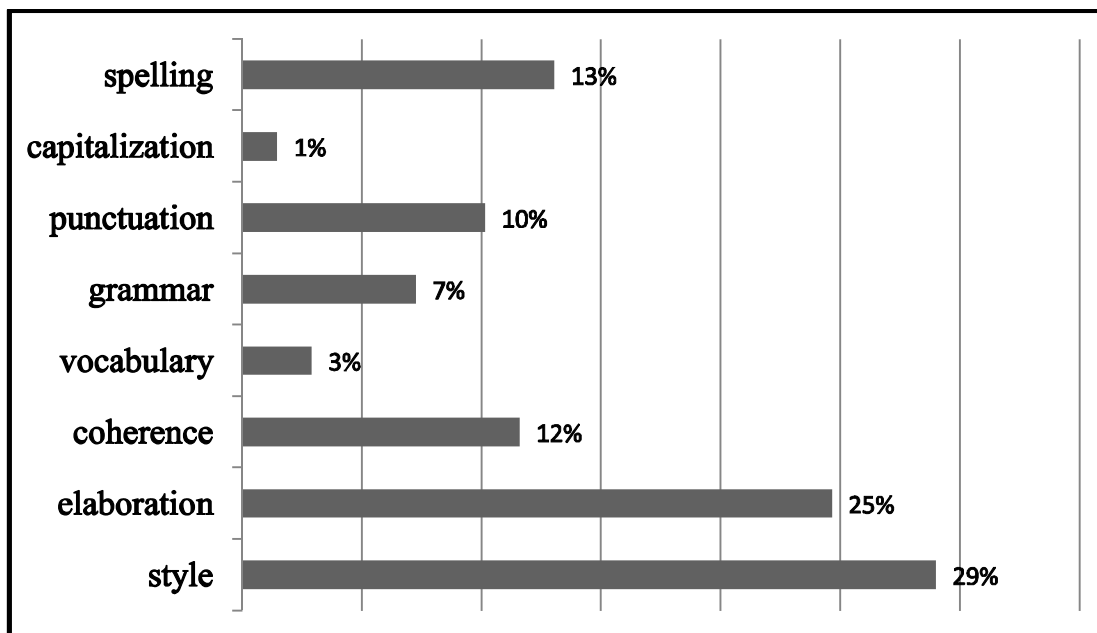


Diagram 13: Typology of the Peer reviewers' Comments

The diagram shows that most reviewers focused their comments on how the student bloggers' constructed their responses. The highest percentage of comments (54%) concerns the style and elaboration of the compositions. Most of the comments were positive showing how highly receptive to the content the peer reviewers were. This is important to note because this kind of feedback is highly recommended at initial stages of the composing process. As Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) rightly remark that feedback made at this stage by peers or other assessors should be as encouraging as possible and that comments for editing and proofreading should come subsequently. In most of their comments the peer reviewers followed this sequence: they appraised the overall quality of the texts then moved to criticizing the surface features of the entries by commenting on the student bloggers' command of language and use of writing conventions. These last two categories received most of the negative comments.

**(i) Comments on Mohamed-Amine's Posts**

The analysis of the comments on Mohamed-Amine’s posts made show that there was an even distribution between positive and negative comments, as Diagram 14 below shows:

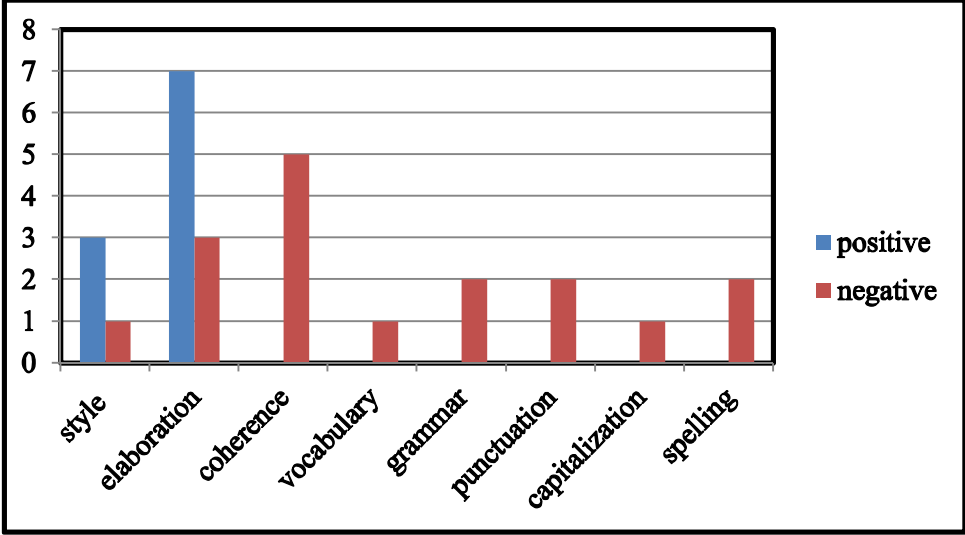


Diagram 14: Typology of Comments Made by Peer Reviewers on Mohamed-Amine’s Posts

Diagram 14 demonstrates that most of Mohamed-Amine’s posts collected negative comments on form rather than content. Something he deplored in his questionnaire though he admitted that he learnt a lot from the peer reviewers’ remarks and followed some of their advice.

**(ii) Comments on Nedjemeddine’s Posts**

In terms of peer reviewers’ comments, Nedjemeddine received almost as many positive comments as negative ones with the following distribution as show in Diagram 15 below:

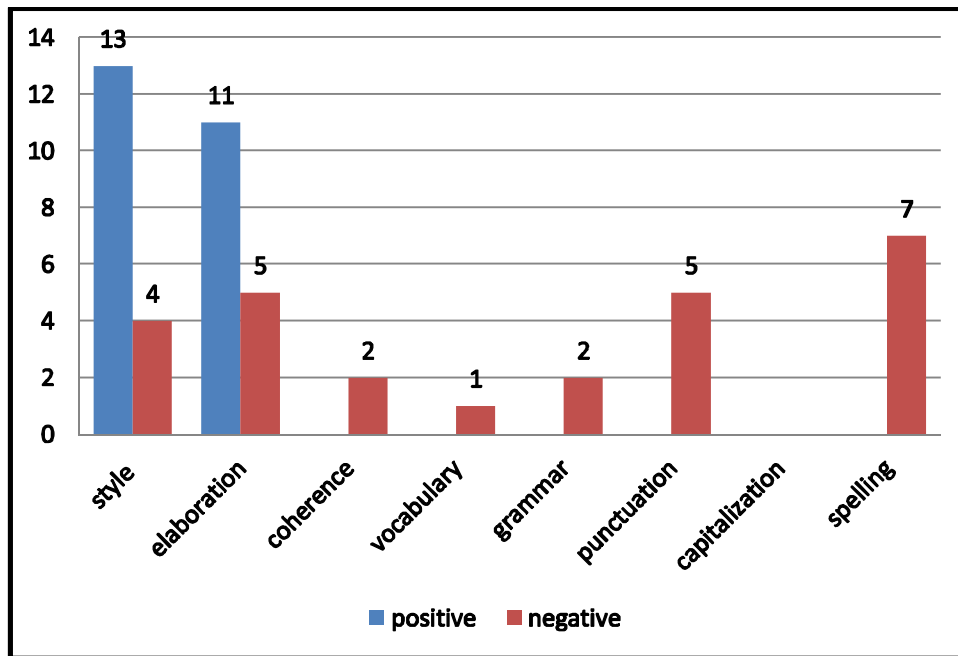


Diagram 15: Typology of Comments Made by Peer reviewers on Nedjemeddine's Posts

Diagram 15 shows that most of the positive comments were on content not form. The negative comments on form relate to spelling and punctuation mistakes, two weak areas in his writing that he had already self-diagnosed in his questionnaire. Unlike Mohamed-Amine, Nedjemeddine valued comments on form, but not on content as he considered matters of content (style or elaboration) as something highly idiosyncratic. In fact, Nedjemeddine would not allow any comments on his content because his writing is writer-oriented and not reader-oriented. For him peer reviewing should be restricted to the surface aspects of the writing.

### **Conclusion: Cross-case Analysis**

The analyses of the five cases of this study resulted in showing the participants' positive feelings towards the use of blogs in the ESL/EFL language classroom. They all saw advantages to their utilization for the writing course. However, the evaluation of the results showed diverse benefits for the development of the participants' writing

skills. Indeed, if the results showed noticeable improvements for the student-bloggers: Mohamed-Amine and Nedjemeddine, this was more contrasted for the peer reviewers. Mohamed-Amine and Nedjemeddine's writing skills seem to have benefited from their classmates' feedback even if their purposes in blogging were different. Mohamed-Amine's purpose was to use blogging as an extension of the traditional writing class, with the opportunity offered to practice what he learnt in class. On the other hand, Nedjemeddine saw his blog not only as an opportunity to showcase his writings to an audience of peers but also an opportunity to express his deepest feelings. Hence, he was disinclined to read any critical comment on his content.

For the peer reviewers the blogging experience was not useful to improve their writing skills despite their active participation in the commenting tasks. Ferial was the one with the most unexpected results. With her good initial writing skills, she should have at least refined her knowledge of the writing skills, compared to her two student blogger classmates, but she did not. She somehow stagnated. Among the peer reviewers, Wassila is definitely the one who did not benefit from her blogging practice if some aspects of her writing actually improve as the elaboration and support of her answers, we cannot say with certitude that this was due to her blogging experience. However, we believe that for a student who started with such a poor level of writing proficiency filling in the gaps is arduous in higher education. We confirmed this with Wassila as in the ensuing semester the evaluation we made of her writing skills just after the blogging experience remained unchanged, especially in her command of language and use of writing conventions. In his overall writing proficiency Amine, on

the other hand, benefited from his blogging experience, but this was not settled in the second semester.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

In spite of the difficulties inherent to the implementation of a technology-based experience like blogging, the data collected from the writing activities of student bloggers, Mohamed-Amine and Nedjemeddine, and the peer reviewing tasks of peer reviewers, Ferial, Wassila, provided valuable information in relation to the three research questions:

RQ 1. Does blogging have an effect on the participants' writing?

RQ 2. Does reviewing student bloggers' post have an effect on peer reviewers' own writing?

RQ 3. What are both blog writers and peer reviewers' perceptions of their blogging experience?

The case studies analysis highlighted the potential benefits and impediment for learning outcomes in the EFL writing classroom. However, the results showed that in terms of improvement of the writing proficiency, this blogging experience was more beneficial to student bloggers even if one of the peer reviewers, Amine improved his writing significantly after this experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

# **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

## **Chapter 4: Discussion of the Results**

This case study research purports to explore the potential for weblogs to become valuable learning tools in the EFL writing class. Discussing the results of the data generated by our research tools is of cardinal importance. Indeed, putting the insightful information obtained into perspective allows a more comprehensive picture of the use of this technological tool in the EFL language classroom. The findings of the present investigation are discussed in this chapter in the light of the research questions, which inquired about the learning outcomes of blogging in an Algerian EFL writing class, the appropriateness of blogs as an internet-based device likely to improve the efficiency of EFL writing instruction, and students' reactions to their experience with blogging.

### **4.1. Blogging as a Skill-Building Activity in the EFL Writing Classroom**

The causal relation between blogging and the improvement of students' writing skills can be established to a certain extent. Indeed, the results of our investigation corroborate the findings of other blogging-related researches in respect of the development of writing skills (Jones, 2006; Zhang, 2009; Vurdien, 2011; Fageeh, 2011; Cequena, 2013). The writing skill improvements were contrasted between the different types of participants. If for the two student-blogger participants, Mohamed-Amine and Nedjemeddine, the blogging experience was profitable, it was less conclusive for the peer reviewers. The triangulation of the results provided by the pre and post-test, the blog entries, the peer reviewers' comments, and the responses to the questionnaires helped to understand and explain not only these differences of

outcomes between the student bloggers and the peer reviewers but the extent to which blogging helps as a skill-building activity for both bloggers and peer-reviewers.

#### **A. Factors of Improvement for the Bloggers.**

The analysis of the student-bloggers' blog entries and their pre and post-tests showed that blogging had a significant effect on the overall quality of their writing. However, only specific aspects of their writing improved noticeably, such as style and ability to elaborate and support their answers to produce coherent and effective pieces of writing. These findings correlate with Cequena's research (2013) that identified the same areas of improvements in her participants' writing skills. There are many reasons why using online language learning environments like blogs have proved to be determinant in the progress blogger-participants made.

The first noticeable benefit for our participants is that blogging is an opportunity for output, one of the principles advocated for successful instructed language learning as 'output helps to automatize existing knowledge' (Ellis, 2008:4). During the experiment, Mohamed-amine who tried to apply his knowledge of good paragraph traits in each of his blog entries and who confirmed in his post-test that these had been learned is a good example of how blogging can contribute to the process of second language learning. Another important role of the output relevant to our study is that 'output helps learners develop a personal voice by steering conversation to topics which they are interested in contributing' (Ellis, 2008:4). Indeed, Nedjemeddine (student-blogger 2) wrote mostly on topics that mattered to him choosing deliberately

a non-academic genre of writing and favoring free constructed responses to his assigned blogging task.

The second impacting factor revealed by the analysis of the student-blogger questionnaire is the notion of audience discussed in many researches (Pinkman, 2005; Arena & Thomas Jefferson, 2008; Fageeh, 2011). A notion which is particularly important in blogging, as the decision of an individual to maintain a blog is generally driven by the will of having a group of readers or followers. In the context of this study, the audience was limited to the peer reviewers and the “behind-the curtain” teacher-researcher. Nedjemeddine evoked in his questionnaire that this audience of peer readers activated his desire to surpass himself to impress his classmates. This restricted audience went ‘global’ (Pinkman, 2005: 21) when Mohamed-Amine (student-blogger 1) invited a foreign friend as a follower who posted a comment on one of his blog entries, illustrating the possibility with blogging of communicative interaction beyond classmates or local environments.

These interactions with peers are indeed conditions for optimal language learning (Egbert, Chao & Hanson-Smith, 1999:4) and at the core of the socio-constructivist theories of learning. Moore (1989, cited in Woods & Baker, 2004) qualified these interplays as ‘learner-learner interaction’, including interactions occurring between learners, with or without the presence of the teacher, alone or in group settings. In this study, these interactions occurred through peer feedback on blog entries and allowed to negotiate meaning between participants as attested by the online exchange between Nedjemeddine and Amine (peer reviewer 3). The student-bloggers voiced in their questionnaires how this type of interactions with peer reviewers affected their writing

by reconsidering the mistakes they made. These positive perceptions are congruent with the findings of some recently reported researches on peer reviewing (Puegphrom & Chiramanee, 2011; Jahin, 2012)

However, if student-bloggers' overall writing proficiency undoubtedly benefited from this short blogging interval, it was not as positive for the peer reviewers.

### **B. Effect of Online Peer Reviewers 'Feedback on their Own Overall Writing Proficiency.**

The comparison of peer reviewers' pre and post-tests did not provide the positive results we expected at the outset of this project. The comparative analysis shows that if the peer reviewers as their blogger counterparts improved at the macro level of their writing, their command of language and writing conventions were not sufficient to achieve the same level of writing performance. Indeed, they could not benefit in their own writing from all the types of mistakes they spotted in their classmates' blog entries. The analysis of their comments showed that their positive comments were generally on style and elaboration and not meant to induce content changes except for some comments on Nedjemeddine's posts, and that most of their negative comments were on writing conventions. However, both types of comments remained at the surface-level, which did not generate changes of meaning. In their taxonomy of types of revision, Faigley and Witte (1981:403) coined them "formal-changes" and "meaning-preserving changes". These low-learning outcomes do not concur with the reported study focusing on peer-reviewing of Lundstrom and Baker (2009). In this study, peer reviewers actually improved their writing by just peer reviewing. However,

this improvement did not happen as reported in Wakabayashi's experiment (2013) where peer reviewers' only reviewing others students' texts did not perform as well as peer reviewers' writing and reviewing their own texts. One of the explanations of this disruption of the reading-writing connection for peer reviewers is their lack of training in the process of peer revision (Rollison, 2005). Another important factor worth considering is that blogging as a text-based activity is more pertinent to develop macro writing skills than micro skills like grammar or mechanics. Consequently, student-bloggers being writers took full advantage of their blogging experience unlike their peer reviewing classmates. To circumvent this impediment, an additional tutor blog (Campbell, 2003) could have come to complement the blogging activity and provide links to skill-building website to support learning on the blog.

#### **4.2. Students' Perceptions of their Blogging Experience**

Processing the data collected from the questionnaires provided valuable insights about the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards blogging in the EFL writing classroom. As in many studies on blog assisted language learning (Ward, 2004; Jones, 2006; Ahluwalia, Gupta & Aggarwal, 2011; Wan & Tan, 2011), those were positive in this study. The content analysis of the students' responses revealed certain perceived benefits of blogging on their language learning, which relate both to the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

##### **A. Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors of Improvement**

- *Blogging enhances the connection between writing and thinking skills.*

The analysis of the student-blogger questionnaires revealed that participants made a connection between writing and thinking. For example, Mohamed-Amine wrote “I became a better writer”, and Nedjemeddine wrote that it gave him time to think, write, combine, and order his thoughts. These responses show that connecting writing to thinking does not come naturally and has to be learnt and practiced, mainly through process writing which in this experiment was taught in the traditional classroom. Actually, blogging allows the composing processes to interplay (Zamel, 1983). Zamel reported cases of these processes in ESL advanced students, but they can also apply to our undergraduate participants. Before posting their blog entries, the student-bloggers had to select the content of their posts then interact with the content to produce texts adequate enough to be posted and read by the audience. However, before achieving the desirable written outcome, students have to go through the process of gathering the relevant data and making decisions about data presentation, which is quite subjective and goes beyond grammar or writing conventions. This subjectivity is what differentiates between writers. Differences we noticed in the composition patterns of the two student-bloggers’ posts.

In addition to the thinking skills students developed while writing, the interaction with peer reviewers through the comments they made was a result of blogging. Even if those were not cognitively challenging for the peer reviewers or inducing “text-base changes” (Faigley & Witte, 1981:403), both student-bloggers evoked in their questionnaires the changes they made in their texts after reading their classmates’ comments although Mohamed-Amine was a little skeptical about some of the peer reviewers’ comments which were not necessarily constructive according to him.

Nedjemeddine questioned a comment of peer reviewer 3 on one of his posts. Yet, whatever the type of feedback made by the peer reviewers, the purpose behind was always writing improvement, and the student-bloggers were free to consider the comments made as potential corrections. Their questioning about the appropriateness of feedback shows that blogging can also promote critical-thinking skills and consequently learning. In an interdisciplinary guide for the use of peer reviewing in higher education, Pearce, Mulder, and Baik (2009) reported a certain number of studies that confirm the benefits of peer reviewing for critical-thinking and learning in general.

- *Blogging enhances the reading-writing connection*

Another benefit pertaining to the cognitive domain of learning is the reading-writing connection grounding the blogging activity. This was revealed by the peer reviewers' questionnaires. To perform the reviewing task assigned to them, peer reviewers had to read their classmates' posts. In their questionnaires, they wrote that they learnt a lot from the mistakes their classmates made in their posts. Peer reviewer 2 wrote she learnt how to write academically from reading the blog entries. As in Jones's study (2006), the blog entries served as written models for peer reviewers to follow in their own writings. This is an excellent example of how blogs can serve as an effective interface between reading and writing. In our study, the areas of improvements perceived by peer reviewers in their questionnaires were mainly vocabulary, punctuation, and paragraph structure. These perceived areas of improvement for the peer reviewers attest the link between reading and writing for our

peer reviewers, yet this connection remains at the information and structure knowledge identified by research in reading (Rubin & Hansen, 1986).

- *Blogging is a metacognitive activity*

The peer reviewer questionnaire unveiled a surprising metacognitive effect of blogging, more precisely of online peer reviewing. Metacognition is an important component of learning, as it forces learners to consider what they know, what they do not know, and what actions they should take to reduce the gap between the two. For example, peer reviewer 1, Ferial, mentioned that she had to look-up words in the dictionary before commenting because it was important to know the word first before correcting it in others' writing. Similarly, peer reviewer 3, Amine, who used French to answer his questionnaire, wrote that he checked information in terms of spelling and meaning before putting it on the blogs as a comment. By doing this, he was bound to re-consider his English language competence by comparing himself to other participants. This is the evidence that there was a permanent cognitive conflict between what the reviewer knew and what he could do to perform his task properly. The peer reviewer was indeed in a constant process of self-evaluation, a recognized metacognitive strategy in SLL (Second Language Learning) defined as the "checking outcomes of one's own knowledge language learning against a standard after the learning has been completed" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:232).

### **B. Affective and Motivational Factors of Improvement in Blogging.**

Affective and motivational benefits of blogging such as self-esteem, anxiety, and motivation were identified in the in-depth analysis of the questionnaires.

- *Blogging increases self-esteem/self-confidence*

According to Brown (2007), the impact of affective factors is as important as cognitive factors on language learning. Some of these affective factors are self-esteem and its corollary, anxiety. Brown identified different types of self-esteem, but the one that is pertinent to our study is task-self-esteem (p.155). Task self-esteem is the evaluation a learner makes of a specific situation. In this context, it is one's self-evaluation of the writing /peer reviewing. This task self-esteem relates to one type of foreign language anxiety that is here a 'situation-specific anxiety' (Ellis, 1994: 480). This explains certain attitudes and perceptions bloggers and peer reviewers had during their blogging experience. Both peer reviewers 2 and 3 self-evaluated their writing skills before coming to university as poor or even very poor. For example, for peer reviewer 2, writing was something hard requiring many sub-skills. In spite of her self-proclaimed weaknesses, she had positive feelings about writing in general. This lack of self-esteem from both peer reviewers generated some kind of anxiety related to the peer-reviewing task. Peer reviewer 3 qualified it as a stressful experience because of the "presence" of a potentially reproving audience of peers. These factors affected their peer-reviewing task in that they engaged in a kind of escape. They did not comment or provide constructive feedback as often as they wanted, pointing their lack of English language competency. This could explain why they did not improve as significantly as student-bloggers. These findings concord with the findings some studies on self-esteem and anxiety in foreign language learning (Williams & Andrade, 2008; Zare & Riasati, 2012).

- *Blogging increases motivation*

From the analysis of the questionnaires, an important construct pertinent to blogging as a potentially effective EFL learning environment emerged, the construct of motivation. A multi-faceted phenomenon quite difficult to define in simple terms but generally categorized as extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. In our study, the participants' motivation could be characterized as intrinsic because they were all volunteers without any expectation of getting benefits from their participation in terms of grades. Nevertheless, we can go further and examine the aspects of blogging which could have engendered this motivation that Gardner (2007:10) calls 'language learning motivation'. The lack of this type of motivation may explain poor learning outcomes (Bernard, 2010).

- *Motivation is boosted by the blogging interface:*

The first motivational aspect of blogging comes from the language-learning situation supported by blogs. On the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand, et al, 1992) this corresponds to 'intrinsic motivation to experience simulation' (p.1006). The questionnaires provided evidence of this motivation when students were asked about their feelings towards technology for learning in the language classroom. Most students gave hints of evidence, but Mohamed-Amine and Ferial were the most expressive. They wrote respectively: "It was a magnificent experience", "...with blogging you enjoy learning."

- *Motivation is boosted by the audience:*

The concept of audience previously mentioned is also a non-negligible factor of motivation. The possibility offered by blogs to interact with an audience of peers gave the student-bloggers a purpose to publish texts on their blogs. On this matter, the two student-bloggers had two different approaches. Nedjemeddine's writings were not audience-oriented in the sense that he did not write for his audience. For example, he did not write on topics that would appeal to his readers, but rather on personal topics. Yet, he considered this audience as people who could testify of his writing skills. This kind of motivation was labeled by Ausubel in 1968 (cited in Brown, 2007:169) "the need for ego-enhancement, for the self to be known and to be accepted and approved by others." On the other hand, Mohamed-Amine wrote with his audience in mind on topics more likely to interest young-adults like him: football, food...etc. To immediately grab his readers' attention on the topics being discussed, he integrated illustrative pictures. His purpose was to achieve the task assigned to him the best he could, and his blogging gave him the opportunity to display his writing skills and his technological skills as well. Warshauer (2000) explains that "when a student understands well the purpose of an activity and finds the electronic medium appropriate to fulfill the task, he experiences high motivation and engagement" (op.cit 52). It is noteworthy that his use of visuals shows that when used for instruction, blogs can potentially address different learning styles, like here visual learners.

### **4.3. Limitations of the Study**

The current study investigated the potential use of weblogs in an EFL writing class to promote writing-skills with a group of five first year undergraduate students in the Pre-service Teacher Training College of Bouzareah. Although the research has

reached its aims, we are aware of its limitations. If we are to generalize the results of the data generated by our research tools, we have to reconsider certain aspects of this study.

The position of the researcher as the participants' teacher of writing sets limits to the generalization of the findings. The researcher's teaching style, experience, and favorable attitudes towards the use of technology in the language classroom limit the extension to other contexts. However, this experience can be adapted and transferred to adjust to a specific language-learning context (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985, cited in Seale, 2002: 104). The case study approach of this research where the teacher-researcher is the interpreter of the data might also be seen as a limiting factor for generalization as it might create reliability threats of the results. To reduce these threats, we tried to provide sufficient evidence through the triangulation of the data provided by our research tools to support our interpretation of the results (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). Limitations inherent to the research design need to be highlighted as it might preface further research on the topic. Indeed, Blog Assisted Language Learning for writing is still in need of a generic model transposable in any context. In this study, the researcher decided to let the student blog on their own with no intervention on the blogs; other models of blog integration are possible. However, to enhance the quality of the peer reviewing process, more specific training sessions on the task should be envisaged. This research could have benefited from a peer reviewer preparation providing more constructive and easily interpreted feedback. The last limitation is that despite its encouraging results, the study does not answer one important question about the impact of input on the students' writing skills in the context of the blended

language learning created by the blogging experience; so further comparative studies should be envisaged to determine the actual impact of classroom input within a blogging situation.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

# **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

## **Chapter 5: Pedagogical Implications**

Unsatisfactory learning outcomes in terms of writing skills in the department of English of the Teacher Training College (ENSSH) were at the onset of the present study. The analysis of the collected data has demonstrated, like in some similar studies presented in the review of literature, that blogs and blogging can foster and increase learning opportunities in the ESL\EFL writing class. The research results also illuminate some potential issues relating to the undisputable future use of blogs in the EFL writing class. Consequently, the insights gained from BALL studies are worth considering for successful implementations of weblogs in higher educational settings in Algeria. Indeed, higher education institutions are not just places for imparting information. They should be places that champion change in educational practices, places where students grow mentally and develop their social skills and self-confidence, and this in any area of the EFL curriculum. To achieve these goals, blogs and blogging are worth of consideration. This chapter presents the rationale for their use in higher education. The first section explains why blogs are optimal language learning environments. The second section presents how blogs can be integrated in the EFL language classroom. The last section deals with the benefits of blogs and blogging for instructors and learners respectively.

### **5.1. Blogs as Optimal Language Learning Environments**

Technology integration does not just happen in the EFL language classroom. This was true for previous technological tools, but it is even more undeniable for blogs and blogging. Research, despite all the studies undertaken in the field of ESL/EFL

education, has not been able to give definitive responses to ESL/EFL instructors confronted daily to the issue of providing the necessary conditions to foster effective language learning. Splosky (1989) asserted that without the six specific conditions listed below language learning could not take place, or that the outcome could not be reasonably be considered as second language knowledge (p.170):

- 1) Opportunity for Analysis condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity to learn it, consciously or unconsciously into its constituent parts.
- 2) Opportunity for Synthesis condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity to learn how its constituent parts are recombinable grammatically into larger units.
- 3) Opportunity for Contextual Embedding condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity how its elements are embedded in linguistics and non-linguistic contexts.
- 4) Opportunity of Matching condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity for the learner to match his or her knowledge with that of native speakers or other targets.
- 5) Opportunity for Remembering condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity for new items to be remembered.
- 6) Opportunity for Practice condition: Learning a language involves an opportunity for the new skills to be practiced ; the result is fluency

These conditions could apply to the learning of writing in the traditional language learning classroom where successful learning outcomes are the result of the interplay between language learners and these learning opportunities. However, these conditions are not sufficient to evaluate technology-enhanced language learning environment. A more comprehensive research-supported list of conditions to evaluate optimal language learning environments was proposed by Egbert, Chao, and, Hanson-Smith (1999:4).The eight interwoven conditions they put forward can apply to blogs and blogging:

***1-Learners have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning.***

In the language learning process, interaction is the core of the negotiation of meaning. Consequently, teachers in the EFL language classroom invest efforts and time to find or create opportunities for interaction. These interactions should ideally exist between native-speakers and non-native speakers of the target language, but they can also happen between proficient and less proficient users of the target language. Blogs allow different types of written interactions not only between teacher and students but also between proficient and less proficient students. The specific comment feature of blogs can lead to continuous written interaction.

### ***2-Learner interacts in the target language with an authentic audience.***

Chances to communicate and interact with native speakers in traditional EFL classroom are scarce if not almost impossible. In blogs teachers and classmates constitute a knowledgeable audience. This audience can be extended to native speakers of English with appropriate planning as blogs can be open to any invited guest or follower around the globe.

### ***3-Learners are involved in authentic tasks.***

Basically, the construct of authenticity can be defined as natural language behavior (Widdowson,1990: 45).In the EFL classroom, this means that “ children should have opportunities to engage in activities that closely resemble those they will encounter in the adult life”(Omrod, 2008:332) .These two constructs can apply to blogging. Indeed, with the exponential expansion of the blogosphere, blogging has become a human interactive activity in its own right. Writing through blogs by using

the resources they offered in terms of tools and social interaction has become a real-world activity students are likely to perform in their future life.

***4-Learners are exposed to and encouraged to produce varied and creative language.***

In instructed second language learning exposure to extensive input and opportunities for output are essential to the language learning process (Ellis, 2008). This matches Spolsky's Exposure Condition cited above (1989:166). In the EFL language classroom, the textbook provides this repeated exposure to this input and some opportunities to produce in the target language. For example, in the offline part of our experiment, the textbook used provided exposure to different text-types in each section, with the study of discrete features of academic writing. Nevertheless, these exposure and production remained insufficient, an insufficiency that can be settled by the combination of textbooks and technology. In blogs and blogging, the exposure is provided by the WWW, where students have in a click access to a myriad of related resources. Exposure to these resources leads to the production of more creative language rarely possible in the classroom.

***5-Learners have enough time and feedback.***

Egbert, Chao, and, Hanson-Smith (1999) stated that:

“Learners need adequate time and feedback. Both of these factors facilitate the formulation of ideas. Within the classroom, individual differences in ability, motivation, and other factors determine how much time each learner requires to complete a task successfully. This fact suggests that some flexibility must be built into the time line for the task. Only by this effort can all learners have the opportunity to communicate and reflect on their ideas.” (p.5)

More than for any of the other language skills, developing efficient writing skills takes time and necessitates feedback. Due to time constraints, these two conditions

have become issues in higher education .If we consider writing as a very personal form of communication, the question in the classroom is how to provide each student with the time and feedback he or she needs to achieve satisfactory learning outcomes to perform well in high-stakes examinations. Blogs as asynchronous CMC tool can be instrumental in answering this crucial question. Hyland (2003) already pointed out that this non-synchronicity allowed text composition and edition before transmission and this at a more leisurely pace resulting in more reflective and considered responses (p.153).If blogs can free teachers and learners from the time constraints of in-situ course, they can also be conducting vectors of teacher or student feedback with interesting results as shown in our review of literature.

#### ***6-Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.***

If we understand language learning as a mindful process, the construct of mindfulness is important to define.” Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context (Langer, 2000: 220).When technology comes into play, learners must be willing to cease the learning opportunity offered by the technology to be cognitively engaged in the performance of the task (Egbert, Chao & Hanson-Smith, 1999:6). For writing,” The technological environment, in which it takes place, affects both writing and cognition “(Salomon, Kosminsky & Asaf, 2003).In blogs and blogging, the engagement comes from the motivation created by the new utilization of the environment for an unexpected educational purpose. This type of motivation was expressed by the participants in the questionnaires. Drawing on Jonassen’s views of cognitive tools (1995), we can say blogs perform as cognitive tools where learning takes place *with* not

*from* the technology as blogging allows the potential qualitative improvement in writing by the mindful engagement of the learners. However, Salomon, Perkins, and Globelson (1991) concluded that the benefits learners can obtain from technology as a cognitive tool " need to be cultivated through the appropriate design of technologies and the cultural surrounds"(p.8).This highlights the important role of the teachers as the designers of the technology integration, especially with blogs and blogging in the EFL writing class.

### ***7-Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level.***

In the traditional ESL/EFL language classroom, successful learning may depend on the teachers' abilities in lowering affective filters like stress and anxiety as they appear to be detrimental to the process (Krashen, 1982:32-33). Blogs are likely to provide the learner-centered environments recommended as inhibitors of high stress and anxiety levels. The individual and personal nature of blogs make of them ideal learner-centered environments. They are perceived by students as safe places to express their personal opinions than the classroom (Alm, 2009).The flexibility of time and space in blogging is an additional alleviator of stress and time because students can connect from home which supposes comfortable surroundings.

### ***8-Learner autonomy is supported.***

Researchers have not yet found an all-inclusive definition of the construct of autonomy in ESL/EFL language learning. The most consensual is Holec's (1981, as cited in Nunan, 2004:193) which is "the ability to take charge of one's learning". Autonomous learning is often associated to self-regulated learning which is:

“a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences. This process occurs when a student’s purposeful actions and processes are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills.” (Zumbrunn , Tadlock & Roberts , 2011:4)

In self-regulated learning, learners are involved in:

- setting goals for learning
- concentrating on instruction
- using effective strategies to organize ideas
- using resources effectively
- monitoring performance
- managing time effectively
- holding positive beliefs about one’s capabilities (Duckworth, Akerman, MacGregor, Salter & Vorhaus, 2009:ii)

Depending on the level of integration of the blogging activity in the ESL/EFL classroom, students have more or less the control of their performance. They have control over time, in the sense that they can access the blogging platform at any time of their convenience, sometimes late at night or even early in the morning as some of the participants in the study. They have also control over pace to achieve the objectives of the activity stated by the instructor. They make decision in terms of frequency and length of the blogging practice. They necessarily have a conscious or unconscious plan to meet the deadline assigned by the teachers.

All these characteristics are inherent to blogs. As they intertwine, they not only contribute to make of blogs optimal language learning environment for writing, but also language learning environments where constructivist learning principles apply.

Section 1.2 of the dissertation listed the characteristics of constructivist environment s identified by the literature. An examination of how blogs and blogging meet those requirements shows that they can be used to implement constructivist pedagogies.

First, blogs offer multiple modes of representation. Even if basically a text-based space, they allow today the incorporation of other non-textual information or representations, directly on the blogs as Mohamed-Amine did with his photos of food. They also provide collaboration opportunities through the comment feature of the blogs where others users can make suggestions for improvement. With blogs learners can experience multiple perspectives on a topic. With the WWW being primarily a huge database, the blogger can insert links to other internet resources presenting different views of the topic he is writing about. An essential principle of constructivist learning is learner-centeredness. Blogs when used for educational purposes are by nature learner-centered as the content of a blog is primarily constructed by the learner. This ownership of the content makes blogging relevant to the learner as advocated by constructivist tenets. Finally, they foster social negotiation, a characteristic which echoes Spolsky's six cardinal conditions aforementioned (1989). Indeed, blogs posts are not static artifacts; they are open to modifications .These modifications may be the result of the writer's self-awareness of the weaknesses of his final product, or the result of explicit negotiation with blog readers through the comment feature.

As a matter of fact, because blogs couple the characteristics of optimal language learning environments and provide the conditions for constructivist learning to take place, we suggest that they deserve serious consideration as an appropriate tool for the EFL writing class in higher education. Even if no distance learning opportunities for students are on the agenda of Algerian higher education, blogs can be integrated into hybrid courses with the blending of blogs and face-to-face courses for the writing course .Despite the language teachers' best efforts, the reality is that achieving the

'optimal' and 'constructivist conditions is problematic in Algerian traditional EFL language classrooms .

## **5.2. Blended Language Learning with Blogs.**

With the timetable and logistic constraints Algerian higher education is facing today “blended learning is the most logical and natural evolution of our learning agenda,” (Thorne, 2003:16) because language learning cannot just stop beyond the wall of the classrooms. Blended learning can be defined as:

“Blended learning is realised in teaching and learning environments where there is an effective integration of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face to face interaction.” (Krause, 2007 as cited in Bath & Bourke, 2010:1)

There are different modes of technology integration in a blended learning situation (See Appendix J: p.144). Research has identified the following strengths of blended language learning (Marsh, 2012:4-5)

- Provides a more individualized learning experience.
- Provides more personalized learning support.
- Supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning.
- Increases student engagement in learning.
- Accommodates a variety of learning styles.
- Provides a place to practice the target language beyond the classroom.
- Provides a less stressful practice environment for the target language.
- Provides flexible study, anytime, anywhere, to meet learners' needs.
- Helps students develop valuable and necessary twenty-first century learning skills.

All these incremental strengths support blogs as optimal constructivist language learning environment for a blended learning situation.

### **A. Ways of Blending with Blogs in the EFL Writing Classroom.**

Depending on the teachers instructional objectives, three types of blogs can be used in the EFL writing course: the Tutor Blog, the Learner Blog, and the Class Blog (Campbell, 2003).

The **Tutor Blog** is created by the teachers for his/her students. Here are some of the suggestions made by Richardson (2008) on how to use the tutor blog:

- post class related information such as calendars, calendars, homework assignments, and other pertinent class information;
- post writing prompts;
- invite student comments or postings on issues in order to give them a writing voice
- provide online readings for your students to read and react to;
- create a dynamic teaching sites, posting not only class-related information but also activities, discussion topics, links to additional information about topics they are studying in class , and readings to inspire learning.(p.39)

The **Learner Blog** is settled for individual or small groups of individual. They can create their own blogs in order to:

- learn how to blog;
- complete class writing assignments;
- create an ongoing portfolio of samples of their writing;
- express their opinions on topics you are studying in class;
- discuss activities they did in class and tell what they think about ;
- writing about class topics, using newly learned vocabulary words and idioms.(Richardson,2008: 40)

The **Class Blog** is the result of class collaboration. Learners as administrators of the blog work as co-constructors of the blog content.

However, whatever the type of blog chosen, implementation has to be carefully planned, in order to align the learning objectives, the teaching and learning activities, with the assessment of the outcomes.

### **5.3. Benefits of Blogs and Blogging for Teachers and Students**

## **A. Benefits for Teachers**

The major interest of teachers for using a blog in the EFL language classroom is because of its versatility. We previously mentioned how a Tutor Blog can be of great help to make the necessary resources for the course available to the students free of time and place constraints. In many higher educational settings, we know from experience that making the course materials, like handouts, texts, and so on, available to the students in time for the session is almost an obstacle course, a blog because of its easiness to settle and maintain can be of great help for academics. Despite this worth of consideration logistic reasons, the most important interest of blogs and blogging in EFL language classrooms is that their utilization can be tailored to individual instructional objectives.

### **Teaching Integrated-Skills**

Not all Algerian EFL language curricula have been designed with integrated skills in mind. For example, in the department of English of the Bouzareah Teacher Training College, the segregated-skill approach is still the norm. This situation contradicts the fact that people use language skills in an integrated fashion in normal communication. It is also discordant with the current direction Teaching English as a Foreign Language is taking even if the titles of certain modules refer to skill techniques like Writing Techniques or Reading Techniques which in this case is also illusory. This segregation is illusory not only between writing and reading techniques but also with other content areas because all these techniques overlap. Blogs can be instrumental in implementing integrated skills approaches. For example, in a content-

integrated skill EFL language instruction, students learn the content and the language skills that are important for their academic success which in blogging are reading and writing.

Indeed, the reading writing connection is the essence of the interaction in blogging, providing the Splosky 's six indispensable conditions mentioned above for language learning to take place. Indeed, blog writers analyze and synthesize the language knowledge they have in the context of the blog to write posts. They match this knowledge (their posts) with their blog readers, peers or teachers who by making comments help blog writers to reexamine their existing knowledge of the skill. As posts are constantly available on the blogs, learners have access to what they wrote for remembering. The practice condition is provided by the blogging practice. Both blog readers and blog writers gain learning benefits from the activity.

### **Teaching Critical Thinking Skills**

Reading and writing are both thinking activities. The connection of both in blogging is a good start not only to teach integrated skills but also critical thinking skills. Indeed, in reading, the very fact of decoding words does not make skilled readers. In writing, knowing word spelling, appropriate vocabulary use, or paragraph structure does not make effective writers. Raising students' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of their writings may help them make the necessary modifications to make a coherent piece of the content for the intended communicative purpose, for example for different types of paragraph patterns. Blogging implicitly means immersing one's self in the writing process. Because writing a post like any other

piece of writing takes time and is not an immediate activity; this is an opportunity for students to reflect on their own writing. This reflection can be the result the writer's own critical evaluation of his post or the result of the teacher or peers' criticism. Whoever is the source of this reflection, blogging is an on-going analytical process likely to promote the critical thinking and analytical skills academics thrive to develop in their students.

Whatever the teachers' instructional agendas blogging can be a supplemental aid; an aid which has to be thought in terms of the benefits students can obtain from blog integration in the EFL writing classroom.

### **B. Benefits for Students**

EFL language teachers take for granted their learners' engagement in the learning, but we know from experience how many students in the classroom are totally resistant to learning if not, their behavior or attitudes show how they move steadily towards complete disengagement. This lack of engagement impacts negatively on students' success. There might be multiple reasons for this detrimental situation, but elevating students' engagement is one of teachers' priorities. There are many ways to lessen the impact of disengagement, and integrating blogging in the array of students' learning strategies can be instrumental in this case. Engagement is a by-product of motivation which is generated by multiple factors in blogging.

This motivation results, first, from the students' interest in this new tool especially if they have never used Web 2.0 tools for educational purposes before. One of the participants said that learning with blogs was fun. Blogging also gave them a

purpose to write. They write for themselves as blogs serve as self-expression tools or write for others as they become content-creator for an audience. The blog as an internet-based tool can extend the initial audience of teachers and peers to millions of others. This opportunity transforms students' expectations about themselves. As they know their posts can be read by a more global audience, they tend to be more meticulous with their writings. The possibilities of interaction with this audience embedded in blogging contribute to knowledge construction. Blogs create this will to connect, share, and communicate with others who can provide information, express opinions, or make suggestions for improvement. These social interactions in blogging create communities of practice where learners can find the help they need whenever necessary.

In conclusion, after having considered what blogs and blogging can bring to the EFL writing classroom, it is evident that their integration is worth of consideration in higher education. Hundreds of academics around the world have already adopted blogs and blogging as the technological component of their course syllabuses, and this to the benefits of all the classroom stakeholders. Indeed, blogging engages students in meaningful learning activities. By blogging within the EFL language writing class, students know they are performing a writing activity which has become a genre in its own right in our 21<sup>st</sup> century technology-saturated environment .Even more than for the other language skills in writing we learn by doing, and blogging offers new more authentic learning experiences than the ones provided in the EFL language writing classroom. However, the objective is not to replace traditional classroom writing

instruction , it is just to use the technological tools available today to fill potential gaps in our existing teaching practices.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## **General Conclusion**

This modest research emerged from the researcher's frustration generated by the poor learning outcomes in the EFL writing classes she has been teaching for more than fifteen years in the department of English of Bouzareah Pre-service Teacher Training College in Algiers. These deterring results have been consistent throughout these years not only in her class but also reported by other teachers and confirmed by the grades submitted to the deliberation juries. To understand and resolve this predicament, attempts were made to move from an initially designed product approach to a more process-driven pedagogy in the foreign language writing class. If this shift in pedagogy resulted in some kind of improvement in students' writing, it nevertheless engendered considerable workload for the teacher. Such workload the researcher thought could be significantly alleviated by the introduction of weblogs in the writing class with a view to improving students' written performance. Yet, for their complete validation as teaching and learning tools, this anecdotal experimentation needed the objectivity of scholarly investigation, which is the purpose of the present study. This twofold research was an attempt to investigate the potential of blogging as a valuable agent in the building of the writing skill, and as they are the first recipients of this integration, students' opinions. The subjects selected to experience blogging as their out-of-class activity were first year undergraduate students enrolled at the ENSSH to become teachers of English in the middle and secondary stages of the Algerian educational system.

The review of literature established the foundation of this study by providing the most relevant theoretical knowledge to inform the research questions. By virtue of its

paramount importance for academic success, writing has been intensively and extensively researched in first, second, or foreign language acquisition and learning. Insights from this research have illuminated the writing instructors' classroom practices for decades now. The ubiquity of technology in today's world could not have left field researchers indifferent to the examination of its adequacy in the language classroom. Indeed, the growth of Web 2.0 and its related ICTs are generally believed to promote and foster change in educational settings, and blogs as one of their major artifacts seem to have the potentiality to contribute to the conversion of the traditional transmission-type pedagogies into more constructivist instructional styles, not only in content-based learning but also in language learning. From this perspective, blogging has been researched quite frequently since its advent and more importantly since its identification as a constructivist-learning tool in the language classroom. BALL studies had been undertaken by researchers seeking for easily accessible and manageable technological tools for students. Most of these studies were located in Middle East and Asian-Pacific parts of the globe, and none to our knowledge have been reported in our country. Most of them substantiated the positive impact of blogs and blogging on their students' writing proficiency. They also reported on their respective students' assenting views of blogs in the foreign language classroom. However, a model of writing instruction with blogs needed and still needs further investigation. This research was a humble contribution to a better understanding of how blogging can be integrated into the writing class with the utmost benefit for language learners under our skies.

The case study research framework imposed itself as the most appropriate approach for the present research, one of the aims being to attain in-depth and accurate descriptions of the sampled students' learning outcomes and consequently, draw objective conclusions on their efficiency for writing instruction. Five research tools: a pre-test and a post-test writing assignments, student bloggers' posts, peer reviewers' comments, and an open-ended survey questionnaire, produced the indispensable data to inform the research questions. The data analysis being carried out on written artifacts, considerable efforts and time were invested in making the data analysis procedure as readable and unequivocal as possible. The researcher in this study being the interpreter of the results, the goal was to increase the validity of the criteria measuring the performance under investigation.

The results obtained from this study suggest that blogs and blogging are certainly worth implementing in a foreign language writing class. For the writing skill per se, they had a positive impact on the quality of students' writing, especially in terms of style and organization, whether the students were bloggers or peer reviewers. However, for the purely micro linguistic aspects of the writing, the experiment was inconclusive: the participants have not shown significant improvement in grammar and use of appropriate writing conventions. These findings match the results of self-reported studies with similarly research designs, and prove that specific models of integration are still to be found in the second/foreign language classroom.

The very fact of successful self-reported technological change does not imply the reformation of educational systems in general and classroom practices in particular. In reality, technology integration is not a matter of technology growth but a matter of

teachers' beliefs. Teachers are the central factor of change . If academics endorse the constructivist view of learning, they must acknowledge that in our Algerian settings implementing instructional practices drawing on constructivist views is almost impossible. Acceptance of their new role as a facilitator of learning is essential to technology infusion. An infusion that can rapidly turn inoperative if teachers do not make the most of their lesson-planning skills to support the pedagogical adjustments it induces. In this matter, blogs are just an example of those ICTs tools that can support change of existing teaching practices. The context of this study was more than significant as it addressed Algerian pre-service education students who would be more likely to adhere to these inescapable prerequisites if they have had positive learning experiences with the technologies of their time.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the pervasive impact of ICTs and the use of internet in our country are not as tangible as they are in a great deal of developing countries, their introduction has become a priority for our decision-makers, at least on paper. In fact, all new educational programs and curricula strongly recommend the integration of new digital technologies and this for the ultimate objective of preparing Algerian students to become technology-literate with the tools they need to operate efficiently in today's highly media-saturated environments. However, the successful infusion of ICTs in our educational system cannot for sure be a top-down decision or a simple copy-and-paste mechanism. As for any other kind of innovation in education, it has to prove its efficiency if all the educational stakeholders, and in priority teachers, are to be convinced of the utility of such an infusion for the benefits of their learners.

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# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT THE ENSSH

#### First Year Foundation Curriculum (for both future secondary (PES) and middle (PEM) school teachers)

MODULES	WEEKLY HOURS	COEFFICIENT
1.WRITING TECHNIQUES	6 H	3
2.GRAMMAR	6 H	3
3.SPEAKING/LISTENING	6 H	3
4. READING TECHNIQUES	3H	1
5.PHONETICS	1H 30	1
6.INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS	1H 30	1
7.INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION & LITERATURE	1H 30	1
8.INTRO TO THE SCIENCES OF EDUCATION(in Arabic)	1H 30	1
9.INTRO TO LINGUISTICS (in Arabic)	1H 30	1
10.COMPUTER SCIENCE	1H 30	1
<b>TOTAL /WEEK</b>	<b>30 H</b>	<b>16</b>

#### Second Year Common Foundation Curriculum (for both future secondary (PES) and middle (PEM) school teachers)

MODULES	WEEKLY HOURS	COEFFICIENT
1.WRITING TECHNIQUES	6 H	3
2.GRAMMAR	6 H	3
3.SPEAKING/LISTENING	6 H	3
4. READING TECHNIQUES	3H	1
5.PHONETICS	1H 30	1
6.INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS	1H 30	1
7.INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION & LITERATURE	1H 30	1
8.CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOLOGY (in Arabic)	3H	2
9.MODERN LITERATURE (in Arabic)	1H 30	1
<b>TOTAL /WEEK</b>	<b>30 H</b>	<b>16</b>

**Third Year Foundation Curriculum (for both future secondary (PES) and middle (PEM) school teachers)**

MODULES	WEEKLY HOURS	COEFFICIENT
1.WRITING & GRAMMAR	4H30	1
2.SPEAKING/PHONETICS	3H	1
3.READING TECHNIQUES	1H 30	1
4. LINGUISTICS	1H 30	1
5.INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY	1H 30	1
6.AMERICAN CIVILIZATION & LITERATURE	3H	1
7. BRITISH CIVILIZATION & LITERATURE	3H	1
8.PEDAGOGICAL TRENDS & THEORIES OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS	1H 30	1
9.TEFL	1H 30	1
10.COMMUNICATION& ATTITUDE PREOCCUPATIONS	1H 30	1
11. PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATIVE	1H 30	1
<b>TOTAL /WEEK</b>	<b>24H</b>	<b>12</b>

**Fourth Year Curricula (for future secondary (PES) and middle (PEM) school teachers)**

MODULES	PEM	COEFF	PES	COEFF
1.AFRICAN CIVILIZATION &LITERATURE	3H	1	3H	1
2.AMERICAN CIVILIZATION & LITERATURE	3H	1	3H	1
3.BRITISH CIVILIZATION &LITERATURE	3H	1	3H	1
4.APPLIED LINGUISTICS	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
5.TEFL	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
6.PSYCHOPEDAGOGY	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
7.MATERIAL DESIGN	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
8.TEXTBOOK EVALUATION	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
9.WRITING A SCIENTIFIC REPORT IN EDUCATION	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
10.EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY ( in Arabic)	1H 30	1	1H 30	1
11. SCHOOL LEGISLATION (In Arabic)	1H 30	1	*	*
12.METHODS IN TEACHING & EVALUATION ( in Arabic)	1H 30	1	*	*
13.TRAINING & REPORT ON TRAINING	6H	2	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28H30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19H30</b>	<b>10</b>

**Fifth Year (for future secondary school teachers only)**

<b>MODULES</b>	<b>WEEKLY HOURS</b>	<b>COEFF</b>
<b>1.AFRICAN CIVILIZATION &amp;LITERATURE</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.AMERICAN CIVILIZATION &amp; LITERATURE</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3.BRITISH CIVILIZATION &amp;LITERATURE</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4.APPLIED LINGUISTICS</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5.ISSUES IN CULTURE</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>6.CONTEMPORARY PEDAGOGICAL TRENDS</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>7.SYLLABUS DESIGN</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>8.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>9.TRAINING &amp; REPORT</b>	<b>6 H</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>10.END OF DEGREE DISSERTATION</b>	<b>3H</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>11. SCHOOL LEGISLATION (In Arabic)</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>12.METHODS IN TEACHING &amp; EVALUATION ( in Arabic)</b>	<b>1H 30</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26 H</b>	<b>13</b>

## APPENDIX B

### THE WRITING TECHNIQUES SYLLABUS

#### **Course description:**

This course focuses on the fundamentals of good written communication. It lays emphasis on the mastery of writing clear, grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs. It develops students' ability to utilize variety in sentence construction. Emphasis is also given to the steps required for successful paragraph development through extensive practice. This course is 3 units of credit.

#### **General objectives :**

**By the end of this course first year students will be able to:**

- Use the writing process when creating their paragraphs
- Use the structure and traits of good paragraph organization
- Describe the characteristics of different writing genres :
  - Expository
  - Descriptive
  - Narrative
  - Procedural
  - Persuasive
- Write paragraph using different patterns of organization
- Identify and write different types of constructions (phrase/clause) and use them their compositions
- Apply rules of punctuation in their writing
- Edit and proofread their paragraphs

#### **Methodology :**

Students will intensively study the conventions of written English, including grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction. They will write and revise short pieces of composition, both in and out of class and also learn to plan, write, revise and edit their paragraph. Most in-class writing will involve collaborative work and peer review. The out-of-class assignments are meant to supplement in-class work.

## **Requirements:**

### **1-Books:**

- Textbook : *Great writing 2: Great paragraphs*. (2010,3rd ed.)
- A good college dictionary and /or thesaurus brought in to every class.

### **2-Attendance:**

As class participation is part of the grade, students are expected to attend all classes. Students with more than 3 absences, for any reason, will be penalized .When students miss more than 6 classes the attendance policy of the English Department will be followed and will result in failure of the course.

Moreover, in case of absence it is the students' responsibility to find out what they missed and to make it up.

### **3-Course requirements**

Inside the classroom students are required to actively participate in discussions and informal writing activities. Outside the class students will write paragraphs of their own after each writing genre studied and practiced in class. They are required to complete all the homework assignments. All work must be turned in on time.

## **Assessment and grading policy:**

Students are assessed on a regular basis for in and out-of-class writing. They will be graded on the quality of their composition, but also on their participation in class.

Students' compositions will be graded based on common traits of good writing: conventions, ideas, organization, presentation, sentence fluency, voice, and word choice and on the specific characteristics of a text type, such as descriptive, fairy tale, friendly letter, how to, and pro/con ( rubrics will be provided to understand expectations).

## **Content and Tentative Course Schedule**

### ***Week 1: Introduction to the course***

- Course Description; Syllabus Review
- Introduction to Writing - Why do we need to write? Audience and purpose
- Assessing students' needs

### ***Week 2: Introduction to the writing process:***

- prewriting- Organizing your ideas

**Week 3: *Introduction to Sentence Structure***

- What is a sentence?
- Kinds of sentences
- Basic punctuation marks

**Week 4: *Components of a Paragraph:***

- Topic sentences
- Concluding sentences
- Supporting sentences
- Formatting paragraphs

**Week 5: *The Expository Genre:* The Descriptive Paragraph**

- Sensory adjectives

**Week 6: *The narrative genre:***

- The Personal Narrative (The first –person point of view)
- The Realistic Fiction ( characters, settings, problems, events, and solutions that can happen in real life)
- Using dialogues in writing
- Transitional signals: chronological order

**Week 7: *The Narrative Genre:* The Fairy Tale (good and evil characters, magic, plot, and setting)**

**Week 8: *The procedural genre:***

- The How-to paragraph: giving instructions
- Action verbs

**Week 9: *The argumentative genre:***

- the persuasive paragraph
- the Pro/con paragraph
- Facts vs. opinions
- Weighing an argument: giving reasons

**Week 10:**

***The transactional genre:***

- The Business Letter: business letter parts- organization of ideas
- The Friendly Letter: friendly letter parts-writing about personal matters
- Common phrases and expressions

## APPENDIX C

The Teacher Training College of Bouzareah

Academic Year: 2012/2013

September 2012

### Pre-Test Writing Assignment

**Choose one of the following topics to write a short and well-organized composition:**

1. Many people say that Algerian teenagers are a lost generation today. What do you think of this statement?
  
2. Education is essential to development. Comment.

Good Luck.

## APPENDIX D

The Teacher Training College of Bouzareah  
Academic Year 2012/2013

Department of English

DATE : 02/2013

Duration: 2 hours

### FIRST TERM EXAM ON WRITING TECHNIQUES

Year: 1<sup>ST</sup>

Groups: 3,4, and 5

Instructions: choose two of the topics below. Then, using all the knowledge you have about good paragraph features, write one paragraph for each topic. Each paragraph should not exceed 20 lines.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Classmates are a more important influence than parents are on a child's success in school. Give specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
2. A person you know is planning to move to your town or city. What do you think this person would like and dislike about living in your town or city? Why? Give specific reasons and details to develop your essay.
3. In some countries, people are no longer allowed to smoke in many public places and office buildings. Do you think this is a good rule or a bad rule? Give specific reasons and details to support your position.
4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Grades (marks) encourage students to learn. Give specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Warning: there will be minus 2 for papers with too many crossings-outs.

Good luck

## APPENDIX E

### MARKING SCHEME FOR EACH WRITING ASSIGNMENT

#### A. ELABORATION AND SUPPORT (11pts)

**Paragraph relevant to prompt:** 1pt

**Format:** Title + indentation 1 pt

- **TOPIC SENTENCE:** overall quality for the topic chosen (1,5 pt)

-effective 1,5    -average 1    -Poor 0,5    -none 0

- **BODY:**

**Main ideas relate to the topic (2pts)**

-all 2    two 1,5    one 0,5    none 0

**Supportive details relate to main ideas (3pts)**

-all 3    most 2    some 1    none 0

**Use of transitional words and phrases (1pt)**

-consistently 1    inconsistently 0,5    no 0

- **CONCLUDING SENTENCE:** overall quality as a closing with rephrasing of the TS or summarizing of the points + broadening of the topic for the topic chosen (1,5 pt)

-effective 1,5    -average 1    -Poor 0,5    none 0

#### B. COMMAND OF LANGUAGE:(4,5pts)

- **Word choice(1,5pt)**

-Elaborated 1,5    - Average 1    -Basic 0,5

- **sentence fluency (structure &variety)(3 pts)**

-illegible 0    - Poor 0,5    - Average 1    -Above average 1,5    -Good 2    -excellent 3

#### C. GRAMMAR, USAGE, & MECHANICS (4,5pts) (minus 0,25pt/mistake)

## APPENDIX F

<b>QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDENT BLOGGERS</b>
--

NAME :

**1. How would you describe your writing skills in English before coming to university?**

.....

**2. Do you have any previous experience in writing?**

a) In English?

.....

b) In your mother tongue?

.....

c) What kind?

.....

d) How do you feel about writing in general?

.....

**3. Have you ever used any technology for learning purposes at school?**

a) If yes, what kind?

.....

**4. Have you ever used blogging before?**

a) If yes, for what purposes ?

.....

**5. After your experience of blogging , what are your feelings about technology for learning in the language classroom?**

.....

**6. Do you think blogging has improved your writing skills?**

a) If yes, why?

.....

b) If not, why not ?

.....

**7. Did you like the fact of having your classmates commenting on your posts?**

a) If yes, why?

.....

b) If not, why not?

.....

**8. Did you value their opinions for revising your posts?**

a) If yes, what corrections did you make to your posts after your peers' revisions?

.....

b) If not, why did you ignore their comments / recommendations?

.....

**9. How has this experience affected your overall language proficiency?**

.....

**10. What suggestions would you make to future users of blogging for the English writing course?**

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

## APPENDIX G

<b>QUESTIONNAIRE TO PEER REVIEWERS</b>
--

NAME :

**1. How would you describe your writing skills in English before coming to university?**

.....

**2. Do you have any previous experience in writing?**

a) In English?

.....

b) In your mother tongue?

.....

c) What kind?

.....

d) How do you feel about writing in general?

.....

**3. Have you ever used any technology for learning purposes at school?**

a) If yes, what kind?

.....

**4. Have you ever used blogging before?**

a) If yes, for what purposes ?

.....

**5. After your experience of blogging, what are your feelings about technology for learning in the language classroom?**

.....

**6. Your task was to review and comment on your classmates' blogs.**

a) Did you enjoy doing it?

.....

b) Why/why not?

.....

**7. What kind of mistakes did you correct?**

a) Vocabulary, grammar, mechanics?

.....

b) Ideas?

.....

c) Other?

.....

**8. Do you think you have improved your ability to write from the comments you made on your classmates' posts?**

a) If yes, how have you improved?

.....

b) If not, why not?

.....

**9. How has this experience affected your overall language proficiency?**

.....

**10. What suggestions would you make to future users of blogging for the English writing course?**

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

## Appendix H

### Summary of Students' Background before the Blogging Experience

		Respondents					
		S B 1 Mohamed-Amine	S B 2 Nedjemeddine	P R 1 Ferial	P R 2 Wassila	P R 3 Amine	
<b>Writing Background</b>	<b>Self- evaluation</b>	Poor		Average	Good	Very poor	Very poor
	<b>Experience</b>	<b>In English</b>	Yes	Yes	Only in text messaging & on Facebook with NS of Arabic	Yes	no
		<b>In mother tongue</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
		<b>kind</b>	School writing only	School writing & creative writing	In Arabic school magazine articles & homework	Limited to school writing	Poems in French
	<b>Feelings</b>	Satisfied with his writing		Very important means for expressing himself	Likes writing in general & reading others 'writing	Difficult skill involves many sub-skills	Great means of expressing one's self
<b>Technological Background</b>	<b>In Learning</b>	No	No	Internet searching & computing classes in school	No	Use of spelling checkers & internet for vocabulary searching	
	<b>In Blogging</b>	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	

## Appendix I

### Examples of Positive and Negative Comments from Peer Reviewers

(The comments are transcribed as they were written in the blogs)

#### Examples of Positive Comments

1. **ferial** December 13, 2012 at 3:22 AM

I like a lot of things in your essay like the explanation that you make between bracketsn and the organisation of ideas

1. **wassila** December 13, 2012 at 3:31 AM

first of all I would like to say it is a good idea

1. **med-amine**December 13, 2012 at 3:55 AM

Hello! Amine it's me again i really like your subject and it was a good essay really nice one .I realy loved the explanations

#### Examples of Negative Comments

1. **ferial** January 12, 2013 at 3:23 AM

I want you to work hard for your ponctuation because you did two mistakes and also spelling

1. **wassila** December 13, 2012 at 4:01 AM

i wanne to say another thing you didn't use the transition very well tou speaked a lot then you said first then you didn't used second, third finnly

1. **med-amine**January 12, 2013 at 3:45 AM

my dear friend i found four spelling mistake,so find them and correct them.And now i found some problems in the fifth paragraph

## **Appendix J**

### **Mohamed-Amine's Post 5 (Word Copy)**

Saturday, January 12, 2013

#### **The Straight Way to a man's heart**

Men's satisfaction was almost an impossible goal that no female reached before, but women has figured out more than a direct way to a man's heart. Is it true? Some people say that cooking is the most successful way to please us by making our preferred dishes and arting them up with all the means, like the look and the smell because they are the façade and the appetite openers of any person, or just because men love food and it is the only thing they care about, women found the weakness and have used it well. Others say that understanding, compassionating, obeying and loving are the secrets to win the precious treasure that Mohammed peace be upon him mentioned in his sayings. That way can be accomplished by much caring about the husband and delivering everything he needs, or in brief words "do not say no to him". But in my personal opinion i say that we have to mix between these two, a little amount of artistic cooking and another one of loving, in order to get a big place in males' hearts.

## APPENDIX K

### BLENDDED LEARNING MODES

Blended learning spans a continuum that covers a wide range of activities between conventional face-to-face interactions and those that are fully online.

<b>MODE 1</b>	Technology is used to facilitate course management and resources for learner support. For example, to provide information and resources to students (e.g., lecture notes or recordings, assessment guidelines), and to perform basic administrative functions (e.g., announcements or course emails)
<b>MODE 2</b>	Technology is used to enrich the quality of the student learning experience through interactive learning activities beyond those attainable through face-to-face classroom interactions. For example, utilising technology to support communication and collaboration, assessment and the management of your course.
<b>MODE 3</b>	Technology is used to support learning that is largely self-directed but also involves the use of interactive and collaborative learning activities. In this mode courses are delivered fully online.

From: Getting Started with Blended Learning (Bath & Bourke, 2010:2)