

KARADENİZ TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ * SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
UYGULAMALI DİL BİLİMİ YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI

**A QUASI EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF WEBLOG
INTEGRATED PROCESS APPROACH ON EFL STUDENTS' WRITING
PERFORMANCE, AUTONOMOUS LEARNING AND PERCEPTIONS**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Aysel ŞAHİN KIZIL

Temmuz - 2007

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TRABZON

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DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

MA PROGRAM IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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**We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully
adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page no</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	V
ABSTRACT.....	IX
ÖZET	X
LIST OF TABLES.....	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Background of the Study	2
1.3. Statement of the Problem.....	10
1.4. Purpose of the Study.....	12
1.5. Research Questions.....	12
1.5.1. Hypotheses	13
1.6. Significance of the Study.....	13
1.7. Outline of the study	14

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
2.1. Introduction.....	15
2.2. Why Teach Writing?.....	15
2.3. Approaches to Teaching Writing.....	17
2.3.1. Product Approaches to Writing Instruction	18
2.3.2. Genre Based Approach to Writing Instruction.....	19
2.3.3. Process Approach to Writing Instruction	19
2.4. Stages in Process Approach and Classroom Application.....	23

2.4.1. Planning.....	24
2.4.2. Drafting	26
2.4.3. Responding/ Feedback	27
2.4.3.1. Teacher Feedback	27
2.4.3.2. Peer Feedback.....	30
2.4.4. Revising.....	33
2.4.5. Editing	34
2.4.6. Evaluating	35
2.5. Assessment in Writing.....	38
2.6. Technology Use in Language Education.....	44
2.6.1. World Wide Web in Writing Instruction	47
2.6.2. Weblogs and Process Oriented Writing Instruction: A Meeting Point	48
2.7. Weblog Use in Enhancing Learner Autonomy.....	55
2.8. Conclusion	60

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY	61
3.1. Introduction.....	61
3.2. Nature of the Study.....	61
3.3. Research Setting	63
3.4. Participants	64
3.5. Instruments	65
3.5.1. Measures to Determine Students' Proficiency Level.....	65
3.5.1.1. The ALTE (2001) Quick Placement Test.....	65
3.5.1.2. English Proficiency Self Rating Questionnaire	67
3.5.2. Writing Performance Task	69
3.5.2.1. The ESL Composition Profile	70
3.5.3. Measures to Determine Autonomous Learning	72
3.5.3.1. GIAPEL Learning Style Test.....	73
3.5.3.2. Interview	76
3.5.4. Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire	76
3.5.5. The Pilot Work.....	77
3.6. Procedures.....	78

3.6.1. Data Collection.....	78
3.6.2. Writing Instruction For Experimental and Control Group.....	79
3.6.2.1. Writing Instruction for Experimental Group	80
3.6.2.2. Setting up a Blog Supported Classroom on Blogger	81
3.6.2.3. Writing Instruction for Control Group	84
3.6.3. Data Analysis	85

CHAPTER 4

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION	87
4.1. Introduction.....	87
4.2. Students' Proficiency Levels	87
4.3. Effect of Weblog Use on Writing Performance	89
4.4. Effect of Weblog Use on Autonomous Learning	98
4.4.1. GIAPPEL Learning Style Test	98
4.4.2. Student Interview	101
4.5. Students' Perception of Weblog Use.....	112
4.5.1. Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire	112
4.5.2. Interview	119
4.6. Correlation of Perception and Writing Performance	122
4.7. Correlation of Learner Autonomy and Writing Performance.....	124
4.8. Conclusion	125

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION	126
5.1. Introduction.....	126
5.2. Overview of the Study	126
5.3. Conclusion	127
5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study	133
5.5. Limitations of the Study	134
5.6. Prospects for Further Research	135

REFERENCES 137
APPENDICES
CURRICULUM VITAE

ABSTRACT

With the recent advances in computer technology and internet, the process oriented writing instruction that is proved to produce positive outcomes on students' writing performance has taken a new trend. Due to such limitations of school setting as time restriction, lack of opportunity for students to reach a real audience or to satisfy their individual learning needs, it has been understood that effective implementation of process approach to writing instruction is not so easy in practice. This understanding has led to the integration of weblogs in writing instruction.

With the purpose of exploring the potentials of blogging in process oriented writing instruction, this study investigated the effect of weblog integrated writing instruction on students' writing performance and their level of autonomous learning. Additionally, it examined students' perceptions towards weblog use in their writing courses and sought to determine the correlation of students' perceptions and their level in autonomous learning with their writing performance.

50 EFL intermediate students studying at School of Foreign Languages, Karadeniz Technical University (K.T.U.) participated in the study; the control group (n=23) received in-class process oriented writing instruction and the experimental group (n=27) integrated weblog into their writing processes. The data were collected through students' written products, questionnaires and interviews. The study lasted 16 weeks.

The results indicated that weblog integrated writing instruction improved students' writing performance more than just in-class writing instruction. The use of blogs in writing instruction was also helpful for students to develop a sense of autonomous learning. Moreover, students had a favourable perception towards weblog use in their writing courses. However, no significant correlation could be detected between students' perceptions and their improved writing performance. Neither was there a significant relation between students' level of learner autonomy and the improvement in their writing performance.

ÖZET

Bilgisayar ve internet teknolojisindeki son gelişmelerle birlikte, öğrencilerin yazma performansını olumlu yönde etkilediği belirlenen süreç temelli yazma eğitimi yeni bir döneme girmiştir. Kısıtlı ders süresi, gerçek bir okuyucuya ulaşmada veya bireysel öğrenme gereksinimlerinin karşılanmasındaki olanaksızlıklar gibi okul ortamından kaynaklanan bir takım kısıtlamalara bağlı olarak yazma eğitiminde süreç yaklaşımının etkili bir şekilde uygulanmasının çok da kolay olmadığı anlaşılmıştır; ki bu da eğitimcileri süreç temelli yazma eğitimini etkili bir biçimde uygulamanın yollarını aramaya yöneltmiştir. Bu arayışın sonuçlarından biri de yazma eğitiminde weblog kullanımudur.

Süreç temelli yazma eğitiminde weblog kullanımının yerini belirlemek amacıyla bu çalışmada weblog destekli süreç yaklaşımının öğrencilerin yazma performansına ve bağımsız öğrenim seviyelerine etkisi araştırılmıştır. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin yazma dersinde weblog kullanımı ile ilgili tutumları incelenmiş ve öğrencilerin tutumlarının ve özerk öğrenim seviyelerinin yazma performansları ile ilişkisi araştırılmıştır.

Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi (K.T.Ü), Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu öğrencisi 50 kişi çalışmaya katılmıştır. Kontrol grubunda süreç temelli yazma eğitimi yalnızca sınıf içi aktivitelerle verilmiştir; deney grubunda ise süreç temelli yazma eğitimi weblog kullanımıyla desteklenmiştir. 16 hafta süren çalışma boyunca veriler öğrenci yazıları, anketler ve mülakatlar yoluyla toplanmıştır.

Bulgular, weblog destekli yazma eğitiminin öğrencilerin yazma performansını sınıf içi yazma eğitiminden daha fazla geliştirdiğini göstermiştir. Yazma dersinde weblog kullanımı ayrıca öğrencilerde bağımsız öğrenme kavramının gelişmesinde de etkili olmuştur. Öğrencilerin yazma dersinde weblog kullanımı ile ilgili tutumlarının olumlu olduğu saptanmıştır. Ancak, öğrencilerin bu pozitif tutumları ile yazma performansları arasında herhangi bir anlamlı ilişki saptanmamıştır. Aynı şekilde bağımsız öğrenim seviyesi ile yazma performansı arasında da anlamlı bir ilişkinin olmadığı anlaşılmıştır.

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No</u>	<u>Title of the Tables</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1.	Summary of Approaches to Writing Instruction	17
2.	Features of Dependent and Autonomous Learner	57
3.	Groups' Number, Range of Departments, and Educational Background.....	64
4.	Interpretation of Results of Quick Placement Test.....	66
5.	Relationship among ALTE Levels, Common European Framework Levels and Cambridge Exams	66
6.	Description of Levels According to the Council of Europe	68
7.	Relationship between Obtained Scores and Autonomy Level in GIAPEL Learning Style Test.....	75
8.	Proficiency Level of the Participants.....	88
9.	Paired Sample t-test Results for Writing Performance Scores in Each Group.....	90
10.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores as Function of Instruction Method	91
11.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Content.....	92
12.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Organization	94
13.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Vocabulary.....	95
14.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Language Use	96
15.	ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Mechanics	97
16.	Results of GIAPEL Learning Style Test	99
17.	Effect of Weblog on Overall Writing Performance.....	113
18.	Effect of Weblog on the Components of Writing.....	114
19.	Effect of Weblog on Feedback and Revision	115
20.	Weblog in Autonomous Learning	116
21.	Students' Overall Experiences of Weblog.....	118
22.	Correlation of Perception and Writing Performance	123

23. Correlation of Learner Autonomy and Writing Performance.....	124
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LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figures No</u>	<u>Title of the Figures</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1.	Stages in Writing Process	24
2.	Dimensions for Assessing Portfolios	42
3.	Writing Instruction for Experimental Group	81
4.	Setting up a Blog	82
5.	Adding Students to the Class Blog	82

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Being one of the language skills, writing has today constituted an important place in language education. Its dual function in communication and language learning makes writing as one of the indispensable part of language education. Wolff (2000, cited in O'Brien, 2004) emphasizes writing as an important tool for learning a language by regarding writing as “probably the most efficient L2 learning tool we have” (p. 1). Raimes (1983) discusses the reasons of including writing as a part of language teaching syllabus. She sees writing as a reinforcement tool for grammatical structures idioms and vocabulary that students have learned; as a tool for hypotheses testing as it provides students with opportunities to go beyond what they have just learned to say and as a tool for enhancing thinking skills as it helps students express their ideas in the target language.

Having such a salient role in language learning, writing gains an additional importance especially in EFL contexts where students are not exposed to target language outside the class, and do not find opportunities to communicate and express themselves in the target language (Kern & Schultz, 1992; Reichelt, 1999). Kern (2000, cited in O'Brien, 2004) supports integration of writing in EFL contexts by stating that writing enhances learners' ability to think explicitly about how to organize and express thoughts, feelings and ideas by considering a reader's expectations; it provides a space for learners to test hypotheses about the new language; it provides time for learners to process meaning, reducing the anxiety often felt in oral production; it allows learner to be creative.

This general agreement on the importance of writing in language education has led educators and researchers to find the ways of effective writing instruction. Today, two conditions have dominated the research related to teaching writing effectively in language education (Whitey, 1993; O'Brien, 2004). One is the emergence of process approach which focuses on the writer as an independent individual and lays particular stress on a

cycle of writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the publication of a finished text (Tribble, 1996). The other condition is the spread of computers and internet and the advent of different applications of internet in language learning. One of the newest and most promising internet applications with regard to effective writing instruction is weblogs, also known as blog, which are defined simply as “online diaries; logs of thoughts, reflections; a space for individuals to write whatever they choose with an option for readers to comment on what they have read” (Eastment, 2005 p. 358) are one of the newest and the most promising one with regard to effective writing instruction. So, this study primarily sets out to investigate how the use of weblogs integrated in a process based writing course affects EFL students’ writing performance, their attitude and their level in autonomous learning.

1.2. Background of the Study

The development of process-based writing instruction and the advent of internet are the two major conditions that affect the way of teaching writing in language education context. Being aware of the fact that learning to write is more than learning the grammatical rules merely, researchers, evaluators and teachers have begun to reassess the nature of writing and the ways in which writing is learned and taught. The outcomes of this reassessment have led to the rise of process-based instruction to writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Process approach to writing stresses prewriting activities, post-writing tasks such as revising and editing, multiple drafts, peer and teacher feedback on the clarity of writing, and individualized learning.

After the development of process approach, a lot of research –either focusing holistically or measuring each tenet individually- was designed to test its effectiveness and to see to what extent it helps enhance writing ability. One of the early attempts of research on process-oriented writing instruction was done by Kern and Schultz (1992), who focused on the relationship between explicit instruction on the writing process and writing proficiency. They designed a teaching programme which involved highly integration of reading of texts and concentration on writing process as well as the final product. Four essays written over the year by 73 students were evaluated by trained raters. The reported outcome was improvement in writing proficiency in a way that had not previously been the

case for that level of students. A similar result was reported in a small scale study done by Akyel and Kamişli (1997) in Turkey. After a 1.5 semester process-oriented instruction, they found that students increased the time devoted to prewriting, planning, pausing and reorganization and they significantly increased their composition grades.

Apart from these general findings, there are some other research which dealt with the sub-processes such as prewriting, planning, feedback to see how these components affect writing proficiency and quality. They also formed a body of knowledge on how to implement process based writing instruction in classroom. O'Brien (2004) reports a study by Becker (1991) which found that adult learners of German who used brainstorming as a prewriting activity for five minutes before writing produced compositions with more imagery and interesting ideas than the control group. Another study on the effect of prewriting activities on the output was done by Lally (1990), who focused on L1 usage in combination with prewriting activity. Among the participants, one group used their L1 (English) in prewriting and the other group used L2 (French). She found little difference between two groups in terms of vocabulary or expression but she reported that the use of L1 in prewriting contributes to organization. Depending on these findings, Lally (1990) suggests that prewriting in L1 facilitates organization and coherence and this practice may be advantageous for beginning or intermediate FL students.

The principle of feedback in process approach is another topic of study. Jacobs, Curtis, Brain and Huang (1998) conducted a study to examine students' preferences for peer or teacher feedback. They worked with students who were L1 Chinese speakers and accustomed to teacher-centred education. The students were required to write multiple drafts throughout the term and they received both peer and teacher feedback, oral and written. The data were collected through semi-structured interview and the results demonstrated that 93 % of the participant students preferred to have peer feedback included with the claim that peers provided more ideas and were able to spot problems they had missed. Moreover, they reported that giving feedback to their peers contributed to their learning. Jacobs et al. (1998) concluded that two types of feedback complement each other; therefore, it should be included in the writing instruction. Although students' preferences may give some ideas, they do not properly reflect whether the procedure is effective. Hedgecock and Lefkowitz (1992) designed an experimental study to compare the

effect of teacher and peer feedback on writing proficiency. The participants were 30 L1 English students learning French. 14 students in experimental group received oral feedback from their peers on the drafts of assigned essays while 16 students in the control group depended on only teacher feedback for their drafts. The results indicated that control group improved grammatical performance while experimental group improved content, organization and vocabulary.

The question of how teachers should respond to the written work of their students has been another point of study in process oriented writing instruction. Kepner (1991, cited in O'Brien, 2004) designed an experimental study in which he compared two types of feedback/response which might have relation to achievement. The study was carried out in an intermediate EFL Spanish writing course. One group of students received error correction feedback on their fortnightly assigned and graded journal writing and the other group received feedback related to the message in their writings. The post-treatment guided journal entries showed that students who received message related comments produced greater number of higher level propositions and did not produce significantly more errors than the students who received error correction feedback. The researcher concluded that error correction did not affect significantly written accuracy in L2 surface skills and quality of writing while message- related feedback given in the target language had potential to facilitate writing development. Sharing the same idea with Kepner, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) have suggested that while commenting on a written work, a teacher should avoid paying exclusive attention to surface convention (spelling, punctuation, paragraphing etc...) and should not pay too much attention to the grammatical mistakes unless they make the message unintelligible. They also have suggested that comments should offer positive support besides attracting students' attention to the flaws and address organizational issues by offering options rather than dictating solutions. Furthermore, teachers should use a set of criteria identified beforehand while responding to students' writings.

The last area that many researchers concentrated on in process-oriented writing instruction is assessment and grading in writing. The traditional assessment was writing on a single topic for a relatively brief time. The essays were then holistically scored by teachers (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). However, research on writing showed that imposing

restrictions on a writer can affect the overall writing process and consequently, the text quality. Cho (2003) claims that “expecting someone to draft a well-organized essay in less than an hour on a topic that the writer may or may not have thought about before is neither realistic nor fair” (p. 168), and Cho (2003) adds that “such a thing has no place in either real-life or theory” (p. 168).

Various parts in traditional writing assessment ranging from the rater variability to time constraints were studied (Kroll, 1990; Powers and Fowles, 1996) and this has led to improvement in writing assessment. One of the outcomes of this improvement is the introduction of ‘portfolio based assessment’ which is a good example of process-oriented assessment. A portfolio can be defined as an ongoing collection containing either the best representatives of students’ writing ability or all the writings together with the drafted versions. It allows for assessment of multiple writing samples across a range of topics and task types. It is generally agreed that portfolio based assessment has a lot to offer for an effective assessment of writing ability. Song and August (2002) designed an experimental study to compare the performance of two groups of advanced ESL students in a composition course. One of the groups was assessed on the basis of portfolios and the other group was assessed by using a traditional standardized writing assessment, CUNY Writing Assessment Test. The results indicated that students in portfolio assessment group got higher scores and the researchers conclude that portfolio is an appropriate assessment alternative for student writers.

Although the use of portfolios seem quite suitable to process oriented writing instruction, it may pose some problems related to reliability and validity matters because the general case is that the teacher evaluates portfolios by considering the progress that the owners have shown and labels them as ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. In order to solve the reliability and validity problems, what is offered in the related literature is the use of ‘rubric’. Rubrics are defined as “descriptive scoring schemes that are developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or process of students’ efforts” (Moskal, 2000 p. 22). A number of researchers conducted studies on the effectiveness of rubrics by focusing on different aspects. Earlier focus was on how to develop rubrics (Turner & Upshur, 1995); then the focus was directed towards rubrics in relation with validity and reliability. In the study carried out by American Educational Research Association, American Psychological

Association & National Council on Measurement in Education, (1999, as cited in Moskal & Jon, 2000) it was concluded that a well-crafted rubric can provide validity and reliability in the assessment. A similar result was verified in a study by Mott, Etsler and Drumgold (2003) who aimed at determining the reliability, developmental and concurrent validity of a rubric in a newly developed writing environment. A total of 60 students enrolled in a computer supported writing course participated in the study and all their works produced over a 4-month period were judged by 5 raters using the same rubric. To determine the reliability, percentages of agreement and correlational analysis were used. The results indicated that there is a high percentage of agreement among the raters in terms of grading and use of the rubric produced an acceptable interrater reliability for four of the five subscales. Correlational analysis between students' score obtained from the target rubric and Iowa Test of Basic Skills showed that the measure was developmentally and concurrently valid. The researchers concluded that a well-planned and validated rubric applied to different learning environments can produce valid and reliable results.

When all these studies are evaluated holistically, one possible interpretation to reach is that it is not so easy for a teacher (and for students, of course) to implement a process-oriented writing instruction though most of the studies have proved that it will lead students to succeed in writing. A teacher willing to implement process approach should consider a lot of things: the writing topics should be chosen in a way that they should address students' interests and before requiring students to write, they should be provided with lots of materials ranging from reading texts related to the topics to exercises so that the students can choose among them according to their individual needs (Harris & Graham, 1996). Since the process approach emphasizes multiple drafts, students should be motivated to write and each draft should be responded by the teacher to guide them towards successful writing. The teachers should also create opportunities through which students can take feedback other than teacher feedback. They should be encouraged to revise their works and to reflect on what they have learned. When all these duties of a writing teacher are considered in connection with limitations of a school setting (time, overcrowded classes, curriculum, etc...), it is apparent that teaching writing with a process approach is not so easy and the teacher should find some other ways to support the writing instruction in the school. In a study focusing on the implementation of process approach with all its components to the teaching of composition, Brock (1994) investigated the

attitudes of eight Hong Kong secondary school teachers toward implementing process oriented writing instruction with the aim of obtaining a deep understanding of the application of process approach in a school setting. The data were gathered through questionnaires, evaluation forms, descriptions of teaching background, examinations of lesson plans and the analysis of teacher diaries. After a six month implementation of process approach, the data analysis implied that teachers were in favour of applying process approach; however, there were constraints in implementing it in a school setting. Teachers, for instance, complained about time pressure and difficulties in structuring activities and using lesson time in process oriented composition class. They also reflected on the importance of motivation in process approach and resistance of the students who lacked motivation towards peer feedback, revising and editing. The last mostly emphasised constraint of process approach implementation was having large classes. The researcher concluded that a successful implementation of process approach would produce positive results when structural and environmental problems such as large classes or limited course hour were solved. He suggested that “change can occur when adequate support is provided” (p.90).

Gettings (1997) summarizes the general case in implementing the process approach to the teaching of writing in a school setting as follows:

Since the goal is for the students to apply language and content knowledge to their own individual study or experiment, a process approach requires teachers to individualize instruction and feedback as much as possible in order to meet the wide range of student needs and interests. The teacher has to consider the facilities and time which students need to both reinforce previously acquired knowledge/skills, learn new knowledge/skills, and to apply that learning. This is especially difficult when class size is large, the time for individual teacher-student, student-student conferencing is short, or student access to appropriate content texts and resources is limited. These restrictions of size, time and resources are common in most EFL teaching situations worldwide (p.1).

One of the solutions to such problems in the implementation of process approach in a school setting is the use of internet as a supporting tool. According to Gettings (1997) integration of internet with a process approach to teaching writing creates opportunities to overcome the difficulties encountered in school setting.

Although the integration of internet into language teaching has not got a long history, there is a great deal of research investigating different applications of internet as a teaching aid. Al-Jarf (2004, cited in Wang, 2005) designed a study to investigate the effect of internet based instruction on the writing of EFL students' writing. The experimental group received online instruction in which they posted their writings on a discussion board, located information from the internet and checked their spelling by using Microsoft Word. The control group received only in-class instruction. The results showed that the use of web-based lessons as a supplement to class instruction was significantly more effective than in-class instruction alone. Greenfield (2003) conducted a qualitative case study to examine secondary ESL students' attitudes and perceptions of e-mail exchanges, another internet application. The exchange was based on an instructional model consisting of process oriented writing, cooperative learning and communicative language teaching. The participants were 10th grade ESL students in Hong Kong and 11th grade English students in Iowa, U.S.A. After the treatment, Greenfield reports that most of the Hong Kong students said that they enjoyed the exchange, gained general confidence in English and computer skills and felt that they made significant progress in writing, thinking and speaking.

As the technology advances, various internet applications have come into existence. One of the newest applications that internet offers is what is called as 'weblog' (also known as blog). Weblog is simply defined as a personal web based space for writing, an online journal that an individual can continuously update with his or her own words, ideas, and thoughts through software that enables one to easily do so (Campbell, 2003). Johnson (2004) argues that although not originally intended for EFL classes, weblogs have immense potential as an extremely valuable tool for the teaching of second language writing. By utilizing free blogging services on the internet, teachers are capable of creating and storing online supplemental materials for students, posting class notes for student review and giving general feedback as a whole or individually. Students are able to submit assignments and students themselves can read and leave comment on the posted assignments. Will Richardson (2002) notes potential implementations of weblogs as they can make student learning logs giving a place for feedback, collaboration, and reflection, they can create a peer coaching environment and ease classroom management by establishing a space for posting assignments, links and notes of interests.

As for research on weblogs in education, there are few studies examining the effects of integrating weblogs into language learning context and writing instruction. In a qualitative research design, Cole (2004) examined weblogs as a tool for response to literature. She also investigated the perceptions of participant students and teachers. The participants were 3 teachers representing two middle classes and 68 students. The data were collected through interview, reflective journals and pre- and post-method survey. The results showed that blogs can serve as a tool for response to literature leading to higher levels of thinking and quality in their responses; the use of blogs can indeed foster motivation through creating an awareness of audience and an attention to intelligibility. Similar positive results were obtained in a small scale study by Wu (2005). In this study, Wu (2005) aimed at measuring students' reactions to the use of blogs in EFL writing class. A total of 51 students having intermediate level in English writing were used as subjects. After a-semester-application which covers posting homework assignments and writing online journals, a blog survey was conducted to learn their ideas on blogging. According to survey results, more than half of the respondents believed that using blogs is helpful for their writing skill. They reported that blogging eased the process of feedback, editing and revision – the stages stressed in process approach to writing.

Though limited in number, the studies and the discussions about the potentials of weblog use in education imply that blogging can be a powerful tool for facilitating process oriented writing instruction in a school setting where the classes are overcrowded, where the teacher has to consider time and curriculum restrictions and where students' access to resources is limited. Weblog use can possibly provide advantages in all stages stressed in process approach by allowing teacher to extend writing instruction beyond the school and create motivation in the students when it is integrated as a supplemental tool for teaching writing.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Together with the increasing number of studies on writing instruction, it was understood that the traditional writing instruction did not satisfy learners' and teachers' needs (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). These studies have led to the rise of process approach to

writing instruction. Process approach focuses on the writer as an independent individual and lays particular stress on a cycle of writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the publication of a finished text (Tribble, 1996). The objective in process approach is to develop a community of learners who share and help each other, who make personal choices about what they read and write, who take ownership and responsibility for their learning, who take risks in their reading and writing and are able to monitor their learning, and who collaborate in evaluating their efforts and progress (Harris & Graham, 1996). It is the teachers' duty to develop such a community of learners. In order to do this, teachers should provide students with opportunities for extended writing and emphasize student ownership of writing. This can be achieved through publishing what they have written. When the students are aware of the audiences they are addressing, they will probably take ownership and responsibility for their writing (Tsiu, 2000). Teachers should design purpose-specific and reader-specific tasks so that the learners can draft and redraft with the communicative context in mind (Stewart & Cheung, 1989, cited in O'Brien, 2004). Students should be provided with various types of feedback from the teacher and the peers so, teacher should encourage peer reading at each stage of the writing process to help students develop revising skills.

However, it is obvious that realizing all these things is not so easy in a school setting where class size is large; teachers have to consider curriculum and time constraints; where students' access to proper resources is limited, and where students have no audience other than the teacher. Gettings (1997) observes that this restriction of time, size and resource persist in most EFL schools in the world.

As an EFL teaching setting, Karadeniz Technical University, School of Foreign Languages shares the similar problems mentioned above. School of Foreign Languages is a preparatory school established to teach English to the students enrolled in various programmes at Karadeniz Technical University. The students graduating from this school are expected to have academic language skills. In other words, they are expected to read, write, listen and speak in English in their future life. Nevertheless, the present situation in the target setting shows that there are problems, especially in writing skill in reaching the aims of teaching language skills to the students. In a study primarily conducted to find out the proper curriculum design, Saka (2005) has reached significant implications related to

the current situation in teaching writing in School of Foreign Languages. He asked 131 students (97 from School of Foreign Languages and 34 graduates) about the major difficulties that they have, and 48.5 % of the students in the School of Foreign Languages and 53 % of the graduate students showed writing skill as their main problem. They reported difficulties in expressing themselves in written English, and writing paragraphs and essays in their field of study. The fact that students have not been satisfied with their writing skill makes it clear that there is a need for an effective writing instruction in the setting in question. The same need has been felt by the present researcher as well. Working over five years in School of Foreign Languages, the researcher has observed that students demonstrate low performances on expressing themselves effectively in written English even those who are relatively successful in other skills. What the related literature offers in terms of effective writing instruction is the implementation of process approach (Mol, 1992; Kern & Schultz, 1992; Brock, 1994; Akyel & Kamışlı, 1997; Smith, 2000). As the studies mentioned earlier suggest, a successful application of process approach to the teaching of writing can lead to an increase in the writing performance of students. However, the successful implementation of process approach in the target research setting is difficult since the class sizes are generally large; only four hours are allocated to writing course per week, and students' access to resources for writing skill is restricted and teacher is the sole person reading students' writings. As it is clear from the discussions in the previous section, use of internet with its weblog application can facilitate process based writing instruction in such a setting.

Therefore, this study is an attempt to disclose the potential effects of weblogs on learners' writing proficiency through process oriented writing course. It is assumed that through integrating weblogs into the general flow of process oriented writing instruction, a writing teacher might be able to create opportunities for students to communicate their thoughts to audiences (peer or any potential internet user) other than the teacher and this might motivate them to write. Since the students and teachers can reach the posted assignments at any time, this will ease the feedback sessions, thus weblogs are assumed to increase the success rate. Moreover, the teacher using weblog can prepare lots of reader-specific materials and publish them online so that the students can reach such materials at any time and choose according to their needs. This is assumed to have positive effect on writing proficiency of students. By maintaining a blog, students will have their own

personal learning spaces where they can publish all their works and organize their learning process; this is assumed to encourage students to take ownership of their works and to take responsibility for their learning, so the concept of autonomous learning is deemed to be developed in the students.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

Although most of the studies in the related literature have proved that using a process oriented writing instruction helps students gain proficiency in writing, when all the stages are considered, it is apparent that it may not be easy to use it in every setting; especially in school settings with limited time. In the search of a solution to implement process approach successfully in the School of Foreign Languages, K.T.U., it is assumed that weblog can make an effective tool to increase writing proficiency of students because of its potential offers in connection with writing ability. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate the effect of the use of weblog on EFL writing. Specifically, this study attempts to examine the influence of weblogs integrated in a process oriented writing instruction on EFL learners' writing performance and motivation towards writing. It also seeks to explore the place of weblog use in enhancing learner autonomy and learners' perception of weblogs as a means of writing.

1.5. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any difference between the writing performance of students who received in-class process oriented writing instruction and that of students who received weblog integrated process based writing instruction?
2. Does the use of weblog in a process oriented writing course have any effect on enhancing learner autonomy?
3. What are the perceptions of students towards weblogs as a means of writing?

In addition to these main questions, this study addresses the following specific questions as well:

1. Does students' level in learner autonomy affect their writing performance?
2. Does students' perception of weblog use affect their writing performance?

1.5.1. Hypotheses

Along with the first question, two hypotheses were formulated:

1) There is a significant difference between the writing performance of students who received in-class process oriented writing instruction and that of students who received weblog integrated process based writing instruction.

2) Integration of weblog into process approach to the teaching of writing improves writing performance.

For the other questions, one hypothesis for each was formulated:

3) The use of weblog in a process oriented writing course has a positive effect on enhancing learner autonomy.

4) Students have a favourable perception towards weblogs as a means of writing.

5) The level of students in autonomous learning positively correlates with the level of their improved writing performance.

6) The level of students' perception of weblog use in writing course positively correlates with improved level of their writing performance.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant from both local and global level. On local level, this study is thought to shed light on the matter of designing an effective writing instruction in the School of Foreign Languages. Since there is not any research directly related to the teaching of writing in the target setting, this study will form a base for future studies.

On the global level, this study is important because most of the studies on the use of internet in teaching language skills such as writing relied on self reported and descriptive information provided by the students. The relationship between perceived effect of internet applications to writing performance and its actual influence on the same area still remains as an open question (Stepp-Greany, 2002; Chuo, 2004). So this study with an experimental design is assumed to contribute to answer such a question. Finally, this study is also significant for the literature related to weblog use in language teaching, in particular, as the

related literature depends mainly on the theoretical information and there are a few studies on its integration into a language skill like writing. In this respect, this study is supposed to make a contribution to the relevant literature.

1.7. Outline of the Study

Chapter One provides an introduction to the topic and explains the background of the study with the research questions and hypotheses. It also gives information about the objectives and significance of the study.

Chapter Two is a review of the relevant literature. It begins with the place of writing in language education. After a brief explanation about the approaches to the teaching of writing, it gives information about process approach in detail. Then, it proceeds with the information about technology use in language education, and internet and weblog in writing instruction. It ends with discussing the effect of blogging on learner autonomy.

Chapter Three explains the methodology adopted in the study by elaborating on such issues as setting, participants, instruments, procedures and data analysis.

Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis of the data collected during the study and it discusses the obtained results.

Chapter Five explains the conclusions, limitations and implications of the study. This chapter also gives suggestions for further research. Finally, it ends with the references and appendices.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature about writing instruction with a focus on process approach and provides information regarding the use of computers, weblog use in particular, in teaching writing. After a brief discussion about the significance of writing instruction, it begins with the approaches to teaching writing, which highlights process approach. Then, a short explanation on computer use in language education and writing instruction follows. And it subsequently discusses how computer applications, especially weblogs facilitate process oriented writing instruction. It ends with an elaboration on the relation between learner autonomy and weblog use in process writing.

2.2. Why Teach Writing?

Being one of the most complex processes of all language arts, practice of writing has manifested itself in language education since 1960s. In line with the theories of language education, writing and writing instruction have been regarded in various dimensions. From a pedagogical dimension, writing is evaluated as an important aid. According to Byrne (1982), the introduction and practice of some form of writing enable language teachers to provide for different learning styles and needs. It helps learners who do not feel secure in oral skills to develop a sense of language. Besides, writing provides variety in classroom activities and, because of its being extended to out-of-class, writing increases the amount of language contact. Emphasizing its importance in language learning, Raimes (1983) handles writing in a communicative dimension. She argues that the basic aim in learning a language is to communicate and in real life situations, one can find himself in a position that she or he must communicate a message in a written form. Therefore, in

communicative level, it is quite important to equip language learners with writing skills. With regard to connection between writing and language learning process, Raimes (1983) lists three main reasons illustrating salience of writing.

1- Writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary taught to the learners. 2- Writing provides the learners with a chance to be adventurous with the language. When students write, they may go beyond what they have learned and discover the language on their own. 3- While writing, learners feel a real need to find the right word or a new way of expressing their idea, which leads learners to be really involved with the target language (p. 3).

All these advantages of writing, therefore, contribute to the language learning process. Chastain (1988) shares similar thoughts and regards writing as “a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language” (p. 244). He notes that as a means of communication and language learning tool, writing is quite crucial in the typical language classroom.

Apart from its importance in communicative and linguistic levels, writing is also seen valuable in terms of developing thinking skills. It is considered to be a powerful instrument of thinking since it provides students with a way of gaining control over their thoughts. Through writing, students learn how to organize and express thoughts, ideas and feelings by considering a reader’s expectations. So, it helps personal growth (Kern, 2000; O’Brien, 2004). In their report, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2004) regards writing as a medium of thought and claims that through the practice of writing, students can be supported in higher-order skills like “solving problems, identifying issues, constructing questions, reconsidering something one had already figured out” (para. 13)

When considered from these points, writing instruction is currently seen as an indispensable part of language education programmes as it contributes to the linguistic, communicative and cognitive growth of language students (Kirby & Liner, 1981; Smith, 1982; Farris, 1997).

2.3. Approaches to Writing Instruction

Teaching writing skills has always been there in the field of language learning. However, instructional strategies and importance attributed to writing varied in different periods; sometimes it was seen as only something to support learning grammatical structures of the target language and at other times it was regarded as a separate skill which should certainly be developed by the learners. In the literature of writing instruction, a number of approaches have been identified. The following table is a summary of the main approaches to teaching of writing.

Table: 1
Summary of the Approaches to Writing Instruction

Approach	Central Focus	Goals
The Controlled Composition Model (Controlled-to-Free Approach, The Free Writing Approach)	Language form in text	Grammatical accuracy Vocabulary building Second language proficiency
Current Traditional Rhetoric (Paragraph Pattern Approach, Grammar/Syntax/Organization Approach)	Language use in text	Paragraph and text organization patterns Proficient use of words and sentences Classification of the discourse into description, narration etc...
Genre Approach (Social Approach/Communicative Approach)	Text and context	Control of rhetorical structure of specific text types
Process Approach	Writer and stages of writing process	Control of techniques

Source: Adapted from Hyland, 2003,

Each approach in the table has its own distinguishing features. However, when all these approaches are considered in terms of their central focus, it is possible to claim there have basically been three approaches to the teaching of writing: Product based approaches, genre based approach and process approach which are further described in the following section.

2.3.1. Product Approaches to Writing Instruction

Together with the advent of audio-lingual method of second language teaching, and because of the effect of structural linguistics and behaviourist learning theories, it was assumed that language was speech and learning was habit formation. These views were extended to writing instruction as well, and the result is the birth of the product approaches in 1960s (Silva, 1990). Zamel (1976) states that in product approaches, writing was regarded as the “synonymous of skill in language usage and structure” (p. 29). The main point of focus was the end product containing correct usage of language. Learning to write was treated a kind of habit formation practiced through previously given models. The basic function of writing was to reinforce the learner’s grammatical knowledge (Hyland, 2003). Classroom activities associated with product approaches were substitutions and controlled writing, guided writing in which students were imitating model texts, and free writing in which learners used the patterns they developed to write an essay, letter etc... (Hyland, 2003; Steele, 2004). Teacher’s role was to assign the topics, set due times and then to evaluate the submitted works. The assignments were written in one draft and while evaluating the teachers were concentrating only on the form of the product. The ideas and the content of the written work were ignored (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Teachers only judge, evaluate and assign a final grade to the end product. The feedback was generally in the form of short commentary written by the teacher, which has no function in improving the learners’ writing ability (Zamel, 1985). Therefore, the traditional approach to writing instruction brought about students writing lots of compositions which were grammatically correct but problematic in terms of content.

Towards the end of the 1960s, language teachers became dissatisfied with the traditional approach to writing on realizing its deficiencies in meeting goals of writing, and developments in psychology and philosophy led researchers and educators to re-examine writing in connection with product approaches (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). As a result, genre based approach which focuses on reader and content, and process approach which focuses on writer and the writing process emerged in language education.

2.3.2. Genre Based Approach to Writing Instruction

Genre based approach rose from the idea that in order to generate effective texts, the writer should focus on the reader to be addressed. The text was mainly seen as something written to achieve a purpose, so it had to be associated with the notion of genre.

There are many definitions of genre. Martin (1992) provides a definition which regards writing primarily as a goal oriented, staged process. It is goal oriented because it sets out to achieve something such as conveying a message. In other words, it has been claimed that writing is for communication. Focusing on the communicative purpose of writing, Swales (1990) states that “a genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p. 158).

Such definitions of genre also imply some important considerations for classroom implementation of genre approach. Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction should deal with teaching students how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful texts. Linguistic patterns are seen as a way for writers to realize their certain goals and intentions, certain relationships with their reader, and to convey certain information. Accordingly, the forms of a text are resources used to accomplish these. Writing classroom is characterized by talk, many kinds of writing and by control of the students over the structure and grammatical aspect of the text they write.

To sum up, genre oriented writing instruction focuses on the text incorporating discourse and contextual aspects of language use in a text. It does not only address the needs of writers to compose texts for certain readers but it draws the teacher into considering how texts actually work as communication.

2.3.3. Process Approach to Writing Instruction

The process oriented approach to teaching writing is an idea that emerged towards the end of past century as a result of various researches in the field of applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics and educational ethnography. In 1970s, the concern for product in writing research was replaced with the writing process and researchers

began to focus on the question of *what is involved in the act of writing* (Mol, 1992). In attempting to answer this question, lots of studies were conducted. Among them, Emig's (1971, cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) study represented a breakthrough for writing instruction. By using case study research and protocol analyses, she tried to see what writers were doing when they were writing. The results of her research led to a "view of writing as a recursive rather than a linear process; she called attention to the importance of preplanning and editing as ongoing activities and writers' errors as a source of data" (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 90). Subsequent to Emig's study, several researchers conducted product centred studies. Some researchers such as Sommers (1980), Bridwell, (1980) and Faigley and Witte (1981) focused on revising in composing process and others such as Perl (1979) and Pianko (1979) clarified some characteristics of learners' writing process.

Flower and Hayes (1981) approached the question of *what is involved in the act of writing* from a cognitive point of view and designed various studies to see how writers compose. The result was the assertion that "writing consists of distinct processes; writing processes are highly embedded; writing is goal directed and writing stimulates the discovery of new goals" (cited in Mol, 1992, p. 14). At the end of a number of studies, they found out that there are three main processes used during the act of composing: planning, writing and reviewing.

Beginning from 1980s, socially oriented views were added to the earlier findings (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Kamimura, 2000). The emerging theory was that writing can only be understood from the perspective of a social context. It was believed that in order to understand what is involved in the act of writing, it is necessary to see how writers perform under normal, natural conditions; therefore a number of studies were designed. (Graves, 1984; Calkins, 1986; Harste et al. 1984 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). The ethnographic studies on writing process led to the introduction of such concepts as audience, purpose and interaction with peers to writing instruction. Under the light of all these research, today what is known as process approach to teaching writing came into existence.

Though the literature provides various definitions, process approach to teaching writing in its simplest form can be defined as instructing learners on the stages of writing by

making them write. Tribble (1996) defines process approach to teaching writing skills as “an approach which focuses on the writer as an independent producer of texts and stresses on a cycle of writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the publication of a finished text” (p. 37). Matsuda (2003) offers a more detailed definition of process approach as it is an approach with an emphasis on “teaching writing not as product but as process; helping students discover their own voice; allowing students to choose their own topic; providing teacher and peer feedback; encouraging revision and using student writing as the primary text of the course” (p. 67). According to Harris and Graham (1996), process approach is distinguished from the previous writing theories as it gives priority to the learner and learner’s needs and sees learning as a socially oriented activity that can be realized in functional and meaningful contexts.

Drawing from the writing research done in 70s and 80s, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) list basic principles of process-oriented writing instruction. Process approach encourages:

- Self-discovery and authorial ‘voice’
- Meaningful writing on topics of importance (or at least of interest) to the writer
- The need to plan out writing as a goal-oriented, contextualized activity
- Invention and pre- writing tasks, and multiple drafting with feedback between drafts
- A variety of feedback options from real audiences, whether from peers, small group, and/or the teacher, though conferencing, or though other formative evaluation
- Free writing and journal writing as alternative means of generating writing and developing written expression, overcoming writer’s block
- Content information and personal expression as more important than final product grammar and usage
- The idea that writing is multiply recursive rather than linear as a process-tasks are repeated alternatively as often as necessary
- Students’ awareness of the writing process and of notions such as audience, voice, plans, etc... (p. 87).

These principles shape the practical application of process approach in the classroom. Though the activities employed to apply process writing may vary from classroom to classroom according to time available, number of students, experience and skills of the students, it is still possible to identify some common characteristics of process based writing instruction implemented in the language classroom.

The first common point of writing process programs is that instruction is focused on the writing process. Mol (1992) elaborates on this feature as:

...not only are the students are initiated into the same process that writers go through in a manner that allows them experience the stages (pre- writing, drafting, revision, editing) in a conscious, orderly way, but also the teacher is prepared to intervene in the process with suggestions of useful strategies to help students overcome difficulties encountered in each of the stages (p. 25).

The aim in doing this is to help students to gain control of their writing processes.

The way that is followed in assignments is the second common characteristic of process writing programs. The assigned writing tasks encourage students to write in a variety of modes and the choice about subject of the writing is mostly left to the students. The underlying idea in assignments is that students can become successful writers only when they write on a topic which is important or at least interesting to them (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Tribble, 1996; Kroll, 2004).

The third common characteristic of process writing programs is the consideration of audience and purpose which is generally ignored in the earlier approaches. The writing in process approach is evaluated by “how well it meets the audience needs as well as fulfils the writers’ intention” (Hairston, 1982, cited in Mol, 1992, p. 27). Since it is not so easy to arouse a sense of audience in the students in a school setting where the unique addressee is the teacher himself, some solutions including school magazines and the use of internet have been developed.

The fourth characteristic of process-oriented writing instruction is the focus on feedback. Because the aim in process approach is to lead the students towards the production of best writing, if not the perfect, by experiencing various stages of writing, they should be guided at each stage by being provided with feedback. By the word feedback in process approach what is meant is not only correction on form but also guiding students in content (ideas and organization) as well. In order to make the students discover writing, various types of feedback including teacher feedback, peer feedback and real audience feedback are favoured (Raimes, 1983; Tribble, 1996; Harris and Graham, 1999). According to Bruffee (1981, cited in Mol, 1992), “students learned to write better if they

were helping each other rather than working alone or with a teacher” (p. 28). In most of the process writing classrooms, peer-feedback sessions are organized (Ferris, 2003).

The last characteristic of process writing programs is related to the teacher-role. In process approach, the main role of the teacher is as a facilitator (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994). As a facilitator, the teacher considers the students writing as work in progress and responds to a number of aspects of the work to help students extend their knowledge of the best way of writing the text. Tribble (1996) identifies three more roles of teacher in process based writing instruction: audience, evaluator, and examiner. As an audience, teacher responds to the students’ writing as an interested reader by “referring ideas, feelings or perceptions that the students have tried to communicate” (p. 119). As an evaluator, teacher doesn’t aim at improving a particular text but improving overall performance of students as writers by commenting general strengths and weaknesses. As an examiner, “teacher has to provide as objective an assessment as possible of how well a student can write” (Tribble, 1996, p. 120). The basic duty of teacher in process oriented pedagogies is to create collaborative environments facilitating idea exchange and negotiation among the learners.

2.4. Stages in Process Approach and Classroom Application

Process approach to teaching writing has emerged as a result of the studies which have sought an answer to the question of *what writers do in the act of writing* with the aim of improving writing instruction in language learning. Researchers have been primarily concerned with socio-educational context for learning to write and then the focus has shifted to cognitive aspects of writing. A number of studies on the nature of composing processes and their development have been designed. The initial finding of the studies was that writing is a recursive process (Flower and Hayes, 1981; Raimes, 1983; Hedge, 1988; White and Arndt, 1991 cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) and “writers constantly shift among three basic stages of writing; prewriting, writing and revising” (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 19). As process approach has evolved, the stages that a writer goes through while writing are identified certainly. The following figure is an illustration of these conceptual stages:



Figure: 1
Stages in Writing Process

Source: Adapted from Hyland, 2003

Today, educationists and researchers agree that “process approach as a classroom activity incorporates four basic writing stages –planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing- and three other stages externally imposed on students by the teacher, namely responding (sharing), evaluating and publishing (Seow, 2002, p. 316). The following section presents these stages and provides information on classroom application.

2.4.1. Planning (Prewriting)

In process writing, the first stage that the students need to go through is to find something to write about any subject chosen. This stage is named as pre-writing. Pre-writing centres around engaging students in the writing process and helps them discover what is important or true for them about any subject at a particular time. At this stage learners generate tentative ideas by considering the audience, purpose and tone of writing and gather information for writing. In generating ideas, a number of strategies that help learners to explore the topic can be used (Harris and Graham, 1996; Ghaith, 2002).

Though there is no agreement on which strategy is the best, the mostly suggested ones in implementing process writing are brainstorming, clustering, free-writing and listing.

Brainstorming is an activity which means thinking about the topic and noting whatever is remembered without considering the relevancy. *Clustering* means forming words related to a stimulus. The words are circled and then linked by lines to show discernible clusters (Seow, 2002). Clustering is especially useful for students “who know what they want to say but just can’t say it” (Proett & Gill, 1986, p. 6). *Free-writing* is writing down the words and phrases about a topic freely and quickly. In *listing*, students think about certain points of the subject and list them under certain titles.

Research on use of prewriting practices has generally pointed to positive outcomes. Focusing on the prewriting activities associated with process approach to teaching writing, Becker (1991, cited in Riechelt, 2001) designed an experimental study investigating effect of clustering through brainstorming in relation with improved writing content. 424 adult learners of German at various proficiency levels in a language school constituted the sample for the study and they were randomly assigned as experimental and control group. All the students wrote one composition by choosing one of two given topics. Students in experimental group used clustering for five minutes before writing and control group did not. The written works are examined by two raters who compared pair of compositions across the groups in terms of ideas. The results showed that experimental group outperformed the control group in including interesting and imagery ideas in their writings. The author suggests that clustering and the other pre writing techniques similar, in logic, to clustering should be introduced to the students and they should be directed to use before writing in the implementation of process writing. Martinez-Gibson (1998) conducted a study on brainstorming as a pre-writing activity in an EFL context. A total of 43 fifth semester university students of Spanish served as subject. After being instructed on writing a compare/contrast essay, the students were divided into two groups. Both groups were shown a television commercial for a soft drink describing both Spanish and American culture. After seeing the advertisement, one group participated in activities including brainstorming about their knowledge about Spanish culture, categorizing these ideas and discussing their knowledge of the differences between Spanish and American culture. The other group were required only to observe the sceneries in the commercial. Then, two groups wrote an essay comparing and contrasting Spanish and American culture. Analysis and comparison of the writings by the students demonstrated that the students doing pre

writing outperformed the other group in recognizing the cultural differences emphasized in the commercial, task completion and cohesiveness of writing.

With regard to the language used in prewriting, though there is little empirical study directly focusing on language choice and planning (O'Brien,2004), it is advised to allow students to shift between their first language since prewriting aims at generating ideas not using correct language (Friedlander, 1990; Lally, 2000). Woodall (2002) investigates using the first language while writing in a second language in relation with language proficiency, task difficulty and language group. 28 adult students from intermediate and advanced ESL, Japanese and Spanish classes at a university in America served as sample for the study. Using protocol analysis, Woodall (2002) collected the data by asking participants to think aloud while producing two writing samples –a personal letter and a persuasive essay-. The observed, coded and videotaped think-aloud sessions were analyzed in a hierarchical design using two repeated measure of ANOVAs. The results suggested that less proficient L2 learners use their L1 more frequently than advanced learners, and that more difficult tasks increase the duration of L1 use in L2 writing. By interpreting the results, Woodall (2002) concludes that students at both intermediate and advanced levels use their L1 for a variety of purposes ranging from higher level operations like planning and revising to lower-level operations like editing and spelling, and he suggests that learners should be allowed to switch between L1 and L2 particularly in planning stage in writing process.

2.4.2. Drafting

After gathering sufficient ideas, the next stage in process writing is drafting stage at which the learners begin the writing production. At drafting stage, the students focus their attention on development of meaning at flow of thought in their writing. Focusing on the content, students don't pay much attention to the surface structure or grammatical accuracy.

As for the implementation, some strategies are advised to employ in translating thoughts into the first and successive drafts. The common ones are *writing off-leads*, *personal letters*, *conferencing*, and *reflecting and questioning*. *Writing off-leads* means creating several first lines and then using the keywords and direction suggested by one of

these leads. *Personal letters* refers to writing a first draft as if it were a letter to a friend. It is thought to free the students to create their first drafts. *Conferencing* means talking about ideas with a teacher or peer. This may prove to be helpful for students to see how they can start and develop their first drafts. *Reflecting and questioning* is related to pausing to ask oneself what he/she is saying and if he needs to say more or say it differently. This will help students move their drafts forward. At drafting stage, what teachers should do is to encourage students to say what they mean as directly as they can by considering the audience and purpose (Raimes, 1983; Tribble, 1996; Harris and Graham, 1996).

2.4.3. Responding/ Feedback

Responding to student writing plays an important role in the successful implementation of process writing (Seow, 2002). It is between drafting and revising. In process writing, a written text isn't regarded as an end-product but as a work implying learner current position in writing and as a source of data through which learner can be guided towards better writing. Hyland (2003) underlines the significance of response in process approach as:

Writers typically intend their texts to be read, a response from readers provides opportunities for them to see how others respond to their work and to learn from these responses. This kind of formative feedback aims at encouraging the development of students' writing and is regarded as critical in improving and consolidating learning. Feedback/response, therefore emphasizes a process of writing and re-writing where the text isn't seen as self-contained but points forward to other texts the students will write (p. 177)

The nature of response to drafts can vary widely and feedback practices differ in accordance with the teacher's preferences, the kind of task and the effect that is aimed to create. There are two main response/feedback types employed in process writing programs; namely teacher feedback and peer-feedback.

2.4.3.1. Teacher Feedback

Research suggests that teacher feedback is highly valued by second language writers (Kepner, 1991; Reid, 1994; Zhang, 1995 cited in Riechelt, 2001; Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti, 1997; Hyland, 2003) and must be certainly integrated into a writing program. What

is not certain, however, is whether the teacher should focus on ideas or form and which strategy he should adopt while responding (Fathman & Whalley, 1990). In order to decide the focus of feedback, teachers are advised to consider what students want from feedback and what they attend to in their revision. Nevertheless, the general case related to the focus of feedback in process based writing instruction is that teacher responses to ideas and organization in earlier drafts and grammatical accuracy in later drafts (Ashwell, 2000; Kroll, 2004).

In a study on focus of teacher response, Kepner (1991, cited in Riechelt, 2001) investigated the impact of different sorts of teacher feedback on student writing. A total of 60 intermediate level college learners of Spanish participated in the study and they wrote eight guided journal entries over the course of the term. As feedback, one of the groups received error correction with explanation and the other was given message-related comments written in Spanish. The sixth journal entry was examined in terms of the number of higher-level propositions like analysis, comparison/contrast, inference/interpretation and evaluation as well as of the number of grammar, vocabulary and syntax related errors. The results indicated that the group receiving message-related comments produced a significantly greater number of higher level propositions than the group receiving error correction only. What's more, the groups did not differ significantly from each other in terms of errors produced. Depending on the findings, Kepner (1991) concludes that grammar correction of L2 writing and rule-reminders do not seem to pose any advantage in improving students' level of written accuracy in surface skills; neither have they improved the quality of writing; however, response to content has the potentials to facilitate writing development.

As for the strategies in giving teacher feedback, the related literature provides a wide range of techniques. Among them, commonly used ones are *commentary*, *minimal marking*, *electronic feedback*, *checklists* and *teacher-student conferencing* (Ghaith, 2002; Hyland, 2003).

Commentary is the commonest type of teacher feedback. It consists of handwritten, inserted into the students' computer file or sent by e-mail commentary on student paper itself. Apart from providing students with ideas on their writing, commentary creates the

chance for students to see the target language out of textbooks (Harmer, 2001). The disadvantage of commentary is that students may not understand or misunderstand what the teacher has written (Hyland, 2003).

Another method of giving feedback is to introduce a checklist. *Checklists* refer to a set of criteria that are looked for in an assigned text. Teachers respond to the students' writing in relation to these criteria. Though the use of checklists in responding may eliminate the possibility of misunderstandings by students and may be useful in showing students what is valued in a particular piece of writing, they may cause some problems because of their restricting the range of issues that can be addressed.

The next strategy followed in giving feedback is *minimal marking* which is related to providing feedback on form in particular. In this form of feedback, teachers use a set of correction codes to identify and classify the problematic parts of form of the writing. Research suggests that indicating the location and type of error is more effective in stimulating a student response. (Bates et al., 1993; Ferris, 1997, cited in Hyland, 2003). The disadvantage is that there may be some cases, especially in EFL context, in which the problem cannot be classified by any of the codes set before (Byrne, 1988).

With the advances in computer technology and internet, *electronic feedback* to writing has emerged. Teachers can give feedback to the students writing on electronic submissions by e-mail or by using the comment function, which is better than e-mailing. Giving feedback by using comment function allows students to see both his writing on one window and the feedback on another window side by side. Hyland (2003) offers an additional strategy on electronic feedback: "Feedback on errors can also be linked to online explanations of grammar to show students examples of features they may have problems in using correctly" (p. 183).

Conferencing is another way of feedback. This form of feedback can be discussed in two groups: face to face conferencing and computer conferencing. Through face to face conferencing, teachers can eliminate the limitations of one-way written feedback with the opportunities for "the teacher and the students to negotiate the meaning of a text through dialogue" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 1, cited in Hyland, 2003). By organizing conferencing

sessions, teacher can clarify on meaning by resolving any probable ambiguities and provide students with the opportunities of raising questions about written feedback and forming a revision plan (Hyland, 2000; Hyland, 2003). The disadvantage is that it may be too much time consuming especially in crowded classes and it may pose some problems for the students who have inhibitions about engaging face to face informally with authoritative figures.

Computer conferencing is one of the recently emerged types of feedback. It refers to carrying out one-to-one or group discussions over a computer network that allows “real-time, synchronous discussion or non-real time, when comments can be added asynchronously” (Skinner & Austin, 1999, p.270). Studies comparing face to face conferencing with computer conferencing have shown that giving feedback through computer conferencing creates motivation and it provides more participation among students than face to face discussion (Warschauer, 1996; Skinner & Austin, 1999).

2.4.3.2. Peer Feedback/Response

Though teacher response has an important role in process writing, there is an increasing emphasis on peer-response as a complementary feedback type (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine & Huang, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000). It has a dual function as a means of both improving writers’ drafts and developing readers’ understandings of good writing (Hyland, 2003). By designing peer-response sessions in classroom, the teacher manages to create collaborative learning environments in which students get feedback from real readers in a non-threatening situation. In such an environment, students learn how readers understand their ideas and gain the skill of critically analyzing and revising written text.

These theoretical assumptions have been tested through various studies. Jacobs, Curtis, Braine and Huang (1998) designed a study on whether second language learners prefer to receive peer feedback as one type of feedback on their writing. Anonymous questionnaire data were collected from a total of 121 ESL students from Hong Kong and Taiwan. All the participants were enrolled in writing courses that incorporate peer, self and teacher feedback. To analyze the questionnaire data, the chi-square test was used and the results showed that 93 % of the participants preferred to have feedback from other students as one

form of feedback on their writing because peers gave them more ideas and enabled them to see the problems they had missed before. They also reported learning from giving feedback.

Peer response may be in different forms in process writing; however, the most typical implementation is assigning students to groups of two or three and asking them to exchange drafts and give comments on each others' work. This generally occurs in class time and takes time as long as an hour to complete. The time necessary for peer-feedback can turn into a disadvantage for the classes which have restricted time. Another disadvantage of peer-response results from inexperienced learners who don't know how to respond to the ideas and organization and focus only on the surface structures. Since peers are not trained teachers, their comments may be vague and unhelpful or overly critical and sarcastic (Leki, 1990; Hyland, 2003,).

What is advised to eliminate these disadvantages is to train students on responding. Using a quasi-experimental, non-randomized control group pre-test post-test design, McGroarty and Zhu (1997) investigated effects of training for peer feedback on students' ability to critique peer writing, quality of student writing and students' attitudes toward peer revision and writing in general. 169 students studying college freshman English composition classes participated in the study and they were divided into eight groups; four experimental and four control groups. 4 instructors each teaching one experimental and one control group attended the study as well. During the treatment, the experimental group received systematic training for peer revision which includes teacher-student conferences to model and practice peer revision. These conferences took place three times during the semester. Data were collected through students' written comments on peer writing, tape recordings of student peer review sessions, holistic scoring on assignments, pre-post-test questionnaires, classroom observation and instructor interviews. The analysis of qualitative and quantitative data indicated that experimental group exceeded the control group in quantity of feedback, proportion of feedback concerning global features, and amount of specific feedback given. Peer feedback training has also positive effects on students' cumulative writing development though it does not cause a significant difference in student writing across groups. And also the positive attitudes of experimental group toward peer revision and writing in general were attributed to training. Şengün (2002) conducted a

similar study investigating the impact of training on peer feedback in process approach implemented in EFL writing classes at a university in Turkey. Using a case study design, the researcher aimed at measuring the relationship between training on peer feedback and students' attitudes towards feedback and their writing quality. 15 students at the Department of Foreign Language Education constituting the sample for the study were trained for four weeks on peer feedback. To measure the participants' attitudes toward peer feedback, the data were collected through questionnaires administered before and after the treatment. Additionally, eight students were interviewed to have deeper understanding. To find out the connection between peer feedback and writing quality, assignments written by the participants before and after the treatment were compared. The data analysis revealed that training enables students to be aware of significance and necessity of peer feedback activities and the researcher reports that almost all of the participants favour the incorporation of peer feedback into the writing course. With regard to the relation between peer feedback and writing quality, it was observed that after a-four- week training, students made not only surface level change but also they improved their writing on content level.

Having such positive outcomes, training students on peer revision is continually emphasized in process writing (Moore, 1986; Stanley, 1992; Nelson and Murphy, 1993; cited in Şengün, 2002) and the related literature provides useful information on how to incorporate peer feedback effectively. Training in peer-response practices can begin by making students work on their own papers. In doing this, students should be provided with a list of criteria to look for in their papers. Hyland (2003) notes that "L2 learners need a focus for their interaction, especially in the early stages of peer feedback activities so response sheets can be a valuable form of indirect instruction about good writing practices" (p. 205). After reviewing their work according to criteria of good writing, they can be asked to write down what they have understood. This will increase self-awareness. Teacher modelling of responding is another way of training students on peer feedback (Harris and Graham, 1996). Additionally, students can be instructed explicitly in the "language of response" by being taught how to give direct responses and soften criticism or suggest. Although literature provides some other training techniques to cope with the problem of inefficient peer feedback, the mostly favoured way of training is to create response sheets especially at the initial stages (Chisholm, 1990). For time related problem in designing peer-review activities, the use of internet has been proposed in the literature because of the

fact that online implementations can allow students to reach their peers and their works at any time and place.

Overall, feedback is central to learning to write in second language (Leki, 1990; Silva and Brice, 2004). It arouses the sense of audience in the students and sensitizes them to the needs of readers (Nelson and Carson, 1998; Liu and Sadler, 2003). Moreover, feedback, peer feedback in particular, contributes to their understanding of good writing and promotes accuracy in their writing (Jacobs et al., 1998; Paulus, 1999). To implement process writing successfully, both teacher and peer feedback should be integrated into the writing course. Among the various types of teacher feedback, the most effective one is “conferencing though it may pose some problems related to time and cultural inhibitions of students. Use of computers may serve as a solution. On the side of students, peer feedback is regarded to be crucial as it contributes to the students’ both as a writer and a reader. However, students may need training on responding. What is more, integrating peer feedback session into the class may be too much time consuming activity. As a solution, online applications which allow both synchronous and asynchronous communication can be employed (DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001; Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004).

2.4.4. Revising

The next stage in process oriented writing instruction is revising at which students review their texts on the basis of the feedback given in the responding stage. It is a complex process in which students are engaged in the act of changing, deleting, adding and retaining. It is done to improve overall content and organization of ideas so that the writer’s interest is made clearer to the reader (Seow, 2002, p. 317). During revising, teacher should make sure that students are really revising their works, not simply copying them. Useful strategies for revising ideas include:

- Teacher can collect and keep students’ drafts and ask them rewrite.
- Students in pairs can read aloud each other’s drafts before they revise.
- Students can read compositions aloud and tape them. Listening may make students resee and rethink what they have written.
- Students can refer to a checklist to revise their work properly (Hyland, 2003).

Teachers' role in revising is to coach students and provide them with some suggestions on the problematic parts regarding revision, which means student writers should be guided in revising their works (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Leki, 1992 cited in Sengupta, 2000). Uğur (2000) designed an experimental study to find out the benefits of teaching revision strategies to the students. Two groups of students (experimental vs. control group) studying at Middle East Technical University (M.E.T.U.), Turkey participated in the study and experimental group received a training which emphasizes revision strategies through checklists. The study consisted of three stages: pre-training, training and post-training. At each stage both control and experimental groups were expected to write drafts on a given cause-effect topic and then to revise them. All the writings were graded by two teachers and the data were statistically analyzed. The results of analysis indicated that those receiving training on revision strategies improved the overall quality of their writing compared with control group. In a similar study, Sengputa (2000) investigated the effect of explicit instruction in revision on learners' writing performance and perceptions about writing. The sample was drawn from 3 classes in one of Hong Kong girls' secondary school. Two of the classes (n=78) served as experimental group and the other class (n=40) was used to compare the results of the treatment. The instruction on revision strategies was planned at three stages. The first stage covers teacher's extensive guidance in revision strategies of adding, deleting, re-ordering and substituting information. At the second stage, guided peer and self evaluation was applied and at the third stage, minimal instructional scaffolding was provided. The data were gathered through pre and post test composition, questionnaire and interview. The analyses revealed that the students getting instruction on revision strategies outperformed those in the control group. Post experimental questionnaire and interviews indicated that students learning revision developed a new conception of writing. Sengputa (2000) concludes that multiple drafting that is emphasized in process approach should be included in writing programs as instruction on revision strategies may contribute to the development of discourse related characteristics in second language writing.

2.4.5. Editing

Editing involves revising the draft in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and accuracy. Since the process approach to writing emphasizes the need for

language production uninhibited by language correction (Hyland, 2003), editing is done at the last stage to prepare the final draft (Polio, Fleck & Leder, 1998). However, in an EFL context in particular where grammatical errors may pose important problems with regard to comprehensibility of the written text may not be the last stage. Students in an EFL classroom may need to write one more draft revising sentence structures before the production of final version. To help the students in editing, a simple checklist reminding them of common surface structure errors found in students writing may be produced and students can be asked to edit their works according to that checklist before submitting them to the teacher for evaluation (Coleman, 2003).

2.4.6. Evaluating

After students submit their final texts, the teacher rereads them to see to what extent students have benefited from all the processes, to what extent they have learned and applied what they have taught. In other words, the teacher evaluates the writing behaviour. Evaluating refers to scoring the final text of the students with the additional purpose of giving students a clear idea about their current position in writing. Traditionally, scoring of a student's writing performance was made by comparing it with that of others. However, this norm referenced method has largely given way to another method through which the quality of each written text is evaluated in its own right according to certain pre-identified criteria (Hyland, 2003). This new criterion- referenced evaluation guide is called as *rubric*. Moskal (2000) defines rubric as “descriptive scoring schemes that are developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or process of students' efforts” (p. 22). Mertler (2001) provides a similar definition by stating that “rubrics refer to scoring guides consisting of specific pre-established performance criteria, used in evaluating student work on performance assessment” (p. 189). Functionally rubrics answer the questions: By what criteria should performance be judged? Where should we look and what should we look for to judge performance success? What does the range in quality of performance look like? How do we determine validly, reliably and fairly what score should be given and what does that score mean? How should the different levels of quality be described and distinguished from one another? (Relearning by Design. Inc, 2000) Arter (2000) summarizes all these aspects in his definition by saying “rubrics are scoring guides describing what to look for in products or performances to judge their quality” (p. 3).

Two main types of rubrics have been identified in the literature. 1-*Holistic rubric* is the first one which requires the teacher to score the overall process or product as a whole, without judging the component parts separately (Mertler, 2001, Allen, 2003). The focus in holistic rubric is on the overall quality, proficiency or understanding of the specific content. It is suitable when errors in some part of the process can be tolerated providing that overall quality high (Allen, 2003; Perlman, 2003). 2- *Analytic rubric* is the second type which requires teacher to score separate, individual parts of the product or performance first, then to sum the individual score to obtain a total score ((Moskal, 2000; Mertler, 2001). Analytic rubrics are suitable when there is a need to assess student work in detail, to give students specific feedback on their performance. Analytic rubric makes it possible to create a profile of specific student strengths and weaknesses (Mertler, 2001; Perlman, 2003).

A teacher interested in using rubrics in the evaluation of the written products has three options: using an already developed rubric, adopting an existing rubric, and developing a new one. Perlman (2003) provides a list of questions that can guide teachers in deciding about the use of an existing rubric.

- Does the rubric relate to the outcomes being measured?
- Does the rubric cover important dimension of student performance?
- Do the criteria reflect current conception of excellence in the field?
- Are the categories or scales well defined?
- Is there a clear basis for assigning scores at each scale point?
- Can different scorers apply the rubric consistently?
- Can students understand the rubric?
- Is the rubric applicable to a variety of tasks?
- Is the rubric useful, feasible, manageable and practical? (p.8)

A review of literature on evaluating student writing performance reveals that using an already developed rubric is favoured among teachers and researchers, and the frequently used one is what is called as ESL Composition Profile by Jacobs, Zingraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel and Hughey (1981) (Bosher, 1998; Cumming, 1989; Cumming, Rebuffot & Ledwell, 1989; Pennington & So, 1993; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996 cited in Larios, Murphy & Marin 2002; Sasaki, 2000; Chuo, 2004).

Sometimes using an already developed rubric may not suit to the teaching contexts in question. In such cases, it is advised to create one's own rubric (Mertler, 2001; Perlman, 2003). Prior to designing a specific rubric to use in evaluation, a teacher must decide whether the performance or product will be seen holistically or analytically and regardless of which type of rubric is selected, specific performance criteria and observable indicators must be identified as an initial step to development. In order to identify the criteria and indicators, teacher should consider the objectives of the course. Mertler (2001) in his article *Designing Scoring Rubrics for Your Classroom* recommends a step by step process in developing a rubric:

- Re-examine the learning objectives to be addressed by the task.
- Identify specific observable attributes that you want to see your students demonstrate in their product, process an performance.
- Brainstorm characteristics that describe each attribute. Each attribute should be described well.
- For holistic rubrics, write through narrative descriptions for excellent work and poor work incorporating each attribute into the description. The highest and lowest levels of performance should be described by combining the descriptors for all attributes.
- For analytic rubrics, write through narrative descriptions for excellent work and poor work for each individual attribute. The highest and lowest levels of performance for each attribute separately should be described.
- For holistic rubrics, write descriptions for all other levels on the continuum that ranges from excellent to poor work. For analytic rubrics, complete the rubric by describing other levels on the continuum that ranges from excellent to poor work for each attribute.
- Collect samples of student work that exemplify each level.
- Revise the rubric, as necessary (p. 193).

Being aware of the issues mentioned above, teachers can more effectively evaluate their students' writing by using a rubric. Whether an existing one is used or teacher creates his own, it is certain that rubrics provide a more valid and consistent evaluation in writing performance (Jacobs et al., 1981; Arter, 2000)

To conclude, instructing students to be effective writers is, first of all, related to the understanding of writing as a recursive process and then to train students in the stages that writers normally go through in producing a text. To implement a successful writing program, the students should be encouraged to plan and organize their ideas before putting

them on the paper. In order to arouse the idea in the students that writing is an ongoing process, their texts should not be regarded as an end product but as the drafts of better works. The drafts should be provided with various feedback forms and the students should be encouraged to revise and edit their works in the light of the feedback. So as to understand whether the students have met the objectives of the writing program, their responded, revised and edited works should be evaluated on a basis of a set of clear criteria and then the whole developmental process in writing skill should be assessed.

2.5. Assessment in Writing

As one of the central issues in education, assessment has recently captured an increasing attention in language education. In its general sense, assessment refers to the variety of ways employed to collect information on a learner's achievement in a certain language skill (Hyland, 2003). It provides teachers with an idea about whether the objectives of course have been realized and whether the students have achieved to obtain desired behaviours. Hyland (2003) summarizes the functions of assessment by stating "It provides data that can be used to measure student progress, identify problems, to suggest instructional solutions and to evaluate course effectiveness" (p. 212).

Without assessment, therefore, any teaching programme would be futile. It is certain that assessment procedures should be placed in language teaching context. What is not certain, however, is how to do assessment. In the context of assessing L2 writing, literature provides two broadly classified writing assessment approaches; traditional approach including direct testing (essay test) and process based assessment emphasizing portfolio assessment techniques (Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

In traditional approach, the assessment of writing skills has been done on one product produced in a limited time, generally with a limitation on subject and number of words. The grading is done generally holistically by the teacher comparing each student's performance with the rest of the class. Rotta and Huser (1995) identify the certain characteristic of traditional writing assessment:

- Traditional assessments tend to focus on simple behaviours
- It is an isolated event, usually occurring at the end of a unit. The collaboration with peers is strictly forbidden

- Traditional assessment causes students to become passive recipients of the assessment rather than active participants (pp. 6, 7).

Development of process approach to writing instruction has revolutionized the assessment procedures; no longer do the educators concern themselves only with the end product (Best, 1995). The earlier focus of 1970s being on “how to teach writing” was replaced with focus “how to assess writing” in 1980s due to the understanding that traditional assessment methods aren’t suitable for assessing writing process. What has led educators to regard traditional assessment methods as inconvenient for process writing is the underlying assumptions of process approach. The first assumption that is stressed in process writing is that writing is a complex activity demanding cognitive, metacognitive and linguistic skills; therefore, there is a need for an assessment technique which considers multifaceted character of writing. Traditional types of assessment cannot meet this need because of their focus on simple behaviours. The next assumption is that writing is continuous; it is always in a stage of perfection. So, assessment should acknowledge the continuous nature of writing and the stages occurring within the process (Rotta & Husser, 1995). In this respect, traditional assessment which considers writing as an isolated event isn’t apt for process writing. The last assumption contrasted with the traditional assessment is that in process approach, learners are seen as active participants who are responsible for their writing and they should attend to the assessment process. This view isn’t compatible with the traditional type of assessment which attributes a passive recipient role to the learners. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) summarizes dissatisfaction felt by practitioners of the traditional methods of assessment in educational context:

.....just as the battle to establish the legitimacy of direct assessment of writing seemed to be ending in victory; teachers of writing were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with direct tests of writing with holistic scoring.although such a direct sample is a far superior instrument than the indirect test, teachers increasingly saw it as a context-poor assessment and began looking for an even better instrument. (p. 10)

The result of this dissatisfaction with the traditional assessment is the development of various assessment techniques which reflect the philosophy of process writing by incorporating great degrees of flexibility, student participation and individualization. Among many, mostly favoured one is “portfolio based assessment” (Wright, Knight & Pomerlau, 1999; Rea, 2001; Hyland, 2003).

Portfolios in educational context refer to a kind of file or dossier which includes students' works prepared throughout the term with a reflection from the owners, indicating the personal growth and progress in the target area. Regarding portfolios in EFL context as an effective response to testing situations requiring students to produce a single piece of timed writing without choice of topic and opportunities for revision, Hyland (2003) defines portfolios as "multiple writing samples, written over time and purposefully selected from various genres to best represent a student's abilities, progress and most successful text in a particular context" (p. 223). Sweet (1993) provides a similar definition oriented in process writing: "A portfolio may be a folder containing a student's best pieces and student's evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of pieces. It may also contain one or more works-in-progress that illustrate the creation of a product, such as an essay, evolving through various stages of conception, drafting and revision" (para. 1). Likewise, Paulson and Meyer (1991) define this assessment tool as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self reflection"(para. 3). The content of a portfolio may vary according to the objectives of assessment. It may not be simply a matter of students choosing their best work; rather students may use it as a systematic collection of their products which can serve as resource for future essays implying students' developmental status in writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2003).

An analysis of potential advantages of portfolio will justify its popularity in assessing writing. The first advantage of portfolios is that they are more broad, detailed and fair than exams (Kemp & Toperoff, 1998).The fact that a portfolio can include any written work such as drafts, reflections, teacher and peer responses, finished texts, readings, diaries, observations of genre uses allows teachers to evaluate students by using multiple measures. It gives an overall view of student writer.

The second one is that portfolio assessment contributes to the teaching process (Rotta & Husser, 1995; Kemp & Toperoff, 1998). Since portfolios present the exact picture of owners in terms of progress in writing, teacher can easily deduce some instructional tips from these pictures.

The third advantage of portfolio use is that portfolios create a collaborative approach to evaluation and provide students with a record of progress. The content of portfolio is arranged by the students in consultation with the teacher who guides them by considering the course goals. This arrangement makes teacher-student collaboration compulsory and frequent and it leads to a positive learning environment. By assembling their texts over time, students can see the changes in their writing abilities and discover something about their learning.

And the last one is that it arouses a sense of awareness in the students (Wright, Knight & Pomerlau, 1999). Portfolio requires students to reflect on their weaknesses and progress while selecting the texts to put in. These reflections lead students to take more conscious, planned steps in learning, which increase success.

Although portfolio assessment has lots of potential advantages, the exploitation of its benefits can be realized only when it is implemented, managed and evaluated in a correct way. In the implementation, what is emphasized is the teacher and student training. Students should be provided with overt guidance in arranging their portfolios and instructed on how to reflect on their choices. Teachers should also develop some methods to deal with the assessing portfolios by taking reliability and consistency matters into consideration. Related literature suggests some steps to follow while integrating portfolios into the writing course. The following summarizes the basic guideline for the management of portfolios.

1. Give students a clear meaning and reason for using portfolios.
2. Determine what the portfolio is to include depending on the goals of the course and students' needs.
3. Decide on the assessment and scoring criteria and inform the students.
4. Identify days to conduct checks to monitor progress and help learners reorganize their portfolios.
5. Teach students how to reflect on the content of their portfolios.
6. Provide opportunities for students to display their work to the real audiences (Pierce & O'Malley, 1992).

As noted above, one of the steps in successful implementation of portfolio assessment is the decision on the assessment and scoring criteria. Though it can be difficult due to the heterogeneous nature of portfolios, a teacher can take one of the two approaches to grading portfolios identified in the literature. The first one is “holistic approach” in which previously scored portfolio samples are used as models representing certain score levels. The scores are used to assign an average single grade. The second is multiple-trait approach which includes both text features and criteria for the drafting stages, awareness of processes, self-reflection, cooperative interaction and content knowledge. Multiple-trait is especially convenient to process writing because of its clear focus on process besides product. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) provide a useful heuristic for assessing portfolios based on the main elements to be assessed:

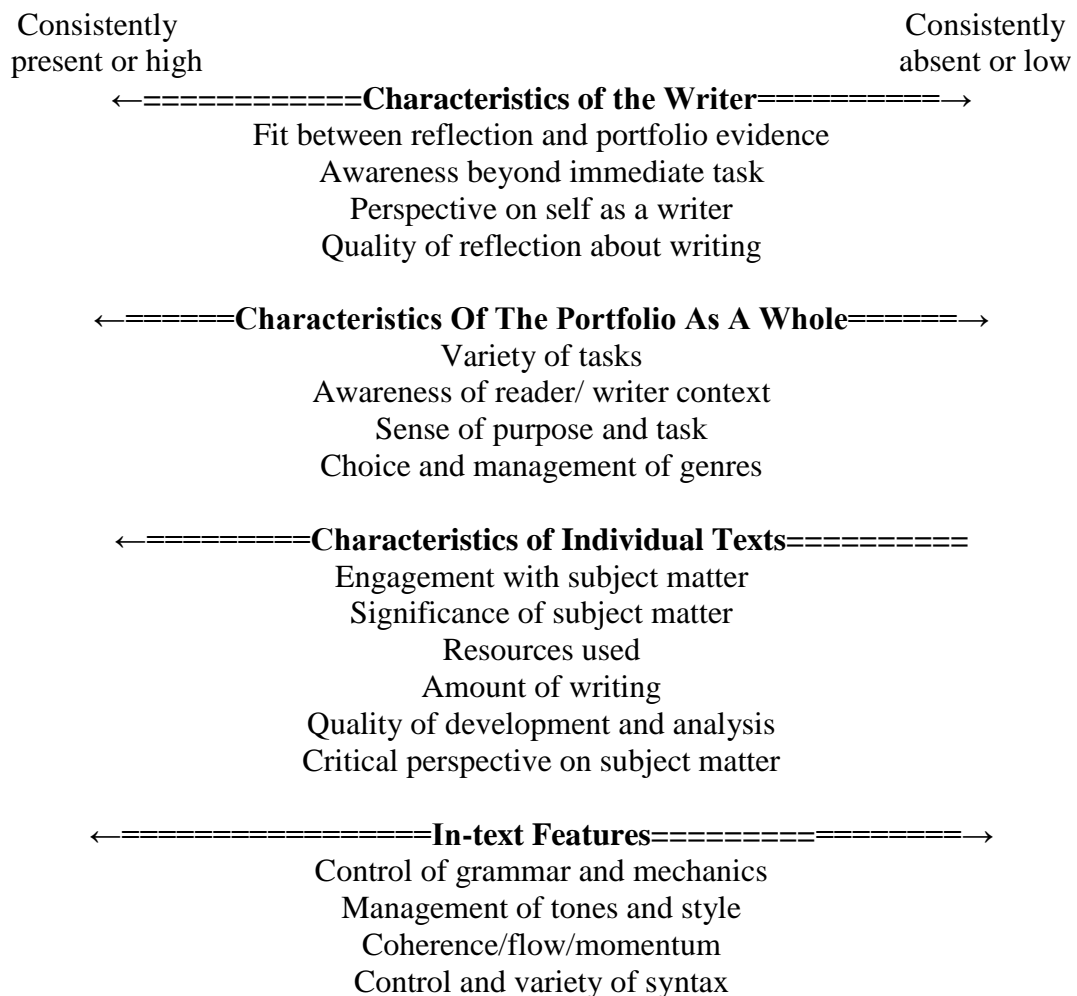


Figure: 2
Dimensions for Assessing Portfolios

Source: Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 2000, p. 144

In conclusion, as one of the language skills, writing indisputably is an essential part of language teaching programs since it contributes to learner development in many ways (Byrne, 1982; Raimes, 1983; Chastain, 1988; Kern, 2000). So as to find effective ways of teaching writing, a number of studies have been conducted (Emig, 1978; Young, 1978 cited in Kroll, 2004; Flower & Hayes, 1981), and the findings of these studies have caused to the advent of process approach to writing instruction that sees writing as a non linear activity in which learners go recursively through such stages as planning, drafting and reviewing, and that emphasizes such concepts as audience, purpose and interaction with peers. Besides the studies reporting positive outcomes as a result of introducing process approach in the classroom (Kern & Schultz, 1992; Akyel & Kamişli, 1997), the relevant literature provides a large body of research on stages in process based writing instruction, which yields significant implications for classroom implementation. Accordingly, planning is the first stage in writing process, and L1 use and the guidance in using such strategies as brainstorming, clustering etc... result in students' better writing performance (Becker, 1991 cited in Riechelt, 2001; Martinez-Gibson, 1998; Woodall, 2002). During drafting, continual interaction with teacher and peers is underlined to arouse a sense of audience in the students, (Tribble, 1996). Feedback is central to learning to write in second language (Leki, 1990; Silva and Brice, 2004). It arouses the sense of audience in the students and sensitizes them to the needs of readers (Nelson and Carson, 1998; Liu and Sadler, 2003). Moreover, feedback, peer feedback in particular, contributes to their understanding of good writing and promotes accuracy and clarifies ideas. This extends to their writing skills (Jacobs et al., 1998; Paulus, 1999). To implement process writing successfully, both teacher and peer feedback should be integrated into the writing course. Among the various types of teacher feedback, the most effective one is conferencing though it may pose some problems related to time and cultural inhibitions of students. Use of computers may serve as a solution. On the side of students, peer feedback is regarded to be crucial as it contributes to the students' development both as a writer and a reader. However, students may need training on responding. What is more, integrating peer feedback session into the class may be a too much time consuming activity. As a solution, online applications which allow both synchronous and asynchronous communication can be employed (DiGiovanni and Nagaswami, 2001; Liu and Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004). Teachers interested in process approach are also advised to provide students with real audience feedback (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Tribble, 1996) With regard to revision stage; research stresses the need for

training students on revision by using various techniques like introducing checklists or modelling (Sengupta, 2000; Uğur, 2000). Writing process ends with the evaluation stage. In evaluating students writing performance, the literature suggests the use of rubric (Moskal, 2000; Mertler, 2001; Hyland, 2003). After the students produce their final drafts by going through all these stages, they should be provided with the opportunities to publish their writings (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) and their overall performance should be assessed. Portfolios, a new technique for assessing writing performance, offer a lot in the assessment as it overlaps with process approach in essence (Rea, 2001; Kemp & Toperoff, 1998).

Even though process approach produces positive results in writing instruction, it can pose problems in teaching contexts where class time is limited or overcrowded (Harmer, 2001; Gettings, 2003). Also there may appear problems in providing students with peer feedback, real audience feedback or providing them with places for publishing. The following is the discussion of how computer use, weblog application in particular, facilitates writing process by addressing aforementioned problems.

2.6. Technology Use in Language Education

The history of technology use in language education dates back to 1960s. The earliest forms of technology were phonograph and radio which were then followed by audiovisual media such as television and video – technological aids that are still in use in the field of education today. The late 60s witnessed the first attempts in using computers in language teaching (Chuo, 2004), and the concept of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) appeared in the literature. From the sixties onward, computers have been used in various ways in language classrooms depending on certain linguistic and pedagogical approaches.

Warschauer and Healey (1998) examine the development of CALL in three main stages; each corresponding to a certain level of technology and a certain pedagogical approach. The first stage of CALL is called as behaviouristic CALL because of the effect of the then-dominant behaviourist theories of learning on CALL activities. Historically behaviouristic CALL covers the late 1960s and 1970s. Repetitive language drills and practice were the main functions that computer programs offered. Computers in this phase were seen as a mechanical tutor presenting the instructional materials repeatedly to the

students without judgemental feedback. So, a number of computer programs that include extensive drills, grammatical explanation and translation tests for various proficiency levels were developed. The next stage in the history of CALL is communicative CALL which covers the late 70s and early 80s when behaviouristic approach to teaching was replaced with communicative model of language learning and when various application of computers were possible through better developed personal computers (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). In this phase, computer activities were based on using forms not on the forms themselves, teaching grammar implicitly and encouraging students to produce original utterances instead of repeating prefabricated language utterances (Undewood, 1984; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Cognitive theories of learning that define learning as a process of discovery, expression and development were taken as a base in designing computer programs. Text reconstruction programs and simulations encouraging discovery among students working in pairs or groups were the chief computer programs developed in this phase. Computers began to function as a stimulus stimulating students' discussion, writing or critical thinking, and as a tool empowering the students to use or understand the language (Warschauer, 1996). Such programs as word processors, spelling and grammar checkers, desktop publishing programs and concordancers were first introduced in the language learning context. By the late 80s and early 90s, the focus in language education shifted from cognitive view of communicative teaching to a more social or socio-cognitive view of teaching. Socio-cognitive theories focused on language use in authentic social contexts not only to provide comprehensible input but also to create practice opportunities for the students in the kinds of communication that they would engage in outside the school (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). Together with the emergence of socio-cognitive theories of language teaching, the function of computers was reassessed. Two major technological advances of the 90s contributed to this reassessment. The result is integrative CALL, the third stage, which is based on integration of language skills and technology more fully into the learning process. Through multimedia technology, computer programs creating virtual situations that one can encounter with in the real world were developed and learners used the language by interacting with computer. CALL activities aimed to change the learners' role from passive recipients to active interpreters and organizers of knowledge. Warschauer (1996) summarizes the novelties brought about by multimedia technology as follows:

Multimedia technology allows a variety of media (text, graphics, sound, animation and video) to be accessed on a single machine. What makes multimedia even more powerful is that it also entails hypermedia. That means that multimedia resources are all linked together... Hypermedia provides a number of advantages for language learning. First of all, a more authentic learning environment is created, since listening is combined with seeing, just like in the real world. Secondly skills are easily integrated, since the variety of media make it natural to combine reading, writing, speaking and listening in a simple activity. Third, students have great control over their learning, since they can not only go at their own pace but even on their individual path..... Finally, a major advantage of hypermedia is that it facilitates a principle focus on content without sacrificing a secondary focus on language form or learning strategies. (para. 13)

Though the multimedia technology contributes to integrative CALL, it has still some deficiencies to meet all the principles put forward by socio-cognitive approach to language teaching; integration of skills (e.g. reading with listening) is possible through multimedia; however, it is not enough to integrate meaningful and authentic communication into all aspects of language learning area. At this point, another important technological advancement, perhaps the most significant one, comes to stage: internet.

The advent of internet has opened a new phase in technology use in language education. Various internet applications have shifted the attention from *learners interacting with computers* to *learners interacting with other people via computer*. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) which has been around in its primitive form since 1960s has become common by means of internet applications that allow learners to communicate directly, inexpensively and conveniently with other learners with no time or place restriction (Warschauer,1996). This new form of technology has brought about many advantages as seen in Moras (2001). First, the idea of being connected with the world is intrinsically motivating for the students because they regard it as a trendy and useful tool. By using the net, learners can have a kind of control over their learning as they are able to choose their paths in accordance with their personal needs and they can go at their own pace. This improves learner independence thereby contributing to autonomous learning. Secondly, through World Wide Web (WWW) students can access lots of authentic materials which range from newspaper articles to special materials prepared for language learners. Apart from getting materials, learners can use the net to create their own materials and share them with internet users. Communication with real audiences arouses interest towards learning and using language in the learners. Finally, because of its text-driven

nature, internet appeals shy students by giving them time to think and chance to participate in communicative exchanges.

Having such advantages for students, internet, today, with its various applications has strongly manifested itself in each language skill and writing is no exception.

2.6.1. World Wide Web in Writing Instruction

The internet applications in writing instruction can be analyzed in two main groups. In the words of Jones (2003), first generation web covers asynchronous (non-real time communication) tools such as e-mail and discussion forums; and real-time communication (synchronous) tools like chat systems.

E-mails refer to electronic, written, non-real time communication between individuals. Research suggests that computer mediated communication through e-mail exchanges in writing instruction develops the writing/thinking connection (Mike, 1996; Son & O'Neill 1999) and enhance student motivation and improve writing skills (Warschauer, 1996; Muehleisen, 1997; Means & Olson, 1997 cited in Chafe, 1999; Shang, 2007). E-mail exchanges can be used in a wide variety of ways ranging from submitting assignments to giving feedback.

Another web application used in writing instruction is discussion forums. Jones (2003) observes that many instructors have increasingly turned to discussion forums as the principal tool for written exchanges among class members. In contrast to e-mail exchanges between individuals, discussion forums facilitate group exchanges. It is claimed that discussion forums in a writing course contributes to the development of the writing skills as it arouses a sense of audience with its 'semi-public display' feature (Jones, 2003).

Contrary to e-mail and discussion forums, 'chat', -another opportunity provided by web- creates a real-time communication and can serve as a powerful tool for writing instruction. It can be used in any stages of writing especially in pre-writing and feedback stages. Transcript of chat sessions may be available for some chat systems but are not

normally possible in most commonly used systems. This limits the use of chat in writing instruction.

Second generation web includes what is called as ‘weblog’, also known as ‘blog’ which is still in evolution. In its basic sense, weblog is a web publishing system which can serve in a wide variety of ways including forming social communication groups to online journaling. It is different from discussion forums and chat systems in terms of postings and access to real audiences. Postings in discussion forums are interwoven and build on each other while weblogs are more stand-alone and individualized (Glogoff, 2005). What’s more, course based discussion forums are available to a restricted number of people but weblogs, by design, are open to any potential internet users and therefore open to a much broader audience (Xie & Sharma, 2004). The virtual space it provides may form a base for any stages in writing process and it can be supported with any web applications like instant messaging or e-mail. The content and form of any blogging system can vary depending on the objectives of the course. Its being free and easy in designing and running are what makes them increasingly popular among writing teachers. With this user friendly nature that necessitates no knowledge of coding or graphical design, weblogs also differ from webpages in many ways by offering practical advantages. Using webpages in a school setting requires too much effort on both teacher’s and students’ side as teachers are to act as a web design educator and technical support, and the students have to handle with complicated applications for creating webpages (Lowe & Williams, 2004).

However, weblogs in education is a relatively new application and our understanding of its benefits is mostly limited to theoretical information resulting from its potential offers. This makes it necessary to have a closer look at weblogs in writing and to conduct research measuring its effectiveness.

2.6.2. Weblogs and Process Based Writing Instruction: A Meeting Point

Being a relatively recent innovation, weblog appeared for the first time in 1990s. Ward (2004) takes the year 1993 when National Centre of Supercomputer Applications used it as a forum, as the starting point of weblogs. However, any special label was not used for the system until John Barger coined the term *weblog* to name his website in 1997. The verb

form *to blog* and the noun form for short *blog* soon followed. By the word *weblog*, Barger (1999) means “a webpage where a weblogger (sometimes called blogger or a pre-surfer) logs all the other webpages she finds interesting. The format is normally to add the newest entry at the top of the page, so that repeat visitors can catch up by reading down the page until they reach a link they saw on their last visit” (para. 3). Agreeing with Barger, Rebecca Blood (2000), the owner of the first published document on blogging, names these link-driven sites as filter style blogs and describes this use of blogs in terms of researchers equipped with technical knowledge filtering internet content in “smart, irreverent and reliably interesting” ways (para. 2). In 1999, the release of Blogger.com and Pitas.com which give free blog hosting service made blogging accessible for anyone other than those from tech world (Blood, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). With these user friendly hosting services, many people began to use weblogs something like a journal; so, weblogs changed from link-driven sites to content-driven sites. Together with the attendance of each blogger, the concept of weblog has evolved. As it evolves, the definitions vary. At present, a weblog, in its most general sense, is a virtual space for people to write whatever they want, with an option for readers to leave comment on what they have read. Dave Winer (2002), who has the longest-running blog on the net, defines it as “often updated sites that point to articles elsewhere on the web, often with comments and on-site articles. A weblog is a continual tour with a human guide who you get to know” (para. 2). Adopting a less sophisticated approach, Bausch, Haughey and Hourihan (2002, cited in Cole, 2004) define blogs as “a page with numerous chunks of content, arranged from newest to oldest” (p.7). Similarly, Lankshear and Knobel (2003) referring to Blood (2002) define blogs as “a special kind of website which is updated frequently with new postings and published in reverse chronological order; the most recent posting is on the top of the page (p.3). Though definitions vary, there is an agreement on general characteristics of weblogs:

- Personal editorship by giving one person sole responsibility of the blog (Cole, 2004; Glogoff, 2005).
- Hyperlinked post structure or referencing to material outside the site (Paquet, 2003; Du & Wagner, 2005)
- Frequent updates organized according to time (Walker, 2003; Efimova & Fiedler, 2004)
- Free public access to the content enabling any internet user to see the blog via World Wide Web (Paquet, 2003; Huffaker, 2004)

- Fostering interaction with its options for comment and reply (Eastment, 2005; Glogoff, 2005)

What makes all these features common for all weblog system is the technical structure behind the weblogs. The technical infrastructure which enables weblogs can be analyzed in three sections: weblog tools that enable writing and publishing, news aggregators (RSS readers) that refer to tools to read weblog and searching and tracking tools through which weblog posts are found easily and connection between posts are provided (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004). Weblog tool refers to a kind of content management system. This system processes the content through a set of templates and simplifies publishing to the web by forming a database of text entries, sound or picture files. RSS which stands for Rich Site Summary or Real Simple Syndication means encoding the published content in an XML (Extensible Markup Language) based format. This processed content is read by news aggregators. Through this technical opportunity, internet users can follow lots of weblogs without searching the actual web pages. Searching and tracking tools allow the users to search the content of a single weblog, a group of weblogs or all the weblogs on the net. These tools also enable the users to be informed about new comments or links to a particular post and they form clusters of weblogs based on their hyperlink connections or content similarity (Efimova & Fiedler, 2004). Opportunities offered by this infrastructure have attracted many people into the blog world. According to the result of a survey by Perseus Development Group (2003), there are more than 4 million weblogs on the net and thousands more are being created weekly (cited in Richardson, 2002). Among these, there are educators creating their own blogs as well. Dealing with the blogging software has reminded people of the possibilities of using this system in education and they begin to search for the areas of implementation. Though it seems limitless, Will Richardson (2002), the founder of weblog-ed. com – a blog on using weblogs in education- lists the main ones.

- 1-** It can be used as student learning logs giving a place for feedback, collaboration and reflection.
- 2-** It can be used for professional development providing a peer directing environment not necessarily from the local school.
- 3-** It can be used in classroom management, establishing a space for submitting assignments, links and notes of interest
- 4-** It can facilitate internal and external communication providing a centralized school portal
- 5-** It can be used as research logs presenting links to reference materials and sources of information (para. 4).

Likewise, Campbell (2003) discusses the possibilities of integrating weblogs into educational context, especially in language teaching field. He mentions about three types of blogs that are likely to be beneficial for language learners. The first type is *tutor blog* through which the class teacher can produce special texts for reading and vocabulary activities by considering his own students' proficiency levels. Creating a tutor blog, the language teacher can also direct his students towards English websites and guide them in their self-study by creating "links to online quizzes, English news sites, key-pal networks, audio and video files for listening practice and ESL interactive websites" (Campbell,2003 para. 8). The second is learner blog run by individual learners. Campbell (2003) claims that this type of blog "may be best suited for reading and writing classes" (para. 9) and he explains the function of learner blogs in writing as follows:

Individually, blogs can be used as journals for writing practice, or as free-form templates for personal expression. The idea here is that students can get writing practice, develop a sense of ownership, and get experience with the practical, legal, and ethical issues of creating a hypertext document. In addition, whatever they write can instantly be read by anyone else and, due to the comment features of the software, further exchange of ideas is promoted (para. 9).

The last type Campbell (2003) advises for use with language classes is class blogs –a collaborative work through effort of an entire class. It can serve like a free form bulletin board for learners to share thoughts on a common topic assigned as homework. It can also prove to be useful for an international language exchange.

Possibilities of weblog use in language teaching are only limited to the ability of creativeness of the user and although it can be applied in all language skills; weblogs seem to be an extremely valuable tool for current writing instruction in particular since it is directly related to writing something. Such developments as the appearance of the communicative approach, cognitive and socio-cognitive views of language teaching have affected the writing instruction just as they have influenced computer applications and caused the advent of weblogs. The dominating approach of the recent years in writing instruction is what is called as process approach. A close examination of main tenets emphasized in process oriented writing instruction and potentials of weblogs implies that they overlap with each other. Main features of effective writing instruction favoured in

process approach can be summarized as multiple drafting with feedback between drafts, various forms of feedback (teacher, student and real audience), free or journal writing, students' awareness of the writing process and of notions such as audience, voice, plans etc..., providing students with publishing opportunities, and assessing the whole developmental process not single products (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Ward (2004) expresses the place of weblog in process based writing instruction as:

For the language teacher, the weblog is a timely arrival which can fulfil many of the needs identified for the effective teaching of writing. The weblog provides a genuine audience, is authentically communicative, process driven, peer reviewed, provides a dis-inhibiting context and offers a completely new form with un-chartered creative potential (p. 3).

By forming a learner blog, the writing teacher can make use of blogging in all the stages of writing process from drafting to publishing and assessment. In drafting stage, the students can share their writings through blog pages and this will ease the feedback process. All the class members and the teacher can reach the drafts at any time and place so they can give feedback easily. Since the drafts are on the net, there will be no time restriction (as it is in classroom context) and peers can examine the drafts as long as they want. Appreciating the value of weblogs in writing class, Levey (2003, cited in Ward, 2004) claims that "blogging has some of the best aspects of peer review built on it" (p.4). Apart from reviewing their peers' writings, weblogs allow students to see the feedback given by the teacher to the other students and this is assumed to contribute to their understanding of successful writing. The opportunities offered by weblogs are not restricted only with teacher and peer feedback; it is also likely that an awareness of audience is aroused in the students depending on open-to-anyone nature of internet. The concept of awareness of audience is continually emphasized in process oriented writing instruction with the claim that if the students know what they have written will be read by someone other than the teacher, they will produce more meaningful and successful texts. However, in a school setting, it is not so easy to create opportunities for the students to write for a real audience. According to Ward (2004) when the students write only for their teachers "they may not only have difficulty adjusting their writing to fit the reader but may have trouble getting started because, aside from the final grade, what they write does not mean anything to them because it does not need to mean anything to anyone else"(p. 3). Integrating weblog into the course has potential to change this situation since students will

feel the possibility of being read by any internet user. When writing for a weblog, Kitzmann (2003) observes that “the (online) audience is not anticipated but expected, and thus influences and structures the very manner in which the writer articulates, composes and distributes the self document” (p. 1). The awareness of audience provides a powerful tool for motivating the students. Besides feedback sessions, weblogs seem to be useful in revision stages as well. What is advised in process approach is to have students make revision under the control of the teacher; however this may not always be possible when class time is limited. By simply adding e-mail or instant messaging options to weblog software, the writing teacher can intervene and guide students during revision. Since students’ writings will be saved in chronological order on their blog sites, a kind of electronic portfolio which can serve as an ideal tool for assessing the development in the students will occur. This aspect of blogging in the writing course is described by Kennedy (2003) who states that “weblogs combine the best elements of portfolio-driven courses where student work collected edited and assessed with the immediacy of publishing for a virtual audience”(p. 4). More important than all these is that weblog supported writing course may contribute to the student awareness of process-driven nature of writing. Continually updating a weblog may be helpful for the writing student to appreciate that writing is an ongoing process (Ward, 2004). These are the benefits that are probable to be obtained from learner blogs. In addition to learner blogs, teachers can make use of blogging by setting a tutor blog through which they can provide their students with lots of materials internet includes, so they can create opportunities for extra studying for the students. Students can choose among the materials referenced by the teacher according to their own needs, and this will lead to the individualization of learning. When the choice of material to study is left to the students, they will take much more responsibility for their learning and develop a sense of autonomous learning, which is assumed to increase success in writing.

With all these potential benefits, weblogs have been experienced by an increasing number of teachers and researchers who want to measure the effectiveness of weblogs in language teaching, in general, and in writing instruction, in particular. Xie and Sharma (2004) conducted a research investigating students’ lived experience of weblog use in higher education. The sample, 9 doctoral students, was drawn according to criterion sampling; all the participants had maintained weblog for at least one semester as a part of

course requirement. The research method was phenomenology and the data were collected through interviews focusing on such main themes as students' perception of function of weblogs in their learning, their approach to reflecting on the weblogs and their feelings toward using weblogs in class. At the end of the data analysis, the researchers reported that participants found weblogs useful for their learning "by providing different viewpoints, by providing a space where reflection and commentary could be organized and by pushing them to think critically about course materials" (p. 842). Additionally, participants regarded weblogs as a tool for creating a sense of community and as a tool for exploration of new technologies. The study does not produce only positive results associated with weblog use; participants also expressed some hesitations about correct usage of weblogs and privacy matters. Interpreting the data, Xie and Sharma (2004) come to a conclusion that weblogs can be employed to support reflective learning individually but a guided instruction to the usage is necessary.

Another study investigating the connection between blogging and reflective learning was designed by Stiler and Philleo (2003), who also want to determine the efficacy of Blogger, a well-known blogsite. Weblog in this study was integrated as a journaling activity. A total of 63 pre-service teachers studying at the University of Southern Indiana participated in the research and were asked to complete reflective journals. The journal entries included reaction statements to course materials, activities, teacher performance and student presentations. To collect the data two different assessment surveys were conducted; one included questions about use of Blogger based on a checklist, the other was used to get more in-depth responses through open-ended questions. Data analysis revealed that participants found weblog as a journaling tool quite useful in their learning and Blogger with its potentials can be used to enhance the development of student reflectivity.

Though the earlier studies focused on use of weblogs and reflectivity, one aspect of weblogs, more comprehensive studies have been done as well. Pinkman (2005) designed a small-scale action research to provide insight for language teachers into educational applications of blogs in foreign language classroom and to determine function of weblogs in enhancing learner independence. Continuing for one semester, the study was implemented in a Pre-Advanced English class – an integrated skills class- and the data were elicited from 15 participant students through questionnaires and interviews at the end

of the term. During the semester, the students were required to set up a blog and weekly write something either on topics identified by the teacher or themselves they were also encouraged to respond to one another's' blogs. Findings suggest that learners regarded weblog use as beneficial because it aroused increased interest and motivation towards using English depending on the interaction with peers and teachers, and easy feedback feature. Additionally, 54 % of the participants expressed that keeping a weblog helped them improve their writing skill.

Similar results were reported by Wu (2005) in a small scale study that aimed at measuring students' reactions to the use of blogs in EFL writing class. A total of 51 students having intermediate level in English writing were used as subjects. The students were instructed on setting up a blog on Blogger and after a-semester-application which covers posting homework assignments and writing online journals; a blog survey was conducted to learn their ideas on blogging. According to survey results, more than half of the respondents believed that using blogs is helpful for their writing skill.

In consequence, weblog is an authentic, interesting and promising tool that can serve a variety of purpose in foreign language education. Since it is directly related with writing, the most suitable field to incorporate this tool is writing instruction. Moreover, what weblogs technically offer has to do with main points stressed in current approach in writing instruction: process approach. Studies, though few in number, are limited to the measurement students' perceptions and all of them come to the same conclusion: weblogs are beneficial tool in enhancing writing skill and in promoting reflective and independent learning.

2.7. Weblog Use in Enhancing Learner Autonomy

Over the last two decades, the development of communicative language teaching, cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches to education have changed the ideas on learning and teaching greatly and learner-teacher roles are re-identified. Ex-learner model as 'passive recipient of knowledge' has replaced with 'active interpreter of knowledge' model and teachers are seen as facilitator and advisor. Depending on the basic assumptions of cognitive theories emphasizing that some learning may be unique to human beings;

individuals are actively involved in the learning process; effective learners are aware of the process underlying their own learning and attempt to use appropriate strategies to manage their own learning (Ruiz, 2003), it is now believed that people learn best when they are involved in the learning process actively and when they take responsibility for their learning. These ideas have led to the advent of concept 'learner autonomy' that broadly refers to process of having control over one's own learning. Holec (1988) provides a comprehensive definition clarifying what is meant by control over one's own learning as follows:

To take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e. determining objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place etc...) and evaluating what has been acquired (cited in Ruiz, 2003 p.96).

Similarly, Little (2004) defines learner autonomy as being responsible for the learning and involvement in all aspects of learning process such as planning, implementing and evaluating, and he identifies common misconceptions about the concept. According to Little (1991, cited in Ruiz, 2003), autonomy does not mean learning without a teacher; it is not a teaching method teachers apply for their students and autonomy is not a single, easily described behaviour. Sharing the same idea with Little, Mynard (2003) describes autonomy in terms of a list of sub-skills that a learner should gradually master to be autonomous. He distinguishes autonomous learners from dependent learners as follows:

Table 2
Features of Dependent and Autonomous Learner

<i>Dependent learners</i>	<i>Autonomous learners</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •rely heavily on the teacher •cannot make decisions about their learning •do not know their own strengths and weaknesses •do not connect classroom learning with the real world •think that the teacher is wholly responsible for their learning •do not possess metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness •are not able to plan their learning •need extrinsic motivators such as grades or rewards •do not reflect on how well they are learning and the reasons •are not able to assess their learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are self-reliant • can make informed decisions about their learning • are aware of their strengths and weaknesses • are able to transfer classroom learning with the real world • take responsibility for their own learning • possess metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness • plan their learning and set goals • are intrinsically motivated by making progress • often reflect on the learning process and their own progress • possess the ability to self-assess

Source: Mynard, 2003, p. 66

In short, learner autonomy is based upon the idea that if learners are reflectively engaged with their learning and made aware of their learning process (what they do while learning, what are their deficiencies, which teaching materials work best for them and what else they need to do to be successful), it is probable that there will be more efficient and effective learning. So promoting learner autonomy is now considered as one of the desired goals of education. In the realization of this goal, teachers occupy an important place because it is the teacher who should clear the paths that learners have to follow to attain autonomy. So as to realize this duty, teachers should behave as a facilitator, mediator of the learning process, advisor and helper (Rogers, 1969; Vygotsky, 1984 cited in Ruiz, 2003). In other words, teachers should help learners to plan and monitor on their own learning and encourage them to reflect on their current position in learning process. They should enable the learners in their classrooms to access a variety of materials such as dictionaries, reference books, authentic texts that are produced in the target language community (such as newspapers, magazines) so that the learners can choose the ones suitable to their learning needs. That is to say, they should customize learning according to learners' needs. Another point that should be taken into consideration by teachers in terms of developing

learner autonomy is the creation of cooperative environments as personal autonomy is closely related to one's existence as a social being (Ruiz, 2003). Learning in essence is a cooperative action; human beings work in learning and knowledge building communities naturally exploiting each other's knowledge. In the real world, humans naturally seek others to help them to solve problems and perform tasks (Ruiz, 2003). So, in formal learning environments, similar collaborative situations where learners can easily interact with their peers, observe, evaluate and perhaps model their processes should be created by the teacher. However, creating collaborative work and customizing the learning process by considering each individual may be difficult in classroom setting because of diversity of learners, physical conditions and time-availability. In striving to create opportunities for the students to become autonomous and to continue their education outside the classroom, many teachers are making use of computer technology, especially internet applications which allow learners to work at their own pace, to have the freedom of choosing their own materials and their own pedagogical path (Pinkman, 2005). Mohani (2003) discusses the place of internet in enhancing learner autonomy by stating:

The internet has created a new learning context for the learner and has changed the learner-learning relationship. It has transformed the learner from a state of passivity and dependence on the teacher for knowledge to that of accepting responsibility of his or her own learning. It has resulted in a shift from the students as a passive recipient of education to one who is self-directed in his or her learning.... The learner can work individually on the computer according to his or her time and pace. He or she can thus work without experiencing any tension or anxiety. Such a condition encourages concentration and receptivity and guides the learners towards maintaining autonomy in learning (p. 3).

Quintana (2002) expresses the same idea emphasizing teachers' role in an internet supported learning environment:

The internet supports the open learning concept by providing students with the ability to connect to the educational resources when it is convenient for them, and allowing students to explore the educational resources in an order that suits their needs. In an open learning environment, the teacher no longer serves as the keeper of the knowledge. Instead, the teacher acts as a tutor, facilitator, and resource to assist in the student's learning process (p. 4).

Apart from enabling students to access and choose language materials according to their own needs, internet provides them with an ideal location for reflective and

collaborative learning (Pinkman, 2005). Among various internet applications, weblogs seem to compile such features as selecting materials, reflecting on learning process, collaborative learning, studying at one's own pace etc... in itself. Creating a tutor blog, the teacher can load the links of language sites that include self-study materials. In this way, students can easily be directed towards the language materials without the risk of being frustrated because of getting lost among thousands of sites, and they can choose among them in accordance with their personal needs. They can revise certain topics or repeat certain activities on the web pages easily. Through tutor blogs, different learning styles can be supported by enabling students to choose among a variety of activities available on the net. As all learners have their own preferences, likes and dislikes, the variety of activities on the web provides sufficient scope for all types of learners to learn (Mohani, 2003). Giving freedom of choosing materials to study is not enough by itself to enhance autonomy in the students; students should also be helped in gaining awareness of their learning process. Wenden (1998, cited in Thanasoulas, 2000) observes that "without awareness, learners will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours and never be fully autonomous" (para. 3). The best way in raising awareness in the students is to encourage reflection that can be achieved through journals (Mynard, 2003; Thanasoulas, 2000). As a journal in essence, learner blogs can serve as an ideal space for reflection. By setting a learner blog, students can evaluate their learning process identifying their strengths and weaknesses, suggesting solutions and setting goals under the guidance of the teacher. Since their reflective journals will be published on the net, the teacher can easily guide them by constantly communicating with them and they can make use of other reflections published by their peers. Learner blogs can also be used as personal learning spaces where students can share whatever they do for their learning, so in this respect, learner blogs are thought to contribute students in developing a sense of ownership of the learning process (Campbell, 2003). Ownership is among the conditions of being autonomous. Being another condition to enhance learner autonomy, collaborative learning can be realized through maintaining a class blog which refers to a kind of blog constructed through the efforts of all the class members. By assigning various degree of responsibility to the class members, the teacher can make the students to create a class blog according to the objectives of the course. Since their work will be published and seen by an anticipated online audience, the students are assumed to get motivated and take much more responsibility which is one of the prerequisites of autonomous learning.

Consequently, having effective language learners who can regulate their own learning by taking decisions related to their learning, by choosing materials in accordance with their needs, and by monitoring and reflecting on their learning process is now one of the desired goals in language education. The way of training students to become effective learners is closely related to guiding them in autonomous learning. While encouraging autonomous learning among students, some certain conditions should be realized. The main ones are the creation of collaborative environments, preparation of various materials considering the learner diversity, encouraging reflective learning and constant guidance to the students in clearing the path to autonomous learning. However, the realization of these conditions may be difficult in traditional classroom settings where the students and teacher meet for a limited time. With such potential offerings as enabling students to choose their own materials to study, developing a sense of ownership through personal web pages, creating collaborative environments and spaces for reflection, weblogs seem to be a possible solution to enhance learner autonomy.

2.8. Conclusion

As the literature on writing instruction indicates, process approach is today regarded as one of the ways of teaching writing effectively. The studies mentioned above do not only identify how to implement in classroom, but also includes some significant implications about the constraints with regard to implementing it in a school setting where the classes are overcrowded, where teacher has to consider curriculum and time restrictions, where students access to resources is limited. One of the solutions proposed in the literature is the use of weblogs. Though weblogs seem quite promising to facilitate process based writing instruction in a school setting and to enhance autonomous learning, there is a need for conducting research to have certain claims on the use of weblogs in process approach. The following chapter describes the methodology of such a study to this end.

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study sought to find out weblog use in process oriented writing instruction; specifically it dealt with the effect of weblogs, personal web publishing tools, on EFL students' writing performance and on autonomous learning with an additional focus on learners' perceptions.

In this chapter, the nature of this study and the methodology adopted to find answer to the research questions of this study are explained. It begins with the nature of the study and continues with setting which covers information about the place where this study is conducted and participants giving information about those involved in this current study. It proceeds with instruments developed to collect the necessary data, and finally it ends with data collection and analysis procedures.

3.2. Nature of the Study

Two research designs were followed in this study: a quasi experimental design and a survey design.

In addressing evaluation questions about the effectiveness or impact of any innovations in an educational setting as it was aimed in the present study, experimental designs prove to be useful (Gribbons & Herman, 1997). However, as argued by Cohen and Manion (1994), it is not always possible in an educational institution to conduct true experiments in which the students are randomly assigned to experimental and control groups as it is not always feasible to change the participants' schools or classes. So, the designs which make

use of experimental and control groups but cannot realize random assignment of the subjects are called as quasi experimental designs (Cohen & Manion, 1994). As the present study which seeks mainly to find out the impact of weblog integrated writing process instruction on writing performance and learner autonomy could not assign the students randomly to experimental and control groups, a quasi experimental design was adopted.

Additionally, a survey design that is one of the most frequently used descriptive methods in educational research was utilized (Cohen & Manion, 1994). A survey, according to Robson (1995), refers to gathering data from a specific population with the purpose of understanding people's attitudes or opinions on a given situation. This study also aimed to measure the students' perceptions towards the use of weblogs in their writing process; therefore, a survey design was adopted.

The main variables of the study were writing instruction (weblog integrated writing instruction and in class writing instruction), student writing performance, student level of learner autonomy and student perception of weblog integrated into the writing course. The data were collected through students' written products, interview and two questionnaires; one is researcher-constructed, measuring the students' perception of blogging and the other is constructed by GIAPEL group (Grupo de Investigación y Aplicaciones Pedagógicas en Lenguas), (Ruiz, 2003), measuring participants' level of being autonomous.

To measure these variables, the present study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative method is defined as a research method that relies on interviews, observations, questionnaires and subjective reports rather than the numbers and statistics (Boeree, 2005). The data obtained through the interviews and Post instruction Questionnaire provided the qualitative data for the study.

Quantitative method is related to collection and analysis of the numerical data and statistics. The scores given to students' written products and learner autonomy test provided the quantitative data for the study

3.3. Setting

The place where this study was conducted is the School of Foreign Languages at Karadeniz Technical University (K.T.U) in Trabzon, Turkey. The School of Foreign Languages aims at equipping its students with the language abilities necessary to understand the subjects related to their own field of study they read and they listen to and to express themselves both in oral and written communication. It consists of three main departments; Department of Basic English, Department of Modern Languages and Department of Translation. This study was conducted in the Department of Basic English where students registering for various departments at K.T.U are taught English before they continue their education in their own field of study. All the students in this department are grouped according to their level of proficiency which is identified through a placement test prepared by the school and administered at the beginning of the education year. While placing the students into the classes, their fields of study are taken into consideration as well. All the classes are instructed with the same English language curriculum; all the students at the same level of language proficiency take exactly the same English courses with the same amount of class hours. The curriculum consists of four English courses: Grammar (6 hours), Reading (8 hours), Speaking/Listening (6 hours) and Writing (4 hours). This research project was implemented in the writing course which aims at enabling students to practice the language they have learned and to express themselves efficiently in well-organized paragraphs and essays. The first term is allocated to teaching paragraph types and in the second term the students are instructed on essay writing. The textbook used for this course is compiled by the school staff from various sources according to the curriculum of the course and it is mostly supported with extra-materials by the instructors. Writing activities are usually confined to in class activities: Students are initially given theoretical information about the target paragraph type. After they are provided with the related structure exercises identified by the instructor, they are shown one or two models of the paragraph type and then they are assigned to write their own paragraphs. Students' writings are generally seen by the teacher who is the sole person giving feedback on the writings. Feedback is generally limited to surface level; that's, students' grammatical errors are corrected by the teacher and students are assigned to re-write the paragraph. Students have no place to publish their writings.

3.4. Participants

In two writing classes, a total of 50 students studying in the School of Foreign Languages, K.T.U participated in this study. Because of the curriculum and administrative limitations of the school where this study was conducted, it seemed difficult to have random sampling; therefore, convenience sampling procedures which “involve choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents” (Cohen and Manion, 1994 p.88) were applied in drawing sample for the study. One of the two classes of students was assigned as experimental group according to their opportunity in accessing internet, and the other class served as control group. For each group, the number of participants and their age, departments and educational backgrounds in English are displayed in Table 2 as follows:

Table: 3
Groups’ Number, Range of Age, Departments, and Educational Background

Groups		Number	Range of Age	Departments	Educational Background
Experimental Group	Male	21	18-21	Physics, Deck, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Public Administration	Anatolian High School, Collage
	Female	5	18-20	Civil Engineering, Public Administration	Anatolian High School, Collage
Control Group	Male	16	18-21	Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Forest Engineering,	Anatolian High School, Collage
	Female	5	18-20	Forest Engineering, Civil Engineering,	Anatolian High School, Collage

The classes were constructed according to the result of a placement test prepared and administered by the School of Foreign Languages; namely, all the participants got similar results from the placement test. However, for the sake of the study, English proficiency level of the students was measured once more through two measuring scales. Both groups were instructed on writing by the researcher as instructor in accordance with the research design.

3.5. Instruments

To gather necessary data, writing performance task, questionnaires and interview were used. In the following section, these instruments are further described.

3.5.1. Measures to Determine Students' Proficiency Level

In order to determine the students' level of proficiency in English, two measurements were used; ALTE (2001) Quick Placement Test that was purchased and used with no change and an English proficiency self-rating questionnaire that was designed for the purpose of the present study.

3.5.1.1. The ALTE (2001) Quick Placement Test

The Quick Placement Test is a test produced by ALTE in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (formerly UCLES) with the purpose of assessing students' level in English. It is designed to help teachers make decisions about which class to place students in, or whether a learner can join a particular course, such as an examination class. The test has been validated in 20 countries with 5000 students and as a whole it ensures that the results are reliable (Oxford University Press, 2006). The test can be used for learners of all levels from secondary age.

Quick Placement Test has two parts consisting of 60 questions: part 1 (questions from 1-40) measures from Elementary to Intermediate levels, part 2 (questions from 40-60) measures the Advanced level. At the beginning of the study, the test was purchased, and the participants of the present study were told to complete the first part as recommended by the authors, and in the case of any students scoring more than 36, they were asked to continue with part 2. The recommendation for the completion of the test is 20-25 minutes, which was followed in the study as well. The results were interpreted according to the scores shown in table 3 below:

Table: 4

Interpretation of results of Quick Placement Test

ALTE Level	Part 1	Part 2
0 Beginner	0-15	0-17
1 Elementary	16-23	18-29
2 Low Intermediate	24-30	30-39
3 Upper Intermediate	31-40	40-47
4 Advanced	No item measuring advance level in Part 1	48-54
5 Upper Advanced		55-60

Source: Adapted from Quick Placement Test, 2001

In order to put students' level into a more meaningful context, the results are also linked to the ALTE Levels, the Common European Framework which is described in detail under the title of English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire and Cambridge ESOL Exams. However, it is recommended for the users to interpret the scores meaningfully against their own level systems, class/year group organization etc... Table 4 presents the relationship between ALTE levels and the Common European Framework levels and Cambridge ESOL Exams.

Table: 5

Relationship among ALTE Levels, Common European Framework Levels and Cambridge Exams

ALTE Level	Common European Framework Description	Common European Framework Level	Cambridge Examinations
0	Beginner	A1	
1	Elementary	A2	KET
2	Lower Intermediate	B1	PET
3	Upper Intermediate	B2	FCE
4	Advanced	C2	CAE
5	Upper Advanced	C2	CPE

Source: Adapted from Quick Placement Test, 2001

The descriptions of levels are as follows:

➤ Learners in level 1 can deal with simple straightforward information and interact in familiar contexts.

- Learners in Level 2 can manage a wider range of situations and express themselves in a limited way.
- Learners in Level 3 have useful functional ability and they show an awareness of conventions of use.
- Learners in Level 4 have the capacity to deal with non-routine and to use language fluently.
- Learners in Level 5 can deal with cognitively demanding material and use the language effectively and fluently.

Though the test is validated, it is recommended that the results should be supported by other forms of measuring scales. With this purpose in mind, an alternative test, English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire, was designed by the researcher. The test is further described in the following section.

3.5.1.2. English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire

In order to elicit students' self-ratings of English proficiency, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher. The questionnaire elicited students' name, age, registered department and school of graduation. The statements used in the questionnaire were adapted from "Self-assessment Grid" based upon the European Portfolio for Languages and created by the Council of Europe.

One of the purposes of Council of Europe is to help partners to describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards in order to facilitate comparison between different systems of qualifications. To realize this aim, The Council of Europe has developed a European Framework with common reference levels. In practice, the number and nature of levels seem to overlap with the organization of language learning and the public recognition of achievement. The levels are an interpretation of the division into basic, intermediate and advanced. The levels and their descriptions are as follows:

Table: 6
Description of Levels According to the Council of Europe

B A S I C	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
I N T E R M E D I A T E	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
A D V A N C E D	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Source: Adapted from Quick Placement Test, 2001

All these descriptors have been turned into a Self- Assessment Grid in order to provide teachers and curriculum designers with a more detailed overview that can be used to orient the learners. The major categories in Self- Assessment Grid are understanding, speaking and writing and the descriptors included in each of these categories are formulated using the expression ‘I can’ to facilitate self-assessment.

The English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire used in this study was created by taking all these considerations into account. The questionnaire asked students about their opinion on their proficiency level in English when writing a text; when reading a text; when speaking in English and when listening to spoken English. For each skill, students were given possible answers adapted from Self-Assessment Grid (2001) and they were required to choose as many of those they considered relevant. In the case of students choosing different options within the same skill that belonged to different levels, the higher level was considered. The global level was obtained by comparing the results in four subsections. For the full version of the Self Rating Questionnaire, see Appendix A.

The main purpose of this questionnaire was to attain qualitative data from the students that could complement the quantitative data obtained in the Quick Placement Test. It is also thought to give an idea about students’ own perspectives of their writing skills, so it could complement the results obtained from the writing performance pre-test. Additionally, self-rating one’s own level of proficiency is an extremely reflective activity which is considered as one of the most important steps towards autonomous learning.

3.5.2. Writing Performance Task

To test the existing ability of the participants in writing, the students both in experimental and control groups were asked to perform a writing task as a pre-test. The task provided the students with choices on the topics and paragraph types that they were going to learn throughout the term. The participants were required to write a paragraph on the topic they chose. The time allowed for the task was 50 minutes. After the treatment, the same task was repeated as a post test (For the Writing Performance Task, see Appendix B).

Three experienced EFL teachers of writing were selected to evaluate the participants' written products by using a rubric (see Appendix C) which was constructed in accordance with ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al., 1981). The evaluators were trained with the Reader Guide in the use of rubric.

The reader guide prepared with the aim of helping teachers to evaluate the writing performances of students reliably and efficiently contains a step by step training that can be applied both individually and collaboratively. The guide consists of three sections. In the section 1, profile approach to composition evaluation is discussed and ESL Composition Profile is introduced. It also contains step by step instructions and illustrations to guide evaluators in using the Profile. Answers to the frequently asked questions about the use of Profile are included as well. Section II in the Reader Guide provides self training and group training procedures to guide readers in evaluating writing performances reliably. The authors give place to specific reminders. Section III presents ESL composition test samples for practice during the training session. Each sample has been evaluated by four evaluators having experiences in using the Profile and evaluation of ESL writing. The aim in putting these samples into the guide is to help readers "to learn to apply the criteria and standards of the evaluation consistently and to provide an opportunity for identifying and moderating points of divergence in their judgments about writing quality" (Jacobs et.al. 1981 p. 145).

3.5.2.1. The ESL Composition Profile:

The ESL Composition Profile is a focused-analytic scale describing five components of writing along four ranges of mastery levels. It was originally developed by Jacobs et al. (1981) with the goal of providing useful information on a learner ability to communicate in writing. Though initially designed for expository and persuasive pieces, the profile has undergone modification (Hamayan, Kwait & Periman, 1985; Wormuth & Hughey, 1988 cited in Gottlieb, 1999) to make it applicable to any genre of writing. The rubric can be used for assessment of students' writings from the first draft to the final version (Gottlieb, 1999).

The rubric used in this study is adapted from Hughey, Wormuth, Hartfiel and Jacobs (1983) and the description of the scales and numerical weights are revised and added by

considering the objectives of the writing course in research setting. The five component scales are Content (30pts), Organization (20pts), Vocabulary (20pts), Language use (25 pts) and Mechanics (5 pts). The rationale behind including these particular components comes from the results of several studies. The authors discuss the studies by Diederich et al. (1961), Remondino (1959), Harris (1977) and Freedman (1977), and report that

...composition evaluators respond to these aspects of writing when they read and judge students compositions ...readers are influenced by writers' ideas, their use of the syntactical, lexical and mechanical elements of language to express those ideas; their organization or arrangement of the ideas, their creativity in expressing themselves, the readability and appearance of the composition. (p. 34)

The Content (30) component is related to the *inventio* of writing, that is, having something to say. The Organization (20) covers the principles of arrangement. The Vocabulary (20), Language Use (25) and Mechanics (5) components of the Profile address the linguistic and mechanical principles of effective delivery of message (Hughey et al., 1983). The total weight for each component is further broken down into numerical ranges that correspond to four mastery levels (Excellent to Very Good, Good to Average, Fair to Poor and Very Poor). These levels are characterized by keyword descriptors representing specific criteria basic to successful writing (Hughey et al. 1983). What is meant by the descriptors is fully explained in Reader Guide to help the evaluators understand the descriptors clearly.

To overcome the rater reliability problems, three independent experienced raters were asked to evaluate the students' writings as the authors of the Profile suggest "for maximum reader reliability, each composition should be read by at least three readers working independently" (p. 69). Each product was graded three times and the results were compared with each other.

The validity-related matters for English Composition Profile were reported by Jacobs et al. (1981) as follows:

In terms of *face validity and content validity*, the Profile looks like measure of writing ability since it contains the criteria that have been emphasized by the educators as the elements of good writing. So it has face validity. The Profile also seems to be valid in

content because it evaluates writers' performance on writing tasks generally required in the classroom (Jacobs et al., 1981).

To find out whether the Profile is *concurrently valid* or not, compositions test scores were correlated with the scores from the TOEFL and Michigan Test Battery. The validity coefficients for the Profile were reported as ranging from .46 to .70. The Profile most strongly correlated with the Vocabulary and Grammar scores of Michigan Test Battery and with the structural writing (.62) scores on the TOEFL (Jacobs et al., 1981).

To determine the *construct validity* of the Profile, it was used as a pre-test and as a post-test for a composition class in the English Language Institute. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant average increase in the Profile scores from pre-test to post-test. ($t=12.04$, $df=109$, $p<0.5$).

3.5.3. Measures to Determine Autonomous Learning

As one of the key concepts in the domain of education in general and in language learning in particular (Thanasoulas, 2000), learner autonomy, in its general sense, refers to learning to learn and is also associated with a set of other terms such as learner independence, lifelong learning and independent learning (Mynard, 2003). Autonomous or independent learners are characterized as appreciating the purpose of their learning, taking responsibility for their learning, monitoring themselves during the learning process and evaluating its effectiveness (Holec, 1981 cited in Ruiz, 2003). The teacher's role in autonomous learning is to help learners by "creating and maintaining a learning environment" (Little, 2004 p. 1) in which students feel the responsibility, develop a capacity for reflection, review and evaluate their learning and interact with others.

Although there is a general agreement on the benefits of developing autonomous learning in the students (Thanasoulas, 2000; Little, 2004), there is little consensus on how it is to be assessed (Reinders & Cotterall, 2000). Describing the process as problematic, Mynard (2003) summarizes the situation concerning the measurement of autonomous learning as:

It might not be satisfactory to attempt to measure the development of autonomous learning in terms of product – i.e. the degree to which the autonomous learning skills are assisting the student in mastering the target language. Positivist studies have limitations as it is not evident whether language learning has occurred because of the application of autonomous learning skills or because of other factors such as previous exposure to language, particular interest in the subject area or a change in personal circumstances (p. 75)

According to Sinclair (2000, cited in Mynard, 2003), researchers dealing with testing of autonomous learning have no chance apart from relying on self-report as it requires knowing what is going on inside a learner's head. Similarly, Cohen and Hosenfield (1981) state that using self-reports is a useful tool to get information about learning process. One of the early attempts in measuring autonomous learning has been done by Willing (1989), who devised a questionnaire including attitudinal statements related to students' learning style and disposition to be independent (Mynard, 2003). In a more qualitative approach, Sinclair (1999, cited in Mynard, 2003) advises the use of interview to measure learner autonomy. Similarly, Mariani (1996) mentions about two approaches in measuring independent learning: In an informal approach, observing students and taking notes may provide valuable insights for autonomous learning, and formal approach requires devising questionnaires and interviews or using ones already available.

The measures used in this present study were constructed in the light of the related literature. Two different measures namely an already available questionnaire and a researcher constructed interview, were employed to determine the participants' level of being autonomous. They are further described in the following section.

3.4.3.1. GIAPEL Learning Style Test

In order to answer the question “does the use of weblog in a process oriented writing course have any effect on enhancing learner autonomy?” the participants were administered GIAPEL Learning Style Test (see Appendix D).

The test was developed by GIAPEL group in 1997 and used in various studies conducted by the same group with the purpose of measuring autonomous learning (Ruiz, 2003). Being originally in Spanish, the test was translated into English and modified to

make it suitable for the objectives of the present study. The test originally contains five main sections: The first two sections are related to students' attitudes towards language learning under the title of grammar; the third section is about students' attitudes towards language learning exercises; the fourth section includes statements about reading skill in specific and the last part of the test contains various kinds of activities among which students are supposed to choose. The statements in each section are indirectly connected with independent/autonomous learner and dependent learner behaviors. For example the statement *the professor should give me the rule and many examples* implies that the student choosing this item tends to be a dependent learner, and the statement *the professor should give me many examples and I try to discover the rule* implies the behaviour of autonomous learner (Ruiz, 2003).

Considering the context of the present research, reading-skill-related part was excluded from the test; instead, a new section related to writing was added. The statements included in the writing section to measure the level of autonomy in connection with writing skill were adapted from Ghaith (2002). Participants were required to choose three items out of the items available in each section. Each of the items was scored with a specific value from 1 to 5. 1 denotes the lowest and 5 denotes the highest in terms of autonomous learning criteria. Because of the restriction in the number of chosen items, the highest score participants can obtain in section 1 is 14 and in the rest of the sections is 15. The total score was obtained by adding each score attained in each section. The possible highest score is 74 referring to autonomous learning. The results of the test were analyzed according to the evaluation guide of the test. The relationship between the total scores each participant obtains and learner autonomy is defined as follows:

Table: 7
Relationship between Obtained Scores and Autonomy Level in GIAPEL Learning Style Test

Learner Types	Score	Autonomy Level
Type A	0-14	<p>They are regarded as the least autonomous and reflective learners They do not like open-ended activities They do not tolerate ambiguity They are teacher-dependent for their learning They consider learning a language as a difficult task They feel ridiculous when using a foreign language.</p>
Type B	14-34	<p>They are considered open to autonomous learning but still attached to teacher-dependence. They are described as subjects who like learning a language following a well designed plan from the simplest to the most complex aspects in language. In this sense, their motto is step by step. They think that before using a language it is necessary to master its grammar and its vocabulary. They do not take risks and do not take decisions about the global meaning of a text if they do not understand all the words of the text. They also consider themselves as pragmatic subjects who prefer short learning activities in order to be able to get quick conclusions about correct or incorrect responses. They like taking a learning route and walking straight on without looking backwards or taking alternative routes.</p>
Type C	34-54	<p>They are considered as opened to autonomous learning although they should be trained in order to take the most out of them in terms of autonomous learning. They are described as subjects who consider learning a language as an interesting and necessary task. They like participating in the design of their learning plans and applying their previous knowledge about languages to new learning situations. They are objective learners who always look for the cons and pros of a learning task in case of doubt. They also consider grammars and dictionaries helping tools, since they prefer inducing meanings and rules from the task.</p>
Type D	54-74	<p>They are considered already autonomous learners. They are described as subjects who love learning languages and enjoy experimenting and discovering languages. They always establish analogies and contrasts among languages. They choose the learning strategy to be used in each activity and the materials and procedure to be applied to each learning context. They consider the learning plan as a fundamental tool in which objectives and process should be clearly expressed at the beginning and can be modifiable as the learning process advances. They consider the teacher as tutor who helps them in their learning process</p>

Source: Adapted from Ruiz, 2003

3.5.3.2 Student Interview

In order to answer the question “Does the use of weblog in a process oriented writing course have any effect on enhancing learner autonomy?”, a semi-structured interview, one of the most widely used research tools to get an idea about learner autonomy, was used to triangulate the data obtained in GIAPEL learning style test and to have deeper understanding by attaining qualitative data about students’ level of being autonomous.

A total of 10 questions were asked to the students in the experimental group. The questions were constructed by drawing from the research by Shih-Yin (2005), who conducted a study on the benefits of technology based environments on learner autonomy, and by Usuki (2002), who designed a case study to identify the qualities of an autonomous learner and from the information about characteristics of autonomous learners. The mostly emphasized qualities that an autonomous learner has are being self-reliant, being aware of weaknesses and strengths, being able to transfer classroom learning with real world, taking responsibility for their own learning, being intrinsically motivated, and possessing ability to self assess (Thanasoulas, 2000; Mynard, 2003; Ruiz, 2003; Little, 2004). Each of the questions in the interview asks about the presence of these qualities in the participants. Question No. 1 is asking about students opinion on collaboration and interaction as autonomous learners are those who are eager to collaborate; question No. 2 investigates the sense of ownership and responsibility in the students for their learning. Question No. 3 is about being accustomed to reflect on learning process; question No. 4 is related to being self-reliant; question No. 5 is about participants understanding of learning; question No. 6 inquires about whether the student is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated; questions No.7 and 8 inquire about how students regard themselves as learners and their teachers; question 9 is about students’ ideas on having responsibility for their learning. And the last question, No.10, was inserted in the interview to inquire further about the students’ perception of weblog use in writing course. For the interview questions, see Appendix E.

3.5.4. Post-Instruction Perception Questionnaire:

So as to answer the third research question, “What are the perceptions of students towards weblogs as a means of writing?” a researcher constructed questionnaire was used.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements adapted from Cunningham (2000) and Chuo (2004). The statements modified in accordance with the objectives of this present study are asking about students' perceptions of weblog use on following five aspects: (1) effect on writing performance (2) effect of feedback and revision (3) interest and motivation (4) communication (5) independent learning, and (6) technology use. The statements (No.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 21) concerning writing performance were constructed by considering the main parts of the rubric (English Composition Profile) used in the study with the aim of obtaining qualitative data that could verify the quantitative data obtained in Writing Performance Test. The aim in putting statements related to feedback (No.11, 13,19), revision, editing (No.12, 15), and teacher and peer interaction (No.7, 8) was to measure students' perceptions of blogging in process oriented writing instruction because they are the mostly emphasized aspects of writing instruction in process approach (Chastain, 1988; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Smith, 2000). The 9th and 20th statements about choice of language learning materials and reflective activities that are recommended to enhance learner autonomy (Hogan, 1998; Thanasoulas, 2000; Mohani, 2003; Little, 2004) were inserted because it was thought that they could give some idea about the place of weblog use in autonomous learning. Finally, motivation-related statements (No.6, 10, 14, 16, 22) were included to find out the effect of weblog use on motivation, and technology-use-related statements (No. 23, 24) were included in the questionnaire to inquire further about students' weblog experiences. In a four Likert scale format, the participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statements. For the full version of the Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire, see appendix F.

3.5.5. The Pilot Work

GIAPPEL Learning Style Test and English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire were piloted; though they were used previously in some other studies (Ruiz, 2003) it was supposed that the translated versions of the questionnaires might pose problems with regard to results obtained. In order to do the pilot work for these two questionnaires, they were given to 18 intermediate students studying at the School of Foreign Languages and having similar backgrounds with that of participants of the present study in terms of learning English. They were asked to follow the instructions in the questionnaires and ask anything about the statements when they felt a need and to report on anything unclear.

Almost no problem was observed in the translated version of GIAPEL Learning Style Test apart from a need to clarify the expression *external feedback*. Five students reported that they did not understand what was meant by this expression. So, this expression was turned into *advice from my friends or someone other than the teacher*.

For the English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire, it was reported a need for the change in the expression *if I have some time to get familiar with the accent*. Most of the students asked how to interpret the expression “some time”, so it was changed into *some time (15-20 min.)* in the main questionnaire.

For the pilot work of the interview questions, five students from the research setting were chosen and interview questions were asked with exception of blogging-related questions as they were not exposed to any weblog activities. The students were ensured to feel free on commenting any questions that they did not understand.

At the end of the interview, it was understood that some of the questions were too broad to understand and students needed clarifications on the terms. For example, for the questions No. 6, 7, 8, 9, the participants reported that they did not know what to say. To elaborate on the questions, the students were given options and required to choose between them and explain. The same options were included in the main interview as well.

3.6. Procedures

Three main procedures were involved in this study. These are data collection, writing instruction and data analysis.

3.6.1. Data Collection

At the beginning of the study, the Writing Performance Pre-test was administered to the students both in experimental and control groups. The experimental group additionally took the GIAPEL Learning style test as a pre-test to measure their current position in

autonomous learning. Since the control group was not provided with any opportunities for autonomous learning, they were not given GIAPEL learning style test.

During the research project, the control group received in-class writing instruction based on process approach whereas the experimental group received process-oriented writing instruction supported with weblog use. Taught by the same instructor, both groups were instructed according to the same curriculum on the same paragraph types by using the same main materials; however, the experimental group was provided with extra opportunities realized through weblog use. After a sixteen-week treatment, the Writing Performance Post-test was given to both experimental and control group. And also experimental group repeated the GIAPEL learning style test as a post-test and received Post-Instruction Perception Questionnaire.

3.6.2. Writing Instruction for Experimental and Control Group

As required by the writing curriculum of School of Foreign Languages where this study was implemented, 4 hours are allocated to the instruction of writing per week. The aim in placing writing course into the curriculum, as identified by the administration, is to provide students with opportunities to practice the language while expressing themselves effectively in well-organized paragraphs/essays. Writing instruction in the research setting begins with teaching paragraph-writing, and in the second term, students are instructed on essay writing. In the first term when this study was conducted, students are required to complete six paragraph-writing assignments each with a drafted version. The paragraph types placed in the curriculum are *descriptive, process, compare, contrast, cause and effect* paragraphs. Each paragraph type is studied in a-two-week time, and the course content is followed in accordance with the content of textbook compiled by the school staff; however, the instructors are allowed to support their courses with extra materials. The same procedure is followed for the teaching of each paragraph type. Students are given theoretical information related to the target type and provided with the exercises about necessary language use and writing practice. The rest of the allocated time is spent for writing the first draft, giving feedback and writing the final version. In order to get a pass-grade, students are required to complete six paragraph assignments and collect them in a portfolio with their drafted versions, which makes the 70 % of their pass-grade, and they

also must take a writing quiz that contributes to their final grade in the rate of 20 %. 10 % of the final grade is due to students' class performance.

These basic requirements were observed in designing courses for both the control group and the experimental group. The following is the summarized writing instruction for each group.

3.6.2.1. Writing Instruction for Experimental Group

Since this study involves the use of blogging in process oriented writing instruction, the course design for experimental group blends blogging with the principles of process approach.

Process approach defines writing as a non-linear activity (Tribble, 1996). White and Arndt (1991) suggest that in process based writing instruction, producing a text involves six recursive procedures: pre-writing, drafting, reviewing, editing, revising and evaluating. Since the basic aim in process approach is to guide the students through these stages, multiple drafts, feedback between drafts and sharing what has been written have gained a special emphasis. Hyland (2003) provides a well documented process model of writing instruction illustrating both the recursive nature of writing process and the things to consider in teaching students to write.

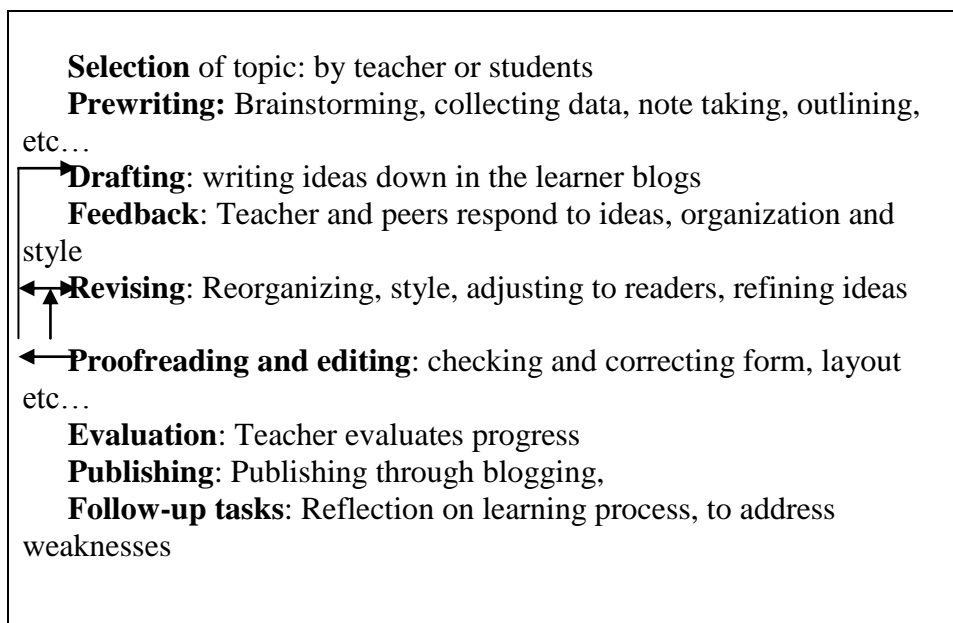


Figure: 3
Writing Instruction for Experimental group
 Source: Hyland, 2003, p. 11

While designing the writing instruction for experimental group, a modified version of this model was used because of the physical and administrative limitations of the research setting.

3.6.2.2. Setting up Blog Supported Classroom on Blogger

So as to integrate blogging into this process based writing instruction, students were introduced to www.blogger.com which was the most widely used blog page (Stiler & Philleo, 2003). They were initially required to create two different blogs on Blogger. The first thing to do in creating a blog was to get an account on www.blogger.com. This could be made in three easy steps. Simply clicking on the *create your own blog* on blogger's homepage, the user was directed to create a user name and password. Continuing along the process, the next step was to enter a title for the blog and to form a URL address. The third step was to choose a template through which the user decides on the font, colour and layout of the blog when viewed as a webpage. The template can be changed at any time. The process of setting up a blog is illustrated on the following figure.

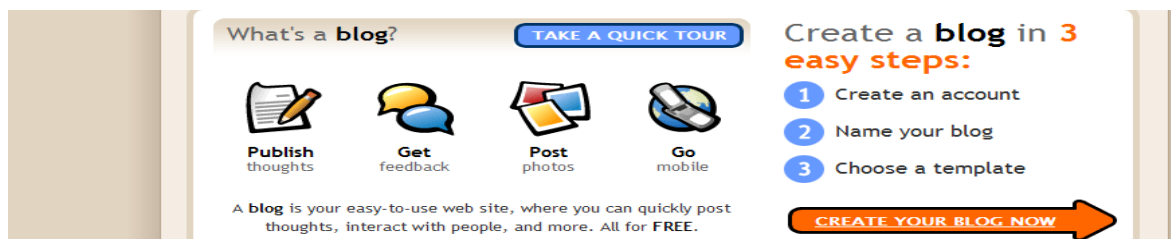


Figure: 4
Setting up a blog

Source: www.blogger.com

In order to turn it to a class blog, the students were added as team members to the blog through the “permissions” button on the blog as shown on the following figure.

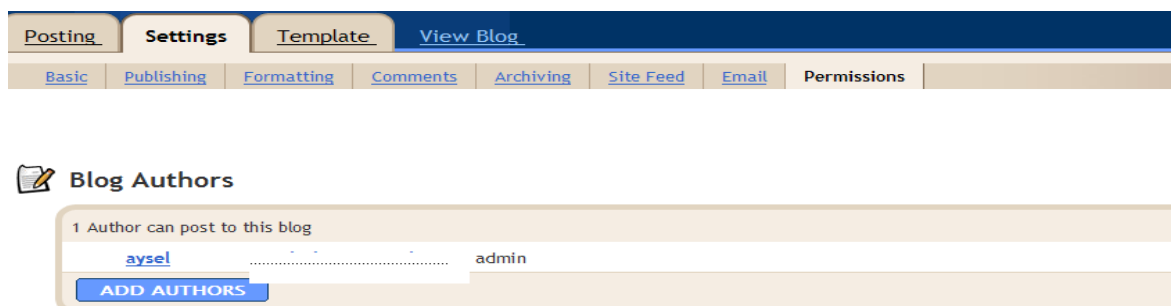


Figure: 5
Adding students to the class blog

Source: www.blogger.com

After clicking on the “settings” and “permissions” buttons, as the owner of the blog, the instructor invited students through “add authors” button. Sending an invitation e mail to each student in the class made the students group members and students could easily reach to one another’s blog.

After each student set his/ her blog, they were trained on maintaining their blogs. In training students on maintaining a blog, all the tools on the site were introduced through teacher modelling. Each student was also sent an email including information about creating a post, revising and editing it, leaving comments and page design. One of the two blogs each student created served as a place for publishing their writings and the other was used as a personal space where students reflected on their learning processes. These two blogs together made the online portfolio for each student. They were also introduced three

researcher constructed blogs that served for sharing instructional materials, online writing and language materials and idea exchange.

For the teaching of paragraph types, the following procedure was followed: In the first hour of the week, students were given information about the target type and two model paragraphs, one written by a professional writer and the other written by a student writer, were examined in class together with the students. In the second hour of the week, vocabulary and the language structure necessary for the target type were studied and the students were provided with exercises related to the topic. Researcher-constructed blogs were utilized while teaching the required language structures as well. By means of weblog use, they were directed on the net to the language teaching websites selected by the instructor according to their relevancy with the topic of the week. The teacher-referenced websites were divided into two groups: only writing skill related websites and general language skills websites. The links to these websites were updated by the researcher at certain intervals. For a full list of the websites used in this study, see Appendix H. Students were allowed to choose among these websites and were required to do the exercises/activities on these sites, and subsequently to reflect on their studies in their own blogs as choice of materials and reflections on the learning process, strengths and weaknesses are emphasized in literature related to both process approach and autonomous learning (Mol, 1992; Ruiz, 2003; Mynard, 2003). In the following hours, students were shown how to write a paragraph in the target type through teacher modelling by attaching special emphasis on how to choose the topic, do the prewriting activities and put the ideas in a paragraph. Then, the students were assigned to choose a topic to write about in the taught paragraph type. The pre-writing stage was realized during class time; however, all the other stages of writing process were carried out on the net. Students were asked to write their first drafts and publish them in their blogs. During drafting, students communicated with teacher and their peers by means of blogging. Before the teacher responded to the drafts, students were required to read their friends' writings and give feedback to them. In order to guide the students in giving feedback, they were provided with a checklist, which is regarded as one way of ensuring useful feedback in peer review (Stanley, 1992; Yang, 2006). The terms in the checklist were elaborated and the students were shown how to use checklist through teacher modelling. After the drafts were examined by the teacher, students wrote the final version of their assignments and

published them in their blogs. At the end of the process, students were asked to write a reflection evaluating their learning process related to the target type in their blogs. (For the detailed version of the weekly course design for experimental group, see Appendix G and for the sample blog pages from the study, see Appendix I).

3.6.2.3. Writing Instruction for Control Group

In the design of the writing course for the control group, the writing curriculum of the research setting and the main principles of process approach were taken into consideration. Like students in experimental group, students in control group attended a-four-hour writing course and they were instructed on paragraph writing at the time of this study. They were required to complete the same paragraph writing assignments. In teaching of paragraph types, all the in-class activities for experimental group were repeated for control group: Students were given information about the target type and they were shown two model paragraphs that were the same with those used in the experimental group. They were also instructed on the language use and vocabulary necessary in the target type. Same exercises used in-class with the experimental group were employed with the control group as well. Paragraph writing was modelled by the teacher and then the students were assigned to choose a topic to write about. The pre-writing stage was realized in class; however, the drafting stage is assigned as homework. The drafts were analyzed by the peers during the class time as time allowed, and after teacher responded to all the drafts, revising and editing stages were assigned as homework again. At the end, students produced the final version of their paragraphs. Because of the limitations of research setting and depending on the design of present study that required the control group not to use internet, there was no place for students to publish their works though publishing was emphasized in process approach. So students collected all their studies (pre-writing activities, drafts and final versions of their assignments) in a dossier which served as a student portfolio. At the end of the instruction on each paragraph type, the students in control group were required to write a reflection evaluating their learning process and to put them in their portfolios as well.

3.6.3. Data Analysis

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through data elicitation instruments. To analyze the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

To test the hypothesis if there was a significant difference between the writing performance of students who received in-class process oriented writing instruction and that of students who received weblog integrated process based writing instruction, data were elicited through a writing task used both as pre and post-test. As the data obtained from the Writing Performance Test were in form of scores which means “ordinal scale data appropriate for parametric procedures” (Hatch & Lazarson, 1991 p. 547), the analysis of t-test was utilized since t test, according to Ak (2006) is used to see if there is a difference between two samples or not. Among the types of t test, paired sample t test was chosen to understand if there occurred a difference from pre-test to post test in each group separately. Finding out the post test means for each group would give a clearer idea about the difference between groups. The same data were analyzed through the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to see whether the difference between groups resulted from the treatment or from the pre-existing differences between groups. Hatch and Lazarson (1991) argue that ANCOVA makes it possible “to control for some variable –perhaps a pre-test score- so that the measurement of dependent variable is adjusted taking into account this initial differences among the subjects” (p. 387).

To test the hypothesis that weblog integration into an EFL setting could enhance learner autonomy, the scores that the students in experimental group obtained from GIAPEL Learning Style Questionnaire as Pre-test and Post-test were analyzed by utilizing the evaluation guide for the test explained earlier in this chapter. As each score obtained from GIAPEL Learning Style Questionnaire had its own corresponding levels and descriptors in terms of being autonomous learner, the evaluation guide was to give an idea about the change, if any, in students’ levels from pre-test to post-test.

For the analysis of the interview data, the participants’ responses were transcribed and read many times. In the analysis, the procedure recommended by Ekiz (2003) was

followed. At data display stage, all the responses by the students were categorized under each question in separate sheets. In order to interpret the responses, the lines were assigned numbers. While giving the numbers, the lines including similar ideas were assigned the same numbers which ensured the analytic interpretation of the idea in the target lines. Then, the frequency of the same number was thought to give an idea about the attitudes of the majority of the students towards weblog use.

Descriptive analysis (frequency percentage and mean scores) was utilized for the students' responses obtained through Post-Instruction Perception Questionnaire. In descriptive statistics, the most important point to be careful is the level of significance which was symbolized by P letter. The generally accepted idea is that when the P value is smaller than 0.05, the results will be statistically significant (Çiçek, 2006). So the same value was considered in the interpretation of the questionnaire results.

To test the hypothesis that the level of students' perception of the weblog use in writing instruction could positively correlate with the level of students' improved writing performance, the Pearson product-moment correlation was utilized. The data attained through the questionnaire and writing performance task were continuous data. According to Hatch & Lazarton (1991), the Pearson correlation establishes the strength of relationships of continuous variables.

Concerning the hypothesis that the level of students in autonomous learning could positively correlate with their improved writing performance, Pearson correlation was again used as the variables for this hypothesis were continuous as well. The results of all the analysis procedures are presented in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4. 1. Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study was conducted to find out the effect of weblog use in process approach on the writing performances of the students. The study also sought to find out the connection between blogging in writing process and learner autonomy. Additionally, it aimed to determine the students' perception of weblog use in a writing course designed in accordance with the principles of process approach, and also to determine the relation between students' writing performance and their level of autonomy and perceptions towards blogging.

In this study, such data collection instruments as writing performance task, questionnaires and interview were used. The study was conducted with 50 university EFL students who were studying at the School of Foreign Languages.

In this chapter, the results of the data analyses are presented and discussed in accordance with the order of questions in Chapter, 1.

4.2. Students' Proficiency Level

The proficiency level of participants was measured through two scales: Quick Placement Test and English Proficiency Self Rating Questionnaire, which were explained in detail in methodology chapter. The following table presents the results about students proficiency levels obtained through these scales.

Table: 8
Proficiency Level of the Participants

Quick Placement Test			
Experimental group		Control group	
Proficiency Level	Number of Students	Proficiency Level	Number of Students
Lower intermediate	18	Lower intermediate	15
Upper intermediate	9	Upper intermediate	8
Self Rating Questionnaire			
Experimental group		Control group	
Proficiency Level	Number of Students	Proficiency Level	Number of Students
B1 (Lower intermediate)	12	B1 (Lower intermediate)	10
B1-B2 (Lower- upper intermediate)	6	B1-B2 (Lower- upper intermediate)	8
B2 (Upper intermediate)	7	B2 (Upper intermediate)	5
B2- C1 (Upper intermediate- advanced)	2	B2- C1 (Upper intermediate- advanced)	-

The evaluation of the proficiency measurement demonstrates that the students both in experimental and control group fell into the lower and upper intermediate levels in accordance with the Quick Placement test. However, the results of the English Proficiency Self Rating Questionnaire showed a slight difference as some of the students defined their level as between lower and upper intermediate and between upper intermediate and advanced. The levels the students assigned were interpreted in line with the evaluation guide explained in Chapter 3. In the interpretations, self rating questionnaire was taken as base since quick placement test only focused on the linguistic items. Accordingly, a great majority of the participants (n= 22) had proficiency in English to understand the main points of a clearly presented speech on familiar matters; to write about a familiar topic in an organized way and to talk about experiences and dreams. 14 of the participants differed from the lower intermediate students in their report that they could handle the complex text in English and they could write on a variety of topics. 12 students fell into upper intermediate level, which means that they could understand complex texts; they could interact in English without so much difficulty and they could produce texts on a wide range of subjects explaining their point of views. Finally, only 2 students were assigned as upper

intermediate-advanced that referred to those who could express themselves fluently and produce clear detailed texts in English.

4.3. Effect of Weblog Use on Writing Performance

As stated in Chapter 1, one of the purposes of this study is to investigate the impact of weblog integrated in process based writing instruction on writing performance. With this aim in mind, two hypotheses for the research question 1, that is *is there any difference between the writing performance of students who received in-class process oriented writing instruction and that of students who received weblog integrated process based writing instruction?* were formulated. The hypotheses were

1-There is a significant difference between the writing performances of students who received in-class process oriented writing instruction and that of students who received weblog integrated process based writing instruction.

2-Integration of weblog into process approach to the teaching of writing improves writing performance.

The necessary data for the answer of the first question were collected through a Writing Performance Task which measures the students' writing proficiency in paragraph writing. Through Writing Performance Task, students both in experimental group and control group were asked to write a paragraph on a chosen topic from the task at the beginning of the study and the same task was repeated as a post test at the end of the treatment. The paragraphs produced by the participants were evaluated by three experienced EFL writing teachers on the basis of a rubric called English Composition Profile (Jacobs et.al., 1983). The mean of the scores given by the raters to each student determined the level of writing proficiency of each participant. The results obtained through pre and post test were analyzed in SPSS computer program. Two different analysis techniques were used: Paired sample t test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

The analysis of paired sample t test was used to analyze the difference between the writing performance pre and post test scores in the control and experimental group respectively. Table 9 presents the results as follows:

Table: 9

Paired Sample t-test Results for Writing Performance Scores in each group

Groups	n	Pre-test		Post test		t
		M	SD	M	SD	
Control	23	47,17	8,92	60,09	7.25	-6,321
Experimental	27	44,15	12,02	72,29	12,29	-16,197

Results showed that there occurred a difference both in the control group; $t = -6,321$, $p < .001$ and in the experimental group; $t = -16,197$, $p < .001$ after the treatment. As seen in the table, the control group increased their test scores from a pre-test score mean 47, 17 to a post-test score mean 60, 09. In the experimental group, an increase from a pre-test score mean 44, 15 to a post-test score mean 72, 15 was observed as well. These findings indicated that both in-class process writing instruction and weblog integrated writing instruction had positively affected students' writing performance as the subjects in both groups improved their writing performance.

As shown in the results of the t-test analysis, there observed a difference in the post test scores of the attendant groups. A subsequent ANCOVA was applied to analyze this difference of the post test writing performance scores between the control and experimental groups, and to identify the source of the difference with the pre-test writing performance scores as a covariate. Covariance analysis (ANCOVA) is a complicated data analysis technique which presents source of change in the post test results. Table 10 shows the results of ANCOVA.

Table: 10
ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores as Function of Instruction
Method

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Corrected					
Model	3655,94	2	1827,97	26,55	0.001
Intercept	3944,20	1	3944,20	57,29	0.001
PRE-TEST	1849,17	1	1849,17	26,86	0.001
GROUP	2322,31	1	2322,31	33,73	0.001
Error	3236,06	47	68,852		
Total	228670,00	50			
Corrected					
Total	6892,00	49			

As is seen in the table, both the pre-test results and the treatment (weblog use) had effect on post-test results. After taking the pre-test results under control through covariance analysis, it was identified that the treatment had a statistically significant impact on the post-test results ($F_{(1, 47)} = 33.73, P < .05$). As stated in the table 9, the experimental group had a higher post test mean score ($M=72, 29$) than the control group ($M= 60, 09$). These findings revealed that weblog integrated writing instruction was more effective than in class writing instruction in that students in the experimental group improved their writing performance significantly more than those in the control group.

Another ANCOVA was employed to analyze the difference of the post test scores on five writing components between the control and the experimental groups. The writing performance of the participants were evaluated and scored by focusing on the *content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics* of their writings. These were the components of a successful writing as identified in the rubric used in the study. Analyzing the difference of the post-test scores on these five writing components with the pre-test scores as a covariate was to give an idea about the influence of weblogs on writing performances in detail.

The following section is devoted to the ANCOVA results for five writing components and their interpretations. Table 11 presents the post test means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA results for scores of content as a significant component of successful writing.

Table: 11

ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Content

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Descriptive Statistics		
CONTENT PRE-TEST	17,496	1	17,496	2,058	,158	Groups	X	SD
GROUP	180,672	1	180,672	21,248	,000	Experimental	22,14	3,28
Error	399,650	47	8,503			Control	18,52	2,48
Total	21552,000	50						

a. R Squared = ,312 (Adjusted R Squared = ,282)

As seen from the descriptive statistics, the experimental group differed from control group in terms of content level post test mean scores. The post test mean in content for experimental group is 22, 14, and for the control group 18, 52. To find the source of difference, the pre-test content scores were controlled through ANCOVA, and it was identified that integration of weblogs into the course had a statistically significant impact on the content of the writings by experimental students ($F_{(1,47)} = 21.24, p < .05$).

Such a difference in content scores can be interpreted in connection with awareness of audience in the students raised through weblog use. As required by the research design, the experimental group shared their writings on the net with their peers and instructor. After they published the first draft of their paragraphs, they took feedback from their peers. Since there was no time restriction depending on weblog use, peers could examine the drafts as long as they wanted and they were able to leave comments on their friends' writings. The paragraphs were generally read by 6 or 8 different students, which could not be realized in a class setting. What is more, some of the students in the experimental group had the chance to address the real audiences. Sometimes family members left comments on their writings and sometimes friends studying at different universities read their paragraphs. All these opportunities were provided by means of blogging, and this is likely to result in much more care about the content of their writings. That they paid more attention to the content

of their homework due to weblog use was also verified in Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire, which is discussed in the following section.

The interpretation of the descriptive statistics by referring to the rubric used in the study can clearly illustrate the difference between control and experimental students. The mean score for the *content* of writings by experimental group was measured as 13 in the pre-test. So, they were characterized as *very poor* in terms of content according to the rubric. They did not have any awareness of audience and most of them wrote their writings just for the sake of writing. The details included in most of the writings were irrelevant. The same performance was observed in the writings of control students in the pre-test as well ($x=14$). After the study, both groups raised their levels. The mean score for the content of the writings by experimental group corresponded to *good to average* mastery level in the rubric. That is to say, the students in the experimental group gained the sense of audience though they did not consistently use an appropriate voice. Most of the details they used in their writings were relevant to the topic, and they thoroughly focused on the same idea in spite of some insignificant problems with the voice. In the case of control group, an increase ($x= 18$) occurred to characterize their performances in terms of content as *fair to poor*. This mastery level is described in the rubric with the expressions *limited sense of audience, insufficient details and incomplete development*. That is to say, the control group improved the content of their writings as well but not so effective as the experimental group did.

The second component measured through the rubric was organization. The following table illustrates the post-test means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA results for scores of organization as one of the components of successful writing.

Table: 12

ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Organization

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Descriptive Statistics		
ORGANIZATION PRE-TEST	47,655	1	47,655	7,510	,009	Groups	X	SD
GROUPS	83,527	1	83,527	13,164	,001	Experimental	14,77	3,20
Error	298,229	47	6,345			Control	12,34	1,89
Total	9749,000	50						

a R Squared = ,289 (Adjusted R Squared = ,258)

As indicated in the table, a difference between the experimental and the control group in organization scores was observed. The post test score mean for the experimental group was 14, 77, and for the control group 12, 34. Though the difference did not seem too important numerically, it was significant statistically ($F_{(1, 47)} = 13, 16, p < , 05$). Therefore, after taking the pre-test scores under control through covariance analysis, it can be asserted that weblog use improved the organization of the writing more than in-class- instruction did.

Referring to the rubric used in the scoring of the writings, writing performances of the experimental students in connection with the organization of their paragraphs could be characterized as *good to average* which means that students adequately used supporting sentences and transitions; they used inviting beginning and effective sequencing; there was a satisfying sense of resolution. The fact that they fell into *fair to poor* mastery level in the pre test indicates that the study had a positive effect on their performances with regard to organizing their writings. An increase in the organizational knowledge of the control students was also observed though no change occurred in their mastery level in the rubric. The students in the control group began the term as *fair to poor* writers ($x = 9, 25$) and they ended the term in the same category; however, they raised their scores ($x = 12, 34$). This increase in the score can be interpreted as the positive outcome of the in-class process based writing activities.

The next category on which the effect of blogging was questioned was vocabulary use in the writings of the students. Table 13 presents the post-test means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA results for scores of vocabulary use.

Table: 13

ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Vocabulary

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Descriptive Statistics		
VOCABULARY PRE-TEST	35,005	1	35,005	,230	,634	Groups	X	SD
GROUPS	29,732	1	29,732	,195	,660	Experimental	15,26	17,90
Error	7149,949	47	152,127			Control	13,59	2,22
Total	17530,000	50						

a. R Squared = ,010 (Adjusted R Squared = -,033)

As shown in the table, the post-test score mean concerning the vocabulary of experimental group was 15, 26, and the control group was assigned a mean 13, 59 in the post test score; however, this difference was not statistically significant ($F_{(1,47)} = .19$ $p > .05$). Therefore, according to ANCOVA results, the treatment did not have effect on students' word choice while writing their posts.

The mean score for vocabulary in the writings by experimental students rose from pre-test score 8, 77 to post test score 15, 26. This comes to mean that students at the beginning of the study were *very poor* in terms of word use in their paragraphs. They had little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms and word forms. They just relied on clichés. However, at the end of the term, an improvement in the vocabulary of the writings of experimental students was observed. When the post test mean score ($x = 15, 26$) for vocabulary of the writings by experimental students was interpreted by referring to the rubric, their writings could be characterized with *effective word use, correct word forms, occasional incorrect word forms, fresh expression and figurative language*. The control group was similar to the experimental group in terms of vocabulary knowledge in the pre-test. The mean score in the pre-test was 8, 87, which implies that the students in the control group were not successful at using prefixes, suffixes, roots and compounds effectively. Their mastery level in the post test corresponded to *fair to poor* in the rubric. That is to say, the students in the control group began to use effective words though few in number and avoided clichés. They attempted to use colourful language with some variety in word choice. This improvement in the post test scores of the control group indicated that just in class writing instruction positively affected students' vocabulary knowledge but it was not

as effective as weblog integrated writing activities since the experimental students performed better scores in the post test.

Language use in the students' writings was the next component through which the effect of weblog use on writing performance was measured. Language use in a text, according to the rubric, refers to sentence variety, sentence structures and the use of tense and word order. Table 14 shows the post test means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA results for scores of language use.

Table: 14
ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Language Use

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Descriptive Statistics		
LANGUAGE USE PRE-TEST	14,725	1	14,725	,039	,844	Groups	X	SD
GROUPS	59,487	1	59,487	,158	,693	Experimental	19,17	22,97
Error	17681,987	47	376,212			Control	16,85	4,27
Total	33820,000	50						

a. R Squared =, 005 (Adjusted R Squared = -, 038)

Though a difference in the means of the control and the experimental group was observed, as seen in the table above, this difference was not statistically significant. When the statistical values for pre test (0.84) and the treatment (0.69) were considered, it was identified that the treatment did not have any effect on language use of the students in their writings ($F(1,47) = .15, p > .05$), neither did the pre-test ($F(1,47) = .03, p > .05$). One possible explanation of this result can relate to the fact that all the participant students took the same amount of grammar course in which they were explicitly instructed on language structures.

When the mean score for language use was interpreted according to the rubric, it was observed that students' performances in language use ranged from *fair to poor*. That is to say, there were some varieties in sentence structures of the experimental students. They had a strong control over the simple sentence structures but they were not so successful at using complex sentence structures. Tense error and mistakes in wording were the least observed problems in language use of the students.

The last writing component on which the effect of blogging was analyzed was mechanics which covers spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in the students' written text. Table 15 shows the post-test means, standard deviations, and ANCOVA results for scores of mechanics.

Table: 15
ANCOVA Results for Writing Performance Scores: Mechanics

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Descriptive Statistics		
						Groups	X	SD
MECHANICS PRE-TEST	,110	1	,110	,500	,483			
GROUPS	3,316E-03	1	3,316E-03	,015	,903	Experimental	3,91	,41
Error	10,382	47	,221			Control	3,88	,50
Total	771,000	50						

a. R Squared = ,011 (Adjusted R Squared = -,031)

As indicated in the table, almost no difference was observed between the means of the experimental and the control group in the mechanics component of their writings. So, it is obvious that blogging activities in process writing created no statistically significant effect on mechanics of the students' writings ($F(1, 47) = .01, p > .05$).

The mean score for the mechanics of the paragraphs by experimental and control group corresponded to *good to average* mastery level in the rubric. In other words, there were occasional errors in spelling, capitalization and use of punctuation. There was no need to edit the writings in most cases. When the pre-test scores for mechanics for both group were taken into consideration, it was understood that neither the experimental group ($x = 3, 81$) nor the control group ($x = 3, 70$) showed a great improvement in their knowledge of mechanics after the study.

In brief, both the students in the experimental group and the control group improved their writing performances at the end of the study. When the influence of blogging was measured, it was found out that blogging activities incorporated in a writing course designed in line with the process approach affected students' overall writing performance positively to a great extent. However, when the impact of weblog use on specific components of students' writing was measured, it was identified that blogging showed the

biggest influence on the *content* component of student writings and this was followed by *organization*. In other words, students using blogging produced more successful paragraphs in terms of content and organization than those who did not use weblog. Yet, blogging created no effect on the *word choice*, *language use* and *mechanics* in student writing.

4.4 Effect of Weblog Use on Autonomous Learning

To measure the effect of weblog use on autonomous learning, two scales, GIAPEL Learning Style Test and an interview were utilized. The results obtained are discussed in the following section.

4.4.1 GIAPEL Learning Style Test

So as to find an answer to the second research question that is *Does the use of weblog in a process oriented writing course have any effect on enhancing learner autonomy*, the students in experimental group were administered GIAPEL Learning Style Test, which is produced by the GIAPEL group to measure the level of autonomous learning. The students took the test before and after the treatment. Among the 27 participant students, 2 did not attend the class in which the pre test was administered, and 1 student did not take the post test. Therefore only 24 students' positions in autonomous learning were measured. The scores were obtained and interpreted in accordance with the evaluation guide of the test explained in detail in Chapter 3. The following table provides the scores the students got and their corresponding levels in autonomous learning in GIAPEL Learning Style Test as a pre and post test.

Table: 16
Results of GIAPEL Learning Style Test

Student	Pre test		Post test		Student	Pre test		Post test	
	Score	Type	Score	Type		Score	Type	Score	Type
1	31	B	43	C	13	44	C	62	D
2	31	B	46	C	14	32	B	55	D
3	24	B	52	C	15	21	B	43	C
4	14	A	49	C	16	23	B	48	C
5	39	C	57	D	17	15	B	46	C
6	32	B	58	D	18	21	B	42	C
7	14	A	32	B	19	47	C	61	D
8	22	B	57	D	20	28	B	50	C
9	28	B	52	C	21	27	B	44	C
10	23	B	51	C	22	29	B	51	C
11	12	A	38	C	23	14	A	32	B
12	34	B	55	D	24	14	A	44	C

As seen in the table, there occurred an improvement in the students' level of autonomous learning after the treatment when their levels in the pre test were considered. Accordingly, five participants that fell into A level which refers to those least autonomous in the pre test scored between 32- 49, which means they took the first step towards being an autonomous learner. Two of the A level learners were assigned to type B in the post-test. That is to say, they became *open-to-autonomous learning* despite their continuing tendency towards teacher dependence. When interpreted in connection with the evaluation guide of the test, it was identified that they favoured step by step learning in language education. Though they did not express their eagerness to take risks in learning language, which is one of the features of autonomous learners, they expressed that they did not feel ridiculous when using the target language at least. In terms of writing skill, their choice that is *I feel myself uncomfortable when my peers see my writings* in the pre-test was replaced with the choice *I want my writings to arouse interest in the reader* in the post-test. The other three A level students who participated all the classes and blog activities got C level in the post-test. They were also classified as 'open to autonomous learning' with less teacher dependence. They appreciated the significance of collaboration and they expressed that they didn't need continual support of teacher in learning. As for their attitudes towards writing, a significant change was observed in their responses. Although they only put check to the item *I get bored with revising my writings* in the pre-test, they

checked, in the post-test, the item *I read the text to evaluate my performance after writing the text*. Therefore, it can be claimed that the students have entered into the path to autonomous learning.

A great majority of participants (n=16) were assigned as type B learners and 3 of them as type C learners according to the GIAPPEL Learning Style Pre-test. Most of the students' being already open to autonomous learning might be considered acceptable when the fact that students were at the university level in which a certain degree of maturity and autonomy might be expected is taken into consideration. Among these already *open to autonomous learning* participants, 12 of them raised their level to C which refers to those that are likely to develop learner autonomy skills. Such an improvement in their autonomy level revealed that the students at the end of the study began to regard language learning as an interesting and necessary task. They began to apply previous knowledge to the new learning situations though they still needed to be guided on autonomous learning. Concerning their attitudes in writing a satisfactory change was observed. Almost all of them, in the post-test, expressed their tendencies towards taking risks by trying out newly learned things in their homework. To be willing to take risks in learning a language is one of the mostly emphasized aspects of autonomous learners. (Thanasoulas, 2000). The results of the post-test also demonstrated the students' appreciation of salience of collaboration and interaction with peers as most of them chose the items *I have to be in collaboration with my peers and teacher to write better* and *I need external feedback to shape my progress*. Drawing from the idea that developing autonomy is closely connected with turning to others for support and help, and being able to collaborate with others (Murphey & Jacops, 2000; Macaro, 1997 cited in Luzon, 2006), it can be claimed that students' understanding of importance of collaboration is a crucial step towards autonomous learning.

Finally three students that fell into C level in the pre-test were assigned as type D learners. D type learners are considered as *already autonomous learners* in the evaluation guide. However, when the points these learners got in the post-test were taken into consideration, it would be too strong to claim that these students turned to be autonomous learners. Thanasoulas (2000) regards autonomous learning as a never-ending process rather than a state which is reached once and for all. Based on this idea, when their position is

evaluated across a continuum at one end of which there are dependant learners and at the other end there are autonomous learners, it can be concluded that these students can be placed to the point closer to autonomous learners; however, they still need to go through the way.

To sum up, weblog use together with process oriented writing instruction had some effects on the participants' attitudes towards learning in general and towards writing in specific. During the treatment, they were given the chance of sharing their writings with the others through blogging, getting feedback from more than one person, given feedback to their peers, and choosing their own materials to study according to their own needs. These were all realized by means of weblog use. They were also encouraged to revise and edit their writings continually, and to reflect on their learning as required by the process approach. Therefore, it can be claimed that all these things may have affected their positions in autonomous learning and blogging may prove to be an efficient aid in helping learners to gain learner autonomy.

4.4.2 Student Interview

With the purpose of having a deeper understanding whether blogging enhances learner autonomy or not, a semi structured interview composed some of open ended questions and some more structured questions was conducted with the students in the experimental group after the treatment. 14 students chosen on a voluntary basis responded to the interview questions. The questions included in the interview asked about the presence of such concepts in the students as responsibility, ownership, collaboration, awareness of the strengths and weaknesses, awareness of the purpose in learning and self assessment in that they are considered as the features of autonomous learners (Mynard, 2003; Ruiz, 2003).

The first question was about students' attitudes towards collaboration and interaction with others. While defining learner autonomy, Little (2004) emphasizes that it develops in interaction with others, and autonomous learners approve that effective learning occurs in communication and collaboration with others. To see if the participants approved interaction or not, they were asked *What do you think about the comments left by your friends to your writings?*

In response to the question, almost all of the interviewees expressed their appreciation. In other words, they gave importance to have interaction with others and they believed that this interaction and collaboration realized through blogging contributed to their development as illustrated in the answers below:

When I opened my page, seeing my friends' comments made me happy. They read what I wrote. Once I got 8 comments from my friends. I liked this too much. If we had not used blogs, I would not have got so many comments in the class. We are all students but all of us are different in terms of knowledge we have and our point of views are different as well. My friends all looked at my writings form a different point of view. To learn how they regard my writings contributed to my performance too much. (S13)

A similar idea was uttered by another student.

It (interaction with peers through comment option) was really helpful. The teacher reads our writings to teach us something or to see whether we understood the topic or not. But my friends were different. They treated my homework as if they were real pieces of writings not homework. They were reading as a real reader. So, what they said was quite effective on my performance. I attended this class to express myself in written English, and only those real readers- namely those other than the teacher- could see if I managed to express myself or not. So, I liked getting comments from my friend (S8).

One interesting finding about this question is that a great majority of the students mentioned about the responsibility this collaborative environment created through blogging attributed them. Taking the responsibility of one's own learning outcomes is among the mostly emphasized characteristics of autonomous learners. Most of the students expressed that they felt responsibility for designing their learning as their peers would see their writings. One of the students, for example, said

It is good to see that someone has read your writings on your blog. I feel happy when I see 4-5 comments below my post. But it was –how can I say- a bit strange. It makes me hesitate... Since people can read my writings, -at least there is such a possibility- I feel myself compulsory to be more careful about my writings. This being read by people places a kind of responsibility to me. I want to use effective sentence structures, different words etc. so I tried hard to learn in other courses (S6).

The second question was about students' feeling of ownership towards their learning. The relevant literature suggests that when students take the ownership, there will be more effective learning (Baggetun & Wasson, 2006). Weblogs as personal learning spaces have potentials to make the students take ownership of their learning environments. With the purpose of understanding whether the participant students regard their blogs as their own learning environments and design their content accordingly, they were asked *Have you ever tried to use visual images in your blogs? Why?*

As an answer, four students said “no” to this question but the rest reported that they used such things to design their blogs. That fact that in all the responses, the words “mine/my page” are included is noteworthy. The use of “mine/my page” has implied that students have taken the ownership of their learning spaces and their learning indirectly. Their responses revealed that this was very important for them. One student said that

This is my own page, my own space. So, it should be different from others. I both used pictures in my blog to reflect my own interests and I also dealt with the layout of my blog. Now that it is mine, I myself control how my weblog appears. Moreover, when the others enter my page, they will see my name so I have to deal with the design (S1).

Therefore, blogging meant to the participant to express themselves in all aspects. Besides adding visual images to their blogs, most of them reported to use links to the websites of their interests in their weblogs. Their aim in creating links to the websites, they said, was to manifest themselves clearly and to make their writings more understandable. For example, one of the interviewees explained that “...besides, I added links to my blogs, because I want my friends see. To see that I don't write meaningless things. Once, I wrote about the effect of economical crisis on Turkey and I placed the links to the newspaper articles about the topic” (S4).

Blogging, thus, can be defined as a situation in which students themselves take ownership of their learning activities, and use digital tools actively in their learning activities. It helped the students to construct their own private spaces according to their own needs and to fill them with their own personal meaningful materials.

The next question in the interview was related to the students as self-reliant beings. In the context for learner autonomy, learning is regarded as something mostly self-directed. According to Wenden (1991) autonomous learners are “self-confident learners who believe in their ability to learn and self-direct and manage their own learning” (p. 53). In order to see to what extents the participant students were self-confident, they were asked *how do you learn best? Relying on teachers’ experiences or on your own experiences?*

Two of the interviewees answered this question by stating that they relied on teachers’ experiences. Their justification for this was that the teachers knew best. However, all the other respondents reported that they based their learning on their own experiences. The responses demonstrated that they were aware of themselves as individuals as they reported that teachers tried to address to the majority in the class. The teachers, according to them, had to deal with at least 25- 30 students in a class, so they could not address the learning needs of each student. They just made some generalizations and taught accordingly. One of the students explained this situation by saying “...teachers consider the majority while teaching. They may not observe every student one by one. So they may not know in which topic you are insufficient. You yourself know this best” (S7).

The respondents uttered almost the same justification for their reliance on their own ability to learn. They all regarded themselves as separate individuals having their own ways of learning. And they believed that no one could know them better than themselves. They had their own strategies and experiences to learn as illustrated in the response below:

Concerning the language learning, I rely on my own experiences. I have been learning English for four years. Now, through the reflections we write on our blogs, I understand better what I am doing while learning, I think. So, I use my own experiences while learning language. For example, last week, in one of our classes, we were talking about the vocabulary. We all have problems with vocabulary. Teacher advised us to write the words in a list and to memorize them. I did not even try because I know that I cannot learn in this way. I have to use the words in sentences to learn them. This is how I learn (S8).

The students were also questioned about their motivation to learn. Motivation as a prerequisite for learning is also underlined to achieve learner autonomy; however, what should be developed for autonomous learning is the intrinsic motivation (Scharle & Szabo,

2000). In other words, only the intrinsically motivated students can achieve life long learning. When asked *how do you motivate yourself to learn?*

The answers indicated that most of the respondents motivate themselves intrinsically to learn. Only one respondent expressed that she gave more importance to the grades or teachers' approval- indicators of extrinsic motivation. She said when she thought of the grades, she had a desire to study and learn. Apart from this student, all the other respondents implied that they were intrinsically motivated. They believed that they got motivated when they saw the connection between learned topics and their life. In other words, if they thought that the outcomes of their learning would be useful in their life, they had a desire to learn. In such cases, they paid much more attention to the things they learned. They expressed that their aim in learning English has to do with their future goals and their feelings. There was no relation, for them, between learning English and passing the class or getting good marks. They uttered that high marks or passing the class would be the natural result of their efforts to reach their goals. As goals in learning language, they mentioned about improving themselves, manifesting themselves as qualified individuals and communicating with different people. One of the students explained the change in his attitudes towards his goal in learning English in connection with his blogging activities:

...now, I learn English to communicate with people. My cousins have been living abroad. They speak English very well. I envy for them. I want to use English like them. They visited my blogs and they commented to my writings. At the beginning of the term, I just wanted to pass the prep school, but now I really want to learn English to communicate with people. When I think of my cousins; in other words, when I think of communicating with other people, I feel I must learn English (S9).

Other students responded as *what is important is to improve myself. I do not care the grades, for example, too much (S2)*. They also emphasized their self esteem *"I learn because of my self esteem. Due to my self esteem, I try to do my best in learning. Since I try to do the best, I try to be successful as much as possible in English as well"* (S13). *"I study because of my self esteem. Everyone can get high marks but I study to achieve my goals, to gain self confidence (S5).*

The fact that they were intrinsically motivated to learn English and they just focused on their particular goals in their minds in learning was also verified in their responses to the question *what is learning?*

Their responses indicated that they considered learning as life- centred, that is to say, they tried to extend their learning in various areas of real life. In search of realizing their goals, they tried to connect inside and outside learning by making use of classroom learning in real life situations. They regarded their classroom learning as only a part of their learning. Classroom learning made the core of their learning and they believed that it should be supplemented by learning outside the classroom. Learning inside and outside the classroom, according to them, could not be separated and they together constituted their present learning. One of the students expressed that

To me, learning is life centred. I try to use the language I learn in my real life. I regard this prep school as a base for my language learning. Here we learn the basics of this language. Then, I try to use these in my real life. For example, I have been trying to chat with foreigners on the net (S4.)

The use of the internet to extend classroom learning to the real life situations was also expressed in some other responses. Some of them used chat systems and some of them mail lists.

I try to apply my classroom learning to my real life since learning is life centred. For example, there is a mail list on language learning. I registered to that list and I send there emails in English. In the emails, I try to use the newly learned structures because I believe that when you use the learned things in your life, they become meaningful (S13).

The students also mentioned about talking on the phone in English and watching English channels as a way of extending learning beyond classroom walls.

Learning... In my opinion, after learning the topics in the class, we should use them in our daily life to make the learning permanent. I learn English here. I have friends studying English at different universities. We try to speak in English on the phone. Here I learned some daily English. While talking with my friends, I tried to use them for instance (S7).

Defining learning as life centred and attempts in connecting inside and outside the classroom learning are indicators of learner autonomy (Kose, 2006). These qualities of the respondents can be interpreted as their closer involvement in their learning process. Through this involvement, they connect their learning to the world outside the classroom. In this way, they continue learning even after the education finishes, which implies that they are heading for the life long learning. In addition, the respondents desire to use the newly learned things in real life situations and their attempts to communicate in English demonstrate that they are willing to take risks and see English as a medium of communication. In this respect, it can also be claimed that they have the features of learner autonomy.

The next question was related to the students' perception of their roles as a learner. How learners define their roles in learning context is seen as an important factor determining the learner autonomy and success in learning (Wenden, 1998 as cited in Thansoulas, 2000). So the students were asked *what is your role as a learner*.

Three students responded to this question by implying that they were passive recipient of knowledge. They defined themselves as "good" students who did whatever the teachers said. They were not in favour of doing anything without teachers' encouragement. However, all the other respondents defined themselves as active participants to their learning process. They stated that they did not receive the knowledge as it was given by the teacher; instead they questioned and thought over what they have learned. They were eager to have some decisions about their learning on their own. For example, one of the students said *"I think I am an active participant to my learning process. I mean I want to give some decisions by myself. I try at least when I am allowed (S5)*.

They also tried to process what was taught by the teachers. The following response provides some clues about the role of the treatment (weblog supported process writing) in students' defining themselves as active learners.

I try to attend to the learning process. I do not expect all the things from the teacher. I try to process the given information by doing some relevant research and I continually question and think on it. This term for example, we were taught the conjunctions in one of our writing courses. But the conjunctions we learned in the

class were those I already knew. We were given lots of links to the exercises on conjunctions in our “assignment” blog. So, I used those links and I chose the least common conjunctions to study. The teacher did not say such a thing. I did so because I could decide what to study (S8).

Although the responses above gave some ideas about participants’ awareness with regard to their roles in learning, they were further questioned in connection with their perceptions towards teacher role. It is believed that when the learners regard that successful learning takes place only in a context where the teacher directs, instructs and manages the learning activity, and the students just follow the teachers’ footsteps, autonomous learning is probably undermined (Wenden,1998). Therefore, their responses were to clarify whether they had the features of autonomous learning or not. So they were asked *what is the role of teacher in your learning process.*

Almost all of the students answered this question as expected. They uttered that they saw the teacher as an advisor who facilitates their learning process. They use the metaphor “path” for learning and they described the teacher as someone who clears the path for them, who shows the directions to go but who leaves the choices to them. The most commonly used words in the description of the teachers’ role were *guide, helper and advisor*, which overlaps with the definition of teacher role in autonomous learning. Their answers also indicated that the students were aware of their role as a learner. One of the students said *“Teacher just forms a base for you and you yourself add according to your own needs (S3).* A similar answer was given by another student who said *“Teacher just shows the path to learn. The rest depends on the student. The student must have desire to learn. Teacher shows the path, student heads” (S6.)* An interesting definition of teacher role came from another student *“Actually, the teacher is a kind of bridge between us and knowledge. He guides us” (S9).*

The answer below may give some clues about place blogging in contributing students’ such an understanding of teacher.

Teacher just shows the way. He helps us. The rest is left to us. For instance, as you can remember, in one of our courses you taught us topic sentences. After the class, I came to ask about some more sources to study. You advised me to visit the sites referenced in our blogs. There I found lots of materials. I studied then. On my own. I

mean teacher teaches the topic, shows the way, directs to the sources and I myself do the rest (S11).

During the study, students were provided with lots of internet materials through blogging, and they were allowed to choose among them according to their own needs. They were set free in deciding on the topic to study. This was perceived positively by the students as indicated in the answer below.

Teacher just makes the introduction and you continue on the way to learning. To me, teacher is not someone who identifies everything. He just clears the path. He guides me. He must do like this, at least. In our blogs, our teacher directed us to lots of sites to practice the language. I mean, she showed the way. Then we studied by ourselves. This was more effective (S13).

The participants responded as follows to the question *before the treatment, did you ever think on your learning process? How do you evaluate your own language learning process?*

With these questions, it was aimed to have an understanding of students' awareness of their weaknesses and strengths as learners can never be fully autonomous without awareness (Wenden, 1998; Mynard, 2003). As required by the research design, during the treatment, the students were encouraged to reflect on their learning both in writing and in language learning in general. They shared their reflections, and were guided in their reflections through blogging. It was clear from the responses that reflecting on the learning process was new to most of the students. Only one student expressed that he was accustomed to evaluating his learning. All the other students reported that it was the first time that they reflected on their language learning process though most of them have been learning language at least for four years. They found sharing their reflections on their own learning a bit difficult at the beginning and some of them found it a bit boring. However, they expressed their appreciation when they were asked if they found it useful or not. Almost all of the students stated that reflections helped them *to know themselves better*. By means of reflections, they could understand the problems in their learning and they could evaluate the reason of their weaknesses. Through reflecting on their learning, they could develop a sense of awareness of their capacity to learn, and this enabled them to learn permanently. One of the respondents, for instance, explained this as *"I think it was quite useful because you see where you are (in your learning). You see what your*

weaknesses are and what you can do. You have an idea about your capacity. And in this way, what you learn becomes more permanent” (S4).

The same student supported his belief by connecting it to his blogging activities by saying

“For example, I still remember the things I have learned through the sites referenced in our blogs. Since I have thought about my weaknesses beforehand and written about them in my blog, I studied accordingly when I entered those sites. Learning became more permanent. Teachers generally teach according to their own beliefs. Of course, they cannot address to the students one by one. But, through this blogging, we could study whatever we wanted with the help of our teacher (S10).

The responses about their evaluation of their learning process demonstrated that most of the students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses as language learners. They all saw their grammar knowledge as the strongest point in their learning and the most frequently mentioned weakness was the vocabulary knowledge they had.

One interesting finding which clarifies the effect of blogging on students’ reflectively engagement with their learning process was that weblog use enabled students to take their peers as models while reflecting on their learning. Since all the students published their posts about self-evaluation in their blogs, the students had the chance of seeing each others’ self-assessment. In their reflections, students were encouraged to identify the strengths and weaknesses and then to provide a solution to cope with the problems in their learning. Through blogging, they had the opportunity to understand how their peers having similar weakness solve their problems. This was reported to contribute to their learning process as it allowed them to try out different strategies to learn. One of the students described this as

To me, reflecting on our learning process was really useful. I think it helped us to know ourselves better. What I liked best was to read my friends reflections. I read the posts about their own learning process I saw that some of them had problems similar to mine. I read their reflections to see what kind of solutions they found. So, it was good. Therefore, it can be claimed that reflecting on the learning process through blogging to students’ autonomous learning as it helped to reflect publicly and to develop an understanding of different strategies (S2).

The last question investigating effect of weblog use on learner autonomy was *did you like to study English through the English learning websites recommended by your teacher? Did it contribute to your learning process? If yes, in what way did it contribute?*

Two of the tutor blogs used in the present study were used to direct students to the language learning websites. The students were given lots of links updated at certain intervals and they were allowed to choose among them by considering their individual needs. The aim in doing so was to give control to the students as providing an appropriate level of control to learners is necessary to promote autonomy (Mynard, 2005). The responses demonstrated that they liked it very much. All the students reported that studying in different websites with different materials contributed to their learning. One student for instance said *“In fact I liked it too much. I have some problems on some topics in English. To study on these topics with different materials was very useful. It worked (S4).*

Sharing the same idea, another student reported that *“I understood better. I could choose just exercises or explanations on the topics. I didn’t understand, and I could repeat the same exercises as many times as I want. I could always turn to the top of the page and restart (S5).”*

Comparing blogging with classroom setting, one of the students summarized positive role of weblogs in creating autonomous learning environments through giving the control to the learners. He said

I definitely liked it. Studying on the net is quite enjoyable. Internet is something modern. While studying, you can determine the time, determine the pace and you yourself choose the topic to study. All these things aroused interest in me. If we had not done blogging, we would not have had so many materials. Even when we had lots of materials, we would not choose according to our wishes because the teacher cannot deal with all of us. But on the net, through blogging, everyone can choose whatever they want. The websites referenced in our blogs give feedback specific to each student. I mean I really liked it (S8).

One noteworthy response came from another student who explained blogging in connection with arousing a sense of responsibility for their own learning in the students.

They (sites referenced through blogs) were all very helpful. I saw different types of questions. I did not get bored because the choice was left to us. In this way, we trust ourselves more. And also, as the choice of material was left to us, I began to think that 'if the teacher trusts me, it means I can do something on my own'. So I tried hard. I can choose the topics on which I feel myself insufficient. It was good. We could get feedback after answering the questions on the sites. We could assess ourselves (S11).

In summary, the responses to the interview questions supported the hypothesis that weblog use in process approach can enhance autonomous learning. As accepted by most of the respondents, weblog use provides them with their own learning space and this contributed to their sense of ownership and responsibility. They redefined their roles as learners and they perceived the teacher as facilitator and guide in their learning process. Since they were allowed to choose their own subjects and materials to study, they redefined their view of learning and rely on their own experiences as self-reliant students. Weblogs role in creating collaborative environment is also appreciated by a great majority of the respondents. When all these things are taken into consideration, it is possible to put forward that blogging can be used as a path to learner autonomy.

4.5. Students' Perception of Weblog Use

Students' perception of weblog use was measured through two measurement scales: Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire and interview results of which were further described in the following section.

4.5.1. Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire

To answer the third research question, that is "What are the perceptions of students towards weblogs as a means of writing?", and to be sure that the change in the Writing Performance Post test can be attributed to the blogging activities during the treatment, the students in the experimental group were administered a questionnaire. Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire that was explained in detail in Chapter 3 consisted of 24 statements adapted from Cunningham (2000) and Chuo (2004). The statements were examined in five main categories: 1) effect of weblog use on overall writing performance, 2) effect of weblog use on the components of writing, 3) effect of weblogs on the feedback

and revision 4) effect of weblog use on learner autonomy 5) effect of weblog use on interest, motivation and technology use. The students were asked to express their opinions on the statements as follows:

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) disagree
- 3) no idea
- 4) agree
- 5) strongly agree.

The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and the results were discussed under the categories aforementioned. Note that in the discussion of the results, the frequency percentage reported as “agree” is the collapsed percentage of “strongly agree” and “agree”, and the frequency percentage reported as “disagree” is the collapsed percentage of “strongly disagree” and “disagree”. The following table presents the means, frequency percentage and standard deviations of students’ perception of weblog use with regard to overall writing performance.

Table:17
Effect of Weblog on Overall Writing Performance

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly agree		SD	X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Blogging and Overall Writing Performance												
Improved writing performance	-	-	2	7.4	4	14.8	15	55.6	6	22.2	,83	3.93
Negatively affected writing performance	15	55.6	7	25.9	4	14.8	1	3.3	-	-	,88	1.67
Caused writing carefully	-	-	2	7.4	4	14.8	12	44.4	9	33.3	,90	4.04

As obvious from the table, the students had a favourable perception towards the effect of blogging on their writing performances. 78 % of the participants agreed that their writing skill improved as a result of weblog use ($x= 3.93$). To verify their responses, they were asked in the questionnaire about the effect of weblog use on the writing performance

in a different wording. The fact that a great majority of students (above 80 %) stated a strong disagreement ($x=1.67$) with regard to negative effects of blogging verified their positive attitudes towards weblog use for their writing skill. The analysis also demonstrated an important finding with regard to blogging: The students anticipated the online audience as claimed in the literature (Kitzmann, 2003). Since they felt the possibility of being read by anyone, 78 % of the students paid much more attention to their writings ($x= 4.04$). This means that through blogging, an awareness of audience can be aroused in the students, which seems to be difficult to realize in a school setting (Gettings, 2002). Awareness of audience is among the prerequisites of successful writing, so the difference in the Writing Performance Post test between the control and the experimental students can be explained by referring to experimental students' audience awareness.

Apart from the overall writing performance, the students' perceptions of blogging concerning the components of writing were also investigated to find out what students think on which component blogging affected most. Table 18 shows the means, frequency percentage and standard deviations of students' perception of weblog use with regard to its effect on writing components.

Table: 18
Effect of Weblog on the Components of Writing

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly agree		SD	X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Effect of Blogging on the Components of Writing												
Effect on content	-	-	4	14.8	4	14.8	13	48.1	6	22.2	,97	3.78
Effect on vocabulary	-	-	-	-	3	11.1	14	51.9	10	37.0	,66	4.26
Effect on language use	-	-	-	-	5	18.5	16	53.3	6	22.2	,65	4.04
Effect on organization	-	-	-	-	2	7.4	17	63.0	8	29.6	,58	4.22

As indicated in the table, the lowest mean for this category is 3.78, which implies that the students believed in the positive effect of weblog use on all the specific components of their writing skill. A great majority of students agreed that blogging influenced the content of their writings positively ($x=3.78$) while only the 15 % of them disagreed with this idea. The highest mean was observed under the title of vocabulary. While no one stated a disagreement, approximately 90 % of the student reported that weblog contributed to their word choice in writing. They also expressed that organization ($x= 4.22$) and language use ($x= 4.04$) in their writings improved through blogging.

Since the blogging activities were blended with process oriented writing instruction during the treatment, the students were asked to give their opinions about weblogs in connection with feedback and revision that are seen as the indispensable parts of process approach. Table 19 shows the means, frequency percentage and standard deviations of students' perception of weblog use with regard to feedback and revision.

Table: 19
Effect of Weblog on Feedback and Revision

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly agree		X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Blogging in Process Oriented Writing Instruction	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Weblog use facilitates reviewing peers' writings	-	-	-	-	3	11.1	11	40.7	13	48.1	4.37
Weblog use facilitates revision and editing	-	-	2	7.4	3	11.1	9	33.3	13	48.1	4.22
Giving feedback to peers through weblog is advantageous	-	-	2	7.4	8	29.6	15	55.6	2	7.4	3.63
Seeing the feedback to peers through weblog is advantageous	1	3.7	2	7.4	9	33.3	11	40.7	4	14.8	3.56
Getting feedback from peers is advantageous	2	7.4	2	7.4	7	25.9	11	40.7	5	18.5	3.56

As Table 19 indicates, the same favourable perception was observed for the role of blogging in writing process. The highest mean was observed in the statement related to the

place of weblogs in reviewing the peers' writing. Almost all of the students stated that weblog use enabled them to review their peers' writings easily ($x=4.37$). So, one of the theoretically claimed advantages of weblog use that is blogging can make peer review much more effective as the students can examine the drafts at any time and place as long as they want (Glen, 2003; Ward, 2004) has been verified empirically. In addition, most of the students expressed that reviewing their peers' writing through weblog contributed to their writing performance ($x= 3.63$). Providing students with the chance of seeing the feedback is another advantage that is realized by means of blogging, and the students stated that they got benefitted form this feature of weblog ($x= 3.56$). With regard to revising and editing their own writings, 81 % of the students stated a strong agreement that blogging was useful ($x=4.22$). And they also reported weblogs to be beneficial in getting feedback from their peers ($x= 3.56$).

The next category on which students' perception was questioned was weblogs and autonomous learning. The following table presents the means, frequency percentage and standard deviations of students' perception of weblog use in autonomous learning.

Table: 20
Weblog in Autonomous Learning

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly agree		SD	X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Blogging in Autonomous Learning												
Interaction with peers	2	7.4	3	11.1	6	22.2	11	40.7	5	18.5	1,16	3.52
Interaction with instructor	-	-	1	3.7	5	18.5	10	37	11	40.7	,86	4.15
Self selected course materials	1	3,7	-	-	5	18.5	10	37	11	40.7	,97	4.11
Reflective engagement with the learning process	3	11.1	5	18.5	4	14.8	9	33.5	6	22.2	1,33	3.37

As demonstrated in table 20, most of the students agreed that blogging created an environment in which they had lots of interaction with their peers ($x= 3.52$) and with their instructors ($x= 4.15$). Almost all of the respondents also stated that through blogging they

could decide on the material to study and this contributed to their performance ($x= 4.11$). For reflective engagement with the learning process through blogging, while a considerable amount of the students agreed that it was helpful, 30 % of them stated a disagreement. When these findings are interpreted in connection with the prerequisites of promoting learner autonomy discussed in Chapter 2, it can be possible to claim that blogging is quite effective in clearing the path to autonomous learning for the students.

Finally, students were asked to express their opinion on motivation and technology related statements in the questionnaire to inquire further about students' weblog experiences. The following table presents the means, frequency percentage and standard deviations of students' perception of their overall weblog experiences.

Table: 21
Students' Overall Experiences of Weblog

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Strongly agree		X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Maintaining a blog motivated me towards writing course	1	3.7	4	14.8	4	14.8	6	22.2	12	44.4	3.89
I enjoyed blogging on the net.	2	7.4	4	14.8	3	11.1	10	37.0	8	29.6	3.67
I prefer only in-class writing instruction to the weblog supported writing instruction	9	33.3	11	40.7	3	11.1	1	3.7	3	11.1	2.19
Publishing on the net through my blog was not motivating	11	40.7	8	29.6	3	11.1	5	18.5	-	-	2.07
I would like to use weblogs in my future learning.	1	3.7	3	11.1	10	37.0	5	18.5	8	29.6	3.59
I frequently experienced technical problems while using weblog.	5	18.5	5	18.5	4	14.8	10	37.0	3	11.1	3.04
I felt nervous maintaining my blog on the net.	4	14.8	11	40.7	8	29.6	-	-	4	14.8	2.59
I disliked sharing my writing with someone other than the teacher	16	59.3	6	22.2	3	11.1	2	7.4	-	-	1,67

When asked about their overall attitudes towards weblog use, a significant percentage of students (67 %) responded that they found blogging motivating and they enjoyed blogging on the net ($x= 3.67$). While 46 % of the participants expressed their willingness towards using weblogs in future, almost half of them (37%) seemed to be unsure about it. With regard to their preference between blogging and in class writing instruction, they were reported in favour of blogging ($x= 2.19$). Lastly, for statements concerning technical aspect of weblogs, students expressed uncertainty ($x= 3.4$) and only a small portion of students (15 %) reported feeling nervous while approximately 56% of them did not report such a feeling.

4.5.2 Interview

In addition to the data attained through Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire, students were asked in an interview session about their ideas on blogging with the aim of inquiring further about participants' experiences and comments on weblog use. As the questionnaire limits the responses to researcher constructed statements, it was thought that the interview could provide richer data.

The responses in the interview, in fact, supported the findings of the questionnaire. A number of students commented on the superiority of blogging to in class learning. They felt that after experiencing blogging, they began to think that learning only in the classroom would be boring. One of the respondents expressed this as follows:

Actually, blogging made me more relax and our classes turned to be fun. To me, the other students studying in the other classes are unlucky because they do not know blogging. I think, they are getting bored with the writing lesson. I have some friends from other classes. They have said so, as well (S7).

Another student came up with another idea

To me, blogging was a very exciting experience. If we had learned writing in the class, it would have been very monotonous. But blogging was very entertaining; it was more attractive. If we had done this in the class, it would not have attracted us. I, for example, click on the "next blog" on my page. I immediately see another person form another country. I wonder whose next blog is mine. This idea makes me excited (S11).

Another student explained the superiority of weblog to only in class instruction in connection with the increased quality of his writing.

... For example, when we learn writing in the class, only you (the teacher) will see what I have written. No one else will see. At the beginning of the term, for example, I did not know what blogging really was. I did not understand that my writings will also be seen by other people. So I wrote about simple matters. I mean I did not care so much about my writings. But then I tried to change this. If we had not done this, I would not have cared about the content of my writings (S3).

The students also expressed their perception towards studying through web materials referenced in the tutor blogs. Their responses indicated that blogging enabled them to access rich and varied information and broadened their understanding of the class topics and contributed to their general knowledge. They believed that web materials helped them in gathering ideas for their paragraphs and coming up with better content.

It was very good to write the homework on the net. We could reach various materials through the net. We could find lots of samples, for example. We were able to search about the topics to write about, so, the content of our writings was better. And we learned many things in general (S8).

They also reported that through these web materials, they were able to find better ways of expressing themselves and organize their ideas, as clarified in the response below:

I got really benefitted form blogging to much. There were too many links in our blogs and I continually used them while writing my homework. I saw lots of sentences in English. For example, once, in one of my writings, I had to use “if clauses” and after writing the post, I realized that I used same structure from beginning to end. I know that you do not like this. Then, I clicked on the links on if clauses and I learned different expression. I learned inverted version, for example (S4).

Additionally, students focused on encouraging environment created by weblog use on their writings. Seeing the posts that received many comments from their friends encouraged them to write more carefully to receive the same amount of comments. A student elaborated this as

Through blogging, I could see my friends’ writings, and I saw that they were writing on different topics. I mean, on interesting topics. Under their posts, there were 8-9 comments. So, I thought “why should not I get so many comments?” Then I did research on the net and tried to find interesting topics to attract my friends’ attention. (S5)

They thought that through blogging their interaction with their peers increased and this affected their writing performance as they tried to prove themselves to their fellows. One respondent described this as “I wanted my friends admire my English. I especially tried to use uncommon words because they would come and ask me the next day. This is something charismatic among the students”. Blogging affected their social relations as well and created a friendly atmosphere as expressed in one of the responses. She said:

This blogging also helped us to form better relations with our friends. If we were in class, maybe we did not talk to every class mate. But through blogging, since everyone commented on everyone's post... I mean we found chance to talk to everyone in the class. The next day, sometimes we thanked to each other; sometimes we explained the things that were not understood in our posts. Namely, we found something to talk about with our friends. We knew each other better (S6.)

The respondents brought up also their ideas on the technical aspects of blogging. They regarded weblogs as very easy to use and maintain. They resembled setting up a blog to taking an e mail account, and they appreciated that no technical knowledge was required. They commented on the features that blogger.com offered. They liked to be able to upload their own photos easily. They also talked on their frequent use of pictures to make their pages more colourful. Even, one of the students, at the beginning of the study, had told that he almost never dealt with internet until he came to the school. The following is his answer related to user- friendly nature of blogging.

As you know, I had no experience with internet until you told us that we would do our classes on the net. I had no even any e mail accounts as you remember. So, I got panicked at the beginning. I thought I could not manage to use weblogs because I did not have any experiences before. But now, maybe I am the one who uses internet more than the others. I thank to you for this. Now I can easily upload pictures, I can change the colour of my page; I can add some more features easily. It is just related to click on some buttons on the page. And I plan to use this in the future as well (S1).

And the last category in which respondents evaluated weblogs had to do with the responsibility and self confidence that blogging had them gain. They felt the responsibility to write better as they had their names written on the top of the page.

I invited my friends from my hometown to visit my blogs. And also my family followed my page. As I knew that my father would visit my pages and read the teacher's comment, I wrote more carefully. I had to because I wanted my family to get proud of me (S3).

With regard to self confidence, one of the students said "I feel myself privileged because I have my own page on the net (S7)." Another student reported that he felt himself just like a real writer. He said "I see myself as a column writer. I have my column on a newspaper named 'intermediate B' and there I shared my ideas with people (S4)." Moreover, a student resembled his weblogs to TV channels by stating that "to me, our

blogs are windows open to the world. They are like our own TV channels. We are broadcasting to the world” (S11).

In summary, both Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire and interview made it clear that the students really liked blogging. Though some of them were reserved at the beginning, at the end it turned to be something enjoyable for all of them. Almost no students uttered anything negative about use of blogs as an aid to their writing course. Only a few of them complained about such physical limitations as problems in finding a computer to enter their blogs or noisy environments where they studied on their blogs. But no complaint came about the technical aspects of blogging. During the study, no problem occurred in terms of accessing the site, blogger.com, and this may have contributed to students’ favourable perception as well. The most advantageous sides of blogging for the students were its increasing interaction, its open-to-anyone nature and its being easy to maintain.

4.6 . Correlation of Perception and Writing Performance

So as to answer the fourth research question, that is, *does students’ perception of weblog use affect their writing performance?* the level of students’ perception scores were analyzed in line with students’ improved writing performance scores. In the analysis, Pearson Correlation analysis technique which was explained in Chapter 3 was used to find out if there was a significant relationship between students’ perception and their writing performance. The data concerning students’ attitudes were attained through Post Instruction Perception Questionnaire and it was analyzed in five categories to have a clearer claim about its connection with writing performance. The categories were students’ perception in relation with blogging and writing performance, blogging and motivation, blogging and autonomous learning, blogging in writing process; and the last category combined all these in their overall perception.

Table: 22

Correlation of Perception and Writing Performance

Variables		Writing Performance	Motivation	Learner Autonomy	Writing Process	Overall Perception	WP Pre test	WP Post test
Writing Performance	Pearson Correlation	1						
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	,80**	1					
Learner Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	,64	,22	1				
Writing Process	Pearson Correlation	,87	,54	,65	1			
Overall Perception	Pearson Correlation	,63	,38	,14	,48	1		
WP Pre-test	Pearson Correlation	-,10	,01	-,01	-,14	-,22	1	
WP Post test	Pearson Correlation	-,04	,07	,11	-,09	-,38	,72	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results showed that there is no significant relationship between the overall perception scores and writing performance of the students. As seen from the table above, the value for the correlation of overall perception and writing performance pre-test is ($r = -.22$, $p > .01$.) and the correlation of perception scores with writing performance post test was ($r = -.38$, $p > .01$.) This indicates that students' favourable perception of weblog use did not have any influence on students' improvement in writing skill in the post test. Though there appeared a correlation between students' perception of blogging with regard to its role in autonomous learning and writing performance post test ($r = .11$, $p < .01$.) and motivation ($r = .07$, $p < .01$.), this seems to not enough to claim that students perception affected the quality of their writings. So the hypothesis, that is, *the level of students' perception of weblog use in writing course positively correlates with improved level of their writing performance* was rejected. The unique claim to be raised from the table is that there is a high correlation between students' writing performance pre-test and post-test, which comes to mean that those who received a high score in the pre test got a relatively high score from the post test as well.

4.7 . Correlation of Learner Autonomy and Writing Performance

In a similar manner, Pearson Correlation analysis technique was utilized to get an answer to the last research question: Does students' level in learner autonomy affect their writing performance? The hypothesis for this question was that the level of students in autonomous learning positively correlates with the level of their improved writing performance. The data used in the analysis were obtained through GIAPEL Learning style Pre- and Post-test, and Writing Performance Pre- and Post-Test. The analysis produced following results.

Table: 23
Correlation of Learner Autonomy and Writing Performance

Variables	Learner Autonomy pre-test	Learner Autonomy post-test	Writing Performance Pre-test	Writing Performance Post-test	Mean	SD
Learner Autonomy pre-test	1				1.64	1,32
Learner Autonomy post-test	.57**	1			3.80	1,87
Writing Performance Pre-test	.21	.20	1		2.94	7,75
Writing Performance Post-test	.36	.25	.72**	1	1.58.	3,62

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As the table demonstrates, there is a significant correlation between autonomous learning pre-test and post-test ($r = .57, p < .01$). The pre- and post-test results related to writing performance were also correlated at a significant level as well ($r = .72, p < .01$). However, the main focus of this analysis was the correlation between learner autonomy and writing performance. When the results were evaluated, it was observed that there occurred a low correlation between learner autonomy pre test and writing performance pre test ($r = .21, p > .01$). Similarly, the correlation of learner autonomy post test with writing

performance post test was low ($r = .25, p < .01$). However, there observed an increase in the correlation in the post tests when it was compared with the correlation in the pre test. Drawing from this increase, it can still be claimed that there is a correlation - even if it is low- between students' level of autonomous learning and their writing performances. That is to say, the more autonomous the learner is the better writings he can produce.

One possible explanation of the low correlation learner autonomy with writing performance may have to do with the number of the subjects used in the study. Since the number of the students taking GIAPPEL learning style pre and post test was only 24, the correlation appeared so low. However, the values indicate that if there were more subjects, the possibility of strong correlation seems to be high. In other words, that the number of the participants was low may have a negative effect on the significance of the correlation of learner autonomy level and writing performance.

4.8. Conclusion

To sum up, weblog integrated process writing positively affected students' writing performance and their level in autonomous learning. The analysis also showed that the students had a positive perception of weblog use in their writing class. The following chapter presents the general conclusions and implications drawn from the study.

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the whole study. It starts with overview of the study and it presents the conclusions yielded from the study with regard to effect of weblog integrated process writing instruction on writing performance, effects of weblog on learner autonomy, students' perception of weblog use in their writing process, correlation of students perception with their improved writing performance and finally correlation of learner autonomy with their writing performance. Then, pedagogical implications of the study for teachers, limitations of the study, as well as prospects for further research are presented.

5.2. Overview of the Study

This study set out to explore the potentials of weblogs as an educational tool. It specifically investigated the impacts of weblog integrated process writing instruction on students' writing performance and on their level in autonomous learning. It also sought to find out students' perceptions towards blogging in their writing process. In a quasi experimental design, this study collected the data from two groups of students; one served as experimental group (n=27) and the other was assigned as control group (n=23). The subjects were university level EFL students studying at School of Foreign Languages, K.T.U. Trabzon, Turkey.

In order to collect the necessary data on the effects of weblogs on writing performance, students' written products before and after the treatment were used. An already existent questionnaire named GIAPEL Learning Style Test was utilized as a pre- and post-test to elicit the data on students' levels in autonomous learning. An additional interview was

conducted to triangulate the data attained through GIAPEL Learning Style Test. To measure the students' perceptions, a researcher constructed questionnaire which is also triangulated through an interview administered to the participants.

In the analysis of the data, four main analysis techniques were used: (1) Paired sample t test to compare the writing performances of the experimental students with that of students in control group, (2) ANCOVA to find out source of improvement in writing performances of the students (3) descriptive statistical techniques to analyze the questionnaire data (4) Pearson Correlation analysis to find out the correlation of perception and learner autonomy level with improved writing performance. As a result of the analyses, the following conclusions can be drawn.

5.3. Conclusions

In an attempt to find answer to the question related to impact of weblog use on students writing performance, two groups of students were compared in their writing performances. The writing instruction of the control group was limited to in class activities; however, in the course design of the experimental group, writing instruction was blended with blogging activities. The analysis of the data attained through Writing Performance Pre and Post Test demonstrated that students in both writing instruction methods improved their writing performances at a significant level. However, when the difference in the post test results was taken into consideration, it was identified that blogging integrated writing instruction proved to more effective than in class writing instruction. Blogging affected students' writing performance of experimental students as a whole and it had a positive impact on the two components of their writings: *content* and *organization*. However, weblog use did not create a statistically significant difference between the *language use*, *vocabulary* and *mechanics* components of the experimental group and those of the control group.

The finding that the in class writing instruction was also effective on students' writing performance can be explained in connection with the process writing approach. Previous studies have demonstrated that process based writing instruction have positive impacts on the writing of students (Becker, 1991; Kern and Schultz, 1992; Akyel & Kamisli, 1997)

In addition to this, when the duration of the study, 16 weeks, is considered, an improvement in the students' writings seems to be acceptable. During these 16 weeks, control group students were provided with sample paragraphs to analyze with a purpose to make them familiar with the organization patterns that they may adopt for their writing. Though relatively limited in number, the students were also provided with exercises on language use and vocabulary. When the fact that these students were additionally exposed to a-four-hour grammar course and a-six-hour reading course was taken into consideration, the change in their writing performance may be justified. All these sample paragraphs, exercises on language structures and students' exposure to language in other courses may contribute to their writing performances.

The finding that weblog use was more effective on students' writing performance than in class writing instruction was consistent with the results of other studies in which students in a computer assisted ESL/EFL learning environment outperformed those in the learning environment without computers (Skinner & Austin, 1999; Braine, 2001; Abrams, 2001). However, the present study makes use of weblogs, specifically, to find out its effectiveness on writing skill. Such a finding can also support empirically the theoretical assumption that blogging enhances writing performance (Campbell, 2003; Kennedy, 2003).

One possible explanation of weblogs being more effective on students' writing performance has to do with the language and writing input provided to the experimental students. Because of the limited course duration for the control group, the language input in the writing course was restricted in amount. In other words, they were given relatively less exercises on sentence structures used in the target paragraph types. Similarly, such materials used to teach the target types as sample paragraphs and relevant exercises were less than those used for the experimental students. By means of blogging, the experimental students had the chance to be exposed to more language and writing input. The writing input in the weblog supported instruction was the web materials presented on one of the tutor blogs. Students received the writing input by surfing these web materials. They found the opportunity of examining many more model paragraphs than the control group did. For the language input, through blogging, students had the chance to access lots of interactive exercises and to choose according to their own needs. So, experimental students' having

more chances to receive the necessary input may have caused the difference between experimental and control groups in the pos-test results.

The findings pertaining to effect of weblog use on specific components of writing revealed an interesting result. In the analysis, when the pre-test scores in five components of writing were controlled through covariance analysis, it was found out that the component on which blogging was more effective was *content*. It was followed by *organization*. No effect of blogging was measured on *language use*, *vocabulary* and *mechanics* of students' writings. That is to say, the source of difference between experimental and control group students was that experimental students paid much more attention to the content of their writings than the control students. The relation of this finding with blogging can be explained by referring to the fact that blogs had the potentials to arouse a sense of audience in the students, which caused better contents (Kitzmann, 2003; Wu, 2005). Due to the fact that time to be spent in class was limited for the control group, peer feedback sessions as one way of arousing audience awareness were not effective. In most cases, the students in the control group did not even carefully read their peers' writings. The exchange was mainly between the course teacher and the student. However, in the case of experimental students, more effective peer feedback sessions were available as there was no time and place restriction owing to the use of weblogs. Students could examine their peers' drafts whenever and wherever they wanted. Additionally, some students had their own readers except their classmates. Knowing that their writings would be read by someone other than the teacher may have caused the experimental students to pay more attention to the content and organization of their writings than the control group students.

The treatment, weblog integrated process approach, has also proved to be effective in students' level of autonomous learning. Students' levels in autonomous learning measured through a standardized test, GIAPEL Learning Style Test, changed positively after the treatment. Though it may not be possible to attribute the whole change to weblog use, it is clear from the students' responses to the interview questions that blogging had some impacts to enable the students to develop a sense of learner autonomy. Among the autonomous learning features, mostly mentioned by the participants in connection with blogging are sense of ownership, feeling of responsibility, and individualized learning

through web materials referenced in the tutor blogs. In other words, blogging helped the students to gain a sense of ownership of their own learning through allowing them to have their own learning spaces. This led the students to take the responsibility of their learning by attempting to design their blogs to reflect themselves as learners as uttered in the interview. Yet, caution must be taken in interpreting these results. Weblog use, in fact, did not turn all the dependent learners into fully autonomous learners; it just created some improvement in the students' level by carrying them to an upper level in a way. Therefore, blogging on its own cannot be strongly claimed to make fully autonomous learners. It can just be treated as an efficient aid to create an environment in which students find their ways towards learner autonomy but not a medium sufficient on its own to create fully autonomous learners.

With regard to students' perception on blogging activities, it was identified that students had a favourable perception of weblog use in their writings. This finding was consistent with previous research (Lindblom, 2003; Pinkman, 2005; Wu, 2005) in which students positively commented on using blogs as an educational practice.

The students perceived that weblog use had positively affected their overall writing performance and almost no student commented on the negative effects of blogging. Their perceived effectiveness was also confirmed by their actual writing improvement as shown by the Writing Performance Test. In addition, students' responses to the interview question about their general evaluation of weblog may further explain these findings. Providing a special learning space and open-to-anyone nature are among the advantages mostly uttered by the respondents. They felt that through these aspects of blogging, they developed a sense of ownership and responsibility, which produced positive outcomes in their learning process.

The students also perceived that a positive effect of blogging on specific writing components in their writings. They believed that weblog use improved the content, organization, vocabulary and language use in their paragraphs. In the analysis of the perception questionnaire, it was identified that the component on which the students felt the effect of weblog best was vocabulary. However, students' perception of such weblog use did not overlap with the analysis of their actual performance. In their actual

performance, improvement in the content comes first, yet there was found no effect of blogging on the vocabulary of their paragraphs when compared with that of control group students.

Most of the students perceived that web materials referenced in tutor blogs were helpful in their improvement. They further expressed the superiority of the web materials over printed materials used in the class. Many students mentioned that these materials enabled them to choose according to their own needs; thus contributing to their success in writing and in language learning. What is understood from the perception questionnaire and interview is that students recognized two characteristics of web as a learning medium. One was the quantity of the learning context presented through web. The other was the manner in which the web was able to presents learning materials. By these two characteristics, web helped them to gather ideas for their writings thereby making writing easier for them.

With regard to effect of blogging on their attitudes and motivation towards writing, the majority of students considered blogging to be beneficial. Most of them agreed that blogging positively affected their motivation towards the course. This finding was also supported by the interview responses. Although writing course was difficult and boring at the beginning, they said blogging changed the course into something more enjoyable. They perceived that being able to use visuals easily in their blogs was effective to make the activities enjoyable for them. They showed a strong preference for the weblog use over just in class writing instruction. Their comments related to the comparison of the two learning environments in the interview further supported such a preference. However, a number of students expressed uncertainty about using blogging in their future life. Therefore, it seems that even though students had a positive attitude towards using weblog, some of them were not motivated enough to use it in their future learning. This can be explained in connection with amount of work demanded by the weblog integrated instruction and the responsibility blogging attributed to them. It is possible that the students may not want to feel this responsibility, to study from a wide range of materials or to read their peers writings so carefully if they were provided a chance to choose.

The students had a positive perception of the interaction element in weblog use. Most of them believed that they had plenty of interaction with the teacher and with their friends.

The responses to the interview demonstrated that this increased interaction with peers was not just limited to interaction in terms of learning. Blogging was also helpful for the students to develop social relations with their friends. Therefore, blogging contributed to the establishment of a non-threatening environment to learn. Such kind of environment, as stated by the students, positively affected their learning efficacy and autonomy as well. Additionally, they reported that learning on a computer at their own pace enabled them to have a more personalized learning.

In terms of easiness of use of blogging, most of the students responded positively. A great majority of them experienced no technical problems in maintaining their blogs. This finding can be connected with the use of blogger.com, which was used as the blog hosting service during the study. As stated in the literature, blogger.com was among the mostly favoured hosting service (Stiler & Philleo, 2003) so, the finding that almost no technical problems were experienced on blogger.com was consistent with the literature.

The students' favourable perceptions towards weblog use, however, did not have any significant correlation with the improvement in their writing performance. One of the purposes of the present study was to find out if there was a correlation between students' perception and writing performance. Yet, no significant correlation was measured. Neither was there a significant correlation between five perception factors and the improvement of writing performance. Therefore, this finding failed to support the hypothesis that *the more favourable perception students had about weblog use, the more they improved their writing performance*. It can then be interpreted that students' positive perception of blogging does not ensure a tendency of better language performance results as the positive attitude towards learning through technology is simply related to people's belief that technology is good. Therefore, it is more helpful to research the effectiveness of weblog based language learning by addressing students' actual performance results in addition to the perception results as done in the present study.

The correlation of writing performance with students' learner autonomy level was also measured in the study. The results indicated that there was a correlation between students' level in autonomous learning and the improvement in their writing performance; however, the correlation was not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that *the more the*

students were autonomous, the better quality writings they produced was rejected. Nevertheless, drawing from the fact that the correlation coefficients were positive, it can be claimed that if there had been a larger sample size, there might have observed a significant positive correlation between students' levels of learner autonomy and their improved writing performance.

5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

The results of the present study have significant implications concerning the educational use of weblogs for the EFL writing teachers. The first one is that for EFL teachers who are not so experienced in using web technology weblogs offer an effective foundation to start with. As maintaining a blog requires no technical knowledge, it can be utilized easily by any teacher willing to incorporate technology into the classroom.

Incorporating such a web tool can especially be useful for those settings in which course duration is limited as it is the case in the research setting. Through integrating weblogs into the class, the teacher can extend the instruction beyond school walls as weblogs enable teachers and students to be together at any time and place.

When the finding that the students using weblogs improved the content of their writing more than those who did not use blogging is considered, it is strongly suggested that weblogs should be utilized in the settings where students have no audience other than the teacher.

Another implication of the study is that interaction through blogging should not just be limited to classmates and teachers. As observed during the study, students that had real readers except their classmates were more careful in their choice of topics and quality of their writings. Therefore, public nature of weblogs should be fully used. For example, a partner class from a different setting would serve to make use of all the potentials of blogging.

The next implication of the study results from the nature of internet usage with the students. During the study, the students were provided with lots of sample paragraphs and

they were directed to websites including learning materials. As experienced in the present study, there may be some students that would just copy the content of the other pages and paste it to their own blogs. Therefore, teachers that want to make use of blogging with their students should fully inform students about plagiarism and follow students' blogs carefully.

Finally, this study indicates that weblogs could contribute to a more personalized learning on behalf of students by allowing them to choose among many materials according to their own needs. However, not all the learning materials on net can address all the needs of the students. This is valid especially for EFL settings. Therefore, teachers should be quite attentive in identifying the materials for the students to study; even teacher created materials by considering the needs of the students in the target setting would be better.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations with this study. The first one is related to the sample size. Due to curriculum and administrative limitations, convenience sampling procedures were used to draw the sample for the study. The total number of the participants was 50, which makes broader generalization of the study impossible. This limitation might have affected the results as well. As the number of experimental students was 27, the correlation analyses did not work properly. The positive coefficients in the correlation analyses implied that had the sample been larger, the weak correlations may have turned to be stronger.

The second limitation of the study is that duration of the study was not long enough to have stronger claims about sustained motivation of students. The study took 16 weeks and blog activities could be integrated to the course beginning from the third week. So, in the perception questionnaire and interview, students mentioned by drawing from their thirteen-week experiences with weblogs that blogging increased their motivation towards writing course; however, this does not ensure that students' such motivation will sustain for a longer period.

In this study, the impact of environment created by weblog use on autonomous learning was investigated. The results were obtained by asking students whether they thought that they used the strategies of autonomous learners or not. In other words, students' actual uses of strategies were not measured as it was beyond the scope of this study.

5.6. Prospects for Further Research

This present study investigated the impact of weblog integrated process writing instruction on students' writing performance and learner autonomy with a focus on students' perceptions. However, there are some other issues that need to be researched in further studies:

1) This study looked into the effect of interaction elements of weblogs through comment options blogs provide. The interaction was a kind of chat on students' writing performance. The writing process was not purely collaborative as the paragraphs were written by individual students and shared with peers and teacher. The students were not assigned any special collaborative projects with other group of students. Further research could explore the potential of weblogs in collaborative learning to have deeper understanding of whether blogging fully enhances interaction among the peers.

2) Besides the quantitative data, further studies could collect data on class observations or teacher's observation logs in order to examine how students interact and learn with web materials as a writing process in weblog integrated instruction.

3) A further study can combine process and genre approach to integrate blogging as a means of writing.

4) With regard to effect of weblog integrated process writing on learner autonomy, this study focused on the learning environment in which students had their own special learning spaces, shared their writings, had opportunities to choose learning materials in accordance with their needs and reflected publicly on their learning process. However, no special strategy training was done with the students. Further research could combine

blogging with strategy training on autonomous learning to fully explore the role of blogging in autonomous learning.

5) As this study was conducted with a small sample (n=50), a further replication of the present study with a larger sample size can be conducted to provide broader generalizations in terms of the impact of blogging in process writing and learner autonomy.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

English Proficiency Self-rating Questionnaire

Name: _____ Department: _____
Age: _____ Graduated School: _____

Read the following statements and put a check to all the statements that identify you. You can point as many statement as you want provided that you think they are relevant to you.

I can identify myself with the following statements.

1- When I listen to a conversation in English.....

- I can understand words that I am familiar with when people speak slowly and clearly.
- I can understand very basic phrases related to me, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
- I can understand phrases and frequently used vocabulary related to immediate environment. (for example, very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area and employment)
- I can catch the main point in short, clear simple messages and announcements.
- I can understand the main points of standard speech on familiar matters (e.g. school, work, leisure activities)
- I can understand the main point of many radio or T.V. programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest if it is slow and clear.
- I can understand long speech and follow lines of argument if the topic is relatively (partly) familiar.
- I can understand most T.V. news and current affairs programmes and I can understand the majority of films in standard English
- I can understand long speech even when it is not clearly structured and I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
- I can easily understand any kind of spoken language even when delivered at fast native speed, if I have some time (15-20 min.) to get familiar with the accent.

2- When I read a text in English,

- I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences.
- I can read very short, simple texts and grab specific information in simple everyday material (e.g. advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables)
- I can understand texts consisting of frequently used everyday vocabulary.
- I can read articles and reports on current affairs and I can understand contemporary literary prose.
- I can understand long and complex texts even when they do not relate to my field.
- I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language. (e.g. manuals, specialized articles and literary works)

3- When I speak in English

- I can interact in a simple way if the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase thing slowly
- I can ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics and I can use simple phrases to describe where I live and people I know.
- I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
- I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe my family, other people, living conditions and my present job.
- I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics of personal interest or everyday life. (e.g. hobbies, work, travel, current events)
- I can describe in a simple way my dreams, hopes and ambitions and I can briefly explain my thoughts. I can narrate a story or film
- I can interact with native speakers of English with a degree of fluency and I can take an active part in discussions in familiar contexts.
- I can clearly describe the subjects of my interest in detail and I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue.
- I can express myself fluently, spontaneously and I can use the language effectively for social and professional purposes without much effort.
- I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects.
- I can express myself fluently without any effort and I can take part in any conversation with a capacity of using idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.

- I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context with an effective logical structure.

4- When I write a text in English,

- I can write a short, simple postcard (e.g. holiday greetings) and I can fill in forms with personal details. (e.g. entering name, nationality, address.....)
- I can write short, simple notes and messages and I can write a very simple personal letter. (e.g. thanking so for sth.)
- I can write simple texts on topics of interests or familiar topics and I can write personal letters describing experiences.
- I can write clear, detailed texts on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. and I can write essay or report discussing reasons or effects of an event.
- I can write letters about personally significant events and experiences.
- I can express myself in clear, well-structured texts and I can write about complex subject in a letter or an essay, supporting my point of view to a degree.
- I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.
- I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style.
- I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

(Source: Adapted from Quick Placement Test, (2001).

APPENDIX B

Writing Performance Task

Name:

Time Allowed: 50 minutes

Class:

Write only one paragraph by choosing one of the topics below. Read each topic carefully and choose the one in which you can write best. Underline the topic you choose.

1. Describe a person who made a vey strong impression on you.
2. Write a description of a city or town you know well.
3. Describe a place where you can go to be alone and relax.
4. Explain step by step how to have successful job interview. Consider what you need to do before, during and after the actual interview.
5. Explain step by step how to prepare a dish.
6. Explain step by step how to get good marks from school exams.
7. Compare and contrast being only child in a family with having siblings.
8. Compare and contrast laptop with desktop.
9. Compare and contrast your hometown with Trabzon.
10. Compare and contrast travelling by bus and by plane.
11. Discuss the effects on a society when its youth are poorly educated.
12. Discuss the possible causes of increase in crime rate.
13. Discuss the possible causes of unemployment in Turkey.
14. Discuss the effects of sleeping late.
15. Discuss the effects of divorce on children.

APPENDIX C

Rubric used in the Study

Language component	Excellent to Very Good	Good to Average,	Fair to Poor	Very Poor
Scoring Range:	30-27	26-22	21-17	16-13
C O N T E N T	<p>Suits audience= an exceptionally strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively.</p> <p>One idea expressed.</p> <p>Supporting, relevant, carefully selected details= when appropriate, use of resources provides strong, accurate, credible support.</p> <p>Creative, an easily identifiable purpose</p>	<p>A sense of audience =the writer seems to be aware of the reader, but has not consistently employed an appropriate voice.</p> <p>A loosely expressed idea, Some specific development, mostly relevant to topic= content and selected details that are relevant, but perhaps not consistently well-chosen for audience and purpose.</p>	<p>A limited sense of audience= the writer's awareness of the reader is unclear.</p> <p>Non-specific statement and incomplete development, Insufficient details= little relevance, minimal development of main idea;, irrelevant details that clutter the text,</p>	<p>A lack of audience awareness =there is little or no sense of "writing to be read.</p> <p>No clear development =too short to demonstrate the development of an idea,</p> <p>Not related details</p> <p>Lack of focus,</p>
Scoring Range:	20-18	17-14	13-10	9-7
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	<p>Effective lead/topic sentence=effective, perhaps creative, sequencing; the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow, a strong, inviting beginning that draws the reader in</p> <p>A strong, satisfying sense of resolution or closure.</p> <p>Smooth, effective transitions among all elements =(sentences, paragraphs, ideas). logical order (time-space-importance) effective connecting/transitional words, conclusion</p>	<p>Adequate lead/topic sentence= effective sequencing; the organizational structure fits the topic an inviting beginning that draws the reader in</p> <p>A satisfying sense of resolution or closure,</p> <p>Some connecting/transitional words= logical, but incomplete order,</p>	<p>Weak lead, topic sentence= attempts at sequencing, but the order or the relationship among ideas may occasionally be unclear, a recognizable beginning that may not be particularly inviting;</p> <p>Weak sense of resolution and conclusion</p> <p>Some connecting/transitional words= not all placed appropriately</p>	<p>Weak or no lead/topic sentence= a missing or extremely undeveloped beginning, body, and/or ending, some attempts at sequencing, but the order of the relationship among ideas is frequently unclear</p> <p>A lack of transitions, or when present, ineffective or overused transitions= a lack of an effective organizational structure. details that seem to be randomly placed, leaving the reader frequently confused</p>
Scoring Range:	20-18	17-14	13-10	9-7

V O C A B U L A R Y	Effective word use =Correct word forms, accurate, strong, specific words; powerful words, fresh, original expression, ordinary words used in an unusual way, meaning clear, effective word choice and description/ figurative language	Mostly effective word use =Mostly correct word forms,(words that are accurate for the most part, although misused words may occasionally appear) meaning understandable, adequate word choice, fresh, vivid expression; ordinary words used in an unusual way, some description/ figurative language	Some effective word use =Many incorrect word forms, meaning obscure, words that work but do not particularly energize the writing, attempts at colorful language that may sometimes seem overdone, some variety in word choice, rare experiments with language; however, the writing may have some fine moments and generally avoids cliches. little description/ figurative language,	Limited word choice , words that work, but that rarely capture the reader's interest,little or no meaning, expression that seems mundane and general, reliance on cliches and overused expressions; generic, basic
ScoringRange:	25-22	21-18	17-11	10-5
L A N G U A G E U S E	Sentence variety = extensive variation in sentence structure, length and beginnings that add interest to the text. sentence structure = that enhances meaning by drawing attention to key ideas or reinforcing relationships among ideas, complete sentences = strong control over sentence structure; fragments, if used at all, work well. correct verb tenses, correct word order, agreement	Sentence variety = variation in sentence structure, length and beginnings that add interest to the text, Sentence structure = Most of the sentences are carefully crafted, with strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable. Mostly complete sentences = control over sentence structure; fragments, if used at all, work well. Several errors in verb tense, Few mistakes in word order, agreement, articles, negatives, run-ons	Sentence variety = some variety in sentence structure, length, and beginnings Sentence structure = strong control over simple sentence structures, but variable control over more complex sentences; fragments, if present, are usually effective Some incomplete sentences, Some inconsistent verb tense, Some mistake in word order, agreement, articles, negatives, run-ons.	Sentence variety = some variety in sentence structure, length, and beginnings, although the writer falls into repetitive sentence patterns Sentence structures = good control over simple sentence structures, but little control over more complex sentences; fragments, if present, may not be effective. Incomplete sentences = largely phrases, Random verb tense, word order, agreement, articles, negatives,
ScoringRange:	5	4	3	2

M E C H A N I C S	<p>Mastery of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, strong control of conventions; manipulation of conventions may occur for stylistic effect.. strong effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text. correct spelling, even of more difficult words. skill in using a wide range of conventions in a sufficiently long and complex piece. little need for editing.</p>	<p>Occasional errors in spelling, capitalization, and use of commas, periods, and apostrophes, effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text. Mostly correct spelling, even of more difficult words. little need for editing</p>	<p>Frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, and use of commas, periods, and apostrophes, correct end-of-sentence punctuation; internal punctuation my sometimes be incorrect,</p>	<p>Dominated by errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, end-of-sentence punctuation that is usually correct; however, internal punctuation contains frequent errors. spelling errors that distract the reader; misspelling of common words occurs. paragraphs that sometimes run together or begin at ineffective places. capitalization errors. errors in grammar and usage that do not block meaning but do distract the reader. significant need for editing.</p>
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(Source: Adapted from Hughey, et al., 1983)

APPENDIX D

GIAPEL Learning Style Test

PUT A CROSS TO THREE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS THAT IDENTIFY YOU IN EACH SECTION. ATTENTION! YOU CAN POINT OUT ONLY THREE STATEMENTS IN EACH SECTION

1-While studying the grammar of a language, it is better...

- To study a grammatical topic and to put it in practices by writing sentences or text
- To study a grammatical topic and to carry out the exercises given by the professor
- To study the same structure in different texts and to extract the rule
- To have a source book (grammar) and consult when I (need) want
- That the professor should give me the rule and many examples
- That the professor should give me many examples and I try to discover the rule

2- I identify myself with the following statements

- I don't like the grammar
- The grammar should be amusing like a puzzle
- If it is necessary to study a grammatical rule, I prefer to do quick exercises of application of that rule
- I prefer to learn the grammar with simple sentences that are example of that rule
- I prefer to learn the grammar by using real texts
- If it is necessary to study a grammatical rule, I prefer to be allowed to guess and to prove if I have understood the rule though I can make a mistake

3- If I have to make an activity to learn a language,

- I want it to be brief
- I want to know the result of my performance at once (whether I did well or bad)
- I want it to be complex and to be allowed to guess the answers
- I want to have been given all the information from the beginning to do the activity
- I want to have access to all the information that I need

- I don't care that the activity is long, what is important it interests me
- To spend half an hour for the same activity tires me

4- If I have to write a text in a foreign language, I identify myself with the following statements

- I want it to arouse interest in the reader
- I feel myself uncomfortable when my peers see my writings
- After writing the text, I read it to assess my performance
- I need constant approval from the professor while writing the text
- I take risks by trying out newly learned structures and vocabulary
- I get bored when I revise my writings
- To write better texts, I need to be in collaboration with others (sees writing as a collaborative work)
- I believe that I need external feedback to shape progress
- I believe that I would be overwhelmed working on the same text.

5- Put a cross to three of the followings that you are attracted by most. You are not asked to carry out them but rather point out those that you would like to make.

- Starting from the following sentences of a new language and of their corresponding translation, guess the last sentence. Ek fil chuchu: "The train has come out"
 - Ek namas chuchu: "The train is very big"
 - Nek kum niva chuchu: "The train has not come out"
 - Ek chuchu: "It is a train"

How would you say "it is not a train"? a) nek chuchu niva; b) ek niva chuchu; c) nek niva chuchu

- Read the following list of words and write as many words as you can remember in a paper without looking: **paintbrush, church, to know, knot, iris, captain, luxury, immediately, squirrel, boat, impertinent, to consent, afraid**
- Write a text by using the words given above
- Look up a dictionary of the language of Samoa for the following words as quickly as possible: **talua, tamaloa, tamaitiiti, taulealea, loomatua**
- Guess the root form of the words “love” and “hit” in Swahili language by using the following matches.

atawapenda = they loved	nitakupenda= I will love you
unamsumbua = you annoy him/her	atampiga = he will hit
nitawapenda = you will love them	atampiga = he will hit
atanipenda = he will love me	atanipiga= he will hit me
atakusumbua = he will annoy you	nitampenda = I will love him/her

- By using the matches above, try to say in Swahili: "I will annoy them"

(Source: Adapted from Ruiz, 2003)

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

- 1- How did you feel about other students' comments on your blogs?
- 2- Did you use pictures/visuals to express yourself in your blog?
- 3- Did you think on your learning process before? What do you think of "reflecting on your before? Is it useful or useless? Why
- 4- How do you learn most effectively?
 - __by drawing from teacher's life experiences
 - __by drawing from your own life experiences
- 5- How do you regard learning?
 - __course centered, applying knowledge within the course
 - __life centered, using knowledge in your life beyond the course
- 6- How do you motivate yourself to learn?
 - __by external motivators such as grades, teacher's approval
 - __by internal motivators such as own goals and thoughts, increased self esteem, quality of life
- 7- What is the role of the teacher?
 - __guide, advisor
 - __authority to define the methods/strategies to be used
- 8- How do you define yourself as a learner?
 - __participant into learning process
 - __recipient of knowledge given
- 9- Did you like to study English through the English learning websites recommended by your teacher? Did it contribute to your learning process? If yes, in what way did it contribute?
- 10- What do you think about the use weblog in learning writing skill in specific and in learning language in general?

(Adapted fro Shih-Yin, 2005; Usuki, 2002)

APPENDIX F

POST-INSTRUCTION PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Below are 24 statements concerning how you feel about the weblog use in writing class. Please circle only one of the numbers for each statement, and indicate the degree to each statement applies to you. Thank you for your cooperation.

(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral (4)agree (5) strongly agree

- 1. My English writing skill improved as a result of weblog use.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı sonucunda İngilizce yazma becerim gelişti)
- 2. When I write my papers on my blog, I pay more attention to the content.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Yazılarımı blog sayfamaya yazdığımında yazımın içeriğine daha fazla önem veriyorum)
- 3. When I write my papers on my blog, I pay more attention to choosing the right word.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Yazılarımı blog sayfamaya yazdığımında kelime seçimime daha fazla önem veriyorum)
- 4. When I write my papers on my blog, I pay more attention to the language use.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Yazılarımı blog sayfamaya yazdığımında dil kullanımına daha fazla önem veriyorum)
- 5. When I write my papers on my blog, I pay more attention to the organization.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Yazılarımı blog sayfamaya yazdığımında, yazımın organizasyona daha fazla önem veriyorum)
- 6. Maintaining a blog motivated me towards writing course.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı, yazma dersine karşı beni motive etti.)
- 7. I had plenty of interaction with my classmates through the use of weblog.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı sayesinde, sınıf arkadaşlarımla çok fazla etkileşim gerçekleştirebildim.)
- 8. I had plenty of interaction with my instructor through the use of weblog.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı sayesinde, dersin hocasıyla çok fazla etkileşim gerçekleştirebildim)
- 9. The web materials referenced in instructor's blog helped me to improve my English.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Ders hocasının blogları vasıtasıyla yönlendirildiğim internet materyalleri İngilizcemimi geliştirmeme yardımcı oldu.)
- 10. I enjoyed blogging on the net.** 1 2 3 4 5
(İnternette blogging yapmaktan keyif aldım.)
- 11. To see the feedback given to my peers contributed to the development of writing skill.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Sınıf arkadaşlarıma verilen dönütleri okumak, yazma becerimin gelişmesine yardımcı oldu)

- 12. Weblog use enabled me to review my peers' homework easily.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı, sınıf arkadaşlarımla yazılarımı kolaylıkla incelememi sağladı)
- 13. Reviewing my peers' homework and giving them feedback through weblog contributed to my writing skill.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog vasıtasıyla, sınıf arkadaşlarımla yazılarını okumak ve onlara dönüt vermek, yazma becerime katkıda bulundu.)
- 14. I prefer only in-class writing instruction to the weblog supported writing instruction.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog destekli yazma eğitimi yerine yalnızca sınıf içi yazma eğitimi tercih ederim)
- 15. Weblog use enabled me to revise and edit my writings easily.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı, yazılarımı gözden geçirmemi ve düzeltmemi kolaylaştırdı)
- 16. Publishing on the net through my blog was not motivating.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanarak yazılarımı internette yayınlamak motive edici değildi)
- 17. Use of weblog did not have any effect on my writing skill.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı, yazma becerime herhangi bir etkide bulunmadı)
- 18. I write more carefully on my blog because of the possibility that anyone can read my writings.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Bloglarıma yazdığım yazıların başkaları tarafından okunma ihtimali olduğundan daha dikkatli yazıyorum)
- 19. My peers' comments helped me to improve my writing.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Sınıf arkadaşlarımla yazılarımla ilgili yorumları, yazma becerimin gelişmesine yardımcı oldu.)
- 20. Reflecting on class and my learning process through weblog was useful.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımı vasıtasıyla ders ve öğrenim sürecim üzerine düşündüklerimi paylaşmak faydalıydı.)
- 21. I disliked sharing my writings with someone other than the teacher.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Yazılarımı dersin hocasından başka birileriyle paylaşmaktan hoşuma gitmedi)
- 22. I would like to use weblogs in my future learning.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Bundan sonraki öğrenim hayatımda weblog kullanmayı isterim)
- 23. I frequently experienced technical problems while using weblog.** 1 2 3 4 5
(Weblog kullanımında sık sık teknik problemler yaşadım)
- 24. I felt nervous maintaining my blog on the net.** 1 2 3 4 5

(Adapted from Cunningham, 2000; Chuo, 2004)

APPENDIX G

Course Design for Experimental Group

Course Description:
This course is designed to give students the basis for writing a well organized, cohesive paragraph with grammatically correct sentences. The emphasis is on writing as a process and correct language use.
Course Objectives:
Learn to compose a paragraph that has a clearly stated topic sentence with adequate development and appropriate organization. Learn to use the writing process to explore ideas, to evaluate ideas, and to revise so that ideas are effectively conveyed to the audience. Learn to use correct word forms in correct contexts. Learn to express oneself in an effective way by using a variety of sentence structures. Use appropriate coordination and subordination to relate ideas. Identify and correct sentence structure problems: fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences. Identify and correct subject and verb agreement problems. Identify and correct pronoun case and pronoun agreement and reference problems. Use appropriate verb tenses. Use appropriate punctuation. Use appropriate spelling.
Course Topics:
Course topics include, but are not limited to, the writing process, paragraph structure, topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, organizational patterns, sentence parts, coordination & subordination, agreement, paragraph types including description, process, compare, contrast, cause and effect.
Specific Course Requirements:
Students should be familiar with Microsoft Word and submitting documents electronically and using the internet.
Required Textbook:
The textbook compiled by the school staff
Assessment and Grading
Testing Procedure:
The primary source of the grade is determined by the quality of the student portfolio. Additionally, students will take a writing quiz and a midterm. Students' class performance and participation to the blogging activities will be considered as well.

Grading Procedure:

Student portfolio: 70%

Writing quiz : 20%

Class/weblog Performance: 10%

Course Content

W E E K 1	Topic	Introduction to writing course
	Aim	Informing students on the course Arousing interest in the students Arousing an awareness in the students about their attitudes toward writing
	Procedure	After a brief introduction session, students were given information about place of writing in language learning. Objectives and requirements of the course were explained. A small questionnaire taken from the textbook and aiming at giving an idea about students' attitudes toward writing was administered. Students were encouraged to share their feelings about writing through small-group discussion.
	Blogging	No action was taken
W E E K 2	Topic	Elements of good writing Introduction to paragraph structure
	Aim	Familiarize students with the basic concepts in writing a paragraph Learning main parts of a paragraph
	Procedure	The importance of <i>subject-purpose-audience</i> in writing well-designed paragraphs was explained to the students. Various exercises related to choosing a proper topic to write about were carried out. Three basic parts of a well-organized paragraph were introduced to the students on model paragraphs. Exercises about identifying parts of a paragraph were applied.
	Blogging	No action was taken

W E E K 3	Topic	Topic sentence Supporting sentences
	Aim	Comprehending topic and supporting sentence Practicing writing sentence
	Procedure	Students were given information about significance of topic sentence. Parts of a good topic sentence were analyzed on model sentences and various exercises were carried out. Students practiced writing topic sentences to the provided paragraphs and the topic sentences were analyzed by the peers. The same procedure was followed for the teaching of supporting sentences.
	Blogging	Blogging was introduced to the students and each student was made to set up their blogs in collaboration with the instructor. For each student, two different blogs under the title of <i>assignment</i> which served as a place for publishing their homework, and <i>reflection</i> which was used as personal place for sharing their ideas on learning process were created. Additionally, they were introduced to four researcher constructed blogs: <i>intermediateb</i> used to direct the students to writing related websites; <i>assignments</i> containing links to each student's blogs; <i>lecture-based materials</i> containing materials used in the class and <i>self study</i> used to direct the students to language teaching websites. Students were asked to write their ideas about weblog use in the course in their blogs. Some questions guiding students in their reflections were written in <i>assignment</i> blog.
W E E K 4	Topic	Supporting details
	Aim	Practicing sentence writing Expressing ideas clearly/fluent in well organized paragraphs
	Procedure	After giving information about supporting details, three different paragraphs that lacked supporting details were shown to the students and students were asked to discuss and find the ways of improving these paragraphs. Students wrote supporting details to the target paragraphs. The suggestions of each student were analyzed during the course together with peers and necessary feedback was given.
	Blogging	Students reflected on their first impressions about the use of weblog in writing course in their blogs. All their reflections were read and content related feedback was given to them through <i>comment</i> option of blogs. Three links to the writing practice web sites including interactive exercises on topic and supporting sentences were logged into the <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were informed about the content and way of use in the same blog. Students were assigned to try these websites and reflect on their performances in their blogs.

W E E K 5	Topic	HOLIDAY
	Aim	
	Procedure	
	Blogging	Students carried out the exercises in the recommended writing practice websites and wrote about their experiences in their blogs. Their reflections were analyzed by the instructor to take the next action related to the course content and they were guided to write better reflections by giving them general feedback through intermediab blog.
W E E K 6	Topic	Concluding sentences Concluding comments
	Aim	Comprehending the function of concluding sentence Familiarizing the students with summarizing skills Practicing sentence writing
	Procedure	Having been informed on concluding sentence and comment, students were shown model concluding sentences on sample paragraphs. Exercises related to rephrasing sentences were carried out and students were asked to write concluding sentences and comments for the given paragraphs. The sentences produced by the students were discussed through small group discussions.
	Blogging	Links of three websites containing information and exercises on concluding sentence were logged in intermediab blog and they were explained to the students. Students were asked to visit these sites, do the exercises and write a reflection on them. To reinforce autonomous learning, <i>self study</i> blog which enables students to choose among a great deal of language materials and exercises was activated as well since students proceeded in other skills. Interactive exercises related to grammar, reading, vocabulary and listening were logged in this blog. Students were informed about them and were asked to choose among them according to their own needs and carry out the exercises and then report on their strengths and weaknesses. In order to persuade students to visit these sites and write reflection on their learning processes, various posts about the significance of reflective learning were published in researcher constructed blogs and they were guided in evaluating themselves.

W E E K 7	Topic	Paragraph structure review
	Aim	Choosing and limiting a topic by writing a strong topic sentence. Identifying support sentences and details used to establish levels of generality in the paragraph. Writing support sentences which back up the controlling idea of the paragraph. Using support details to develop the topic sentence and primary supports into a unified and coherent paragraph.
	Procedure	Parts of a good paragraph were revised on model paragraphs. Students analyzed various paragraphs identifying strong and weak parts and then they were asked to make suggestions on improving the weak parts. They provided topic sentences, supporting and concluding sentences for weakly formed paragraphs.
	Blogging	Students carried out the exercises on concluding sentence and wrote their reflections. New links providing students with extra materials and exercises on paragraph structure were logged on intermediatb blog and the students were explained what to do with these links. They were also given a paragraph which had a weak topic and concluding sentence and lacked supporting details. Students were asked to improve this paragraph and publish it on their blogs.
W E E K 8	Topic	Conjunctions/ sentence connectors
	Aim	Learning to use conjunctions (time/concessive/coordinating...) Learning to express themselves in more complex and effective sentences Improving writing style
	Procedure	Students were informed about conjunctions of reason, result, and time (after, before, until, while, as, when, since, the moment, no sooner...than, hardly...when, as because, since, now that, inasmuch as, due to, because of, so...that, such...that, so, therefore) they were also instructed on conjunctions of concessive contrast direct contrast, and purpose (although, though even though, while, in spite of, despite, whereas, so that, in order that, in order to, so as to).The structures were taught on model sentences. Then various exercises were done to make the students internalize the use of conjunctions.
	Blogging	Students carried out the exercises on paragraph structure and reflected on their performances in their blogs. They also published the improved form of the given paragraph. Correction codes were introduced to the students and they were informed about the reason why use them. Surface level feedback was given to each student's paragraph through correction codes and content related feedback was given by using the comment option of each student's blogs. Students

		<p>gave feedback to their peers as well through comment option. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. They were encouraged to think a solution to their problems in language learning.</p> <p>Links of new websites containing studies on conjunctions were logged in intermediab blog and students were required to visit those websites, do the exercises and reflect on their performances in their blogs.</p>
W E E K 9	Topic	(Writing Process)Steps to writing a good paragraph Prewriting activities
	Aim	Familiarizing the students with the steps of writing process Learning strategies to generate and organize ideas
	Procedure	Various prewriting techniques with examples were introduced to the students. Students were shown how to produce ideas on a given topic and they were guided on their own thinking and organizing process. Related exercises were carried out.
	Blogging	Students published revised version of their paragraphs. They also visited the sites related to the use of conjunctions and reflected on their performances and learning processes in their blogs.....
W E E K 10	Topic	Descriptive paragraph
	Aim	Developing descriptive paragraph writing skills Learning descriptive adjectives
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Students were directed to the websites on descriptive paragraphs. They carried out the exercises on the net and reflected on their performances. They gathered ideas for their own paragraphs.

W E E K 11	Topic	Process paragraph
	Aim	Developing process paragraph writing skills Explaining events in step by step order Practicing language of process paragraph
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Links of websites including process paragraph materials were logged on <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were encouraged to visit the websites to learn more on the process paragraph. Students published the first draft of their descriptive paragraphs. They were required to visit and give feedback to their friends' posts. Their paragraphs were also responded by the instructor. Students were met on the net and they were guided in their revision through blogging. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. They were encouraged to think a solution to their problems in language learning. Students published final version of their descriptive paragraphs and reflected on their learning process.
W E E K 12	Topic	Compare paragraph
	Aim	Developing compare paragraph writing skills Talking about similarities Practicing language of comparison
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Links of websites including compare paragraph materials were logged on <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were encouraged to visit the websites to learn more on the process paragraph. Students published the first draft of their process paragraphs. They were required to visit and give feedback to their friends' posts. Their paragraphs were also responded by the instructor. Students were met on the net and they were guided in their revision through blogging. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog in which the websites were upgraded. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. Students published final version of their compare paragraphs and reflected on their learning process
	Topic	Contrast paragraph

W E E K 13	Aim	Developing compare paragraph writing skills Talking about differences Practicing language of contrast
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Links of websites including contrast paragraph materials were logged on <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were encouraged to visit the websites to learn more on the compare paragraph. Students published the first draft of their compare paragraphs. They were required to visit and give feedback to their friends' posts. Their paragraphs were also responded by the instructor. Students were met on the net and they were guided in their revision through blogging. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog in which the websites were upgraded. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. Students published final version of their compare paragraphs and reflected on their learning process
W E E K 14	Topic	EXAM WEEK
	Aim	
	Procedure	
	Blogging	Students published the first draft of their contrast paragraphs. They were required to visit and give feedback to their friends' posts. Their paragraphs were also responded by the instructor. Students were met on the net and they were guided in their revision through blogging. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog in which the websites were upgraded. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. Students published final version of their contrast paragraphs and reflected on their learning process

W E E K 15	Topic	Cause Paragarph
	Aim	Developing cause paragraph writing skills Talking about an event by giving reasons Practicing language of cause paragraph
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Links of websites including cause paragraph materials were logged on <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were encouraged to visit the websites to learn more on the cause paragraph. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog in which the websites were upgraded. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports.
W E E K 16	Topic	Effect Paragraph
	Aim	Developing effect paragraph writing skills Talking about an event by referring to its results Practicing language of effect paragraph
	Procedure	Topic was introduced to the students and two model paragraphs were analyzed in the class. Exercises provided by the course text were done. A model paragraph was constructed through teacher modeling.
	Blogging	Links of websites including effect paragraph materials were logged on <i>intermediateb</i> blog and students were encouraged to visit the websites to learn more on the compare paragraph. Students published the first draft of their cause paragraphs. They were required to visit and give feedback to their friends' posts. Their paragraphs were also responded by the instructor. Students were met on the net and they were guided in their revision through blogging. Students also reported on their weakness and strengths in terms of language learning after visiting the <i>self study</i> blog in which the websites were upgraded. They justified their choices of language skill, topic and exercise type in their reports. Students published final version of their cause paragraphs and reflected on their learning process

APPENDIX H

List of Websites Used In the Study

<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/fwalters/paraeval1.html>

<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/fwalters/causeconnect.html>

<http://college.hmco.com/cgi->

bin/SaCGI.cgi/ace1app.cgi?FNC=AcePresent_Apresent.html [devenglish_wong_pe_c](#)

hap09_02

[www.paragraphpunch.com:](http://www.paragraphpunch.com)

www.esl.about.com

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/subcon1.htm>

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/coconj1.htm>

http://www2.actden.com/writ_Den/tips/paragrap/compare.htm

<http://www.smic.be/smic5022/idioms3.htm>

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/comp2.htm>

<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/fwalters/compcontEx1a.html>

<http://www.eslcafe.com/quiz/>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/302.htm>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/101.htm>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/209.htm>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/501.htm>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/601.htm>

<http://novatores.com/exercises/701.htm>

<http://esl.about.com/library/quiz/blgrammarquiz.htm>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-quizzes/grammar-quizzes.htm>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-quizzes/pronunciation-quizzes.htm>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-quizzes/general-knowledge-quizzes.htm>

<http://www.englishmedialab.com/intermediatequiz.html>

<http://a4esl.org/a/g3.html>

<http://www.eslpartyland.com/quiz/knee.htm>

<http://www.eslpartyland.com/quiz/kkrest.htm>

<http://www.eslpartyland.com/quiz/have.htm>

<http://amarris.homestead.com/paraphrase.html>

<http://a4esl.org/a/v3.html>

<http://a4esl.org/a/c3.html>

<http://www.manythings.org/vocabulary/games/b/>

<http://www.manythings.org/hmf/>

<http://www.manythings.org/hmj/common75.html>

<http://www.manythings.org/hmj3/>

<http://www.manythings.org/hmj2/frequency.html>

<http://www.cdlponline.org/>

<http://esl.lbcc.cc.ca.us/mmportal.htm>

<http://web.uvic.ca/%7Egluton/awl/index.htm>

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/200/reading/index.htm>

<http://www.english-the-international-language.com/reading/reading4.html>

<http://www.english-the-international-language.com/reading/reading2.html>

http://www.lcanada.org/courses/sample/intermediate/unit2/u2_cont.htm

<http://www.cdlponline.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=stories&topicID=4>

<http://www.manythings.org/e/vocabulary.html>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-quizzes/vocabulary-quizzes.htm>

<http://gocsm.net/sevas/esl/gramcheck/index.html>

<http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/students/grammar/int/intcon.htm>

<http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/students/grammar/int/intcon2.htm>

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/subcon2.htm>

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/conjunctions.htm>

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/con2.htm>

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/becauseetc.htm>

<http://a4esl.org/q/h/vm/conj02.html> <http://a4esl.org/q/h/9901/gc-connectives.html>

<http://www.englishmedialab.com/intermediatequiz.html>

<http://www.englishmedialab.com/vocabulary.html> <http://www.esl-lab.com/short.htm>

<http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~esl-rc/HTML/writing/structure/ex8.html>

http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~esl-rc/HTML/writing/exmenu_development.html

<http://home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3/samppa.txt>

www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/students/Paragraph%20Writing%20Exercises.htm

http://bugs.bio.usyd.edu.au/clearer_writing/module1/paragraph_structure/paragraph_stages/para_stages_intro.html

<http://english-zone.com/writing/stretr-quiz.html>

APPENDIX I

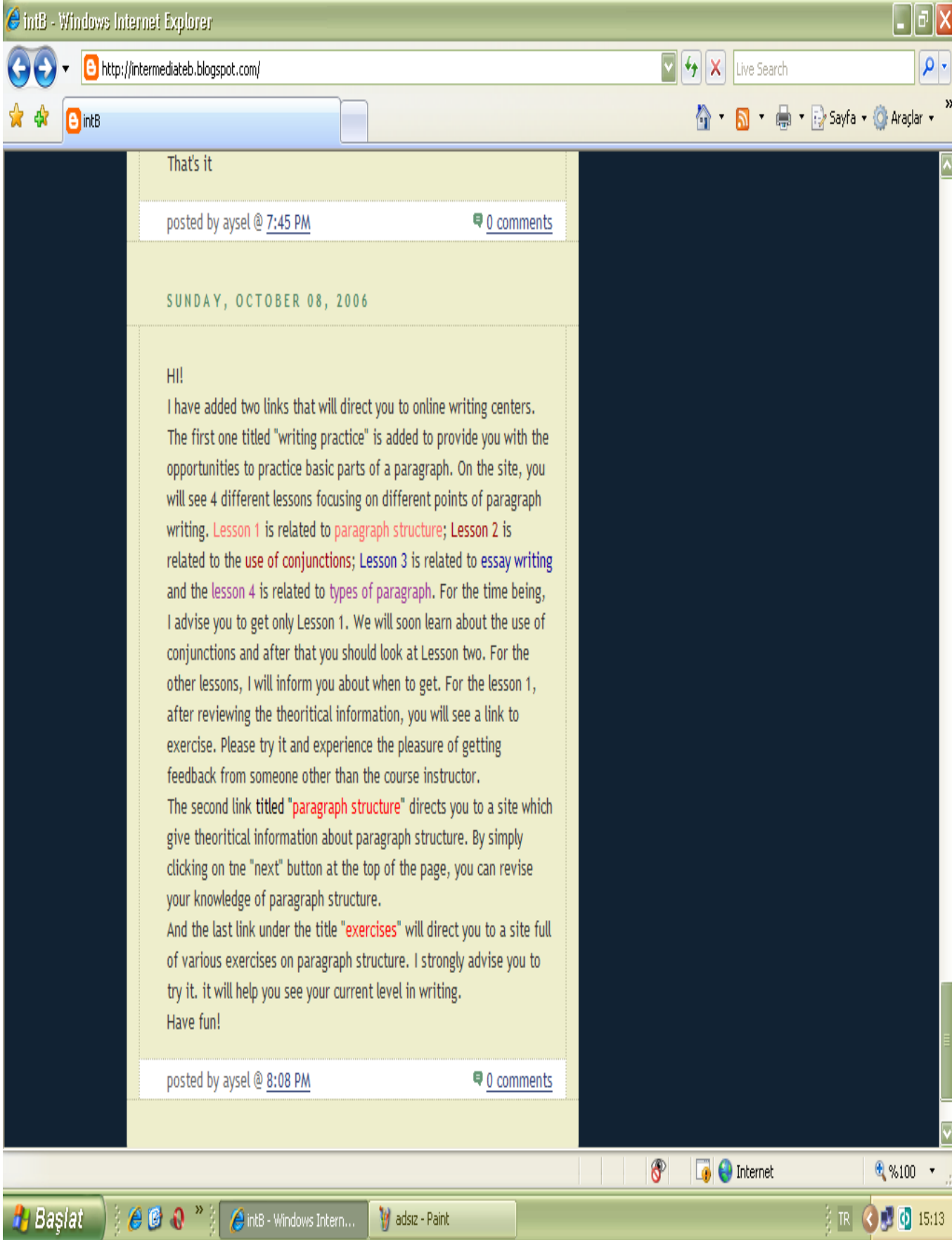
SAMPLE BLOG PAGES

Tutor Blogs

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Blogger blog page. The address bar shows the URL <http://www.assignments-intb.blogspot.com/>. The browser's menu bar includes 'Dosya', 'Düzen', 'Görünüm', 'Sık Kullanılanlar', 'Araçlar', and 'Yardım'. The page title is 'assignments'. A hit counter displays '01072' and 'Hit Counter' with a link to '1 online blogcu OnlineBlogcu.com'. The main content area features a large heading 'ASSIGNMENTS' and a paragraph: 'KARADENİZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES. THIS BLOG HAS BEEN CREATED FOR THE STUDENTS OF INTERMEDIATE B TO HELP THEM SHARE THEIR ASSIGNMENTS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.' Below this, the date 'MONDAY, JANUARY 01, 2007' is shown. The main article title is 'DEADLINE FOR CAUSE AND THE FINAL VERSION OF CONTRAST PARAGRAPH'. The text of the article begins with 'I have read and given feedback to your contrast paragraphs. Thanks all of you for helping me with your comments to your friends' posts. I got very pleased to see your interests in your friends' writings. Now you are supposed to revise your contrast paragraphs according to the feedback given by me and your friends, and **publish the final versions till January 5.** The last paragraph type of the term is "cause paragraph." The

CONTRIBUTORS

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- [EFE AKYUREK](#)
- [YASEMİN HALILOĞLU](#)
- [ÖZKAN CÜNEYT](#)
- [||SEMİH||](#)
- [HANDE](#)



intB - Windows Internet Explorer

http://intermediateb.blogspot.com/

intB

PROCESS PARAGRAPH

I have added a link containing a set of explanations and exercises on process paragraph. It is especially useful for those who have not understood topic sentence well. I advise you to have a look at the website before writing your own exercises. By clicking on the red arrow at the bottom or at the top of the page, you can easily follow the website.

Thanks

posted by aysel @ 3:21 PM 0 comments

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2006

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2006

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

As university students, you yourself are responsible for your own progress. Of course, you will get benefit from the courses in the

- CAUSE-TOPIC SENTENCES
- CAUSE CONJUNCTIONS
- CAUSE CONJ.2
- LANGUAGE OF COMPARISON
- COMPARE IDIOMS
- COMPARE SENTENCES
- PROCESS PARAGRAPH
- PROCESS PARAGRAPH2
- PROCESS PARAGRAPH3
- connectors
- connectors1
- connectors2
- connectors3
- connectors4
- connectors5
- connectors6

Previous Posts

- COMPARISON
- PROCESS PARAGRAPH
- CLEVER STUDENTS OF THE YEAR
- REFLECTIVE LEARNING
- LINKS FOR CONNECTORS
- NEW LINKS
- In order to write your ideas on

Başlat

Blogger: Move to the ... intB - Windows Intern... adsız - Paint

TR

http://selfstudyforntb.blogspot.com/

selfstudy

00288
Hit Counter
1 online blogcu
OnlineBlogcu.com

selfstudy

This blog has been created to guide and help INTERMEDIATE B students in their self studies to learn English

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2006

SOME MORE LINKS FOR SELF STUDY

As you can see in the "links" section of this page, I have added some more links for self study. The procedure is the same: you should choose among the links/skills you feel yourself insufficient, and carry out the exercises. DO NOT FORGET TO SHARE THE RESULTS WITH US. Here is the explanation about the content of the websites you are directed:

READING3 contains a ghost story. While reading, if you encounter an unknown word, you can learn its meaning by double clicking on the word. At the end of the story, you will find comprehension questions. Answer them and tell us the results.

READING2 contains a passage about stress. While reading, if you encounter an unknown word, you can learn its meaning by double clicking on the word. At the end of the story, you will find comprehension questions. Answer them and tell us the results.

READING1 contains two short paragraphs and three different exercises. Simply click on the paragraph you want to read and then carry out the exercises. Tell us the results.

VOCABULARY2 is a site offering vocab quizzes. at the beginning of the page, you will see an explanation. Just scroll down the page to see these expressions: [The Academic Word List](#) [Sublist1](#) [Sublist2](#)

About Me

Name:
aysel
Location:
Turkey

I am an EFL instructor teaching writing to university students and an M.A student studying Applied Linguistics.

[View my complete profile](#)

Links

- [READING3](#)
- [READING2](#)
- [READING1](#)
- [VOCABULARY2](#)
- [GRAMMAR2](#)
- [GRAMMAR](#)
- [VOCABULARY](#)
- [READING&LISTENING](#)

Internet %100

Aydın AKAR - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Dosya Düzen Görünüm Sık Kullanılanlar Araçlar Yardım

Geri Geri Ara Sık Kullanılanlar

Adres <http://aydinakar.blogspot.com/>

Aydın AKAR

Friday, January 05, 2007

Homework_6



Living in big cities is very difficult for people and there are several reasons for this situation. The first reason that makes living in a big city difficult is air pollution. This reason is the most important problem in big cities because they have factories, cars and houses. Factories, cars and houses use chemical substances. And then, these substances go to sky and they react with other chemical substances on the sky, so this situation affect health of people. For example, they don't breathe easily or they make acid rain. Another factor is transportation. In big cities, there are lots of people and they want to go somewhere for something, so they use their cars, buses or other vehicles. Because of this situation, the roads are very crowded and if you want to go

Contributors

- aysel
- Aydın

Links

- Google News
- BlackEagles
- University

Previous Posts

- Homework_6
- Homework_5 (Contrast)
- Homework_5
- Homework_4 (Compare)
- Homework_4
- Homework_3 (Process)
- Homework_3
- Homework_2 (Description)
- Homework_2
- Homework_1

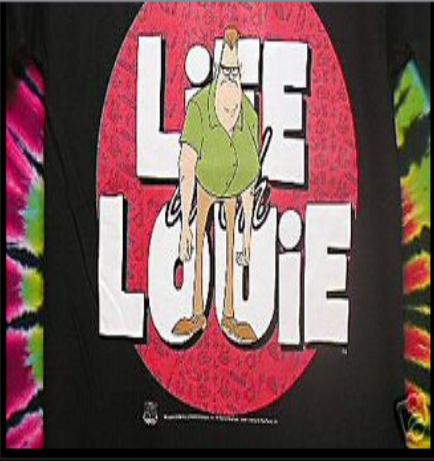
Archives

SAFIYE ERGUN - Windows Internet Explorer

http://safiyerguson.blogspot.com/

Dosya Düzen Görünüm Sık Kullanılanlar Araçlar Yardım

SAFIYE ERGUN



a cartoon character called Andy Anderson. Whenever I watch him I feel as if I was watching my father. They are so similar because of their physical appearance and their personality. First of all they have big bellies and round, cute faces. Secondly they always exaggerate everything. For example in a story they fight against a squirrel and in the last narration of the story the squirrel turns into a polar bear. This can show how they exaggerate something. If they want to tell something to their children they start the word with this sentence: "When I was in your age...". For example "When I was in your age I used to go to school even if there was a tornado." Inside of these, both of them always give people positive energy with their joy and smile. They love their children much more than everything and they live for their children. And the other important thing is that they have big hearts which are full of love. All these features show how they are so similar.

POSTED BY SAFIYE ERGUN AT 8:27 PM 10 COMMENTS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2006

Başlat Microsoft ... conferenc... methodolo... SAFIYE ER... resimler a... büşra ays... TR 16:33

Blogger: SAFIYE ERGUN - Post a Comment - Windows Internet Explorer

https://www2.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=35955343&postID=116672661780393716

Dosya Düzen Görünüm Sık Kullanılanlar Araçlar Yardım

Blogger: SAFIYE ERGUN - Post a Comment

Thanks

2:34 AM

||semih|| said...

what a beautiful topic like that,good organization,good finishing ,classic turkish father aren't they? thanks

5:19 PM

mehmet ergün said...

your daddy said

it is a good topic but I don't know about andy anderson I didnt

read anderson who look like me? your paragraf is excellent

your daddy

1:06 PM

efe akyurek said...

your topic sentence is good again but some parts are not clear enough. i didn't understand what you mean. and your conclusion sentence is clear and good.

Bitki

Internet %100

Başlat

Microsoft ... conferenc... methodolo... Blogger: S... resimler a... bügra ays... TR 16:32

