

E-Tools to Assist EFL Learners' Writing Skill: Wikis, Weblogs, and Podcasts

Fatemeh Behjat¹

Abadeh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abadeh, Iran

Mortaza Yamini

Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri

Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran

One of the promises of web-based education is to help students take control of their learning pace as the basic requirement of language learning is being life-long. The purpose of the present study was to find out which of the e-tools -- weblogs, wikis, or podcasts -- can better help EFL learners excel in their writing skill. To this end, 156 Iranian sophomore students majoring in English and studying at Islamic Azad University, Abadeh and Shiraz Branches and the Zand Institute of Higher Education were selected based on random sampling as participants. As the design of the study was a pre-experimental one, there were three experimental groups involved but no control group. Before the instruction, the participants were given an essay writing test, whose results were used to divide them into three groups. Two of the groups received in-class instruction and were assigned out-of-class activities through weblogs and wikis. The third group received the instruction through podcasts. The treatment lasted for two and a half months and at the end, another essay writing test was given to all groups. A two-way ANOVA for the comparison of the participants' gain scores indicated that using the tools available on the Internet could lead to improvement in the EFL students writing abilities, and gender was not a determining factor. The study reveals the fact that web tools, in general, and

¹ Corresponding author. E-mail: fb_304@yahoo.com

blogs, wikis, and podcasts, in particular, can foster EFL students' writing skills and teachers can use them as supplements in their language instruction.

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning, Podcasts, Web-Based Instruction, Weblogs, Wikis, Writing Skill

In the age of communications and technology, it is no wonder to see teachers make use of computers and the Internet to enhance their students' learning. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the use of computers connected to the Web in language learning has increased explosively. The birth of the World Wide Web and its growing applications has made Web-based learning feasible and its distinctive features attainable (Wu & Hiltz, 2004).

The first reason behind the application of Web-based instruction is that it creates both independent and collaborative learners who try to acquire and practice a new language. Using the net, the learners can enjoy hypermedia, multimedia, and drill and practice programs to foster their knowledge of language. The Web gives the chance to teachers to take adaptive strategies based on their learners' personal needs, and its collaborative use helps learners receive more feedback than they would get in class (Arroyo, 2008).

The Web provides immense opportunities for both language teachers and learners to make use of a variety of sources available to them (Mirzaeian, 2009). It also makes different kinds of computer-assisted language learning tools available (Cushion, 2005; Galloway & Peterson-Bidoshi, 2008) and helps language learning take place in an appropriate environment (Stockwell, 2007).

According to Leidner and Jarvenpaa (1995), one of the fundamental premises on the effectiveness of technology for language learning is the degree to which it supports a particular model of learning. They identified computer-assisted instruction (CAI), for example, to support the idea that learning is instructor-

centered, and the aim is to transfer knowledge from the instructor to the student.

The key theoretical perspective behind Web-Based Instruction (WBI) or online learning is constructivism. It focuses on collaborative learning, through which individual development takes place by sharing knowledge with others (Dougiamas & Peter, 2002).

There are five major ingredients for any Web-based instruction (Carman, 2002) as follows:

- (1) Live events: Every instruction and activity available is either synchronous or asynchronous and it is instructor-directed;
- (2) Self-paced: Learners can embark on learning at their own pace;
- (3) Assessment: Learners have the chance to measure their own learning and knowledge;
- (4) Collaboration: There is communication and interaction among learners;
- (5) Performance-supportive materials: individuals are also supplied with some reference materials to foster their learning.

There are different tools to be used in a Web-based instructional program such as e-mails, facebook, weblogs, wikis, skype, and so on. A wiki is a simple Web-based collaborative system for creating and editing content. It was introduced by Bo Leuf and Ward Cunningham in 1995. 'WikiWikiWeb' was the first wiki designed at that time. It was intended to allow anyone add a new piece of writing or revise an existing text through a Web browser. The basic objective of a wiki is to let users comfortably have participation and cooperation in developing the Web content with flexibility and ease (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2007).

The term wiki is derived from the Hawaiian word 'wikiwiki', which means fast or quick. It is defined as an internet platform that enables users to read and modify any of the webpages within it. It enables one to construct knowledge from a number of sources and serves as a platform for collecting, archiving and sharing common knowledge about many educational topics (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Wikis provide a shared web space in which all users have equal access to certain toolbars to import images, create hyperlinks and modify texts (Wheeler, Yeomans & Wheeler, 2008).

There are some advantages for using Wiki (Ahmed, Härdle & Klink, 2007). Wikis simplify content editing; they are suitable for users with little experience with computers or web site development as no HTML language knowledge is required; they keep record of the previous pages and make the comparison of older and newer web pages an easy task; wiki sites are publicly open and therefore content editing is open to all users; wiki sites create hypertext databases and can regulate the content in any manner.

The major challenge over wikis is that because users can change the content of a wiki either by adding, editing, or deleting, it creates some risks for the site information. Therefore, it is suggested that Wiki developers should check the content regularly or control the manipulation so that inappropriate language and incorrect content are not included. This requires a lot of time and expert energy. Another problem of a wiki is that it represents the perspective of the group who uses it. (*Seven Things about Wikis*, 2005).

Another e-tool which can be at the service of education and language learning is the weblog. It is a website with data entries, presented in reverse chronological order. A weblog, or blog, is defined as a frequently updated online personal journal (Blackstone, Spiri, & Naganuma, 2009). Pinkman (2005) defined blogs as tools that are easy-to-create and easy-to-maintain websites. Weblogs are well suited to serve as on-line personal journals for students, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files (Shekarey, 2007; Zare-ee, Shekarey, Fathi Vajargah, 2009).

Shih (2010) claimed that technology-enhanced learning through web pages helps learners' language acquisition. He added that blogs can be used as a collaborative tool for students, and teachers can use them as a medium for tasks such as delivering news, messages and resources, encouraging discussion, and giving feedback and comments. Making and using a bilingual blog, Jones and Bissoonauth-Bedford (2008) found that it was as an aid to extend the learning experience of students from social, cultural and linguistic perspectives.

Kajder and Bull (2004) maintained that teachers can use blogs to help their students reflect on their own thoughts, and it is also an agreed upon fact that teachers can utilize blogs for their own professional development (Haramiak, Boulton, & Irwin, 2009). Zare-ee, Shekarey, Fathi Vajargah (2009) emphasized the idea that blogging can support students and faculty members effectively by breaking down the limiting walls of the classroom. *Park, Heo and Lee (2011)* in their study discovered that the blog is a meaningful learning environment and blogging is a significant factor for adults to have informal learning.

There are some benefits in using weblogs in education in general and language learning in particular. They are easy and cost-effective to make, use and maintain; they have an interactive nature; they usually present information in simple, non-technical and informal language; they can contain images, sound tracks and the like; they spread ideas rapidly; they offer more chances for students to read materials. Date-stamping for each posted comment allows both teachers and students to keep right track of time (Blackstone, Spiri, & Naganuma, 2009)

The problem with using blogs is that a teacher should always be in touch with the weblog designer to change his/her blog page, as it is a disgrace for a weblog not to be changed often. Some blogs provide too serious context for teachers' syllabi and most often students think that blogs support the old authoritative role of the teacher. They are afraid of leaving comments on the page as it may affect the teachers' overall subjective impression of them.

The third e-tool very commonly used for class presentations and lectures is podcast. The concept of podcasting was suggested

as early as 2000 and its technical components were available by 2001, but the term 'podcast' became popular in 2004 (Stanley, 2007). A podcast is an audio file that can be downloaded from the Internet. After it is downloaded, one can listen to it on the computer or on a music player. Podcasting is like a radio broadcast, but it is transmitted through the Internet and produces pre-recorded content (D'Souza, 2005). Podcast is now commonly used to refer to a series of audio recordings that can be distributed and accessed through the Internet (Guertin, Bodek, Zappe, & Kim, 2007). Similar to Weblogs and wikis, the technology behind is rather simple. The common use of podcasts as a learning tool has grown since their first introduction in 2004 (Frydenberg, 2006; Brookes, 2010). Podcasting is now considered synonymous with recording lectures in language classes. Podcasts can also be used for student assignments and as an alternative for producing and presenting coursework (Harris & Park, 2007).

Though many language teachers believed that using podcasts causes legitimacy for absenteeism, research showed that they can be effective in better learning of a lesson (Tavales, & Skevoulis, n.d.). According to them, as in the classroom the students can be distracted in lectures by other factors, and may miss elements of what the lecturer is saying, a podcast can later help them grasp the whole class content.

According to Brookes (2010), learners' perceptions of podcasts have an impact on their learning experience. The research showed that most students perceived that podcasts had a positive influence on their academic performance. Based on their research, Tan, Ow, & Tan (2006) reported that integrating podcasts into a first year undergraduate module on English Language and Communication can enhance learners' language skills.

Compared with other electronic audio recording tools, the best feature of the podcast is that it is very simple to create, edit, and publish. It is also very easy to listen to the end product via a computer, or a portable music player. The level of technology awareness needed to use the software is very low; even very amateur learners can learn how to use them easily. Further, the

tools needed to create these are freely available on the net (Tavales & Skevoulis, n.d.).

The biggest disadvantage of podcasts is that though they can be very useful in case language learners do not attend any classes, some teachers believe that posting podcasts and lecture notes allows a student to be absent from the class anytime; this will hinder their ability to enjoy the advantages of attending the class. Teachers must ensure that students attend classes and use the podcasts only for review (Tavales & Skevoulis, n.d.). There are also some pieces of evidence which show not all students find podcasts helpful (Guertin, Bodek, Zappe, & Kim, 2007), and many students are not apt to use them in their learning (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray, & Krause, 2008).

One of the hallmarks in foreign language learning is the written language by which one expresses one's thought and knowledge, yet seldom are language students adequately prepared for writing in their academic life (Braine, 2002). It is defined as the skill of creating a context in which other people can think. As Jack (2009) stated, writing had been seen as a soft skill that would be nice to improve, but it takes time to be corrected, so most teachers would find it difficult to invest on it by spending the class time over it (cited in Sayed, 2010).

Research has shown that explicit teaching of writing brings about consciousness-raising as it draws attention to forms which in turn can positively affect the writing skill (Nezakat Alhossaini, 2009). Khabiri and Rouhani-Tonekaboni (2010) indicated that paying attention to writing instruction as a way to raise learners' consciousness toward the skill and taking the process approach to it significantly affects the development of students' ability in essay writing. As with other language skills, collaboration helps the development of writing. The advantage of collaborative writing is that it motivates students for the cooperation and brainstorming involved. Mak, Coniam, & Chan (2007) argued that through interacting, students could learn from each other; this encouraged them to contribute more detailed ideas than did individual work.

With the development of technology, for most students who are tied up with their writing assignments, online writing is the

best option. The interactive nature of the web and its use as a writing platform can attract learners' attention and motivate them to write. Accordingly, their writing power is enhanced. Shortis (2007) believes that those who write within new technology mediated text environments make their contributions based on the expectations of others within the same social context. Web 2.0 tools such as Skype, weblog and wikis, help learners evoke hopeful expectations about their oral and written communicative skills being fostered (Rösler, 2008).

Wikis can actively involve learners in their own construction of knowledge and writing practice. Franco (2008) supported wikis as a peer-correction tool to improve writing skill. Wheeler and Wheeler's (2009) study explored the usefulness of the wiki as an online tool to support higher quality writing skills for undergraduate and postgraduate students through collaboration. Wikis also allow different learners to collaboratively write and edit documents through the Internet in a shared online workspace, without the need for special knowledge or tools (Wei, Maust, Barrick, Cuddihy, & Spyridakis, 2005). In a qualitative research done by Wheeler & Wheeler (2009), students reported that their academic writing skills had improved through their formal participation in the wiki.

Blogs, as one of the Web tools, provide opportunities for students to create and collect written materials such as journals, assignments, or directed writing exercises to enhance their writing ability. Blogging improves academic writing by creating comfortable writing environments that induce a sense of self-efficacy and the feeling that one belongs to a community of individuals all destined to improve their writing (Kelley, 2008). He noted that "a blog provides a genuine writing practice, is authentically communicative, process driven, peer reviewed, offers a completely new form with un-chartered creative potential" (p. 3). Pinkman (2005) described a blog project he used in his reading and writing class at the American University of Sharjah, and found how effective it was in not only learners' improvement in reading and writing but also in raising students' interests in these two skills. Tseng's (2008) empirical study on Taiwanese language learners

showed that students would have positive attitude toward blogs, especially in writing practice, free writing, and peer learning. In an empirical research, Sayed (2010) studied the effect of using blog-based peer feedback on persuasive writing of EFL business management students in Saudi Arabia and concluded that those working on their writing skill through weblogs are more successful persuasive writers. Blankenship (2007) described the interactive approach to teaching writing. He argued that learners take advantage of the interconnected nature of blogs to build their writings in collaboration. He commented that the use of blogs in the writing classroom creates a collaborative learning environment that provides a positive framework for developing writing skills. In a qualitative action research project, *Parker and Chao (2007)* examined the experiences of high school English language learners as they created personal weblogs and responded to queries on a class weblog. The data from the project demonstrated that blogging as a classroom writing activity is effective in helping students to obtain, process and construct the English language.

Based on the above-mentioned information and pieces of evidence on the usefulness of e-tools in language development in general and writing skill in particular, the present study aimed at finding out whether weblogs, wikis, or podcasts could better enhance the Iranian EFL students' writing ability or not. The next question posed in the present research was whether the students' gender could play any role in their writing improvement, using the above-mentioned e-tools. Based on the results of the present study, teachers would decide which of the e-tools used could help their students outperform in their writing skill so that they could use them in their instruction as supplementary materials and if they should use different e-tools for their male and female students or not.

Research Questions

Question 1. Using weblogs, wikis, and podcasts, do the Iranian EFL students perform differently in their writing skill?

Question 2. Using weblogs, wikis, and podcasts, does the Iranian EFL students' gender play any significant role in their writing outperformance?

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, two null hypotheses were posed.

Method

Participants

In order to select participants for the present study, the purpose of the research was explained to the available sophomore students majoring in English translation and literature at Islamic Azad Universities, Abadeh and Shiraz Branches and the Zand Institute of Higher Education in Shiraz. The participants were selected from these institutions as they were the only available places to the researcher where she could easily conduct the research. Therefore, availability sampling model was applied for subject selection. As for their language knowledge, the writing test administered before the instruction revealed that they were homogeneous. To avoid John Henry Effect, which refers to the participants' tendency to exert more effort than they otherwise would, and thereof negatively challenges the purpose, the participants were informed that the results would not affect the teacher's evaluation of their writing skill at the end of the term. One hundred and fifty-six students (30 males and 126 females) voluntarily took part in the study. As they were all in their second year of studying English, they were assumed to have passed their grammar (I) and (II), and thus had the same basic knowledge of English grammar and structure. Besides, they had all passed their Advanced Writing Course and thus knew the principles of paragraph and essay writing. They were all Iranian students who studied English as a foreign language and were at an average age range of 20 to 27 years old. The course name was Essay Writing, and all the students except one group that received instruction through podcasts attended the class once a week for two hours.

Instrumentation

The instruments used to answer the research questions were two essay writing tests, the topics of which were similar for both pre- and post-tests. As far as the amount of production was concerned, the participants were required to write in three paragraphs, and the mode of development for both writing tests was argumentative. In order to score writing performance of the participants at the beginning and end of instruction, Weir's (1990) rating scale was used. Shaw and Weir (2007) stated that Weir's (1990) rating scale is a validated test for writing which enjoys the major features of communicative writing tests; therefore, it was selected for rating the participants' writing performances. For reliability purposes, the participants' writings were scored by two raters.

Design

As the study does not provide any control group but enjoys experimental groups, according to Ary and Razavieh (1996), it is classified as pre-experimental. In the present study, there are only three experimental groups, each of which receives a different kind of treatment, and they are compared to explore which of the treatments used for instruction is probably more effective than the others in improving the Iranian EFL students' writing skill. Therefore, the independent variable was instruction types -- weblogs, wikis, and podcasts, and the dependent variable was the pre- and post-tests of writing administered before and after the instruction. Gender was considered as a moderator variable and students' age and nationality were control variables.

Procedures

In order to answer the research questions, the following procedures were adopted. First, to observe ethical considerations, sophomore EFL male and female students at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz and Abadeh Branches and the Zand Institute of Higher Education were informed of the purpose of the study. Out

of all available students, a number of 156 sophomore male and female students were selected as they volunteered to do so.

The participants were classified into three groups. In the first group, weblogs were used as the supplement for class instruction; in the second group, wikis were introduced, and in the third group, podcasts were used as an e-tool. In order to see whether the participants in all groups were at the same level in English writing skill, they were all required to write a three paragraph argumentative essay on an assigned topic. The writing performance of the learners was rated according to Weir's (1990) rating scale by two raters to ensure the reliability of scoring. A One-Way ANOVA was run on the participants' scores in writing performances, and since there was no significant difference in their writings, the participants were considered homogeneous. Due to the fact that the writing test was administered before the instruction, it was considered as the pre-test.

During the instruction, which lasted for two and a half months, two hours a week, the learners in two groups took writing lessons in the classroom. The difference, however, was in their out-of-class activities.

In all experimental groups, weblogs, wikis, and podcasts were explained about, and the way they can be used to help learners be successful language learners were discussed and the way they were to be used for the present research purposes was talked about. This way, it was made sure that all participants in different groups were technology-wise. Another important factor to consider in using online materials was time. In order to control the time spent on each reading and writing activity in all groups, the researcher asked the participants to do their assignments in not more than four hours.

Since the materials of all three groups were posted on the same blog, in order to ensure that the members only used the materials designed for them in a particular group – this case, Group A -- they were given a password to enter their own group on the blog. For the first group, the teacher's weblog was introduced (<http://hybridlearning.blogfa.com>). They were asked to visit the weblog after the class to do their homework. The weekly

assignments were assumed to be posted by the participants on the blog. The texts posted on the teacher's weblog were exactly the same for all groups. Each week, three different texts with the same degrees of difficulty were posted. Taking a learner-centered approach, the participants were asked to choose the topic they liked best, read the related texts, and select a topic based on the reading materials and type a three paragraph argumentative essay on it in the blog. The participants were required to discuss the topic of their reading and writing materials, exchange ideas on how to develop their idea, and have interaction. As they could see each other's assignments, they were also given the opportunity to give suggestions on each other's work and leave comments for their peers. Interactivity is the major characteristic of every weblog.

For the second group, the participants were again given the weblog address with their related password for group B. They were required to read materials, which were in wiki form. That is, there were some links to other websites that participants could click on and have access to more reading materials about a special term used in the text. Also, and some parts of the texts could be edited by participants if they wanted to add more materials to the text to let others read them.

The third group received class content through Podcasts. In fact, the participants in this group did not receive instruction in the classroom. Rather, they downloaded the teacher's instruction on the net. The class content was recorded as audio files which could be posted on the Web right after it was recorded. The instructional materials were available to the participants through the same weblog introduced to the other groups. They were considered as Group C and given a password to have access to the recordings. The students were required to download the files, get the lesson, and then do the related exercises presented by the teacher to them each week. They handed in their assignments on paper not online.

After the treatment, the participants in all three groups took the post-test. For the post-test, they were again asked to write a three paragraph essay on the same topic they had for the pre-test. Students' writings were scored by the same two raters of pre-test performances based on Weir' (1990) rating scale. The participants'

raw scores in the pre- and post-tests were considered as the data for the study.

Results and Discussion

To maintain the reliability of the scores, the papers were scored by a second rater using the same rating scale (Weir's, 1990), and correlation was used. The results are in Table 1.

Table 1
Correlation of Raters' Scores on Participants' Writing Performances in the Pretest

		First rater	Second rater
First rater	Pearson	1	
correlation			.820
Sig.		156	.000
N			156

The correlation between the two sets of scores was high (.823). Based on Henning's (1987) inter-rater reliability formula, the reliability index turned out to be .90; therefore, it can be concluded that the scores enjoyed a considerable inter-rater reliability. So, the average of both raters' scores was taken as the data for pretest.

In order to see if there is any significant difference among the writing performances of all groups before the instruction, a one-way ANOVA was applied. The results are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Scores in the Pre- test

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
Pre-test	Podcast	43	12.4186	2.88661	.44020
	Weblog	58	12.3491	1.79543	.23575
	Wiki	55	12.4045	1.91213	.25783

As Table 2 indicates, the mean score for the participants' scores in the pre-test of writing was 12.4186 (podcast group), 12.3491 (weblog group), and 12.4045 (wiki group). Table 3 shows whether the difference in the mean score of the participants in the pre-test of writing was statistically significant or not.

Table 3

One-way ANOVA for Homogeneity of Participants in All Groups

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	.267	2	.134	.028	.972
Within groups	731.019	153	4.778		
total	731.287	155			

According to Table 3, since the significance level (.972) is higher than .05, it can be concluded that the difference is not significant. Thus, groups were at the same level of writing ability before the treatment.

After the treatment, the participants in all three groups took another essay writing test. In order to see if the scores in the post-test enjoyed inter-rater reliability, they were correlated with those of the second rater. The results are as follows:

Table 4

Correlation of the Raters' Post-test Scores for Inter-rater Reliability

	First rater	Second rater
Pearson correlation	1	.855
First rater Sig.		.000
N	156	156

Table 4 indicated that the correlation was .855. Again, Henning's (1987) inter-rater reliability formula was applied, and the reliability index was calculated. Since the result was .91, it was

concluded that the scores enjoyed a good level of inter-rater reliability.

Then, the average of pre and post-test scores given by the two raters were calculated, and the mean for participants' writing gain scores were obtained by finding the difference between post-test and pre-test scores. A two-way ANOVA was used to compare the gain scores of the participants in different groups.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Scores in the Post-test

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Post-test	podcast	43	14.8547	2.18506	.33322
	Weblog	58	16.4181	1.81875	.23881
	Wiki	55	16.3864	6.86642	.92587

According to Table 5, the mean score for the participants' writing performances increased in the post-test. The lowest mean score belonged to the podcast group (14.8547); on the other hand, the wiki group and weblog group with mean scores of 16.3864 and 16.4181 had better writing performances in their post-test. Table 6 indicates whether the difference in the mean scores was statistically significant or not.

Table 6
Two-way ANOVA to Compare Participants' Gain Scores in All Groups

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	138.460	5	27.692	1.608	.161
Intercept	1127.959	1	1127.959	65.480	.000
Group	40.502	2	20.251		.311
Gender	.098	1	.098	1.176	.940
Group*gender	56.342	2	29.671	.006	.182
Error	2583.890	150	17.226	1.722	

Total	4730.812	156
Corrected total	2722.351	155

According to Table 6, the significance level for group (.311) is higher than .05, it can be concluded that there is not a significant difference in the performances of participants' writing gain scores in different groups. Therefore, the first research null hypothesis stating that there are not any differences between the writing performance of Iranian EFL students who get their writing instruction through podcasts and those who practice their writing through weblogs and wikis is retained here. Since the significance level for gender (.940) is higher than .05, the second research null hypothesis stating that gender is not a significant factor in the difference in the average of participants' gain scores is again retained here.

This study was based on two null hypotheses stating that, in the first place, there is no significant difference in the writing performances of students who use different e-tools such as podcasts, weblogs, and wikis, and in the second place, gender does not play a significant role in the improvement of the students' writing skill when they use different web tools. Both research hypotheses were retained as no significant difference was observed either in the performance of different groups who used e-tools or male and female students in different groups. Yet, since the post-test mean scores for all groups was better than the mean scores in the pre-test, it can be stated that the e-tools could equally help the students enhance their writing abilities. And as the results of the present research indicated that students who use e-tools, especially those who use weblogs can improve their language abilities, in general, and writing skill, in particular, it can be stated that this study is in line with the results of studies done by *Parker and Chao (2007)*, *Blankenship (2007)*, and *Sayed (2010)* on the role of weblogs in the students' writing performance and concluded that weblogs are effective interactive tools which can build students' writing skill through collaboration on the Internet. In all studies, no difference was observed in the male and female students'

performances; therefore, the present study confirms the results of the previous ones as gender was not a determining factor in the present research, too.

Additionally, this research supported the findings of studies done by Wei, Maust, Barrick, Cuddihy, and Spyridakis (2005), Franco (2008), and Wheeler and Wheeler's (2009). They all agreed on the fact that giving the students the opportunity to edit texts and have access to hyperlinks through wikis can foster their writing abilities.

Conclusion

The present research was an attempt to find out from among three e-tools, podcasts, weblogs, and wikis, which of them can help the Iranian male and female EFL learners outperform in their writing skill. It was discovered that all three groups performed equally disregarding their gender and group. As an improvement was observed in the mean scores of students' writings in the post-test compared to the pre-test mean scores, it can be implied that wikis, weblogs, and podcasts could help the Iranian EFL learners foster their writing abilities.

This study supports the results of the research done by Wheeler & Wheeler (2009) and Sayed (2010), who stated that wikis and weblogs are effective tools to improve language learners' writing ability. Following the results of the present study, language teachers can use these Web tools to enrich their students writing ability. This way, they can both help them enjoy the use of technology and enhance their writing power. Syllable designers and materials developers can also design some parts of writing lessons and assignments within weblogs, broadcast writing instructions through podcasts, and encourage the learners to use wiki pages for their writing courses.

The Authors

Fatemeh Behjat holds a PhD in TEFL and is a full-time faculty member at English Department, Islamic Azad University, Abadeh Branch, Iran. She also teaches at Islamic Azad University,

Shiraz branch and the Zand Institute of Higher Education. She has so far presented papers at international conferences in Iran and abroad and published books and articles in language journals. Her main area of interest is teaching and language acquisition.

Reference

- Ahmed, T., Härdle, W., & Klink, S. (2007). Using wiki to build an e-learning system in statistics in Arabic language. *Discussion Paper 2007-031, Berlin*, 1-17.
- Arroyo, J. (2008, June). E-learning offers flexible staff training. *Dietary Manager*, 30-33.
- Ary, D. & Rzavieh, A. (1996). *Introduction to research in education*. (Fifth Ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Blackstone, B., Spiri, J., & Naganuma, N. (2009). Blogs in English language teaching and learning: Pedagogical uses and student responses. *Reflections on English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 1-20.
- Blankenship, L. (2007). Interactivism: Transforming the writing classroom through blogging. *Unpublished dissertation, University of Arkansas*.
- Braine, G. (2002). Academic literacy and the nonnative speaker graduate student. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1(10), 59-68.
- Brookes, M. (2010). An evaluation of the impact of formative feedback podcasts on the student learning experience. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism, and Education*, 9(1), 53-64.
- Carman, J. M. (October, 2002). Blended learning design: Five key ingredients . In Billigmeier, G. M. (n.d.). Blended learning: Design and implementation. Retrieved from imet.csus.edu/imet10/portfolio/billigmeier_g/.../ROLFinal.pdf on 12 March 2011.
- Cushion, S.(2005). A software development approach for computer assisted language learning. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 18(4), 273-286.

- Dougiamas, M. T., & Peter C. (2002). Interpretive analysis of an Internet-based course constructed using a new courseware tool called MOODLE. *Proceedings of HERDSA Conference 2002*.
- D'Souza, Q. (2005). Web 2.0 Ideas for Educators: A Guide to RSS and More (Version 2.0). Retrieved from www.teachinghacks.com/files//100ideasWeb2educators.pdf on 12 March 2011.
- Franco, C. P. (2008). Using wiki-based for peer-correction to develop writing skill of Brazilian EFL learners. *Novitas-ROYAL*, 2(1), 49-59.
- Frydenberg, M. (2006). Principles and pedagogy: The two P's of podcasting in the information technology classroom. Paper presented at the ISECON Conference, Dallas, TX.
- Galloway, D. & Peterson-Bidoshi, K. (2008, February). The case for dynamic exercise systems in language learning. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 2(1), 1-8.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2003). Blogs and Wikis: Environments for on-Line Collaboration. *Language Learning and Technology*, 7(2), 12-16.
- Guertin, L., Bodek, M., Zappe, S., & Kim, H. (2007). Questioning the student use of and desire for lecture podcasts. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 3(2), 133-141.
- Haramiak, A., Boulton, H., & Irwin, B. (2009). Trainee teachers' use of blogs as private reflections for professional development. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(3), 259-269.
- Harris, H. & Park, S. (2007). Educational usages of podcasting. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(3), 548-551.
- Henning, G. (1987). *A guide to language testing*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers.
- Jack, E. (2009). Don't let poor writing stifle company growth. American Society for Training and Development. Retrieved 16 January 2010 from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4467/is_200910/ai_n42041656/.
- Jackson, G. B. & Constante, G. (2001, November/December). Web-mediated second language instruction: Will it actually work? *TechKnowLogia*, 15-17. Retrieved from

- www.techknowlogia.org/TKL_Articles/PDF/337.pdf on 4 June 2011.
- Jones, H. & Bissoonauth-Bedford, A. (2008). Developing a bilingual blog as a platform for language learning in French: A pilot study. *Emerging Technologies Conference: Supporting a Learning Community*. University of Wollongong, 110-119.
- Kajder, S. B., & Bull, G. (2004). A space for "writing without writing." *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 31(6), 32-35.
- Kelley, M. J. (2008). The impact of weblogs on the affective states and academic writing of L2 undergraduates. *Unpublished Dissertation, University of Virginia*.
- Kennedy, G, Judd, T, Churchward, A, Gray, K., & Krause, K. (2008). First year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives? *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(1), 108-122.
- Khabiri, M. & Rouhani-Tonekaboni, F. (2010). How to boost academic essay writing: A choice between process and product writing. *Journal of TEFL*, 1(3), 53-74.
- Leidner, D. E., & Jarvenpaa, S. L. (1995). The use of information technology to enhance management school education: A theoretical view. *MIS Quarterly*, 19(3), 265.
- Mak, B., Coniam, D., & Chan, M. (2007). A buddy reading programme in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. *English Language Teaching Journal*. Retrieved from <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/>. on 25 September 2010.
- Mirzaeian, V. R. (2009). Language teaching/learning resources on the web. In the proceedings of the 7th International TELLSI Conference on New Horizons in Language Education, Yazd University, Iran.
- Nezakat Alhossaini, M. (2009). The impact of explicit teaching and conscious-raising on EFL writing. In the proceedings of the 7th International TELLSI Conference on New Horizons in Language Education, Yazd University, Iran.
- Park, Y., Heo, G. M., & Lee, R. (2011). Blogging for informal learning: Analyzing bloggers' perceptions using learning Perspective. *Educational Technology & Society*, 14(2), 149-

160. Retrieved from www.ifets.info/journals/14_2/13.pdf on 25 July 2011.
- Parker, K. R. & Chao, J. T. (2007). Wikis as teaching tools. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Knowledge and Learning Objects*, 3, 56-72.
- Pinkman, K. (2005). Using blogs in foreign language classroom: Encouraging learner independence. *The JALT CALL Journal*, 1, 12-24.
- Reinhardt, J. & Thorne, S. L. (2007). *SCMS, blogs, and wikis: A manual for professional teacher development*. PA: CALPER Publications.
- Rösler, D. (2008). Deutsch als Fremdsprache mit digitalen Medien – Versuch einer Zwischenbilanz im Jahr 2008. *Info DaF* 35(4), 373-389.
- Sayed, O. H. (2010, September). Developing business management students' persuasive writing through blog-based peer-feedback. *English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 54-66.
- Seven things you should know about Wikis. (2005, July). EDUCAUSE: Learning Initiative. Advancing Learning through IT Innovation. Retrieved from net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7004.pdf on 23 March 2011.
- Shaw, S. D. & Weir, C. J. (2007). *Examining writing: Research and practice in assessing second language writing*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Shekarey, A., (2007). Blogging in higher education: An examination of Iranian graduate student. *Intl. conference on culture, knowledge and understanding*. Singapore, 27-30 May.
- Shih, R. C. (2010). Blended learning using video-based blogs: Public speaking for English as a second language students. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 2010, 26(6), 883-897.
- Shortis, T. (2007) Great expectations: The creativity of text spelling. *English Drama Media Journal*, 21-26.
- Stanley, G. (2007). *Language learning & web 2.0 technologies*. Retrieved from

- margallego.lacoctelera.net/post/2008/10/09/language-learning* on 7 December 2010.
- Stockwell, G. (2007). Vocabulary on the move: Investigating an intelligent mobile phone-based vocabulary tutor. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 20(4), 365-383.
- Tan, Y. H., Ow, J. E. G., & Tan, S. C. (2006). Audioblogging and oral skills in Chinese language. *AECT Research Symposium, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*, 1-30.
- Tavales, S & Skevoulis, S. (n.d.). Podcasts: Changing the face of e-learning. Retrieved from www1.ucmss.com/books/LFS/CSREA2006/SER4351.pdf on 24 April 2011.
- Tseng, M. C. (2008). The use of blogs in English classes for medicine-related majors. *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 167-187.
- Wei, C., Maust, B., Barrick, J., Cuddihy, E., Spyridakis, J. H. (2005). Wikis for supporting distributed collaborative writing. *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Society for Technical Communication, Arlington, VA, USA*, 204-209.
- Weir, C. J. (1990). *Communicative language testing*. Wiltshire: Prentice Hall Publications.
- Wheeler, S. & Wheeler, D. (2009). Using wikis to promote quality learning in teacher training. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34(1), 1-10.
- Wheeler, S., Yeomans, P., & Wheeler, D. (2008). The good, the bad and the wiki: Evaluating student generated content for collaborative learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology* 3, 24-36.
- Wu, D. & Hiltz, R. (2004). Predicting learning from asynchronous online discussions. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 8(2), 139-152.
- Zare-ee, A., Shekarey, A. & Fathi Vajargah, K. (2009). The educational usefulness and use of blogging in higher education: Male and female Iranian undergraduate students' views. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 7 (2), 211-219.

کاربرد ابزارهای شبکه در یادگیری مهارت نگارش فراگیران زبان انگلیسی: وبلاگ، ویکی و پادکست

فاطمه بهجت

دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد آباده

مرتضی یمینی

محمدصادق باقری

دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد شیراز

هدف از انجام تحقیق حاضر این بود که اولاً کدامیک از ابزارهای اینترنتی موجود از قبیل بلاگها، ویکی ها و پادکستها میتوانند بطور موثرتری به یادگیری نگارش دانشجویان زبان انگلیسی کمک کنند و دوماً آیا جنسیت دانشجویان نقش مهمی در عملکرد بهتر آنان ایفا میکند یا خیر. بدین منظور، 156 دانشجویی سال دوم رشته زبان که در دانشگاههای آزاد اسلامی واحد شیراز، آباده و غیرانتفاعی زند تحصیل مینمودند انتخاب شدند. پس از اینکه دانشجویان به سه گروه تقسیم شدند، یک پیش آزمون نگارش گرفته شد و نتیجه نشان داد که همه دانشجویان از نظر توانایی نگارش انگلیسی همگون هستند. به هر کدام از این سه گروه آموزش نگارش با استفاده از ابزار اینترنتی ویژه ای داده شد: یک گروه از طریق وبلاگ، گروه دوم ویکی و سومین گروه پادکست. پس از یک دوره دوماه و نیم، دانشجویان دریک پس آزمون نگارش شرکت کردند. مقایسه اختلاف نمرات پیش و پس آزمون نشان داد علیرغم اینکه که قدرت نگارش دانشجویان در هر سه گروه افزایش داشته، از نظر آماری تفاوت عملکرد آنان در گروههای مختلف معنادار نبوده است. بدین ترتیب، هر سه ابزار اینترنتی به یک نسبت به یادگیری نگارش دانشجویان کمک نموده است. از طرف دیگر نتایج حاصل از این تحقیق نمایانگر این بود که جنسیت دانشجویان هیچ نقشی در عملکرد آنان در گروههای مختلف نداشته است. نتایج حاصله از این

مطالعه به مدرسین زبان کمک میکند تا از ابزارهای موجود در اینترنت بخصوص ابزارهای یاد شده، در جهت ارتقاء دانش زبانی فراگیران، صرفنظر از جنسیت آنان، استفاده نمایند. کلید واژه ها: یادگیری زبان انگلیسی، آموزش نگارش، پادکست، وبلاگ، ویکی

Archive of SID