
EFL Student Writers 'Engagement Strategies in Technology-Mediated Communication

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ABSTRACT

The pivotal role of readers/audience in helping shape students' writing has led to attempts to engage them in their composition. This reader awareness is further enhanced with technology integration of Web 2.0, like blogs, into writing pedagogy. This study aims to investigate the engagement strategies employed by EFL writers in their blogs and how readers respond to the strategies. In this content analysis study, twenty-seven learning English blog entries uploaded by three EFL student bloggers were analyzed using Hyland's (2005) and Myers' (2010) engagement strategies. The findings reveal the bloggers' use of the engagement strategies despite the different extent of their use subject to the type of the blog post, personal background, and writing purposes. The use of such strategies as "Pronoun" and "Image" has drawn a lot of comments from the blog readers, implying a strong sense of readership. It is thus recommended for EFL writing teachers to introduce varieties of engagement strategies within digitally mediated writing environments to their students to enhance reader/writer interactions and help shape students' writing.

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1. Introduction

In the past, students perceived academic writing as a written task accomplished to meet the expectations of the teacher assigning it (Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006). This teacher-oriented perception might then lead them to be ignorant of the expectations of other potential audiences, such as their peers or readers beyond the classroom who might also read their writing (Hafner, 2019; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Liu & Hansen, 2002). Realizing the importance of this potential audience in helping shape students' writing, several writing teachers have attempted to design a shared writing activity where students have their writing read and commented on by their peers or even a wider audience. This shifting focus then leads to a change of view in students' writing from teacher to reader/audience orientation, implying students' awareness on the audience role in helping shape their writing (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Hafner, 2019; Johnson, 2004; Paul & Frigal, 2019). Endeavors have been made by writers to convey this audience awareness in their writing, some of which display engagement strategies (Hyland, 2005) utilized to attract and engage readers in their writings for writer-audience interactions to occur.

This audience-oriented activity is enhanced as Web 2.0 technologies highlighting human interactions mediated by computers that is implemented in writing classrooms (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Blogs despite not designed for pedagogical purposes have been considered to be one of the most popular Web 2.0 technologies in language learning particularly due to their easy-to-use interface (Bloch & Crosby, 2009; Campbell, 2003; Johnson, 2004) and a space provision for reading and writing activities (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Godwin-Jones, 2008). The most appealing benefit is on its use that encourages collaboration and interaction not only with audience within the class but also beyond the classroom (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Hafner, 2019; W. Wu, 2006; Xu, Banerjee, Ramirez, et al., 2019).

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Due to these potential advantages, Wu (2006: 1) highly encouraged blog integration in English language teaching settings which she regarded as “a new promising vehicle of extreme value for TEFL”.

Ample studies have investigated the integration of blogs into EFL writing instruction and their role in facilitating students’ writing development. Fellner and Apple (2006), for instance, examined low proficiency EFL students’ attempts to improve their lexical complexity and writing fluency mediated by blogs, while Ducate and Lomicka (2008) focused on the process foreign language learners went through during blog reading prior to writing their own blogs, and their attitudes toward blogging in foreign language instruction. More recent studies involve the role of carefully designed blog-mediated instruction in facilitating students’ collaboration and critical thinking skills (Angelaina & Jimoyiannis, 2012), in the extent student writers revised their writing within peer review activity (Pham & Usaha, 2016), and in the ways students utilized, summarized, communicated sources within research-based blog writing assignment, which could be treated as a complementary of research essay assignment (Hansen, 2016). Hence, positive perceptions and attitudes from the in-service and pre-service teachers as well as students on the integration are obtained (Gönen, 2019; Huang, 2016; Lamb & Arisandy, 2020; Xu, Banerjee, Ramirez, et al., 2019).

Those studies have shed light on the benefits of incorporating blogs into second language writing instruction. However, despite their positive findings, the studies seem to undermine peer response activity in helping shape students’ writing, and thus ignoring blogs’ potential use as a computer-mediated peer review (CMPR) tool in gaining teacher, peer, and even larger audiences (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Johnson, 2004; Paul & Friginal, 2019; Pham & Usaha, 2016). Furthermore, most of the studies in this area focused on studying the effectiveness of blogs in EFL students’ learning, and few of which qualitatively investigate the writers’ attempts to sense their awareness of readers and to what extent these attract readers to comment on the blogs. This is important, since one of the reasons for bloggers to post their writing on a blog is to garner readers’ responses toward the ideas in the blog (Penrod, 2007).

Among the few qualitative studies on blogs, Bloch and Crosby (2009) conducted an in-depth analysis exploring rhetorical strategies employed by a second language learner while writing blogs as a way to improve his writing. The findings were useful to identify the strengths and weaknesses of his writing and the sort of strategies that might be beneficial when applied to second language writing instruction. Meanwhile, Hansen (2016) compared the potential benefits of research essay and blog writing tasks in promoting students’ research and writing performance. The study revealed the usefulness of the former in shaping students’ ability to compare and synthesize ideas using academic references while the latter benefits students from communicating and summarizing (online) sources.

With regard to blog-mediated peer response activity, Wu’s (2006) study on the effect of peer and teacher feedback on the revisions produced by EFL writers of low to intermediate level within the medium of blogs revealed the ineffectiveness of peer feedback in providing meaningful and constructive feedback despite the peer review training they received prior to the peer review activity. They argued that this poor revision as well as peer feedback were related to the students’ low English proficiency. The students’ poor quality comments on their peer’s writing are also identified in Pham and Usaha’s (2016) findings. The great quantity of the global-area comments produced by the students were not immediately followed by the same number of revisions in the areas. Huang (2016) blamed it on the blog interface that inhibited students from detecting their peers’ writing errors, which might explain the type and quantity of feedback produced. However, blogs are found to more fruitful for such types of feedback as idea exchange, meaning negotiation, and responses to questions. The findings may carry implications for teachers and/or researchers to consider the types of writing tasks effectively mediated by blogs and the quality and quantity of students’ comments as well as their revisions during blog-mediated peer review activities.

These aforementioned studies, however, lack investigation on how blog writers attempt to involve audiences, presuming they exist and read the blogs. Acknowledging this information is essential in identifying whether blog writers take audience into account while writing their blogs, which may then influence the extent to which readers feel connected with the blogs and thus eventually respond to them (Myers, 2010; Paul & Friginal, 2019; Penrod, 2007).

To display this audience awareness as well as attract audience to read their writing, student

writers may employ particular engagement strategies. Hyland (2005) claimed the values of these not only to acknowledge readers' needs of their expectations, but also to position them in the discourse through acknowledging their uncertainties and guiding them to interpretations. He further proposed five engagement strategies that writers could use to involve readers into their writing: *Reader Pronouns*, *Personal Asides*, *Appeals to Shared Knowledge*, *Directives*, and *Questions*.

Second singular, plural, and possessive pronouns, such as *you*, *we*, *us*, *your*, *our*, are the most common pronouns that writers use as a signal of the readers' presence and their attempt to involve the readers into their writing. The use of these pronouns is particularly useful to alert readers of their shared interest with the writers and guide readers through an argument and towards an intended interpretation. In addition to *Reader Pronouns*, *Personal Asides* may also benefit writers in addressing readers directly, by interrupting an argument to embed a personal comment into the argument on a previously expressed statement. In this context, the comments lean more toward the writer-reader relationship than the additional information of the argument. *Appeals to Shared Knowledge* strategy, furthermore, is employed to reveal the shared knowledge between the writers and readers. In this context, writers are assumed to have acknowledged the view they share with their readers, thus helping the writers to shape the role of the readers within this shared view. Some of the lexical markers used for this purpose are *of course*, *obviously*, *distinctly*. Next, the use of *Directives* and *Questions* shows the writers' presumption on the presence of readers, and expectation to gain responses. Although some of these are merely rhetorical in most written texts and thus do not require answers or responses, these strategies are particularly important in blogs, since readers can directly respond to the directives and/or questions in the comment section (Myers, 2010). In other words, blog writers often make literal questions and directives to elicit feedback from readers.

In addition to Hyland's engagement strategies, Myers (2010) adds more strategies, particularly those that are commonly found in blogs, such as *Address and Audience Reference*, *Conversational Interaction*, and *Politeness*. Myers further asserts *Address and Audience Reference* as explicit reference of the intended audience in the text to signal the audience for whom it is intended. Another strategy is to enact *Conversational Interaction* in the blog. In this context, the blogger creates expressions that are commonly used in oral conversation as a way to interact with the readers, although the expressions may be merely rhetorical. *Politeness*, furthermore, may be used as an engagement strategy to soften any threats that may hurt the readers' feelings, and thus maintain harmony between writers and readers. In this context, hedging is one of the commonly used markers to express a polite request. Next is *Implicature*, which refers to the flouting of any or all of the four maxims: *quantity*, *quality*, *relation*, and *manner*. Although it is more commonly used in speaking, implicature can also be found in blogs (Myers, 2010). This flouting happens when speakers/writers do not observe a maxim without intending to mislead or deceive (Paltridge, 2012). Last is the use of *Image* and/or *Link* to enhance readers' comprehension of the topic under discussion in the blog. Images are added to provide a possibly clearer illustration than written description, while links are useful to clarify a particular topic that may not be explained in detail in the blog due to its limited space. Links also represent "conversation, affiliation, or readership, implying a form of implicit social structure" (Marlow, 2006: 1). This means that by creating links, particularly to a different blog, a blogger is attempting to interact with the blog owner, which eventually creates a new emerging community between these bloggers. These strategies employed by blog writers to foster engagement with their readers through the texts they write is illustrated in Figure 1.

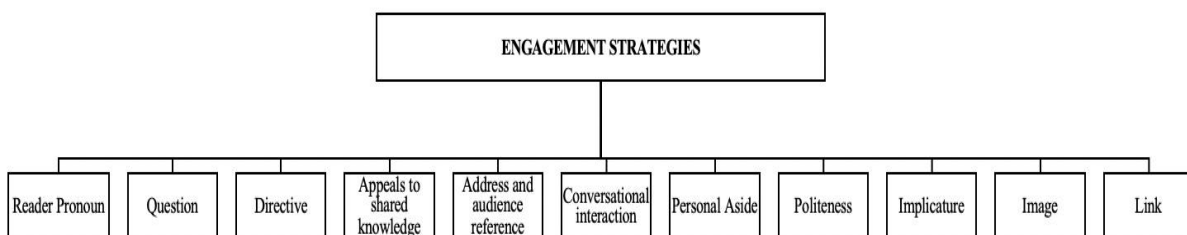


Figure 1. Writer's engagement strategies (adapted from Hyland (2005) and Myers (2010))

Hence, this study attempts to fill in the gap of the previous research in this area by investigating the engagement strategies employed by EFL student writers in their blogs and how the audience responds toward the strategies. To facilitate this study, a content analysis of the ready-to-use students' blogs and readers' comments was conducted to gain a more natural finding on the strategies that have been employed so far in an attempt to draw readers' comments.

2. Methods

To investigate the nature of the student writer-reader interactions, a well-established authentic blog was chosen. In this context, *BBC Learning English Blog* represents an exceptionally well structured educational blog sharing similar features to a writing class blog incorporated in language classes. The blog comprises *Student Blog* and *Teacher Blog* sections. The former is a blog space or platform provided for "students" and the BBC Learning English bloggers to post their writing. These students are selected every month based on their emails sent to the BBC staff. The latter is for the "teacher" who is regularly selected to help these learners with their English. *Teacher Blog* provides space for this selected teacher to write his/her own blog and provide feedback on the students' language problems. Registered BBC readers whose comments must follow the BBC House Rules may then comment on either or both of these blogs. These rules are the netiquette that BBC bloggers must follow prior to posting onto the *BBC Learning English Blog*, to avoid any spam or unethical posting.

This study employed a content analysis to identify the engagement strategies employed by the EFL writers and readers' responses toward the strategies by analyzing the writers' blog entries posted in *BBC Learning English Blog*. This type of analysis was used as a tool to generate a thick contextualized description of the nature of language produced in authentic spoken or written interaction (Lazaraton, 2009).

The primary data for this study comprised 27 blog entries produced by three EFL student blog writers, *Emir* (pseudonym), *Nat* (pseudonym), and *Milly* (pseudonym), each of whom became the blogger of the month in three different consecutive months. *Emir* posted 10 blog entries, while *Nat* and *Milly* provided 5 and 12 entries each, respectively. Among the 27 entries, a total of 402 readers' comments obtained from each of these blogs, which were treated as primary data, were analyzed.

To identify the writers' engagement strategies employed in their blog, the data were classified and coded based on the engagement strategy scheme, which was an adaptation of Hyland's (2005) and Myers' (2010) engagement strategies (see Figure 1). For example, the use of *you* in '*You should go to Bali*' is coded as *Reader Pronoun (PRON)*.

In addition to these schemes, the blog entries were categorized based on the student bloggers and their blog posts. In the first category, the analysis was classified based on each of the three student bloggers in this study while the second data were analyzed according to the theme categories of the blog posts. These schemes and categories, however, were not fixed. It was open to new coding and/or category emerging from the data during the analysis.

After collecting and setting the coding schemes and categories for the data, the data were ready for analyses. The analyses were classified based on the categories of the data: the writers' engagement strategies and the readers' responses, respectively. After classifying the blogs and the strategies employed based on the categories, the frequencies and percentages of each category were quantified to determine the extent to which the writers employed any of the strategies in their blog. The same pattern of analysis was further used to classify the comments the audience made in response to the writers' strategies. In this stage, each strategy the writer employed in his blog was matched with the comments this writer received in his blog.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The elaboration of the findings starts with a sub section on the description of the profile of the student bloggers whose blogs were under investigation in this study. The next two sub sections deal

with answering the two research questions, each of which is arranged based on the order of the questions. Examples of the student bloggers' remarks or expressions used in their blogs in relation to the research questions are also displayed in each sub section.

3.1.1 The Profiles of EFL Student Bloggers

The blogs under investigation belong to three student bloggers: *Emir*, *Nat*, and *Milly*. From the analysis of the entries, it was found that the topics could be classified into four main categories: *Introduction*, *Culture*, *Homework*, and *General* topics. *Introduction* refers to posts whose content is on brief information about the bloggers and their life. Reasons for joining *BBC Learning English Blog* were also displayed here. *Culture* posts describe several cultural events commonly held particularly in the bloggers' country. As the name implies, *Homework* contains the bloggers' responses toward English homework/assignment given by the assigned teacher. Meanwhile, posts whose contents cannot be classified into any of the previous three categories belong to *General*. Furthermore, the number of reader comments they received in each category is shown to identify whether the quantity of the comments could be traced back from the engagement strategies employed. All the comments in this context were retrieved from the comment section in each blog post. Thus, they consisted of not only the readers' comments, but also the student blogger's responses on the readers' comments and some comments removed by the BBC administrator but were still listed in the comment section.

Emir from Spain

Emir from Pamplona, Spain and an online security officer was elected as a blogger of the month due to his email to BBC. In his introductory blog, he addressed the importance of English, and his interests in blogging seemed to have influenced his decision to register as a BBC EFL Student blogger.

Emir received a fairly large number of comments on all of his blog topics. Details and number of comments he received are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. *Emir's* blog entries and reader comments.

No	BLOG ENTRY		Total
	Entry Category	Entry Number and Title	Comment
1	Introductory	1) Improving English with Internet: Int E1(1)	67
	Total	1 entry	67
2	Culture	2) First of January, second of February, third of March....: Cul E1(2)	7
		3) The Month of the JAVIERADA and some Spain secrets: Cul E2(3)	25
		7) Food and famous Spanish chefs: Cul E3(7)	12
		10) Recipe: the most typical dish in Spain: Cul E4(10)	10
	Total	4 entries	54
3	General	4) How do you use Internet? Gen E1(4)	22
		8) Public speaking: Gen E2(8)	17
	Total	2 entries	39
4	Homework	5) Emir's homework task 1: Hw E1(5)	3
		6) Emir's homework task 2: Hw E2(6)	6
		7) Emir's homework task 3: Hw E3(7)	9
	Total	3 entries	18
	Total Entry	10 entries	178

From Table 1, it is evident that the entries classified as *Introductory* post was the most commented by the readers. These comments amounted to more than the total number of comments received from his entries on *Culture*, *General*, and *Homework* topics, respectively. *Emir* posted 10 blog entries altogether with *Culture* as his preferred blog topic and gained a total of 178 comments from his blog readers.

Nat from Thailand

Nat or *Lily* as she preferred to be called, was the next blogger of the month. She was working as a property consultant in a British company. From her unique dialogue with 'her mind' (or "A") as displayed in her *Introductory* entry, *Nat* enclosed her reason for joining the BBC blog. She claimed that the good reputation of the BBC's English services and instruction would help improve her English. Table 2 illustrates the entries *Nat* posted in her blog and the number of comments she received.

Table 2. *Nat's* blog entries and reader comments

No	BLOG ENTRY		Total
	Entry Category	Entry Number and Title	Comment
1	Introductory	1) Happy Easter: Int N1(1)	33
	Total	1 entry	33
2	Culture	3) Happy Songkran Day: Cul N1(3)	7
	Total	1 entry	7
3	General	2) Happy After Graduated and Happy Homework: Gen N1(2)	11
		4) At the Raining day: Gen N2(4)	20
		5) Happy Pictures: Gen N3(5)	8
	Total	3 entries	39
4	Homework		
	Total	0 entry	0
	Total Entry	5 entries	79

Table 2 contains the data on *Nat's* entries and the number of comments obtained in her blog. Her second entry "Happy After Graduated and Happy Homework" was categorized as a *General* post due to its dominant content on a general topic than homework content. The *General* topic dominated most of her entries, which might be related to her way of treating the blog as a personal journal rather than a shared-information medium. Furthermore, as in *Emir's* blog, *Nat's* *Introductory* blog was the most commented. Quite surprisingly, she contributed only half the number of entries compared to *Emir's*, which might explain the low number of comments received from her readers.

Milly from Mexico

Milly was selected as the blogger of the month after *Nat*. As she worked in an international company, she was expected to be fluent in English. Thus, she joined a twice-a-week English class in her office and was introduced to *BBC Learning English Blog* by her English teacher. The opportunity that the blog might help improve her English encouraged her to be a BBC blogger.

Compared to the other two bloggers, *Milly* posted the greatest number of entries in her blog. The list of her entries and the number of comments received is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Milly's* blog entries and reader comments.

No	BLOG ENTRY		Total
	Entry Category	Entry Number and Title	Comment
1	Introductory	1) From Mexico to everyone: Int M1(1)	17
	Total	1 entry	17
2	Culture	3) Break away from the City: Cul M1(3)	20
		5) Happy Mother's day!!: Cul M2(5)	21
		7) XOCHIMILCO- Trajineras- Mariachis: Cul M3(7)	12
		9) Food from Mexico: Cul M4(9)	4
		10) Sea and sun: Cul M5(10)	13
	Total	5 entries	70
3	General	2) THANKS FOR THE COMMENTS: Gen M1(2)	16
		6) Answering you're questions: Gen M2(6)	13
	Total	2 entries	29
4	Homework	4) My first homework: Hw M1(4)	4
		8) Happy teacher's day!! and 2nd Homework: Hw M2(8)	21
		11) 3rd Homework: Hw M3(11)	3
		12) Good bye everybody!!: Hw M4(12)	5
	Total	4 entries	33
	Total Entry	12 entries	149

Table 3 displays that *Milly* was an active blogger as she posted 12 entries within the month and wrote different types of blog topics. Some intriguing findings, however, emerge in this table. One example is found in the *Homework* post. While this post category is known for its few reader comments, this was not the case in *Milly's* second Homework entry "Happy teacher's day!! and 2nd Homework" which received 21 comments. This combined entry was categorized as *Homework*, instead of *Culture*, due to its homework-dominated content. In this entry, *Milly* combined very brief information regarding the teacher's day event and descriptions of her homework. This brief cultural content, however, might have attracted her readers to comment on this entry.

In summary, the three student bloggers were all EFL learners wanting to learn English and

improve their writing through the BBC blog. The different cultural backgrounds and interests of the student bloggers may have a role in the types of entries they posted in their blogs. Additionally, the choice of topics for their blogs may have influenced the number of comments provided by their blog readers. The *Introductory* and *Culture* posts, for instance, seemed to have attracted most readers' comments. Readers might be drawn to *Introductory* posts due to an interest in getting to know a new student blogger. The *Culture* post might also be a preferred topic for readers who were keen to learn about the culture of the blogger, particularly since the bloggers came from different cultures worldwide. Furthermore, the more entries a student blogger provides seemed to influence the number of comments received. However, an exception applied to *Emir's* entries (10 entries) whose total reader comments outnumbered those for *Milly's* blogs, which gained the largest number of posted entries (12). These inconsistencies, then, could support the uniqueness of blogs, which social and linguistic researchers commonly claim (see Giltrow & Stein, 2009; Penrod, 2007).

3.1.2 Engagement strategies in writers' blogs

The three student bloggers utilized several engagement strategies to involve readers into their writing. The coding scheme consisted of eleven engagement strategies writers employed in their writing: *Reader Pronoun, Question, Directive, Address and Audience Reference, Appeals to Shared Knowledge, Conversational Interaction, Personal Aside, Politeness, Implicature, Image, and Link*. In this section, the strategies employed are illustrated according to the bloggers who used them, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of engagement strategies among student bloggers

	PRON	SRD. KNW	DIREC	IMG	CONV. INT	IMPLC	PERS. ASID	POLIT	QUES	ADDR	LINK
EMIR	7.4%	6.7%	4.4%	4.6%	2.4%	2.2%	2.6%	2.6%	3.0%	1.4%	3.8%
NAT	8.0%	4.4%	3.8%	1.6%	2.8%	3.1%	2.3%	1.0%	1.1%	1.3%	0.1%
MILLY	8.2%	5.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.8%	1.2%	1.9%	2.8%	0.3%	1.6%	

<i>Key terms:</i>		
PRONS	: Reader Pronoun	SRD.KNW : Appeal to Shared Knowledge
IMG	: Image	CONV INT : Conversational Interaction
POLIT	: Politeness	PERS.ASID : Personal Aside
QUES	: Question and Responses to question	DIREC : Directive and Suggestion
		IMPLC : Implicature
		ADDR : Address
		LINK : Link

Table 4 displays the distribution of engagement strategies used by the three BBC student bloggers. It could be revealed that the strategies were employed to a similar extent by *Emir, Nat,* and *Milly,* particularly on the use of *Pronoun, Conversational Interaction, Personal Aside,* and *Address* strategies. The most frequently used strategy employed by the three bloggers was *Pronoun* particularly the second singular or plural pronoun “*you.*” The most interesting figure, however, is found in *Link*. Whereas *Emir* employed quite a number of links, *Nat* and *Milly* did not make the best use of this strategy. These findings show how each student blogger employed different types of strategies to engage readers in his/her writing.

Excerpt 1 provides a good sample of how the strategies were used in a student's blog.

“Emat, you have to try writing it's a good experience, and you're going to learn more..... Jaja I'm 100% Mexican girl. Well, here my name it's not common and here the diminutive of Maria it's Mary.”
(retrieved from Milly's blog Gen M1(2): “THANKS FOR THE COMMENTS”)

This excerpt presents the use of *Pronoun, Conversational Interaction,* and *Address* strategies as aids to help *Milly* engage with her readers. First, she used *Personal Address, Emat* and *Jaja,* to refer to her particular audiences. Thus, the pronoun *you* in this context was more attributed to *Emat* rather than to her readers in general. In addition to functioning as a stance marker, the interjection *well* belongs to *Conversational Interaction,* which benefits a blog writer in conveying a shift in tone, thus creating a friendlier interaction as commonly used in spoken conversation.

Other strategies were also found in the students' blogs. Excerpt 2 and excerpt 3 provide some examples of the use of *Directive* and *Implicature* in *Emir* and *Nat's* blogs.

“My advice to you before to read this post is the same that when you go to the supermarket. **Eat a healthy snack or meal before you go to the supermarket read this post.**”
 (retrieved from Emir’s blog Cul E3(7): “Food and famous Spanish chefs”)

“**Do use clean water only, I think you know the reason.**”
 (retrieved from Nat’s blog Cul N1(3): “Happy Songkran Day”)

The two excerpts reveal how *Directive* and *Implicature* strategies were used in Emir’s and Nat’s blogs, respectively. The former conveys the writer’s requests to the reader to do something. *Eat a healthy snack* and *Do use clean water only* reveal Emir’s and Nat’s requests to their readers to do things as suggested. In the latter, the expression used reveals the flouting of maxims found in blogs (Myers, 2010). Thus, the crossed out expression “the supermarket” and *I think you know the reason* clearly show how maxim of manner and maxim of quantity, respectively, were flouted in these students’ blogs. The flouted maxim in this context might reflect the readers’ thought of the event under discussion.

Beside classifying the strategies based on each blogger who used them, these strategies were grouped by referring to the type of blog post. The engagement strategies were categorized based on their most dominant topics, which is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of engagement strategies based on blog post categories

	PRON	SRD. KNW	DIREC	IMG	CONV. INT	IMPLC	PERS. ASID	POLIT	QUES	ADDR	LINK
Introduction	3.0%	2.8%	0.6%	0.4%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	0.9%	1.2%	0.9%	0.2%
Culture	11.2%	7.2%	7.4%	6.1%	2.0%	1.8%	4.6%	1.7%	1.1%	1.1%	1.9%
Homework	1.6%	3.2%	0.5%		1.0%	1.70%		1.7%	0.4%	1.0%	0.5%
General	7.6%	4.0%	1.7%	2.1%	3.0%	2.1%	2.1%	1.1%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%

Table 5 presents the distribution of engagement strategies employed by the student bloggers according to the topic categories of their blog posts. All the engagement strategies were practically employed to a fairly similar extent across different blog posts. *Pronoun* is the strategy used most across all the posts, particularly in *Culture* posts. In addition to *Pronoun*, most of the strategies, such as *Appeal to Shared Knowledge*, *Directive*, *Personal Aside*, and *Image*, were dominantly used in *Culture* post. The *Appeal to Shared Knowledge* strategy represents the bloggers’ use of a particular term without any further information to clarify it. The bloggers may presume the readers’ acknowledgement of this term from its use and definition in a previous blog entry. One of Milly’s *Culture* posts contains a good example of the use of this strategy as in Excerpt 4.

“In the way you can find food like **quesadillas** and music our typical mariachis.”
 (retrieved from Milly’s blog Cul M3(7): “XOCHIMILCO- Trajineras- mariachis”)

Excerpt 4 shows the use of a technical term that does not contain any further information to clarify its meaning due to the shared knowledge between Milly and her readers. Readers who did not follow Milly’s blog may have been confused by the technical term *quesadillas*. The same case, however, may not apply to readers of Milly’s previous post, since she had introduced the term earlier in her old post (see Excerpt 5).

“Perhaps not many know what a **quesadilla** is; it’s a typical meal because the main ingredient is corn. With the corn we make tortillas and this is the base of **quesadillas**.”
 (retrieved from Milly’s blog Cul M1(3): “Break away from the city”)

Those reading this old post of Milly’s benefited from understanding the term *quesadilla* since the post clearly clarifies its meaning. This *Shared Knowledge* strategy was also commonly used in *Introductory* posts. Excerpt 6, Excerpt 7, and Excerpt 8 are samples of the use of *Shared Knowledge* strategy in *Introductory* entries posted by Emir, Nat, and Milly, respectively.

“Two months after I sended my request to become **blogger for a month**, I receive an e-mail from **Learning English** and some names I had seen in different english resources materials from **BBC**.”

(retrieved from Emir's blog Int E1(1): "Improving English with Internet")

"Thank you very much for choosing me to be **blogger** here. As well as thank you to **Emir** who is a brother-blogger. The reason is **he came before me**, so I can call him brother:)"

(retrieved from Nat's blog Int N1(1): "Happy Easter")

"After a few weeks, I don't know exactly when I received a mail for **Nuala**, this notice made me feel surprised but at the same time exciting, because she told me that no one had ever written from Mexico. **Nuala** asked me for a response if I want to be the **May blogger**."

(retrieved from Milly's blog Int M1(1): "From Mexico to everyone")

Such terms as *blogger for a month*, *Learning English (blog)*, *Emir*, *Nuala*, *May blogger*, were some of the common terms used in *BBC Learning English Blog*. Therefore, the student bloggers might have found it unnecessary to define these particular terms due to their shared knowledge with their readers. This shared knowledge represents the bond between the student writers and readers as members of *BBC Learning English Blog* community.

These findings have explored the various use of engagement strategies among the three bloggers in different blog posts. It was revealed that the majority of the engagement strategies had been used to various degrees depending on some factors as writer's personal background, type of posting they wrote, and writing purposes. The fairly distributed use of the engagement strategies also indicates the student bloggers' sense of audience reflected in their blogs.

The elaboration of findings in these two sub sections has been viewed from the writer's perspective. The following section exposes the findings from the reader's point of view, which is to identify the effect these strategies might have on the blog readers.

3.1.3 Readers' responses toward the bloggers' engagement strategies

The application of engagement strategies by blog writers in their text implies their awareness of readers who may visit, read and/or comment on the blog. Readers' sense of these strategies may eventually influence their decision to comment on the blog and the way they respond to the strategies in their comment. Table 6 presents the total comments each of the bloggers received across types of postings. In addition to the readers' comments on the topic, the numbers in this chart also cover readers' comments irrelevant to the topic of the blog, removed comments, and comments provided by the blogger in respond to the readers' comments.

Table 6. The number of comments the student bloggers received in each post

	Introduction (3 posts)	Culture (10 posts)	General (7 posts)	Homework (7 posts)	Total
EMIR	67	54	39	18	178
NAT	33	7	39	0	79
MILLY	17	70	29	33	149

Table 6 summarizes the data from Table 1, 2, and 3, illustrating the total number of comments each blogger received according to different blog posts. The number of the comments was counted according to the total of its occurrence in each entry of different blog posts: *Culture*, *Introductory*, *General*, and *Homework*. The chart clearly exposes the highest number of comments found in the total of ten *Culture* entries posted by the three bloggers. However, the most commented entries belonged to *Milly's Culture* entry (70 comments) and *Emir's Introductory* entry (67 comments). The use of several strategies in the latter, such as *Questions* and *Image*, has attracted plentiful readers to comment on this blog entry.

Emir's multiple questions that sought his readers' opinions regarding the types of topics he was supposed to write for his next blogs were enthusiastically responded to by his readers. Excerpt 9 and Excerpt 10 reveal readers' responses toward *Emir's* questions.

Emat wrote:

"Hi, Emir! Congratulations! And, with your permission I'd give my vote to theme to talk about yours favourite namely **English films**. Do you look any one? For example, my favourite from of lasts what I'm looked is "little voice" with Jane Horrocks. I think she is the greatest actress.

Thanks in advance for your to-be-posts. We will wait them very keenly.
With my best wishes, Emat."

Narendra wrote:

"Hi Emir,

I am from India. I am interested in your blog as I am also working as IT administrator from last 4 years.

I am expecting some posts from you regarding Internet security etc....

I am always proud to be a IT admin.

Your dog really cute looking.

Thanks

Narendra"

(retrieved from excerpts in the comment section of Emir's blog Int E1(1): "Improving English with Internet")

The excerpts represent readers' enthusiasms toward *Emir's* offer for his readers to choose any topic of their interest for him to write about in his blog. *Emat* and *Narendra* are two of his readers who positively responded to his questions by offering such topics as English film and Internet security. As stated in *Narendra's* comment, he also commented on *Emir's* dog portrayed on the image, which is another way of engaging with readers.

Emir was apparently aware of the power of image in attracting his readers to comment. One of the images he uploaded in his *Culture* entry illustrates a group of cyclists standing together while facing the camera. Prior to introducing this image to his readers, he asked them to guess whether they were able to identify him in this image.

The combination of these strategies (*Image* and *Question*) has created great effect on his readers' enthusiasm as they were 'competing' with each other to correctly guess which one *Emir* was, as shown in Excerpt 11.

Kirsti wrote:

You are the third one from the left. You are keeping your left hand on the cycle handle bars and in your right hand you keep a can."

(retrieved from an excerpt in the comment section of Emir's blog Cul E2(3): "The month of the JAVIERADA and some Spain secrets")

All these findings demonstrate the positive responses the readers gave to the blog writers' engagement strategies across topics. Several strategies, such as *Pronoun* and *Image*, have drawn a great number of readers to post their comments on the blog. The blogger-reader reciprocal interactions also underscore the tightly-knit and emotional bond between and among BBC blog community members.

The positive and constructive blog responses could be attributed from the strong bond between the writer bloggers and the audience, yet it does not mean that the blogs are free from negative remarks. This is when BBC Administrators were involved by acting as a moderator as well as a filter sorting out any inappropriate blogs, comments, images, links and owned a right to remove any of them from the blog. Most of the negative comments identified in the blog sample had been removed due to the violation of the BBC House Rules, as illustrated in Excerpt 12. Since the comment had been removed prior to analysis, it is unclear whether the removal was due to the use of any particular engagement strategy employed by the writer.

Phyllis wrote:

This comment was removed because the moderators found it broke the House Rules

(retrieved from an excerpt in the comment section of Emir's blog Int E1(1): "Improving English with Internet")

Although the administrators had done their job at removing unsatisfactory comments, the blogs still could not escape a harsh comment as found in Milly's blog in Excerpt 13.

Mario wrote:

"I don't like your blog. I want to end **May**"

(retrieved from Milly's blog HW M2(8): "Happy teacher's day!! and 2nd Homework")

To loyal BBC audience and bloggers, it has been obvious that the use of 'May' in Mario's refers to the month when Milly became the blogger of the month, indicating his use of *Appeals to Shared*

Knowledge strategy, so no further explanation was needed. Mario, who is also a Mexican like Milly, further addressed his disinterest due to the dominant topics of Milly's blog which continuously exposed the positive sides of Mexico, and thus did not represent the real phenomena in Mexico. Interestingly, this harsh comment was immediately countered by other peers, rather than Milly's herself, to support her blog, as found in Excerpt 14.

Emat wrote:

"Hi dear Mario,

I respect to your opinion, it's okay. Of course, I can't know what kind of actually themes has Mexico, but I know exactly that the Mexican girl Milly has only one actually theme in this Blog: to improve a little bit of her knowledge in English language. And the themes could be chosen freely: for example, our friend Nat from Bangkok who was right before Milly, so she completely in during of the all month told only about mice...no, not about mice, if to be exact about the mouse, about the one mouse separately given and all of us (including our esteemed Teachers) passionately picked up this theme, if you remember. Just imagine! But, Mario, if to be seriously, if you need some globally info about Mexico you can find in internet lots of much more authoritative sources then from Milly. Good day, friend."

(retrieved from Milly's blog HW M2(8): "Happy teacher's day!! and 2nd Homework")

Emat's excerpt reveals his loyalty as a BBC blogger as revealed from his acknowledgement on the blogger of the month before Milly. His attempt to defend Milly also illustrates how tight the writer-audience bond was within the BBC community. This type of BBC bloggers had succeeded in creating and maintaining the harmonious and positive relationship within the community as well as countering any negative comments by supporting each other, as the case of Milly depicted, or reporting any netiquette violation to the administrators.

3.2 Discussion

That the use of blogs encourages interactions between and among blog members has been obvious (Angelaina & Jimoyiannis, 2012; Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Johnson, 2004; Paul & Friginal, 2019), and this is the point where the community is shaped and strengthened. In the BBC blog, the interactions involving its members have shaped the BBC Learning English Blog community. By allowing comments on the students' blogs as well as the student bloggers' responses toward the readers' comments, the members sensed strong connection between them, realizing that they could interact and share ideas and/or opinions ethically with each other regardless time and space. This tightly knit connection was partly influenced by the members' shared purposes and interests in joining the BBC blog. These members' endeavors to maintain a harmonious relationship within the BBC community was presumably related to their shared purposes and interests in joining this community, that is, to learn English enjoyably, gain more knowledge, and enhance their networking with other EFL learners in this BBC blogosphere. This is in line with one of the aims of this BBC blog, that is to "build a vibrant and focused community" (Chapman & Scott, 2008: 3).

Moreover, as far as the blog characteristics are concerned, the difficulty in classifying the students' blog entries into particular categories is an indication of the complex genre of blogs. The difficulty may be related to the characteristics of blogs that blend several written genres to produce content. Hence, it could be argued that a blog represents "a new genre of writing" (Penrod, 2007: 36). However, Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, et al. (2004: 2) asserted that this "hybrid genre" does not refer to a new form of genre, since it comprises several already-available genres, online and off-line, and thus is neither unique nor reproduced. However, apart from this semantic issue, they all agree on the characteristic of a blog genre, that is, one that mixes several online and off-line genres to create this online written form text.

The friendly and non-threatening learning environment in the BBC blogosphere apparently has attracted EFL learners because its Internet interface allowed them to learn English at their own pace regardless of time and space. This is what seemed to motivate the three EFL learners: *Emir*, *Nat*, and *Milly*, to participate as BBC Student Bloggers. Despite their awareness of the importance of English for their occupational purposes, their strong intrinsic desire to learn English seemed to have occupied them more, particularly since there was no external force requiring them to join this BBC blog. Thus,

their self-attempt to seek ways to learn the target language in an enjoyable way at their own pace by voluntarily joining this BBC blogosphere may imply their strong determination to learn English. They were intrinsically determined to challenge their English writing competence by interacting with English native speakers as well as other EFL learners within the BBC blog community. These orientations for knowledge and friendship represent some of the features attached to intrinsic motivation (Gonzales, 2010; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, et al., 2000).

Furthermore, the free, yet under controlled, learner-centered activities in this blog, such as writing blogs, receiving and giving comments on blogs, and solving their language problems, allowed the BBC bloggers to express themselves by using the target language. These activities not only helped improve their English, but also benefited them by enhancing their knowledge of various aspects, particularly the cultures of other learners. The most significant effect, however, is on fostering their sense of autonomy in learning. These two factors, competence and autonomy, are essential in stimulating learners' intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). This echoes previous studies on the benefits of blogs in fostering learners' motivation and autonomy (Alm, 2009; Lamb & Arisandy, 2020), and cultural competence (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008).

These intrinsically motivated student bloggers have possibly become more encouraged to learn through gaining external 'rewards' by, for instance, being chosen as the BBC blogger of the month, publishing their work online, receiving feedback from worldwide BBC bloggers, and gaining language feedback from the BBC teacher. The use of the technology itself has been seen as a motivating force for learners (Warschauer, 2001). In these terms, Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) addressed the great potential for achieved competence and autonomy in learning when their intrinsic motivation is enhanced with external rewards.

Another significant finding that emerged from the study relates to the BBC student bloggers' sense of audience reflected in their blogs. Their audience awareness was framed in the use of writer's engagement strategies in their blogs. From the findings, it is shown that *Reader Pronoun* is the most common strategy employed by these bloggers across different blog posts. Hyland (2005) argued this type of strategy as "the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse" (p. 182). By using pronouns like *you*, *your*, or *we*, these blog readers were made aware that their presence was being acknowledged by these bloggers, which might have encouraged them to comment on the blog.

A much closer interaction has also emerged as the writers made *Direct Address* as reference to a particular reader. By addressing this audience with his/her nickname, the writers have created a more intense and exclusive relationship with that particular audience as the remark or statement was especially dedicated to this reader. This direct address may eventually lead to an increase in the reader's confidence as he/she realized that his/her comment was responded by the blog writer. A similar effect was also experienced by the blog writers whose engagement strategies were responded by their readers. Thus, it can be inferred that the use of online media such as blogs may be beneficial in boosting students' self-confidence (Ware, 2004) and motivation (Alm, 2009) to read and write blogs due to the close interactions amongst the blog users. However, researchers warn that poor students' technical skills, teachers' limited technical pedagogical knowledge, poor supporting technical facilities, and even negative beliefs and attitudes of teachers about technology integration (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, et al., 2012; Inayati & Emaliana, 2017) could be barriers in successful technology-mediated writing instruction, leading to students' low confidence and demotivation (Gönen, 2019; Kung, 2018; Lamb & Arisandy, 2020). Thus, careful planning and vivid technology-based instructional design are crucial to minimize issues that might emerge during its implementation.

Surprisingly, while *Link* is considered one of the most commonly used strategies to engage with readers in blogs (Marlow, 2006; Myers, 2010), it became the least appealing strategy employed by the student bloggers in this study. As revealed in Table 5, unlike *Emir*, *Nat* and *Milly* almost never provided *Link* as a strategy to help their readers gain a better understanding of the topic under discussion. This difference may be related to their level of technology literacy in using *Link* strategy rather than their reluctance to using it. This is a surprising finding since creating links has become a common part of technology literacy in blogs to help readers gain more understanding of a particular issue or term under discussion. Links are also fruitful to clarify a particular topic which may not be explainable in detail in the blog due to its limited space. However, this absence of *Link* did not stop these bloggers from

providing clear and sufficient information on a particular topic, and thus its absence apparently did not disrupt the reading comprehension of the blog readers. This could be due to the continuing entries the bloggers posted, so that some unexplained terms or topics were addressed on the next posted entry.

From the readers' point of view, the engagement strategies employed by the blog writers were positively responded by their readers. It is this audience that has encouraged writers to write blogs (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008; Paul & Friginal, 2019) due to the interactions that could emerge between bloggers and their audience. From all the engagement strategies, *Question* has apparently attracted the majority of the readers to comment on the blogs. *Question* is considered an effective strategy because not only does it engage the readers but it also encourages them to actively participate in the discussion in the text (Myers, 2010). It is not surprising then that *Emir's Introductory* blog containing ten raised questions to his readers gained the highest number of comments. These readers' comments were mostly responded by the blog writers, indicating their appreciation of these comments. This reciprocal interaction between and among the student bloggers and their readers are indicative of the strong community emerging in the blog.

4. Conclusion

The findings uncover the engagement strategies employed by the student bloggers despite the different rate of frequency and extent of their use in blogs subject to some factors. The use of *Link* as the least popular strategy, for instance, was possibly related to the bloggers' technology literacy, while *Pronoun* was the most favorite strategy utilized by the student writers in their blogs. The fairly distributed use of the engagement strategies among the student bloggers also implies the student bloggers' strong sense of audience reflected in their blogs.

Not only did writers attempt to engage their readers by employing the strategies, but readers also responded to the strategies through their comment postings. It was found that strategies, such as *Pronoun* and *Image*, successfully encouraged plenty of readers to comment on the writer's blogs. The use of the strategies has successfully enhanced not only the blog writer-reader interactions but also their strong and vibrant relationship within the BBC blog community.

It is important to note, however, that the limited number of bloggers involved and the special context of the blog in the current study which does not represent a common learning/class blog are some considerations making the findings not possible to be generalized in other technology-enhanced writing instructions. Thus, further studies involving a greater number of respondents and other technology-mediated language instructions over a longer period of time are worth conducting for more significant findings. Additionally, the intercultural communication and identities emerging from the multicultural EFL student writer-reader interactions, which was not explored in the current study, could be generated for further studies.

EFL teachers may consider adapting and applying the techniques used in *BBC Learning English Blog* as an alternative way of introducing blogs in their EFL classrooms. They could equip themselves with fruitful technical pedagogical knowledge necessary to help them design and integrate technology into instructional activities to gain the upmost benefits for teachers as well as students (Gönen, 2019; Kung, 2018; Lamb & Arisandy, 2020). Furthermore, the effectiveness of these engagement strategies as endeavors to engage blog writers with their readers may encourage EFL teachers to introduce these strategies to their students to help them create audience awareness. They could also enhance this sense of audience by inviting audience beyond the classroom to participate in this blog writing, thus providing a more authentic environment to facilitate and shape language learning through a digital literacy approach (Hafner, 2019). Lastly, EFL students could also be introduced to netiquette prior to integrating this technology to avoid any spam or unethical online behavior from happening. This knowledge of online etiquette would be useful to accelerate the flow of the online activities amongst the learners and audience, and thus maintain the harmonious interactions of the members, which may eventually shape and strengthen the blog community emerging from the interactions of the members.

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