



Fostering EFL Learners' Writing Skills through Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL)

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Abstract

Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) provides a platform for students to enhance their language skills through interactive and engaging activities. These activities include peer review and feedback, interactive discussions, reflective journals, and multimedia integration. This study aims to investigate the specific impact of BALL on improving EFL learners' writing performance, addressing the problem of how this innovative approach can enhance various aspects of writing skills. This study was conducted using classroom action research in one cycle, involving 18 vocational school students. Data were gathered through writing tests, observation checklists, and questionnaires. The findings revealed that implementing Blog-Assisted Language Learning significantly enhanced the learners' writing performance and attitudes toward learning English. The students showed improvement in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of their writing. The average score increased from 71.61 in the pretest to 81.9 in the posttest. All students were engaged in the teaching and learning process, and they found using a blog to promote language acquisition to be an enjoyable activity. Additionally, a Paired Sample t-Test showed a significant difference between the students' overall scores pre-test and post-test, with a level of significance of 0.000, indicating that the implementation of Blog-Assisted Language Learning had a statistically significant impact on improving the students' writing performance. Therefore, Blog-Assisted Language Learning proves to be a valuable strategy for enhancing EFL learners' writing skills, and its interactive and enjoyable nature can motivate students, creating a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

Keywords: Blog-assisted language learning, EFL learners, classroom action research, writing skill.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four essential language skills that students must acquire in English language learning. It is explained as a set of activities to express human thoughts in written forms, serving as an effective way of communicating and expressing a writer's ideas, feelings, and perceptions to others (Zuhri & Sukarnianti, 2015). According to Setyowati (2016), a writer should have the ability to process ideas into a meaningful and logical

sequence that can be easily read. Developing strong writing skills can significantly contribute to a student's academic success, as it enhances grammatical structure, expands vocabulary, and shapes the scientific framework of human thought in written form. Additionally, writing proficiency can improve other language skills, including speaking, reading, and listening (Javed et al. 2013; Nodoushan, 2014). Despite its importance, writing is a challenging skill to master, particularly when a foreign language is involved. Differences in language structures, modes of expression, writing styles, and cultural factors significantly affect the writing of foreign language learners. Writing requires the integration of various components such as grammatical structure, vocabulary, and punctuation to produce coherent and effective text (Aminatun et al. 2019). However, students often struggle with these elements, leading to poorly constructed texts where ideas are not effectively conveyed.

Several problems contribute to students' difficulties with writing. Many students find writing challenging due to a lack of ideas, insufficient writing models, and difficulty organizing their thoughts. To address these challenges, integrating technology into writing instruction has shown promising results. Research has shown that integrating technology in the classroom can significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning for both teachers and students (Alfarwan, 2019; Ammade et al. 2018). One such technological approach is Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL), which leverages the interactive nature of blogs to foster students' writing skills. A blog, is an online journal or informational website where individuals or groups of writers share their views on various subjects. According to Ward (2004), BALL includes practices such as blogging, commenting, and receiving feedback from peers. They feature user-friendly interfaces, frequent updates, and interactive comment fields, making them accessible and engaging.

In educational context, Blogs provide a platform for students to write regularly, which helps improve their fluency and comfort with the written word. The process of learning writing using Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) is often perceived as a method of learning through journaling. In BALL, students are required to post their journal entries online (Lin et al., 2013). The comment section also allows peers and teachers to provide immediate feedback, promoting a more iterative and reflective writing process and helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Moreover, learning writing through BALL is beneficial in several ways: it encourages autonomous learning by giving students more freedom and responsibility over their education, inspires them to improve as writers and readers, and promotes discussions among students (Kung, 2018).

Research on Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) reveals both its potential and its challenges in enhancing writing skills. Lin et al. (2013) found that students often struggle with BALL due to low language proficiency and anxiety about peer reactions, which can inhibit their participation and engagement. This suggests that while the concept of BALL is appealing, its practical implementation requires addressing students' psychological barriers and building their confidence. On the other hand, Muslem et al. (2022) demonstrated the significant positive impact of BALL on improving students' writing skills and overall satisfaction with the learning process. This highlights the effectiveness of BALL when students are adequately supported and engaged. Furthermore, Quadir et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of interaction types in BALL, showing that peer-to-peer and learner-content interactions are crucial for achieving both subjective and objective learning

outcomes. This indicates that for BALL to be successful, it must foster meaningful interactions and actively involve students in the learning process.

Moreover, [Özdemir & Aydin \(2020\)](#) investigated how blogs affected Turkish EFL students' enthusiasm for writing. Their research showed that using blogs alone did not increase students' motivation to write. Additionally, [Kashani et al. \(2013\)](#) revealed that students did not perceive a noticeable difference in the quality of their writing when comparing blogging to traditional pen-and-paper approaches. Several factors contributed to this. First, technical difficulties with the blogs hindered students' participation in blog activities. Second, students were not accustomed to posting on blogs. Third, they were trained to complete traditional pen-and-paper assignments.

Furthermore, based on the results of questionnaires and observations from a preliminary study on teaching writing in this study, it was concluded that students were not motivated enough during the writing process. Many students claimed that writing is a difficult task, and they were unsure how to write words in English. However, among the various problems students face during writing, the most crucial issue is the accuracy of their writing. While several studies have explored the benefits and challenges of Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) in enhancing writing skills, there remains a gap in understanding how to effectively implement BALL to overcome students' motivational issues and uncertainties in writing, and more specifically, how BALL can improve the accuracy of students' writing. This study aims to address the use of BALL to enhance EFL learners' writing performance, with a particular focus on accuracy.

METHOD

This study utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve students' ability to write analytical exposition texts, aiming to identify the advantages of using Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) to address practical teaching challenges in English instruction. CAR is particularly useful for teachers seeking effective strategies to resolve classroom issues. According to [Kemmis et al. \(2014\)](#), CAR involves four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, the research procedures and criteria for success are established, outlining the steps and setting clear objectives. The acting stage involves the teacher implementing the planned strategy, focusing on the predetermined procedures. During the observing stage, data is collected to assess the strategy's effectiveness, monitoring the teaching and learning process to determine its success in addressing classroom problems. Finally, in the reflecting stage, the collected data is analyzed to evaluate the action's effects. Based on this reflection, a decision is made on whether the research objectives have been met or if further cycles are required to achieve the desired outcomes.

After considering the students' background knowledge of English and taking into account suggestions from the teacher, the researcher selected a class of 11th-grade students as the accessible population for this study. Additionally, it was observed that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was not being used efficiently during the teaching and learning process in this class. The selected class consisted of 18 students, including 1 male and 17 female students, representing the 11th-grade population of the vocational high school.

The study involved several activities over five meetings. The teacher explained the exposition text and provided text models for the blogs. Students then brainstormed ideas for a given topic, created an outline, and posted their topic and first paragraph on the class blog. Subsequent meetings focused on writing the second and third paragraphs. In the final meeting, students wrote their concluding paragraph (reiteration) and posted their final draft after receiving peer feedback. Furthermore, writing scores were determined using [Jacobs et al. \(1981\)](#) writing rubric, which assesses five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Data from the observation checklist were analyzed based on indicators for each aspect during the observation period, with engagement levels ranging from 1 to 4, indicating higher engagement with higher scores. The questionnaire responses were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

After gathering all the data, analysis was conducted to evaluate how the strategy helped students address the challenges in composing an analytical exposition text. The data were compared to the criteria of success. Intraclass Coefficient Correlation (ICC) was used to assess the consistency of the students' final writing scores. Observations were analyzed based on each indicator in each aspect, with engagement levels identified on a scale from 1 to 4, where higher scores indicated higher levels of engagement. Descriptive statistics were then applied to both the test results and questionnaire responses. The SPSS Statistics 25 program was used to process the data, minimizing the potential for calculation errors. This comprehensive analysis provided insights into the effectiveness of the Blog-Assisted Language Learning strategy in improving students' writing performance.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In the pre-writing stage, the students built their prior knowledge of the material by brainstorming ideas. This step allowed the students to determine the suitable topic and the supporting arguments. The students then made a writing outline. The outline was supposed to be a guide for them to make their writing neater and in clearer order. The results of the students' outline can be seen below.

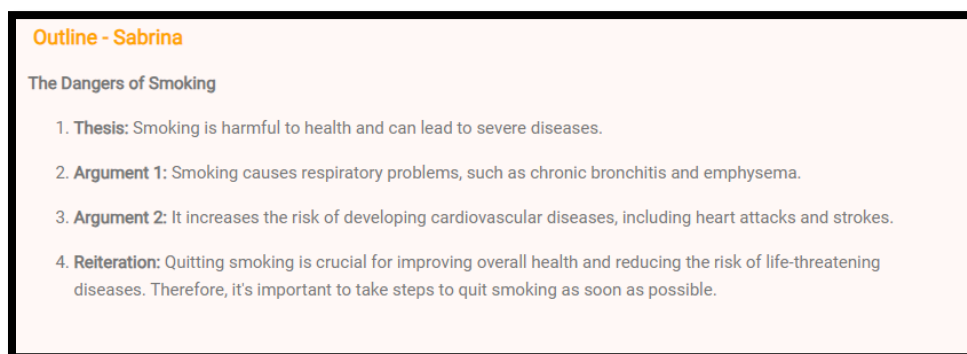


Figure 1. Sample of student's outline

From Figure 1, it is evident that the students have already written their thesis statement, argument 1, argument 2, and reiteration. According to [Salija \(2017\)](#), students can compose essays with clear and well-organized ideas, develop topics into more specific subtopics, and express their ideas in high-quality language with the help of an outline. After

completing their outlines, the students began writing their paragraphs, commenting on their peers' writing, and revising their own drafts. These three steps of writing were performed in each meeting.

While drafting, students developed the ideas outlined and posted their drafts on the blog. The use of ICT in learning writing proved beneficial in engaging students with the material and each step of the writing process. This result aligns with the findings of [Amir et al. \(2011\)](#), who stated that students felt more engaged, inspired, and self-assured in their writing because blog writing made the classroom more interactive and engaging.

After writing their rough paragraphs, the students reviewed their peers' drafts. This step allowed them to observe how their classmates constructed their writing, including the words they used and the ideas they developed. According to [Amir et al. \(2011\)](#), students reported that reading their peers' drafts enhanced their grammar and vocabulary. By analyzing their friends' drafts, students could identify the strengths in their peers' writing, which helped them produce higher-quality work. Consequently, they were able to organize their ideas into a coherent passage. Providing feedback is a crucial element in the writing learning process. During this stage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure, and the accuracy of supporting materials such as quotations and examples were all checked. A sample of the feedback provided can be seen in Figure 2.

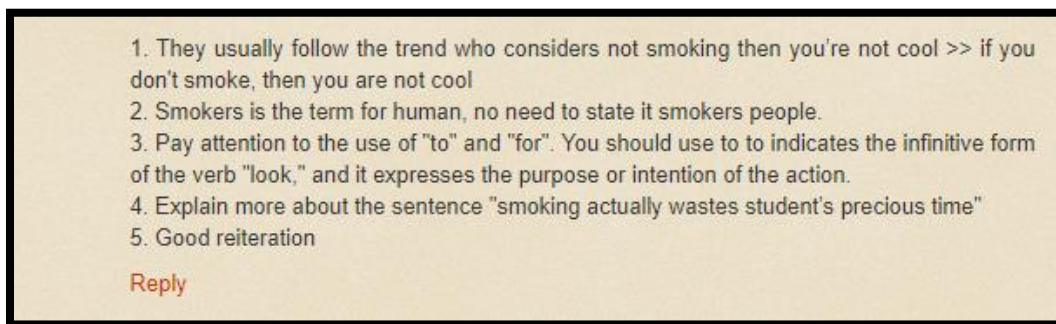


Figure 2. Sample of feedback from peer

From the sample above, it is evident that students provided comments based on their peers' language use, content, and vocabulary. Peer feedback is a beneficial form of feedback that enables students to improve their writing by reflecting on and receiving insights from their peers ([Amalia, 2018](#)). According to [Fathi & Nourzadeh \(2019\)](#), peer feedback exchanges on blogs encouraged students to communicate more with one another, enhancing their writing skills. [Csizér & Tankó \(2017\)](#) found that students gained confidence in completing written projects and developed effective techniques for managing their learning process through frequent and prompt feedback on their blog posts.

After receiving feedback, students began revising their drafts. The use of blogs was found to be more efficient in the writing process, allowing students to immediately revise their drafts upon receiving feedback. [Ebrecht \(2015\)](#) claimed that electronic writing made it easier for students to correct grammar and spelling mistakes. After editing and finalizing their work, students posted their finished products on the blog. [Mortensen et al. \(2002\)](#) stated that publishing writing on a blog leads to more effective and convincing content.

Therefore, Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) was integrated with the process writing approach to enhance students' writing performance.

Students' Development in Writing Performance

To assess the impact of the BALL treatment on students' writing performance, we compared the initial scores from the preliminary study to the final scores obtained at the end of the meetings. The students' average scores increased significantly from 71.61 to 81.94, demonstrating a notable improvement in their overall writing performance. This enhancement was particularly evident in key areas such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. These results highlight the effectiveness of the BALL treatment in advancing students' writing skills.

A Paired Sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the BALL treatment by comparing students' overall writing scores before and after the intervention. The test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-treatment and post-treatment scores, with a p-value of 0.000, well below the threshold of 0.005. This indicates a high level of confidence in the observed improvements, affirming that the BALL treatment had a substantial positive impact on students' writing performance. The detailed statistical results, presented in Table 1, provide comprehensive evidence of the efficacy of the intervention, showing marked gains in various aspects of writing, including content development, organizational structure, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and mechanical precision. These findings underscore the robustness of the BALL approach in enhancing the overall quality of students' written work.

Table 1. The statistical result on overall writing performance

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre - Pos	-10.3333	2.47339	.58298	-11.56332	-9.10335	-17.72	17	.000

The data presented in Table 1 indicate a significant improvement in students' overall writing performance following the implementation of BALL. These results are consistent with [Saraswati and Purwati \(2021\)](#), who found that integrating technology with language learning enhances learner engagement and improves learning outcomes. Similarly, [Kuimova and Zvekov \(2016\)](#) demonstrated that Blog-Assisted Language Learning enables learners to enhance or maintain the quality of their writing content. Furthermore, [Akdag \(2017\)](#) highlighted that incorporating blogging into writing instruction allows students to enrich the details of their writing. Collectively, these findings underscore the effectiveness of BALL in advancing students' writing skills, providing strong support for the integration of technology in language education to foster better learning experiences and outcomes.

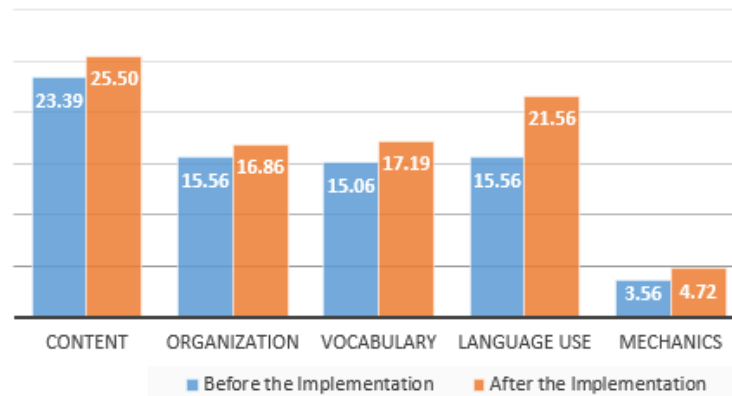


Figure 3. Students' writing performance before and after the implementation of BALL

The scores assigned to the students were based on Jacobs et al. (1981) scoring rubric, which includes five elements of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and writing mechanics. The current study indicates that using blogs in process-based EFL writing has a favorable impact on writing proficiency. The learners' content knowledge has improved, and they also exhibit better organization skills, including capitalization, punctuation, paragraph and essay development, discourse marker usage, appropriate vocabulary usage, sentence construction, and writing mechanics. Furthermore, these findings align with previous research, which suggests that blogs and peer assistance enhance students' writing performance (Kim & Bae, 2020; Özdemir & Aydın, 2015; Suadah, 2014).

This study found that students improved the content of their writing, particularly in the development of their thesis statements, after the implementation of BALL. Observations and writing task results revealed that students employed richer vocabulary, lexical diversity, suitable linking words, and more complex sentences in their work. Blogging in the classroom helps students become more motivated and empowered to enhance their writing abilities (Alsamadani, 2017).

The results of this research showed that the organization aspect of writing improved from 15.56 to 16.86, equivalent to a 4.4% increase. This aligns with Özdemir and Aydın (2015), who also highlighted improvements in learners' writing achievements after implementing a process-based approach using blogs. They noted that having an outline on hand allows writing to flow more easily, effectively helping writers organize their thoughts methodically, focus on relevant information, and arrange logical supporting data.

Students' vocabulary mastery also improved significantly, rising from 15.06 to 17.19, equivalent to a 23% increase. This indicates that students could enhance their vocabulary knowledge after the implementation of BALL. Similar findings were reported by Suparto et al. (2021), who also observed an increase in vocabulary usage, and Said et al. (2013), who noted that certain types of blogging promote students' vocabulary. Additionally, Akdag (2017) found that blogging experiences contributed to students' writing skills, particularly in vocabulary enhancement. The students' language use also improved significantly, increasing from 15.56 to 21%. Language use, which was highlighted as a major issue in this study, showed rapid improvement after the treatment. According to Fellner & Apple (2006),

the process-based approach encouraged students to write freely and enjoy their own virtual environment. Students reported that creating a blog improved their writing abilities, particularly in terms of syntactic precision.

Furthermore, the mechanics of writing improved from 3.56 to 4.72, equivalent to a 25% increase. There was noticeable improvement in punctuation, including the use of capital letters, commas, and full stops. During the implementation of BALL, students paid more attention to these aspects because they knew their audience would include not only their teachers but also their classmates and potentially people from outside the school. The ability to share their writing with others through blogs contributed to the rise in writing achievement. Students could verify each other's work to ensure quality. [Muslem et al. \(2022\)](#) suggested that utilizing technology and collaborative learning can improve students' motivation and abilities.

Students' Perception Towards the Use of BALL in Writing

In addition to the writing task, the success of the BALL implementation in teaching analytical exposition text is also reflected in the questionnaire administered at the end of the meetings. The results of the questionnaire are presented in the table below.

Table 3. The results of the questionnaire

No.	Questionnaire Items	Percentage			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	Using a blog was effective for learning writing.	0	0	77.78	22.22
2	Using a blog made learning English becomes more interesting.	0	0	66.67	22.22
3	Using a blog can help me finish my assignments quickly.	0	0	44.44	55.56
4	I expressed my ideas better when I used a blog rather than when I expressed them in class.	0	0	55.56	33.33
5	I found using a blog useful when learning to write analytical exposition text.	0	0	44.44	55.56
6	I found reading my friend's writing text through a blog helped me to compose better writing.	0	0	66.67	33.33
7	Reading the feedback from my peers helped me to make my writing better.	0	5.56	27.78	72.22
8	I can understand the generic structure of analytical exposition text better after the implementation of BALL.	0	0	38.89	61.11
9	The implementation of BALL enables me to think creatively.	0	0	27.78	72.22
10	I can clearly state my ideas in my writing after the treatment.	0	16.66	61.11	38.89
11	I can arrange the contents of my writing coherently.	0	5.56	55.56	38.89
12	I used more vocabulary to deliver the message in my writing during the implementation of BALL.	0	0	66.67	33.33

13	I feel my spelling, punctuation, and capitalization become better after the treatment.	0	0	88.89	11.11
14	I understand sentence structure and the language use of paragraphs of a text after the implementation.	0	0	72.22	11.11

The questionnaire results revealed that the majority of students agreed that the implementation of BALL was beneficial in helping them learn to write analytical exposition texts. All students reported enjoying the learning process through blogs, finding it interesting and distinctive as a learning medium. They felt that reading their peers' drafts and receiving feedback improved their learning experience. Students noted that they could express their ideas more clearly, organize their thoughts better, and use a wider range of vocabulary, leading to better writing results. Additionally, they felt that their spelling, punctuation, and capitalization had improved after the implementation of BALL. They also gained a better understanding of sentence structure and language use in exposition texts.

These findings support the study by [Said et al. \(2013\)](#), which demonstrated that students had positive opinions about using blogs to support writing learning. Similarly, [Armstrong & Retterer \(2008\)](#) found that blogs positively influenced the attitudes, self-confidence, and L2 writing achievement of college students, improving their writing performance and generating favorable opinions about their experience. [Sulistyo et al. \(2019\)](#) also reported that students have positive perceptions of blogs, as they increase motivation and confidence.

The utilization of blogs is not the only factor influencing students' confidence and motivation. Social interaction through feedback also plays a crucial role in boosting students' confidence ([Miftachudin, 2017](#)). Students found comments from classmates on their blog entries motivating and engaging. They also enjoyed posting comments on their classmates' posts ([Muslem & Abbas, 2017](#)). Furthermore, [Husnah et al. \(2023\)](#) stated that the feedback feature provided by Blog-Assisted Language Learning served as a source of motivation for students to review and revise their writing mistakes. Incorporating blogs into writing instruction provides a versatile and interactive method to engage students, improve their writing skills, and foster a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Through regular practice, interactive feedback, peer collaboration, autonomous learning, and multimedia integration, BALL presents a promising approach to modernizing and enhancing writing education.

CONCLUSION

This study found that integrating Blog-Assisted Language Learning (BALL) with process-based writing can improve learners' performance and motivation in EFL writing. Learners agreed that using a blog to facilitate language acquisition was an enjoyable activity. Additionally, the use of this integrated technology increased student engagement in language learning by focusing their attention on the material, resulting in beneficial lexical input. Based on the students' responses regarding the implementation of BALL with process-based writing, it was found that they improved in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Students were able to develop their ideas correctly, choose appropriate words, and write sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. They also became more aware of ambiguous sentences and avoided them in their writing.

As this study was conducted using classroom action research in only one class, the outcomes may vary if conducted in different environments, with different participants, or through other methods. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted in diverse settings with larger populations and different age groups to validate and expand upon these findings.

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