EFFECTS OF BLOG, WIKI AND GOOGLE DOCS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF BANGLADESH AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

English language learners at tertiary level, nowadays, have become highly dependent on blogs, wikis and Google docs in learning English. The use of these new media tools has certain effects in learning English. The aim of the study was to define the effects of blog, wiki and Google docs in learning English language at tertiary level. The researcher used qualitative method in the study. To collect the data, six Focus Group Discussions(FGD) were conducted with 30 students. The collected data was coded following the data coding procedure and significant themes had emerged after coding. The findings of the study showed that the students of tertiary level use English learning materials from blog, wiki and Google docs. The study also found that learning of English language is stress free, motivational, context-free, easily accessible and less costly when students learn through blogs, wikis and Google docs. Moreover, the study found that due to multiple sources of the same language input including grammar, vocabulary and mechanics in blogs, wikis and Google docs, sometimes students became confused as there were some blogs and wikis which did not maintain standard or provided correct solution. The study recommends the institutions give the students a list of authentic blogs and wikis so that the students can learn authentic language inputs.

Keywords:
Effect, New Media, Blog, Wiki, Google docs, Learning English, Tertiary Level, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Technological revolution in education has made the learners largely dependent on new media tools. Specifically, the wider use of new media tools has made learning friendlier and easily accessible to the learners. To some the adoption of technology left mixed feelings (Hawkridge, Vincent, & Hales, 2018). Learners of English language worldwide are using different new media tools including blog, wiki and Google docs. These new media tools present learning materials as e-texts. The learners get access to these e-texts by using their devices at any time with internet connection or they can store important materials from the download options. In Bangladesh, learners of tertiary level use different new media tools for their English language learning purposes (Hasan & Labonya, 2016; & Hasan & Khan, 2017). So their choices for learning strategy has changed much during last decade and they are more akin to learn through digital technologies. Therefore, curriculum and learning techniques are immensely based on digital technology which facilitates them to learn even when they are far from them physically (Hasan & Khan, 2017). Learners widely use blog, wiki, and Google docs for enhancing their English language competencies. However, the effects of using blog, wiki and Google docs by the tertiary level learners are not widely defined. Therefore, the highest outcomes of learning through blog are not well-defined yet and the teachers of English at tertiary level are also facing challenges in implementing the curriculum.

The reason behind facing the challenges is that the students of current age are known as "Net Generation (Net Gen)" or "Digital natives" and their cognitive development is far different

from their preceding generation (Evans, 1995). Most recently, many researchers (Hasan & Khan, 2017; Susilo, 2014; & Jadhav et al., 2013; Chowdhury, 2012; Omar et al., 2012; Lee, 2011; Conole, 2010; & Tina, 2010) have indicated that learners have started learning English language skills consciously or subconsciously with the support of new media tools including Blog, Wiki, different apps, android phones, recording device, DVDs, YouTube, Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Skype, Quick Messengers, WhatsApp), e-books, English songs and movies with subtitles etc. For instance, in android phone, the users can use WhatsApp, Skype, and Messenger, thus, communicate with different groups of people within a short time (Jadhav et al., 2013). However, as stated, the effects of blog, wiki and Google docs in learning English are not widely defined by the teachers, planners of curriculum, and most importantly the researchers of English language skills in Bangladeshi context. Therefore, an investigation is needed to define the effects of blog, wiki and Google docs in learning English language at tertiary level.

Prospects of e-Learning for Bangladesh

Digitizing education sector has got an imperative attention in recent years. In Bangladesh ICT Forum (2009), National ICT Policy-2009 of Bangladesh has aimed at digitizing the learning in different stages of education. To fulfil the aim, government has established language labs with computers and internet access in the educational institutions and technical institutions so that informants can learn English language from the digital facilities. Patra et al. (2010) identified a few paybacks of e-Learning in Bangladeshi context. Patra et al. (2010) stated that for Bangladesh building infrastructure is not possible for providing education to all and the introduction of e-learning from a few institutions can reach huge number of students. According to Farid et al. (2018), e-learning through new media tools have different meaning in different contexts. Additionally, Bangladeshi students are found to be interested in adopting e-library and digital learning contents (Hossain et al., 2018).

Net Generation and New Media

Nowadays, the students are keen to use the benefits of newer technologies in learning formal and informal situations (Ang et al., 2018) and the educational institutions have to feed the students according to their demand for newness. In their study on distance education, Worley (2011) and others have stated that nowadays the higher education teachers and administrators are facing challenge in planning and teaching their students. Moreover, the students are also interested in learning through new media tools (Hasan & Khan, 2017). Therefore, curriculum and learning techniques are immensely based on digital technology which facilitates them to learn even when they are far from them physically.

In addition, English language is taught and learned with the help of new media tools in and outside the classroom. In most of the countries English language skills are learned with the incorporation of internet facilities including Google docs, wiki, Blog, YouTube etc. The use of these internet based learning tools are called as the new media tools which presents learning materials as e-texts instead of traditional printed materials. Different studies (Al-Timimi, 2018; Hanson-Smith, 2018; & Balaji & Chakrabarti, 2010) have shown that the use of new media tools like blog, wiki and Google docs have effects like more functionality, user-friendliness and so on in learning English language skills by the "Net Generation".

Research Question

The research question for the study is:
What are the influences of using blog, wiki and Google docs in learning English language skills?

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to:
define the influences of using blog, wiki and Google docs in learning English language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blogs, wikis and Google docs have certain influences in learning English language at tertiary level. The previous researchers have defined the influences of blogs, wiki, and Google docs in different contexts. The researcher has found different influences of blog, wiki and Google docs.

Blogs in Learning English

Blogs are thought to be one of the widely used web tools in learning English language skills. There are some studies which justify the use of blogs in learning English language skills. Blogs have become a part in learning language skills where English is a foreign language (EFL) (Aydin, 2014). The use of blogs in language learning contributes to gaining cultural knowledge, provides opportunities to explore the target culture, and increases cultural awareness. So, throughout blogging, language skills can be learned (Aydin, 2014). Moreover, computer-mediated communication with the use of blog helps learners to be exposed to the native speakers and learn different things from the native speakers with motivation (Henry et al., 2018). Even the learners who study in the native speaking countries learns to communicate in English as the learners get the benefit of cross-cultural interaction there (Lee, 2011). Additionally, communication through blogs enhances cultural interaction, competence, communication and exchanges (Lee, 2012). Thus, communication through blogs promotes learners' language skills day by day.

Blogs allow learners to learn outside the classroom, besides learning in the classrooms. Campbell (2003) introduces three uses of weblogs that can be utilized for learning outside the classroom. Three types or uses of blogs are tutor blog, learner blog and class blog. A tutor blog can perform three functions and first one is disseminating information to learners regarding course outline, assessment, homework, due dates of assignments etc. Second function is that the teacher can post different materials and websites for learners' study. Thirdly, the learners can give their feedbacks on classroom activities in the blog. Zheng, Yim and Warschauer (2018) found that blogs are used for writing purposes and it is an effective platform for writing development. Thus, learners get scope to develop their language awareness. Blogs facilitate English language learners with inquiries, frequent visits, commenting on the posts and receiving comments from the moderator (Tharwa, 2017).

Wikis in Learning English Language Skills

A Wiki is a website that allows any user to add content, and allows that content to be edited by any other user. Users can view, edit, and add information to a Wiki through its web-based interface, and a user does not need to know any html (Hyper-Text Markup Language) or other coding in order to use a Wiki (Frumkin, 2005). In English language teaching arena, teachers use a Wiki to assign activities for their students. The students who are supported by Wiki, they improve faster in enhancing their writing and new vocabulary skills (Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017; Khany & Khosravian, 2014).

The use of wiki helped students to work autonomously and the e-portfolio motivated them to learn and own the learning as well (Papadima-Sophocleous et al., 2012). So, Wiki is a good web tool for learning English language skills. Moreover, Wikis help students to work collaboratively and enhance their writing skill in EFL context besides their classroom activities. Students can improve their essay writing skill when they work collaboratively in Wiki-based writing projects (Aydin & Yildiz, 2014; Lin & Yang, 2011).

Google Docs in Learning English

For learning more beyond the classroom, learners hugely rely on Google Docs. Google Docs, a free web-based version of Microsoft Word, is a platform for learning language (Suwantarathip, 2014). Even the attitude of the collaborative group who worked with the support of Google documents and online medium for communication was positive towards learning English language learning. In this process of learning, the students did peer checking and peer correction activities using the Web 2.0 applications. The collaborative group is found motivated in learning English language skills using Google documents (Liu & Lan, 2016). Interaction through SMS (Short Messaging System) helps learners to read how another person constructs sentences and the new vocabularies for communication through English language (Collentine & Collentine, 2013). It is found that the group who worked collaboratively with the help of Google Docs did better than the group who worked collaboratively without the help of Google Docs (Suwantarathip, 2014). Indeed, learning through online is more relaxed than learning from the teacher in face-to-face communication.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used qualitative research method from data collection to analysis part. The qualitative research method helped the researcher understand the phenomena from the perspectives of respondents (Hair et al., 2015). The sample size for qualitative research was small, the researcher used open ended questions, and the research approach was inductive (Hair et al., 2016).

In this study, the researcher used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for collecting the data. A Focus Group Discussion is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six (Creswell, 2015). FGD is advantageous when the interaction among interviewees likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative to each other (Creswell, 2015). The areas of discussion for FGD were adopted from the reviewed literature. There were 10 open ended questions for the FGD. The reason for using open ended questions was that open ended questions permitted the researcher to explore the reasons and to identify any comments that the participants might want to mention what may not be collected through close ended questions (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003).

In the beginning of the FGD, the researcher has ensured the ethical issues related to the participants.

The researcher had conducted six FGD with 30 respondents selected from tertiary level. In each FGD, there were five respondents. The duration of each FGD was from 30 minutes to 47 minutes. The ratio of male and female students were equal in the FGD. The researcher recorded the FGD in audio recorder and later transcribed the interviews to find out the emerging issues or themes. The researcher followed the steps of coding the qualitative data recommended by Creswell (2003). The results of the study were presented in few themes emerged for the FGD.

RESULTS

Digital Texts Are Attractive and Easily Portable

Among the different channels, blog, wiki, Google docs and to some extent Facebook presented language learning materials in text format. The presentation of the text materials in the new media channels was a bit different from the texts we find as hard copies, the informants said in the FGD. The main difference they said was the texts presented in the new media channels were more attractive and easily portable and they did not have to carry a heavy book nowadays. The findings of Pinto-Llorente (2017), Susilo (2014) and Chowdhury (2012) also found the same findings. Their smartphone could carry hundreds of books in a small space which allowed them to read the texts anywhere they wanted. The text materials presented in the blog, wiki, Google docs and Facebook were catchier. The informants said that,

> "We get the teaching materials in the channels like blog, wiki, Google and Facebook. These contents are more attractive and we enjoy learning here as it is stress-free." [F6I1]

> "I don't always use a large bag to carry all the books. My smartphone and tab are my bag and it carries all the textbooks I need. I can read from adobe reader." [F2I5]

Learners' Recommendation for Combination of Real classroom and Web-based Learning

However, the informants agreed that only new media channels were not enough to learn the skills of English language. They preferred a combination of real classroom teaching and the support of the new media channels when necessary. They said that sometimes they understood the usages of English from the class lecture by the teachers and sometimes they needed the support from the new media channels. Therefore, to them, a combination of real classroom and new media tools could help them learn better. The findings of Conole (2010) and Tina (2010) also showed the same results in their study. The informants, in the FGD, said that,

> "I don't think that we always need the support of new media channels for every topic we are taught in the classroom. We need the support when we make our assignments or in case we do not understand a topic in the classroom." [F3I2]

> "Okay, I agree that new media channels are okay for me in learning English. However, I have to think of some of my friends who are not that much tech savvy. They need more time to be accustomed to incorporate new media tools in learning English language skills." [F4I2]

Blogs, Wikis and Google as Supplementary to Class Lecture

To them, learning the essay or paragraph writing rules and techniques could be learnt from the lecture and feedback they received from their teacher. However, the support from the online media could help them learn better. They also said that from different blog posts they could learn grammar and as the grammar topics were presented in online so they could check anytime from their smartphone and learn from the grammar teaching blogs. The informants usually learned different language topics from the blogs like Grammarly Blog, English Grammar – Your guide to error-free writing, Ielts-simon.com, Daily Writing Tips, Reddit – Grammar, English Grammar Blog, OxfordWords blog - Grammar and writing help and many more. From the blog posts, the informants learned tenses, punctuation rules, adjectives, adverbs, determiners, direct and indirect speech, gerund and present participle (ing form), nouns, passive, possessive, relative clauses, the infinitive and verbs and verb tenses etc. Aydin (2014) and Lee (2012) also showed almost same findings in their study. The informants mentioned that,

> "Our learning from the posts in blogs and wikis are effective as these two new media channels presents language topics in comprehensive way. Even we get some videos from different blogs which are very inspiring and we love to spend time in this learning process." [F1I2]

> "Listen, I can now give grammar tests in online within short time. I don't have to waste paper and ink to learn grammar topics at present." [F5I3]

> "In my case, I learn from different images from Google containing English language items. What I do is I write those learning in my paper and later I repeat the learning." [F4I3]

Blogs, Wikis and Google Facilitates Quick Search of Language Contents

In the FGD, informants also said that when they needed to know any grammatical structure in a book, it took time to find out exactly what they looked for. However, when they searched it in the Google, they found the topic was explained clearly. They received multiple explanations of the same topic and could choose the best one. As there were multiple explanations and examples by the Native and Non-Native speakers of English, so the explications made the language input more comprehensible in the new media tools. Same difficulty was mentioned in the studies conducted by Worley (2011), Omar et al. (2012) and Jadhav et al. (2013). The informants pointed out that,

> "We get every topic of English language in the new media tools like blog, wiki and Facebook pages. Contents are presented as more comprehensible in the new media tools." [F1R3]

Enhancement of Reading and Writing Skills through Blog, Wiki and Google

The informants agreed that they could tremendously enhance their reading and writing skills from the blog. The teacher posted in the blogs and the informants made comment and replied to their friends' comments there. The teacher also gave remarks on the comments and replies made by the informants in the blog posts. The enhancement of reading and writing skill was also stated by the previous researchers like Henry et al. (2018) Collentine and Collentine (2014), Aydin and

Yildiz (2014) and Balaji and Chakrabarti (2010). They had a chance to acquire knowledge and improve their English language skills, specifically their reading and writing skill. The informants pointed out that as the teacher provided them replies virtually at any time, so they found blogging as a more comprehensible way in enhancing their reading and writing skills. One of the informants pointed out that,

> "If it was not blog, we must have not written as much as we write every day. Presentation of lots of contents in blog makes the learning easy and comprehensible to us." [F2I4]

Easy Option to Download, Store and Practice Tests

Google facilitated them with ample amount of reading materials which were mostly free for everyone. In the FGD, the informants pointed out that they did download different reading texts from Google and later they did annotate, paraphrase and solve the questions given with the reading text. In the testprepreview.com, they could give free reading tests where they gave test on MCQ (Multiple Choice Questions), fill in the blanks, finding main ideas, inferring and summary writing based on a given text material. The informants pointed out that the benefit of this online practice was that the answers were explained elaborately. Therefore, they could understand the reasons for correct and incorrect answers. They also sat for TOEIC Mock Test which had helped them develop their reading skill. All these were possible through Google they mentioned. The informants mentioned that,

> "I regularly read different materials in blogs, wiki and Google. This has enriched my vocabulary level. Now I can use variety of words in my writing." [F5I2]

> "My reading skills have improved much during last three years. The reason is that I always use the new media tools for learning English." [F2I5]

However, the informants also mentioned that sometimes they became confused while learning through blog, wiki and Google docs. They mentioned that when different sources in the blog, wiki and Google docs presented different information, then it became difficult for them to identify the accurate information. Some of the informants also mentioned that they preferred reading from the printed version of the language learning materials. They preferred printed version of the materials for enhancing their reading skill. Most of the informants agreed that blogs, wikis and Google docs should be used for information gathering and enhancing grammar, mechanics, reading skills and learning through entertainment.

DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study, it is evident that learning through blog, wiki and Google have positive effects on learning English although some of the learners suggested for a combination of both new media based and real classroom learning. The learners of tertiary level found blogs, wikis and Google docs were useful for enhancing their English language skills. To them, learning was amusing through the new media tools. The learners could download necessary e-texts or pdf files in their device within short time. They did not have to be compelled to spend immense cash just like the previous learners of previous generation. Moreover, the portable capability of the e-texts made it simple to carry anyplace within the smartphone or portable computer. The learners could read the vital language related topics or story books from their smartphone. These facilities made English language learning simple and fast among the learners of tertiary level.

Moreover, besides the classroom teaching, learners used blogs, wikis and Google docs as a supplement. Whatever confusions they had related to grammar, syntax, mechanics, rhetoric and style of English language, they could search in numerous blogs, wikis and Google quickly. Thus, the learners could solve their individual language related problems by themselves. Another significant matter was that the learners of tertiary level checked their scores in different skills of English language within the free online language tests. The online tests were usually free and there was no need for a real teacher there. The virtual teacher instantly provided feedback to the learners who sat for the test through blogs. The reading and writing habit of the learner were often transformed into a skill of reading and writing through blog and wiki. Once the teacher asked the learners to answer or reply in the blog, they became more driven to try and do this. The explanation behind this can be that the "Digital Natives" feel more leisurely to reply virtually. On the opposite side, the teacher could reply the learners at any time. Therefore, learning English language through blog, wiki and Google was not bound to any place or specific time of the day.

Additionally, from the findings, it can be asserted that the teachers and learners of English language needed to pay more attention on the cultural appropriateness of the contents presented in the blog, wiki and Google docs. As some of the learners mentioned the need for cultural appropriateness of the language learning contents presented in the digital tools, the necessary materials for learning needed to be produced by the institutions for making the learning more effective. From the findings it could be stated that when the learners found the learning content topics related to their own and known culture, they became more enthusiastic to pay attention in learning from the digital contents.

Another important issue of learning through blogs, wiki and Google docs was that these digital tools focused more on improving learners' reading and writing skills. The two other language skills including listening and speaking remained untouched mostly in learning through these digital tools. From the findings, it could be affirmed that the learners still have the need for digital ways to enhance their listening and speaking skills. The institutions need to focus on these two skills and create platform so that the learners can equally strengthen their listening and speaking skills, and become good users of all four main English language skills.

However, from the findings, it was equally evident that some of the learners still cannot regulate themselves in learning through blog, wiki and Google docs. These learners of tertiary level still prefer learning from the printed learning materials. They found the digital texts boring to read. This happens due to socio-economic background and belated exposure of the learners to the digital devices. If the learners begin using digital devices earlier, they are supposed to find it comfortable in reading from the blogs, wikis and Google docs. However, the blog operators, e-text designers of English language ought to put emphasis in coming up with user friendly e-texts in order that all learners of tertiary level can benefit from blog, wiki and Google docs. In case the context demands a combination of both real teacher and digital contents through the blog, wiki and Google docs, the institution can recruit teachers who will be in charge of the institutionalized blogs in teaching and learning English. The teachers' quick reply to the learners' inquiries can make them active learners of language.

The implications of this study encompass the researchers, ELT (English Language Teaching) practitioners, existing theories, learners and policy makers. The researchers can use the findings in their future study and investigate with a bigger population. The ELT practitioners can use the suggestions made in the study in their teaching contexts and make learning easily accessible to the learners. The learners can use blog, wiki and Google docs more effectively in the learning process and make their learning more interesting and motivating. Additionally, the policy makers can use the findings in planning curriculum and syllabus of English education in the context. The existing theories on the use of new media or technology in language learning can be revised based on the findings. Most of the theories given before the technological

revolution in education sector ignored the cultural appropriateness of the language learning contents. Therefore, the cultural appropriateness of the digital contents to be used by the language learners globally needs to be revised in the existing theories.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The English language learners of tertiary level mostly prefer using digital texts for enhancing their English language skills, specifically reading and writing skills. They enjoy learning from the digital texts as the digital texts are easily accessible, easily portable, less costly, motivating and a number of texts can be stored in their laptop or smartphone. The learners can test their language proficiency in different blogs and wikis free of cost which makes language learning cost effective. However, there are certain areas of digital texts presented in blog, wiki and Google docs which learners use for learning purposes. The presentation of language learning materials in the blogs, wiki and Google docs needs to be more learners friendly so that all learners find it motivating to learn English from blogs, wikis and Google docs. The study recommends for making the blogs audio-visual also so that the learners can also practice listening and speaking skills there. The learning materials need to be contextualised and it should be culturally appropriate. Finally, teachers need to select list of effective learning sources from blog, wiki and Google docs so that learners find learning more effective. The limitation of the study includes the specific context where the data was collected and therefore the findings may not be applicable to every context.

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