

*An Analysis of Weblogs' Grammatical Errors of Filipino Learners of English as
Second Language*

Romualdo A. Mabuan, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigated grammatical errors in a corpus of 58 blog posts written by 58 participants through weblogs. It aimed to determine the views of students on the use of blogs in facilitating the acquisition of English writing skills, to identify, categorize, and analyze grammatical errors in students' blog posts, and to explore students' perceptions on the advantages of blogging as an alternative writing platform. The participants were freshman university students enrolled at a Study and Thinking Skills class at Lyceum of the Philippines University – Manila during the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015. Research data come from students' blog posts, survey, and focus group interviews. Errors were first classified into seven major categories and then they were divided into subcategories. Results show that the most pervasive errors committed by the participants were tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, morphology, articles, verbs, and pronouns. Pedagogical implications for teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, and text developers were offered on the basis of these results.

Keywords: blogs; blogging; weblogs; error analysis; error analysis of weblogs

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Introduction

Blogs, Blogger, Blogging

Blogs (short for “web logs”) are free, manipulable, and personalized online websites that look like a journal or diary. Blogs are easy-to-use and easy-to-maintain websites which allow a blogger or a blog user to create, edit, and publish written outputs called blog posts into the blogosphere (blog community in the cyberspace) through a blog platform, which is a free web hosting service (Campbell, 2003). Blogs can be used for personal, social, entrepreneurial, and educational purposes.

Blogs are popular but not necessarily new. They have been existing for 23 years now since their introduction into the World Wide Web in 1991 as a mode of sharing information. Early blogs had three primary features – contained links to other areas of interest in the web, commentary on the links, and interactivity and interconnectedness (Li & Chignell, 2010). Blogs have gained popularity since free hosting websites such as *Blogger.com* introduced itself in 1999, fostering a rapid growth of blog sites (Blood, 2000). In fact, blog ranked first in the “10 tech trends to watch in 2005” in the cover story of the first issue of *Fortune* magazine in 2005. “According to blog search-engine and measurement firm Technorati”, *Fortune* reports, “23,000 new weblogs are created every day – or about one every three seconds” (p.34). Requiring little or no technical background from users to create, design, and maintain, blogs have become a viable tool for online publishing from personal to business purposes.

Nowson (2006) defines blogs as web pages frequently updated with posts in reverse chronological order and the language used is informal and less constrained. It provides freedom to the blogger to write and publish absolutely anything about everything, at anytime in anyplace as long as there is an internet connection. Blogs are medium for dialogs between bloggers and readers, readers with other readers, and bloggers with other bloggers and their readers (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004). This authentic, interactive, and communicative environment qualifies blogs worthy of integration in the modern language classroom.

Campbell (2003) states that there are three types of educational blogs which educators can utilize in incorporating this technology into their classrooms: the tutor blog, which is created and maintained by a teacher; the learner blog, which is individually owned and updated by the members of a class; and the class blog, which is co-owned and co-operated by both the teacher and the students. Blogs, according to Campbell, affords students reflective learning in the process of developing an online portfolio that indexes all their learning outputs from their respective classes.

From Technology to *Teach-nology*: Blogging for Language Classes

With the upsurge of modern technologies, educational thought-leaders and policy-makers have continually strived to harness the potentialities of these technologies for classroom integration. As a result, various educational trends surfaced: Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), Technology-Enhanced Language Education (TELE), blended learning, digital learning, and so on. There is a growing awareness to recognize the nature of a modern learner, a ‘digital native’ (Prensky, 2001), who is adept at manipulating modern technologies in his day-to-day existence. Educators can

no longer deny this fact, and should therefore shift their teaching paradigm and admit that they can no longer teach their students the way they were taught before.

There is a gamut of modern technologies that teachers can utilize in their classrooms: blogs, wikis, podcasts, video-casts, blackboards, storyboards, and many more. Most of these applications and programs are free and easy to use, which makes them very practical for classroom use. This study explores the viability of one of these technologies: blogs. Because blog features its easy-to-use interface, frequent text update, and interactive comment area, most educators applied their blogs to reading or writing classes (Johnson, 2004; Campbell, 2003). These interactions expose learners to authentic uses of the target language which can inspire and challenge them in ways that classroom experiences cannot (Campbell, 2005). Studies (Saeed, 2009; Wang & Woo, 2008) have suggested that through blogging, students can organize information, post and share written outputs, give and get comments from other students, search information, link to other students' sites, read and evaluate other students' posts, collaborate and learn from one another, exercise learner autonomy, develop confidence, and reinforce motivation.

Existing studies and reviews on the use of blogs in second language learning and language learning include: blogs as a pedagogical tool in the classrooms (Richardson, 2009); blogs as an educational platform for ESL learning (Abu Bakar, 2009 as cited in Johnson, 2004); blogs as a learning material and learning process (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004); blogs as a tool for reading and writing (Wells, 2006); blogs as a way to foster a feeling of community between the members of a class (Soares, 2008). These studies suggest that blogging can be exploited to cater to different educational purposes aimed at enhancing the learners' language learning experience.

Furthermore, blogging can induce, as what Nagel and Anthony (2009) regarded a "therapeutic intervention" as it allows learners to release their feelings and emotions, which may lead to "an immediate feeling of relief and initially increase a person's ego or strength", thereby boosting students' affective domain, making them perceive writing not as a dreaded activity. This strengthened what Daiute (1986, p. 3 as cited in Soares, 2008) wrote that "...one of the main observations has been that students of all ages find writing on computers and communicating in the cyberspace to be highly motivating – an attitude that has not been reported regarding traditional writing instruction environments."

Investigating Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing via Blogging

Error Analysis (EA) is a type of linguistic analysis that is concerned with the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and that Target Language itself. Pit Corder is considered to be the forerunner of EA. Errors used to be perceived as "flaws" should be eliminated. Corder (1971) gave a different perception of these errors by considering them as "important in and of themselves" because errors shed light on the learning process. In the same vein, Gass and Selinker (1994) define errors as "red flags" that provide evidence of the learners' knowledge of the second language. Researchers are concerned with errors because they reflect and reveal the strategies that people use to acquire a language (Richards, 1974).

Errors can be interlingual or intralingual. Interlingual errors are attributable to the native language (NL). They occur when the learner's L1 habits (patterns and systems) interfere and prevent them from acquiring patterns in the TL (Corder, 1971). In other words, interlingual errors are the result of a negative transfer from the mother tongue (L1) to the TL. Interesting enough, investigating errors has both diagnostic and prognostic aspects. It is diagnostic because it discloses the learners' state of the language at a certain level during the learning process. It is prognostic because it can inform course organizers to restructure language learning materials in the light of the learners' current problems (Corder, 1967).

In the present study, Ellis' (1985) Error Analysis framework was utilized to identify, classify, explain, and evaluate students' grammatical errors in their blog posts.

Research Question

A class blog project was carried out in this study in order to fulfil the following objectives:

1. to determine the views of the students on the use of blogs in facilitating the acquisition of English writing skills;
2. to identify, categorize, analyze, and evaluate grammatical errors in students' blog posts; and
3. to explore students' perceptions on the advantages of blogging as an alternative writing platform.

Significance of the Study

This study is an attempt to incorporate technology in the English language classroom. Integrating technology into an educational setting affords both the teacher and the students to enhance their teaching and learning pathways. This educational endeavour provides insights to educators and researcher the viability and potential benefits of blogging in the ESL classroom and other subject areas. Furthermore, this supports student-centered approach in teaching as it recognizes and capitalizes on the characteristics of this generation's modern 'digital' learners.

Methodology

Participants

The participants involved in this study consisted of fifty-eight (58) freshman college students (16 males and 42 females; ages range from 16 to 20 years old) enrolled in Study and Critical Thinking Skills, from two degree programs, BS International Hospitality Management (major in Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Culinary Arts and Kitchen Operations, Cruise Line Operations in Hotel Services, and Cruise Line Operations in Culinary Arts) and BS International Travel and Tourism Management, in a private tertiary institution in Intramuros, Manila – Lyceum of the Philippines University. They have an average English learning experience of 10 years, and their English proficiency levels at the time of study ranged from lower intermediate to intermediate based on their TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) scores, which was administered by the university in the beginning of the semester. The course uses an integrative approach which caters to the learning and

acquisition of all English macro skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each class session ran for one and one half hours with two sessions per week. This study was conducted during the first semester of Academic Year 2014 – 2015, from July 7 to August 9, covering five weeks.

“The Blog Project” was announced to all classes as a midterm project to ensure that all students would participate in blogging. Initially, seventy (70) students created a blog account; however, only fifty-eight (58) continued with the project, for the six discontinued doing it after a week, the three officially dropped after the preliminary term, and the remaining three failed due to excessive absences.

Prior to the conduct of the study, participants’ “virtual profiles” were checked by identifying the social networking sites that they maintain. The survey revealed that the three most popular social networking sites among the initial 70 respondents are *Facebook* (70, 100%), *Twitter* (44, 63%), and *Instagram* (35, 50%). In a day, they access their social media for at least an hour (14, 20%), more than an hour but less than five hours (21, 30%), and more than five hours (35, 50%). Their social media activities include posting, reading, and commenting on their and their friends’ status updates, chatting, uploading photos and videos, and sharing information. Furthermore, when asked whether they have heard about blogs, they responded as follows: No (11, 15.7%); Yes, but no idea what it is (24, 34.3%); Yes, but have a slight what it is (27, 38.6%); and Yes, and have a blog (8, 11.4%). This supported the initial premise that the respondents were technologically-savvy and hence were considered ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), establishing their readiness to participate in the project.

Research Instruments

To gather pertinent data for this study, the following research instruments were utilized.

Survey

Two surveys were administered to the respondents. Prior to the implementing of the project, a ‘pre-project’ survey questionnaire was administered to the respondents to gather personal information and to determine their exposure to technology particularly social networking sites. The responses from this questionnaire were used to organize the project in terms of what blogging platform to utilize, how much blogging the learners should do per week, what topics should be included, and how much background knowledge learners had of blogs. A ‘post-project’ open-ended survey questionnaire was administered to the participants to determine their perceived advantages and disadvantages of the blog project as an alternative writing platform, as well as their reactions to peer feedback online. The responses to the questions were posted as reflections on the blog project.

Interview

After the project was completed, 10 students volunteered for a group interview with the researcher to discuss the blog project. Open-ended interview questions were asked of the students to determine their perceptions on the benefits, limitations, and

challenges encountered in blogging. These responses were recorded by the researcher in order to determine how students viewed the project, whether or not the students would continue blogging in the future, and how, according to the students, could the project be improved.

Procedure of the Study

The Blog Project commenced in the First Semester of AY 2014 – 2015 after seeking consent from the students and their parents/guardians. As aforementioned, a pre-project survey questionnaire was administered to the participants. The project ran for five weeks with two sessions per week for one and one half hours per session.

Prior to the implementing of the project, the researcher identified the platform or blog site which would be utilized by the class, taking into consideration Soare's (2008) recommendation that teachers who would like to implement blogging in their classes should have "trial blogs before using the 'real thing' with students, checking if the platform chosen caters for all the wants and needs." The researcher set some basic criteria before deciding on the blog site to be introduced to the class: a) User-friendliness (the site must be easily navigable and must require only basic technical skills from setting up to publishing so that the students will have more time for blogging), b) customizability (the site must contain interesting features for the students such as access to free themes, formats, layouts, and integration of widgets, comment sections, and photo and video blogging), and security (the site must secure by providing students username and password for blog owner's access, as well as security codes for comment posting and preventing of unsolicited posts or comments). Shortlisted among these platforms based on the set criteria were *Blogger* (www.blogger.com), *Multiply* (www.multiply.com), *MySpace* (www.myspace.com), *Tumblr* (www.tumblr.com), and *WordPress* (www.wordpress.com).



Figure 1. *Blogger* (www.blogger.com) as the platform for The Blog Project

Being an active blogger himself for five years, the researcher tested all the shortlisted blog sites and finally decided to use *Blogger* as the platform for the project. Furthermore, to keep track of students' blog posts without manually visiting every individual blog, the researcher used *Bloglines*, a web-based service news-feed collector (also called 'aggregator') which enabled him to subscribe to the RSS (Real Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary) feed of each of the students' blog, allowing him to read all of the students' blogs in one site from any computer connected to the Internet. Upon downloading and installing the 'notifier', the researcher was 'notified' whenever the subscriptions have new items to read. This aggregator also helped the researcher organize blogs by students' real names rather than pseudonyms.

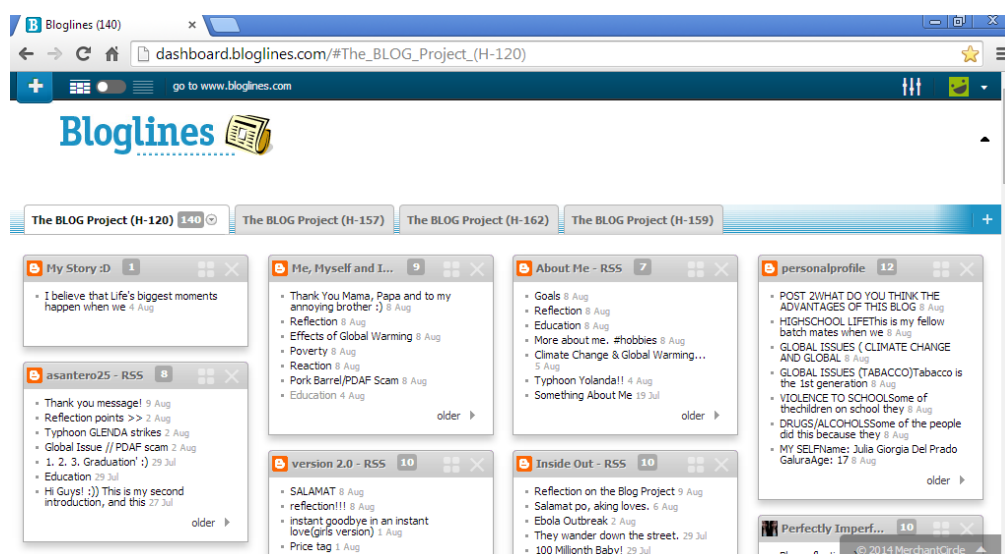


Figure 2. A screenshot of RSS feed reader from *Bloglines.com*

The researcher demonstrated to the class how to set up a *Blogger* account, how to use the *Dashboard* to post blogs, how to edit, how to change themes and layouts, how to integrate photo and video blogging, how to publish posts, and finally how to comment on each other's blog posts. Peer feedback was stressed to be relatively important and was required for all, and guidelines and examples were given. Moreover, the objectives and guidelines of the project were presented to establish adherence and to achieve the desired outcomes. Students were encouraged to publish two blog posts per week related to the general topics provided: Personal (Week 1), Educational (Week 2), Societal (Week 3), Global (Week4), and Reflectional (Week 5). Grade incentive as a form of extrinsic motivation was also utilized to reinforce compliance with the project among the students. The researcher asked the participants to post their blog sites on the class' *Facebook* 'closed' group account. From there, he 'visited' their sites and subscribed to their RSS feeds through *Bloglines*. The *Facebook* group account where all blog sites of the students were posted served as the 'venue' for students' access to their classmates' blogs for reading and commenting of posts.

The researcher monitored all the blog posts of the students closely through *Bloglines*, and he consistently motivated and reminded them to keep on blogging and posting of comments every time the class met, while addressing some specific concerns

encountered by the students. Several reminders were also posted on the class' *Facebook* group account.

After the project completion, a post-project survey questionnaire was posted online, and students were asked to accomplish it through posting their responses to the questions in their individual blogs. The researcher collected these responses for analysis. Afterwards, a focus group interview was conducted with the 10 volunteer respondents to determine their perceptions on the benefits and limitations of blogging, as well as their general comments on the blog project. Their consent was solicited to record the interview, assuring them of its confidentiality and anonymity. Open-ended questions were asked like: *"How would you describe your blogging experience?" "Do you think writing online through blogging helped you improve your English skills particularly writing? If yes, could you cite some of these improvements?" "What did you learn from this blog project?" "What were the challenges that you encountered while doing the blog project?" "Did you like/enjoy the project? Why or why not?" "How can this project be better?" "Would you continue blogging?"*

Finally, using 58 self-introduction essay blog posts, common grammatical errors committed by the students were identified, classified, and analyzed. These errors provided the researcher feedback on how the students have progressed, what remains for them to learn, and how the teacher can employ effective strategies to address these errors.

Data Analysis

To find out the students' reaction to the use of blogging as an online writing platform and their perceived advantages of it in developing their English skills particularly the writing skills, their blog posts were collected and quantified, and the survey questionnaire responses were coded and analyzed. Interview results were qualitatively described to validate these findings. Furthermore, common grammatical errors committed by the students in blogging as reflected in their blog posts were identified, categorized, and analyzed to determine trouble-spots in writing to gain insights for more effective teaching of writing practices.

Results and Discussion

Throughout the five-week implementation of The Blog Project, the researcher gathered important data as regards the quantity and quality of blogs posted and the perceptions of student bloggers on writing online through blogging as an alternative writing platform.

In terms of the quantity of blog posts, the 58 participants who complied with the project published a total of 418 blogs online within the duration of five weeks, with an average of 83.6 posts per week. Among these blogs, the maximum number of words is 1,956, while the least number of words in a blog is 20. On the average, blogs are composed of 319.67 words. These figures showed the pedagogical potentialities of blogging as to its effects in motivating learners to freely express their ideas, emotions, and opinions through online writing. Despite having no 'strict' guidelines in blogging such as paragraph structures, style, and word limits, and despite the absence of any evaluative measure or grading system for each of the blog post, it can be seen that

students manifested significant interest in writing and posting blogs. While this can be attributed to the blogging being introduced as a ‘midterm project’, it cannot be denied that students showed motivation and enthusiasm in writing through the frequency of their posts and the quantity of words for each post. Furthermore, it should also be noted that students did not only use text blogging; they also incorporated photo and video blogging as well as hyperlinking to their classmates’ blog sites and other websites. This implies that blogging provides interesting features that promote students’ enthusiasm for writing, creativity, and collaboration.

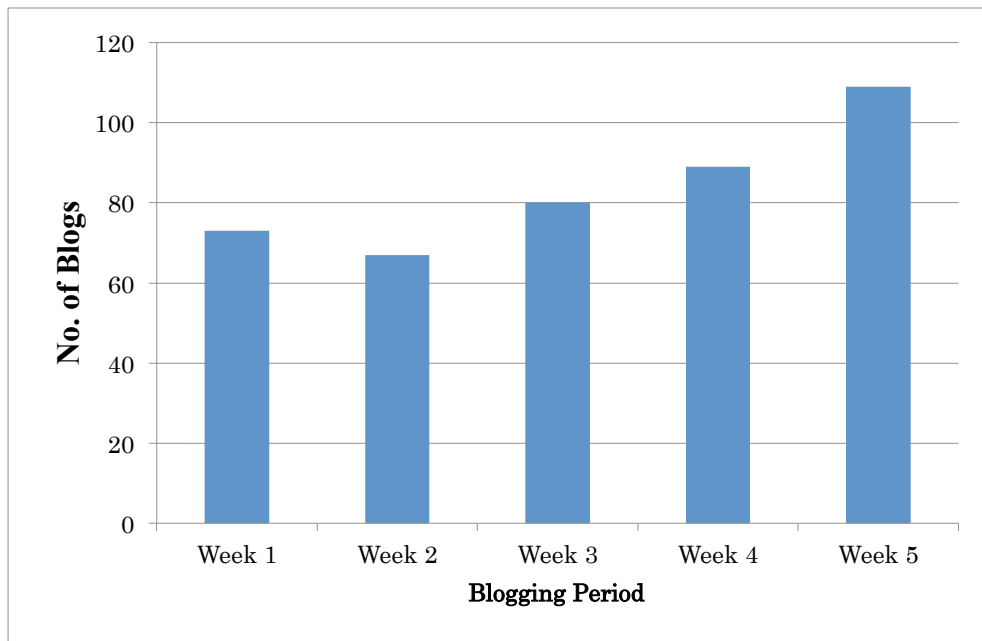


Figure 3. Blog count per week

Figure 3 presents the blog count for each week. This data shows an upward movement from the onset of the project. On the Week 1 of The Blog Project, 73 (17.46%) blogs were posted, showing the project’s wide acceptance among students, despite some complaints of lack of sufficient knowledge on blogging, having no technological resources like personal computer and internet connection at home, and poor or unstable internet line connection. Some students also reported having created their blog sites where they posted their blog entries, but were hesitant to post the link on the class *Facebook* group account due to ‘shyness’ and ‘fear of criticism’. However, it should be noted that these ‘inhibitions’ were gradually eliminated as the project progressed.

There was a slight decrease of the number of posts for Week 2 (67 blog posts, 16.03%). This can be attributed to the busy schedule of the students in preparation for their Preliminary Examinations, which brought a growing number of school tasks and projects to attend to. However, after Week 2, a consistent upward trend is remarkably noticeable from Week 3 (80 blog posts, 19.14%), to Week 4 (89 blog posts, 21.29%) and to Week 5 (109 blog posts, 26.08%) when it reached its peak. This may be due to the consistent motivation and encouragement given to the students, increased learning and adaptability of the technical know-how of blogging, and growing interest of the participants upon seeing their classmates’ posts and comments to one another. This

strengthens the claim that blogging is not merely a writing activity but an avenue for learning new things and for sharing experiences, ideas, and information.

In terms of the quality of the students' blog posts, the researcher observed varied but relevant responses to the five general topics provided. Though students were always reminded to pay attention to the unity, coherence, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary, and organization of their blog posts before publishing them, common grammatical errors surfaced. Table 1 shows the identification of grammatical errors based on the type of errors, frequency of errors, and percentage of errors committed by the students in writing their blog entry number one which is a self-introduction essay. The researcher analyzed 58 blog posts, totalling 27,754 words, with an average of 296.49 words per blog.

| Types of errors | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Tenses | 70 | 25.36 |
| Subject-Verb Agreement | 55 | 19.93 |
| Prepositions | 49 | 17.38 |
| Morphology | 39 | 14.13 |
| Articles | 27 | 9.57 |
| Verbs | 25 | 9.06 |
| Pronouns | 11 | 3.90 |
| Total | 276 | 100 |

Table 1. Identification of grammatical errors

The results show that the most common grammatical errors that the students made were in tense (25.36%), subject-verb agreement (19.93%), prepositions (17.38%), morphology (14.13%) followed by articles (9.57%), verbs (9.06 %), and pronouns (3.9%). These results are graphically represented in Figure 4:

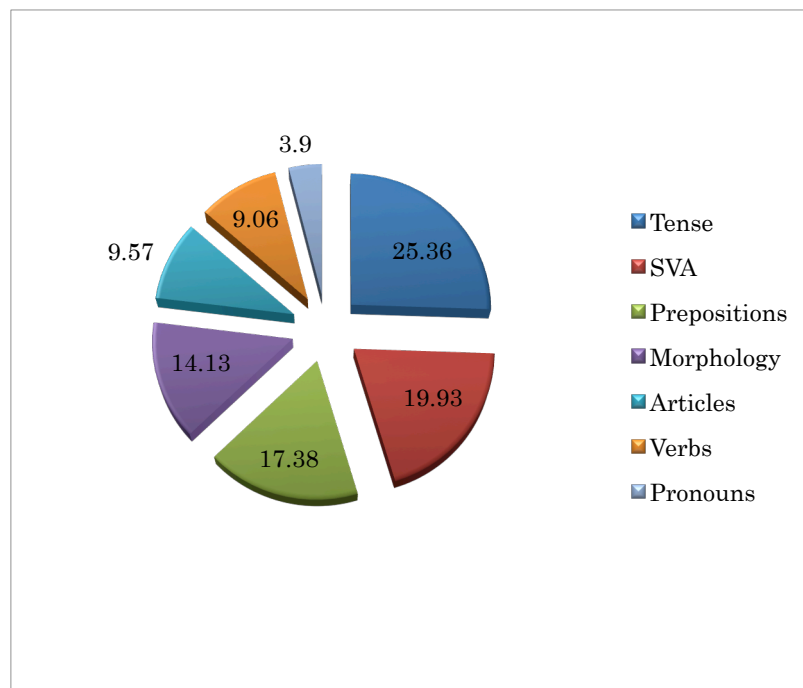


Figure 4. Identification of grammatical errors

As can be seen from these results, the most problematic area in grammar among the students is the verb tense. Wrong application of verb tenses can be seen when the participants did not apply the correct tense to the verb in the sentences. Students had problems with the use of bare infinitive after modals, the use of the simple present tense when the context is in the present, and the use of simple past tense to refer to actions completed in the past. Darus and Ching (2009) contend that it is not surprising that L2 learners face problems with tenses since English notion of tense is somewhat confusing to the L2 learners who regard time as a separate entity by itself.

The second most common type of error committed by the students is the error in subject-verb agreement. Students seemed not to master the syntactic rules of providing singular verbs for singular subjects and plural verbs for plural subjects. It was observed that the major cause of this error is students' confusion in locating the subject and determining its number. The third most common type of error is error in prepositions. It was noticed that students were not sure of the semantic scope of certain prepositions, i.e. they do not know whether the preposition IN, for example, or the prepositions ON and AT should be used in a given context.

These grammatical errors committed by the students in their blog posts may be attributed to some factors such as first language interference and negative transfer from L1 to L2. These errors revealed that while the students know that these forms exist in English grammar, they still have not mastered the rules governing them. These finding implicate teachers to pay attention on these 'trouble spots' so that purposive grammar-based writing instruction may be applied, so as to assist the students in developing their writing skills with fluency and accuracy.

Table 2 summarizes the common grammatical errors committed by the students in their first blog post:

| Definition and grammatical error classification | Identification of errors | Correct sentences |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Verb Tenses – misuse of verb tenses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. But as I grow old, it all get cleared. 2. We explain it and our adviser is so angry. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. But as I grew old, it all got clear. 2. We explained it and our adviser got so angry. |
| 2. Subject-Verb Agreement – misuse of subject/verb agreement | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My parents wants me to be like her. 2. I still doesn't have hair yet. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My parents want me to be like her. 2. I still don't have hair yet. |
| 3. Prepositions – when a preposition is misused, omitted, or added | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We live at Las Piñas City. 2. There are no perfect people in the Earth. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We live in Las Piñas City. 2. There are no perfect people on earth. |
| 4. Morphology – omission of plural "s"; misuse and addition of | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In just a few minute you'll have nothing. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In just a few minutes you'll have nothing. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| the plural ending in “s”; wrong word formation | 2. I like listening to musics. | 2. I like listening to music. |
| 5. Articles – omission or addition of “a”, “an”, or “the” | 1. I came back to () Philippines. 2. My life is a simple. | 1. I came back to the Philippines. 2. My life is simple. |
| 6. Verbs – omission of the verb “do” or “be”; confusion for verb choice | 1. He () not showed that I’m incomplete. 2. I () proud to myself. | 1. He did not show me that I was incomplete. 2. I am proud of myself. |
| 7. Pronouns – misuse of pronouns | 1. I think his a businessman. 2. Me and my sister used to watch movies together. | 1. I think he is (or he’s) a businessman. 2. My sister and I used to watch movies together. |

Table 2. Common grammatical errors committed by the students in their blog posts

Learner-perceived Advantages of the Blog Project

Students’ interview results and reflections revealed that all of them “enjoyed” the blog project overall. When asked about the benefits of the project, reasons why they enjoyed blogging, and what they learned from the project, students reported a variety of responses. Thirty-two learners agreed that they enjoyed having the freedom to express their feelings and opinions on different topics, and that it gave them “voice” and served as their “emotional and intellectual outlet”. Fourteen learners cited that they thought their writing skills had improved from doing the project. Eleven learners believed that the project helped them socialize and interact with their classmates in a virtual environment outside the classroom. Below are some of the students’ reflections.

Table 3 lists all responses regarding the advantages of the blog project.

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Freedom and confidence to express and share one’s feelings, ideas, and opinions on certain topics and issues | 32 | 31.1 |
| Improved writing skills | 14 | 13.6 |
| Interacting and socializing with other learners online | 11 | 10.7 |
| Increased societal awareness | 8 | 7.8 |
| Understanding oneself and others | 7 | 6.8 |
| Learning and using new vocabulary | 6 | 5.8 |
| Grammar practice | 6 | 5.8 |
| Practice in technology | 4 | 3.9 |
| Thinking critically | 4 | 3.9 |
| Served as past-time/ hobby | 3 | 2.9 |
| Learning new ideas | 2 | 1.9 |
| Improved time management | 2 | 1.9 |

| | | |
|---|------------|------------|
| Typing practice | 1 | 0.97 |
| Developed creativity | 1 | 0.97 |
| Improved reading skills | 1 | 0.97 |
| Exciting, interesting, and fun activity | 1 | 0.97 |
| Total | 103 | 100 |

Table 3. Learner-perceived advantages of blogging

The following students' avowals support these findings:

| Perceived benefits of blogging | Interview transcripts and reflections reflecting students' perceptions on the benefits of blogging |
|--|--|
| Freedom and confidence to express and share one's feelings, ideas, and opinions on certain topics and issues | <p><i>While writing in a blog, we can learn to express our ideas and own opinions on topics of common interest to other people.</i></p> <p><i>This blog project develops my self-confidence in posting personal opinions and experiences.</i></p> <p><i>For me, blogging helps me to express my ideas through the cyber world. I am free to share with others what I really feel about something or someone I want to talk about.</i></p> <p><i>It taught me how to express more of what I'm having in my mind. It also gave me confidence to share my knowledge and especially my opinions.</i></p> <p><i>Through blogging, I could say that I was able to express the pain of growing up without a father.</i></p> |
| Improved writing skills | <p><i>I believe my written communication skill improved while I expressed myself in this blog project because I learned how to write in different styles to make my blogs interesting for my classmates.</i></p> <p><i>It enhanced my writing skills as I was able to use it as a diary.</i></p> <p><i>Having a blog taught me to make an essay in an organized manner.</i></p> <p><i>I learned to compose creative ideas through my blogs.</i></p> <p><i>It forced me to write... at first I thought it was very boring, but as I continued to blog, I learned how to love writing. It's interesting and helpful naman pala.</i></p> |
| Interacting and socializing with other learners online | <p><i>Through this blog project, I gained new friends.</i></p> <p><i>It helped us to interact with our classmates by reading and leaving comments on each other's blogs.</i></p> |
| Increased societal awareness | <p><i>It helped me widen and deepen my thoughts about the things around me.</i></p> <p><i>I also got to know the issues here in the Philippines & around the world.</i></p> <p><i>By researching for my own topics and reading my classmates' blogs, I learned more about the different situations in our society.</i></p> |
| Understanding oneself and others | <p><i>This project let us see the world in a broader way.</i></p> <p><i>This project made me know others well. It helped me reach out to people for them to understand me for who I</i></p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | <i>am.</i> |
| | <i>In just a click, people around me could have piece of me and of course I did that that in the same way to their blog posts in order for me to know their part.</i> |
| | <i>Because of this project, we know now our block mates' background.</i> |
| Learning and using new vocabulary | <i>Because of this blog, I learned to research and check the spelling of words first before I published them. I also encountered new words that I didn't know.</i> |
| | <i>While reading some of my peers' posts throughout, I noticed that they were able to use different and more complex vocabulary.</i> |
| | <i>I have been more creative in picking the best words for my blogs.</i> |
| Grammar practice | <i>I was very careful with my grammar and vocabulary, and even spelling. Before posting my blog, I made it sure that I didn't have errors, because my classmates may laugh at me haha.</i> |
| | <i>Honestly, I think my grammar improved because (classmate's name) constantly checked my sentences. I thank her for that.</i> |
| | <i>This project also helped me detect the errors in grammar of classmates as well as correct them and vice versa.</i> |
| | <i>This blog project enhanced my English grammar on how to create and combine perfect sentences and ideas using the English language. I was able to write long sentences.</i> |
| Practice in technology | <i>This blog project helped us to maximize our gadgets and technologies in a better way.</i> |
| | <i>I was able to use this technology in a useful and sensible way.</i> |
| Thinking critically | <i>Our reasoning and judgment was practiced in commenting on the societal and global issues.</i> |

Table 4. Students' avowals on the advantages of blogging

From these responses, it can be deduced that students view blogging as a viable tool to express their ideas, improve their writing skills, and practice their grammar and vocabulary skills. This finding corroborates with the results of similar studies (Ware, 2008; Zhang, 2009; Lee, 2010 as cited in Cequena, 2013), emphasizing the point that students have positive attitude towards blogging, which they view can develop their English skills in vocabulary building, grammar, and writing.

Furthermore, these findings echo the results of related studies (Roth, 2007; Kelley, 2008; Anderson, 2010 as cited in Cequena, 2013) which show that frequent blogging among students develop writing skills, enabling them to take pride in their achievements, and consequently developing their self-esteem.

Conclusion

This study explored the viability of integrating technology into an ESL classroom by using weblogs. The findings suggest that writing online via blogging may facilitate students to develop their English writing skills, express their ideas and opinions freely on certain topics and issues, and improve their grammar and vocabulary. With its interactive and communicative nature, blogging also increases students' motivation, self-confidence, and "sense of ownership" (Campbell, 2004). Furthermore, blogging promotes free exchange of ideas and critical thinking skills among students through online peer feedback, which consequently can "empower students to become analytical and critical" (Oravec, 2002, p. 618). Despite its minimal disadvantages such as accessibility, connectivity, and time constraints, language teachers can devise appropriate project mechanics to integrate blogging effectively into the language classroom. Any attempt to employ this technology must consider the educational goals of the institution, the readiness of the learners, the enthusiasm of the teacher to redefine his or her teaching approaches, as well as the competencies that the school aims to develop among its students.

Students' responses suggest that blogs provide a rich, authentic, and "collaborative learning environment" (Dieu, 2004; Mitchell, 2003) for both learners and teachers who seek to find innovative ways in learning and teaching the English language. This study implicates educators to consider blogging as a "useful supplemental aid to teaching" (Johnson, 2004). However, proper planning and course design should be considered to effectively maximize the potentialities of this computer-based resource.

Aside from exploring the potentialities of blogging for classroom integration, this study also identified and categorized the common grammatical errors that students committed in their blog posts. The results show that students encounter problems with basic grammatical rules in English such as verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, morphology, verbs, articles, and pronouns. These results shed light on the process through which ESL learners internalize the grammatical rules of English as a target. It further shows that error analysis can help teachers pinpoint systematically the common grammatical problems that students make as they perform certain English writing tasks. Consequently, this study provides an insight into language learning problems encountered by students, which is useful to teachers because it tells about common trouble spots in language learning particularly in the acquisition of writing skills. Language teachers, syllable designers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers may also consider the findings in this study in planning, designing, and implementing lessons and instructional materials.

This classroom-based study hopes to inspire educators to incorporate blogging in their own pedagogy to provide students modern and innovative learning facets. Other forms of blogging such as inter-class, inter-school, and inter-cultural blogging may be tried out to explore its effectiveness with varied audiences and contexts. In addition, other approaches to research such as experimental and mixed methods may be done to investigate closely the usefulness and effectiveness of blogging in the teaching of writing skills and other English language skills.

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Contact e-mail: romualdo.mabuan@lpu.edu.ph