<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>The impact of blogging and scaffolding on primary school pupils’ narrative writing: A case study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Ruth Mei Fen Wong and Khe Foon Hew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td><em>International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies</em>, 5(2), 1-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>IGI Global</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This document may be used for private study or research purpose only. This document or any part of it may not be duplicated and/or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document.

This paper appears in *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies* authored by Ruth Mei Fen Wong and Khe Foon Hew Copyright 2010, IGI Global, [www.igi-global.com](http://www.igi-global.com). Posted by permission of the publisher.
Table of Contents

Research Articles

1 The Impact of Blogging and Scaffolding on Primary School Pupils’ Narrative Writing: A Case Study
Ruth Mei Fen Wong, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Khe Foon Hew, National Institute of Education, Singapore

18 Finding Determinants Affecting Distance Education Effectiveness in Terms of Learner Satisfaction and Application Achievement
Jeong-Wook Kim, Sejong University, South Korea
Kyung Hoon Yang, University of Wisconsin, USA
Kichan Nam, Sogang University, South Korea
Sung Tae Kim, Woosong University, South Korea

37 Supporting the Interconnection of Communities of Practice: The Example of TE-Cap 2
Élise Lavoué, Université de Lyon, France
Sébastien George, Université de Lyon, France
The Impact of Blogging and Scaffolding on Primary School Pupils’ Narrative Writing: A Case Study

Ruth Mei Fen Wong, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Khe Foon Hew, National Institute of Education, Singapore

ABSTRACT
Narrative writing is a skill that all primary (elementary) school pupils in Singapore are required to develop in their learning of the English language. However, this is an area in which not all pupils excel. This study investigates if the use of blogging and scaffolding can improve pupils’ narrative writing. Data were gathered from 36 primary five (grade five) pupils through pre-post writing tests, reflection sheets, and interviews. The pre-post writing tests were administered before and after the pupils had completed their blogging activities, while the blogs were used to draft their narrative writings and to comment on their peers’ writings. The teacher also used a writing guide that served as a scaffold to help pupils plan their writing on their blogs. Overall, results showed a statistically significant difference of medium effect size between the pre-post test scores. Pupils’ perceptions of using blogs as a tool for writing were also explored.

Keywords: Blogs, Case Study, Narrative Writing, Primary School, Scaffold

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Literacy and Narrative Writing

Reading and writing form the foundation of education, and are basically required for all academic disciplines, including mathematics and science (Cassell, 2004). Often referred to as verbal literacy, children begin developing reading and writing skills even before they attend school (Huffaker, 2004). In order to have success throughout life, verbal literacy is crucial and especially so from the beginnings of education to the future employment of adults (Cassell, 2004).

In Singapore, the primary education system consists of a six-year program: a four-year foundation stage from primary (grade) 1 to 4 and a two-year orientation stage from primary 5 to 6 (Ministry of Education, 2010). One of the overall aims of the Singapore primary education is to give pupils a good grasp of the English Language. Literacy development such

DOI: 10.4018/jwltt.2010040101
as reading and writing is at the heart of the English Language instructional programme in Singapore schools (Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD), 2001). As indicated in the 2001 English Language Syllabus (CPDD, 2001, p. 2):

*English is one of four official languages in Singapore. As the language of public administration, education, commerce, science and technology, and global communication, it has become the medium by which most Singaporeans gain access to information and knowledge from around the world. The ability to speak and write English effectively, therefore, has become an essential skill in the workplace, and a mastery of English is vital to Singapore’s pupils.*

At the end of their primary school education, pupils in Singapore are required to understand the grammatical features for the text type of narratives and be able to carry out narrative writing. They will also be assessed informally and formally in their narrative writing skills during class practices, school-level or national level examinations (CPDD, 2001). Please note that narrative writing is one of the many learning outcomes of the English Language education. Other learning outcomes include reading comprehension, listening, and oral presentations.

According to Derewianka (1990), there are many types of writing genre and narrative writing is one of them. Narratives are recounts with a twist in them. The basic aim of narrative writing is to entertain the reader through gaining and holding the reader’s interest in a story. Narratives may also attempt to teach or inform, to embody the writer’s reflections or experience, and to nourish and extend the reader’s imagination. There are many types of narratives, including: fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, choose-your-own-adventures, romances, horror stories, heroes and villains (e.g., TV cartoons), adventure stories, parables, fables and moral tales, myths, and legends. The main focus of a narrative text is on a sequence of actions and narratives usually begin with an orientation, where the writer introduces the setting or background of the story.

Narratives may have a major complication which is not resolved until the end, together with a number of minor complications which might be resolved in part or whole as they arise during the course of the story. These minor complications are usually related to the major complication and serve to sustain the interest and suspense of the reader, leading to a crisis or climax. The language features of narratives often include: specific participants with defined identities, action verbs that refers to action (e.g., run, hide, walk, etc.), verbs which refer to what human participants said, felt, or thought, words in past tense, many linking words to do with time, dialogue, descriptive language, writing as the first person (i.e., I, we) narrating the story, or writing in the third person (i.e., he, she, they) narrating the story (Derewianka, 1990).

Although narrative writing is a skill that primary school pupils in Singapore are required to develop in their learning of English language as a subject, not many pupils excel in it. For example, the 36 pupils in the current study who attended a government-funded primary school did not perform up to the school’s expectations for their narrative writing tests in the last four years (from 2003-2007). One plausible reason is that the pupils in the current study may see English as a formal language that is apt for school subjects such as social studies or science, but not for telling stories about commonplace events.

In order to help pupils improve their narrative writings, some primary school English teachers have begun exploring the use of blogs and writing guides as a possible scaffold. In this study, we investigate the impact of using such a learning environment on the pupils’ narrative writing abilities. Pupils’ perceptions of using blogs as a tool for writing are also explored.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following two research questions:
(a) Did the use of blogs and scaffolding improve pupils’ narrative writing ability?
(b) How did primary school pupils perceive the use of blogs as a tool for writing?

This paper is organized as follows: the first section presents an overview of blogs, followed by a brief conceptualization of scaffolding used in writing instruction; the second section presents the methodology of the study; this is followed by the results, the discussion and conclusions of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blog

The word ‘blog’ is actually an abbreviated form for ‘weblog’ (Blood, 2000; Ray, 2006; Wu, 2006). It can be used as a noun and a verb. When used as a noun, it refers to an online journal or web diary and, as a verb, ‘to blog’ or ‘blogging’ means to write on the weblog (Wu, 2006). Blogs display the work of the main author(s) in reverse chronological order (Hall & Davison, 2007; Wu, 2006). It also has other functions such as creating links to other Internet resources and the integration of comments from others (Hall & Davison, 2007; Ray, 2006; Stiler & Philleo, 2003). The most recent entries are supported by an archive of earlier posts (Hall & Davison, 2007; Wu, 2006). Similarly, blogs can be defined as personal journals made up of chronological entries that are similar to a paper diary (Huffaker, 2005; Poling, 2005).

One of the most quoted features of a blog is that a blog can have instant publishing of text or graphics to the Web without the need for sophisticated technical knowledge (Huffaker, 2005; Martindale & Wiley, 2005). Huffaker (2005) also brought up other features of a blog that include: ways for people to provide comments or feedback to blog posts, the opportunity to archive past blog posts by date, and hyperlinks to other bloggers. However, most blog tools do not have spell checkers, and this may pose a problem for individuals who rely heavily on having a spell checker to correct their spelling errors. One way to circumvent this problem is to first type the comments in a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word) and use the spell checking feature of the word processor to check for spelling errors before copying and pasting the comments into the blogs. It is also important to note that although a blog is open to all readers by default, an author can restrict his or her blog to only certain selected readers. However, the author must explicitly give access to these readers, and the readers will need to log in before reading the blog.

Blogs have been used in many domains and they include that of advertising (Hall & Davison, 2007), business (Kharif, 2004), medicine (Herper, 2003), journalism (Chung, Kim, Trammell, & Porter, 2007), news dissemination (Hall & Davison, 2007; Wu, 2006), and education (Kreul, 2001; Ray, 2006; Smith, 2007). In educational circles, blogs are frequently known as ‘edublogs’.

Advocates of edublogs suggest that blogging provides learners with a less formal environment outside the classroom where they could use it as a knowledge log (Brescia & Miller, 2006) to record their learning journey (Dickey, 2004). Instructors may also use a blog to post class times and rules, assignment requirements, suggested readings, and exercises (Downes, 2004).

However, the number of empirical studies pertaining to the use of blogs in primary or elementary school context is still very few. For example, using computerized bibliographic databases such as Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, Education Resource Reference Information Centre, and PsycARTICLES, we searched for papers using open ended search periods using words including “blog” and “education”, and found 175 papers as at May 6, 2008. In addition, we employed the “snowball” method and reviewed the references in the selected papers for additional papers. So far, only one was related to the use of blogs in elementary schools (Jones & Nuhfer-Halten, 2006). Jones and Nuhfer-Halten (2006) reported on a blog project that involved
participants in beginning and intermediate Spanish classes where both language production and cultural awareness were encouraged. Four examples of students’ blogging activities were described: assignment prompt, free write, scene description, and peer-edited process writing. Twenty three elementary-level students completed a questionnaire regarding their experiences with blogging. Clearly, there is a need for more studies to examine use of blogs in the primary school contexts.

Using Scaffolding for Writing Instruction

Consistent with Ellison and Wu’s (2008) view, we believe that blogging, like any technology, is not a silver bullet and will not independently or autonomously improve pupils’ writing performance. Certain guidance or scaffolding should be developed and practiced, along with the use of technology, in order to achieve increased pupils’ performance (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This section therefore presents a brief conceptualization of scaffolding used in writing instruction.

Writing is typically perceived as an abstract task because it involves a second-order symbolic system that must be consciously applied to communicate with a distant audience (Olson, 1995). In order to generate a written text, students must have the knowledge of the content, structures, and symbols of a written language, as well as know how to use one’s personal experience and everyday speech in written forms (Scribner, 1997). Englert, Wu, and Zhao (2005) stated that in order to help students acquire writing proficiency they need to focus on text structure and text organisation too. Text structures include genres such as narratives, written reports, procedures, expositions and compare/contrast (Spivey, 1997). However, most young writers demonstrate an immature writing strategy known as the knowledge-telling strategy, as exemplified by the recording of their ideas in whatever order they come to mind (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1985). The use of appropriate scaffolding could help alleviate this problem.

According to Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), scaffolding is defined as a temporary form of support “that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (p. 90). After some time, the adult will take away the scaffolds from the child once the child has a conceptual understanding of the entire task and is able to accomplish the task on his or her own.

Findings from Englert, Manalo, and Zhao (2004) indicated that students wrote more, elaborated with topically-related details, incorporated more genre specific characteristics, and became more organized in expressing their ideas on written assignments that made use of scaffolding. Perry, VandeKamp, Mercer, and Nordby (2002) also added that even younger students who are struggling with writing are able to develop their writing skills when guided using scaffolding.

There are different types of scaffolding. Some types of scaffolding are: questioning scaffolds that can be used in teacher-student interactions (Greene & Smith, 1999; Maloch, 2002) or in written contexts where questions are in print to guide students (Englert et al., 2004), peer revision scaffolding where students are allowed to discuss ideas and aid each other in their writing (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000), writing prompts that offers structural reminders to prompt students’ attention to certain text features such as organization of ideas, and developing of ideas (Englert et al., 2004; Englert et al., 2005), writing frames that structure pupils’ expression of understanding of processes by providing a template of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers which give pupils a structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to express (Warwick & Maloch, 2003), writing model guides that can be used as an outline or mind-mapping guide for the planning component of the writing (Hallenbeck, 2002) and teacher modelling that looks at the teacher demonstrating how the writing should be done by focusing on different aspects such as language, text organisation, and ideas generation (Derewianka, 1990; Gibson, 2007). It
is also noted that peer revision scaffolding that was mentioned here, can come in two forms. One being a collaborative scaffolding whereby students jointly work together on their written texts to help each other improve while the other being a uni-directional kind of scaffolding where the student writer authors a piece of text, while the other student reader reads and provides comments for the student writer to improve (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

For the purposes of this study, a writing model guide (see Appendix 2), which incorporated teacher modeling of certain linking words, phrases that addressed the setting, phrases that looked at action, phrases that dealt with the ending, and the use of questions as scaffolds for the planning of the story, was used. In addition, the use of uni-directional peer revision scaffolding whereby pupils read and posted comments about their peer’s writing on the blog site in order to help their peers improve through the better use of vocabulary, linking words, content generation and sequencing of realistic ideas, was incorporated.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

The participants in this study were 36 primary five (equivalent to grade five) pupils, consisting of 18 boys and 18 girls, taking English language as a subject in Singapore. Singapore is a small city state situated in south-east Asia, located south of the Malaysian peninsula. The ages of the pupils were between 10 and 13 years old. According to the pupils’ teacher, the 36 pupils who participated in the study were of average English proficiency with regard to narrative writing. Their narrative writing scores in a pre-test ranged from 21-36 (out of a possible score of 0 to 40), with a mean of 27.19, and mode of 29. Although many pupils might have experience using the computers and Internet, this was the first time the pupils experienced blogging.

**Procedures and Data Analysis**

The current study is best characterized as a one-group pre-test and post-test experimental research design, in which a single group was measured both before and after a particular treatment (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The study was done over three weeks with various activities conducted in each week. In the first week, the 36 pupils were given a pre-test which consisted of a narrative writing task (see Appendix 1 “a”). The purpose of the pre-test was to gather baseline data on the pupils’ initial narrative writing ability. Pupils completed the pre-test individually on paper. They were given 50 minutes to complete the pre-test in class.

Still within week one, following the pre-test, pupils were introduced to blogs. Each pupil was taught how to sign up for a Gmail email account and to use it to set up their individual blogs. Due to the ease of use and its availability as a freeware, the teacher chose ‘Blogger’, which is hosted at https://www.blogger.com for the pupils to host their individual blogs. Once, their blogs were set up, the pupils were taught how to invite their peers to their blog as blog readers so that their blogs could only be read and commented upon by the participants of the current study. Signing up for the Gmail account and setting up their individual blog was taught by the school’s in-house Information Technology teacher aide, while the rest was taught by the teacher.

In week two, the teacher prepared and introduced to the pupils a writing guide as a scaffold to help pupils’ use of language and plan for their writing on their individual blogs (see Appendix 2). Specifically, pupils completed the following tasks in the school computer laboratory:

(a) First—pupils typed out the first draft in their individual blogs in response to a blogging practice question (see Appendix 1 “b”) by using the writing guide as a scaffold.

(b) Second—pupils worked on their first draft by transferring their first draft to a Microsoft Word document (i.e., through copy
and pasting) in order to use its spelling checking, and word count tool which was not available on their blog. The edited first draft was subsequently re-posted on their blog as a second draft.

(c) Third – pupils read and provided comments about each other’s second draft. Pupils specifically commented on their peers’ use of vocabulary and linking words. Pupils then worked on their second draft to produce a third draft based on their peers’ comments.

(d) Fourth – pupils worked on their third draft to produce a final draft, after their peers had again commented on their third draft. This time, however, pupils commented on the sequencing, development, and relevance of their peers’ ideas.

The pupils in this study used only the word count and spelling check features of the Microsoft Word processor. Other features such as thesauri and translation programs were not used. The word processor was not used in steps c and d. Overall, each pupil received between three to five comments from different pupils. There were no know-alls who commented on everyone’s work. In week three, the teacher used another narrative writing question (see Appendix 1 “c”) as a post-test that tested the pupils’ narrative writing ability after the blogging and scaffolding treatment that was conducted in week two. Similar to the pre-test, pupils completed the post-test individually on paper. They were also given 50 minutes to complete the post-test in class. Pupils were not allowed to use blogs and the writing guide as a scaffold. Overall, the questions in the pre- and post-test were examined beforehand by the school’s English Head of Department for construct validity to make sure that they tested narrative writing genre. The Head of Department also examined both pre-test and post-test questions to ensure that both sets of questions were similar in terms of level of difficulty.

Pupils’ completed pre-test and post-test writing scripts were then marked using the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) English marking rubric. The PSLE English marking rubric is a validated marking scheme used by all Singapore primary school teachers at the national level. To keep individual bias to a minimum, two markers (one the teacher of the pupils, the other a teacher from another school) read and marked all the pupils’ pre- and post-test writing scripts on two components: content (e.g., generation of ideas), and language (e.g., use of vocabulary). Each component was rated a score of 0 to 20 (20 being highest performance). The scores from the two components were then added to yield the overall total scores (0 to 40). In order to ascertain the reliability of the marking, independent sample t-tests were conducted for the pre- and post-test scores. No statistically significant differences were found in the two markers’ scores (content, language, and overall total) of the pupils’ pre-test and post-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

To determine if there was a gain between the pupils’ pre- and post-test scores, paired sample t-tests were carried out. To establish effect size, we calculated Cohen’s (1988) d statistic. Kotrlik and Williams (2003) argued that reporting effect size allows a researcher to judge the magnitude of the differences present between groups, thus increasing the capability of the researcher to judge the practical significance of the results derived.

To address the second research question, “How did primary school pupils perceive the use of blogs as a tool for writing?” pupils were asked to reflect upon four open-ended questions at the conclusion of the study. The questions were:

(a) What do I like about blogging as a tool for writing?
(b) What do I dislike about blogging as a tool for writing?
(c) What are some suggestions to improve the use of blogging as a tool for writing?
(d) How do I compare blogging and writing on paper?

The teacher prepared the aforementioned four open-ended questions on sheets of paper (hereby referred to as reflection sheets). All 36 pupils completed the reflection sheets in...
Individual face-to-face interviews were also carried out after the reflection sheets were done. Six pupils were purposefully selected for the interviews in order to clarify unclear issues that surfaced from their reflection sheets, and to seek a more in-depth view of some of their perceptions of using blogging as a writing tool. To increase the validity of the interview data, we used member checking by sharing our gathering of the pupils’ interview data with the pupils to clear up possible areas of miscommunication (Johnson, 1997).

RESULTS
Did the Use of Blogs and Scaffolding Improve Pupils’ Narrative Writing Ability?

Table 1 summarizes the statistical results for the pupils’ pre- and post-test writing performances in terms of their content, language, and overall total scores.

The results shown in Table 1 revealed that pupils’ mean scores had improved for all three areas (i.e., content, language, and overall total), after the blogging and scaffolding treatment. In addition, the standard deviation for all three areas had also decreased, indicating that the spread of the scores had decreased and that the scores of the pupils were more consistent. This suggested that the blogging and scaffolding treatment had narrowed the score differences between pupils.

Results further revealed that pupils’ language component post-test scores ($M = 14.61$, $SD = 1.90$) were significantly better than their pre-test scores ($M = 13.56$, $SD = 2.18$) ($t = 4.482$, $df = 35$, $p = 0.000$) at the 0.05 level of significance. In addition, pupils’ overall total post-test scores ($M = 28.94$, $SD = 3.45$) were significantly better than their pre-test scores ($M = 27.19$, $SD = 4.06$) ($t = 3.151$, $df = 35$, $p = 0.003$) at the 0.05 level of significance. The effect size was medium ($d = 0.47$).

By contrast, there was no significant difference between the pupils’ content component post-test scores ($M = 14.33$, $SD = 1.84$) and pre-test scores ($M = 13.64$, $SD = 2.18$) ($t = 1.727$, $df = 35$, $p = 0.093$) at the 0.05 level of significance, although the data shown in Table 1 suggest that the pupils’ mean scores for content had improved while the standard deviation had also decreased. This may indicate that the spread of the scores had decreased due the blogging and scaffolding treatment. As the content component scores of the pupils were closer to the mean, it might indicate that the weaker pupils’ content scores had improved. These results tend to indicate that some improvement for narrative content had taken place though it was not significant.

How Did Primary School Pupils Perceive the Use of Blogs as a Tool for Writing?

Since the comments from the pupils were openly solicited from the reflection sheets and interviews, one pupil could list multiple reasons, suggestions or views. Table 2 provides a description of our results including a listing of categories, the number of responses in each category, and some typical responses.

Based on the content analysis of the pupils’ comments from the reflection sheets, it seems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content component</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language component</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*indicates significant difference, $p < 0.05$. SD – standard deviation
Table 2. Results of content analysis and sample comments from pupils’ reflection sheets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of Comments</th>
<th>Sample comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection Question 1: What do I like about blogging as a tool for writing?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun to use</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>It is very fun and interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve writing through peer’s comments</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I can improve my writing through my friend’s comments on spelling, grammar, vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customize my word style, font, colour, and etc.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I can make my posts attractive by choosing a colour for the font. I can also change the type of font.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need to waste paper, ink or correction tape</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can use the computer to type instead of wasting my pen ink to do the writing on a piece of paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train me to type faster</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Blogging also helps us to train our speed of typing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help me improve my use of technology</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>It also helps me improve my technology. I also learn a lot about computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typed out composition is neater and easier to read</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>We can easily understand what our friends type and people can understand what I type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not need to copy out the whole composition for drafts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>We would not need to copy out the whole composition on a paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection Question 2: What do I dislike about blogging as a tool for writing?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow typing ability</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>I type slower than I write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staring at computer monitor is bad for my eyesight</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>What I dislike about blogging is if we sit with it typing out a big composition it will spoil our eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No word count tool on blog</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>There should be word count so that we would not need to count the words one by one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work can be deleted accidentally</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes I could make mistakes and accidentally delete my work, then I will have to do it all over again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow computer or Internet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>It sometimes annoys me when the computer is slow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog does not auto-save often enough and work can be lost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>It does not autosave often enough, often resulting in lost work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make mistakes easily due to typing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I will miss out some letters while typing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection Question 3: My suggestions on how to improve the use of blogging as a tool for writing?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog site should have word count</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>We can have a word count so that we do not have to copy everything and paste it in the Microsoft Word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time for blogging</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maybe teacher could put aside 30 mins every week for blogging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get more peers to comment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maybe we could let more people, friends to comment on our posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow more personalisation of the blog</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Let us find nicer designs from blogskins.com to enhance the beauty of our blog page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog site should have word checking for editing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The blog could have the option for checking the words or check for mistake to save us the trouble of copying and pasting our composition to Microsoft word for checking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Continued on following page*
that primary school pupils enjoyed using blogging as a writing tool as compared to writing on paper. There were more positive comments on what they liked about blogging as a tool for writing (i.e., 81 comments) as compared to negative comments on what they disliked about blogging as a tool for writing (i.e., 53 comments). Quite a number of the comments mentioned in response to Question one (i.e., what do I like about blogging as a tool for writing?) were in accordance to that brought up in Question four (i.e., my comparison between writing on paper and blogging). For example, one popular reason why pupils liked to use blogging as a writing tool was that they could improve their writing through the comments provided by their peers on their blog post (i.e., 11 comments stated in Question one), which could not be done easily if they were to write on paper (i.e., four comments stated in Question four). As elaborated by one of the interviewees, “When we write, our friends cannot comment freely on our paper but when we blog our friends can comment easily on our blog and we can easily improve our writing through their comments.”

The fact that pupils found blogging fun and that it allowed customization through the change of fonts and colour were also two other main reasons why they liked blogging as a writing tool. Some sample comments were: “It [blogging] is also very fun and interesting”, “When we write on paper, we cannot add pictures to make our writing more interesting but when we blog we can add pictures and other things to make our writing more interesting. If I am a reader I would want to read a writing on a blog as it is more interesting with these add-ons.” One interviewee added, “I can make my posts attractive by choosing colors and changing the font.” This was echoed by another interviewee, “We can decorate the words and make it more colourful so it will look more interesting and nicer.”

One of the major dislikes of using blogging as a tool for writing was that typing could be tedious especially for pupils who could not type fast (i.e., 17 comments for Question two). As mentioned by a pupil, “I dislike the typing as I am not a fast typist.” It was expected that faster typists would prefer blogging, while slower typist would prefer writing. Some pupils also felt that the use of blogging, which entailed the need to stare at the computer monitor, was detrimental to their eyesight. As one pupil noted, “What I dislike about blogging is if we sit with it typing out a big composition it will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of Comments</th>
<th>Sample comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Question 4: My comparison between writing on paper and blogging.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging is faster</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I prefer blogging to writing as I can type very fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing is more tiring</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>I do not like writing on paper as my hands get tired very easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing is faster</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Writing on paper takes less time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers cannot comment on my writing but can comment on my blog to help me improve</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>When we do blogging, we have more ideas from our peers through their comments but on paper, we only have the teacher’s idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier to count the words by using Microsoft word</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing on paper requires you to count the number of words whereas while blogging, the computer can count the words for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking for use of computers will encourage writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Most people tend to like the computer so our liking for the computer will spur us more than writing on paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Continued

We hope that we can add polls, music, comics and other elements into our blog to describe what type of entries to write.
spoil our eyes and will have to wear spectacles.” Pupils also disliked the fact that they could not do a word count on a blog, as indicated by the following comment: “There should be a word count function so that we would not need to count the words one by one.” Another dislike about blogging as a tool for writing was that pupils’ work could be accidentally deleted easily. This was elaborated by one interviewee, “Most people make mistakes and they might accidentally delete their work and will have to recreate it and that takes up a lot of time whereas when I make a mistake on paper the writing still stays but for a blog, I may have to start all over again especially if I accidentally delete the whole blog.”

One interesting finding was the conflicting view that while writing on paper was faster, it could be tiring (i.e., 11 comments and 12 comments respectively for Question four). One reason for this is that when doing their writing on paper, pupils need to copy out the entire work when they are doing drafts, whereas on blogs they only need to delete or revise the specific areas to be corrected. One interviewee provided the following explanation, “When writing on paper we have to rewrite the whole draft but when blogging we only have to rewrite the parts we want to change. The rest could be easily copied and pasted. This will also help me focus on the problem areas and not make me exhausted because sometimes we copy until we are very tired.” That could also be a reason why some felt that writing was more tiring.

A number of suggestions were also given by the pupils in response to Question three on how blogging could be improved when used as a tool for writing. The top three suggestions were: blog site should have word count (i.e., 7 comments), more time should be allocated for blogging (i.e., 7 comments) and more peers should be allowed to comment on individual blogs (i.e., 6 comments). Some of the respective sample comments include: “The blogging on the website should also have a word count to be even faster”, “Give us more time and bring us more often to the computer lab” and “We should get more pupils to comment on my compositions”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be used to inform educators who are interested in the use of blogging and scaffolding for teaching narrative writing. As indicated earlier, through this study, the results may imply that the use of blogging and scaffolding can help improve pupils’ narrative writing ability as pupils’ writings in terms of their language use (e.g., vocabulary) and their total scores for the post-test showed a significant gain compared to that of their pre-test scores, after the blogging and scaffolding treatment. This could be due to a number of reasons including blogs as motivational tools that motivate pupils to write better (Martindale & Wiley, 2005), blogs present a fun and authentic writing environment that ensures that posts are read by an audience that does not only include the teacher (Bruning & Horn, 2000), pupils are able to personalise their blogs and writing (Ferdig and Trammell, 2004), pupils can concentrate on problem areas and modify or develop their writing accordingly, instead of having to copy out all of their writing (Richardson, 2004), blogs enable uni-directional peer revision scaffolding, contributed by peers to be published and read on individual pupils’ blog sites so that they can use them to improve their writing (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Langhorst, 2007), and writing guide that helped pupils to craft better writing pieces (Gibson, 2007; Hallenbeck, 2002).

It is surprising that there was no statistically significant difference in pupil’s narrative writing ability in terms of content generation. We discuss two possible reasons for this phenomenon. First, the short duration of this study may have prevented pupils from doing a more thorough reflection and thinking about their story ideas. Second, pupils have neglected to provide comments about their peers’ story ideas. To test this latter possibility, we conducted further content analyses on the pupils’ blog postings. Results of
our analyses confirmed that many pupils (i.e., 26 out of 36 pupils) did not post comments on their peer’s blog to help them improve on their content or story ideas, even though they were told by the teacher at the beginning of the study to do so. The 26 pupils merely provided comments to help their peers improve in language use by examining their vocabulary and linking words use. Only a handful (i.e., 8 out of 36 pupils) gave comments to help their peers improve on content during the blogging sessions and that did not prove to be enough.

This study points to several implications for the use of blogs in primary school contexts. First, our finding suggests that teachers wishing to implement peer comment should constantly remind pupils to provide feedback on the content generation component, and not merely focus on the language part of their peers’ writings. Second, it is noted that some pupils had difficulty in using blogs due to their limited typing ability. This finding suggests that teachers should perhaps provide a typing workshop or class for these pupils before actual blog use commences. This can help bring their typing ability up to par with the rest of the pupils so that they would not be disadvantaged when using blogs in the classroom.

In conclusion, we return to the aim of our research. Did blogging and scaffolding improve pupils’ narrative writing ability and how did pupils perceive the use of blogs as a tool for writing? The results suggest that blogging and scaffolding can help improve pupils’ narrative writing ability as a comparison of their pre- and post-test scores show an improvement in overall test scores. Overall, pupils also prefer the use of blogs for writing as compared to pen and paper writing and this is determined through the analysis of the pupils’ reflection sheets.

As with any other research, limitations of our work need to be noted. First, the current study was conducted on a short term basis, across three weeks. Although future research is needed to investigate the effect of a longer duration of blogging and scaffolding on pupils’ narrative writing ability and perception of blogging as a writing tool, we believe that having a longer duration would at least give the pupils more time to reflect and post better writing. Second, short-term studies may suffer from a novelty effect. The pupils and teacher in the current study may have been more highly motivated or given more attention to their instruction because of the novelty of the blogs (Richardson, 2006). Consequently, the results could easily have been affected by this type of bias. Whether the pupils would evaluate blogs less or more positively if they use them over a period of time is uncertain. We therefore urge that caution be exercised when interpreting our findings.

Despite the limitations, we believe that the findings are useful because we focused on an important area — elementary school context, which hitherto has not been as frequently investigated as tertiary and adult students in previous research. Moreover, the current study is unique because it is situated in an Asian-Pacific setting, hence making the findings particularly useful to researchers and educators interested in comparing cross-social cultural use of blog contexts.

For future research, we suggest that the current study should be extended for a longer period of time. Perhaps, pupils and teachers could use blogs and scaffolding for an entire year, and studies be conducted to investigate whether the positive impact on the language component scores and overall total scores hold over time, as well as whether there is improvement in the pupil’s narrative writing ability in terms of content generation. A longer study can also provide researchers and educators the opportunity to examine whether pupils’ perceptions of using blogs undergo change over time. In addition, future studies with larger sample sizes would be useful to verify our findings. A larger sample size would also enable researchers to examine whether there is a difference between boys and girls with regard to blog use. Replications of the current study in a different culture, other than Singapore, and with pupils who are less computer-savvy could also be carried out to validate the current findings. We also urge future research to investigate the impact of blog usage on primary school pupils’ learning.
of subjects other than English narrative writing. For example, a study might be conducted to examine the use of blogging and scaffolding on pupils’ learning of Bahasa Indonesia or the Chinese Language. For a rigorous test on the specific causal effect of blogging, the blogging group may be compared to a control group that uses a different technique between pre-test and post-test, such as writing and printing essay on paper for revision by peers.

REFERENCES


Warwick, P. & Maloch, B. (2003). Scaffolding speech and writing in the primary classroom: A consideration of work with literature and science pupil groups in the USA and UK. *Reading, 37*(2), 54-63.


Ruth Mei Fen Wong is currently a Teaching Fellow of Learning Sciences & Technologies at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. She is interested in the creative and perceived affordances of ICT use as a pedagogical tool for enhancing teaching and learning. Postal address: National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616 Email: meifen.wong@nie.edu.sg

Khe Foon Hew is an assistant professor of Learning Sciences & Technologies at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. He is interested in examining student interaction and cognition in computer-supported learning environments. Postal address: National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616 Email: khefoon.hew@nie.edu.sg
APPENDIX 1

(a) Pre-test narrative writing question

Question

I was shopping for my cousin’s birthday present in a shopping centre. Suddenly I heard a scream.

Based on the above situation, write a composition of at least 150 words.
In your composition, make use of the following points: (a) what caused the scream, (b) what happened next, and (c) what happened in the end. You may reorder the points. You may also include other relevant points.

(b) Blogging Question

Question

It was getting dark. My friend and I were walking hurriedly back to our campsite when we heard a cry for help.

Based on the above situation, write a composition of at least 150 words.
In your composition, make use of the following points: (a) why is there a cry for help, (b) what happened next, and (c) what happened in the end. You may reorder the points. You may also include other relevant points.

(c) Post-Test narrative writing question

Question

One afternoon, you were waiting for your good friend at the school gate as usual. Suddenly, you heard a loud sound.

Based on the above situation, write a composition of at least 150 words.
In your composition, make use of the following points: (a) how you felt, (b) what happened next, and (c) what happened in the end. You may reorder the points. You may also include other relevant points.
APPENDIX 2 WRITING MODEL GUIDE FOR BLOGGING QUESTION

Pre-writing Activity 1

Think of descriptive word(s) and/or phrases for the following word webs and write them at the end of the given lines.

Pre-writing Activity 2

Plan your story by making notes in the boxes below.

Figure 1.
**Figure 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A) Orientation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the story about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **What happened first?** |
| **What happened next?** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C) The Climax</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What unexpected incident happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did this affect the characters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did the characters do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was the problem solved?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>D) The Ending</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did the characters feel?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>