

KOREAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WEBLOGGING AND ONLINE BEHAVIORS IN A BLENDED LEARNING COURSE¹

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Abstract

This research examines university students' perceptions toward blogging in a university OPIc English conversation course. Twenty-three students enrolled and voluntarily participated with the researcher/facilitator of the course on the SNS tool – BAND. During the fall semester of 2015, blogging perceptions were measured by means of a quantitative pre/post course survey to explore how perceptions changed. Answers to open-ended questions and transcribed semi-structure interviews were qualitatively analyzed for triangulation with the quantitative survey. The findings indicate that students enjoyed the blogging experience and believed in the benefits of using SBLL to enhance SLA. However, the results implied that students' participation is hindered by distractions such as busy schedules, blogging difficulty and ethical concerns. The

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present study also analyzed and categorized online behavior throughout the semester. Results indicated that students form group norms, reflect on quality of writing and use online tools to enhance composition.

Keywords: EFL; blended learning; MALL; perceptions; online behavior; weblog

I. Introduction

Blended learning (BL) through smartphone technology has enabled classmates to access course material, interact and extend learning online. Implementing a weblog could allow students to practice via synchronous and asynchronous participation online. Lenhart (2012) claimed that texting represents the dominant form of communication amongst teens. Identifying the pros and cons of online interaction is crucial to develop and implement well-organized, convenient and useful online communities. Conducting administrative tasks and lectures online would free up class time for more challenging and interactive activities such as discussion, critical reflection and presentations. Unfortunately, research by Ushioda (2013) asserts that devices like smartphones are devalued as a learning tool. Forcing students to engage with external motivation like higher grades runs the risk of unnatural online behavior. Educators need to comprehend how class weblogs could benefit students and uncover beliefs and motivations regarding online communication. The purpose of this research was to examine participants' perceptions of blogging and online behavior using an SNS Application - BAND. The weblog aimed to provide a safe zone for classmates to preview and review class content. As a result, students could be more engaged in class, build confidence, and encourage each other. Ultimately, the goal of this course is enhancing oral proficiency by sharing ideas, creating

knowledge, and practicing composition. A BL weblog would be an ideal platform for accomplishing this task. This mixed-methods study measured students' initial weblogging perceptions and how they changed during the semester. This research also focused on identifying significant perception themes and exploring various online behaviors. Hopefully, the results could shed some light on the potential of weblogging to aid EFL pedagogues, inform educators about MALL and promote smartphone technology in education.

II. Literature Review

Blended Learning (BL), according to Rosen and Stewart (2015), is hybrid teaching that incorporates a face-to-face class with an online component. Kazu (2014) claims BL combines the advantages of traditional classroom learning with benefits of online learning. Smartphones have led to increased potential of BL from limited access 'CALL' to a more promising 'MALL'. Kim et al., (2014) found that wikis, blogs and forums all had positive effects on SLA. Jin (2014) determined that reviewing and previewing lessons online led to improvements in writing, reading, comprehension, speaking and vocabulary. Stockwell et al., (2013) recommended simple content in manageable chunks to ensure scaffolding amongst members. Yoon (2014) concluded that online interaction appears to override the time consuming aspect which is linked to social constructivism. The advantages range from cheaper, faster and more available Wi-Fi access to unlimited functionality (Stockwell et al., 2013). However, according to Chu (2011), MALL research is still in its infancy. Devices are owned for social purposes (Ushioda, 2013). The small screen limits tasks to simple tasks and alarms can be distracting to students. These and other shortcomings are surmountable with adequate training, and facilitation. The key is to embrace the creative component without negative technical or affective issues that will demotivate participation (Sun and Chang, 2012).

Interaction is essential to learn language and more likely within specific communities (Efimova and de Moor, 2005). Trajemberg and Yiakoumetti (2011) asserted that less proficient learners benefit from more advanced. Constructivism emphasizes cognitive development of learners being influenced by society and culture (Aydin, 2014; Driscoll, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding is essential for classmates and teachers to develop knowledge and negotiate meaning, while saving face online which is advantageous for socially inept students. Ward (2004) stated that the purpose of blog-assisted-language-learning (BALL) is for the collective group. ZPD is optimized when people cooperate in a specific environment (Kim & Yoon, 2014). EFL administrators and teachers must keep up with this phenomenon to provide efficient pedagogy in BL courses.

According to Guttler (2011), a weblog is a type of website arranged in chronological order. Aydin (2014) claimed weblogs are normally based on particular topics whereby members share and reflect on ideas. Noytim (2010) concluded writing on a weblog is more motivating than paper-based writing and designed for an audience and diverse community (Ward, 2004). Weblogs offer accessible, asynchronous contexts, anytime, anywhere. However, factors such as limited Internet access, small screen size and other technical difficulties can affect participation (Kwon, 2013; Wu et al., 2011). Weblogs can be utilized while students were commuting, but not often due to inconvenience and distraction (Chu, 2011). Moreover, annoyances such as excessive scrolling, headaches (Kim et al., 2014) and sore eyes (Noytim, 2010) reduce participation. Improper netiquette also has disastrous impacts on group moral (Ward, 2004) as well as concerns of plagiarism and cheating (Pop, 2010; Ward 2004). Students tend to stop blogging at the end of the course (Domalewska, 2014) partially due to external motivation to obtain a higher grade (Kerawalla et al., 2007). The key is to balance 'challenge' and 'fun' to maximize productivity (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2012).

Weblogs provide great potential for extended learning opportunities for SBLL (Jin, 2014). The prices of mobile devices and applications have dropped (Lee & Son, 2012; Vinu et al., 2011). Before posting, students scroll through others' posts developing skimming and scanning skills (Ward, 2004). Bloggers plan and reflect on their own entries to produce complex sentences (Noytim, 2010; Rehamany, 2013). According to Kim and Yoon (2014), SBLL via Kakao Talk and Mocafe led to increased quality and quantity of English language skills and confidence. Furthermore, reading classmates' posts reduce negative feeling associated with language learning (Guttler, 2011) and increase students' responsibility (Larsen, 2012). On the contrary, Lenhart (2012) believed that these devices are not intended for language learning (Guttler, 2011). Jeong (2007) claimed it is difficult to measure improvements in a 4-month semester while Ward (2004) observed the writing on blogs is sloppy compared to paper-based writing. Jin added that smartphones are more effective for low/medium level learners, not advanced. Nevertheless, Pop (2010) asserted that new technologies are crucial for life-long SLA.

Positive perceptions of blogging and MALL are high due to smartphone fever (Aydin, 2014; Kwon, 2013); mainly due to just one click and less effort than other tools (Jin, 2014). Long-term changes are best predicted by enjoyment (Wu et al. 2011). This leads to reduced user anxiety increasing the desire to engage (Wu et al. 2011). According to Guttler (2011), free Wi-Fi accessibility, multi-modality, portability and attractiveness led to increased student satisfaction. Students also place high importance on choice and flexibility to optimize motivation (Ushioda, 2013). Lawrence (2015) noticed that communication between students and teacher received the highest receptiveness. Research has also shown high perceptions in the belief in the educational value of weblogging (Lee and Sun, 2012). Unfortunately, Cha (2012) claimed that students perceive in-class tasks to be less work than online tasks. Furthermore, students were easily distracted by the Internet and technical problems (Rahamany, 2013). Moreover, Kim and Yoon

(2014) noticed that students had difficulty locating unknown words using SBBL tools. It is crucial to understand the existing perceptions of weblogging for successful implementation into a BL course.

The facilitator plays a huge role in the effectiveness of a weblog and is responsible for providing tutorials and a safe zone. This includes facilitator training and familiarization with MALL applications. Noytim (2010) claimed it is a disservice when the facilitator does not participate. Yang (2009) felt teachers should be vulnerable and active in the beginning to set the tone. Arena (2008) recommended facilitators keep interest alive by inquiring, dialoguing and commenting when participants are struggling. When the students learn how to blog, the teacher could reduce participation and become the mediator and monitor (Kwon, 2013; Yoon, 2014). Unfortunately, Wu et al., (2011) believes teachers lag behind the evolution of SNS technology and Larson (2012) feels teachers' practice has minimal influence on students' perceptions of the BL environment. However, most research highlights the importance of the facilitator.

Kerawalla et al. (2007) claimed the effectiveness of the blog depends on students discovering the benefits themselves. Guttler (2011) suggested that weblogs be utilized for distributing class information. Efimova (2005) observed they pick up customs from each other. And Miyazoe (2012) believes they quickly form group norms. Ward (2004) noticed students submitting opinions and advice without pressure. Rahamany (2013) noticed competitive behavior in how students recommend new phrases. However negative attributes were discovered. In a study by Lin et al. (2013), participants approved of BALL principles, but irregularly employed them. According to Arena (2008) and Ushioda (2013), students display superficial participation for higher grades. Consequently, Lin et al. (2013) noticed that students manipulated the system by contributing the bare minimum. Also, according to Sadeq (2015), students felt a burden to post daily which Forster (2006) believed hindered the ability to track discussion after posting. It

seems that blogging sessions are optimal when the majority of the class or designated groups can interact at the same time.

III. Methodology

1. Research Questions

RQ1: How did Korean university students perceive weblogging throughout a blended learning EFL course?

RQ2: Were the students' perceptions different according to the background demographics of the participants?

RQ3: What forms of online behavior were observed on the weblog throughout the semester?

2. Context and Participants

This research was conducted at a university located in the southern part of Gyeonggi Province, South Korea during the fall semester of 2015. 23 students (15 females and 8 males) enrolled in 2 English conversation elective classes. Each class met once a week for a 2-hour class. The majority of the students had completed 6 credit hours of first-year university English: ESL Listening and Speaking and all started studying English in elementary. Students passed a written and oral placement test conducted by the researcher to enroll in the course. The researcher was a 40 year-old Canadian male native English speaker who had taught EFL in South Korea for 14 years. He had completed his graduate TESOL course requirements at the time of the study, and been in charge of the OPic program at the university for 5 years.

The goal of OPic is to familiarize students with the test, guide them through the OPic background survey and anticipate questions. Students were encouraged to work in groups and collaborate with each other in class and online. The blogging questions were taken directly from the course textbook which followed a week-by-week curriculum. The students were also

given oral midterms and final interviews to assess their progress.

The application chosen for this course was BAND. It was founded in March, 2013 by Camp Mobile which was a former affiliate of Naver Corp. It is a social networking tool for private group communication which cannot be searched by outside parties if the group sets the privacy settings accordingly. Beyond blog threading, BAND offers functions such as photo albums and sharing links and videos. It also has extensive storage capacity and user-friendly importing and exporting functionality. Above all, it is a common application in Korea used for group purposes making it a feasible SNS option for educational purposes in EFL.

The researcher invited students to BAND via emails accessible on the university portal. The BL course was carefully explained in the textbook and in a tutorial the first day which covered how to utilize the functions of BAND. There were 3 online sessions on BAND; the first to preview basic concepts of the next class and 2 review sessions for more difficult subject matter following the class. All students had Wi-Fi at home and were able to join the discussion between 7-10pm on Tuesday and Thursday nights and Saturday between 12-5pm. The purpose was to maximize interaction online to optimize class time for collaboration. Facilitative strategies to encourage participation were implemented such as teacher involvement, humor and constructive feedback. Pre-determined, open-ended questions were posted in week 2 for immediate participation. Students were asked to utilize all BAND functions for their contributions and participation was 15% of the course grade.

3. Data Collection Procedures

The researcher constructed a 13-question background survey for demographics regarding gender, age, university major, English experience, smartphone usage and weblogging. The final 3 open-ended questions inquired about general likes/dislikes about blogging and using smartphone for SLA. A 2-page pre/post-perception questionnaire was developed to obtain

quantitative data on weblog perceptions at the onset and conclusion of the course. The questionnaire was modified based on pre-existing surveys to suit the local context and purpose of this research. The 24 questions were divided into 5 sub-categories: Enjoyment, motivation, confidence, belief and comfort; each written in comprehensive English before translated into Korean by an advanced Korean student from the pilot study the previous semester. The questionnaire was tested on 25 students prior to this study. Based on the Cronbach Alpha reliability test and received an alpha of 0.881, appropriate for the current study. To compose relevant and authentic semi-structured interview questions, weblog data was exported from BAND, organized and analyzed on a word processor. During midterm examinations, the data was analyzed to develop codes which could be narrowed down into online behavioral themes. Participants' blogging frequency was recorded each week to observe their regularity. However, frequency was insufficient in measuring performance on BAND. Therefore, further exploration into the online behavior of the participants was required. Semi-structured interview were carefully designed and verified by a quantitative expert to reduce bias or leading questions. 4 candidates were chosen based on pre-midterm participation frequencies and pre-questionnaire perception averages at the onset of the course. Profiles were created and analyzed for each participant as a tool to prepare follow-up questions. Interviewees were briefed on the length and purpose of the interview and informed it was to be recorded, transcribed and analyzed. They also agreed to a follow-up interview at the end of the semester. All 4 candidates signed the disclaimer presented prior to the interviews. The second semi-structure interviews were conducted after final exams in week 16.

4. Data Analysis

1) Pre/post questionnaire

A mixed-methods research approach was needed due to the number of participants (23). The questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively with the assistance of a statistician; a colleague of the researcher. The questionnaire responses and background data were transferred onto a spreadsheet to await statistical analysis. The statistical program used was SPSS 22, specifically *t*-test and one-way ANOVA at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The sub-categories and question numbers were: Enjoyment (Q: 1-5), Motivation (Q: 6-10), Confidence (Q: 11-14), Belief (Q: 15-19) & Comfort (Q: 20-24). The demographic data was statistically treated for significance with the questionnaire data. The open-ended questions (Q. 11-13) on the background survey were analyzed qualitatively. The responses from week 2 and 14 were crunched together, reorganized based on the respected categories. Data from each participant was inserted into a large table and highlighted in colors for first cycle In-vivo coding. The themes generated from the 3 open-ended questions were eventually combined with themes gathered from the semi-structured interviews.

2) Weblog

To analyze the various forms of online behavior observed on the weblogs, the BAND weblog threads from both OPic classes were exported onto a word processor for analysis prior to the midterm. Upon initial analysis, several categories were uncovered: Answering the questions, greetings, offering opinions, agreement, acknowledgement, inquiry, follow-up, explanation, the use of humor and emoticons represented the major reoccurring categories. Posting pictures, giving recommendations and showing excitement were a few others. Thereafter, a more thorough analysis was conducted on the data to identify, color code and generate themes within each posting. To ensure validity, the coding process was shown to 2

qualitative research experts who were colleagues of the researcher. They reviewed the themes and verified the coding rationale. Following the midterm, a second discussion thread commenced and this data was exported at the end of the semester for further analysis. A thorough analysis was conducted on the lengthy weblog threads to color code and quantify the frequencies of the pre-selected online behavior categories. This data was analyzed to uncover reoccurring participant behavior that could assist in supporting the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

3) Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview transcripts were color-coded using the same color coding scheme and In-vivo coding procedure as the open-ended questions. The researcher took direct codes from the interview transcripts, condensed them into phrases and inserted them in the right-hand column of the transcriptions. The codes were color-highlighted based on the categories: Enjoyment, motivation, confidence, belief and comfort. After the first cycle the 'in-vivo' codes were color-highlighted for the open-ended and semi-structured interview transcriptions and separated into negative and positive perceptions and inserted into the appropriate columns on a large white poster to enable reorganization. The purpose of the second cycle coding was to rearrange and crunch all the qualitative data into more concise categories. This lengthy process seemed necessary due to the lack of experience of the researcher. In order to eliminate any bias, these codes were triangulated with the means of the pre-post perception questionnaire as well as direct quotes from the semi-structure interviewees and citations from previous research studies. The coding process was shown to a qualitative research expert and deemed to be satisfactory. Next, the original transcriptions were analyzed again to locate significant quotes from the students to further validate the qualitative analysis. The goal was to generate 5-7 significant themes.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Quantitative Perceptions of weblogging

Perception on being enjoyable" was almost the same between the pre-usage (n=23, m =5.03, s.d. = 0.63) and the post-usage (n = 23, m = 4.99, s.d. = 0.63) of a weblog in a BL university OPIc classroom at .05 level of significance. Upon further analyses of the 'enjoyable' perception means for questions 1-5, it was clear that the post perceptions for all 5 enjoyable questions didn't deviate significantly. In fact, questions 2 & 5 had the same perceptions in the pre/post questionnaire. The post rating for question 4: 'Enjoy discussing social issues,' was the lowest in the category for both pre and post and dropped by 0.13 points on the post-perception questionnaire. Reasons for this could be a lack of experience with weblogging or usage of BAND. It also pointed out that students were unwilling to discuss social issues that were irrelevant to their own lives and/or difficult to discuss online or in English. Based on question 1, students' perception of enjoyable interaction dropped by 0.08 points, indicating that the students thought the weblog was slightly more enjoyable prior to the course. Regardless, the slight drop in the enjoyable perception is statistically insignificant. Compared to other categories, students had high average perceptions in the category of enjoyment.

[Table 1] Descriptive statistics on category: Enjoyment (n=23)

Category	Question	Pre		Post	
		m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Enjoyment	Q1	5.04	0.82	4.96	0.77
	Q2	5.04	0.82	5.04	0.64
	Q3	5.13	0.76	5.17	0.72
	Q4	4.74	1.01	4.61	0.94
	Q5	5.17	0.65	5.17	0.89

Perception on motivation' rose slightly from the pre-usage (n=23, m = 5.00, s.d. = 0.73) to the post-usage (n=23, m = 5.02, s.d. = 0.51) of a weblog thus indicating no significant difference in this variable. Question 9: 'Motivation to interact with teacher' actually increased slightly from 5.43 to 5.48, but still represented a much higher perception than question 8: 'Motivation to interact with classmates' which increased from 4.65 to 4.63 pre to post. Reasons for this were most likely due to external motivation to receive a higher grade and the fact that the facilitator always read and responded to the posts. The lowest results in the motivation category were from question 10: 'Motivated to join new networks online'. Perceptions for this question dropped from 4.57 to 4.35 pre to post. This implied that students were less motivated to join new groups than was originally anticipated. Reasons for this could be the notion that students use SNS for social and private purposes and are less motivated to join networks for educational purposes.

[Table 2] Descriptive statistics on category: Motivation (n=23)

Category	Question	Pre		Post	
		m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Motivation	Q6	4.96	0.88	5.13	0.97
	Q7	5.39	0.72	5.35	0.71
	Q8	4.65	0.93	4.83	0.78
	Q9	5.43	0.79	5.48	0.59
	Q10	4.57	1.20	4.35	1.07

Perception on confidence' were quite similar between the pre-usage (n=23, m = 4.52, s.d. = 0.83) and post-usage (n=23, m = 4.63, s.d. = 0.89) of a weblog hence, no significant difference exists in this variable. Based on questions 11-14, a few key observations need to be explained. Overall the pre-perception average for confidence was the lowest amongst all 5 categories (4.52). Participants indicated the highest confidence on question 14 regarding 'confidence in using the various functions on a smartphone' for blogging. Even though the mean for this question dropped from 5.04 to 4.91 it still remained the highest perceived question within the confidence category. The second observation was that students displayed the lowest confidence in their ability to contribute to the weblog which is most likely attributed to their lack of experience using a class weblog as well as their unfamiliarity with BAND. Finally, it should be noted that question 13, 'confidence discussing various topics with classmates' was the question that increased the most from pre to post (4.39 to 4.70). I attributed this to the students' confidence to interact with their peers on a variety of topics throughout the course.

[Table 3] Descriptive statistics on category: Confidence (n=23)

Category	Question	Pre		Post	
		m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Confidence	Q11	4.35	1.07	4.35	0.94
	Q12	4.30	1.33	4.83	1.16
	Q13	4.39	0.99	4.70	1.11
	Q14	5.04	0.71	4.91	0.90

The perceptions on 'belief' were practically the same between the pre-usage (n = 23, m = 4.85, s.d. = 0.61) and post-usage (n = 23, m = 4.65, s.d. = 0.61) of a weblog thus indicating there was no significant difference in this variable. Upon further analysis of the belief perception, a few findings were noteworthy. Question 17, 'having enough time to weblog outside of class,' represented the largest drop in perception (pre: 4.91 to post: 3.96) which was a drop of 0.95. This question was the main contributor for the overall drop of 0.20 in the entire belief category. This implied that students originally believed they had enough time to blog, but as the semester progressed, they had a change of heart. Furthermore, question 15, 'a belief in using smartphones for educational purposes,' represented the highest overall mean perceptions in the whole questionnaire (pre: 5.39 and post: 5.57). It also emphasized student awareness on the potential of smartphones. Finally, question 19, which involved a belief in one's English level, produced the lowest perceptions in the belief category (pre: 3.61 & post: 3.83). Perhaps, the students still believed their English levels were slightly inadequate to perform complicated tasks or have complex interaction on the weblog.

[Table 4] Descriptive statistics on category: Belief (n=23)

Category	Question	Pre		Post	
		m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Belief	Q15	5.39	0.84	5.57	0.73
	Q16	5.22	0.67	5.09	0.85
	Q17	4.91	0.90	3.96	1.26
	Q18	5.13	0.69	4.83	0.94
	Q19	3.61	1.31	3.83	1.23

Perception means on 'comfort' were virtually the same between the pre-usage (n = 23, m = 4.58, s.d. = 0.73) and the post-usage (n =23, m = 4.53, s.d. = 0.70) of a weblog hence, no significant difference in this variable. Question 23, 'comfort receiving feedback from the teacher,' received the highest mean perception in this category in both pre and post questionnaires (5.35 & 5.17 respectively). Participants were more comfortable receiving feedback from the teacher, compared to the lower perception means in question 18, which involved a 'belief in peer feedback'. Question 20, which involved being familiar with smartphones for educational purposes, received the lowest pre and post perception means (3.96 & 3.74) which was not a surprise based on the background demographics which indicated that most of the students had little experience with weblogging. Overall, the post means for the belief category were the lowest at 4.53.

[Table 5] Descriptive statistics on category: Comfort (*n*=23)

Category	Question	Pre		Post	
		m	s.d.	m	s.d.
Comfort	Q20	3.96	1.26	3.74	1.05
	Q21	4.48	0.90	4.39	1.03
	Q22	4.61	0.89	4.65	1.07
	Q23	5.35	0.78	5.17	0.83
	Q24	4.52	1.31	4.70	0.93

Perceptions according to demographics

In terms of the students' perception during the pre-usage, females had a slightly higher mean average during the pre-usage than males, but not statistically significant. There was a significant difference between males and females during post-usage of the weblog. Male perception of weblogging increased slightly, while the female average dropped significantly. This implies that males maintained a more positive experience weblogging.

[Table 6] Perceptions based on gender (*n*=23)

Demographic	Category	Number	Pre		Post		
			m	s.d.	m	s.d.	p
Gender	Male	8	4.96	0.53	5.07	0.44	0.05
	Female	15	5.07	0.63	4.62	0.52	0.05

In terms of 'age', there was no significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level for the three

conditions. The mean score for 18 -20 years old ($m = 5.21$, $s.d. = 0.24$) was not significantly different from 21 – 23 ($m = 4.88$, $s.d. = 0.49$) and 24 and above ($m = 4.72$, $s.d. = 0.68$). Taken together, these results suggest that age did not affect perceptions on the weblog during the semester.

As for 'year of study', there were no significant or notable differences amongst the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students in terms of pre and post usage, suggesting that 'year of study had no effect on weblogging.

Regarding 'years studying English', there was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions: The mean scores for 0 – 5 years ($m = 4.56$, $s.d. = 0.28$) was not significantly different from 6 – 8 years ($m = 5.13$, $s.d. = 0.47$) and 9 years or more ($m = 4.70$, $s.d. = 0.68$). These results suggest that number of years studying English did not affect their perceptions in a weblog during pre and post-usage.

In terms of 'using smartphone for educational purposes' ($n = 14$, $m = 4.97$, $s.d. = 0.53$) and 'not using smartphone in educational purposes' ($n = 9$, $m = 4.72$, $s.d. = 0.63$), those students who were using smartphone for educational purposes had a higher mean average those who did not, especially prior to the course, but there was no statistical difference at the $p < .05$ level for both pre and post usage of the weblog.

[Table 7] Perceptions on using smart phone for education (n=23)

Demographic	Category	Number	Pre		Post		p
			m	s.d.	m	s.d.	
Using Smartphones	Yes	14	4.97	0.53	4.84	0.55	0.05
educational purposes	No	9	4.72	0.63	4.72	0.51	0.05

As for 'experience weblogging' (n = 4, m = 4.64, SD = 0.21) versus 'no experience' (n= 19, m = 4.84, SD = 0.64) at the $p < .05$ level of significance, no statistical difference existed. However, those students who had experience weblogging tended to have higher perceptions, especially during the pre-usage.

Regarding the pre usage, no statistical difference existed between the students with 'experience using BAND' (n = 14, m = 4.92, s.d. = 0.56) compared to those who had 'no experience' using BAND (n = 9, m = 4.63, s.d. = 0.64) at the .05 level of significance. In terms of post usage, no statistical difference existed between the students with 'experience using BAND' (n = 14, m = 4.97, s.d. = 0.44) compared to those without (n = 9, m = 4.53, s.d. = 0.56). On average, those with experience had a higher mean average in both pre and post usage of the weblog.

[Table 8 Perceptions based on using BAND (*n*=23)]

Demographic	Category	Number	Pre		Post		p
			m	s.d.	m	s.d.	
BAND experience	Yes	14	4.92	0.56	4.97	0.44	0.05
	No	9	4.63	0.64	4.53	0.56	0.05

In terms of the 'number of hours spent texting per day' at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions: 0 – 2 hours ($m = 4.55$, $s.d. = 0.19$) compared to 2 –3 hours ($m = 4.61$, $s.d. = 0.63$) and 3 hours or more ($m = 5.11$, $s.d. = 0.69$), there was no significant effect in terms of students' perception during the pre-usage. In terms of the post usage, there was also no statistical significance for 0 – 2 hours ($m = 4.81$, $s.d. = 0.46$) compared to 2 –3 hours ($m = 4.65$, $s.d. = 0.68$) and 3 hours or more ($m = 4.85$, $s.d. = 0.54$). These results suggest that the 'time spent texting' did not affect their perceptions on a weblog. However, it's worth noting that the perceptions went up for students who texted less than 2 hours a day and went down for the students who texted more than 3 hours a day.

2. Qualitative perceptions of weblogging

A total of 7 themes were identified from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. They are explained in order of total number of codes in each category within each theme. Themes 1-3 are positive perceptions of a weblog, while themes 4-7 are negative. Theme 1 was titled: Convenient & interesting interaction. A total of 129 codes related to enjoyable, cheaper, simple and useful perceptions of common issues,

opinions and interests. Many other students responded positively due to enjoyment, humor, curiosity and the ease of becoming familiar and finding common ground with classmates.

[Excerpt 1] "At first, I was amazed by the weblog in this course. I never used a weblog like that before. I knew weblogs were used when someone introduced a hotspot or place, so I was so amazed." (Ally, Oct., 2015)

Theme 2 was labeled: 'Beliefs in online technology to support second SLA. There were 85 codes within theme 2. The most reoccurring themes were efficient communication and the benefits of responding to improve interactive abilities and practical English skills. Resources like online dictionaries and other language applications were believed to be time and cost-effective. Downloading movies and music, reading online newspapers, listening to podcasts were also perceived to enhance SLA.

[Excerpt 2] "I have to search unknown words or even idioms, so, I can use online tools to learn English. I usually use my smartphone as an English teacher and supporter." (Cole, Oct. 2015)

Theme 3 was titled: Benefits of weblog in BL class and accounted for 78 codes. Students understood the value of a weblog to support the curriculum, prepare for exams and submit homework. Finally, the weblog encouraged repetition and utilizing supplementary material. It allowed shy and less fluent students more time to respond and benefit from interacting with advanced students.

[Excerpt 3] "A weblog is a good tool for enhancing the teaching/learning process because it generates frequently asked questions and supports class discussion" (Ally, Oct., 2015)

Theme 4 was labeled: Participation inhibitors and represented 59 codes. Students had part-time jobs, were attending academies and were seeking full-time jobs. Many felt annoyed by excess work and perceived the weblog as too overwhelming and unnatural at times. Large group online conversations were not ideal for the introverts and those who didn't check their phone frequently

[Excerpt 4] 'I'm a senior so I have to prepare resumes and for job interviews. Weblog is studying, not talking with others. So, I guess, I have some pressure about that. (Cole, Oct., 2015)

Theme 5 was titled: Not conducive for sustained interaction and included 49 codes. Several students struggled to become familiar with the weblog within a short period. There were 17 accounts related to the difficulty of getting acquainted under these circumstances. There were also 17 reports regarding the inability to use body language. A few students claimed it was difficult to disagree or deviate from the current topic. Overall, it seemed evident that these factors diminished the effectiveness of the weblog.

[Excerpt 5] 'Face-to-face has body language, eye contact but weblog is just me alone and when I started weblog writing, it was a little bit of a burden and not natural for me' (Ally, Dec. 2015)

Theme 6 was labeled: Lack of intrinsic motivation to learn and consisted of 35 codes. 15 students confessed to posting short messages to gain more participation points. There were no mandatory prompts to reply, post extra resources or links, therefore, 9 students admitted to not contributing on certain occasions. 7 students confessed that the notification settings were

demotivating. Overall, students lacked intrinsic motivation to contribute extra on the weblog when they didn't feel they were being rewarded.

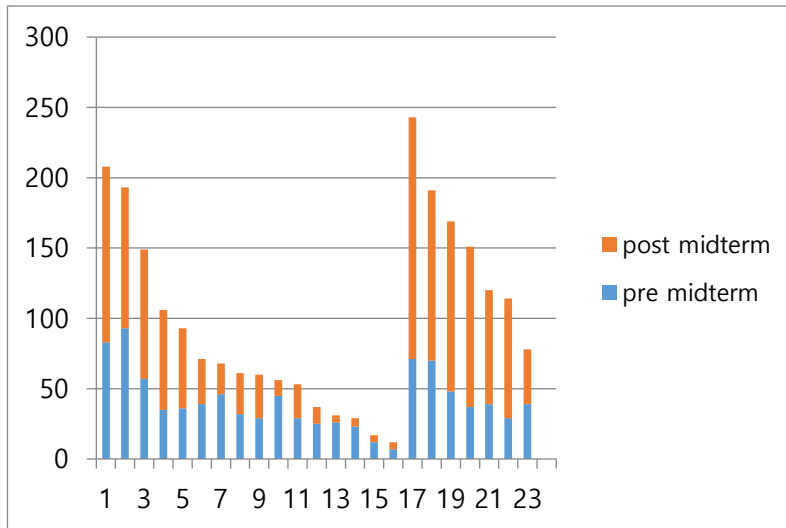
[Excerpt 6] "BAND is part of the grade. That's why I posted a lot; for my good grade." (Ellie, Dec., 2015)

The 7th theme was titled: 'Ethical concerns' and had 34 codes. OPIc involves answering personal questions in private. However, the purpose of the weblog was to share ideas on how to answer OPIc questions. There were 15 reports of topics being too personal for sharing. A few students were defensive and withdrew from large group conversations. Also, some felt ostracized when their posts were ignored. On occasion, poor online netiquette, the spreading of rumors and inappropriate humor, were hurtful to sensitive students. Overall, using a weblog to support a conversation course that deals with personal information was hindered by ethical concerns.

[Excerpt 7a] "Some topics were an invasion of privacy, personal and there was teasing." (Ally, Oct. 2015)

3. Online behavior

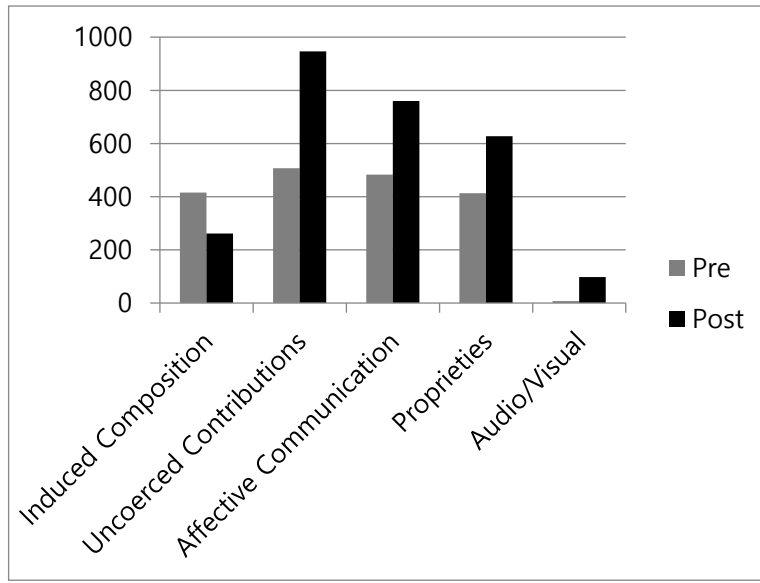
The participation frequency of all 23 students was calculated during the semester. One credit was given for each post, regardless of quality or quantity. The results of the students in the first class are labeled 1-16 and second class, 17-23. The lower section of the bar represents weeks 3 to week 7 and the upper section, weeks 9 to week 13. Each section represented exactly 5 weeks of blogging activity.



[Figure #1] Blogging Frequencies pre/post midterm

It was evident from the graph that students 1-5 in the first class of 17, participated much more than the rest, and actually increased their frequency in the second half. Students 13-16 hardly participated in the first half of the semester and even less in the second half. In terms of the second class of 7 students, participation amongst the class was much more frequent and consistent. The frequency of all 7 members increased in the second half implying that blogging could be more effective in smaller groups since students were able to interact with each participant more in class and quickly became familiar with each other online.

This first category of online behavior was: Induced composition. As the semester progressed, the level of difficulty and rising expectations of the students became evident. Only direct responses to the original question were counted. Prior to the midterm, 415 cases of induced composition were observed. Post-midterm, there was a 63% drop in 'induced composition, seemingly due to the increase in other voluntary forms of online behavior. Secondly, many students resigned from posting direct answers.



[Figure 6] Online behavior themes

Uncoerced contributions included 5 subcategories. The first was: 'Opinions'. Pre-midterm, students posted opinions 150 times compared to 297 following. As students became more acquainted, they were more willing to express opinions. The next subcategory was: 'Follow-up' comments. This included posting additional information and increased from 112 posts pre-midterm to 250 post-midterm. The third subcategory was: 'Explanations', to offer more detail. These increased from 61 to 188 post-midterm. The fourth subcategory was: Questions. It represented students' inquiries regarding other posts. The number of questions decreased from 152 pre-midterm to 139 post midterm, due to less course-related questions as the semester progressed. The final subcategory was: Suggestions. Students offered consultation and advice based on their experiences. This seemed to build relationships and trust within the community. There were 32 cases of 'suggestions' pre-midterm, compared to 72 cases afterward.

Affective communication included 4 sub-categories: Emoticons, humor, excitement and encouragement. Posting simple emoticons is a convenient and common part of texting. 216 emoticons were posted pre-midterm and 272 following the midterm. The second sub-category was: Humor like 'ha ha,' simple jokes, exaggeration and Korean expressions. There were 165 cases of humor pre-midterm and 318, post mid-term. It appeared students became more comfortable joking, instead of just acknowledging. The third subcategory was: Excitement which increased from 79 to 151. The use of exclamation marks and capital letters indicated excitement. Expressions like, 'WOW' and 'I can't wait' were common examples. The final sub-category was: 'Encouragement' which slipped slightly from 23 to 19, pre to post midterm. Total affective communication posts increased by 57%, pre to post midterm.

Proprieties are acceptable manners in communication. The majority were 'acknowledgment' which increased from 144 pre-midterm to 334; comments such as: 'I see', 'Oh', 'Aha' to show they read the post. This behavior gradually became status quo on the blog. The second was: Agreement, which increased from 104 to 158. Surprisingly, there were no traces of disagreement. The third propriety was: Greetings, which dropped from 129 to 87. Saying 'hello' and 'good night' were less essential as the term went on. The fourth one was: Apology, such as saying sorry for posting late or missing class. The number of apologizes increased from 36 to 48, indicating the polite nature of Korean culture when deviating from the norm. Students posted 413 total proprieties pre-midterm compared to 627 afterwards, a 52% increase.

Audio/visual contributions included posting pictures or voice clips. There were only 8 prior to the midterm. Afterwards, students posted audio or visual posts a total of 98 times. Even though the facilitator utilized the voice note function, there were zero voice note posts prior to the midterm and only 11 post-midterm. There were only 8 photos prior to the midterm

compared to 87 photos afterwards. Once a few students utilized these functions, similar behavior followed suit.

4. Discussion

Several important findings and assumptions were uncovered. Enjoyment perceptions remained quite high (pre: 5.03, post: 4.99) as participants reported preference for convenience, simplicity and fun. Relevant topics seemed to optimize participation on the weblog. These factors were supported by the highest occurring qualitative theme: Convenient & interesting interaction. Questions 6-10 on 'motivation' scored highest in all five categories. Students preferred small groups, or private conversations with the researcher. Extrinsic motivation affects participants' willingness to volunteer their leisure time. In the current study, there were 15 confessions of participation to obtain higher grades. Perceptions regarding 'belief in technology' to support SLA dipped 4.85 to 4.65, mainly due to a perceived lack of time to blog even though the belief of using smartphones for education rose from 5.39 to 5.57; the highest perception in the whole study. In the current study, peers did not correct each other, but realized the comparative levels and expectations of the blog. Aydin (2014) claimed that learners perceived gains in speaking proficiency while engaged in an EFL blog. Shy or lower proficient students actively participated on the weblog alongside more advanced learners. The researcher actively interacted until the participants were acquainted, at which time, gradually reduced his presence. Students need to discover the benefits themselves (Kerawalla et al. (2007). In the current study, frequency of posting was credited, not quality or quantity. The percentage of uncoerced behavior significantly increased while the number of induced composition decreased. Unfortunately, only one continuous thread was available per class, hindering students from keeping up with previous conversations. Moreover, it was assumed that simple texting would be

utilized while students were commuting. However, as Chu (2011) attested, this task was inconvenient and distracting. Lin et al. (2013) noticed that students contributed the bare minimum and often repeated other students' posts. Domalawska (2014) felt that poor reflection from the browsers can result in superficial, haphazard or irrelevant contributions, while other comments do not generate discussion. All of the positive and negative attributes need to be optimized to successfully implement a weblog into a BL course.

V. Conclusion

1. Conclusions

Technological devices like smartphones enable SLA at a quicker and more efficient rate. Weblogs allow EFL students to interact more ubiquitously, economically and conveniently. Based on social constructivist theory, students can maximize the ZPD as they interact, create knowledge and reflect on their English skills. Successful assimilation of MALL and SBL accelerates SLA however many factors need to be considered to assure that a weblog is effective. An experienced facilitator needs to set up the BL course and procedures while creating tasks that are relevant, useful, easy and fun for students to volunteer their time. A belief in the educational value of technology is paramount for students to utilize the theories of BALL. A balance of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is also required. Minimizing demotivating factors like annoying notifications and poor netiquette is critical. If the blog simulates natural conversation, students would be more willing to participate. Past research does not sufficiently address specific blogging perceptions and various types of online behavior amongst Korean EFL students. Further research needs to be conducted in the area of BL in an EFL environment to explore students' online behavior and perceptions of weblogging.

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