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Impact of using blogs on summary writing skills of EFL university students



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Abstract

This study examines the impact of using blogs on developing students' summary writing skills and the perceptions of Saudi undergraduate EFL students on using blogs in developing their summary writing skills. The study participants comprised 20 female students, and the data were drawn from pre/post-tests and a questionnaire. The results revealed that blogs are an effective tool that positively impacts learners' summary writing skills. Moreover, most participants showed positive attitudes towards using blogs in EFL writing; they perceived blogging as a helpful tool that increases motivation and interest to learn, fosters autonomous learning and critical thinking, improves collaboration skills, and provides powerful feedback. Furthermore, the participants reported many benefits of this blogging project: improving learners' English language skills, facilitating collaboration among students, saving time, developing summary writing skills, and ease of use. However, some participants mentioned drawbacks such as the difficulty of using blogs and the lack of peer comments. Further, some found blogging to be time-consuming. Overall, the benefits of blogging outperformed the drawbacks, demonstrating that blogs are a beneficial and effective tool for EFL learning and teaching; they can improve student writing skills in general and summary writing skills in particular.

Keywords: blogs, writing, summaries, EFL

Introduction

Blogs (or weblogs) are one of the significant and common technological tools in language education, which may enrich English teaching and learning (Campbell, 2003; Ward, 2004; Pinkman,

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within this paper.

2005; Galien & Bowcher, 2010; Said et al., 2013; Reinhardt, 2019). Blogs are a form of Internet media and a kind of online journal. They are easily updated and published in cyberspace, allowing for comments and interactions by interested cyberspace users (Wu, 2005). Blogs can be a venue for learners to effectively enhance many writing skills including summary writing. Further, blogs can be a beneficial medium in teaching and learning English in terms of creating a motivational learning environment, developing autonomous learning, encouraging collaboration among students, and getting feedback from others (Wu, 2005; Noytim, 2010; Amir, Ismail, & Hussin, 2011; Chawinga, 2017; Bougia, 2018; Sulisty, Mukminatien, Cahyono, & Saukah, 2019). Furthermore, blogs can provide students of English as a foreign language (EFL) with opportunities to communicate in English beyond the classroom, with their peers and the cyberspace community (Wang, Wu, Chiu, & Wu, 2011). Blogs also provide EFL learners with authentic learning experiences through real communication (Kitchakarn, 2012) in addition to enabling them to practice writing under less pressure (Nepomuceno, 2011). Eventually, as learners practice more writing, reading, and commenting on classmates' blog posts, they will be encouraged to communicate in the target language in real situations outside the classroom, which is the major aim of learning a language (Richards, 2006).

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the use of blogs in English writing. Many researchers found benefits of blogging in EFL writing classes (e.g., Aljumah, 2012; Grami, 2012; Kitchakarn, 2012; Layali, 2017; Alsubaie & Madini, 2018; Sulisty et al., 2019), while others identified drawbacks of using blogs in writing (e.g., Lin, 2013; Lin, Groom, & Lin, 2013). Therefore, this study provides further evidence of the effect of using blogs on EFL learners' summary writing skills, besides students' perspectives of blogging which contributes to more understanding of their benefits and drawbacks. In addition, no studies have been conducted in the Saudi context to examine EFL learners' perceptions of blogging on promoting summary writing ability that is a crucial skill to be mastered at university level (Kitchakarn, 2012). It is hoped that this research makes a valuable contribution to the field of learning and teaching EFL writing.

Literature Review

Studies on Using Blogs in Learning and Teaching Writing Skills

Blogs were not originally intended to be used in learning a language; however, they can serve as a highly beneficial tool for learning and teaching writing skills (Kavaliauskien, Anusien, & Mažeikien, 2006). Many primary studies investigating the use of blogs in EFL writing have mostly reported positive results. For example, Kitchakarn (2012) conducted a mixed-method study on 33 first-year undergraduates to investigate the impact of using blogs on EFL learners' summary writing skills and to explore their perceptions about using blogs in learning. Kitchakarn's (2012) study divided the study participants into six groups comprising five or six members. In each group, students created a blog using the free blogging platform, Blogger (www.blogger.com), and they collaborated to produce six summary writings over the course of 14 weeks. Before submitting their final summary paper to the instructor for grading, group members were required to summarise, edit, and revise via blogs. The results indicated that the participants favored the use of blogs in learning, and blogging helped the students develop their summary writing skills because of the authentic learning environment it offers. The participants' positive attitude toward using blogs in learning is probably due to the novelty of this tool and the sense of motivation and involvement they felt when creating blogs and managing the activities by themselves.

Similarly, Sulisty et al. (2019) reported on how blogging can enhance EFL learners' writing performance. In this study, the researchers employed a collaborative classroom action research conducted in one semester. The participants were 30 undergraduates majoring in English Education

at a university in Malang, Indonesia. The intervention of blog in an Advanced Essay Writing class was applied through seven steps: creating a class blog, giving text models, discussing a topic, asking learners to write a text and post it in the blog, giving feedback on participants' drafts and asking them to give comments on their peers' drafts, asking students to review their drafts before posting their final writings, and reading their classmates' final posts and giving comments. The data were gathered from an interview, questionnaire, and writing test. The findings showed that blogging helped in improving EFL learners' writing performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Students found that blogs encouraged them to be more active and independent in learning. They also clarified that blogs provided them with chances to collaborate with their peers by sharing and giving comments and motivated them to work harder before posting their essays since they have more audiences. Furthermore, a blog can provide EFL learners with flexible writing activities as it allows them to complete their tasks within and beyond their classroom.

Some studies have shed light on utilising blogs in Saudi EFL writing classes. For example, Aljumah (2012) focused on exploring the attitudes of Saudi undergraduates toward the integration of blogs in EFL writing as well as investigating the advantages and disadvantages of using blogs in learning a language. Aljumah's (2012) study participants comprised 35 male students majoring in English Language at the Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. For 14 weeks, students were asked to individually create their own blogs using Blogger, write a weekly post of 150 words, and provide comments on their classmates' blog posts. Data for this mixed-method study was collected using a questionnaire that was distributed to the learners at the end of the writing course to explore their perceptions. The results indicated that the participants favored using blogs in English writing. The findings also revealed that students perceived benefits of utilising blogs such as improving writing skills, and increased interest and motivation to use English owing to the interaction among students and the feedback provided by both teachers and classmates.

In the same vein, Grami (2012) examined EFL students' perceptions regarding collaborative writing, online peer feedback, and blogs as the main tool of communication. Participants comprised seven female Saudi EFL university students. Over a period of four weeks, each student was required to write four posts of 250 words about topics they are interested in, in addition to providing comments on their classmates' blog posts. Then, the researcher randomly selected and provided feedback on two posts for each participant, using a checklist. The results demonstrated positive attitudes toward blog writing and peer feedback. Furthermore, the learners reported that they liked providing and receiving peer feedback as well as collaborative writing through blogs. The study identified many benefits of blog-writing, such as providing a cheap and easy medium for using the target language outside the classroom, enhancing student-centred learning, and developing critical thinking skills.

Likewise, Layali (2017) investigated 10 male Saudi first-year students' perceptions about blogging and the advantages and limitations of using blogs in writing. The researcher applied a qualitative exploratory study design and employed three main tools for data collection: an interview, questionnaire and researcher's journal. Each week, the participants wrote an essay on their blogs about a topic of their choice and from their textbook. Students were free to collaborate with others to discuss words and ideas for their writing; however, each student wrote his or her own post. After eight weeks of blogging, the researcher interviewed the participants and conducted a survey. The findings showed that the participants had positive attitudes towards using blogs in writing classes, and they found it to be a beneficial tool in improving their writing skills. Moreover, the results identified many advantages of utilising blogs in EFL writing including enhancing interaction and collaboration among classmates outside the classroom, encouraging shy learners to express their views, motivating students to write, and decreasing the pressure on learners when writing. In summary, these findings support those observed in earlier studies; blogs are advantageous for

improving writing skills.

In a recent study that dealt with blogging in Saudi EFL writing courses, Alsubaie and Madini (2018) investigated the effectiveness of using blogs for improving EFL learners' writing, in particular the vocabulary usage. An experimental design research using a quantitative approach was adopted in this investigation. The data were gathered from 37 Saudi female preparatory year learners who were enrolled in a writing course in the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University. All participants were given a pre-test of a vocabulary scale test then they were divided into 19 students for the experimental group (EG) who were asked to visit the weblog weekly. Every week, the learners from the EG received an entry with materials including images, videos, and other interesting content related to the topics discussed in the class and they were required to post a short text of five lines using the new words. The other 18 students formed the control group (CG) that studied the course by the traditional teaching method of writing (i.e., pen and paper). By the end of the experiment that lasted for seven weeks, a post-test was given to both groups to measure their vocabulary understanding of meaning and usage in different sentences and contexts. The findings demonstrated that blogs can effectively improve EFL learners' writing skills, especially the use of vocabulary as it was evidenced in the development of the EG's vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the study reported that blogging can help in enhancing students' technology literacy, fostering EFL learning, and encouraging higher social engagement and interaction with peers.

Despite all the benefits and positive results demonstrated by these studies (e.g. Aljumah, 2012; Grami, 2012; Kitchakarn, 2012; Layali, 2017; Alsubaie & Madini, 2018; Sulistyio et al., 2019), some researchers reported a number of drawbacks. For example, Lin et al. (2013) explored the experiences of 25 Taiwanese ESL students in a writing course that used blogs by conducting a qualitative study. The participants comprised first-year students majoring in English Language at a university in Taiwan. In this project, the students had to publish 17 essays on their blogs over the course of 36 weeks and comment on their classmates' blog posts. By the end of the project, the researchers interviewed eight students. The interview data revealed contradicted the findings of previous studies; learners perceived using blogs in English writing as difficult and time-consuming. Further, students reported that they were worried and anxious about possible mean comments from their colleagues on their writing errors. The participants were enthusiastic about blogging in theory; however, in practice, they were not motivated to engage in blogging activities.

However, Lin et al. (2013) explained that these negative experiences are due to the participants' low-level English skills, which caused them to spend a long time to complete the blog tasks, deterring them from blogging or decreasing their motivation to learn writing. The researchers further provided some suggestions to avoid these drawbacks, including using blogs with advanced students who can write more in English; focusing more on fluency than accuracy; and encouraging friendly rapport among learners to decrease any possible cynical remarks on others' mistakes.

A similar study carried out by Lin (2013) investigated the impact of blogging on 50 undergraduate ESL students' writing skills in Taiwan. The experimental group wrote journals in blogs and provided feedback for others' posts whereas the control group wrote the same number of journal entries in the traditional format of writing and provided comments on others' printed works. The study applied a comparative experimental method, and used a questionnaire and pre/post-tests to assess participants' learning motivations and writing proficiency. The findings showed no significant difference between the two groups regarding writing performance. Moreover, the learning motivation of the control group outperformed that of the experimental group. The study concluded that using blogs to teach writing was less efficient than the traditional teaching method. The researcher did not provide any explanation for these negative results. However, Lin, Li, Hung, and Huang (2014) claimed that Lin's (2013) study used blogs as "a portal for managing class information and a bulletin board on which

student assignments and peer comments were required to be posted” (p. 429). They further clarified that Lin’s (2013) research utilised blogging as an alternative for the traditional classroom, which deprives learners of experiencing blogs as a free personal platform. This might have led the participants to publish their posts for the course rather than for themselves. Therefore, students might have been reluctant when blogging, rendering blogs less effective than the traditional pen-and-paper method.

In consideration of these positive and negative results, the study at hand provides further evidence in relation to the impact of blogging on EFL students’ summary writing skills, besides learners’ perceptions concerning using blogs in EFL writing, therefore, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of their benefits and drawbacks. In addition, the present study is driven by the lack of quantitative researches conducted on the Saudi context that examine precisely EFL learners’ perspectives of blogging for enhancing their writing skills, especially their summary writing abilities which is a crucial skill to be mastered at university level and a part of their academic success. Knowing students’ attitudes of utilising blogs in EFL writing is vital as their opinions may have important pedagogical implications that can help instructors to support their students make the most of blogs in their EFL writing class and avoid any adverse effects.

This research seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the impact of utilising blogs on students’ summary writing skills?
2. What are the perceptions of Saudi EFL undergraduates on the benefits and drawbacks of using blogs to develop their summary writing skills?

The current study attempts to advance the knowledge on how technology can enhance EFL learners’ writing skills and provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of utilising blogs for honing students’ EFL writing skills and digital literacy.

Methodology

This section presents the methodology used to answer the study questions. It also provides extensive information about the current research sample, instruments, procedures of data collection, and the methods of data Analysis.

Sample

The study sample comprised a class of 26 first-year female students enrolled in a writing course at the Department of English Language at the College of Science and Humanities in Jubail, at the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. They were all Saudi aged from 18 to 21 years old and they were native speakers of Arabic. Moreover, all of the students had experienced at least seven years of EFL instruction at school before going to college. The English level of the participants was intermediate. The assigned course book was *Q Skills for Success* that aimed to equip EFL learners with different writing skills including summary writing.

Research Instruments

This study used two primary resources to gather research data: a questionnaire and pre/post-tests. First, the researchers used a three-part questionnaire to investigate students’ views on the benefits and drawbacks of utilising blogs to improve their summary writing skills. The first part contained seven demographic questions. The second part dealt with participant attitudes towards using blogs in writing and included 16 statements with a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, uncertain,

disagree, and strongly disagree). The last part consisted of two open discussion questions to gain more detailed information on learners' opinions of the advantages and limitations of blogging in learning writing. The researchers extracted and modified the survey questionnaire from the studies of Kitchakarn (2012), Aljumah (2012), and Layali (2017). Furthermore, the questionnaire items were written in English as well as Arabic which is the native language of the participants, to prevent any misunderstanding and to help participants to accurately express their opinions.

In addition, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 16 students of the study sample to check its reliability and validity, and the researchers improved the questionnaire items based on the students' feedback to avoid misinterpretation. Later, the revised questionnaire was distributed to the participants after they finished blogging. The questionnaire was validated using the Pearson correlation coefficient, and its reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha.

Second, to examine the impact of blogging on EFL learners' summary writing skills, the pre-test and post-test were employed on the participants before and after conducting this project. These parallel tests required participants to read a text of approximately 300 words and write a summary of three to five sentences within 40-50 minutes for each test. The students' pre/post-tests were graded by the researchers in light of Wormeli's (2005) rubric to evaluate their summary writings.

The pre-test and post-test were submitted to a number of arbitrators for feedback. The arbitrators expressed their opinions about the clarity of the statements and their appropriateness to what they were designed for, and they made amendments and suggestions for betterment. Accordingly, the researchers applied the necessary changes to the final form.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out over five weeks. In the first week, the participants were introduced to blogs and were shown a sample blog to teach them how to create their own blog on the free blogging platform Blogger (www.blogger.com). This platform was selected due to its ease of use that requires minimal computer skills to establish a blog. Next, the students were randomly divided into seven groups, each comprising three or four members. The members' collaboration could help in scaffolding the weak students by the more proficient ones which would make writing via blogs more interesting and easier for them. Each group created their own blog for collaboration, and members were responsible for publishing posts and maintaining their blogs to promote a sense of ownership. Then, the researcher explained several features of blogs and allowed students to get acquainted with the features such as publishing a post and adding comments to others' blog posts. The list of blog addresses of each group was distributed so that their colleagues could read and comment on their blog entries. At the end of the introductory session, a pre-test was given to the participants by the course instructor to gauge their summary writing skills level.

The blogging project was applied as an out-of-class activity that aimed at motivating participants to take advantage of authentic environments outside their classroom to practice writing and communicating with others besides getting feedback from not only their peers and teachers but also from any Internet readers. After learners being taught summarisation in the second week, they were assigned to read four texts from their course book and post four summary paragraphs of about 3-5 sentences per week. The instructor gradually increased the length of the reading passages and the length requirement for summary paragraphs for each task. The working process began when a student wrote her summary and posted it on her group's blog. After that, the other members revised and corrected the summary post and provided reasons for their revisions. All members could post suggestions for enhancing the summaries. In addition, they were encouraged to provide feedback on other groups' posts. Group members exchanged roles in each summary task. The instructor provided

comments, feedback, and suggestions on participants' blogs to improve their summaries. The instructor also graded two summary posts to give students a chance to write in a relaxed environment, and to direct their attention to learning and benefiting from blogging rather than focusing only on grades. In the final week, the instructor distributed a questionnaire and post-test to the students after finishing the blogging project. The researchers analysed their views on blogging and examined the impact of the blog project on their summary writing skills.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), program edition 21, was used to analyse the data. The questionnaire and pre/post-test data were quantitatively analysed using descriptive statistics as well as the Wilcoxon test. The researchers analysed the questionnaire (closed questions) responses through descriptive statistics to elicit percentages and frequency analysis, and they tabulated and charted the findings. They applied content analysis for the narrative data gathered from the open-ended questions to find common views and themes which were synthesised into categories with percentages in table format. In addition, the summary writing tests were checked by the researchers using the same criteria. Then, to examine the effect of blogging and to find any statistical significant difference in the participants' summary writing performance after blogging, Wilcoxon test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test.

Results

The Impact of Using Blogs on Students' Summary Writing Skills

The researchers used a Wilcoxon test to find out the effects of blogging on the participants' summary writing skills, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations of the pre- and post-test for the impact of using blogs on students' summary writing skills

	Standard deviation	Mean	N
Pre	0.68	1.98	20
Post	0.78	2.95	20

Table 2. Results of the Wilcoxon test concerning the differences between the mean scores of the pre- and post-test

Eta Squared	P value	Z value	Sum of ranks	Mean ranks	N	
			0.0	0.0	0	Negative ranks
			153.0	9.0	17	Positive ranks
0.37	0.001	3.659			3	Ties
					20	Total

The results shown in Tables 1 and 2 indicate statistically significant differences between the

respondents' mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in favor of the post-test, with an average score of 2.95 for the post-test and 1.98 for the pre-test. This result reveals the positive impact of blogging on students' summary writing performance.

As shown in Table 2, the ETA square value concerning the differences between the respondents' means scores in the pre-test and post-test was 0.37, surpassing 0.14 that indicates the educational importance of statistical results in psychological and educational research (Murad, 2013). This difference was due to the learning technique used; using blogs highly positively affected participants' summary writing skills.

The Perceptions of Using Blogs to Develop Summary Writing Skills

This study used frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to determine the perceptions of Saudi EFL students regarding the benefits and drawbacks of blogging. The second part of the questionnaire on the perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of using blogs in writing included 16 items; the means ranged from 3.45 to 4.50, corresponding to the fourth and fifth categories of the Likert scale (agree and strongly agree).

The general mean was 4.05 and showed that the Saudi EFL students agree on the benefits of using blogs in writing, such as being more careful with one's writing and checking sentences before posting on the blog; working together on the blog which helped one to develop summary writing skills; and saving time as the group members did not need to meet to collaborate.

What are your perceptions of the benefits of using blogs in EFL writing?

The open-ended question in the questionnaire was concerned with the advantages of using blogs in EFL writing. Many benefits were reported in the responses, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceptions of Saudi undergraduates on the benefits of using blogs in EFL writing

N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Blogs save time.	4	20.0
2	You can write and submit anytime you want; therefore, you can avoid mistakes.	1	5.0
3	Help to improve our English language.	8	40.0
4	To communicate with each other.	1	5.0
5	Improve my summary writing.	2	10.0
6	Blogs help in collaboration among students.	7	35.0
7	Blogs are easy to use.	7	35.0
8	Blogging helps in learning and practicing writing.	1	5.0
9	Blogs provide comments, advice, and criticism.	1	5.0

Item 3 in Table 3, "help to improve our English language," comes first among the stated benefits of using blogs in EFL writing; it was reported by 40.0% of the respondents. It was followed by Items 6 and 7, "blogs help in collaboration among students" and "blogs are easy to use," respectively, reported by 35.0% of the respondents. In addition, Item 1, "blogs save time," was ranked third among the benefits (20.0%), followed by Item 5, "improve my summary writing" at 10.0%. Finally, Items 2, 4, 8, and 9 ("you can write and submit anytime you want," "to communicate with each other,"

“blogging helps in learning and practicing writing,” and “blogs provide comments, advice, and criticism,” respectively) had the same percentage (5.0%).

What are your perceptions of the disadvantages or drawbacks of using blogs in EFL writing?

The last open-discussion question in the questionnaire focused on the disadvantages or drawbacks of utilising blogs in EFL writing. Some drawbacks were identified as demonstrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Saudi undergraduates' perceptions of the disadvantages or drawbacks of using blogs in EFL writing

N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Blogs are difficult to use.	5	25.0
2	Blogs consume much time.	3	15.0
3	You may face network connection problems during submitting posts.	1	5.0
4	Lack of comments received from others.	3	15.0
5	The difficulty in expressing my ideas sufficiently in English.	1	5.0

Item 1 in Table 4, “blogs are difficult to use,” ranked first among the drawbacks of using blogs in EFL writing (25.0%). Items 2 and 4 (“blogs consume much time” and “lack of comments received from others,” respectively) ranked second (15.0%). Lastly, Items 3 and 5 (“you may face network connection problems during submitting posts” and “the difficulty in expressing my ideas sufficiently in English,” respectively) ranked third (5.0%).

Discussion

The first question of this study attempted to examine the effect of utilising blogs on students' summary writing skills. The pre-test and post-test results showed a significant improvement in the participants' summary writing performance after using blogs. This finding reveals the positive impact of blogging on students' summary writing skills and the effectiveness of this learning tool in EFL writing. It is consistent with that of Kitchakarn (2012) who pointed out the positive influence of blogging on enhancing learners' summary writing skills. Furthermore, the improvement in the students' summary writing skills is possibly attributed to the communicative nature of blogs that offer an authentic learning venue for language learners to interact with others and collaborate by commenting on others' posts and receiving feedback from peers, teachers, and cyber audiences.

The second question of this study aimed to investigate the perceptions of female Saudi EFL undergraduates concerning the benefits and drawbacks of using blogs to develop their summary writing skills. Regarding the first section of the survey, the findings revealed that before the writing course, most participants (85%) had previous experience with Internet Explorer, 70% had experience with chatting platforms, and 65% with social networks and email; however, only 25% had experience with blogs. This finding is similar to that of Aljumah's research (2012) which indicated that the majority of the study sample used the Internet, email, chats, and social networks, while only a minority actively used blogs. Many students (65%) used both Arabic and English when browsing the Web, whereas only a few students (15%) browsed the Web in English. This finding highlights the necessity of engaging EFL students in different web tools such as blogs to encourage using and practicing the English language.

Among the study participants, 80% had never blogged before, while a small percentage (20%) owned a blog and had previous experiences in blogging. Blogs in Saudi Arabia are probably not widely-known among the young generation (Aljumah, 2012). Another key finding was that 90% of the students did not use blogs in any EFL writing classes before, which indicates that most participants had no experience in blogging. This finding is consistent with that of Grami (2012) who reported that most of his study participants were introduced to blogging for learning purposes for the first time. The lack of prior blogging practice can be a significant factor that leads to learning challenges, which may help interpret the negative attitude of some participants towards using blogs. Moreover, this study found that 55% of the participants had Internet access from home, 30% logged on the Web at the university, 10% at friends' or relatives' houses, and 5% at cyber cafés. This means that most students had access to the Internet; therefore, blogging can be a part of course assessment. Furthermore, this result may help teachers who already implemented or plan to utilise blogs in their EFL classes to better use them as an out of class activity based on the high percentage (70%) of students who were mostly online out of the classroom.

In the second part of the questionnaire that focused on the learners' perceptions of writing using blogs, quantitative data analyses revealed that most participants showed positive attitudes towards using blogs in EFL writing (see Table 7). As shown in statement (3), which had the highest mean, 18 out of the 20 students found that blogging helped them to be more careful and to edit their summaries before posting them on the blog. This result supports earlier studies (Wu, 2005; Vurdien, 2012; Sulistyono et al., 2019). Blogs can motivate students to more carefully write and revise their posts before publishing online, because they know that their blog posts might be viewed by any cyber user (authentic audience) who may comment on their posts (Wu, 2005). Moreover, 90% of the participants agreed that working together on the blog helped them to learn from each other, save time, and improve their summary writing skills (Items 10, 6, and 5, respectively). These findings support Kitchakarn's (2012) results, possibly due to the nature of blogs that offer "opportunities for real communication in an authentic learning environment" (Noytim, 2010, p. 1128). When using blogs, students can write, comment on others' posts, and receive feedback from peers, teachers, and other audiences. By doing so, summary writing can become an easy learning task for students. As mentioned earlier, the working process of each group in this blogging project allowed members to work together via blogs in which one student wrote a summary and the other members revised and commented on it. This probably helped the participants to learn from each other, save time, increase their awareness of summary writing, and develop their summary writing skills.

Moreover, many students (95%) confirmed that blogging motivated them to improve their writing, and 75% of the participants found it helpful in increasing their critical thinking, responsibility in learning, and writing in English (Items 14,13, and 8, respectively). These results support other studies (e.g., Oravec, 2002; Jones, 2006; Abu Bakar & Ismail, 2009; Amir, Ismail, & Hussin, 2011; Chen & Brown, 2012; Alaboudi, 2014; Apriani & Melati, 2018). Most participants in this study were exposed to blogging in EFL writing for the first time. This seems to have motivated them to try this new tool by writing more posts in the target language, probably helping in developing their writing skills. Further, blogs may foster students' autonomous learning and critical thinking by encouraging them to be responsible of evaluating what they read and write and reflecting on their peers' posts on blogs before commenting on them. This act can help in providing useful feedback on blogs, which possibly explains the high percentage of respondents (70%) who appreciated the valuable advice and comments from their peers and who (80%) found them helpful in gaining a better understanding of summary writing (Items 1 and 2, respectively). These findings are similar to those of Vurdien (2012) who pointed out that most students in his study found peer feedback to be very useful in improving their writing skills. When responding to friends' comments, students can learn what to revise in their writing and have more constructive thoughts about how to enhance their English writing skills

(Ellison & Wu, 2008).

The most significant finding in this research was that 55% of the participants believed that using the blog was an effective way of teaching and learning writing in English, and only a small percentage of students (15%) expressed disagreement (Item 15). This result matches those observed in earlier studies (e.g., Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Zhang, 2009; Aljumah, 2012; Grami, 2012; Lin et al., 2014; Koç & Koç, 2016; Akdağ & Özkan, 2017). Further, most participants (65%) liked learning via blogs as they provide a motivating and engaging environment, while (10%) negatively responded (Item 4). This finding supports that of Abu Bakar and Ismail (2009) who found that most of their participants perceived blogging as a motivating and engaging social learning environment.

With respect to Item (9), the study results indicate that many students (55%) showed positive attitudes regarding the idea that blogging made learning English more interesting whereas 20% disagreed. This finding is in line with that of Kitchakarn (2012) who pointed out that students believed that writing through blogs made learning more motivating and interesting. She added that students found creating their own blogs and running the activities by themselves an interesting way to learn English. The relatively few negative responses could be due to the lack of previous blogging practice, as 90% of the students had not used blogs in any EFL writing course, in addition to the 80% who had no experience with blogging. Moreover, the students in this experiment blogged for only five weeks, which seems insufficient to effectively practice blogging. Therefore, EFL learners should be given ample opportunity and more time for practicing blog writing to overcome any learning difficulties (Layali, 2017).

The current research revealed that 85% of the students found that using blogs develops their cooperative skills (Item 3). This finding is consistent with those of earlier studies (Wu, 2005; Vurdien, 2012; Bougia, 2018) which proved that blogging could improve learners' collaborative skills through learners' regular interaction and feedback provision on the blogs. Moreover, in this study, the majority of learners (75%) found it easy to use the blog for writing and preferred to practice their summary writing on the blog, while 10% found blogging difficult and chose traditional writing (Items 11 and 12). This result is similar to that of Galien and Bowcher (2010) who pointed out that most participants found it easy to utilise blogs in their writing assignments. As mentioned earlier, lack of prior blogging experience may cause difficulties, explaining why blogging might not have been easy for some students. In terms of future use of blogs, many students (60%) expressed their willingness to continue blogging in EFL writing and other courses, whereas 20% disagreed. This finding concurs with that of Song and Chan (2008) that showed most participants were willing to embrace blogs as part of their learning environment in the future.

To sum up, the responses to the second part of the questionnaire revealed that most students positively perceive the usage of blogs as a beneficial learning and teaching tool in EFL writing. Furthermore, the benefits of this blogging project were not only restricted to developing summary writing skills but also helped in increasing student motivation and interest to learn, fostering autonomous learning and critical thinking, improving collaboration skills, and serving as a powerful feedback tool.

In their narrative responses concerning the benefits of using blogs in EFL writing, participants identified many advantages (Table 7). Most students highly appreciated the blog-based writing method as it helped improve their English language skills. This concurs with the finding of Noytim (2010) who indicated that the participants perceived blogs as a tool that enhances their English learning. Blogs also provided another valuable benefit: facilitating collaboration among students. This finding affirms the results of Wang et al. (2011) and Sulistyo et al. (2019) who pointed out that blogging provided learners with opportunities to collaborate with their friends by commenting on

blog posts. A third advantage reported by many students was the easy use of blogs. The participants indicated that the blog was an easy-to-use platform and that there was nothing confusing in creating a blog page and publishing posts. This result agrees with the finding of Song and Chan (2008) who found that the main merits of blogging stated by many learners included ease of use, flexibility, and accessibility. The fourth benefit reported was that blogs helped students to save time. When group members worked together, they did not need to meet in class or elsewhere. This finding is consistent with that of Kitchakarn (2012). The last advantage reported was that blogging improved the students' summary writing skills, supporting Kitchakarn (2012).

Finally, when students were asked to list down the drawbacks of blogging in EFL writing, five learners stated that they found the difficulty of using blogs as one of the major limitations (Table 8). This was evident in some of their comments such as "it was difficult to access my blog" and "my friends' comments on my posts were not visible." This finding corroborates the result of Wu and Wu (2011). Therefore, students should have access to adequate technical support through lab sessions to assist their learning the blogging platforms (Farmer, Yue, & Brooks, 2008). Another disadvantage was that blogs consumed more time. This can be due to the fact that most students in this project had no previous experience in using blogs, which probably resulted in spending more time on exploring different features of the tool. This result is similar to that of Lin et al. (2013) who indicated that the students reported that blogging is time-consuming. The lack of comments received from other classmates was reported as the third major drawback of using blogs. Some participants mentioned that the students in other groups did not provide enough feedback for their posts. This finding matches that of Song and Chan's (2008) study.

In general, the responses to the discussion questions revealed that the research participants believed that using blogs in EFL writing offered many benefits: improving students' English language skills, facilitating collaboration among learners, saving time, developing summary writing skills, and easy use. However, other participants encountered some difficulties while blogging: complicated use, losing time, and lack of comments received from others on the blog.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to determine the impact of utilising blogs on students' summary writing skills and to explore the views of female Saudi EFL undergraduates regarding the benefits and drawbacks of blogging in improving their summary writing skills. The results have shown that blogs are an effective tool in EFL writing and have a positive impact on learners' summary writing skills as evidenced by the improvement of students' summary writing performances. This development in participants' summary writings is attributed to the learning and teaching method used in this study that offers an authentic learning venue for language learners to collaborate, interact, and communicate with their peers, teachers, and any cyber audiences. Therefore, using blogs for academic purposes is highly advisable as it can help in enhancing EFL students' writing skills. Furthermore, most students showed positive attitudes towards using blogs, and they perceived blogging as a helpful tool in learning and teaching EFL writing. The major limitation of this study is the small sample size and the restriction of the sample to female participants. Further, due to time restrictions, the study did not last for a semester or a full academic year but only for five weeks.

Pedagogical Implications

This research revealed the positive attitudes of the Saudi undergraduates towards blogging and the many benefits of using blogs in English writing. Therefore, EFL instructors should utilise this useful technological tool in language classes and encourage students to use blogs in practicing EFL writing outside the classroom and orient them to more suitable applications to improve their English

learning. Providing students with necessary technical support and ample guidance concerning setting up their blogging accounts, and publishing and commenting on blogs posts are extremely important. This may help minimise the shortcomings and maximise the benefits of using blogs in EFL writing. Decision-makers and curriculum designers could incorporate blogs as a beneficial tool in EFL curricula at universities to enhance students' writing skills.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should explore the perceptions of male Saudi EFL undergraduates regarding the use of blogs in summary writing and compare the results to that of this study. Furthermore, further research must investigate the attitudes of Saudi undergraduates concerning the use of blogs in summary writing, involving a large sample of EFL students, including male and female, from different universities. It may be interesting to explore the similarities and differences between male and female learners' perceptions regarding the use of blogs in summary writing. It can also be fruitful to explore the effect of blogging on improving summary writing skills by comparing the writings of experiment and control groups. Moreover, instructors' views on the use of blogs in summary writing could also be investigated. Finally, more research must be conducted on utilising technology to enhance EFL learners' writing skills.

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Appendix: Samples of Students' Pre-test and Post-test

Sample 1

Pre-test

1- Summarize the following reading text (3 to 5 sentences):

1 1/2 / 5

Global Warming

Experts in climatology and other scientists are extremely concerned about the changes to our climate. Admittedly, climate changes have occurred on our planet before. For example: there had been several ice ages or glacial periods. These changes were different from the modern ones because they occurred gradually and naturally. The current changes aren't the result of natural causes, but of human activity. Furthermore, the changes are occurring alarmingly rapid.

The major problem is perhaps, that the planet is warming up. According to some experts, this warming, known as global warming, has been occurring in the last 10,000 years. The effects of global warming on the planet are very serious. Rising global temperatures could give rise to such ecological disasters such as floods and droughts. This could have a harmful effect on agriculture.

This unusual warming of the earth has been caused partly by so-called greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, being emitted into the atmosphere by car engines and modern industrial processes, for example. Such gases, not only add to the pollution of the atmosphere, but also create a greenhouse effect, by which the heat of sun is trapped. This leads to the warming up of the planet.

Politicians are also concerned about climate change and there are now regular meetings on the subject, attended by representatives from many of the world's industrialized countries. In Kyoto, Japan in 1997, it was agreed that the most industrialized countries would try to reduce the volume of greenhouse gas emissions and were given targets for their reductions. It was also suggested that more forests should be planted to create so-called "sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases. At least part of the problem of rapid climate change has been caused by too drastic deforestation.

Specialist in many scientists are tremendously concerned about the changes to our climate. These effects are very serious. The causes may tend to the warming up of the planet. Politicians concerned about climate change.

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End of Questions

Post-test

1- Summarize the following reading text (3 to 5 sentences):

4 / 5

Global Warming

Experts in climatology and other scientists are extremely concerned about the changes to our climate. Admittedly, climate changes have occurred on our planet before. For example: there had been several ice ages or glacial periods. These changes were different from the modern ones because they occurred gradually and naturally. The current changes aren't the result of natural causes, but of human activity. Furthermore, the changes are occurring alarmingly rapid.

The major problem is perhaps, that the planet is warming up. According to some experts, this warming, known as global warming, has been occurring in the last 10,000 years. The effects of global warming on the planet are very serious. Rising global temperatures could give rise to such ecological disasters such as floods and droughts. This could have a harmful effect on agriculture.

This unusual warming of the earth has been caused partly by so-called greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, being emitted into the atmosphere by car engines and modern industrial processes, for example. Such gases, not only add to the pollution of the atmosphere, but also create a greenhouse effect, by which the heat of sun is trapped. This leads to the warming up of the planet.

Politicians are also concerned about climate change and there are now regular meetings on the subject, attended by representatives from many of the world's industrialized countries. In Kyoto, Japan in 1997, it was agreed that the most industrialized countries would try to reduce the volume of greenhouse gas emissions and were given targets for their reductions. It was also suggested that more forests should be planted to create so-called "sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases. At least part of the problem of rapid climate change has been caused by too drastic deforestation.

Experts in climatology and other scientists are highly worried about the changes to our climate. The main issue is might be global warming. Its effects are very grave. Because of the worries they managing regular meetings on the subjects. The politicians suggested that more forests should be planted to create so-called sinks to absorb greenhouse gases.

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End of Questions