Students' Perceptions on the Effects of Blogging Sites in Enhancing their Motivation for Foreign Languages Writing and Reading Proficiency

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Abstract

The emergence of web2.0 in language education has ushered in a pedagogical shift in language pedagogy. Blogging sites as one of the web2.0 technology have proven to serve relevant roles in language learning. However, beyond being a platform for sourcing relevant information, blogging sites provide language learners with relevant materials and platform to learn language at ease. Meanwhile, the present study seeks to explore the perceptions of foreign language students on the influence of blogging sites in enhancing their motivation for writing and speaking skill. While focusing on the features found on the blogging sites, the study examines the extent to which these features motivate language learners. Using exploratory research methods, the study seeks to elicit insights, preferences, and perceptions of language learners concerning the functions of these features found in blogging sites in regards to their reading and writing proficiency. Nevertheless, the research identified these features as thus; content, interactive features, multimedia elements, polls and surveys, and search functionality. Nevertheless, an important observation in the study revealed that out of the identified features, the multimedia elements motivate learners more than other features in developing their reading proficiency, while polls and survey feature motivate learners in developing their writing proficiency. While it is crucial for learners to regularly interact with these features when using blog sites for language learning, it is equally imperative to establish a harmonious relationship between blogging sites and conventional classroom instruction, and to guarantee that blogging activities are in accordance with the academic curriculum and the learning objectives of the students.

Keywords: *Blogging Sites, Technology, Reading and Writing Proficiency, Language Proficiency.*

1. Introduction

The fast development of digital technologies; web2.0 specifically, and their integration into education allows people to engage in novel learning environments within the

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educational sphere. According to Cong-Lem (2018), web 2.0 has brought about a shift in language pedagogy.

The present state of web2.0 (web-based technology) has given language teachers more opportunities to teach outside of the traditional classroom setting (Duffy & Bruns 2006). For instance, with blended learning, learners participate in both conventional face-to-face language classes and online activities outside of school. The process of acquiring language skills has grown pervasive, so that foreign language learners may now engage in practice sessions without being limited by time or physical location.

Blog as one of web-based technology, provide avenue for language learners to learn new language and also practice their language skill. According to Dieu (2004), blogging sites have gained popularity in the field of education due to their incorporation of multimedia elements, interactive capabilities, and capacity to facilitate collaborative and independent learning. Blogs has significant influence as a result of the robust interconnection between writers and readers, enabling them to facilitate impactful worldwide dialogues. Bloggers have the ability to peruse other blogs, establish hyperlinks to them, and make allusions to them inside their own blogs. The global blog readership allows students to engage with and showcase their work to others outside the confines of the classroom.

The emergence of web2.0 in language education has ushered in a pedagogical shift in language pedagogy. Blogging sites as one of the web2.0 technology have proven to serve relevant roles in language learning. However, beyond being a platform for sourcing relevant information, blogging sites provide language learners with relevant materials and platform to learn language at ease. Meanwhile, the present study seeks to explore the perceptions of foreign language students on the influence of blogging sites in enhancing their motivation for writing and speaking skill. While focusing on the features found on the blogging sites, the study examines the extent to which these features motivate language learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An overview of Blogging Sites: Exploring the Unique Features of a Blog

One implementation of Web 2.0 that Barger outlined in 1997 is a weblog, more often referred to as a blog. According to Doctorow et al. (2003), a simple website is one that includes brief paragraphs of information, views, personal diaries, or connections. These postings are organized in chronological order, with the most recent one appearing first, like an online journal. At its most basic level, it is a website that displays entries arranged in reverse chronological order and made available on the internet. Individuals that regularly update and manage a blog are often referred to as bloggers.

According to Doctorow et al., (2003) a blog is a basic website that contains short paragraphs of opinions, facts, personal diary entries, or links. These postings are organized in chronological order, with the most recent one appearing first, like an online journal. With this definition, Paquet (2003), revealed that a blog is characterized by five features: personal editorship, a hyperlinked posting structure, regular updates, open public access to the information via the Internet, and archived entries. Similar to the features of a blog identified by Paquet (2003) is that of Du & Wagner (2005). The scholarly work claimed that weblogs offer various features such as archiving past weblogs by date-posted, hyper linking to other webloggers, instant publishing of web content without the need for technical expertise, and the ability for others to comment and provide feedback. These features create fresh possibilities for individuals to showcase and articulate themselves on the internet.

Given the relevant features of blog by several scholars, it can be said that a blog typically consists of the following eight elements; which are post day, category, title, body,

comments, link and footer. Post day refers to the specific day and time when the post was published. However, category indicates the label or labels assigned to the post, which may be one or more. While title refers to the primary heading of the post, body refers to the main text of the post. However, link found in a blog can be a trackback (link that lead back to the post from other websites) or permalink (the specific URL that directs to the complete article). Comments represent responses and feedback provided by readers, while footer which is typically located at the bottom of the post often displays the post's date and time, author, category, and statistics such as the number of views, comments, or trackbacks.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that the above features are found in the traditional text-based weblog. A study carried out by Cong-Lem (2018), identified other types of blogs, which includes, video blog, audio blog (podcast), photoblog, among others.

2.2 Roles of Blogging Sites in Language Education

Blogs have gained popularity in the field of education due to their incorporation of multimedia elements, interactive capabilities, and capacity to facilitate both collaborative and independent learning. . Martindale and Wiley (2005) state that the introduction of blogs into language classrooms represented a break from more traditional methods of teaching foreign languages. Learners may experience a sense of agency and participation via these platforms' interactive environments, which allow them to actively participate in content creation and consumption. Given this, Warlick (2005) argued that bloggers may access other blogs, create links to them, and cite them inside their own blogs. Blogs' worldwide audience gives students a platform to share and discuss their work outside the classroom.

A number of studies have shown that blogs can help with language learning and instruction (Betts & Glogoff, 2004; Boch, 2007), especially when it comes to improving students' grammatical accuracy, fluency, and linguistic complexity (Hewett, 2000; Pellettieri, 2000). Blog writers also seem to have greater freedom than their classroom-based counterparts when it comes to expressing themselves and arguing their points of view (Baggetun & Wasson, 2006; Bloch, 2004). Affirming to this assertion, Rahmany et al. (2013), maintained that through the act of composing and publishing content on a personal weblog, language learners may really experience a feeling of possessing and being responsible for their work. Hence, it is essential for bloggers to assume responsibility for the content of all their posts on their own sites, Yang et al. (2005).

Blogs increase users' exposure to individuals from diverse origins and situations (Baggetun & Watson, 2006; Richardson, 2006). Archiving blog posts enables users to reflect on the content of their blogs and promotes the development of metacognitive skills for tracking their learning progress (Richardson, 2006; Xie & Sharma, 2004). Additionally, blogging empowers students to assume control over the virtual environment and the content they post. This shift substitutes the conventional role of passive information consumption with active information production, as supported by several studies (Baggetun & Watson, 2006; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Warlick, 2005).

To underscore the linguistic characteristics and precision of blogging experiences, Wang (2009) investigated the impact of "blog-assisted electronic feedback" on the quantity of feedback received by language learners. As a result of the research, it was determined that students must be instructed on how to modify the blog posts of their peers and encouraged to develop an understanding of the collaborative elements of this process. Averianova (2012) asserts that the prevalence of these devices has increased in recent decades. Students are initially encouraged to utilize weblogs and other "electronically mediated communication" resources.

Analyzing the traditional text-based blog, Kennedy (2003) posits that blogs possess the capacity to augment writing and literacy proficiencies, all the while providing a distinctively stylized mode of expression. Blogs offer a platform for individuals to express themselves and foster creativity, encourage critical thinking, engage students in inventive risk-taking, and motivate them to employ sophisticated language and design elements through format it provides. By doing so, the students develop collaborative, communicative, critical, and creative abilities that may prove beneficial in academic and professional settings.

2.3 Motivation in Language Learning: Exploring Effects of Blogs on Language Proficiency

Currently, language learning revolves on the symbiotic relationship between technology and motivation. Studies (Yang & Chen 2007; Nikitina 2011; Mahadzir & Phung 2013; Serajuddin 2023; Resmi et al. 2023) have shown that incorporation of technological tools in language learning creates a more engaging and conducive learning environment for language students. Blogs, being vehicles for the distribution of linguistic content, also act as motivational stimuli. Blogs' participatory and interactive features encourage students' intrinsic motivation by strengthening their sense of agency, belonging, and competency.

Blogging has consistently been regarded as a mechanism for incorporating various proficiencies, particularly writing and reading. According to Zamel (1992) writing can furnish "comprehensible input" for reading, in the same way that reading provides "comprehensible input" for writing. In order words, language learners' reading and writing proficiencies are improved as they engage in the contents of a blog.

Nevertheless, the study conducted by Mynard (2007) examined the impact of weblog writing on learner autonomy and reflection on language acquisition. However, the scholarly work suggested that this could be utilized to motivate students to reflect on their own learning. As stated by Kavaliauskiene et al. (2006), learner autonomy can be enhanced via the implementation of blogging by "raising awareness" of the actions taken during the activity. Blogging, according to Hou et al. (2020), can facilitate the development of metacognitive and cognitive abilities that are conducive to making more deliberate decisions.

In a study conducted by Appel & Borges (2012), it was observed that learners' speaking skill greatly improved with the use of audio blogging. Meanwhile, in the study, a web-based tool called LANGblog was created by the researchers' university, to enhance speaking practice for remote learners. Within the online LANGblog platform, a forum for audio-blogging was established to facilitate learners in sharing their own audio recordings and hearing to those of others. The majority of participants expressed their support for the use of the web-based audio-blogging platform, as they considered it improved their ability to communicate orally. Similarly, the practice of maintaining oral diaries, despite its simplicity, has been shown to enhance the speaking proficiency of language learners.

In another study conducted by Combe & Codreanu (2016), it was revealed that video blogging has positive effects on verbal ability and intercultural understanding of language learners. The scholarly work also claimed that students were able to improve their digital competence via the process of creating, editing, and sharing a video.

Also, in a study conducted by Hsu (2016), Taiwanese EFL students were made to engage in speaking practice outside of classroom through the use of audioblog. Students created audio recordings of themselves discussing course topics and posted the recordings to a blog. In addition, they gave comments after listening to their classmates' audios. The researcher then compared the participants' speaking material in terms of complexity, correctness, and fluency by analyzing their audio from the first two weeks and the final two weeks. Although the average duration of audio recordings was lengthened, there was no discernible improvement in accuracy or fluency. This suggests that students may need

more time to practice speaking before they may become more fluent and accurate. To help their students improve the quality of their spoken language practice, language teachers should provide corrective feedback.

Generally, blogs are great platforms for incorporating audio, video, and picture content. However, this multimedia features enhances the process of learning a language by engaging several senses of language learners. More so, the presence of these multimedia features increases motivation and engagement among language learners, as revealed by the already reviewed scholarly works.

2.4 Gap in the literature

Evidences have been provided by existing scholarly works on the potentials of blogging in language learning. Nevertheless, these scholarly have focused on benefits of blogging sites and challenges associated with their utilization in language learning. On the other hand, there is an important aspect of the utilization of blogs in language learning which have not yet been explored fully by scholars. This important aspect is 'how the unique features found in the blogging sites motivate foreign language students on writing and reading proficiency. However, the aim of the current research is to fill in this identified gap in the literature. Meanwhile, it is important to note that the features the study aim to explore is only limited to the ones found in the traditional text-based blog.

2.5 Research Questions

A.   In your opinion, what specific features on blogging sites do students find most influential in motivating their reading and writing proficiency?

B.   How do students perceive the role of blogging sites in enhancing their motivation for FL writing and reading proficiency?

3. Research Methodology

A.   Research Design

The current research employed the use of exploratory research methods. However, exploratory research methods are employed when the investigator wishes to gain an initial or rudimentary understanding of a phenomenon. The principal objective of exploratory research is to investigate, uncover, and acquire knowledge regarding a subject or matter that is currently lacking in clarity. Nonetheless, this research included quantitative and qualitative method; which are also components of the expository methods. Meanwhile, the quantitative aspect was used to collate both the demographic information of the research participants and also the responses of the participants in regards to the first research question. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect was used to explore the responses of the participants in regards to the second research question.

B.   Population and Sample

 In this study, the total population size is sixty-seven (67). Nevertheless, these participants are foreign language learners who were recruited through purposeful sampling from various locales. However, the majority of these respondents were chosen on the basis of their implementation of blogging sites in language instruction. Based on the demographic information provided by the participants, it was observed that thirty-two were male, while the remaining thirty-five were females. Additionally, the respondents were intermediate foreign language learners.

C.   Research Tools

The study employed the use of Google Form as a tool for collation of quantitative data. Nevertheless, it was customized to align with the principal aim of the study, and disseminated via an internet-based platform. Furthermore, qualitative information was

collected through email interviews. The objective was to attain a deeper comprehension of the fundamental research questions and the elements that comprised the survey. A comprehensive dialogue was commenced with the five respondents who were selected to participate in the interview. The researcher documented the entirety of the interview session in order to collect data through interviews. The interview protocol was formulated as a continuation of the questionnaire, which delved more extensively into the respondents' perceptions of the roles of blogging sites in enhancing foreign language students' motivation for FL writing and reading proficiency.

D.   Data Analysis Procedure

The collated data for the research were presented based on the developed research questions. Firstly, a chart was used to present the responses of the participants in regards to the first question. Subsequently, a table was used to present the responses of the participants in regards to the second question. The primary purpose of employing the tabular format is to accurately depict the themes identified in the participants' responses.
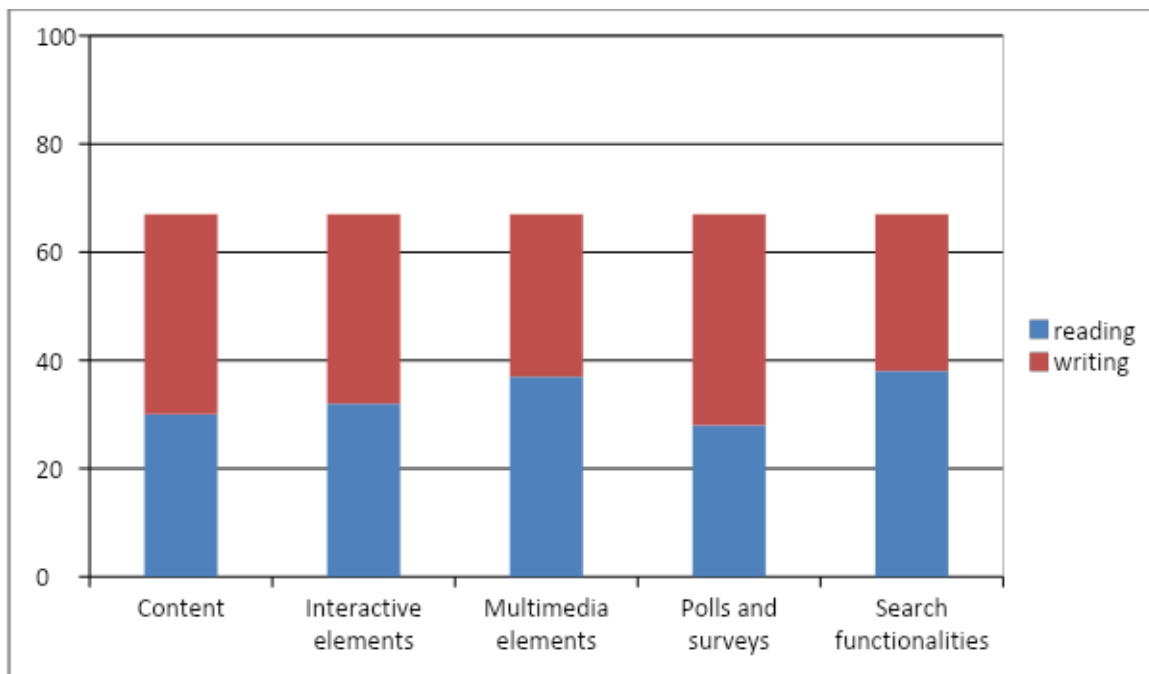
4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Figure 1 Features of Blog Motivating Reading and Writing Proficiency

The above table represents the responses of the 67 research participants on the specific features on blogging sites they find most influential in motivating their reading and writing proficiency. From the table, it can be observed that the average level of motivation exhibited by participants is marginally higher for writing proficiency (37) compared to reading proficiency (30). This implies that the blog's content is seen as a more powerful motivator for engaging in writing activities. On the other hand, interactive elements have a similar impact on both reading and writing proficiency; as seen in the table. Meanwhile, the multimedia elements in blog include the audio clips, photos, GIFs, podcasts, video among others. While 37 participants affirmed that multimedia elements motivate reading proficiency, 30 of them affirmed that multimedia motivate their writing proficiency. For the surveys and polls features, the number of participants that affirmed that these features impacts on their reading proficiency is lesser (28) compared to those (39) who affirmed that these features impact on their writing proficiency. However, this finding suggests that the participants consider these components to be more stimulating in

terms of their writing proficiency. The search functionality receives an average rating of 38, which is higher in reading proficiency than in writing proficiency (29). This finding indicates that the ability to search for particular content is perceived as more motivating by participants during reading activities.

4.1 Qualitative Result

For the interview, five individuals were selected from the 67 research participants to share their opinions for further investigation on the role of blogging sites in enhancing their motivation for FL writing and reading proficiency. However, these participants branded as Foreign Language Student (FLS)1; 2; 3; 4; and 5 have significant expertise in using blogging sites for language acquisition purposes. However, the responses of these participants were systematically presented and debated according to themes.

Table 1: Role of Blogging Sites on Motivation of Students Reading and Writing Proficiency

No.	Theme	Related Expressions	Implication
1.	Authentic language use	reading blog… made me feel like I was in the real world of words.	Improves reading, speaking and writing proficiency
2.	Creativity and expression	experiment with language.	Improves writing proficiency
3.	Language skill development	able to improve my vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.	Overall language proficiency
4.	Cultural learning		

The table summarized the themes developed from the responses of the research participants. These themes include authentic language use, creativity and expression, language skill development, language skill development and cultural language. Nevertheless, these themes are discussed below.

A.   Authentic Language Use

The narratives provided by the participants revealed that the theme of "Authentic Language Use" served as a significant impetus in their pursuit of language acquisition. Blogging platforms enabled users to participate in authentic, substantive discussions, which served as an indispensable link between language learning and practical implementation. The participants enthusiastically discussed the ways in which engaging in content creation, thought sharing, and linguistic proficiency in a foreign language not only bolstered their linguistic abilities but also fostered within them a deep-seated sense of assurance and appreciation for different cultures. Below are some extract from students' interview.

"Using blog in my language acquisition journey made me feel like I was in the real world of words. I mean, it wasn't enough to just learn new words and spelling rules; you had to use the language in a real way. It gave me a taste of how the language is spoken and written when I talked to people from different backgrounds, shared my own experiences, and wrote posts in a foreign language. I felt like I was a part of a conversation going on around the world, which gave my language learning a lot of meaning…" FLS 3

B.   Creativity and Expression

The consensus among the participants was that "Creativity and Expression" on blogging platforms extended beyond traditional language instruction. The platform functioned as a vibrant medium through which individuals could express their linguistic experiences, explore a variety of writing approaches, and instill their learning styles. The

amalgamation of artistic ingenuity and linguistic expertise not only enhanced their written communication but also ignited a sparkle of uniqueness in their linguistic expedition.

"I enjoyed my learning process using blogging sites because I was permitted to experiment with language, compose posts that reflected my personality, and infuse each sentence with originality. Through the art of expression, I felt as though I were not only mastering a language, but also discovering my own distinctive voice…" FLS1

"To my best understanding, blogging sites have really helped me a lot. Blog sites provided me with the opportunity to engage in various creative exploration of various writing styles, delve into subjects that really connected with me, and genuinely articulate my thoughts and emotions freely…"FLS2

C.   Language Skill Development

The concept of "Language Skill Development" is another important theme developed from participants' responses. Participants constantly emphasized that blogging served as a dynamic environment for expanding vocabulary, refining grammar, and naturally developing language abilities. The shared experiences together depicted blogging as more than simply a learning tool, but rather a transforming tool that enhances language abilities via consistent and intentional involvement. This theme emphasized the impact of continuous writing and reading on blogging platforms in enhancing participants' language ability over time.

"Even though that I utilized blogging to help me reading and writing proficiency, I observed that I was able to improve my vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. In fact, it provided an environment in which I not only acquired these skills, but also utilized them…"FLS4

"I included the use of blog in order to help my writing proficiency. However, the more I read bog contents, the more learn how to pronounce certain new words. I was able to hone my grammar, vocabulary, and overall language abilities through consistent reading of varied material on the platform…" FLS2

D.   Cultural Learning

The theme of "Cultural Learning" evoked a sense of exploration, wherein blogging platforms functioned as entry points to various cultures. The participants consistently characterized their experiences as a digital marketplace of ideas that surpassed the realm of language learning, akin to a global dialogue. This theme emphasized the inherent link between culture and language on blogging platforms, where every individual post enhanced a cultural understanding. Blogging, in addition to functioning as a means of communication, also provided access to a vast array of viewpoints and collective human experiences.

"It was more than simply picking up a new language; it was an adventure into other cultures. My horizons were expanded and my grasp of the target language was deepened with each position that served as a cultural exchange…"FLS3

"The fact remains that blogging sites are wonderful platforms to learn. For instance, my comprehension was enriched by reading posts from individuals all across the globe, listening to many viewpoints, and experiencing distinct cultural subtleties via language. The experience went beyond just words; it transformed my language practice into an immersive cross-cultural inquiry, all from the comfort of my computer..."FLS1

4.2.   Discussion

In this study, the use of blog was explored in order to reveal its motivating role in the reading and writing proficiency of foreign language learners. The result from the research emphasized that the use of blogging sites motivate language learners in their development of reading and writing proficiency.

As noted earlier, blogs, being vehicles for the distribution of linguistic content, also act as motivational stimuli. This means that language students, who consistently incorporate blog sites in their language learning journey, have tendency of developing their language skills. As suggested by Dippold (2009), blogs' participatory and interactive features encourage students' intrinsic motivation by strengthening their

Meanwhile, the result of this research identified relevant features found in the blog site that motivates foreign language students' reading and writing proficiency. These features include content, interactive features, multimedia elements, polls and surveys, and search functionality. Nevertheless, an important observation in the study revealed that out of the identified features, the multimedia elements motivate learners more than other features in developing their reading proficiency. Multimedia elements in blog include the audio clips, photos, GIFs, podcasts, video among others. According Mompean (2010), the integration of multimedia elements in learning engages learners' several senses. Reading encompasses not just the understanding of written language, but also the comprehension of visual and aural information. This comprehensive method of learning caters to many learning styles, suiting individual preferences and enhancing overall growth of reading competence.

More so, another important feature found in blog that has proven to impact on language learners' writing proficiency is poll and survey. Polls and surveys promote active involvement of learners in linguistic content. When learners are given questions or prompts, they are encouraged to articulate their ideas, thoughts, or preferences via writing expression. Engaging in this active engagement cultivates a routine of consistent writing, which in turn promotes the growth of writing expertise.

Participating in polls and surveys often entails sharing subjective viewpoints and personal encounters. This kind of expressive writing offers learners the chance to convey their views in a clear and concise manner. Consistently practicing writing over time leads to enhanced writing competence.

Additionally, the result from the qualitative analysis revealed the important role of blogging sites on motivation of students reading and writing proficiency. Important themes developed from the responses of the participants formed the major themes, which include authentic language use, creativity and expression, language skill development and cultural language.

Blogging platforms provide students genuine possibilities to engage in language usage that is true to life. According to Richardson (2006), the interaction with authentic information, user-generated postings, and engaging conversations reflects the language students may face in real-life communication scenarios. On this note, Akcay & Arslan (2010) claimed that the realism of the learning experience increases students' motivation as they recognize the practical applicability of their language skills to real-world situations. Nevertheless, the research identified these features as thus; content, interactive features, multimedia elements, polls and surveys, and search functionality. Nevertheless, an important observation in the study revealed that out of the identified features, the multimedia elements motivate learners more than other features in developing their reading proficiency, while polls and survey feature motivate learners in developing their writing proficiency. While it is crucial for learners to regularly interact with these features when using blog sites for language learning, it is equally imperative to establish a harmonious relationship between blogging sites and conventional classroom instruction, and to guarantee that blogging activities are in accordance with the academic curriculum and the learning objectives of the students.

5. Summary and Conclusions

This research underscores the significance of blogging sites on the proficiency of language learners. Beyond the primary use of blog, it has been observed that blog can serve as a language pedagogical tool. It can be deduced from the results and discourse of this research that students frequently employ blogging sites to enhance their reading and writing proficiency. However, it was observed that some features found on blog site act as motivating factors for language learners in improving their reading and writing skills. These features include, content, interactive features, multimedia elements. Polls and surveys, and search functionality. While it is important for learners to consistently engage with these features when they utilize blog sites for language learning, it is important to create a synergy between bogging sites and traditional classroom learning, it is also important to ensure that blogging activities align with the school curriculum and students' learning goals. Using exploratory research methods, the study seeks to elicit insights, preferences, and perceptions of language learners concerning the functions of these features found in blogging sites in regards to their reading and writing proficiency. Nevertheless, the research identified these features as thus; content, interactive features, multimedia elements, polls and surveys, and search functionality. Nevertheless, an important observation in the study revealed that out of the identified features, the multimedia elements motivate learners more than other features in developing their reading proficiency, while polls and survey feature motivate learners in developing their writing proficiency. While it is crucial for learners to regularly interact with these features when using blog sites for language learning, it is equally imperative to establish a harmonious relationship between blogging sites and conventional classroom instruction, and to guarantee that blogging activities are in accordance with the academic curriculum and the learning objectives of the students.

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