Blogging to Learn to Write in an EFL Context: A Comparison Study*

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This article reports the findings of an empirical study which examined the effectiveness of a blog-integrated English as a foreign language (EFL) college writing course in Taiwan by comparing two groups of learners in terms of their linguistic performance and perceptions. The two groups were compared by their progress in fluency, accuracy, and lexical complexity in the regard of linguistic performance. They were also compared by their perceptions on the course of study in terms of the instructor's teaching behavior, the facilitative effect of the course on their learning to write, their interests/preferences, and the effect of the course on their confidence in writing. The experimental group was also inquired to report their preferences on the four distinctive features of blogs. Randomly selected, 26 non-English majors participated in a conventional English writing class (the control group) and 18 students in a blog-integrated English writing class (the experimental group). The results showed that there were no significant differences among the two classes in linguistic performance. Nevertheless, intra-group analyses showed that both groups progressed in writing fluency and accuracy. Although most of the students held favorable attitudes toward their course of study, there were no significant differences between the two groups in perceptions. As for the experimental class' perceptions on blogging to write, the learners regarded the blog-integrated course as a positive experience and among the features of blogs, comment was mostly preferred by the students, with archiving being the second, self-publishing the third, and hyperlink the fourth.

Keywords: EFL blogging to write, linguistic performance, perceptions, comparison study

Introduction

Due to information revolution, the use of English is expanded throughout the world as it is considered as the language of globalization and international communication. In the age of the network, it is noticed that "written" English is the predominant medium for much of the discourse (Long & Richard, 2003). English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL) writing skills, thus play an increasingly important role today in the lives of non-native English professionals in almost every field and discipline as well as create a challenge to those who are responsible for the teaching of ESL/EFL writing.

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Because of the profound effect of computer on literacy practice (Pennington, 2003), ESL/EFL writing teachers start to reflect on their current teaching approaches and attempt to bring computers into their own pedagogical practice (e.g., Chapelle, 2001; Marcoul & Pennington, 1999; Pinkman, 2005; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996). One of the latest developments in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is the Weblog or Blog. Developed in the 1990s, blogs are personal journals made up of chronological entries organized in reverse order. With its distinctive features: instant publishing, comments, archive, and hyperlinks, blogs look like a composite form of many computer media, yet still feature the ease of use of a template-based system. Nowadays, some people might suspect the prevalence of blogs among young people when comparing blog with “Facebook”, “Instagram”, or other social media. In terms of the application in EFL writing, the author argues that blog is superior than other social media in that people visit “Facebook” or “Instagram” basically for the people while they visit blogs for what people have written. People can have links to friends and sometimes their friends make comments, but the main point of a blog is to write down thoughts. On social media, people write stuff, too, but the essence of it is a social networking tool. An analogy made by Owyang (2008) is that “Blogs are like a keynote speech where the speaker (Blogger) is in control of the discussion, but allows questions and comments from the audience ... while social networks (e.g., Facebook) are like topic tables at a conference luncheon”.

Although many educators and practitioners regard blogs as potential learning tools prior to 2006, research on their effectiveness in the foreign language classroom has been scant. Journal articles mostly give suggestions for incorporating blogs in the educational settings without presenting empirical findings regarding blog application (Campbell, 2003; Dieu, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Oravec, 2002). Starting 2006, there is more documentation of the use of blogs within the field of foreign language education (e.g., Ahmed, Banday, & Jan, 2014; Al-Aayed, 2009; Bakar, 2009; Bayrak & Kocak, 2011; Bloch & Crosby, 2008; Camilleri, Ford, Leja, & Sollars, 2007; Cequena, 2013; Ding, 2008; Fageeh, 2011; Güttler, 2011; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Jones & Nuhfer-Halten, 2006; Murray & Hourigan, 2008; Nepomuceno, 2011; Shin, 2009; Soares, 2008; Sun & Chang, 2012; Wu, 2006; Zhang, 2009). With these studies, we are informed of the benefits and challenges of the application of blogs in foreign language learning and teaching. Nevertheless, among the above studies, few experimental, comparative studies have been conducted, i.e., to go beyond one-group design and/or explanatory in nature. In order to bridge the research gap, the present study conducted a comparison study with an aim to provide more empirical data for using blogs in EFL writing.

Related Literature

Linguistic Performance

Cited in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews, 2007), the term “linguistic performance” used by Noam Chomsky in 1960 refers to “the actual use of language in concrete situations”. Linguistic performance in this study specifically refers to the lexical, morphological, and syntactic aspects of writing performance, for these have been the most heavily researched aspects within second language writing (e.g., Cooper & Odell, 1977; Faigley, 1979; Hunt, 1965, 1970; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007; Llach, 2011; Nold & Freedman, 1977; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). More specifically, the present study attempted to gauge the students’ writing performance through the use of “fluency”, “accuracy”, and “lexical complexity” measures researched by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998).

According to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), the classification comprises intuitive rather than theoretical operationalizations of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The underlying assumption is that these three characteristics of writing development progress in tandem. That is to say, more proficient second language writers are more fluent (“They write more”), accurate (“They produce fewer errors”), and complex (“They write more grammatically and lexically complex sentences”) in their writing than less proficient writers. Nevertheless, some evidence shows that there is individual variability at any given point of time as well as points where one aspect of development may progress at the expense of another (MacKay, 1982; Casanave, 1994; Tedick, 1990; Young, 1995).

In the search for the best writing developmental measures, Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) compared the research results for more than 100 measures of fluency, accuracy, or complexity that were used in 39 second or foreign language research studies. The followings are the best measures of writing development proposed by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (p. 119).

Table 1
Measures of Writing Development

Best measures compiled by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998)		
	Fluency	W/T, W/C, W/EFT
	Grammatical complexity	C/T, DC/C
	Lexical complexity	WT/ $\sqrt{2W}$, SWT/WT
	Accuracy	EFT/T
T-unit	An independent clause plus all the subordinate elements attached to or embedded in it	
W/T	Number of words in T-units	
W/C	Number of words per clause	
W/EFT	Number of words per error-free T-units	
C/T	Clauses per T-unit	
DC/C	Dependent clauses per clause	
WT/ $\sqrt{2W}$	Word types per square root of 2 times total words	
SWT/WT	Number of sophisticated word types per total word types	
EFT/T	Error-free T-units per T-unit	

The present study adopted W/T, C/T, SWT/WT, and EFT/T to measure students’ writing (linguistic) development.

Blogging to Write

Blogs’ definition, genres, and functions. First appeared in the mid-1990s, “A weblog or blog is a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order” (Walker, 2005, p. 1). Rebecca Blood (2002) described the evolution of blogs’ genres and functions by stating that “The original weblogs were link-driven sites. Each was a mixture in unique proportions of links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays” (p. 12). She explained that the earlier function of blogs are public and social. However, once the technology evolved to allow easy self-publishing, many blogs lost elements of this public filter for disseminating information and instead featured more individually motivated content. Self-publishing, according to Godwin-Jones (2003), encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of students. Such personal responsibility is lacking in discussion boards/forums, as Godwin-Jones argued. Along with blogs’ self-publishing feature are the other three distinctive features mentioned in the literature: archiving, comment, and hyperlink. In discussing the key concepts for teaching with blogs, Brooks, Nichols, and Preibe (2004)

correlated blogs with research notecards and classroom notebooks in which students jot down ideas and important notes. The correlation demonstrates the archiving function of blogs in helping students to organize and store/archive the important information. In an article describing the environments of online collaboration, Godwin-Jones (2003) mentioned that blogs are both interactive and collaborative. They are interactive in that bloggers typically make rich use of hypertext to link to what others have written on a topic or to resources on the Internet. At the same time, blog entries are accompanied by a comment button that allows readers to respond to the text. Blogs are also collaborative, because blogs can be easily linked and cross-linked to create larger online communities.

The application of blogs to ESL/EFL. In the present study, blogs played an important role for the experimental group. The students were required to create their own blogs to turn in assignments, to free write, and to build up hyperlinks for autonomous learning. In an analysis of the application of blogs to ESL/EFL writing, Chen (2015) synthesized the benefits of using blogs in teaching/learning ESL/EFL writing. These include providing a real audience for students to write for (Godwin-Jones, 2003), “offering extra reading practice for students” (Campbell, 2003; Johnson, 2004; Stanley, 2005), “functioning as online learner journals” that can be read by their peers (Campbell, 2003; Stanley, 2005), “guiding students to online resources” appropriate for their level (Camilleri, Ford, Leja, & Sollars, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Lin, Liu, & Sie, 2009; Soares, 2008; Stepp-Greany, 2002; Zhang, 2009), “increasing the sense of community in a class” (Al-Aayed, 2009; Bakar & Ismail, 2008; Bakar, 2009; Bloch & Crosby, 2008; Camilleri et al., 2007; Campbell, 2005; Farmer, 2004; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Pinkman & Bortolin, 2006; Shin, 2009), “encouraging shy students to participate” (Cummings, 2004; Stanley, 2005), “stimulating out-of-class discussion” (Al-Aayed, 2009; Bakar & Ismail, 2008; Bakar, 2009; Bloch, 2008; Camilleri et al., 2007; Campbell, 2005; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Nishikiori, 2007; Pinkman & Bortolin, 2006; Shin, 2009; Wang & Woo, 2010), “encouraging a process-writing approach” (Campbell, 2005; Murray & Hourigan, 2008; Stanley, 2005; Zhang, 2009), “functioning as an online portfolio of student written work” (Campbell, 2003; Fiedler, 2003; Stanley, 2005; Zhang, 2009), and “helping build a closer relationship between students in larger classes” (Farmer, 2004; Stanley, 2005).

The Study

This study is a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) effectiveness study regarding the use of blogs in EFL writing by comparing students’ writing performance and perceptions of two college writing classes in Taiwan. Writing performance, as the author argues in the above, is further divided into three sub-areas: fluency, accuracy, and lexical complexity. The analysis of perceptions includes the comparison of the two classes’ perceptions on their course of study and the experimental class’ perceptions on blogging to write.

Participants

Two writing classes of the researcher’s at a National University of Science and Technology in Northern Taiwan participated in the study. Randomly selected, 26 students participated in a non-blog English writing class and 18 students in a blog-integrated English writing class. Each class contained mixed levels of students that can be roughly categorized into two proficiency levels: intermediate and high-intermediate. All the students are ethnic Chinese and non-English majors. Their average ages were between 19 and 21, and most of them are male.

Description of the Two Course Syllabi

In order to control the human variable as not to confound the findings, the two classes received an identical instruction under the same instructor. All students were required to write three approximately 300-word expository essays, did peer-review activity for each essay, keep a learning journal, and they were encouraged to write freely out of their will. Specifically, the differences of the two classes lay in the way the students turned in their assignments, did peer-review activities, and received the instructor's feedback (offline vs. online). Under this circumstance, the experimental class was able to view their peers' marked assignment and peer-review archives of all students due to the open environment of blogs. Since the students were science and technology majors, according to the researcher's observation, they were adept at using computers. Therefore, technically speaking, blogging to write was not regarded as a problem for the experimental class.

Method

In response to Felix's (2005) call for combining various data collection methods within one single study in CALL effectiveness research to strengthen confidence levels about results, this study collected the scores of the students' pre- and post- tests, and the findings of the perceptions questionnaires to analyze the application of blogs in an EFL college writing course. The three research questions (RQ) are:

1. What is the effect of a blog-integrated writing class on students' linguistic performance? Do students in a blog-integrated writing class gain more on "fluency", "accuracy", and "complexity" measures of writing than students in a non-blog writing class?
2. What are students' perceptions on the writing class? Do students in the experimental class differ significantly from students in the control class in terms of class perceptions?
3. What are students' perceptions on blogging to write?

Table 2

A Summary of the Method in the Present Study

RQ	Instruments	Data collection procedures	Data analysis procedures
RQ 1 (Linguistic performance)	A pre-and a post- TOEFL writing test.	The pre-test in the fourth week; the post-test in the last week; 30-minute testing time.	The fluency, accuracy, and complexity measures (Wolfe-Quintero et al.,1998), a series of ANCOVA and paired-samples <i>t</i> -test for comparison.
RQ 2 (Comparison of the students' perceptions on their course of study)	A questionnaire of 21 generic statements (see Appendix I).	Questionnaire administered at the end of the course.	Independent-samples <i>t</i> test for comparison.
RQ 3 (The experimental class' perceptions on blogging to write)	A questionnaire of 15 statements reusing blogs to write (see Appendix II).	Questionnaire administered at the end of the course.	Descriptive statistics and ranking.

The instruments for data collection included a pre- and a post- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) writing test, a questionnaire of 21 generic statements (see Appendix I) for both classes, and a questionnaire of 15 statements (see Table 6 & Appendix II) regarding the use of blogs to write for the experimental class. The pre-test was administered in the fourth week of the semester and the post-test in the last week. Both tests took 30 minutes on site in the classroom. Both questionnaires were administered to the students at the end of course.

The statistical methods used to analyze the data included: (a) ANCOVA for comparing the fluency,

accuracy, and complexity aspects of the two classes' linguistic performance; (b) paired-samples *t*-test for intra-group comparison in linguistic performance; (c) independent-samples *t*-test for comparing the two classes' perceptions on the course of study; (d) descriptive statistics and ranking for interpreting the experimental class' perceptions on blogging to write. Table 2 above summarizes the RQ of this study and how they were answered.

Results

Linguistic Performance

Table 3 shows that even though the levels of language proficiency of the two classes were significantly different in the pretest of two measures: "fluency" and "accuracy", after the course of study, students in the blog-integrated writing class did not gain more on fluency, grammatical complexity, lexical complexity, and accuracy measures of writing than the students in a non-blog writing class. To gain a further analysis of student' linguistic performance, paired-samples *t*-tests were run for an intra-group comparison for both classes and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

The ANCOVA Results of Students' Linguistic Performance

Measure	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Fluency	Covariate (Pre-test)	69394.18	1	69394.18	27.44	0.00**
	Between-Subjects	319.28	1	319.28	0.13	0.72
	Within-Subjects	101174.64	40	2529.37		
Grammatical Complexity	Covariate (Pre-test)	2.265E-03	1	2.265E-03	0.03	0.86
	Between-Subjects	1.784E-02	1	1.784E-02	0.26	0.62
	Within-Subjects	2.77	40	6.930E-02		
Lexical Complexity	Covariate (Pre-test)	2.11	1	2.11	2.46	0.13
	Between-Subjects	8.953E-02	1	8.953E-02	0.10	0.75
	Within-Subjects	34.38	40	0.86		
Accuracy	Covariate (Pre-test)	463.44	1	463.44	32.02	0.00**
	Between-Subjects	11.93	1	11.93	0.82	0.37
	Within-Subjects	578.94	40	14.47		

Note. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4 shows that both classes significantly performed better in their post-tests on the measures of fluency and accuracy. Nevertheless, both classes showed a backsliding in lexical complexity of their writing. This is an interesting phenomenon that statistics might not be able to explain satisfactorily here. Despite the backsliding in lexical complexity, the above data analyses indicate that the use of blog generally did not hinder students' linguistic performance when compared to a conventional writing class.

Students' Perceptions on the Course of Study

To see whether the two classes differ significantly from each other in class perceptions, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing 21 generic statements at the end of the course. The statements were designed to elicit information about students' perceptions on: (a) the teacher's helpful and facilitative behavior in the class; (b) the facilitating effect of the writing class on learning to write; (c) interest and the relevance of the class activities to their present or future needs; and (d) the positive effect of the class on students' confidence in writing. Table 5 shows the results of students' perceptions on the course of study in the four

elicited categories of statements.

Table 4

The Paired-Samples T-Test Results of Linguistic Performances for Both Classes

Measures	Post-test—Pre-test			
	SD		p	
	The control	The experimental	The control	The experimental
Fluency	46.75	57.38	0.00**	0.00**
Grammatical complexity	0.38	0.42	0.37	0.40
Lexical complexity	-2.19	-2.05	0.00**	0.00**
Accuracy	3.84	3.54	0.00**	0.00**

Note. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions on the Course of Study

Students' perceptions	Mean of the control class	Mean of the experimental class
a. The teacher's helpful and facilitative behavior in the class.	4.15	4.10
b. The facilitating effect of the writing class on learning to write.	4.04	4.26
c. The interest and the relevance of the class activities to their present or future needs.	4.05	4.25
d. The positive effect of the class on students' confidence as an independent learner	4.08	3.78
Mean scores.	4.08	4.10

With the mean scores in three of the above categories (a, b, and c) above 4 point, the results indicate that both classes felt that the instructor was facilitative in the learning process, the course had helped them to learn to write, they were fond of the class activities and they thought the activities were relevant to their needs. Regarding category (d), the non-blog class had a mean score above 4.0, indicating that they felt confident in writing after the class. The blog-integrated class, with a mean score of 3.78, on the other hand, showed a neutral attitude toward how the class helped them become a confident learner-writer. While both classes showed positive attitudes toward taking their writing courses, by independent-samples *t*-test, Table 6 shows that the two classes did not differ significantly from each other in class perceptions.

Table 6

Comparison of Students' Perceptions by Independent-Samples T-Test

T-test for equality of means				
The control class—The experimental class	MD	t	df	p
	-1.98	0.44	24.82	0.66

Students' Perceptions on Blogging to Write

In addition to comparing students' perceptions on the course that they took by the 21 generic questions, the researcher also particularly asked students in the blog-integrated class to report their perceptions on blogging to write by additional fifteen questions. The statements of the fifteen questions were designed to elicit information about students' perceptions on: (a) the four distinctive features of blogs—Items 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, and 15; (b) the technical skills that they acquired—Item 1; (c) the time that they spent in the course—Item 4; (d) their likes and dislikes—Items 5, 11, and 13; and (e) opinions on the integration of blogs into their writing course—Items 8, 9, 12, and 15. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

The Experimental Class' Perceptions on Blogging to Write

Item	Mean scores on a 5-point-likert scale	Proportions of students' agreement with the statement (%)	Rank
1. I gained technical skills on the computer as a result of this class.	3.17	44	8
2. I liked doing the computer-assisted writing (blogging to write) as assignments better than conventional writing assignments.	3.94	72	4
3. I liked using blogs to store and organize my learning materials and process.	4.00	78	3
4. I put more time into this class than I would have invested in a regular English writing class.	3.61	56	7
5. I did not mind my classmates viewing my blog.	3.72	61	6
6. I learned a lot from the hyper-linked writing resources of the class.	3.94	72	4
7. I liked using blogs to publish my work.	3.94	72	4
8. The composition class blog was as useful as a bulletin board and a discussion board.	4.06	72	4
9. I will continue "blogging to write" to practice English writing.	3.94	72	4
10. I was able to observe my writing performance by using blogs to compile all my work as an E-portfolio.	3.94	78	3
11. If given a choice between a regular English writing class and blog-integrated English writing class, I would take a blog-integrated class.	4.17	83	2
12. The integration of blogs made this writing class a more interesting one.	4.17	89	1
13. I liked viewing my classmates' blogs.	3.89	72	4
14. I liked building up the hyper-linked learning resources.	3.89	67	5
15. The integration of blogs promotes interaction and cooperation between students.	4.06	83	2
Total	3.90		

Among the four distinctive features of blogs, it is found that students preferred the feature of comment most, with archiving being the second, self-publishing the third, and hyperlink the fourth. In terms of the skills that they thought they had acquired (Item 1), most students (56%) did not think that they had acquired technical skills on the computer as a result of the course. The result implies that blogging to write does not require advanced computer skills. For the time spent in the course (Item 4), 56% of the students reported that they put more time into the class than they would have invested in a regular English writing class. The result is not clear enough to show that taking a blog-integrated writing course would take students more time than a regular writing course. As for the students' likes and dislikes about blogging to write, the results of Items 5 and 13 show that not all of the students (61%) did not mind their classmates viewing their blogs, even though 72% of the students reported that they liked viewing their classmates' blogs. Despite the above ambivalent attitudes, 83% of the students reported that they favored a blog-integrated writing course more than a conventional one (Item 11). With regard to the integration of blogs into their writing course (Items 8, 9, 12, 15), 72% of the students reported that the whole class' blog was as useful as a bulletin board and a discussion board (Item 8); and 72% of the students also expressed that they would continue "blogging to write" for practicing English writing in the future (Item 9). Besides that, more than 80% of the students thought that the integration of blogs made a regular writing course a more interesting one (Item 12) and it promoted interaction and cooperation

among classmates (Item 15). To sum up, with the total mean scores of the questionnaire near four, students perceived the blog-integrated writing class as a positive experience.

Discussion and Conclusion

Linguistic Performance

By analyzing the two classes' pre- and post- tests, it is hard to know the effectiveness of the use of blogs in a writing course since a series of ANCOVA analyses did not show significant differences between the two classes in fluency, grammatical complexity, lexical complexity, and accuracy. Nevertheless, further intra-group comparisons demonstrated that both classes had progressed significantly in fluency and accuracy. This could be due to the effect of instruction (the instruction of formal way of English writing and the emphasis of readings in the writing class) and the teacher's corrective feedback. For the blog-intergrated class, being able to view the whole class' assignments and works through blogs might be another reason for the students' progress in fluency and accuracy. With regard to fluency, the more the students viewed their peers' blogs, the more ideas they might generate because of a larger exposure to contents on a specific writing topic. Viewing their peers' assignments or free writings through blogs might also stimulate students' aspirations for writing more. With regard to accuracy, viewing the teacher's corrective feedback to the whole class' assignments through the class blog might impress students on the mistakes they had also made and/or be alerted to their classmates' mistakes. Although the blog-integrated EFL writing class did not seem to work better than a conventional one, the findings suggest that the use of blogs at least did not hinder students' linguistic performance and could in fact enhance fluency and accuracy.

Students' Perceptions on the Course of Study

Although the mean scores of perception scores of the experimental class were higher than those of the control class (4.10 vs. 4.08), the independent-samples *t*-test demonstrates that the two classes did not differ significantly from each other in terms of class perceptions. The findings yielded from the blog-integrated class conform to computer-assisted writing studies that indicate a positive association of computer media with students' attitudes and preferences for writing (e.g., Hartman et al., 1991; Hoffman, 1994; Keller, 1999a; Mabrito, 1992; Mahmood, Huzaina, Ghani, & Rajindra, 2014; Pennington & Brock, 1992; Phinny, 1991; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Ushida, 2005; Vinther, 2011; Warschauer, 1996b). The findings also confirm the research on the application of blogs to foreign language learning that shows a favorable perception on a blog-integrated writing class (Al-Asyed, 2009; Bakar, 2009; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Nishikiori, 2007; Pinkman, 2005; Simsek, 2009; Wu, 2006).

Students' Perceptions on Blogging to Write

The experimental class' responses to the questionnaire of blogging to write showed that they ranked comment as the first preferred feature of the four distinctive features of blogs, with archiving being the second, self-publishing the third, and hyperlink the forth. In the computer-mediated literature, the function of comment is the feature that is highlighted as promoting interaction between bloggers. Previous research also points out that learning can be improved through interaction and collaboration (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978; Bruce & Rubin, 1993; Gere, 1987; Hartman et al., 1991). By exploring the function of comment, students in the blog-integrated class formed a learning community to help each other in learning to write. Specifically, through peer-review activities, they provided comments on and feedback to their peers' writings. As for the next mostly preferred

feature, 78 % of the students expressed that they liked to use the archival feature to sort out and organize their writing assignments and learning materials. They also felt that the archival feature had helped them to notice their learning progress. Seemingly, being able to store all of their writing entries neatly offered a reflection of growth and cognition for the students as Martland (2003) claimed in discussing the use of portfolios in students' learning. In terms of the feature of self-publishing, 72% of the students reported that they liked blogging to write more than a conventional way of writing and expressed that they would keep this practice in the future. Keeping a blog offered an opportunity for students to develop a sense of ownership of their writing when they could control the contents and quality of their writing, which would encourage self-directed writing later on. As for the hyperlink function of blogs, students in general showed a fair attitude toward it. In terms of their likes and dislikes, students showed an ambivalent attitude toward viewing other classmates' blogs and their blogs being viewed. The findings that the students liked to view their classmates' blogs but did not very much like others to view their blogs reveal that students in the experimental class either valued privacy or were inherently shy. For teaching a quiet and reserved class like the experimental class in the future, teachers are suggested to inform students of the benefits of sharing each others' works through blogs. With regard to the technical skills that they had acquired, students' report revealed that the blog-integrated writing course did not require advanced computer skills or let students learn technical/computer skills. Based on the students' responses to the time they spent in the blog-integrated writing course, the finding (56% agreement) is hard for us to conclude that the blog-integrated writing course would require more time investment.

This study explored the effectiveness of a blog-integrated EFL college writing course by comparing two English writing classes in Taiwan in two areas: linguistic performance and students' perceptions. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between the blog-integrated writing course and the conventional one in enhancing students' linguistic performance. Nevertheless, the students made a progress in writing fluency and accuracy. In terms of their perceptions on the course of study, the students regarded blogging to write as a positive experience and expressed that they would still try to blog to write in the future. These findings, hopefully, will provide some useful information for EFL instructors and educators in teaching and researching the role of blogs in language education. Regarding their preferences of the four distinctive features of blogs, the students ranked comment the first, with archiving being the second, self-publishing the third, and hyperlink the fourth. The instructional technologists are recommended to take into consideration these findings for developing future CALL tools.

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Appendix I

Students' Perceptions on the Course of Study (For both classes)

Research Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1 This course caters to my needs, including improving my writing skills, preparing me for taking a standardized writing exam and writing my reports in the other courses.	1	2	3	4	5
2 The feedback that the instructor provided to my assignment helped me understand the strengths and weaknesses of my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
3 I started to notice the English structure through this writing course.	1	2	3	4	5
4 The interaction between the class helped solve my puzzles of understanding English writing.	1	2	3	4	5
5 My English writing ability has improved.	1	2	3	4	5
6 I have learned how to reflect on my writing problems and seek for help.	1	2	3	4	5
7 I liked the way the instructor corrected my assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
8 I learned how to search for information/materials to improve my English writing.	1	2	3	4	5
9 Free writing benefited my writing skill.	1	2	3	4	5
10 I liked the activities of this course.	1	2	3	4	5
11 As long as I grasped how to write, I did not need the instructor around me.	1	2	3	4	5
12 I benefited from peer-review activity in the process of writing.	1	2	3	4	5
13 My confidence in writing increased.	1	2	3	4	5
14 I did not like writing learning journals.	1	2	3	4	5
15 I have become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
16 I liked peer-review activity.	1	2	3	4	5
17 Having the instructor around me in the process of writing helped promote my writing potentials.	1	2	3	4	5
18 I like the instruction of this course.	1	2	3	4	5
19 I did not like free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
20 Keeping a learning journal helped me to record my learning process and trace my language problems related to English writing.	1	2	3	4	5
21 The instructor's guidance was facilitative in the process of my writing.	1	2	3	4	5

Notes. Category 1—Perceptions on teacher role and facilitation (4, 11, 17, and 21);

Category 2—Perceptions on the effect on learning (2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 19, and 20);

Category 3—Perceptions on interest and relevance (1, 7, 10, 14, 18, and 19);

Category 4—Perceptions on confidence as a learner and technical skills (8, 13, and 15);

Items that require reverse scoring—4, 16, and 18.

Appendix II

Students' Perceptions on Blogging to Write (For the experimental class)

Research Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1 I gained technical skills on the computer as a result of this class.	1	2	3	4	5
2 I liked doing the computer-assisted writing (blogging to write) as assignments better than conventional writing assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
3 I liked using blogs to store and organize my learning materials and process.	1	2	3	4	5
4 I put more time into this class than I would have invested in a regular English writing class.	1	2	3	4	5
5 I did not mind my classmates viewing my blog.	1	2	3	4	5
6 I learned a lot from the hyper-linked writing resources of the class.	1	2	3	4	5
7 I liked using blogs to publish my work.	1	2	3	4	5
8 The composition class blog was as useful as a bulletin board and a discussion board.	1	2	3	4	5
9 I will continue "blogging to write" to practice English writing.	1	2	3	4	5
10 I was able to observe my writing performance by using blogs to compile all my work as an E-portfolio.	1	2	3	4	5
11 If given a choice between a regular English writing class and blog-integrated English writing class, I would take a blog-integrated class.	1	2	3	4	5
12 The integration of blogs made this writing class a more interesting one.	1	2	3	4	5
13 I liked viewing my classmates' blogs.	1	2	3	4	5
14 I liked building up the hyper-linked learning resources.	1	2	3	4	5
15 The integration of blogs promotes interaction and cooperation between students.	1	2	3	4	5

Notes. Category 1—Perceptions of the four distinctive features of blogs (2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, and 15);

Category 2—Perceptions of the technical skills that they acquired (1);

Category 3—Perceptions of the time that they spent in the course (4);

Category 4—Perceptions of their likes and dislikes (5, 11, and 13);

Category 5—Perceptions of opinions on the integration of blogs into their writing course (8, 9, 12, and 15).