Attitudes of EFL Students towards Using Educational Blogs in Learning English Grammar

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify the attitudes of EFL students towards using Educational blogs in learning English grammar. A case study method was used. The study population consisted of all students of the first stage of the English Language Department at the College of Basic Education / Al-Mustansiriyah University, who numbered 500 students. As for the study sample, it consisted of 60 students from the same stage. An electronic educational blog and attitude scale was prepared and used. The study exposed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements at level of significance (0.05) for the attitude scale towards using electronic educational blogs in learning English grammar in favor of the post measurement. In light of the findings of the study; the researcher recommended a number of recommendations, including: holding training courses for faculty members and students in Iraqi universities to train them on the use of electronic educational blogs.

اتجاهات الطلبة دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية نحو استخدام المدونات التعليمية في تعلم قواعد اللغة الانكليزية

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المستخلص

هدفت الدراسة إلى تعرف اتجاهات طلبة الجامعة دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية نحو استخدام المدونات التعليمية في تعلم قواعد اللغة الانكليزية. تم استخدام منهج دراسة الحالة. وتكون مجتمع الدراسة من جميع طلبة المرحلة الاولى لقسم اللغة الانكليزية في كلية التربية الاساسية/الجامعة المستنصرية والبالغ عددهم ٥٠٠ طالب. اما عينة الدراسة فتمثلت في ٦٠ طالب من نفس المرحلة . وتم إعداد واستخدام مدونة تعليمية إلكترونية، ومقياس اتجاه نحو استخدام المدونات التعليمية الإلكترونية في تعلم قواعد اللغة الانكليزية. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى وجود فرق دال إحصائيا بين متوسطي درجات القياسين القبلي والبعدي (عند مستوى 0,05) لمقياس الاتجاه نحو استخدام المدونات التعليمية الإلكترونية في تعلم قواعد اللغة الانكليزية لصالح القياس البعدي. وفي ضوء النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة؛ أوصى الباحث بعدد من التوصيات، منها: إقامة دورات تدريبية لأعضاء هيئة التدريس والطلبة في الجامعات العراقية لتدريبهم على استخدام المدونات التعليمية الإلكترونية.

1.1. Problem of the Study and its Significance

Nowadays, the world is witnessing a rapid development in various fields, especially in the field of technologies. Technology, in its many forms has become a basic requirement of the age. Besides, technical progress has entered into all fields, and education has made a large share of this progress.

One of the most prominent manifestations of technical progress is the use of the Internet as a necessity for the success of any educational system, as it achieves several advantages. The most prominent of which are: providing huge abundance of information sources, increasing the knowledge and cultural output of the learner, providing excitement and suspense, providing flexibility in education and independence of the

learner, and thus contributed to the change of features of the educational system with its various elements; It has contributed to changing the role of the teacher from a mere transmitter of information to a teacher capable of playing the role of facilitator, explainer, evaluator, guide, trainer, challenger, and constructive leader (Salem & Alghamdi, 2011: 5).

Accordingly, traditional educational methods are no longer sufficient to provide learners with the skills necessary for work competition in the age of globalization; Therefore, societies and governments have tended to adopt electronic learning and its applications in various educational institutions in that it is the gateway to the world of knowledge (Aboukhatwa, 2011:4).

One of the most important developments in the field of E-learning technologies is the development of the second generation of E-learning systems which concerns with the employment of social web applications such as blogging and others in the educational process.

A blog is a form of direct interactive communication technology which is characterized as an educational tool that allows creating a contact between the teacher and the learner (Wu, 2006:70). It is an an ideal communication medium for learners to publish, share, and manage information, as it only takes short time to create as long as an internet connection is available. Blogs that are used in education are called Educational blogs (henceforth E-blogs).

A blog has added new dimensions to the learning process, as it is a distinctive way to integrate technology in the classroom. It is an easy form that students can deal with simply, as it gives them an atmosphere for expression and creativity. Besides, it allows them to keep learning

outside the classroom at any time, which improves their learning outcomes (Kajder & Bull, 2004:34).

Accordingly, the researcher's attention was directed to designing an E- blog to teach English grammar, and explore the attitudes of EFL students towards blogs.

From the abovementioned introduction, it is clear that the current study seeks to answer the following question:

What are the attitudes of EFL students towards using electronic E-blogs in learning English grammar?

1.2. Hypotheses of the Study

The current study attempts to verify the following hypothesis:

There is no statistically significant difference at (0.05) level of significance between the mean scores of the two pre-post applications of the attitudes questionnaire towards learning English grammar using E- blogs.

1.3. Aim of the Study

The study aims to identify EFL students' attitudes towards using E-blogs in learning English grammar.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in several aspects:

Theoretical aspects

1- It supports the recent trend towards personal learning environments, which helps students to create a lively and active learning environment.

2- It provides a new style in the educational process based on integrating technology with the curricula, so that it is available at any time and at any time to improve the outcomes of the learning process.

3-The current study coincides with the interest of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq towards E-learning as a new challenge in education.

Practical aspects

1- Creating E- blog may contribute to improve students' attitudes towards the use of E- blogs in learning English language.

2- The results of this study may contribute to developing some suggestions in the process of developing curricula, methods of teaching and teaching techniques in higher education.

3- It may give the opportunity to reconsider the contemporary traditional educational environment and to know the need to create a modern educational environment.

1.5. Limits of the Study

1.5.1 Time Limits

The study has been implemented in the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021.

1.5.2. Spatial Limits

The study has been implemented in Mustansiriayh University/College of Basic Education/Department of English Language.

1.6. Definitions of Basic Terms

1.6.1. Attitude

A feeling or opinion about something or someone, that causes a certain behaviour as a result of this opinion (Richards& Schmidt, 2002:18).

The operational definition:It is an acquired willingness, either negative or positive, adopted by university students towards learning English grammar using E− blogs.

1.6.2. Educational blog

It is one of the applications of the second generation technology for the web that works by means of an electronic content management system with simple tools that enable individuals with primary information in technology to produce interactive pages, including graphics, multimedia, video and audio, in addition to the text which is an important aspect of blogging (Deng and Yuen, 2011:43).

The operational definition: It is an electronic learning environment with multi−element tools specified for English grammar course. It is presented in an attractive and interesting way that allows students to interact with the elements of the course and discuss its components so as to achieve effective learning process.

Section Two

Theoretical background

2.1. Definition of Educational Blogs

According to Sim & Hew (2010:56) E−blogs have been defined as personal web pages that give individuals the opportunity to present information on various topics, and interact with others without the need for design experience. Duda & Garrett (2008:1059) on the other hand believe that E− blog is a personal electronic page written by a person or group of people in a chronological sequence reflected in an image

notes, which are hosted by a fixed web page or a site hosting the blog. They are new windows for participation and expression in a personal or participatory learning environment, and it enables teachers and student to exchange their ideas and opinions in various media.

2.2. Classification of Educational Blogs

Blogs can be classified according to several criteria include the following:

- **The purpose of the blog**: including educational blogs, which are used in the field of teaching as a primary source of learning, and are divided into teacher's blogs, learner's blogs, and classroom blogs that reflect the collaborative effort of the teacher and learners (Wang, 2008:36).

- **Content of Blog**: Blog content can be categorized into five types: written blogs that contain typed text only, photoblogs that include still photos, video blogs (Vblog), audio blogs (Audioblog), and mobile blogs (Mblog)that allow to publish their content and receive Messages through mobile devices. One blog can contain more than one of the abovementioned formats.

- **Cost of blog**: includes free blogs, which are created on free sites, such as Word Press and Blogger sites, and paid blogs that are created by reserving a domain in one of the sites that provide web hosting service.

2.3. Usage of Educational Blogs

According to Hegazy (2011:189) blogs are used in the educational process in many fields, most notably are as follows:

1- Learners publish their assignments electronically instead of the traditional method.

2- Learners cooperate and create an atmosphere of constructive dialogue by following and commenting on their colleagues' blogs.

3- Learners consider them as an electronic bag in which they store their works and achievements for reference later when need them.

4- They represent tools for exchanging information, advice and guidance between teachers and colleagues around the world.

5- They represent effective forums in which the activities that are carried out inside or outside classroom are presented and discussed.

2.4. Steps for Designing Educational Blogs

When designing an Electronic E- blog, the designer follows the following steps taking into account the different blog hosting sites (Almelegy, et al: 580).

1- Creating a new account so that the user will have username and password.

2- Making Registration of a blog address.

3- Accepting the terms of the hosting site.

4- Choosing the appropriate design template.

2.5. Previous Related Studies

2.5.1. Du & Wagner (2005)

This study aimed to identify the impact of the using blogs on the level of personal education. The study sample consisted of 31 students from City University of Hong Kong. The experimental method was adopted and the tools consisted of blogging and testing. The study revealed a set of results, including that the correlation between the use of the blog and the development of student performance increased over

time, which confirms the developmental role of the blog on student performance. The study recommended researching the best ways to use blogs.

2.5.2. Tu *et al* (2005)

This study aimed to identify the effect of the electronic blog on students' writing ability of English as a second language and their attitudes towards writing. The type of writing adopted in this study was the directed writing based on the use of the Internet. Blogs were used as a template for writing. The study sample consisted of 43 male and female students from the eighth grade of the preparatory stage. the experimental method was adopted in this study. The tools were a questionnaire and writing instruction manual. The study revealed a set of results, including the effectiveness of electronic blogs in developing the writing ability and the attitude towards writing among students. The study recommended conducting further research with regard to encouraging writing.

2.5.3. Visa (2007)

The study aimed to identify the effect of using wikis and blogs on academic achievement in Spanish grammar course and the attitude towards learning this language. The study sample consisted of 41 male and female students at West Virginia University in the United States of America, and it was randomly divided into two groups; the first group (18) students who studied through cooperative learning method based on wikis, and the second group (23) students who studied through cooperative learning method based on blogs. The study adopted the quasi−experimental approach, and the tools consisted of a demographic survey, pre − post achievement tests, an attitude scale and an assessment tool. The results of the study revealed that there was no

statistically significant differences in the achievement of the pre-test tests after controlling the variables, and there was no Statistically significant difference in the attitude towards learning Spanish among students who used blogs and those who used wikis. The study recommended conducting a study on a larger sample.

2.5.4. Shahsavar & Tan (2012)

This study aimed to identify the students' attitudes towards blogs in teaching English as a second language. The study sample consisted of 30 undergraduate students in Malaysia. The study relied on the experimental method and the tools consisted of interviews and an attitude scale toward blogs. The results revealed a set of guidelines for developing a tool to measure students' attitudes toward blogs and recommended conducting a study on a larger sample.

2.6. Discussion the Previous Studies

The current study benefited from previous studies in developing the general framework of the study tools, the study methodology, the statistical methods, the theoretical framework, and discussing the results of the current study later.

Despite the diversity of the previous studies aims, it has become clear to the researcher's knowledge that there is a dearth of studies that aimed to identify the attitudes of university students towards the using E- blogs in learning English language, and this is what the current study seeks to answer.

Concerning methodology of the studies , it varied between the experimental, the quasi-experimental, and the descriptive method, but none of them used the case-study method, on which the current study is based.

Regarding the sample, it varied between students of the secondary stage, and undergraduate students and teachers. The current study consistent with the studies that were addressed college students. Regarding, the tools, they varied between the blogs, tests, questionnaires, and surveys.

Despite that there is none of the abovementioned previous studies matches to a large extent for the current study, many studies have recommended the investigation of the best use of blogs as digital repositories and increase interest to use them in education in various educational stages taking into consideration the skills and abilities that students possess to use second-generation technologies for webs and seek to benefit from them in what supports their learning, and provide useful learning environment for students which reinforces the importance of the current study.

Section Three

Methodology and Procedures

3.1. Method of the Study

A quasi-experimental study has been adopted and applied to one sample of EFL college students. By applying the pre-application of the questionnaire to the sample of the study and after being exposed to the experimental variable, the post application was applied to the same sample. The difference in the group's responses of the pre-post application of the questionnaire resulted from being affected by the experimental variable.

3.2. Population and Sample

The study population is represented by 520 EFL students in the first stage at Mustansiriyah University /College of Basic Education/English

Department in the academic 2020−2021. A random sample of 60 students has been selected as an experimental sample. They were taught English grammar course by using E− blog.

3.3. Instruments of the Study

To achieve the aims of the study and verify its hypothesis, the following tools were used:

3.3.1. Educational Blog

After reviewing the educational literature that dealt with Instructional design models, the researcher designed an E− blog according to the following stages:

1− Analysis Stage

In this stage, the researcher analyzed the objective of the E− blog, the characteristics of learners, scientific material, and the analysis of the educational and training environment.

2− Design Stage

In this stage, the researcher formulated the behavioral educational aims of each unit, and determined the scientific content and learning strategies. Besides, they defined the evaluation methods, which are represented by putting some questions or activities that students do after studying each unit and evaluating students' comments on each post.

3− Production Stage

In this stage, the researcher created a Google account and then created a blog on the Blogger site, which provides the blogging service from Google. The site was accessed, and then the terms of use were accepted, followed by the selection of a title for the blog as "English

Grammar". The appropriate template was chosen for the blog and the multimedia and files were downloaded.

4- Evaluation Stage

After completing the construction of the blog, it has been presented to a group of experts specialized in educational techniques to verify its validity and the purpose for which it was set and its observance to the educational and psychological standards. They confirmed the validity and quality of the site within the framework of the objectives set for it.

3.3.2. Attitudes Questionnaire.

The tool aims to identify the students' attitudes towards using E-blogs in learning English grammar. The researcher reviewed a number of educational literatures and a set of designed questionnaire , and then formulated the items. The five-point gradient (Likert) was used, so that the positive answer was given strongly agree (5) degrees, agree (4) degrees, neutral (3) degrees, disagree (2) degrees, and strongly disagree (1) degree. The questionnaire consisted of (33) positive and negative items.

3.4. Validity

The questionnaire was presented to a jury members to verify its face validity by identifying their opinions on it in terms of the clarity and accuracy of the items and adding or omitting any items. Based on what was stated by the jury members, the researcher made the necessary modifications to the scale, and thus the scale consisted of (33) items, 21 positive items and 12 negative items. Each item has 5 response alternatives, starting with strong approval and ending with strong rejection.

3.5. Reliability

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated according to " alpha Cronbach coefficient. The reliability coefficient of the scale was (0.89). This indicates that the reliability coefficient is high and the scale is valid to be used.

3.6. Procedures of the Study Application.

3.6.1. Pre-application of the Study tool.

On 10th of March 2021 the attitude scale towards using E- blogs in learning English grammar was applied to the sample of the study.

3.6.2. The application of the Study experience.

The students have been trained on the way they use E- blog before embarking on the experiment through the following steps:

1- Creating Google account by the students, so that they have a login name and password in which entry data is kept confidential.

2- Introducing the students to the E-blog that was created and giving them its link, which access permission was for students only.

3- Receiving students' inquiries at any time, whether during or after the experiment.

4- Providing immediate feedback to the students, by following up on their comments they write on each post, paying attention to what they ask and responding to their inquiries.

5- Allocating a portion of the course grades, not less than 10% to participate in the blog, comment, discuss and add new information.

3.6.3. Post-application of the Study tool.

The application of the experiment which aims to develop the attitude towards using E- blogs to learn English grammar lasted for 8 weeks. After that the attitude scale has been applied on 12th of May 2021 to the sample of the study.

Section Four

Results, Conclusion, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

4.1. Results

To achieve the aim of the study and verify its hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant difference at (0.05) level of significance between the mean scores of the two pre-post applications of the attitude scale towards learning English grammar using E- blogs as shown in table No (1).

Table No (1).

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Pre-post Measurement of the Attitudes Scale towards the Use of E- blogs in Learning English Grammar.

Pre-measurement		Post-measurement	
Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation
3.7	0.502	3.32	0.401

Table (1) reveals that the mean value of the post-measurement is (3.32) and the mean value of the pre-measurement $(3.3.7)$. This indicates the presence of difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements. To clarify the significance of this difference, the

researcher has used T-test for two correlated samples as shown in table No. 2.

Table No (1).

The result of T-Value for two correlated samples to indicate the difference between the mean scores of the Pre-post measurements.

Measurement	Mean Score	Difference of Means	T-value	DF	Level of Significance
Pre	3.7	25	4.5	59	0.05
Post	3.32				

Table No. 2 shows that T-value is (4.5) which is a statistically significant at (0.05) level of significance. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the (Pre-post measurement) of the attitude scale towards using E- blogs in learning English grammar in favor of post- measurement. This result leads to Rejecting the null hypothesis, and accepting the alternative hypothesis in that there is statistically significant difference at (0.05) level of significance between the mean scores of the two pre-post applications of the attitude scale towards learning English grammar using E- blogs.

4.2. Conclusion

Based on the results of the current study, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference at (0.05) level of significance between the mean scores of pre-post measurement of the attitude scale towards learning English grammar using E- blogs in favor of the post-measurement, It can be stated that the students' use of blogs in learning process contributed to changing the traditional pattern and

formed positive attitudes towards using blogs. Their learning and educational attainment have become better, more effective, energetic, motivated, and fun. Besides, they helps students using mediation, critical thinking, intellectual freedom, and self-confidence. Furthermore, they made students more responsible of their learning, interacting, connecting, communicating and cooperating with their teacher and colleagues.

The researcher attributes the difference between pre-post measurement in the attitude towards using the E- blog in learning English grammar to the students' promotion through discussions and comments, and the diversity between traditional and E-learning education and traditional and electronic interaction, which provided the students with an appropriate, varied and rich educational setting environment. Furthermore the availability of a self-assessment through which the students learn about their achievement through the presented activities and multimedia, and the presentation of scientific content in an enjoyable way. Besides, using multimedia, including audio, image, and video clip which are available in any time the students need, and the existence of the search engine on the blog page.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1- Holding training courses for faculty members to train them on designing and using electronic educational blogs.

2- Holding training courses for students to train them on using electronic educational blogs.

3- Using E-blogs in the various stages of university education, in its various courses to benefit from their positive educational aspects .

4.4. Suggestions for Further Research.

1- An experimental study examining the attitude towards the use of blogs in different English subjects.

2- A descriptive study to identify the obstacles to the use of E-blogs by faculty members in Iraqi universities.

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