ONLINE FEEDBACK IN INTEGRATIVE BLOGGING: CULTIVATING STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: Integrating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into language learning has shifted how English classes are administered. The shift in teaching instruction from pen and paper-based activities to online-based approaches has led to interactive blogging to make the classes more authentic, motivating, and communicative. Thus, this paper mainly examines two significant issues: 1) how interactive blogging benefited the writing class when online feedback took

place and 2) how the EFL students actively participated in the interactive blogging atmospheres. This study employed school-based action research involving 30 students majoring in the English Language Program of a university in Malang, Indonesia, who actively participated in the study. The data were taken from interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and writing tests. The findings revealed that online feedback in interactive blogging increases students' writing performance covering CAF (complexity, accuracy, and fluency), and it enables students to interact more frequently with their teacher and classmates inside and outside the classroom. This indicates that teachers must empower students with technologies and more student-student and student-teacher interactions in writing classes. However, it is not as easy as paper and pen-based writing activities when giving and understanding online feedback.

Keywords: *interactive blogging, learning engagement, online feedback, writing performance*

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is complex to master, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. In general, writing not only deals with translating ideas into texts, but is also the work of creating content and fitting the way the text meets readers' interests and needs. In EFL writing settings, students are required to express their thoughts in a good text with appropriate content and organization. Besides, they commonly struggle hard to deal with linguistic issues covering accurate grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In short, developing students' writing ability is essential although it is an intricate process of English language learning (Tahira et al., 2022). Thus, it is vital to apply a suitable approach in the writing activities.

One of the possible approaches to be applied is the process approach, in which the students need to go through some activities in accomplishing their writing task and how the teacher can play his role

in helping them. The process approach in writing can be ideally applied in various teaching models is intended to achieve maximum learning outcomes (Khaki & Tabrizi, 2021; Li & Razali, 2019) . One such teaching activity is maximizing the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Sydorenko et al. (2017) and Nguyen (2022) acknowledge that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has driven two changes in instruction: the possibilities offered by the technology and the educational insights which provide a rationale for teaching practice. One of the ICT products is interactive blogging, and according to Lavin, Korte, & Davies (2012), the utilization of ICT in the English courses has increased very rapidly since students have sufficient technology literacy. Also, Acar et al. (2012) claim that ICT use such as weblogs seems to be well implemented into writing courses which cultivate an interactive atmosphere, so students may obtain teacher and peer online feedback to make their drafts much better.

In interactive blogging, the process approach can be applied in some steps of writing activities covering pre-writing, making a draft, doing revision, and writing final product (publishing). It also encourages a multi-way interaction: student-teacher and student-student modes. Thus, the blog allows a lecturer to monitor the students' work and provide online feedback in revising each student's work, and all students can read their classmates' work and comments. The benefits of feedback have been investigated broadly by several researchers focusing on improving students' performance (Copland, 2012; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019; Yang & Carless, 2013). The studies commonly focus on examining which mode of feedback works better.

On the other hand, providing online integrated teacher and peer written feedback by maximizing ICTs is still under-researched. Saiful et al. (2019) revealed that conventional teacher feedback by providing written feedback on the students' texts is more powerful than online teacher feedback. In addition, Kashani et al. (2013) found that blogging does not have any effects on students' writing skills, yet it motivates students to write more enthusiastically. The students' motivation itself

can be detected from their learning engagement in the classroom. Learning engagement is a concept of learning involving behavioral (being on task), cognitive (exerting effort), and affective (being interested in the task) (Christenson et al., 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). In active-learning environments, students spend more time searching and developing knowledge and skills with their classmates (Chi & Wylie, 2014)), which needs the willingness to cultivate effective working interactions with peers (Lorenzo et al., 2006).

With the potentials of interactive blogging in writing classes, some types of written corrective feedback can be applied, namely teacher and peer feedback integrated with online feedback. Online teacher and online peer feedback happen when they comment on students' drafts posted in interactive blogging. Thus, interactive blogging serves as a tool in constructing an interactive condition to stimulate the students to improve the quality of their texts (Acar et al., 2012). Besides, sharing texts in the blog, reading their peer texts, and giving feedback lead to learner-centered learning, which cultivates student learning engagement (Lin et al., 2013). Boudjadar (2015) claims that online feedback in the blog allows active discussion, so students are encouraged to make more rigid efforts to enhance the quality of their texts. By participating in the online discussion covering sharing and receiving online feedback, the students maximize their critical thinking by doing self-evaluation on their own texts and those of their peers (Dizon, 2016).

Considering the potentials of interactive blogging and the importance of learning engagement, it is important to examine further the roles of online written feedback on students' writing performance and the learning engagement in an interactive blogging classroom. Therefore, this paper aims at investigating the use of interactive blogging as one of the teaching models in providing online written feedback and student learning engagement in the writing class. Then, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

1) What are the effects of online feedback on EFL students' writing performance?

2) How does interactive blogging cultivate student learning engagement in the writing classroom?

METHOD
Research Design and Participants

This present study investigates the intervention of interactive blogging in a writing class. It seeks to discover how online feedback was used to improve students' writing performance and how students actively participated in the online atmospheres inside and outside the classroom during one term (16 meetings in which each meeting consisted of 100 minutes). The study involved 30 students majoring in English Language Department in Indonesia. This study employed a school-based action research instead of an experimental design because action research aims at improving practice on students' processes of learning (Halim et al., 2010). In addition, the interactive blogging was conducted inside and outside the classroom. It was difficult to control other variables, especially those that were outside the classroom and were done by the students. These variables might have influenced the results of the study if an experimental design was used. Action research has been considered beneficial since it can empower teachers to construct in-depth perspectives and practices about the teaching and learning process (Lacorte & Ishihara, 2002).

Action Research Procedures

First of all, the lecturer set a class blog rather than a tutor blog nor student blog since the class blog not only provides materials and activities of the course, but it also gives the students opportunities to communicate and share their thoughts or assignments with their peers and lecturer (Domalewska, 2014; Lin et al., 2013; Zhang, 2009). The class members just needed to give their email account to the administrators of the blog - the captain of the class and the ICT person - to get an identification number to log in to the blog. Thus, only the members of the class blog could post any written products and give comments done inside and outside the classroom.

The overall procedures to implement the intervention of interactive blogging were as follows. First, the lecturer activated students' understanding of essays, such as parts of an essay and constructing thesis statements. In this meeting, the students were encouraged to read articles about the first topic, "Should ICT be applied in the classroom?" Empowered with Wi-Fi, the students searched some articles and discussed them in small groups to cultivate their background knowledge or schemata. Based on the discussion they held in the previous meeting, the students discussed further the first topic and tried to outline pre-writing activities. The lecturer controlled the students' activities and gave help when students asked for help or needed to discuss their outline. Then, the students started to write a rough draft. They wrote their draft directly on their laptop, but some of them wrote their draft on a piece of paper. Since the students failed to finish their draft due to the limited time provided, they continued finishing it outside the classroom, and then they had to publish their draft in the blog. After that, the lecturer and the students gave online feedback to the drafts outside the classroom. The feedback, based on the agreement, was given in the following ways. The lecturer gave feedback to all drafts.

Meanwhile, each student had to provide feedback on at least three drafts. One feedback was a must, and the other two were free drafts. For example, a student who belonged to number 2 in the attendance list had to provide feedback to student number 1. The student of number three gave feedback to that of number 2, etc. Then, each student was free to choose two other drafts to give online feedback, so each student had at least three opportunities to provide feedback. Next, the students started to revise their drafts based on their feedback before posting their final essays. Finally, the students who had posted their final product were encouraged to read the texts or final products of their classmates' and share their comments on the texts.

Data Collection

The instruments to collect data needed in this study were an open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview, and writing test. The data taken from the instruments were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to find out the students' writing performance and learning engagement towards the implementation of interactive blogging in a writing class. The quantitative data taken from the writing test in scores were administered by two raters using a scoring rubric covering complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) adapted from Cohen (1988 as cited by (Tavares, 2009) to avoid bias. Then, the scores from the raters were checked their reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. This type of reliability was used to see the consistency of the raters in scoring the learners' essays, and it has the advantage of negating any bias that any rater might bring to scoring (Creswell, 2012:161).

Data Analysis

The students' scores taken from pre-entry behavior before the intervention of the blog and the post-test were analyzed using SPSS Version 20 Paired Sample t-test to examine the effect of online feedback on students' writing performance. In addition, the qualitative data taken from the questionnaire and the in-depth interview were used to investigate the student learning engagement in the blog.

FINDINGS

Results from an open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interview, and writing test are elaborated to provide thorough findings on how online feedback was used to improve students' writing performance and how students actively participated in the online atmospheres inside and outside the classroom.

How online feedback was used to improve students' writing performance

The statistical computation results using Paired Sample t-Test indicate the students' mean scores taken from pre-entry behavior and post-test are significantly different (Table 1) since the significance value between the two mean scores was 0.00, which was lower than 0.05.

Table 1. Pre-entry behavior and post-test means scores of overall students' writing performance

Test	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	p
Pre-entry Complexity	30	21.60	2.159			
Post-test Complexity	30	23.23	1.730	-4.736	29	.000
Pre-entry Accuracy	30	13.57	1.654			
Post-test Accuracy	30	14.53	1.312	-4.276	29	.000
Pre-entry Fluency	30	39.83	4.990			
Post-test Fluency	30	43.58	2.924	-5.408	29	.000
Pre-entry Overall	30	75.00	7.348			
Post-test Overall	30	81.35	5.614	-6.908	29	.000

Based on Table 1, the comparison between the students' scores taken from the pre-entry behavior and the post-test proves a statistically significant improvement in their scores before and after the treatment of online feedback in interactive blogging.

In addition, Figure 1 shows the average students' writing performance scores before and after implementing interactive blogging. The students' average scores were taken from two raters. Thirty students took the writing test before and after the implementation of interactive blogging.
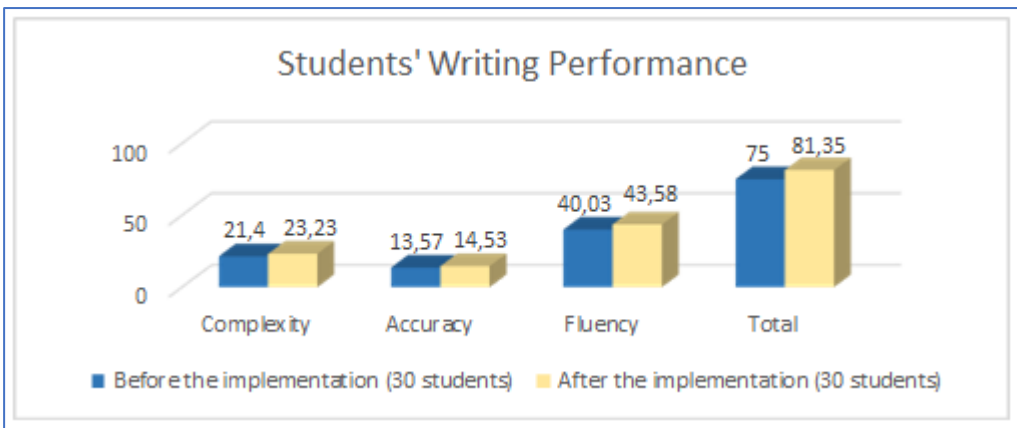
Figure 1. The students' writing improvement

Figure 1 indicates that the students made improvements in their essays after being treated using interactive blogging. They wrote more complex, accurate, and fluent essays after the intervention of interactive blogging. In addition, the improvement of the students' scores before and after the implementation of interactive blogging on the students' performance categories of scores taken before the implementation is described in Figure 2.
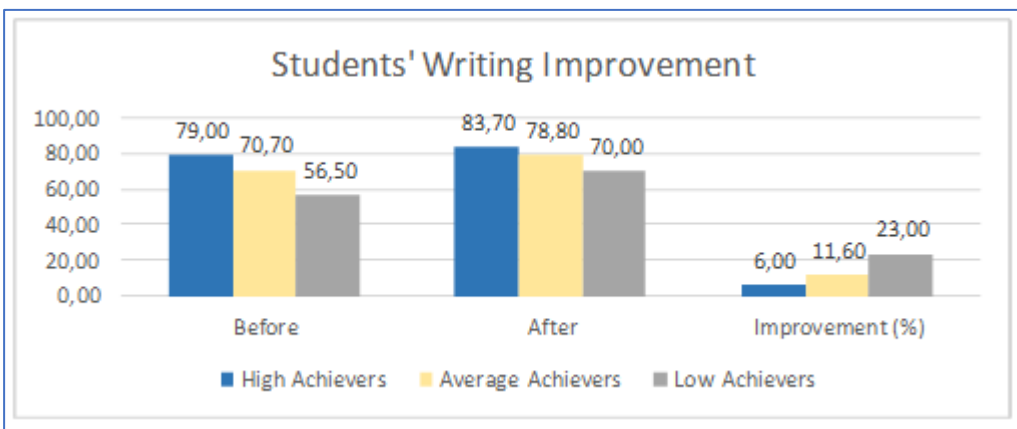

Figure 2. The students' score improvement based on the category of scores

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Based on Figure 2, the highest percentage of the students' score improvement was low achievers (23,00%, followed by average (11,60%) and high achievers 6,00%).

How students actively participated in interactive blogging

In addition to the quantitative data dealing with the students' scores in writing, the present study's findings also revealed the student learning engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagements) during the intervention of interactive blogging. The participation of the students covered Publications, Reads, and Feedback Provisions. In Publications, each student posted three drafts and three final essays (products) after revising their drafts. Thus, in each assignment, the students produced 30 drafts and 30 essays. In the Reads part, students read their classmates' drafts while at the same time they gave online feedback onto the drafts, and they read their classmates' final essays and provided comments. In addition, each student got a teacher and peer online feedback to make their drafts much better, including comments on their final products (essays).

Table 2. Students' Activities in the Blog

	Assignment 1				Assignment 2				Assignment 3			
	Draft		Final Product		Draft		Final Product		Draft		Final Product	
	Tot.	Mean	Tot.	Mean	Tot.	Mean.	Tot.	Mean.	Tot.	Mean.	Tot.	Mean
Feedback	176	5.87	125	4.14	201	6.07	120	4.00	187	6.23	132	4.40
Read	326	10.87	110	3.67	276	9.02	112	3.73	291	9.70	123	4.10

Table 2 shows that the students were eager to read their classmates' drafts and final products (essays) and provided feedback as indicated by the frequencies of reading drafts and feedback provision activities. The students read their classmates' drafts more frequently than final products as indicated by the averages of Feedback and Read because, according to a student, based on the interview, they could compare their products with their classmates' works. This indicated that they applied cognitive engagement in the blog by

understanding what they had to do. The emotional engagement was also done since some students enjoyed giving and receiving online feedback in the blog, even though another student confessed that she was ashamed to share her essay, and one student suggested stopping online feedback and starting pen and paper-based feedback. Nevertheless, the students generally had a positive perception of online feedback since it provided them with flexible activities. Last, behavioral engagement was also done by the students by working very hard to publish their best products. Some claimed that understanding that all blog members could read and comment on their works made them work harder.

DISCUSSION

The findings prove the benefits of the implementation of online feedback. The students' writing quality developed after implementing online feedback in the interactive blogging, as indicated by improved writing scores covering complexity, accuracy, and fluency in pre-entry and post-test. Their activities in the Reads and Feedback attracted them to collaborate and, at the same time, compete with their classmates. It seems that they had high motivation to do their best in accomplishing their tasks. Boudjadar (2015) claims that blogs empower students with chances for positive discussions and meaningful feedback, which motivate them to do their best to improve their writing performance. The interactive blog might become a platform for them to learn flexibly, as indicated by a study by Abidin et al. (2011) that revealed that students have the willingness and opportunities to collaborate with their peers. Thus, online learning in interactive blogging is advantageous to the writing class conducted inside and outside the classroom.

The results are in harmony with the findings of the previous research conducted by several researchers. Fellner & Apple (2006) found that implementing ICT, including blogs, in the writing classrooms helps students improve the quality of their essays, specifically fluency and lexical complexity. Rahmany (2013) found a

surprising result, demonstrating that students feel blogs like a competition to advocate new terms or thesaurus more than others by maximizing Meriam - Webster App. Online blogging encouraged them to correct each other's errors and reformulate the texts by suggesting new words. Nasir et al. (2019) argue that the key to effective online learning is the active participation of students and teachers. Thus, the students share more ideas and suggestions in the blogs when providing online feedback to their classmates and this condition motivates them to have more variations in word choices in their texts. In fact, by reading their classmates' drafts, they can learn a lot, including the willingness and bravery to provide online feedback.

The activities in the blog seem to facilitate students belonging to the low achiever group made high progress, as indicated in Figure 2. The activities of sharing products and feedback are beneficial to help them understand better how to write an essay appropriately and motivate them to join the class. It is in harmony with the results of a study by Dizon (2016) that low achievers made a significant progress since they were motivated to engage actively in the class. In addition, Lou and Chen (2012), examining the effects of blogging on the students' texts, found that the students were able to write rich and meaningful content rather than just giving details or presenting a simple piece of writing, so the number of inferior writings was reduced and the quality improved. Vakili and Ebadi (2019) found that online collaborative correction led to students' gradual independence in academic writing. It proves that sharing products and giving online feedback one to another maximizes the students' writing performance. Further, Dizon (2016) also proved the power of blogs to enhance students' writing quality. He investigated the roles of blogging on L2 writing quality in terms of fluency and lexical complexity, i.e., the degree to which a writer can apply varied and extensive dictions. The results showed that after a 12 - week intervention, the EFL learners at the tertiary level improved their lexical richness in vocabulary use.

Some other researchers also reported the benefits of online feedback in interactive blogging. Aydin (2014) revealed that blogs

effectively increase students' texts, specifically their rhetorical strategies and accuracy, as indicated by the total errors made before and after the implementation of reflective blogging. Also, Ebrecht (2015), focusing on the roles of interactive blogging on the students' writing quality claimed that blogging cultivated a sense of community among the students. The blog helps students revise or edit their essays since it helps them identify and correct grammar and spelling errors quickly. Overall, online feedback in interactive blogging is advantageous to cultivate the students' writing performance since they get more and more feedback in the blog. In other words, it could be estimated that the more online feedback they got, the better writing performance they made.

In addition to the advantages of online feedback on the students' writing performance, interactive blogging also cultivated students' learning engagement in the writing class, as formulated in the second question. It was found that the student emotional learning engagement appeared in the intervention of the online feedback in the blog. The students were motivated to post their texts or essays in the blog, read their classmates' texts, and provide online feedback. This motivation is in line with the results of the findings of the previous studies. For instance, Kashani et al. (2013) found that using blogging in the writing class motivated the EFL students to write more eagerly because they probably enjoyed learning using innovation compared to old traditional activities. In addition, students got other advantages, such as increased motivation to use more accurate and complex English after having immense interaction with their peers and teacher as indicated by Pinkman's (2005) study. Dizon (2016) revealed that smartphones and tablets stimulate them to work harder outside the classroom anytime and anywhere. The new platforms of writing activities lead the students to have high motivation in learning engagement. Let alone, now technologies in English Language Learning are new trends in the language classrooms, and more people have developed new habits of on-screen reading and writing (Boudjadar, 2015).

A statement of a student in the in-depth study reveals the importance of motivation in L2 learning:

> *"I like to share my texts in the class blog since I know I will get online feedback from my friends and lecturer to improve the quality of my texts. It is motivating to share my texts in the blog because I believe in my own writing quality".*

The statement is in line with some studies that discovered blogs as a tool cultivating students' motivation and self-efficacy to join the interactive classes (Acar et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). Motivation in language classes determines significantly the learning outcomes. Alizadeh (2016) claims that motivation has a significant role on learning English as ESL or EFL covering three primary aspects: (1) positive attitudes towards the L2 community, (2) the enjoyment of learning, and (3) external pressures.

Somehow, three students complained:

> *"Online feedback is more difficult than paper and pen-based feedback activities. Moreover, it is not easy to give and understand online feedback. It takes more time to do. Thus, I suggest we get back to paper and pencil-based writing activities".*

It can be predicted that the students were not used to using online platforms in their classrooms. Blogging was a new thing for them. The statement is in harmony with the findings of a study by Kashani et al. (2013), which revealed that the Iranian graduate students found online feedback was not as easy using a pen – and – paper-based for them, which is familiar to everybody. Accordingly, they need a long time familiar with the platform and fully realize its power when implemented in the classroom.

The teaching-learning process of writing using interactive blogging has empowered them to increase their writing performance and learning engagement inside and outside the classroom. Some suggestions can be formulated based on the findings of this research to cultivate the teaching-learning process of writing, especially for EFL writing classes and other classes which might have the possibility to apply interactive blogging. It cultivates their cognitive learning

engagement by getting some activities in the blog. Also, they interact with their teacher and classmates on the cyber platform inside and outside the classroom. Alsubaie (2018) found that ICT integration in the teaching process supports four keys of learning: group participation, consistent interaction and feedback, connection to real-world exposure, and student learning engagement.

In addition, the students also applied behavioral learning engagement as indicated by their efforts to compete with their classmates to produce better essays. Besides, they also read their classmates' drafts and provided online feedback to manifestation collaboration in the classroom. Foroutan (2013) found that students positively perceive blogs by applying self-regulated and independent learning as well as the use of the target language. Some studies confirm that online blog feedback encourages students to think critically, explore text and feedback models, and communicate more with their teacher and classmates (Acar et al., 2012; Wanajak, 2011; Yunus et al., 2012; Zhang, 2009). Thus, the teaching-learning activities turn to be more meaningful and motivating for the students.

The findings of this present study led to some implications of the teaching-learning process by applying online feedback in interactive blogging. First of all, since writing activities take time and students are required to be independent learners or writers, integrating a process-based approach and online feedback in interactive blogging can solve the problems that the teacher and students encounter during the teaching-learning process. Their passion to write should be facilitated, so they can develop their interests to collaborate with their classmates in the writing classes or probably other classes, which, in the long run, develop them to be independent and self-regulated learners. This concerns their efforts to apply their cognitive learning engagement by applying different pursues in completing their tasks.

Second, because the students have different writing performance levels and interests, it is necessary to encourage them to write more eagerly by telling them the importance of having sufficient writing skills in academic contexts and their future when they start to

work after graduation. It is also important to motivate them to be proud of their written products and develop a sense of authorship.

Last of all, it is essential to train students how to apply online feedback in interactive blogging in the classes since the students probably have different technology literacy levels. Exceptional help should be given to those who are not so familiar with blogging. In this context, a teacher should be ready to be a tutor, or he/she can maximize some students to help their classmates so that every student can be familiar with the blog and use it easily.

CONCLUSION

Online feedback in interactive blogging motivates EFL students to cooperate with their teacher and classmates and interact more frequently inside and outside the classrooms, resulting in improved writing performance. Even low achievers got the highest improvement, followed by average and high achievers. It implies that the atmosphere of collaboration and competition empowers the students to work harder and increase student learning engagement. Through interactive blogging, students are enthusiastic about reading their classmates' drafts and final written essays so that they can compete to be better. Besides, providing online feedback develops their passions in the teaching-learning writing process since they achieve more challenging activities through interactive blogging inside and outside the classrooms. This indicates that teachers must empower students with technologies and more student-student and student-teacher interactions in writing classes. Nevertheless, some students claimed that it is not as easy as paper and pen-based writing activities when they must give and understand online feedback.

Regarding the potentials of online feedback in interactive blogging in the classroom, and because this study may have some limitations, further research revealing more significant findings should be conducted to obtain more concrete evidence of the benefits of online feedback using interactive blogging. It might be necessary to investigate whether there is a different writing performance among

EFL learners who are taught using blogging compared to those treated using a conventional method (e.g., pen and paper-based activities) in EFL writing classes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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