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## **Writing Skills Application Through Blogging in Spanish**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The use of technology in the learning of foreign languages nowadays has become a need that is both important and fun. The advent of the internet has made it very convenient for learners to share and create language learning content. Therefore, this paper will discuss the use of blogs as a new and innovative method in the process of teaching and learning Spanish as a foreign language. Jean Piaget's Cognitive theory approach (1952) will be applied to observe learners' cognitive level in creating blogs and to identify learners' writing skills in Spanish. Five blogs will be examined in this research, focusing on the performance in writing basic sentences in Spanish. In these blogs, learners will apply the writing skills they have obtained in class to the blogs they create. The findings from this research do not only highlight the learners' thinking skills in creating the blogs but also, the researchers have also observed that their basic writing skills have improved. Therefore, this research has given a new dimension in diversifying the teaching and learning approach to learning Spanish as a foreign language.

*Keywords:* Blogs, Spanish, Cognitive, Writing Skills

### **Introduction**

The development of technology and multimedia nowadays plays an important role in strengthening language teaching and learning (T&L) process especially the T&L of foreign language in Malaysia. The explosion of technological application like *facebook*, *whatsapp*, *twitter*, *instagram*, blog and others have become the choice of

learners to obtain information due to the audio and visual aspects that can be integrated within the content. According to Mohd Zulkhairi (2005), the development of technology and multimedia era nowadays plays a huge role in influencing every aspects of education. It is evident that language learning does not only occur in the classroom. The use of technology in language T&L immensely help foreign language learners to learn and master the language because the internet has made it so convenient to access information and content. As a result, learners now are more autonomous in their learning where they can be in control of the content they can access. This in turn will create a more engaging environment among foreign language learners which will lead divergent thinking.

Therefore, in line with the current multimedia technology development, lecturers must be able to apply these technology to their T&L. Numerous local research has been carried out with regard to the use of technology in T&L like the one carried out by Mohd Firdaus, Muhammad Sabri and Mohd Shahrizal (2013). The research is about a web site known as EZ-Arabic, developed to find the potential that exists in the virtual learning platform. In addition, through the Balaghah software design, Zulkhairi (2012) has found the need for suitable instructional design model selection based on exact multimedia elements. According to Teoh Jun Yong (2012), the language aspect has become the main focus in that discussion. Yong has discussed the use of Chinese language in blog developed by Malaysian youths. It is evident that the choice of language style is also stressed in creating a web site. Therefore, in this research, the reasearchers will discuss the written aspect used by learners in developing websites in Spanish.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a considerable amount of effort being put by lecturers to improve the Spanish T&L in Malaysia. Nevertheless, there are still issues that has become obstacles that need to be addressed. One of the obstacle is that being a foreign language, there are not many Spanish speakers in Malaysia, reducing the chances for learners to use the language. Furthermore, printed materials are scarce and if there is any, they would be costly. Hence, the existance of freely available Spanish learning web sites serves as a rich resource for Spanish learners in Malaysia. Thus, from this problem has lead the reasearchers to train learners to build their own Spanish blogs to observe their cognitive level when writing in Spanish blogs.

### Research Objectives

The objectives of this research is as follow:

1. Identify learners' writing skills in blogs.
2. Observe writing style used in blogs.
3. Investigate the relationship between learners' writing style and cognitive level in creating Spanish blogs.

### Research Methodology

The research uses the qualitative approach in observing 5 blogs that have been created by Spanish learners in Malaysia. A decriptive analysis approach is used to analyse the variety of trends applied by learners. Each identified trend will be related to Jean Piaget's (1952) cognitive theory which states that each learning process is a constructive

### Research Discussion

The aim in asking learners to build Spanish blogs is to give them space to practice their writing skill while applying it in a manner that is abreast with recent technological advancement. The learners exhibits high levels of confidence although their writings are simple. Piaget (1952) explains that learning is a constructive process where learners need to build on what the learners already know. In this research, it is evident that learners are able to create web logs based on the Spanish vocabulary that they have learnt. Given enough time and the correct instructions, several Piaget's (1952) theory like assimilation, accomodation and adaptation can be practised.

In the blogs being studied, the learners have produced simple writings based on themselves, families and interests. This has reflect the different cognitive levels based on their proficiency in Spanish.

Referring to <http://ummimusician93.blogspot.my/> blog, it is clear that the learner's potential fulfills the aspects of schemata and assimilation of the Piaget (1952) theory. This is because the learner is able to use her newly learnt basic Spanish vocabulary and applying it to her existing knowledge about blogs. Observing the blog, it can be seen that this learner is able to produce two simple writings regarding herself and her family. The use of simple sentences like *mi padre es muy guapo y alto* (my father is very handsome), *tambien trabaja como maestro en una escuela* (Also, he works as a teacher in a school), *tiene quince años* (he is 15 years old) and others serve as evidence that there is cognitive development.



Aside from writing about family, the learner has also written about herself. This is where the accommodation stage can be seen. Her ability to write about is now considered as old knowledge and it is being used to construct a sentence about herself. The sentence *estudio para ser profesora porque yo creo que es una profesión muy interesante* (I learn because I want to be a lecturer) shows that a constructive process has occurred.



<http://ummimusician93.blogspot.my/>

The blog example has shown that the respondent is able to practise the writing skill acquired through her writing about her family and herself. This is prove the learner’s confidence in writing in Spanish has been increased.

There is also evidence that a learner has written in order to improve her own writing skills. This serves as proof that this particular learner’s cognitive level has surpassed other learners. Simultaneously, this also demonstrates the learner’s high

confidence level. This occurrence proves that Piaget’s (1952) constructivism theory has been practised in Spanish learning by constructing a blog.



<http://spanisheddieupm.blogspot.my/>

In the blog <http://spanisheddieupm.blogspot.my/> the learner demonstrates her ability by writing about something different that is *mi idolo* (my idol). Although the sentence constructed is simple, it is proof enough that effective T&L has occurred. The learner’s maturity can also be seen in this blog when the learner made references from materials outside the classroom, not totally depending on notes provided by the lecturer.



<http://spanisheddieupm.blogspot.my/>

The following blog has also shown that this particular learner is ready to adapt basic concepts through the translated sentences constructed. This demonstrates the existing schemata potential that include all basic concepts that has created a balance between knowledge, belief and experience.





<http://adibahms.blogspot.my/>

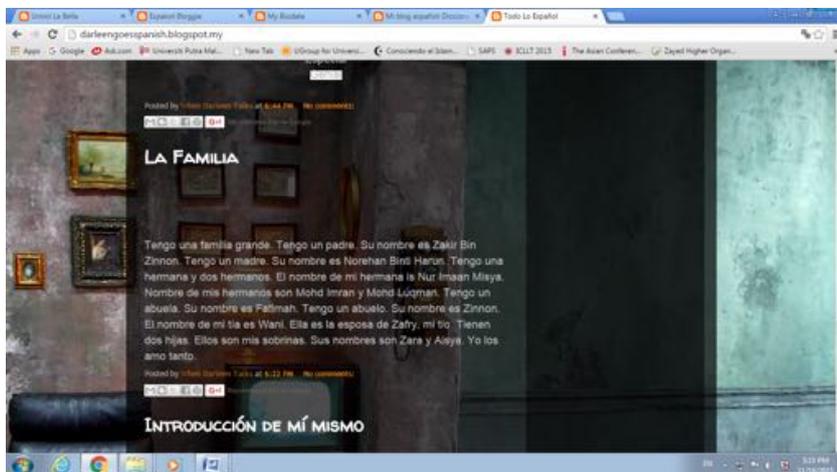
Generally, the writings in the <http://adibahms.blogspot.my/> blog deals with self and family. This is because at the basic learning level, the learner needs to have something that is already known or familiar to the learner’s immediate surrounding to serve as a basis for the constructive process to take place. Sentences like *tengo una familia* (I have a family), *soy estudiante* (I’m student), *estudio para ser profesora* (I learn because I want to be a lecturer) and others show that the learner’s proficiency is at the basic level. However, because there is accommodation, previous knowledge of sentence structure is used to create new sentences, shows that a constructive learning process has occurred.



<http://adibahms.blogspot.my/>

The learner’s confidence can also be seen in the production of her writing when the learner is not afraid to make mistakes although producing basic sentences.

Observing the sentences the learner has constructed, it is clear that there are spelling mistakes and grammatical errors but it has not stopped the learner from writing. Nevertheless, the basis of this research is not to look at mistakes committed but rather to evaluate the level of the learners' thinking in improving their Spanish writing skills.



<http://darleengoesspanish.blogspot.my/>



<http://nadiafarina3006.blogspot.my/>

Referring to the two blogs, it is clear that the learners' cognitive level are at the same level when they write about their family however, they have been written differently in accordance to the learners' creativity. The choice of the words *mi padre* (my father), *mi madre* (my mother), *tengo* (I have), *amo* (I love) and others indicates that the learners are trying to create new sentences based on their knowledge of how Spanish sentences are constructed.

Based on these discussions, it can be concluded that:

- a) Schema, a general potential within the learners can be increased through learners' confidence in writing. This has been proven through the observation of several blogs

discussed earlier that have demonstrated learners' potential to expand their basic Spanish writing skill. Choosing blogs as a platform to produce writing has in a way demonstrated how the learners' cognitive level has influenced their writing skill.

b) Generally, topics regarding self and family have been chosen by learners because of their lack in proficiency in Spanish. Due to this lack, the learners construct simple sentences about topics closest to them and in this case, themselves and their families. Nonetheless, the variety of ideas generated indicates the different cognitive levels of the learners.

c) The use of blogs can be a new approach to teaching and learning Spanish. Learners will gain the satisfaction of creating their own web blog although their proficiency level is at the most basic level.

### Conclusion

From the discussion regarding learners' writing in web logs, the research has concluded knowledge obtained from the classroom has been extended. This is prove that there is an increase in cognitive activity and shows that language learning has occurred. The increase incognitive activity further strengthen learners' basic writing skills in Spanish.

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