# Effects of Blog-Mediated Writing Instruction on L2 Writing Motivation, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Regulation: A Mixed Methods Study[1]

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## Abstract

Employing an explanatory sequential design, this study investigated the effects of a blog-mediated writing course on L2 students' writing motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. A number of 46 Iranian EFL learners from 2 intact university classes were recruited as the participants and were randomly assigned into the control group ($n = 21$) and the experimental group ($n = 25$). Over a 16-week university semester, the control group was taught using traditional writing instruction, whereas the experimental group was taught using a blog-mediated writing course. Data were collected through administration of 3 scales, measuring L2 writing motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Also, to reveal a more comprehensive understanding of blog-mediated writing instruction, a set of semistructured interviews were conducted with a number of participants in the experimental group. ANCOVA analyses and thematic data coding were conducted for the quantitative and qualitative data analyses, respectively. Findings revealed that integrating blogs into EFL writing instruction helped the experiment group to have more writing motivation and writing self-regulation than the control group that only had received regular in-class instruction. However, the blog-mediated writing course decreased the writing self-efficacy of the EFL students. Findings offer theoretical and pedagogical implications for L2 writing instruction.

***Keywords*:** Writing Motivation; Blogs; EFL Writing; Self-Efficacy; Self-Regulation

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## 1. Introduction

The emergence of Web 2.0 era and Internet applications has provided L2 learners with various opportunities to interact through L2 exposure and production, enhance learning attitudes and motivation, reduce anxiety, and communicate in various ways, especially in written form (Sun, 2010). The text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as e-mail, online chat rooms, online discussion forums, and other texts on the Internet, helps L2 learners to engage in meaningful communication in the L2 and, finally, paves the way for effective language learning. Concerning diverse online writing tools, blogging has been the focus of much investigation by researchers in the Web 2.0 era (see Wang & Vásquez, 2012). Changing users from consumers to creators of information, blogs have significantly changed the way individuals use and interact on the Internet (Du & Wagner, 2007). According to Hill, blogging "is throwing the Internet forward and backward at the same time. Forward into a new era of consumer empowerment, and backward to the grass-roots spirit of the early Web" (2006, p. 19).

From the educational point of view, blogs have received much attention and have been considered as effective instruments for collaboration, self-reflection, peer evaluation, and resource bank (e.g., Cooper & Boddington, 2005; Martindale & Wiley, 2005; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). With regard to L2 teaching and learning, blogs have also been the focus of attention by researchers and instructors (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Hourigan & Murray, 2010; Lee, 2011; Murray & Hourigan, 2008; Pinkman, 2005, to name a few). As far as the use of blogs for L2 writing is concerned, numerous researchers have investigated the contribution of blogs to developing writing skills (e.g., Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Bloch, 2007; Campbell, 2003; Lee, 2010; Sun, 2010), creating a sense of community among students (Campbell, 2005; Fellner & Apple, 2006), stimulating out-of-class discussion (Bloch, 2008; Campbell, 2005), fostering a sense of ownership (Campbell, 2003; Ducate & Lomicka, 2008), improving a sense of voice (Rezaee & Oladi, 2008), and building critical and synthesizing skills (Lee, 2010; Mynard, 2007). In spite of the aforementioned benefits pointed out in the existing literature, few studies have investigated the effects of blog-mediated writing instruction on the psychological factors of L2 writing. Following the recent research attention given to the dynamic and context-sensitive reality of instructed L2 settings (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016), L2 researchers have come to acknowledge the interdependent interactions between L2 learners' individual differences and the contextual variables of their everyday classrooms (Joe, Hiver, & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Larsen-Freeman, 2016). In addition, given the complexity of L2 writing that requires efficient coordination of numerous cognitive and linguistic processes and resources (Kellogg, 1996), recent literature has emphasized the role of individual or psychological factors in affecting the writing

process (Han & Hiver, 2018; Kormos, 2012; Piniel & Csizér, 2015). According to Han and Hiver (2018), "psychosocial factors, such as learners' writing specific emotions, self-efficacy and self-regulation, can regulate attention and cognitive engagement, and determine the level of effort learners will invest in the writing process" (p. 44). Therefore, as an attempt to shed more light on the potential effects of blog-mediated writing instruction on L2 writing psychological factors, the present study was set to investigate the effects of an EFL blog-mediated writing course on Iranian students' writing motivation, writing self-efficacy, and writing self-regulation. Moreover, to reveal a more comprehensive understanding of blog-mediated writing instruction, a set of semistructured interviews were conducted with a number of participants in the experimental group. As a result, to accomplish the objectives of the present study, the following research question was formulated:

- Does blog-mediated writing instruction enhance Iranian EFL learners' motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation in L2 writing?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Psychological Factors in L2 Writing

As noted above, because L2 writing is a cognitively demanding activity, a recent body of research establishes that successful L2 writing is considerably influenced by psychological and noncognitive variables (Han & Hiver, 2018; Kormos, 2012; Piniel & Csizér, 2015; among others). L2 writing-specific psychological factors can significantly enhance L2 learners' writing performance by affecting their degree of engagement and investment in producing drafts of higher quality (Piniel & Csizér, 2015). These writing-specific psychological variables may include anxiety, self-efficacy, self-regulatory capacity, motivation, and ideal L2 writing self (Han & Hiver, 2018). Against this background, the present study examined three psychological factors of writing motivation, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, as they are reported to be interdependent in a complex way (Csizér & Tankó, 2017).

L2 writing motivation builds on the main assumptions of the general construct of *motivation* in L2 education (Waller & Papi, 2017). Motivation, an integral element of successful L2 learning, is conceptualized as a dynamic process that is prone to continuous change (Dörnyei, 2001). As a dynamic construct, L2 motivation is affected by both external factors relating to the sociocultural and contextual background of the learner and internal factors pertaining to the individual learner (Williams & Burden, 1997). Motivation accounts for why L2 learners select a particular activity, how long they are willing to continue its doing, and how much effort they invest in it (Dörnyei, 2001). The current dominant description of

motivation highlights its dynamic and context-sensitive nature. From this perspective, an L2 learner is very likely to be affected by more than one motive at a time, which is contextually dependent, and the motives may change at different times (Keblawi, 2006). Adopting the L2 writing motivation scale by Waller and Papi (2017), we consider L2 writing motivation as the learners' general motivation to enhance L2 writing proficiency through different means. More specifically, we adopted Waller and Papi's (2017) definition in which "learners' L2 writing motivation is a measure of the amount of effort they intend to invest in improving their L2 writing, their desire for doing so, and how intensely they are engaged in this pursuit" (p. 57).

As another writing psychological factor in this study, writing *self-regulation* is concerned with the extent to which L2 writers appreciate, value, and get engaged in doing writing tasks (Kormos, 2012). According to Zimmerman (2000, 2001), self-regulation refers to planned self-generated thoughts, feelings, and activities resulting in the achievement of goals with the use of feedback from prior performance making the process cyclical. Self-regulatory learning describes to what extent students are able to regulate, manage, and organize their learning process and how they are able to take responsibility for their own learning (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). As far as L2 learning is concerned, self-regulation indicates L2 learners' active and creative participation in the learning process (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Self-regulated L2 learners are successful in aspects such as goal-setting, problem solving, and managing strategic effort that are closely related to how they monitor their performance and adjust their evaluation of the task and their expectancy for success (Zimmerman, 2001). Self-regulated L2 writers are able to understand, value, and engage in L2 writing more effectively (Kormos, 2012). Because L2 writing is a cognitively demanding process that requires L2 learners' awareness and use of control strategies in managing writing tasks, self-regulation, as a writing-specific psychological factor, plays a key role in managing, monitoring, and fueling learning efforts in L2 writing (Teng & Zhang, 2016). Drawing on Han and Hiver's (2018) definition, we considered L2 writing self-regulation as L2 learners' strategic effort to organize and manage their writing-specific goals and processes.

As the third psychological factor under investigation in the present study, writing self-efficacy is subsumed under the main *self-efficacy* construct, conceptualized as the core variable in the mainstream education (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Self-efficacy is concerned with beliefs about one's own capability of doing a particular learning task. Self-efficacy beliefs are considered to be of high importance in enhancing students' engagement in learning in various academic contexts (Bandura, 1997). Within L2 learning domain, a significant body of empirical research suggests that high self-efficacy is positively correlated with task performance and L2 skills (e.g., Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Woodrow, 2011). Writing self-efficacy has been

associated with lower writing anxiety, stronger writing self-concept, and higher perceived value of writing (Pajares, 2003). Also, it has been revealed that writing self-efficacy is positively correlated with the learner's interest and sustained effort, self-regulatory capacity, writing self-concept, goal achievement, and successful writing performance (Piniel & Csizér, 2015). In the present study, writing self-efficacy was conceptualized as L2 learners' beliefs and confidence in their capabilities as L2 writers (Han & Hiver, 2018).

### 2.2. Blogs in L2 Writing

As a result of heightened tendency towards the use of Web 2.0 in L2 contexts (Wang & Vásquez, 2012), examination of the use of blogs in L2 writing classrooms has gained growing research attention (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010; Bloch, 2007, 2008; Campbell, 2003, 2005; Chen, 2016; Dippold, 2009; Fellner & Apple, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lin, 2014; Sun, 2010). Although it is beyond the aim of the current study to review all the body of research conducted in this area, to ground the present study, some more illustrative studies investigating the use of blogs in L2 writing are reviewed below.

As an example, Armstrong and Retterer (2008) explored the benefits of community blogging and personal blogging on L2 writing performance, self-confidence, and attitudes with 16 college-level students of L2 Spanish. The data collection was carried out via the analyses of blog entries and interviews with the participants. The findings indicated that the length of the blogs written by the participants increased over the course of instruction. Moreover, all the participants stated that, at the end of the course, they had more positive attitudes towards L2 writing, in general. In fact, the findings revealed that blogging enhanced the participants' positive writing attitudes, as a noncognitive and affective variable. Similarly, Lee (2010) investigated the effects of using interactive blogs as out-of-class assignments for L2 writing performance and motivation. The data were collected from 17 students at the advanced level of the L2 English who were required to post one or two entries and read, comment on, and respond to each other's entries over a course of a 14-week intervention. Also, the instructor gave feedback to the posted blogs of the students. The results revealed that blog-supported instruction contributed to the enhancement of the participants' L2 writing fluency and motivation. Additionally, the participants held positive attitudes towards the feedback they had received from their classmates and teachers, especially those directed to the language and form of their blogs. Overall, the findings of Lee (2010) verified that the use of blogs improved writing performance as well as psychological factors, such as confidence and motivation in L2 writing. In the same line of research, the findings of Sun (2010) indicated that writing on blogs contributed to improving the participants' overall writing performance, enhancing their autonomous writing, and creating more

positive attitudes toward L2 writing. Sun (2010) concluded that blog-supported writing could be conducive in improving learner autonomy as a key psychological factor affecting L2 learners' writing performance.

In another study, Vurdien (2013) investigated the effectiveness of blogging for writing in an advanced EFL class in Spain. Eleven advanced students partook in the intervention that lasted for 5 months. All the participants were required to create their personal blogs, read each other's views, share ideas, and comment on their peers' postings. The findings of the data collected from the blog entries, class discussions, and questionnaires indicated that the personal blogs motivated the students to enhance their writing skills through self-reflection and peer feedback. The findings revealed that writing via blogs had increased the learners' motivation and interest in doing writing tasks. Similar results were also reported by Zhang, Song, Shen, and Huang (2014) who examined the instructional affordances of blogs for L2 collaborative writing. The participants were an intact class consisting of 36 English major students. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that blog-mediated peer-feedback was positively correlated with the students' psychological factors, such as motivation, course satisfaction, cooperation, and self-confidence.

However, the usefulness of blog-mediated writing was not corroborated by Lin (2014) who investigated the effects of the use of blogs on L2 writing performance, motivation, and self-efficacy. The results of this study indicated that although both groups had made significant improvements in all the three dependent variables, the differences between the groups in terms of writing performance, motivation, and self-efficacy fell short of significance. Therefore, Lin (2014) concluded that blogging failed to enhance the L2 learners' writing performance, motivation, and self-efficacy. To justify the obtained results, Lin (2014) argued that the "earlier claims for the effects of blogging on ESL student writers may have been made on premature evidence resulting from a flawed research design" (p. 587).

In a more recent study and to shed more light on this line of research, Chen (2016) investigated the effect of use of blogs on L2 learners' writing performance, metalinguistic awareness, and affective performance. Twenty-six randomly selected, non-English majors took part in a conventional English writing class, serving as the control group, whereas 18 learners participated in a blog-integrated English experimental writing class. The findings indicated no significant differences between the two groups with regards to metalinguistic strategy use, but there were significant differences in metalinguistic awareness. As far as affective performance was concerned, there were no significant differences between the two classes in terms of writing motivation and writing anxiety. However, the control group significantly outperformed the experimental class in writing self-efficacy.

In spite of the aforementioned studies, research into the effects of writing instruction through blogging on L2 learners' writing psychological factors is essentially lacking and warrants further studies for some reasons. First, most studies reviewed above mainly considered writing performance and motivation as the dependent variables. In other words, the effect of blogs on the psychological factors of L2 writing seems to have been absent on L2 writing research agenda. Chen (2016) and Lin (2014) are among the few studies that investigated the effects of blogging on other psychological factors (e.g., writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety). However, the findings of the two studies contradict each other. It is worth noting that, as far as psychological factors in L2 writing are concerned, blogging is claimed to have the potential to enhance self-regulated and autonomous learning (e.g., Lee, 2011) and increase learner motivation (e.g., Chen & Brown, 2012; Lee, 2017; Sun & Chang, 2012), engagement, and self-efficacy in L2 writing (e.g., Aydin, 2014; Hourigan & Murray, 2010; Lee, 2017; Zhang, 2009). However, such claims call for further empirical support in order to be taken on board by L2 practitioners. Second, mixed methods studies are pressingly needed in studies investigating the use of blogs in L2 writing. As reviewed above, most existing empirical studies have employed mostly either quantitative or qualitative research designs. Nevertheless, because blog-mediated instruction is reported to be more effective for the process approach to writing, involving a cycle of written drafts, reading, revising, and giving feedback to others' posts (Hegelheimer & Lee, 2013), mixed methods designs are more likely to contribute to explaining, refining, and clarifying the dynamics of L2 writing as supported by blogs. Furthermore, the role of various contexts and participants in affecting the use of technologies in L2 writing has been acknowledged by numerous researchers (e.g., Arnold & Ducate, 2006; Kessler, 2009). These reasons, along with the high importance of replication studies in education (Makel & Plucker, 2014), served as the main incentives for the conduction of this mixed methods study as an attempt to shed more light on the effectiveness of blogs in L2 writing.

## 3. Methodology

The present study was a part of a larger project in which the effects of an EFL blog-mediated writing course on several relevant, dependent variables was taken into account. However, this paper just reports the details related to the purpose of the current study with writing motivation, writing self-efficacy, and writing self-regulation as the three dependent variables under investigation. We employed an explanatory sequential design (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) in which the quantitative data were collected first, followed by qualitative data collection. The purpose was to make use of the qualitative results to further explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative phase.

### 3.1. Participants

For the purpose of the current study, a sample of 46 Iranian EFL students were recruited. The participants were B.A. students of English language and literature at Islamic Azad University of North Branch in Tehran, Iran. They were both male and female students whose age ranged from 21 to 25 years old ($M$ = 22.6). The students were taking their "Advanced Writing" course, which is a 2-credit compulsory course offered to the students doing their bachelor's program. The writing course lasted for a period of 1 semester (16 weeks). The participants were students of two intact classes, randomly assigned into a control group ($n$ = 21) and an experimental group ($n$ = 25). The two classes were taught by the same teacher who was familiar with and interested in CALL. All the participants reported to have enough experience and familiarity with computer and technology devices, in general.

To ensure the homogeneity of the two groups, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT; Allan, 2004) was administered to all the students of the two groups prior to the initiation of the treatment. In order to compare the mean scores on the OPT, an independent samples $t$ test was run to examine the existing differences between the groups. The results of the independent samples $t$ test indicated that the groups were not significantly different in terms of language proficiency before the experiment.

### 3.2. Instruments

- **Second Language Writing Motivation Scale (SLWMS)**

The L2 writing motivation scale (SLWMS), developed by Waller and Papi (2017), was employed in the present study. SLWMS includes 7 L2 writing motivation items (see Appendix B), adapted based on general L2 motivation measures developed and validated by Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009; as cited in Waller & Papi, 2017). The scale encompasses items on L2 students' intended efforts for learning the L2, desire to learn the L2, and L2 motivational intensity. It is a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 6 (*Always*). The internal consistency of the scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha formula, was reported to be 0.86 in the present study.

- **Second Language Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (SLWSS)**

The L2 writing self-efficacy scale (SLWSS), developed by Han and Hiver (2018), was used to measure the learners' level of writing self-efficacy before (as the pretest) and after (as the posttest) the treatment. SLWSS consisted of 6 items (see Appendix C), adapted from Mills et al., (2006) to measure L2 learners' beliefs and confidence in their capabilities as L2 writers. It is a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). The reliability index of the scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha formula, was reported to be 0.83 in this study.

- **Second Language Writing Self-Regulation (SLWS)**

This L2 writing self-regulation scale (SLWS), developed by Han and Hiver (2018), was administered to measure the level of writing self-regulation. SLWS consisted of 5 items, adapted from Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006, as cited in Han & Hiver, 2018; see Appendix D), which intend to measure the strategic effort of L2 learners to organize and manage their L2 writing-specific goals and learning processes. It is a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). The internal consistency of the scale, as measured by Cronbach's alpha formula, was reported to be 0.89 in the current study.

### 3.3. Procedure

A week prior to the beginning of the new semester, the two classes were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. Then, to ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of general English proficiency, the OPT was administered to the students of both experimental and control conditions. The administration of the proficiency test is justified due to the fact that language proficiency can be a moderator variable affecting both the writing performance and the three psychological variables (i.e., writing motivation, writing self-efficacy, and writing self-regulation) under investigation in the present study. The result of an independent samples *t* test indicated that the experimental and control classes were not significantly different in language proficiency before the initiation of the treatment. In the first session of the semester, the pretests, including SLWMS, SLWSS, and SLWS, were administered to the two groups. Then, the two groups were taught the same materials according to the same curriculum by the same instructor. However, the experimental group participants were provided with more opportunities for further practice through the use of blogs.

To accomplish the purpose of the study, a blog-mediated writing instruction was integrated in a regular 16-week "Advanced Writing" course in the experimental group, whereas the control group received the regular in-class writing instruction. During the course, the students of both groups became familiar with different types of paragraphs, such as descriptive, process, compare, and contrast. First, the instructor introduced each paragraph type by providing both theoretical information about paragraph types and some samples of each paragraph type accompanied by practice. Then, the students were assigned to write a sample of each type by, first, writing the first draft of each assignment, then redrafting each written task upon receiving feedback and, finally, producing the final draft. The experimental group participants were given necessary instruction and guidelines on how to create their own blogs via www.edublogs.org and they were instructed on how to publish materials on the blog. During the intervention, the experimental group participants were, first, given the

basic and theoretical principles of the paragraph type and some model paragraphs were examined in the classroom. By the use of blogs, the participants were also directed to websites with more model paragraphs. Then, the necessary vocabularies and structures for writing the target paragraphs were discussed and practiced. To provide the participants with more similar vocabulary and structure input, tutor blogs were used to direct the participants with related websites. As the first step to produce written drafts, the participants were taught on how to write a paragraph through teacher modelling. They chose a topic to write about and the teacher modelled a sample paragraph on the related model. Next, they were engaged in prewriting activities, consisting of brainstorming, outlining, diagramming, storyboarding, clustering, and free-writing. Then, during the drafting stage, the participants published their drafts on their blogs and exchanged ideas with the teacher and peers through blogging. In the feedback stage, the participants received feedback on their first drafts from the teacher, peers, and other individuals through blogging. In the revision and editing stage, the participants were able to discuss their own drafts with the teacher and the peers because their drafts were more easily accessible through their blog pages. Afterwards, they published the final draft of their paragraphs on their blog pages. And finally, in the follow-up stage, the participants were assigned to write a reflection to self-evaluate their learning process and to publish their reflections through the blog software.

All the main stages of the writing process for the experimental group discussed above were undertaken for the control group, too. Also, all the activities and assignments were replicated for the control group. The participants in the control group received the same amount and the same type of instruction. The only difference between the experimental and control groups was that the participants in the control group did not use blogs to publish their writing assignments or drafts. They did not use the Internet or other websites used by the participants in the experimental group. Instead, the control group participants were required to keep all their drafts and final versions of their assignments in one document, so that they could be graded by the teacher and analyzed by the researcher at the end of the study.

After the completion of the intervention, the three scales of SLWMS, SLWSS, and SLWS were administered as the posttests. The descriptive statistics for the posttests are presented in Table 1. In addition, in a follow-up stage, a series of semistructured interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted with 6 participants of the flipped group. The interviews were conducted on the last day of the course, with the instructor acting as the interviewer. The purpose was to make the interviewees verbalize a retrospective reflection of their experience with the blog-mediated writing course and express their attitudes towards the course.

# 4. Results

## 4.1. Quantitative Phase

In order to examine the effects of the EFL blog-mediated writing course on the participants' writing motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation, a set of one-way between-groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare the effects of the two types of EFL writing instructions adopted in the control and experimental groups on the three writing psychological factors under investigation. According to Pallant (2013), ANCOVA can be employed when there is a pretest/posttest design (e.g., comparing the impact of two different interventions, taking before and after measures for each group). The scores on the pretest are considered as a covariate to control for pre-existing differences between the groups. For each ANCOVA analysis, the independent variable was the type of intervention (i.e., blog-mediated or traditional) and the dependent variable consisted of scores on the three scales (i.e., SLWMS, SLWSS, and SLWS) administered after the completion of the treatment. The participants' scores on the pretests of each scale were considered as the covariate in this analysis:

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Pretest and Posttest Scores*

| Groups | Scales | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| Experimental | Motivation | 20.28 | 4.74 | 24.70 | 5.01 |
| | Self-Efficacy | 19.62 | 4.52 | 18.68 | 3.47 |
| | Self-Regulation | 14.66 | 3.09 | 19.68 | 3.28 |
| Control | Motivation | 19.85 | 3.80 | 21.88 | 3.96 |
| | Self-Efficacy | 20.90 | 4.59 | 21.78 | 4.89 |
| | Self-Regulation | 15.28 | 3.46 | 17.21 | 4.20 |

For the three conducted ANCOVAs, preliminary checks were carried out to ensure that there was no violation of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate.

Regarding the effect of blog-mediated writing instruction on the EFL learners' L2 writing motivation, as Table 1 indicates, the writing motivation mean score of the experimental group was 20.28 on the pretest and this value increased to 24.70 on the posttest. Likewise, the writing motivation pretest mean score for the control group increased from 19.85 to 21.88 on the posttest. However, after adjusting for the pretest scores of writing motivation, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the posttest scores of writing motivation, $F(1, 43) = 6.15$, $p = 0.017$, partial Eta squared = 0.12; see Table 2). This finding indicates

that the participants in the experimental group improved their writing motivation significantly more than those in the control group, suggesting that the blog-mediated writing course was effective in enhancing the writing motivation of the participants:

Table 2. *Results of ANCOVA on Writing Motivation*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Covariate (Pretest) | 308.792 | 1 | 308.792 | 25.725 | .000 | .374 |
| Between-Subjects | 73.838 | 1 | 73.838 | 6.151 | .017 | .125 |
| Within-Subjects | 516.161 | 43 | 12.004 | | | |

Concerning writing self-efficacy, the descriptive statistics data (see Table 1) show that the control group had a writing self-efficacy mean score of 20.90 on the pretest and this mean increased to 21.78 on the posttest. However, the writing self-efficacy mean score for the experimental group was 19.62 on the pretest and this value decreased to 18.68 on the posttest. After adjusting for the pretest scores of writing self-efficacy, the results of ANCOVA (see Table 3) revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the posttest scores of writing self-efficacy, $F(1, 43) = 5.36$, $p = 0.025$, partial Eta squared = 0.11). This finding indicated that the integration of blogs into the writing course had reduced the writing self-efficacy of the participants:

Table 3. *Results of ANCOVA on Writing Self-Efficacy*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Covariate (Pretest) | 362.437 | 1 | 362.437 | 31.594 | .000 | .424 |
| Between-Subjects | 61.528 | 1 | 61.528 | 5.363 | .025 | .111 |
| Within-Subjects | 493.288 | 43 | 11.472 | | | |

With regard to writing self-regulation, the descriptive statistics data in Table 1 indicate that there was an increase for the scores of the experimental group from the pretest ($M = 14.66$, $SD = 3.09$) to the posttest ($M = 19.68$, $SD = 3.28$). Also, a similar pattern of increase was observed for the scores of the control group from the pretest ($M = 15.28$, $SD = 3.46$) to the posttest ($M = 17.21$, $SD = 4.20$). Nevertheless, after adjusting for the pretest scores of writing self-regulation, the results of ANCOVA (see Table 4) revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the posttest scores of writing self-regulation, $F(1, 43) = 36.199$, $p = 0.000$, partial Eta squared = 0.45). This finding showed that the participants in the experimental group had improved their writing self-regulation

significantly more than those in the control group, suggesting that the integration of blogs in writing course had been effective in improving the writing self-regulation of the participants:

Table 4. *Results of ANCOVA on Writing Self-Regulation*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Covariate (Pretest) | 485.407 | 1 | 485.407 | 163.298 | .000 | .792 |
| Between-Subjects | 107.604 | 1 | 107.604 | 36.199 | .000 | .457 |
| Within-Subjects | 127.819 | 43 | 2.973 | | | |

## 4.2. Qualitative Phase

The purpose of this phase was to use the qualitative findings to explain or give further understanding to the quantitative data. In so doing, semistructured interviews were conducted with 6 participants from the experimental group after the completion of the blog-mediated writing course. Overall, the content analysis of the qualitative data indicated patterns of both positive and negative perceptions on the participants' experience of blog-mediated writing course. Some participants stated that they had gained a positive attitude towards writing tasks during the newly experienced blog-mediated course. This positive attitude had given them motivation to have further practice in writing. For example, Elaheh said, "in the past, I had not practiced writing that much and I didn't have a positive attitude towards my writing ability and writing was so tedious to me . . . (blogs) gave me further practice in writing and I learned how to write better." Also, Mahsa added, "writing became a fun for me, I was interested in posting on the blog, and I was eagerly waiting for the quick feedbacks." The participants affirmed that because they had known their writings would be read and evaluated by their classmates and the teacher, they had tried harder to produce a higher quality draft. For example, Mahsa said, "I really tried hard to write better and to check everything before posting my drafts on the blog." Also, the participants referred to the fact that because blogging had provided them with the opportunity to produce further drafts and have more practice outside the class, they had become more interested in writing tasks. For example, Reza mentioned, "I no longer have the resistance to writing; I am willing to write at any time at home . . . ."

However, some participants acknowledged that the fear of being evaluated and judged by others had made them feel uncomfortable and lose their confidence in writing. For example, Majid stated, "I didn't like the course . . . it didn't feel comfortable being evaluated by others . . . ." Also, Sahar added, "I think that I had more confidence prior to this course . . . it (blog-mediated course) really lowered my faith in my writing ability." Mehran said, "I didn't like to be compared with others."

Additionally, the transcripts indicated that the blogging had made the participants more engaged in learning how to write better and more responsible in what they posted. For instance, Mahsa said, "the visibility of my writing tasks made me feel more responsible . . . I tried harder to produce better drafts . . . ." Also, Elaheh added, "I used to check the blog very often . . . I was more active and more engaged in language learning than ever . . . ." Moreover, the participants pointed out that due to relatively quick feedback by the peers and the teacher, they had had the opportunity to learn how to evaluate their own essays more effectively. For example, Elaheh said, "once I used to evaluate my essays very quickly, focusing on just correct usage of words and grammar and ignoring other aspects, but after frequent feedback of the others through blogging, I got more self-aware of any aspect of a written task." Reza, highlighting the feedback of the peers, added, "due to the feedback of my classmates, I learned to self-evaluate not only my spelling and grammatical mistakes but also my development of the idea . . . I tried to put myself in the shoes of the reader to see whether if I have provided adequate examples or facts to clarify and present my points."

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the effects of an EFL blog-mediated writing course on the Iranian students' writing motivation, writing self-efficacy, and writing self-regulation. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses yielded three main findings: First, it was revealed that the blog-mediated writing course enhanced the writing motivation of the participants. This finding is in line with the findings of Armstrong and Retterer (2008), Lee (2010), Sun (2010), and Vurdien (2013), and it is at variance with the findings of Chen (2016) and Lin (2014). As revealed by the qualitative data, the enhanced writing motivation of the participants may be attributed to three reasons: (a) the students' positive attitudes towards the newly experienced blog-mediated course, (b) their heightened efforts to produce better quality drafts because of the anticipated other evaluation, and (c) increased opportunity to further practice in writing. These reasons are likely to have motivated the participants to make more sustained efforts to improve their L2 written production.

As indicated by the qualitative data, some participants held positive attitudes towards the experience of blogging in writing course. Consequently, they became more motivated to post better quality drafts. Their interest in blogging re-echoes Krause's (2005) claim that blogs can provide "a more inviting and interactive space for our students to write in" (p. 33). The inviting nature of technology-mediated writing for L2 writers has been suggested by a number of other researchers (e.g., Chien, 2005), too. In addition, as L2 writers anticipated the feedback of others and

they were writing for a broad audience (Lee, 2009, 2010; Ward, 2004), rather than for a sole teacher, they were more motivated to write high-quality written works. Finally, it was revealed that the blog-mediated instruction provided the participants with increased opportunity to have further practice in writing outside the class. In other words, blog use, as an inviting technology, is very likely to enhance L2 learners' motivation in carrying out writing tasks beyond the class walls. The beneficial role of beyond-the-class interactions in motivating blog writers has been acknowledged by other researchers (e.g., Cheng, 2007; Greer & Reed, 2008), too.

Second, it was found that the blog-mediated course reduced the writing self-efficacy of the participants. As confirmed by the qualitative data, some participants stated that the fear of being evaluated or judged by others had caused them to feel less comfortable and lose their sense of self-confidence in L2 writing. Therefore, we can argue that the fear of other judgments and evaluations may have reduced the writing self-efficacy of the participants. This finding confirms the findings of Chen (2016) in which it was argued that the lowered writing self-efficacy of the experimental group participants "might have something to do with the potentially threatening nature of blogging to write because showing one's work and sometimes poor works in front of a potentially large and unknown audience somehow sabotages students' writing self-efficacy" (p. 13).

Third, it was found that the blog-mediated course improved the writing self-regulation of the experimental group participants. As indicated by the qualitative data, we can argue that more engagement, sense of agency, and responsibility in conjunction with further self-evaluation because of quick teacher- and peer-feedback were the likely causes of the improved writing self-regulation among the participants. A number of researchers (e.g., Holec, 1981; Williams & Jacobs, 2004) have referred to the facilitative role of blogs in enhancing autonomous learning and self-reflection. The participants of the blog-mediated course took charge of their own learning and experienced the disclosure of their own self and personal growth while reflecting on their own posted blogs (Wagner, 2003). In other words, the blog-mediated L2 writing course appears to have fostered the participants' sense of independence as writers when they, for example, were engaged in blog posting, monitored their own written drafts, commented on others' performance, managed challenges, and achieved intended writing goals. Furthermore, the feedbacks given by the peers and the teacher served as scaffolding, positively affecting the participants' L2 writing self-regulation. This scaffolding may have helped them develop workable strategies to self-regulate their own learning processes while writing in an L2 (Csizér & Tankó, 2017). Moreover, we may argue that giving feedbacks to others and evaluating their own and peers' writing tasks made the participants of the experimental group learn about the criteria for better writing, which may have encouraged them to do more planning

and monitoring in order to have a better performance in writing (see Han & Hiver, 2018).

Overall, the findings of the study revealed that the blog-mediated writing instruction enhanced both writing motivation and writing self-regulation, but reduced writing self-efficacy. This is in contrast with some previous findings (see Pajares, 2003), suggesting that L2 learners' writing self-efficacy beliefs can influence all other aspects of learning behavior. Similarly, the findings of the current study did not confirm the claim made by some other researchers (e.g., Csizér & Tankó, 2017; Kormos, 2012) that L2 writing constructs (i.e., motivation and self-efficacy) are very likely to be connected.

Although the findings of the present study generally appear to be promising concerning the use of blogs in L2 writing courses, integrating this kind of instruction into the EFL classroom is not a straightforward issue and requires adequate groundwork beforehand in order to validate the use of blogs in any EFL course. Evidently, appropriate employment of any kind of technology requires both teachers and students to be equipped with a certain degree of necessary skills. Technological skills are of high importance for the implementation of blog projects in L2 instruction (Lee, 2010). Moreover, one important variable for the practitioners considering using blogs in their teaching is the added responsibility and administrative load of blog-mediated instructions. Teachers are responsible for providing their learners with both technical and pedagogic support. They should monitor the blogs during the course, make sure that all the students have enough participation, and provide them with regular feedback.

There are some limitations to the findings of the study: First, as the participants of the present study had not experienced any blog-mediated writing course before, a kind of Hawthorne effect may have affected the improved motivation of the participants during the blog-mediated writing course. Second, although all the participants reported to have enough experience and familiarity with computer and technology devices, in general, prior to the commencement of the study, the present study failed to control for the intervening effects of computer anxiety on the results of the study. Third, though the instructor tried to provide the two classes with equivalent instruction, the participants of the experimental group had more opportunity to review their own written essays, view archives of their classmates' essays, and exchange comments beyond the walls of the classroom. Finally, as far as external validity or generalizability of the study is concerned, this sample of Iranian EFL students may not be representative enough to make a generalization beyond the case. Therefore, in order to identify how blogs can best be harnessed for the benefit of L2 learners in writing courses, it is recommended that similar studies be replicated with different types of EFL learners from different educational contexts with various

age, gender, and proficiency levels and with various types of blog-integrated writing courses.

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## Appendix A
## Interview Questions for Semistructured Interviews

1. Did you enjoy the writing instruction course through blogging? If yes, would you please talk about your feelings about the writing course?
2. What effects do you think the course had on your English writing during the course?
3. Did the course help you experience less of negative feelings such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence, fear of evaluation, and so on during English writing?
4. Do you feel that your English writing abilities have improved as a result of attending the blog-mediated course?
5. Do you think that the course should be included in normal English writing classrooms? Please elaborate your answer.
6. How different was the blogging course different from other L2 writing courses you had experienced in other classrooms?

## Appendix B
## Second Language Writing Motivation Scale (SLWMS)

- I enjoy writing in English.
- Writing in English is very important to me.
- I always look forward to my ESL writing classes.
- I would like to spend lots of time learning to write in English.
- I would like to concentrate on learning to write in English more than any other topic.
- I actively think about what I have learned in my English writing class.

- I really try to learn how to write in English.

## Appendix C
### Second Language Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (SLWSS)

- I feel confident about writing in English.
- I know how to write well in English.
- I write in English with an underlying logical organization.
- If I put in the needed effort, I am sure I can become a good writer in English.
- I can write essays that are relevant and appropriate to the assignment.
- I present my point of view or arguments accurately and effectively when writing in English.
- I am sure I can do well on writing courses even if they are difficult.

## Appendix D
### Second Language Writing Self-Regulation (SLWS)

- I know how to reduce my stress from learning writing in English.
- I have special techniques to achieve my learning goals when learning writing in English.
- I feel satisfied with my own special methods for reducing the stress of writing in English.
- I have special techniques to keep my concentration focused when learning writing in English.
- I persist until I reach the goals that I make for myself when learning writing in English.
- I believe I can achieve my goals more quickly than expected when learning writing in English.
- I can cope with the stress from learning writing in English immediately.
- When it comes to learning writing in English, I think my methods of controlling procrastination are effective.
- I know how to arrange the environment to make learning more efficient when learning writing in English.