
Enhancing Classroom Learning through Computer-Mediated Reflective Writing and Peer Feedback

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Abstract

This research was initiated to gauge students' perception of computer-mediated journaling as a way to enhance classroom learning experience through a limited style of blogging. It drew on the benefits of collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1962; Warschauer, 1997), cooperative learning (Slavin, 1990; Olsen & Kagan, 1992), autonomous learning (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989), and reflective writing, which Bartlett-Bragg (2003: 5) sees as 'a tool for creating meaning and context from events and experiences – leading the learner towards creating new meanings and further enhancing their ability to contextualise and progress towards self-directed and deeper learning'. The objectives were: to determine if the participants benefited from peer input and feedback on their online journals, and whether the computer-mediated method increased their awareness and interest to learn.

Data were gathered from two different sources: online space in *Friendster* (journals and peer feedback) and questionnaire. The research involved 14 undergraduates who were enrolled in a university language course. This paper discusses the participants' discourse in the private online space, and their perception of this process of learning.

Introduction

This study on students' perception of computer-mediated journaling (through controlled blogging) as an extension of classroom learning has its roots in collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1962), an umbrella term for approaches in education involving joint intellectual effort by learners or learners and educators, cooperative learning (Slavin, 1990, Olsen & Kagan, 1992), autonomous learning (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989), and reflective writing, which is seen as 'a tool for creating meaning and context from events and experiences leading the learner towards creating new meanings and further enhancing their ability to contextualise and progress towards self-directed and deeper learning' (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003: 5). Slavin (1990) believes that opportunities for students to work together are opportunities for them to learn together, while Ellis and Sinclair (1989) view reflective writing as an autonomous learning strategy which enhances learner development.

This computer-mediated medium combines the interactional aspect of speech and the reflective aspect of writing (Warschauer, 1997), thus allowing for more interesting discourse and easier collaboration between the participants in terms of time and space (can be accessed at anytime at their own pace without needing the physical presence of the other collaborators), location (can be accessed from anywhere that has an internet-linked computer), storage (it is not shared on paper and therefore does not require physical storage), editing (it allows the collaborators to plan or rework what they have written before posting it, and review it after posting), and privacy (non-participants are locked out of the interactions).

Proponents of educational blogging cite its many benefits such as motivation to excel when students know others may read and respond to their writing (Davis, 2007), the technology improves communication outside of the classroom (Adnekan, 2005), it supports the 'concepts of reflection, application, and engagement, which are key elements to successful college teaching' (Brescia, 2006:50), and collaborative blogging improves students' attitudes toward writing and supports development of related skills and knowledge (Drexler, et. al., 2007). This area of study thus generated a lot of research interest. The objectives of this study therefore, were to determine the potential of blogging and reflective journaling in learner development from the perspective of the users in an Asian context, and whether this computer-mediated method increased the students' interest to learn. The findings shed light on whether this computer-mediated method of enhancing learner experiences works for Asian learners and the information adds to the body of knowledge in this area.

Sample

A total of 17 (5 males, 12 females) undergraduates from various disciplines of study who enrolled in a language course, took part in this investigation which involved answering a questionnaire. Further, besides answering the questionnaire, fourteen of them chose to take part in the computer-mediated tasks which required them to post their journals online and to post comments on their peers' journals. All fourteen participants had taken the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), a university requirement for admission, with twelve of them obtaining at least Band 4 (*competent users* of the language), while the other two obtained Band 3 (*modest users* of the language). Therefore, most of them were expected to be able to write moderately easy journals in English regarding their thoughts about their language learning experience. The views of the other three participants who did not involve themselves in the computer-mediated tasks were included as additional data to reveal their perception of this method of learning. The 17 participants were from different language classes and therefore they did not know all the other participants in this investigation. The sample for the study is thus reflected in Table 1 below:

Participants	Participation in the computer mediated tasks		Participation in the questionnaire
	Online journals	Online feedback	
Male (5)	3	3	5
Female (12)	11	9	12
Total: 17	14	12	17

Table 1: The sample of the study

Method of Data Collection

Two types of data were collected – the online journals and comments posted by the participants, and their feedback in a questionnaire. To ensure privacy, a by-invitation-only group space was created in the online social network *Friendster* to allow participants to post their journals, read their peers' journals, post their comments, and read their peers' comments. A questionnaire was administered at the end of this process for them to provide their thoughts on this method of enhancing their learning experience.

Online Journals and Comments

The language course that the participants enrolled in required them to write two reflective journals (Peyton & Staton, 1992), that revealed their thoughts and feelings about their language learning experiences in and outside the classroom. These were posted in the private group space in two instalments to allow time for reading the writings and for posting comments before the second journals were posted. The journals chronicled the participants' language learning journey and experiences in and outside the language classroom. Most parts of the journals were narratives and in this paper, only parts of the journals that the participants commented on are discussed together with the comments.

The online discussion was monitored by the researcher in the background to ensure no unpleasantness arise through insensitive writing or vulgarity. The participants however had a free hand over what they chose to write regarding their language learning experience. The researcher played no active role in the discussions in order not to influence or interfere with the participants' discourse. In retrospect, however, this decision could have been a contributing factor to the initial lacklustre discussion. The slow start could also be due to the aspect of voluntary participation. Those who did not wish to be involved in the computer mediated investigation did not perform the online tasks required of them even though the online space was accessible to them throughout the study. Of the 14 participants who performed the online tasks, eight participated fully by posting both journals and comments while the other six executed only one of the two online tasks required.

The online journals posted by the participants were downloaded and saved in MS Word document for examination. Periodic visits were made to the online space to download comments that were posted on each journal. *Friendster* has a function that alerts group members through email whenever something new has been posted on the discussion board. This made it easier for the researcher to keep track of the comments that had to be downloaded for analysis. A final sweep was done at the end of the whole exercise to confirm that no posted journals or comments were left out.

Questionnaire

The survey included questions about participants' thoughts and feelings concerning:

- a. reading their peers' online journals,
- b. posting comments regarding their peers' journals,
- c. receiving online comments from their peers regarding their own online writings, and
- d. the whole online process of sharing their writing and giving feedback.

A five-point Likert scale section, with STRONGLY AGREE at one end of the scale and STRONGLY DISAGREE at the other, was also added to the questionnaire to gain a deeper insight into the participants' thoughts regarding the whole task of blogging about their language learning experiences. Open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to help shed light on why some participants did not participate fully in the study.

Method of Analysis

Quantitative

An online text analyzer was used to examine each journal and comment to obtain general statistics and to measure the level of readability of their writing. Their writings were fed through a free text analyzer provided by UsingEnglish.com and Flesch Reading Ease Readability scores were obtained. This measurement rates text on a 100-point scale based on the average number of syllables per word and words per sentence. The higher the Flesch Reading Ease score, the easier it is to understand the document. The scores correspond to seven readability levels ranging from *very easy* to *very difficult*.

ranging from 4th Grade to College Graduate.

The statistics generated shows most participants' discourse was fairly easy to understand, with the majority falling between *very easy* (4th grade) and *standard* (8th grade) levels. Only less than 4% of the online discourse was graded as *difficult* (high school/college) to *very difficult* (college graduate) due to lack of coherence in the writing. In this paper, no further discussion on quantitative findings is done as the bulk of it is dedicated to qualitative findings.

Qualitative

Each journal and comment was manually examined for the amount of personal identifying data revealed, emotive features used, type of comments rendered, and any specific features that stand out from the text. The personal identifying data shed light on how these Asian participants felt about revealing themselves to the other participants in the study. Information from the questionnaire was manually analysed to reveal their thoughts concerning this method of enhancing their learning experiences and attitudes towards writing about their learning experiences. Throughout this paper, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants.

Discussion of Finding

Disclosure of Personal Data

The participants revealed a considerable amount of their personal identifying information on the front page of their blog (see Table 2) real first name (50%), real full name (36%), age (79%), location (79%), contact information (93%), and photo (71%). 79% gave their zodiac sign but strangely none revealed their birth date although the template for this was available in *Friendster*. Only one female participant went to great lengths to conceal all personal information about herself, using the very apt *Anonymous Coward* as her pseudonym. It revealed shyness and apprehension towards making her journals available for public scrutiny, even though it was within a limited group. Participants who did not post their journals cited embarrassment because of their poor command of English and issues with privacy as the main reasons for not being involved in the computer-mediated tasks. Though blogging is now a rather common social networking outlet for the young, with 74% of Malaysian bloggers categorized as 25 years old and below (Stewart, 2006), some still felt that it infringed on their privacy

Total number of participants	First name	Full name	Age	Birth date	Location	Contact info	Photo	Zodiac Sign
14	7	5	11	0	11	13	10	11
Percentage	50	36	79	0	79	93	71	79

Table 2: Disclosure of Personal Information

Emotive & Expressive Features

The majority of participants (57%) used emoticons in their comments. These were all females who favoured emoticons showing *Happiness* (73%), *Playfulness* (15%), *Embarrassment* (8%), which was used to express the sorry state of their language proficiency, and *Sadness* (4%). Only 4% of the emoticons used were text-based while the rest was the easily understood graphic-based emoticons. The type of emoticons and the frequency of usage in the online discourse are shown in Table 3

Participant/Gender	Emotive Features (text-based smiley, emoticons)			
	Happiness	Sadness	Playfulness (Rolling eyes, Twisted evil, mock horror)	Embarrassment
AN (m)				
ANON COW (f)				
BRAD (f)	😊😊😊😊		😜	
ET (f)	😊😊😊			😬😬
GWEN (f)	😊😊 ^_^	😞	😜	
JAN (f)	😊😊		😜	
JENI (f)				
JOH (m)				
KEC (f)	😊😊		😜	
MIZZ (f)	😜			
NASH (m)				
SHER (f)	😊😊😊			
SHIV (f)				
WOO (f)	😜			
Total	19	1	4	2
Percentage	73%	4%	15%	8%

Table 3: Emotive Features Used in the Discourse

The use of these emoticons, especially the frequently used *Happiness* emoticons suggests that they tended to make light their comments in order not to offend their peers, as seen in Samples 1 and 2. In Sample 1, without the emoticons the comment 'lazy girl' would appear like a reprimand and in Sample 2 it would sound like an accusation that NASH was pretending to be humble:

Sample 1:

BRAd

lazy girl~ 😊

same here as well. .i never use the new terms that i learnt; therefore, the terms are never mine. 😊

i wish u enjoy ur stay hcre~ 😊

Sample 2:

Mizz

hey nash...i think for someone who claim that he doesn't know how to write a journal to wrote such an interesting journal was kinda ironic.

why? coz u're far from making yourself sound lame 😊

This observation is also supported by data from the questionnaire which confirmed that participants felt the need to be truthful in their comments but not hurt their peers' feelings. A great possibility is also that the emoticons were used to create a closer rapport with the author of the journal since the participants were all taking the same language course and experiencing the same struggles in their learning. Reading about the same struggles gave them a sense of 'comradeship'. The emoticons seemed to help minimise negative impact on the author as 70% of the participants felt that their peers' comments made them want to improve the quality of their writing, and no one (0%) had anything negative to say about their peers' feedback on their writing. The use of the emoticons by only female participants in the study supports the traditional view that females tend to be more expressive than males. However, since this study involves only three male participants, it is not entirely fair to say that men are not expressive, especially when some studies such as Huffaker et. al's (2005) actually reveal that males use more emoticons than females in their blogs. Table 4 shows that the use

of other expressive features were also dominated by female participants, with the exception of one male participant, AN, who used it rather liberally in his journal and comments. A closer examination of his discourse suggests that the exclamation marks were at times used as a tool to mask his embarrassment over his limited command of the language, especially when he compared it to his peers' journals (see Samples 3 and 4).

Participant /gender	2 dots	3 dots	4 dots dots	6	8 dots	!!	!!!	!!!!	4 comma	Misc.
AN(m)		x5	x4		x1	x9	x6	x1		
ANON										
COW(f)										
BRAD (f)		x6	x1							
ET (f)	x4	x7								
GWEN (f)	x1	x1	x1	x2					x1	
JAN (f)	x30	x17		x3						
JENI (f)										
JOH (m)										
KEC (f)	x1	x4							x1	
MIZZ (f)	x1	x3								
NASH (m)										
SHER (f)	x68					x1				haha
SHIV (f)	x5	x15	x1			x1	x4			Yeah, WOW, Ouhhhh, owhhh, ???
WOO (f)	x1									

Table 4: Expressive Features Used in the Discourse

Sample 3:An

Yar, agree with you. Life in university full with exams, tests, assignments, presentations.....etc etc!!!!ai....hope this will be over soon...

haha, but your english is really good (as compare to mine)!! We have been in same class almost half year, but we never talk even a sentence!!

hope can be good frens later!!

Sample 4:An

hi kec, i am thinking that if u know me, u will realise that how excellence u are in the language!!!

my English is absolutely "lousy"!!
i can't even speak proper english.
i did also felt shame when i talk with other.

but when i found out that speaking english is unavoidable in university life (especially in my faculty), so i began to take it easy .. So, hope that both of us can improve our language and score a good result!!!

Online Comments

When their participation was first sought for the study, the participants were instructed to view their peers' online journals and provide feedback on their peers' learning experiences written in their journals. It was hoped that the computer-mediated method would increase awareness about their individual language learning journey and enhance their learning experience as they exchanged ideas and suggestions. Although not every participant provided feedback on their peers' writings (85.7% did), a total of 54 comments were posted. Analysis of the 54 comments revealed that communicative acts were used to perform functions in their communication. Krashen (1988) states that in natural communication, "speakers are

concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding” in order to achieve meaningful interaction. The 54 comments were not accurate in form but the messages they carried were clear. A number of communicative acts were identified, but the discussion here will focus on acts that revealed influence from their Asian background and those that exhibited collaboration and peer support. These are communicative acts of:

1. **Giving compliments (9/12)** [i.e. nine participants out of the twelve who posted comments complimented their peers on the journals they posted]

This function featured prominently in the comments posted by the participants. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire revealed that participants were mindful that their comments would not upset their peers. There was a tendency to be kind and polite when commenting on their peers’ writing for three reasons: not all the participants knew each other offline although they were from the same university; being in the same learning situation evoked a feeling of comradeship; and not wanting to ‘judge’ lest they be ‘judged’ in return. Being kind and polite is also an Asian trait that is valued and emphasized. And this is repeatedly manifested through the compliments in their comments (see Sample 5).

Sample 5:

Jan. hey..i think your journal is quite interesting.. you talked about your strategies on how you can improve your english. i think you are taking a pretty good strategies. .keep it up.

Kec: i enjoy reading your journal...your english is quite good and i learned some new words from your journal.. i agree with the other friends’ comments that you are really brave to express your feelings. hehe.

Mizz: instead, i really find that ur style of writing is very creative. u’re able to express urself well and engage ur readers’ full attention to fimsh the journal. congrats.

Nash. Hey, you’re journal is very systematic and organized, I guess that’s a reflection of your personality; is it?

2. Expressing appreciation (3/12)

Again, the Asian trait of politeness and appreciation is clear from the extracts in Sample 6:

Sample 6:

Et:	i am very happy and thank you to you because u give me a lot of helpfull in my homework and all thing, thanks your patient to me. thank you vey much.. i know i am very broken english , but your never look down at me, but also give me a lot of encourage and advise, thank you a lot. ●
Gwen.	Anyway, thanks so much for everythings u gave me,friendship, concerning,smiling. ...also u helped me almost things in classes... ^-^ so, I could enjoy studing during the class.kk
Nash.	Thanks for the kind words An, I hope so too. And like you, I too can't wait for University life to be over. It's very draining on me.

3. Expressing humbleness through comparison (4/12)

The participants in this study tend to compare their writing with that of their peers and the Asian trait of humbleness is seen in the discourse when they claimed that the other's language was better than their own (see Sample 7).

Sample 7:

An:	haha, but your english is really good (as compare to mine)!!
Et:	you already is a good speaker than me, because u brave to talk than me, when i speak in front of the people, i very nervous and forgot what i want to say
Shiv'	Do u know that ur english is good and quite ok than the others. my english is also not so good he. .almost da same like ur's maa..

4. Admitting limitations and expressing lack of confidence (7/12)

The participants were acutely aware of their limited command of the language. Being mindful of the state of their language proficiency, they were honest about it and admitted their weaknesses. Their lack of confidence in using the English language and sense of inferiority is expressed in their discourse, where they tend to put themselves down (see Sample 8).

Sample 8:

An. my English is absolutely "lousy"! i can't even speak proper english. i did also felt shame when i talk with other

Sher until now i think my english had improve alot..although it is still broken english. but at least i'm better than last time.

Et: sometime i cann't catch what lecture say because i'm broken english, sometimes the word is very abstruse, i cann't understand it. if i write wrong, please forgive.. hope you understand what i write...

Despite struggling with her limited command of the language, and feeling small about her limitations, Et courageously put her comments online for all to read and was very honest in writing about her difficulties in learning the language (see Sample 8). This is really commendable considering that others who had better command of the language 'dropped out' of this study and did not post their journals or comments.

5. Expressing Encouragement and Giving Suggestions (8/12)

One of the objectives of the study was to provide a space for participants to share their learning experiences and hopefully learn from one another, and gain confidence to continue their effort. Analysis of their discourse reveals that the participants did just that, encouraging one another and offering suggestions and ideas (see Sample 9).

Sample 9:

Jan. and start speaking english with friends and lecturers is a good start. speak more often...that's how you can gain confidence in speaking. i remember once..i went to a program. where all the lectures are all in english. but i think i got another suggesting. instead of reading newspaper or other strategies only.. i think you should consider listening to english songs. because i think it is really helps. 🤔🤔

Kec. At the beginning of your journal, you said you will fail this course. You shouldn't put the lower target if you are not trying it yet. Nothing is impossible. All the things that we want to do, we have to put the higher target and think positive that we can achieve it if we try hard on it. You also can speak English by oneself if you have nobody to talk to. You can read newspaper loudly to improve your pronunciation.

Nash. I hope you learn to not feel inferior to anyone about anything. You shouldn't ever feel this and should always be proud of your capabilities and always wanting to improve them.

6. Expressing Empathy (6/12)

The participants were not alone in the pains and frustrations they faced in their efforts to improve their language proficiency, hence they were able to identify with the struggles the others were experiencing. This is revealed in the extracts in Sample 10.

Sample 10:

Brad. same here as well i never use the new terms that i learnt;therefore, the terms are never mine. 🤔

Nash. I think it's quite natural for people to want to do the easiest thing in a new situation. You'd rather speak mandarin all the time and not learn english in your university days, don't be too hard on yourself. We all tend to take the easier route.

7. Establishing connections (4/12)

The participants also used the online space to bond with one another by relating to one another's learning experiences or by seeing themselves as being in the same boat (see Sample 11).

Sample 11:

An: hope can be good frens later!!

Brad: sometimes i too, feel inferior towards my coursemates due to my lack of terms. we're in the same boat. i hope we both could learn more from this class.

Sher: actually i also faced problems when preparing the word map and were confused too because not sure what exactly ms lim want us to do.

8. Introducing new information (1/12)

The online space was also created to encourage participants to add to the body of knowledge that was discussed in the online journals. However, except for suggestions on how to practise using the language, not much new information was contributed through the comments, save for the one reproduced in Sample 12.

Sample 12:

Sher: i remember somebody told me before that human only use 10% of their brain capacity in their life and there's 90% left unused. but in everyday life we always hear people, especially students say that my brain is full with knowledge already i cannot remember more things dy but we all know that it's just an excuse for us when we forgot something or when we are lazy to try to memorize things.


9. Peer correction (2/12)

The participants also used the online space to provide correction or to gently chide one another when they feel their peers' attitude was not right. However, this was few and far between. The first extract was a reaction to what Brad had written in her journal regarding a new

word (bauble) she had just learnt and being smug that someone else did not know the word. Brad had written: *"I asked my sister to go out for bauble shopping and she was puzzled. I was satisfied."* And Sher commented on it. Brad also corrected a spelling mistake made by Joh (see Sample 13):

Sample 13:

Sher: sometimes we feel so good when we use a word that people don't understand cause we get the feeling that we know better than them..but sometimes i find that when we use a word that people do not understand we need to spend time to explain the meaning of the word to them and it's not always good.

Brad: dear joh, mas kawin is spelled as mas k-a-h-w-i-n
 i like your journal~

The discussion above showed that collaboration and peer support took place in the discourse and this provided much encouragement to the participants who before this had no idea that the others were facing the same struggles in learning English.

Findings from the Questionnaire

a. Reading peers' journals

The participants' comments regarding their peers' journals were analysed and categorised as positive, negative, or neutral comments. Positive comments far outweigh negative ones by a ratio of about 2:1. Those who had negative comments about their peers' journals read only a couple that they felt were mildly interesting as they felt what their peers' had written intrigued only the authors themselves. These same participants also felt that their peers did not open up their real feelings about their learning, but instead chose to report only what they had learnt in class. It should be noted that most of the participants had never written a diary before in their lives, let alone, a reflective journal. For them to pen their emotions and thoughts about their learning experiences into something readable and interesting to others is in

itself a new experience. Having said that, it should also be noted that being permitted to read what another person had penned on the same topic and experiences was also a new experience which allowed them to see how others were doing it and what they could do to improve their own writing. Those who had positive comments about reading their peers' journals had a high regard for their peers' journals. Excerpt 1 shows what they gained from reading their peers' journals.

Excerpt 1:

Sometimes I really wish I could write as they are writing.

They can express their feeling and thoughts very well. I used their journal as my guidelines to write better journal for the next time.

Most of the journals are great as it provides an insight into their learning attitudes

They were a delight to read.

b. Commenting on peers' journals

Data regarding the process of commenting on their peers' journals revealed that almost 50% of the participants were apprehensive about this task, mainly for fear of unintentionally hurting their peers' feelings while desiring to be truthful in their comments. Participants who were limited in their use of the language found themselves inadequate when trying to provide feedback on the writings of their more proficient peers. In fact, 78% of the participants felt that it was difficult to give feedback on their peers' journals.

c. Reading peers' comments about their own writing

Participants who received comments on their journals generally had positive feedback. Many reported that:

- they felt relieved and surprised at the encouragement given
- they felt inspired to write more
- their initial fears about being laughed at or put down did not materialise.

However, when writing subsequent journals, participants who were better writers felt it was easier to let their creative juices flow without having to check on what others had said about their writing. The

comments they had received only helped to confirm their confidence in their own writing. Those who seem to benefit most from the peer comments were participants who were not proficient in the language. When preparing their second journal, they took into consideration comments regarding their ideas, grammar, and choice of words. The majority of them (70%) agreed that their peers' feedback made them want to improve the quality of their journal. The comments gave them confidence and encouraged them to improve their writing (see Excerpts 2 & 3).

Excerpt 2:

"It is interesting to get a comment from my friends although I don't know who they are. Some comments make me feel better and proud of myself. It also improves my confidence on myself."

Excerpt 3:

"Yes, because my friend gave me the comment not laugh me, and they encourage me to 'add oil' do that."

- d. **Using computer-mediated journaling as a process of learning**
 Most of the participants (62%) felt that the whole process was an enjoyable part of their learning experience. They felt that it was a very good way to get constructive feedback on their journals which gave them confidence about themselves and helped them improve their writing. They were able to learn from their peers' experiences too, knowing that they were not alone in feeling apprehensive and anxious about their own learning. One participant reported that this whole exercise had made her see the advantage of having a weblog and had therefore decided to continue the effort by creating her own blog. Another saw it as a way to gauge her writing skills, since posting journals online meant that it would be accessible to the public to provide criticism. The minority who were negative about the process were not exactly negative about the use of it as a way to enhance learning but the implementation of it and their own limitations. They felt that the whole process did not achieve full success because not all who were invited to participate posted their journals, and among those who did, only a few actively posted comments on their peers' journals. 12 out

of 17 participants posted comments but most of them did it way after the second journals were posted and the questionnaires were submitted. The original plan was to have the comments posted before the second journals were due to provide time for participants to reflect on them before posting their second journal. Time constraints seemed to be the main reason as the participants felt that they were already bogged down by numerous assignments in their coursework, and therefore, this was a low priority for them especially when participation was voluntary and no marks were given for their efforts. Another reason given by a participant that could be important in planning subsequent study is access to the internet. Not everyone has access to the internet at home. In this study, one participant had to rely on cybercafés to post her journals and comments. Cost, time, and effort were involved. However, as she was enthusiastic about the use of this medium to enhance her learning, this setback did not deter her from participating fully in the study

In summary, what the participants learnt through the whole process was that:

1. there are different writing styles, some more interesting than others, and that they could learn from their peers' writing to enhance their own.
2. they were not alone in facing struggles, frustrations and fear in their learning; all the learners face the fear in varying degrees.
3. those who were better in the language also had to employ various strategies to improve their learning.
4. peer support and camaraderie gave them hope and encouragement to continue their endeavour.

Conclusion

Many studies have been conducted to gauge the feasibility of using blogging and reflective journaling for educational purposes (Huffaker, 2004, Arena, 2008) This study aimed to discover the effects of the combination of both, from the perspective of the users who are Asians.

The result of this study shows that the participants find the computer-mediated method of blogging their reflective journals and receiving feedback motivating an interesting way to continue their learning efforts. Half the battle is already won if students are motivated to enhance their classroom

learning through continuous efforts outside the classroom. However, the findings also reveal some limitations in this method. The procedure in setting up this learning environment needs to be carefully designed to ensure maximum participation and a discussion board that is lively. It is human nature to want to use the least effort possible to get the most done and the participants in this study were no different. Hence, incentives are recommended if a robust online discussion is desired. If implemented in a particular academic course, the incentive could take the form of marks for participation that contribute to the overall grade, or commendation and publicity in university newsletters to promote the popularity of active students' weblogs. However, having said that, the findings also show that there was apprehension about the computer-mediated method which allowed peers to read what they had written. Although the phenomenon of blogging has hit Asia with fervour, there are those who have reservations about setting up a very public blog alongside the more than 900 million bloggers in the world to read and to comment on. Even within the confines of a private space that was set up for this investigation, the fear of displaying their writing to their peers was evident. Hence, this barrier needs to be crossed before students can feel safe to bare their thoughts and feelings about their own learning experiences in order to achieve maximum benefits through this computer-mediated method.

The findings also suggest that collaboration with the facilitator in the online space is also important. At the very least, it lets the students know that their effort does not go unnoticed and the involvement of the facilitator will encourage a robust communication.

A significant finding of this research is the participants' positive feedback on their peers' online writing to offer encouragement to fellow learners who are in the same boat. Though the forms of their discourse were not grammatically accurate, meaningful interaction was achieved. As each reveals his own struggles in learning the language and the difficulty of his journey, there is much empathy among them as they recognise the same struggles they are facing. The bonding created an environment of sharing to reach their common goal of improving their language. Another important observation made is that though the participants could cheat their way on the discussion board by getting someone more proficient in the language to feed in their comments or write their journals, it was obvious from the contents of their input that they did not do so. They did obtain help through various means to improve their writing such as checking with friends or using the dictionary when composing.

The Asian trait of downplaying their ability and show of humility which is closely associated with their Asian background was apparent in their online journals and feedback. So was their embarrassment about their level of proficiency in the language. Making the environment of this research a private one to provide a buffer from outsider comments which could sometimes be downright cruel was the right decision.

Though this study is replicable in other learning environments, the findings of this investigation cannot be generalised due to the limitations of the study. It was carried out on a very small group of participants made up of unequal number of male and female university students. It also did not take into consideration the ethnic composition of the group or the exposure they have had to the internet in general and specifically, the blogosphere. Hence, the findings are applicable only to this study. As the internet continues to spread its influence and become indispensable in every area of our lives and as online social networking continues to garner interest among the people, the results could be very different indeed in a similar study conducted at a later time (for example, Windows Live Messenger signed up 2.4 million users 60 days after it was launched, and 330 million users in its tenth year). It is hoped that other similar studies would be carried out among Asian students to either confirm the findings or dispute them.

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