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FROM BLOG TO ESSAY: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF BLOGGING ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING IN OWERRI EDUCATION ZONE OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Uloh-Bethels, Annah C. (Ph.D.) & Eyisi, Chinyere Ogochukwu
Department Of Arts Education
Faculty Of Education
University Of Nigeria, Nsukka

Email: annah.uloh-bethels@unn.edu.ng & eyisic@gmail.com
Phone: 07039594168 & 07068661457

ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to explore the impact of blogging on students' achievement in English essay writing in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quasi-experimental 2 x 2 pretest-posttest non-equivalent control factorial design involving four intact classes. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was 5,542 Senior Secondary School Two (SSSII) students in all the 78 public secondary schools in the zone. The sample size consisted of 220 (102 males and 118 females) students drawn from four co-educational schools using multi-stage sampling procedure. Instrument for data collection was English Language Essay Writing Achievement Test (ELEWAT) which was validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha procedure and a reliability index of 0.77 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that the use of blog significantly improved students' English language essay writing skills. Students taught essay writing using blog exhibited higher achievement than their counterparts taught with the conventional explicit strategy. However, the findings showed no significant influence of gender on students' essay writing. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should adopt and integrate blog as an activity in the teaching and learning of English language essay writing in order to enhance students' essay writing skills. This is because apart from helping students to study in a tension-free atmosphere, they are likely to achieve better in essay writing when they are exposed to blogging. It was also recommended, among others, that students should avail themselves of the opportunity to blog irrespective of their gender.

Keywords: Blog, Blogging, English language, Writing and Essay writing

Introduction

Promoting technology-based learning has become a plausible concept in Nigeria education system. This is because in this 21st century dispensation, use of technology has become an integral part of the contemporary society. It has become so glaring that people eat, drink, sleep and wake up with technology. This is an indication that technology has actually come to stay hence, its usage can no longer be removed from among humanity. Therefore, utilization, efficient maximization, practicability and promotion of technology-based learning in Nigeria education system can no longer be relegated considering the numerous roles which technology plays in any education system. For instance, technology has improved accessibility to education, breaking geographical barriers and increasing access to educational resources. Johnson & Johnson (2020) note that technology has facilitated collaboration among teachers and students thereby promoting social learning, teamwork, and communication skills. In other words, the influx and development of technologies have revolutionized the education system. Technology has, therefore, influenced and transformed the way in which teachers and students interact in the teaching and learning process and as such, leveraging the potentials of technology is very essential for enhancing the efficacy of English language education.

The role of technologies in the 21st century education system is so numerous. It is the life line to global economic integration and so vital, if any institution must take part in the global economy. Kwache (2007) notes that the education sector has certainly been affected by the penetrating influence of technology worldwide as it has made impact and continues to make impact on the quality of teaching, learning and researches in education recently. Supporting Kwache, Chapelle (2020) emphasizes that the proliferation of digital tools and platforms has created opportunities for language learning thereby enabling students to engage with language in more interactive and collaborative ways. For instance, education was one of the sectors that were affected by the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 with social distancing measures and closure of schools for a long period of time. But thanks to technology-based teaching and learning which enabled teachers to continue teaching so that students did not lag behind. The outcome of technology-based education in economic development, manpower improvement and socio-cultural awareness is so massive that the earlier technology-based teaching and learning is encouraged and promoted in institutions of learning, especially in Nigeria, the better it is for teachers, students and the entire citizens of the country.

The potential of technology-based education is enormous. For Yusuf (2005), the potentials of appropriating technology-based education include enriching, accelerating and widening teachers' technology skills; motivating and engaging students (thereby making them responsible for their learning); helping to relate school experiences to work places and helping to create economic viability for tomorrow's workers. Other potential benefits of technology-based education include improved engagement (Hamari et al, 2020); collaborative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2020); data-driven instruction (Mandinach & Honey (2020); cost-effectiveness (Rumble, 2020); scalability (Siemens, 2020); increased accessibility (UNESCO, 2020); personalized learning (Kwak, 2022) and real-time feedback (Lai & Hwang, 2022). All these potentials of technology-based education strengthen teaching, contribute to positive changes in teaching and learning, and offer opportunities for interactivity and interconnectivity between teachers and students, the school and between their counterparts all over the world. There are different technologies which can be adopted and used for teaching and learning of various school

subjects including the English language. One of such technologies is blog.

Blog, otherwise known as weblog (a combination of *web* and *log)* is a relatively new web tool that has, in the recent past, proliferated the internet and stretched globally. Duermyer (2021) explains that the word *blog* is a shortened form of its original name *weblog* and that blog allows internet users to *log* the details of their day in diary-style entries. Blog generally refers to the online post which a blogger (an individual who writes contents for blog and/or manages or controls the blog) usually keeps and updates regularly as a type of diary. Blog can also be referred to as a type of website where one regularly records one's thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences or discussion/talk on a particular subject matter or topic.

Blog can be misunderstood as a website. According to Minaev (2021), differentiating between a blog and a website in this contemporary time has become a challenge because companies are integrating blogs into their websites, which further confuses the two. But WPBeginner (2021) makes a clarification between a blog and a website by explaining that blogs are a type of website or part of a larger website but whereas blogs are updated regularly with new contents (some bloggers publish new articles daily), which are displayed in reverse chronological order (with new blog posts first), typical websites are static in nature and its contents are organized in pages, which are not frequently updated.

Blogs are usually meant for online public viewing, reading and comments. They typically consist and focus on personal experiences, reflections, perceptions and commentaries on issues such as events, businesses, tutoring, domestic affairs, academic, marriage, career development, food, health, fashion and nutrition. Duermyer (2021) notes that although a blog can have an individual author or a collection of authors, its contents vary significantly. For instance, there could be travel, home, business, arts, religion, motivational, political and food blog. A blog content, from Duermyer's perspective, can take the form of basic words (copy) as well as rich media (audio, video or embedded objects). But blog, unlike a webpage, requires little technological sophistication and is therefore, accessible to different types of audiences.

Blogging simply means writing a content/post for a blog. In a broader term, blogging refers to writing, photography and other media that are self-published online but its hallmark include frequent updates, informal language and opportunities for readers to engage and start a conversation (Duermyer, 2021). Some of the benefits of blogging as enumerated by WPBeginner (2021) include making money through using various monetization method; helping one to socialize with interesting like-minded people; helping individuals to become authority in their industry; raising awareness and influencing people's opinion; providing an avenue to organize one's thoughts and ideas and allowing one to showcase one's creativity, talent and writing skills.

In as much as these benefits mentioned above accrue from writing a content for a blog, it means that blogging requires a combination of different writing skills such as paragraphing, punctuation, possession of a reasonable stock of vocabulary, construction of simple and complex sentences and knowledge of different types of writing. These skills, apart from being taught in the classroom, could be learnt by students through blogging. As students put their writing skills to work by blogging on topics as may or may not be provided by their teachers, people respond to their blogs by commenting, giving corrections and proffering suggestions for the enhancement of the blog. When students effect the corrections and suggestions and internalize them, there could be improvement on their writing skills and style of writing. The

consciousness that the blog may practically be viewed globally and by anyone apart from their teachers could make students put in their best in writing. This consciousness could also restrain students from making unnecessary grammatical, morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical mistakes and from committing avoidable errors while writing. Blog is easy to create and while many business firms use it for advertising their products, some education institutions use it for instruction and learning of different subjects. From the above discussion, it could be understood that blogging and writing are intertwined because blogging requires writing.

Writing is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. According to Nunan (2003), writing is both a physical and mental act, which entails discovering ideas, thinking about how to communicate and developing them into statements and paragraphs that will be comprehensible to readers including students. For Widdowson (2012), writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting them through the visual medium as a means of communication. For the purpose of this study, writing is defined as the manual or electronic graphic representation of legible and readable meaningful symbols and letters on a surface such as book, black or white board, paper or computer screen for information, instruction, entertainment and communicative purposes.

Writing is an essential skill of the English language. It requires creativity, articulation, organization and projection of ideas or information that a writer intends to convey to readers. Gonye (2012) believes that writing requires greater precision and care than speech as it is a more formal activity and can produce a permanent record. According to Gonye, during conversation, a speaker gauges the listener's response and clarifies any points, which have not been comprehended but no such interaction takes place in a piece of writing. Fauzan (2017) states that blogging (writing a post for blog) just like writing, also requires creativity particularly in describing things, explaining occurrences and logical presentation of points as in argumentative writing and in telling stories. The import of Fauzan's statement is that being creative is necessary in, for instance, describing an event or a scene, explaining a concept, presenting a point and or narrating stories. All these basically sum up the four types of essay writing taught in schools. It, therefore, presupposes that blog could lead to achievement in descriptive, expository, argumentative, or narrative essay writings examined in internal and external English language examinations in Nigerian secondary schools.

Developing proficiency in writing requires adequate knowledge of writing process and possession of appropriate skills necessary for expressing and establishing facts, ideas, experiences and thoughts through the written words. Writing, therefore entails thinking on paper and having such thought(s) hand-written or electronically type-written using technology such as blog. However, such thinking may not be possible without adequate skills in the mechanics of writing such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and having adequate vocabulary repertoire from which words could be culled and used to paint clear and concise mental picture of what can engage readers. Incidentally, these mechanics are applied in expository, argumentative, descriptive and narrative writing, which is the focus of this study.

Narrative writing is simply story-telling. A narrative writing can be fiction, non-fiction, essay article, fairy tale, autobiography, short stories and imaginative events. This could be why Nordquist (2019) defines narrative writing as a piece of writing that tells a story and also stresses that apart from exposition, argument and description, narrative writing is a classical rhetoric mode or way that writers use to present

information. Like any story, it usually has a title, introduction, body, which contains chronological details, explanation and elaboration of the theme and ideas raised and finally, the closure, which contains closing sentences. All these are chronologically written in paragraphs according to the information and ideas discussed.

Some of the things teachers assess in students' narrative writing include sentence types and structures, paragraph organization, chronological arrangement of information, punctuation, grammar, tenses, use of correct choice of words, use of sentence or paragraph connectors, plot of the story and the general arrangement of the narration to achievement coherence and comprehension. All these are compressed into four assessment indices, which are assessed in narrative essay writing especially in external examination. These indices are content (10 marks), organization (10 marks), expression (20 marks) and mechanical accuracy (10 marks). So, failure in any of these indices could jeopardize achievement in essay writing and invariably result in poor achievement in English language. Eberly Centre (2020) explains that lack of skills in these areas could make students' writing unsatisfactory in multiple ways including poor grammar and syntax, unclear organization, weak reasoning and illogical narration.

Interestingly, blogging requires possessing and manipulating all the writing skills and mechanics mentioned above. Whether it is for blogging, engaging in other forms of writing or for the purpose of passing English language examination, these skills cannot be neglected. They could be likened to a recursive process where scaffolds can be used to support each student's learning while permitting an ebb and flow of responsibility (Ortlieb & Schatx, 2019). The discussion above indicates that it has become imperative for English language teachers to diversify their teaching to include strategies that are not only capable of motivating and capturing students' interest to write but also capable of making them to actively participate in classroom writing activities that can enhance their essay writing skills.

What English language teachers presently use to teach the essay writing skills in secondary schools is the conventional explicit strategy. According to Collins & Kessien (2001), writing should go through the processes of pre-writing such as brainstorming, drafting, revising and proof reading (and producing the final copy of the write up). But following this process is not usually taken into consideration by teachers when using the conventional explicit strategy for teaching essay writing. This is because teachers appear to be too impatient to take students through the rigors of this process. Graham & Perin (2007) lament that writing is taught in secondary schools by explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts; how to construct complex and sophisticated sentences and providing them with specific and reachable goals for writing assignments. Chang (2011), on the other hand, regrets that the learning activities (in the explicit strategy) classroom are spent by the teacher in explaining the lesson, whereas the students take notes and listen to the teacher. For Kompa (2012), Al-Zu'be (2013) and Rusman (2014), the conventional explicit strategy is not effective to educational solutions that should refer to the active learning as it presents students as passive learners and the teacher active and authority figure in the classroom. So, such strategy does not give students opportunities to engage in the activities appropriate with their wants and interests.

The use of conventional explicit strategy is not sufficient in the teaching and learning processes (of the English language essay writing skills) considering that students have different abilities and characteristics (Antika, 2014). The import of the Antika's assertion is that the use of

conventional explicit strategy could lead to ineffective learning, which in turn yields unsatisfactory results and finally produces halt-baked students who cannot write effectively. Necessity is, therefore, laid on English language teachers to make the teaching and learning process of essay writing exciting and interesting to students by integrating strategies that actively engage students within and outside the classroom at any time convenient for them and anywhere comfortable for them. This will make essay writing an activity of fun anytime and anywhere. One of such strategies is the use of blog in teaching the skills of English language essay writing especially the narrative essay.

The effectiveness of blog in promoting learning, creativity, interactivity and writing has been harped by many researchers. For instance, Bartlett-Bragg (2003) and Oravec (2003) are of the opinion that blogs allow a more creative response from students. Baim (2004) notes that the open and interlinked nature of blogs connects learners to contexts beyond the classroom. So, blog can decrease feelings of isolation for distance students and promote the shift from surface to deep learning (Dickey, 2004). According to Williams & Jacobs (2004), the immediacy and commentary-based systems of blogging lead to reflection, analysis and contextualization of learning (writing skills). While Wu (2005) acknowledges that blogs have formidable potentials to be used as a useful tool for the teaching of English essay writing, Kavaliauskienė (2006) explains that although blog was not originally created for use in English language classes, it has great potential to serve as a valuable tool for teaching writing and also an entertainment between the bloggers and the viewers. For Chen (2012), the way blogs are typically organized allows readers or viewers to recontextualize posts according to categories and dates as well as allowing users to use key words to search for posts on any topic including essay writing. More current researches such as conducted by Alsamadani (2018), El-sawi (2020), WPBeginner (2021), Shujan (2022) and DL Institute (2024) have also indicated the efficaciousness of blog in developing and fostering students' self-confidence, engaging students and showcasing their talents, enhancing creative writing skills and as an essential powerful tool for promoting active learning and peer collaboration in educational context.

It could be gathered from the above-mentioned researchers' view point that the use of blog for teaching students essay writing skills brings a change to the classroom environment as fun and excitement are introduced. It can also motivate students to learn essay writing skills thereby making it more interesting as it makes room for interaction between the teacher, students and other bloggers. In Higgins' (2003) view, the use of blog in education has transformed the teaching and learning processes from being highly teacher-dominated to student-centered and this transformation increases the teaching gain for students; motivates them to become more involved, active and interested in essay writing; promotes the collaborative communication and interpersonal skills of students and consequently, changes their attitude to essay writing. Blackmore-Squires (2010) and Connor (2011) are of the view that apart from having a positive impact on the content and amount of writing of learners because of its social nature, blog also creates an innovative, more engaging and more authentic experience as a result of its collaborative learning environment that allows students to learn through modeling and through exposure to other students' opinions and ideas. Nepomuceno (2011) claims that blogs primarily are seen as contributory in the development of reading skills, which have important role in the development of writing skills. Nepomuceno also asserts that blog can be used as an additional or alternative writing activity which would

motivate learners to view writing as a means of expressing meaning and not merely as a requirement in language classes. Blogs can, therefore, be used as a tool for practising the narrative essay writing.

The theoretical basis of this study hinges on Vygotsky's theory of collaborative learning. It has earlier been established that blog offers students opportunity to not only learn, use and practise essay writing within and beyond the classroom, but it also engages students in social interaction thereby encouraging collaborative and interactive learning. This is what Vygotsky's theory advocates. Vygotsky believes that learning is not the result of a single individual's construction. It is rather the outcome of interactional collaborative effort of members of a group, association or communities who participate in the learning process and in the activities to facilitate and help to make learning occur. As pointed out by Vygotsky, when learning happens collaboratively, it can help to make individuals reach higher developmental stages. This is because collaborative learning can help to scaffold one in one's learning process. It can be claimed that blogging is grounded in the Vygotsky's theory of collaborative learning in which learners can develop their knowledge through interaction with other learners and especially more knowledgeable ones (group interaction). Blog allows collaboration among students hence, by including collaboration in the classroom, teachers can help students question and construct their own knowledge, analyze and apply what they have learnt and then build a strong foundation for lifelong learning (Ali 2006).

Empirical studies such as Cequena (2013), Said, Doring, Aqilah, Yunus. Asmi & Li (2013), Akdag (2017), Alsamadani (2018), El-Sawi (2020) and Shujan (2022) have corroborated the efficacy of blog in facilitating and developing students' writing skills. For instance, the result of Said et al's (2013) study in Malaysia using 33 students revealed that blogging was very effective for teaching essay writing skills. The study also indicated that apart from improving their writing skills and motivating them, students had positive perceptions and attitude towards blogging. The findings of Akdag (2017) showed that blogging enabled students to acquire and recycle vocabulary and also gives them opportunity to see how other students employ writing and editing strategies in writing through reading comments from other people about their blogs. Akdag's study also showed that blog aids students to improve in grammar, language use, exemplification and explanation.

Lending credence to the above studies, Alsamadani (2018), using 44 freshman college students of Manilla, Philippine, agreed that blogging is an effective instructional tool in developing writing proficiency. For Alsamadani, the major areas of improvement in students' writing were vocabulary development, organization of ideas, spotting writing (tenses, spellings and punctuation) mistakes and in development of writing styles and skills. Alsamadani revealed that blog is a user-friendly platform that helps students to improve in several writing components such as content development, language mechanics, style, voice, word choice and other sub-skills of writing. Alsamadani concluded that when students when become aware that their readers and audience are no longer their teacher(s) only, they become more conscious of paying particular attention to what they write and revise it, probably many times, to ensure that the final product is more interesting (and meaningful). This continued interaction catalyzes students' desire to keep writing and communicating in a two-way fashion with the reader (s) and themselves.

The studies of El-Sawi (2020) and Shujan (2022) however, indicated that blogging activity requires commitment from teachers and

students to properly and actively manage their blogs so as to enable students to experience another way of learning writing instead of the (traditional) pen-and-paper activity. All the studies reviewed have demonstrated the effect of blog in improving writing skills and in fostering social interaction and collaboration. To either corroborate or refute the results of the studies reviewed, this study was, therefore, carried out with the purpose of exploring the impact of blog on students' achievement in English language essay writing in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria.

Many variables could influence the use of blog for teaching and learning of the English language essay writing skills. One of such variables is gender. Gender refers to the role's attributes, experiences and kind of associations, which a particular society identifies and assigns to the male and female members of that particular society. This societal identification and assignment can influence how males and females perceive and engage in learning experiences and interact with others in the learning process. This could explain the noticeable gap in male and female students' achievement in different school subjects including research findings on students' achievement in English language. For instance, while some studies (Fakaye, 2010 and Egbe, 2015) found males better achievers than females, studies such as Uloh-Bethels (2018) and Ukoha, Nnamani & Uloh-Bethels (2021) claimed that the females obtained higher mean achievement scores than males in English language. Some other studies such as Hamdan (2014) and Ogbu, Ugonna & Nwachukwu (2021) have found no statistically significant influence of gender on the mean achievement scores of students in English language. This study also determined the influence of gender on students' achievement in English language essay writing. To carry out the study, the following research questions were posed:

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of blog on the mean achievement scores of students in English language essay writing?
2. What is the influence of gender on the mean achievement scores of students in English language essay writing?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Each hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay

writing using blog and those taught using the conventional explicit strategy.

Ho_2: Gender has no significant influence on the mean achievement rating scores of students in English language essay writing.

Methods

The study adopted a quasi-experimental 2x2 pretest-posttest research design non-equivalent control factorial design. The area of the study was Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. This zone is made up of three Local Government Areas (LGAs): Owerri Municipal, Owerri North and Owerri West. Statistics from the Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB, 2025), Owerri Zone indicated that there are 78 public secondary schools in the zone with secondary school two (SSS II) students' population of 5,642 (2,252 males and 3,390 females). The sample for the study was 220 (102 males and 118 females) SSSII students drawn from four co-educational schools in the zone using multi-stage sampling procedure. Initially, all the 78 public schools were stratified into the three LGAs that make up the zone. Then, out of these three, Owerri Municipal was purposively

selected because it has the largest number of single sex (7) and co-educational (23) secondary schools as already stratified by SEMB. Since gender was a very important variable in this study, the co-educational schools were purposively selected. Four schools that had enough computers for the students used for this study were also purposively selected. By balloting, two schools were assigned to the experimental group (those taught using blog) and the other two were assigned to the control group (those taught using the conventional explicit strategy). And finally, by tossing of the coin, one intact class was randomly drawn from each of the four selected schools. The total number of all the students in these four classes was 220. This number constituted the sample for this study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study.

The instrument for data collection was a 25-item researcher-structured questionnaire titled English Language Essay Writing Achievement Test (ELEWAT), which was validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument was trial-tested using 30 SSSII students from two co-educational schools outside the study area. These testees have the same characteristics as those in the population of this study. The instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.77 after determining its internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha Method. This is because items on the instrument were not dichotomously scored.

The researchers ensured that adequate measures were taken to control extraneous variables that might constitute a threat to the validity of the findings of this study. For instance, prior to the commencement of the study, the researchers prepared two sets of lesson plans (one for the experimental and one for the control group). This was done as a measure to control teacher variables/differences in relation to subject matter mastery, class control, methodology, technique, time management, personality trait and qualification of the research assistants that were used in this study. The lessons plans were used to give the research assistants a detailed process-based writing training and instructions in order for them to be competent enough to use the lesson plans as well as to implement the treatment conditions. They were advised to strictly obey the instructional procedure as contained in the lesson plans. In order to control mixture/interaction between subjects, the two experimental groups were selected from different schools. Teachers and students did not have knowledge of their counterparts in other schools who participated in the study. Also, the teachers were not told which of the experimental groups they would handle neither did students know the experimental groups to which they belonged.

Before the treatment, a pretest was administered to the experimental and control group using ELEWAT. After teaching the students for four weeks, ELEWAT was also administered as posttest. To control experimental bias, the researchers were not directly involved in administering the experiment. And to ensure uniformity of instructional situation for all the classes, the regular English language teachers in all the selected schools, who incidentally were the research assistants used in the study, taught their students. The pretest and the posttest were administered to all SSS II classes in the selected schools but the researchers made use of only the results from the intact classes selected for the study. This was to control Hawthone effect, which is when, as a result of increased emotion, interest or motivation, research subjects' fake response because they are aware they are involved in an experiment or subjected to novel or unusual condition.

The researchers used the same questions for the pretest and the posttest but the questions

were rearranged during the posttest. Answer scripts were not provided for the students. As a result, the answers to the pretest and the posttest questions were written on their question papers, which served as the answer sheets. The question papers were collected from the students immediately after the test. Teachers had no access to the test items neither were students allowed to take any question paper away especially after the pretest. By so doing, students were prevented from having the opportunity of using the same questions to prepare for the posttest and the teachers were prevented from using the questions to teach the students. It was expected that rearranging the test item and numbers, prohibiting students and teachers from taking away any question paper and the period of four weeks, which the treatment lasted were sufficient to minimize any effect of the pretest on the posttest or to interfere with the treatment. Both tests were marked and recorded and scores from these tests formed the data for this study. The pretest was used as covariates to the posttest scores. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Intact classes were used in this study thus, the error of non-equivalence might have occurred as a result of non-randomization of the research subjects. To control this error, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance so as to remove or partial out the initial differences between the research groups.

Results

The results of this study are presented in tables in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of blog on the mean achievement scores of students in English language essay writing?

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest Mean Achievement Scores of Students Taught English Language Essay Writing Using Blog and Explicit Strategy

Variable		Pretest		Posttest		
Group	N	X	SD	X	SD	Mean Gain
Experimental (Blog)	119	65.83	7.70	79.62	9.22	13.79
Control (Explicit Strategy)	101	65.03	7.62	68.10	5.57	3.07

Results presented in Table 1 show that the pretest scores of the experimental and the control group are 65.83 and 65.03 respectively. This difference (0.80) between the two scores indicates that both groups were almost at the same level of knowledge of essay writing before the treatment. The results also show that posttest mean achievement score for the experimental group is 79.62 with a mean gain of 13.79 while that of the control group is 68.10 with a mean gain of 3.07. Although the posttest mean achievement scores for both groups were higher than the posttests, those taught using blog achieved higher than those taught using the conventional explicit strategy. This shows that blog was very effective in enhancing students' achievement in essay writing.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of gender on the mean achievement scores of students in English language essay writing?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Gender on Mean Achievement Scores of Students in English Language Essay Writing

Variable		Pretest		Posttest		
Gender	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**X**	**SD**	**Mean Gain**
Male	102	63.81	8.68	65.55	8.47	1.74
Female	118	63.65	8.02	65.37	7.79	1.72

Results presented in Table 2 show that male students obtained pretest and posttest mean achievement scores of 63.81 and 65.55 with standard deviations of 8.68 and 8.47 respectively. The mean gain score of male students was 1.74. On the other hand, the female students had a pretest mean score of 63.65 with a standard deviation of 8.02 and a posttest mean score of 65.37 with standard deviation of 7.79. The mean gain score of the female students was 1.72. The difference between the mean gain scores of the male and female students was 0.02. This indicates that the male students achieved slightly higher than the females. However, this difference was not shown to be statistically significant in the test of hypothesis as presented in Table 3.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using blog and those taught using the conventional explicit strategy.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Students' Post achievement Scores in English Language Essay Writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Dec.
Corrected Model	1040.752[a]	6	173.459	2.785	0.01	0.129	
Intercept	6251.039	1	6251.039	100.355	0.00	0.470	
PretestAchi	69.876	1	69.876	1.122	0.29	0.010	
METHOD	521.890	2	260.945	4.189	0.01	0.069	S
GENDER	45.542	1	45.542	0.731	0.39	0.006	NS
METHOD*GENDER	433.410	2	216.705	3.479	0.03	0.058	S
Error	7038.715	113	62.290				
Total	508342.000	220					
Corrected Total	8079.467	119					

Note: S= Significant, NS =Not Significant

Results presented in Table 3 revealed that an F-ratio of 4.189 with associated probability value of 0.01 and an effect size of 0.07 was obtained with regards to difference in the mean achievement scores of students in English language essay writing. This associated probability value is shown to be significant in the test of hypothesis. Since the associated probability value of 0.01 is less than the 0.05 level of significance set as bench mark, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught essay writing using blog and those taught using the conventional explicit strategy was rejected. This means that blog had a more significant impact on students' English language essay writing than conventional explicit strategy.

Ho_2: Gender has no significant influence on the mean achievement rating scores of students in English language essay writing.

Results, as also presented in Table 3, reveal that an F-ratio of 0.731 with the association probability value of 0.39 is shown not to be significant with respect to difference in the mean

achievement scores of male and female students in English language essay writing. Since the associated probability value of 0.39 was greater than 0.05 set as level of significance, the null hypotheses that gender has no significant influence on the mean achievement rating scores of students in English language essay writing was not

rejected. In other words, gender was not a statistically significant factor in determining how students write essays in English language.

Discussion

The findings of the study as presented in Table 1 revealed that the experimental group (those taught writing using blog) achieved higher than the control group (those taught using explicit strategy). This means that blog significantly enhanced students' achievement in essay writing. The online learning activities which blog offers were instrumental to developing students' essay writing skills. This finding agrees with that of Alsamadani (2018), El-Sawi (2020) and Shujan (2022) who found that blog is a user-friendly platform that helps students to improve in several writing components such as content development, language mechanics, style, voice, word choice and other sub-skills of writing.

Findings from this study also indicate that male students achieved slightly higher than the females although the difference in their achievements was not statistically significant. This means that gender was not a significant factor of students' achievement. This finding is in tandem with that of Hamdan (2014) and Ogbu, Ugonna and Nwachukwu (2021) who found no significant influence of gender on students' achievement in English language reading comprehension. This finding also implies that blog was enjoyable and advantageous to both male and female students and that any student, irrespective of gender, can improve their essay writing skills using the learning activities and learning environment provided in blog.

Conclusion

The influx of technologies and different technology-based learning platforms has revolutionized the teaching and learning of different aspects of English language including essay writing. Blog is one such technology-based platforms. It is perceived as an interactive tool for facilitating the development of writing skills. To refute or corroborate this perception, this study was carried out to determine the impact of blog on secondary school students' achievement in essay writing as well as in developing students' English language writing skills. The findings of the study revealed that blog was efficacious in developing students' writing skills. Blog also significantly improved students' achievement in essay writing as both male and female students enjoyed the interactive learning activities which blog offers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should adopt and integrate blog as an activity in the teaching and learning of English language essay writing in order to enhance students' essay writing skills. This is because apart from helping students to study in a tension-free atmosphere, they are likely to achieve better in essay writing when they are exposed to blogging.
2. Students should avail themselves of the opportunity to blog irrespective of their gender. This is because blog is not gender sensitive. Therefore, any student can engage in blogging, enjoy it and apply its benefits to not only in essay writing but in other forms of writing.

3. Engaging in blogging requires literacy in ICTs. Therefore, engaging students in blogging would be difficult, if not impossible, where both teachers and students are technology illiterates.
4. In addition to taking both offline and online courses in ICT usage and applications, teachers are encouraged to strive to improve their technology know-how by attending seminars, workshops and conferences where ICT tools are utilized for presentations, discussions and other ICT-related activities. This will enhance their professional development.
5. The federal and state governments should assist in providing ICT facilities and manpower in secondary schools because these are lacking in most secondary schools. This can be done by creating a certain percentage of the national and state budget to develop technology education in Nigerian secondary schools.

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