

Exploring the Possibility of Blogging to be Normalized as an Integral Part of Everyday Teaching Practice

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Abstract

The use of technology in everyday teaching practice is commonly seen nowadays. Throughout the span of using computer in Language Teaching, commonly known as computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Open CALL, which is justified happens nowadays, is determined by the roles of CALL as a simulation, games and computer-mediated communication (CMC). The goal of CALL or various technological product and devices in language learning should be fully integrated where it looks like an 'invisible' implementation as the technology embedded in every teaching and learning, which means normalization. Therefore, this article explores particularly for blogs as a form of CMC, whether is it feasible to be normalized in everyday teaching practice or not. This article contributes to the rationality that it seems reasonable to conclude blogging is feasible to be normalized in everyday language teaching as long as the issues mentioned by could be resolved. Some steps should be considered which are alterations regarding technology form, approach, and practice among teachers and learners. Its implication is that teaching concept of writing will change to follow asynchronous and synchronous forms of blogs.

Keywords— Blogging, normalization, possibility in everyday teaching practice, CMC.

INTRODUCTION

The computer has brought various modifications which have an impact on an academic field involving teaching and learning process. Throughout the span of using computer in Language Teaching, commonly known as computer-assisted language learning (hereby CALL), Bax (2003) classified CALL into three specifications after criticizing 'behaviouristic', 'communicative' and 'integrative' CALL presented by Warschauer and Healey (1998), which are Restricted, Open, and Integrated CALL (see appendix.1). Restricted CALL can be identified by the use of computer separated merely in computer lab presenting closed drilled quizzes and no integration into syllabus whereas Open CALL, which is justified happens nowadays, is determined by the roles of CALL as a simulation, games and computer-mediated communication (CMC) (ibid: 21). Integrated CALL has not been implemented in general as what it should be because of the

teachers' attitudes in delivering language teaching, syllabus integration, and taking a small part of every lesson (ibid:22).

The term of CMC as a type of task in the historical outline presented by Bax (2003), is 'communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers' (Herring, 1996:1). Based on this definition, therefore the email, social conferencing, texting, social networking and blogs underpin an umbrella of CMC. In relation to Blogs and CALL historical phases mentioned above, there is a concept promoted by Bax (2000) that the goal of CALL or various technological product and devices in language learning should be fully integrated where it looks like an 'invisible' implementation as the technology embedded in every teaching and learning (Bax, 2003: 27).

For the reason above regarding the goal of CALL, I want to explore particularly for blogs as a form of CMC, and to explore whether is it feasible to be normalized or not. This paper will briefly explain in literature review regarding blogs definitions by experts, then discuss all features related to blogs. Afterwards, there will be a discussion section to discover the possibility of blog normalization and its implication in teaching pedagogy. Eventually, the essence of this paper will present at the end part as a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Definition and Theoretical Approach of Blogging

The word of 'Blogging' - a contraction of the term 'web logging' - described as a form of micro-publishing' (Williams, 2004: 232), has developed and risen significantly in many various languages' usage around the world (Bloch, 2007). Bloch describes as 'an open architecture, meaning that they can be viewed, if so desired, by anyone connected to the Internet' (ibid, 128). It has been utilized as forms of online journal and diaries or as aid equipment in class activities (ex. Embrey, 2002; Goodfellow, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2005; Pimpare 2008; Reed,2005). Therefore, In the recent year, it is evident that there is mass incline of web-based access like blogs (Boulos et al. 2006).

There are several theories related to blogging. The first is programmed instruction theory proposed by Skinner 1954, and it is underpinned by the umbrella of behaviourism theory where the stimulation and reinforcement are two significant aspects to gain knowledge (Wu et al. 2012). This theory has an effect on constructing English teaching materials as blogging is a flexible activity to using media that can be shaped by their user, it can be organized by teacher

to use such sequence material in order to establish individualized instruction and self-learning in relation to what is stated as programmed instruction (Skinner, 1945). Social learning theory, underpinned of behaviourism as well, proposed by Bandura (1977) which involves the principle of observation, imitation, and modelling is related to what blogging would exist in its implementation. The blog users are tended to learn from another to follow the pattern in constructing information before finding their ways.

The second layer theory associated with blogging is constructivism theory where individuals are considered to be active as they have to create their learning target (Wu et al. 2012) or what Bednar et al. (1995) said as creating the representation of objective reality. Blogging requires its users to be enthusiastic participated in managing and following the information circulation in managing, writing, publishing and connecting with other users. Under the constructivism as a major theory, there are two learning principles which have a connection with blogging which is social development theory and cognitive apprenticeship reveal by Vygotsky (1962 and 1978). Social development theory devised by Vygotsky (1962) which concerns on the link between people and socio-cultural context can be seen on social interaction process of blogging where the role of socio-cultural context has a significant aspect in constructing comprehension among users. In the same line, by using blogging activities such as writing, posting, commenting, it would be a good way to learn how to emerge and sharpen user knowledge and skills in the real atmosphere of communication specifically for writing which associated with what Vygotsky (1978) reveal as the cognitive apprenticeship theory which emphasizes on the authentic practice. Moreover, Vygotsky also coined a concept of the zone of proximal development which is believed that learning process is active in this zone (Wu et al. 2012). This theory is close related to scaffolding system where it would happen in constructing knowledge by considering the gap between learner ability guided by the teacher and their ability to achieve goal independently (Nassaji & Cumming, 200). To sum up, there is two major theory associated with blogs, which is behaviourism and constructivism theory. Both theoretical approaches seem to be interconnected one another in relation to understanding the significance of blog.

2. Blogging as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The proliferation of computer-mediated communication (hereby CMC) has been developed since the 1990s, signed by the appearance of some scholars conducted an investigation through second language interaction (Yanguas, 2010). Barnes (2002:5) classified

CMC into several genres, which are 'simple E-mail exchange, mailing list, real-time chat, instant messengers, multiplayer games, and web pages. Concerning on web pages, blog is categorized as web 2.0 application similar to wikis and podcasts (Boulos, 2006), and the word of blogging refers to an activity of using blog (Bloch, 2007)

CMC certainly could not be merely implemented without having such problem. Boulos (2006) claims that CMC would create rudeness, disruptive behaviour. It could be easily seen currently, communication through the internet shows rude comment, and this can affect an individual, group and social order (Ibid, 2006:247). Moreover, a study conducted by Olaniran (1994) shows that CMC provides a difficulty regarding students' decision making. They assume that decision-making in face-to-face interaction is better than CMC. However, regards to the benefits of CMC Beauvois (1997) mentions that CMC would decrease student's anxiety due to revision and correction easiness especially in writing. It would happen as the sense of fear in making a mistake could be diminished by the CMC features because students have the ability to control their interaction like editing or reread before posting as comment or blog contents (Christopherson, 2007). Barners (2002) claims that, when implementing CMC, teachers' appropriate monitoring on students' blogging is likely to improve the quality of interaction among students and between students and the teacher

CMC is divided into two types by time interacting which provides intensive interaction for its user, asynchronous (delayed time) and synchronous (real time) (Hines and Pearl, 2004; Lord and Lomicka, 2007). It could be observed clearly that blogs offer a commentary space and it is meant as delayed communication (asynchronous) whereas what is provided by a Facebook messenger program, for instance, is categorized as synchronous due to interaction exist at the real time. Moreover, surprisingly there is an additional feature called widget on the blog which allows users to improve blog performance by adding 'Web content from external sources and can be embedded into a blog' (Kroski, 2008:41). It certainly can be used to improve blog to become synchronous CMC, the sample of widgets for WordPress and Blogger because real-time interactions between can be accessed on blogs by adding these additional features. (See appendix 2).

Both asynchronous and synchronous are useful for collaborative learning types but contribute to language learning in different aspects (Johnson, 2006). Synchronous could contribute through 'holding virtual office hours, team decision-making, brain- storming, community building, and dealing with technical issues' while 'asynchronous' is noticeable in

encouraging in-depth, more thoughtful discussion; communicating with temporally diverse students; holding ongoing discussions where archiving is required; and allowing all students to respond to a topic' (Branon and Essex, 2001: 36). However, it cannot be denied that synchronous and asynchronous have drawbacks. The asynchronous limitation is on providing instant feedback, 'student laziness to check in regularly, need more time to get a deep discussion and social disconnection feeling from students (ibid, 2001). Synchronous disadvantages are difficulty in 'arranging students online collectively, guiding large-scale conversations, deficiency of reflection time for students, and intimidation of poor typists' (ibid, 2001: 36).

3. Blogging Affordance and Constraints

The advantages of blogging in language learning context have been mentioned by some scholars (e.g., Ducate & Lomicka, 2005; Houringan & Murray, 2010; Murray & Houringan, 2008; Lee, 2011; Sun, 2012). Murray & Houringan (2008) who present some reasons why blogging is suitable for the language class, as it is: easy to set up, has free access, contains multilingual features, enables instant publishing, provides commentary features and gives the writer a wide range of transferable skills. Lord and Lomicka (2007) claim that blogs also provide greater opportunities for the author to be more flexible with their time and help establish collaborative learning between students through sharing and supporting another point of views. Within this form of interactions, it could provide a good way to improve student's rhetorical competence (Bloch, 2007). It is in line with what is expressed by Pawn et al. (2003;135) as 'reflective exchange' that could allow readers to think critically.

Students motivation will also increase by using blogs as students can define their selves as they want (Weasenforth et al. 2002), which is called anonymity (Christopherson, 2007). Somebody can create a new identity to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, which is defined by Christopherson (ibid,3040) as the sense of 'privacy on psychological well-being'. The motivation here is certainly closed related to learner's autonomy where motivation will be a foundation to build learning autonomy (Spratt et al. 2002). Therefore, blog affordances are related to motivation and learning autonomy simultaneously.

Ellison and Wu (2008) have conducted the explanatory study to investigate blog mainly, involving undergraduate students at Midwestern University, and they reveal that students are accepted the format of blogging compare to writing in papers, more motivated as the less formal writing atmosphere there. However, students feel anxious regarding teacher feedback

on the blog because, in comparison to face-to-face class, direct feedback brings less anxious as they will directly know what teacher thought about their assignment. Furthermore, few students assume that the writing blog in a less formal environment has an effect on an assignment which shows informal writing style. Bloch (2007) furthermore found that grammatical issues are not addressed in writing class context, and it can bring a burden to teachers to evaluate teaching process if blogging activity is implemented out of context. In contrast to a benefit mentioned above, privacy or an anonymity concept, there is a downside where the irresponsible student will post negative contents as the effect of too loose control (Freidhoff, 2008).

4. The Concept of Normalisation

The term of 'normalised' revealed by Bax (2000) is the idea where the technology implementation is embedded with a teaching process and considered as an ordinary as other teaching resource. Normalisation is a phase where technological devices or product are commonly used as a common part of teaching and learning activities. To obtain the phase of normalisation, there are feasible seven steps proposed by Bax (2003:24-25) (See appendix.3)

Most of the scholars said that normalisation concept is valuable for teachers pursuing a better understanding of technology (Bax, 2012). Levy and Stockwell (2006: 243) stated that 'we believe that working towards normalisation is a useful, practical strategy'. However, this concept has many issues when it comes to implementation phases. It can be seen through Schmid (2009) who has adopted the concept of normalisation specifically to investigated the interactive whiteboard (IWB). He mentioned that there are two major issues to be considered by practitioners to get the phase of normalisation, which are a location to access IWB and layout of classroom design. The result of his study is that IWB has not been categorized into normalisation phase. It is caused by teacher misconception regarding 'technology invisibility' and lack of teacher's ability in its implementation (ibid:80). Moreover, what should teacher consider is not solely technology but also related to what neo-Vygotskian perspective, which is culturally based and social process. The phases of normalisation are closed associated with social behaviour and cultural aspect. Teachers who just focus on technology implementation will face difficulties to create a real normalisation term. Therefore, Bax (2012) in his publication entitled Normalisation revisited: The efficient use of technology, mentioned that is essential to understand how people employ the new concept such as normalisation.

DISCUSSIONS

The feasibility in normalizing blogging in regular teaching activities will be discussed around issues proposed by Bax (2003; 27), which are alterations regarding technology form, approach, and practice among teachers and learners. The points as mentioned above will be elaborated in this following paper.

Technology forms related to blog here is that an appropriated blog which can be utilized according to its purposes. Campbell (2003) divides blog into three types such as the tutor blog, the learner blog, and the class blog. If the teaching goal includes preparing reading practice, website exploration, and resources from teacher to help students in engaging self-study (Noytim, 2010), it would be suitable to choose tutor blog because all teaching material will be posted there and learner can access or revisit anytime. If the teaching goal is to enhance number of learners posting related to learning collaboration between learners, the class blog is likely the best choice (ibid, 2010), and if the purpose of learning is to encourage learner in developing and expressing their thoughts, where learners will more motivated as they have a control of their writing (Zang, 2009), the learner blog would be matched to be implemented (Noytim, 2010). Zang (2009:69) define it as 'intellectual explores' as students have an ability to regulate their blogs. These aforementioned categories can be chosen by teachers in order to deliver an appropriate learning media. Moreover, Blogs have a capability to be modified according to learners needs where is connected with the use of 'authorable' (Chambers and Bax, 2006). This allows teachers and student to adapt and fit to be more effective in teaching and learning context to get the phase of normalisation. Students have authority to customize their blogs using (see appendix.4) based on their interest regarding appearance and adding widgets, while teachers still have a capability to control students' comments and postings (see appendix.5).

What should be considered in designing blog for foreign learning context, however, is not only the types of blogs but also the capability of students to follow teaching material. The material and instruction in a blog should be structured from the basic to advance and related to each other to help students to activate their (Zone of Proximal Development) ZPD (Vygotsky, 1962). For example, firstly applying blogs for a brainstorming session in the asynchronous situation in order create an outline, after that rough draft would be set up according to an outline. After evaluation to get a final draft, the publishing stage will be released as the last step. It is assumed that this particular environment will become a catalyst to execute task

accompanied by teacher or tools guide before having an ability to perform independently (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000). In this case, teachers should analyse the learning material and apply regular evaluation to build fixed material teaching in blogging activity that can be normalised.

Regarding learners and teachers' attitudes, what Bax (2003) claims that teachers have significant issues called 'Fear' and 'Awe' whereas students tend to assume that technology can solve everything, extremely substituting dictionaries even teachers. The sense of 'fear' in technology is the condition where teachers are not confident enough to deliver teaching material using products of technology, and 'awe' is related to the over claimed on the benefits of technology products. Moreover, based on the research conducted by (Chambers and Bax, 2006), integration CALL to syllabus will probably create problems for old teachers who are not familiar with the computer, and teacher duties in preparing lesson will be more challenging. This condition leads to ineffective teaching process as teachers have to be a central role to maximize the use technology (Bax, 2003).

These issues can be solved by combining pre-service and in-service teachers throughout modelling, participation in, and reaction to the behaviours and thoughts are necessary to establish decent collaboration (Pawan et al. 2003:119). Likewise, enhancing teacher's ability to apply blog, in this case, should be trained through 'collaborative mode rather than top-down' or expert-to-novice mode' because 'top-down' model training tends to involve teachers who are not willing to be trained (Chambers and Bax, 2006: 478). If teachers who are unwilling and experienced teachers in technology are gathered in collaborative mode, it would be easy to inspire them and show the benefit of technology as it happens in practical context and unwilling teachers will realize that technology such blog is helpful to be implemented so that the sense of 'fear and awe' will be decreased or vanished. Experienced teachers will also give an insight of instructional design as to cooperated technology in balancing 'technology-based delivery' and 'teacher-led activity (Bush, 1997: 336).

Alteration in approach is also needed in applying blog as an integral part of language teaching. The movement from face-to-face interaction to synchronous and asynchronous using blog brings an alteration from 'sage-to-stages' students-to-students, students-to-interlocutor, student-to-teacher through the medium of blogs (Ellison and Wu, 2008). Sage-to-stages is 'an instructor who lectures almost exclusively, who has the philosophy that s/he has knowledge to 'give' learners who would benefit from this' (Janssens-Bevernage, 2014). Interaction of

students-to-students, students-to-interlocutor, student-to-teachers, will provide a contribution in constructing knowledge about language learning. This condition refers to the term of social constructivism theory mentioned before.

What should we note is that, although all of these issues can be solved, blogging normalisation is not merely considered as integrated system where all students, teacher and learner are capable of utilizing blog, but it is closed related to how familiar they are using blog and then becoming usual as everyday teaching process in accordance with what is stated by Bax (2003)?

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the aforementioned literature that has been discussed, it seems reasonable to conclude blogging is feasible to be normalised in everyday language teaching as long as the issues mentioned by Bax (2003) could be resolved. It is believed that, although the form of technology has been fully integrated and become normal for all learner, the role of teachers is still essential as the technology 'will not the centre of any lesson but it will play a part of almost all' (Bax, 2003:24).

One the benefits of blogging is an accessibility where there are many free blog providers that teacher can choose for example edublog.com, blogger.com, wordpress.com and blog.abaenglish.com. The existence of smartphone nowadays also gives a significant effect where blogs can be accessed without time and space limitation. It gives a pivotal effect on blogging normalisation process as the place issues mentioned in Schmid (2009) regarding places could be probably solved. Students tend to be easy to manage and access their blogs everywhere without a limitation of devices. Furthermore, smartphone manufacturer provides a broad range of price, so the smartphone price will not be a big issue anymore.

The most tangible impact on teaching, if blogs have reached a normalisation stage, is that the teaching concept of writing will change to follow asynchronous and synchronous forms of blogs. Not only teaching writing but also the way of teaching reading will have an impact in the form of reading for pleasure because students would be easy to get authentic reading passage concerning their interest. The further visions of blogging normalisation are writing activities as a habit in learning languages to establish a generation in which most of the students are getting normal to use blogs in writing or expressing their idea. It is supported by Bloch statement that

blogs are forms of software that can create social communities (Bloch, 2007). Nevertheless, there should be further empirical research studies to investigate of these statements.

Eventually, in order to find out specifically regarding the significance of normalisation, Bax (2003:27) claims that there should be more research studies conducted using 'in-depth ethnography' approach to investigate the relationship amongst classroom management, teacher and learner attitudes, and classroom practice, as many 'interlocking and overlapping factors' can be intensely investigated which is useful to become consideration in implementation Blog. On the other hand, a 'research in individual environment' is needed to overcome the obstructions in its implementation (ibid:2003; 27).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. An Outline of Restricted, Open and Integrated CALL

Restricted, Open and Integrated CALL: an outline

Content	Type of task	Type of student activity	Type of feedback	Teacher roles	Teacher attitudes	Position in curriculum	Position in lesson	Physical position of computer
<i>Restricted CALL</i>								
Language system	Closed drills Quizzes	Text reconstruction Answering closed questions Minimal interaction with other students	Correct/incorrect	Monitor	Exaggerated fear and/or awe	Not integrated into syllabus—optional extra	Whole CALL lesson	Separate computer lab
<i>Open CALL</i>								
System and skills	Simulations Games CMC	Interacting with the computer Occasional interaction with other students	Focus of linguistic skills development Open, flexible	Monitor/ facilitator	Exaggerated fear and/or awe	Toy Not integrated into syllabus—optional extra Technology precedes syllabus and learner needs	Whole CALL lesson	Separate lab—perhaps devoted to languages
<i>Integrated CALL</i>								
Integrated language skills work Mixed skills and system	CMC WP e-mail	Frequent interaction with other students Some interaction with computer through the lesson	Interpreting, evaluating, commenting, stimulating thought	Facilitator Manager	Normal part of teaching—normalised	Tool for learning Normalised integrated into syllabus, adapted to learners' needs <i>Analysis of needs and context precedes decisions about technology</i>	Smaller part of every lesson	In every classroom, on every desk, in every bag
	Any, as appropriate to the immediate needs							

S. Bax / System 31 (2003) 13–28

Bax, S., 2003. CALL—past, present and future. *System*, 31(1), pp.13-28.

Appendix 2. Samples of Widget to add Live Chat in Blog.

TIDIO LIVE CHAT



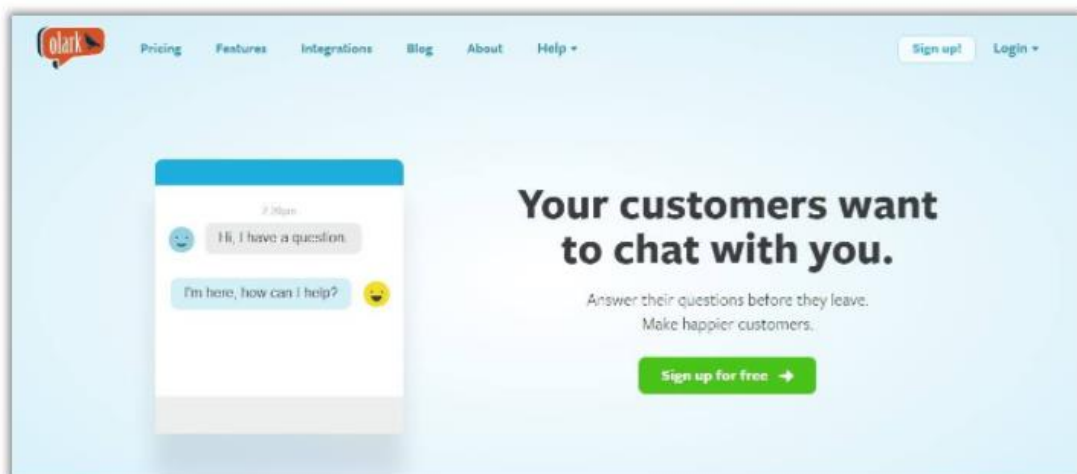
Tidio Live Chat

ZENDESK CHAT (FORMERLY ZOPIM LIVE CHAT)



Zendesk Chat

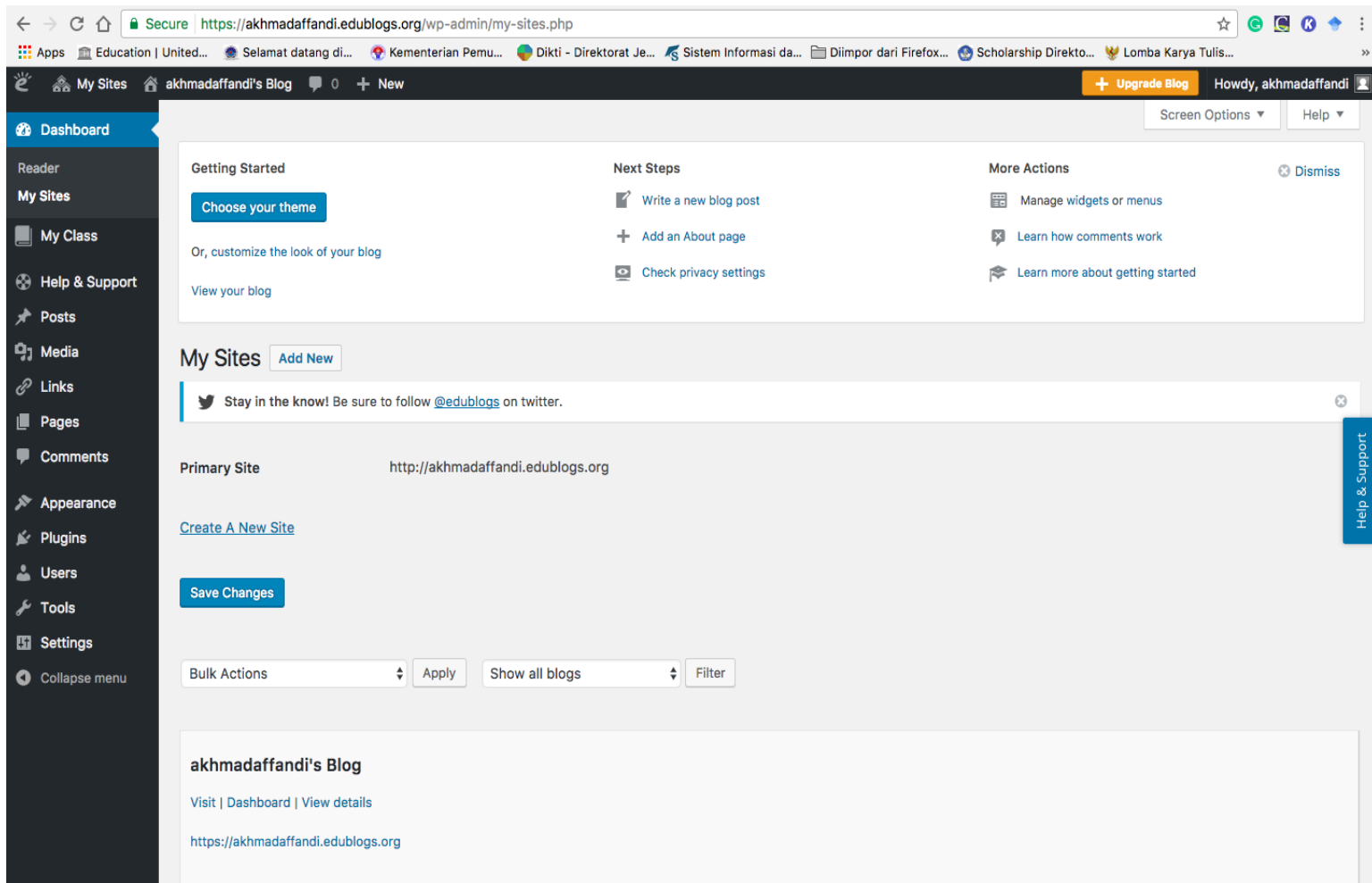
OLARK



Appendix 3. Seven steps proposed by Bax (2003:24-25)

1. *Early Adopters*. A few teachers and schools adopt the technology out of curiosity.
2. *Ignorance/scepticism*. However, most people are sceptical, or ignorant of its existence.
3. *Try once*. People try it out but reject it because of early problems.
4. *Try again*. Someone tells them it really works. They try again. They see it does, in fact, have relative advantages.
5. *Fear/Awe*. More people start to use it, but still, there is (a) fear, alternating with (b) exaggerated expectations.
6. *Normalising*. Gradually it is seen as something normal.
7. *Normalisation*. The technology is so integrated into our lives that it becomes invisible— ‘normalised’.

Appendix 4. Sample of ‘Authorable’ in Blogging activity.



Appendix 5. Class Blog: Sample of blog features that can help teacher to modify class interaction.

My Sites akhmadaffandi's Blog 0 + New + Upgrade Blog Howdy, akhmadaffandi

Create a Class

Featured Plugin! The 'Live Shortcodes' plugin makes it easy to add buttons, accordions, dividers, and more to your blog. [Learn more here.](#)

Class Blog: This is a class blog
Only check this if your students will have their own blogs and you'd like to manage them here.

Allow Students To Post On The Class Blog

Yes, no moderation - able to publish posts on class blog
 Yes, with moderation - able to submit post pending review on class blog
 No - use if you want them to publish posts on their student blog

This setting only effects THIS blog - your main "class blog". To moderate students on their own blogs, set the "Moderation" settings below.

Moderation On Student Blogs

I must approve all posts - use if you want to check all posts before they are published
 I must approve all comments - use if you want to check all comments before they are published

These settings only effect the students' individual blogs. Students won't be able to change these settings.

Privacy

These privacy options will be set on all student blogs that are attached to this class.

Allow all visitors to all blogs
 Block search engines from all blogs, but allow normal visitors to see all blogs
 I would like only registered users of Edublogs to see each blog
 I would like only registered users of each blog to see it
 I would like anyone who provides the following password have access to all blogs

*Note: Anyone that is a registered user of this blog won't need this password.
Password is the best privacy option if you only want other teachers, all students and family to view blogs*

Reader Allow all students in this class to read each other's posts in the dashboard 'Reader' tool.

Dashboard My Class Join a Class Create a Class Invite Students Help & Support Posts Media Links Pages Comments Appearance Plugins Users Tools Settings Collapse menu Help & Support