

PROMOTING METACOGNITIVE LEARNING USING BLOGS IN AN L2 LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The literature on weblogging or the contraction blog underscores its pedagogic potential for use in higher education as well as in other contexts. Studies of the affordance indicate that “blogging has the potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning” (Williams & Jacobs, 2004) and researchers claim that it is a useful practice for the development of metacognitive skills, active learner-centered pedagogy, authentic learning, associative thinking and interactive learning communities (O'Donnell, 2006). Proponents of educational blogging argue that it contributes “to a reconceptualisation of students as critical, collaborative, and creative participants in the social construction of knowledge” (Burgess, 2006, p. 105). This paper reports on the use of a blogging resource in a large-cohort first year EAP class in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria (FUTA); the metacognitive benefit of this affordance and its deployment in building a learning community are discussed. Data for the study was obtained through content analysis (of blog entries) and paper-based questionnaires administered at the end of the course. The results highlight the advantages of the use of blogs for higher-order learning and building of online language learning communities.

Keywords: weblogs; higher-order learning; learning community; ICT affordance; blended learning

1. Introduction

The weblog, or blog for short, is an affordance of Web 2.0 which allows its users to interact in a highly participatory environment. Winer (2003, p.1) defines blogs as “... hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser”. Blogs are online journals where an author publishes a series of chronological, updateable posts on various topics on which readers are invited to comment; they enable students to engage in online exchanges, create

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opportunity for language study and provide opportunity for learning communities to expand beyond the walls of the traditional classroom. Williams and Jacobs (2004) comment that blogs increase the opportunity for student interaction and expand their learning spaces exponentially.

This technology which started in the late 90s has been created at a phenomenal rate since its inception and Helmond (2008) reports that by January 2008, the blog engine *Technorati* tracked over 112 million blogs with 175,000 new blogs being created daily. Blogs have now become very popular and this popularity is credited to readers and fans of blogs who total 346 million and 77 percent of active Internet users (Singer, 2009). This number is fast increasing with the help of other social media and the accessibility of mobile technologies.

The literature on blog underscores its pedagogic potential for use in higher education as well as in other contexts. Blogs are popularly used in schools and higher education and they are employed as collaborative tools which support students' active learning and they have become a popular and influential form of online micro-publishing and computer-mediated communication (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006). Scholars assert that educational blogging is an effective tool for user-centred, participatory learning which contributes "to a reconceptualisation of students as critical, collaborative, and creative participants in the social construction of knowledge" (Burgess, 2006, p.105). Ferdig and Trammell (2004) delineate the four pedagogic benefits of blogging for students:

- They assist students to become subject-matter experts through the process of regular scouring, filtering and posting.
- They increase student interest and ownership in learning.
- They give students legitimate chances to participate in the learning process and socialize them into a community of practice.
- They provide opportunities for different perspectives.

Blogs have been leveraged for pedagogic purposes (Tekinarslan, 2008) and applications include using blogs to publish students' writings, review each other's work, build personal portfolios (Tan & Tan, 2010) and recently new variants of blogs such as audioblogs and videoblogs or vlogs have been added. Empirical studies indicate that blogging led to an improvement in students' language skills: Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam and Ng (2010) found that students' reading proficiency was significantly correlated with their consultation of blogs; Lou, Wu, Shih and Tseng (2010) concluded that the use of blogs increased the performance of high school students in Chinese language composition; and Sun (2010) found that extensive writing using blogs improved the writing skills of second language undergraduates and helped them develop self-monitoring strategies. Also studies indicate that the creation of a

technology-enriched classroom environment has some effect on student acquisition of higher-order thinking skills (O' Donnell, 2006; Farmer, 2006).

Drawing their observation from the influence of Vygotsky's educational theory (1978), Olson (1994); Krajcik, Blumenfeld, Marx & Soloway (1994) underscore the knowledge construction processes of the learner and suggest that learners negotiate meaning through the social process of language use over time. Blogs afford students the opportunity of publishing knowledge; and through this, teachers can make inference about the process by which students transform meanings and strategies appropriated within the social domain, and how they make those strategies their own (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). Publication makes material accessible for subsequent reflection and analysis and therefore allows students to revisit and revise their productions and this way the language experience is enriched (Krajcik et al. 1994). Considering the fact that blogs help users to recollect, reflect and write about their past experience, and that studies on the pedagogic application of blogs and empirical studies on blogs are still nascent, this paper reports on an exploratory study on the use of blogs in promoting metacognitive learning in a second language situation and in forming a community of language learners in an L2 situation.

2. Context

The Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria, (FUTA) is a specialized university that offers undergraduate and graduate courses in Science and Technology (SciTech). Use of English- GNS 101, is an English for Academic Purposes course that is taught at the undergraduate level and the objective of the course is to equip students with skills that are necessary for learning, studying effectively in a university and communicating in English as a Second Language. The second component of the course, GNS 102, an integrated reading and writing course designed to equip students with literacy and research skills ends with writing a term paper on science/environmental issues using the skills acquired. At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to read critically in academic contexts and use basic research and internet skills to write term papers in academic contexts. The expectation is that students develop their computer, research and language-based skills in tandem.

The need to expand students' learning space, adopt a pedagogy that will engage them, encourage the development of higher-order learning and create a language learning community that will be unlikely to emerge in a traditional classroom setting, led to the use of blogs alongside other affordances like the discussion forum and Wiki in our English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class in FUTA. Blogging was trialled as one of the components of the learning schedule for a large class of freshmen (3000+) on a course of integrated Reading-Writing English for Academic Purposes. A blended learning approach that combines the use of the MOODLE VLE (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) as a learning platform and the face-to-face

method was employed in teaching the Use of English course; this course is underpinned by the theories of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and learning community (Pallof & Pratt, 2005).

The blended learning mode integrates the strengths of face-to-face and computer-mediated modes and it enables the development of a sense of community and enhances the quality of interaction among community members (Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006). Students' engagement in the online community enables them to share knowledge and increase individual effectiveness (Kaplan, 2008).

The online learning management system employed involves the use of sequential series of web pages, live chats among students and teachers, wiki, forums, blogs, e-mails and directories (for uploading and sharing files). The MOODLE in use is hosted on the University learning site: <http://www.futa.edu.ng/futaelearningdirect.com> and this makes issues of access easy for all. The blog which is embedded in each student's profile is integrated in the MOODLE and it has features for sending and receiving messages. The course starts with an orientation programme where the whole student cohort (3000+) is informed about: the overall course objectives, expected learner outcomes, e-learning component of the course and ground rules such as avoidance of pidgin forms and slang expressions. The course is conducted in a two-hour plenary face-to-face session with strong emphasis on online presence on the part of students. To spur students to use the blogs, one of the teachers initiated a blog discussion to which some students responded and along the line another teacher employed the use of the blog in teaching GNS 103- Information Retrieval; she used Wordpress which can be accessed at <http://futalib.wordpress.com>. These two efforts kept the students busy with blogging especially as they were required to make at least one blog post per week.

The blog in particular, the object of this study, was used alongside other affordances like the discussion forum and wiki because it was perceived that it would help students form and connect easily with a learning community, and provide academic support for freshmen many of whom research reveals suffer feelings of isolation and alienation as they make the transition from secondary schools to a radically different learning system that is impersonal and overwhelming (Peel, 2000). The feeling of isolation on the part of undergraduates is worse in Nigeria where these neophytes struggle to learn in an education system that is affected by issues like large class size, scanty learning resources, under-funding and inadequate teachers.

The course which consists of two hours of formal teaching and learning per week affords students the opportunity to learn in class while informal learning also takes place ubiquitously- outside class, in the students' groups and in virtual space. Apart from the weekly blogging encouraged, cohorts are also required to read and respond to posts made by their colleagues. The current study took place in the first semester; in this semester, the GNS 101 course was arranged in modules on: time management, study skills, scientific word formation, parts of speech, listening and lecture comprehension, note-taking/note-making and paragraphing. Blog post assignments

were integrated with other course activities. Before blogging, students read thematically related material and used the content as a basis for discussion on their blog posts. In this case, they summarised content discussed in class, added to it or brought up other related academic issues. Political, religious and emotional discussions were not permitted in order to keep students within the confines of the research interest.

The course is undergirded by the socio-cultural constructivist theory which developed from the work of Vygotsky (1978) who posited that the environment should be the starting point for learning and that student-centered learning should be designed within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept describes the type of environment that enables the learner to develop cognitively. When a learner is faced with a new situation, he needs new or more mature psychological tools and mental structures for the particular activity (Chaiklin, 2003) cited in Hall (2007) and if the learning environment has the right amount of support from others, then the learner can gain maturity in the new tools as he will learn to use them in the environment. When this happens, he is said to be “*learning in the ZPD.*”

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Metacognition

Flavell (1979, p. 906) describes metacognition as “the knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena”. Metacognition involves monitoring one’s cognitive processes and regulating these processes after one gains an understanding of them (Leahey & Harris, 1997). In her discussion of the methods to develop autonomous language learners, Wenden (1998) adopted Flavell’s categorisation of metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, task knowledge and strategic knowledge. Person knowledge is considered as a learner’s general understanding of how learning takes place and how factors such as age, aptitude, motivation, cognition and learning style can affect language learning. Task knowledge refers to the process involved in understanding the procedures that are required to ensure the successful completion of a language task; task knowledge may include the purpose, nature, difficulty level and demands of a language task. Strategic knowledge includes knowing the effective strategies that will lead to the completion of specific language tasks and general knowledge about language learning that serves as a guide to the choice of strategies. These three types of metacognitive knowledge allow language learners to engage in self-appraisal and monitor their language task performance.

Learners who are metacognitively aware have strategies for figuring out what they need to do. Using metacognitive strategies activates a learner’s thinking and can lead to more profound learning and improved performance especially among struggling learners. When learners reflect on their learning strategies, they become

better equipped to make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning.

3.2 *Community of learners*

Graves (1992) defines a sense of community as an environment in which people interact in a cohesive manner, continually reflecting upon the work of the group while always respecting the differences individual members bring to the group. Rovai (2002) adds that a sense of community is setting specific, in which case, a classroom community will be defined in terms of four dimensions: spirit, trust, interaction and commonality of expectation and goals. With the emergence of the new media, computer conferencing tools, web-based collaboration technologies, a web-based concept of community building has replaced the earlier physical-based concept (Bringelson & Carey, 2000) and Palloff & Pratt (2005) explain that two components distinguish the online learning community from an online community: the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning and the reflective practice involved in transformative learning.

Studies of the online learning environment indicate that a feeling of community and connection among learners has contributed positively to academic performance and learner satisfaction with online courses (Palloff & Pratt, 2005) and activities requiring student interaction and sharing of ideas. This promotes a deeper level of thought (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). Commenting on this, Palloff and Pratt (2005, p. 2) claim that:

‘By learning together in a learning community, students have the opportunity to extend and deepen their learning experience, test out new ideas by sharing them with a supportive group, and receiving critical and constructive feedback. The likelihood of successful achievement of learning objectives and achieving course competences increases through collaborative engagement’.

Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) present a conceptual framework that identifies the elements that are important for a successful educational transaction in higher education: cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence. This paper considers one of the elements- social presence, in building a community of learners. This category refers to the ability of participants to project their full personality socially and emotionally through the chosen medium of communication.

Indicators of this category include: statements that express emotions through the use of *emoticons*, *autobiographical write-ups*, *self-disclosure* and *humour*. The second category of indicators of social presence is open communication- *risk-free expression*, *acknowledging others*, *providing encouragement*; and the third category is group cohesion. This involves *soliciting collaboration*, *assisting* and *supporting*.

4. Research questions

- Does the use of blogs encourage metacognitive thinking among the students?
- Does the use of blogs help to build online language learning communities?

5. Methodology

5.1 Sample

100 questionnaires were randomly administered to students of FUTA from the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET), (600+) who offer the GNS course and who had sent in a minimum of five blog posts. 76 of the questionnaires administered were returned and blog entries were chosen at random to reflect the investigated items. This sample size no doubt presents a limitation; therefore the results can not be generalized to a larger sample.

5.2 Instrumentation

Data was obtained through content analysis of the blog entries and the use of paper-based questionnaires. Eighteen yes/no and open-ended questions were asked to obtain the respondents' view on reasons why they blogged, their level of engagement and the cognitive and metacognitive processes associated with blogging, how the affordance helped their learning and reflective skills, usefulness of the blog entries to their study, link between their thinking, study and blog entries, their blogging and the formation of a learning community. The Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) analytic framework was used to analyse components of social presence.

6. Result and discussion

6.1 The impact of blogs on metacognitive thinking

- Does the use of blogs encourage metacognitive thinking among the students?

The results of the analysis of the responses generated from the questionnaire indicated that the use of blogs encouraged metacognitive thinking among the students. The findings revealed that the students' uptake of the new media was high as 93.4%

indicated that they use social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, 2go, Myspace etc. The use of the blog for pedagogic purposes as in the case of GNS 101, GNS 102 and GNS 103 made the students familiar with the possibilities of blogging for metacognitive purposes.

Table 1 presents information on the number of students who responded to the different categories. 89.5% of the students claimed they found blog comments useful for their study as ruminating over ideas discussed helped them recall information and it broadened their scope of learning. 76.3% indicated that using the blog helped them think deeply about what they were taught in class. Posting messages on the blog and the traffic of responses from sender to receiver led to inquiry that accentuated critical reflection; when a community of learners interact online they go through a process of reflecting, analyzing and bonding. Tan and Tan (2010) observe that one of the major applications of the blog is that bloggers use it to recollect, reflect and write on one's past experience. 77.6% of the respondents claimed that the blog posts they sent helped them understand the topic they were taught in class. Some of the comments sent in by the students include the following: ***“sending blog posts give me opportunity to go over what I was taught in class”***, ***“makes me do extra reading to gather points”***, ***“forces me to revise and think”***, and ***“helps me learn from others and enriches my knowledge”***. Sending blog comments created a scaffold between what the students were taught in class and the new knowledge they acquired through their personal research; many of them claimed that investigations in the form of further research preceded the blog posts they sent. 97.4% indicated that they consider blogging a learning exercise. Some of them mentioned that blogging serves the following purposes: ***“It makes me think deeply about what I was taught in class”***, ***“it gives me space to express myself and acquire more knowledge”***, ***“improves my thinking and learning”***, ***“it forces me to do research so that I read widely and understand a topic better”***.

These findings are corroborated by White (1993) who notes that there seems to be a likely connection between the use of text-based communication in computer conferencing and the achievement of higher-order learning objectives and critical thinking. In support of the metacognitive benefits of text-based communication that takes place within the medium of computer conferencing, White (1993) and Garrison et al (2000) claim that text-based communication is closely linked with careful and critical thinking. This suggests that the reflective and explicit nature of the written text encourages discipline and rigour in thinking and communicating.

Table 1: Number of Students' Responses on Selected Categories

Topic Category	Yes	Percentage
Did you find blog comments useful for your study?	68	89.5%
Does using the blog help you think about what you learnt in class?	58	76.3%
Do blog comments help you understand the topic you were taught in class?	59	77.6%
Do you think blogging is a learning exercise?	74	97.4%
Does using the blog make you feel you are a part of a group of learners?	73	96.1%

6.2 *The impact of blogs on building online learning communities*

- Does the use of blogs help to build online language learning communities?

Answer to this was provided from the students' responses on the questionnaire and their comments on the blog. Data from their responses on the questionnaire revealed that 96.1% of the students claimed that using the blog made them feel that they are part of a group of learners. Some of the comments they made include: ***"it makes me feel like a member of a large class because I learn from people and they learn from me, people comment on the article in my blog and correct my mistakes"***, ***"it makes me feel special that my opinion is read by others"***. On the whole, the respondents revealed that blogging was instrumental in connecting them with other users of the learning management system (LMS) and sustaining their relationship: 68.4% claimed blogging helped to connect them with their friends and 76.3% indicated it helped to connect them with their classmates and 65.8% said it connected them with their teachers. The technical challenges they claimed to have with using the blog include: difficulty with uploading files and pictures and slow server.

The use of written communication, blogs in this case, helped to build an online language learning community. Communication which takes place when students blog is crucial for the development of online language learning communities and Lipman (1991) observes that the features of communication of a community of inquiry includes

the skills of: questioning, reasoning, connecting, deliberating, challenging and problem solving. These skills are generally used when students blog. Fabro and Garrison (1998) note that social presence is important in establishing a community of learners, and that the formation of a community of inquiry happens through a collaborative process where critical reflection and discourse are encouraged and practised. Through blogs, participants collaborate and Schrage (1995) cited in Garrison et al (2000) claims that the act of collaboration involves shared creation and/or shared discovery. Through collaboration, learners share learning experiences, construct and confirm meaning and create knowledge.

The Garrison, Anderson and Archer's conceptual theory of community of inquiry (2000) which constitutes three elements that are essential to an educational transaction- cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence was used in analyzing this section even though only the parameter of social presence was used. The indicators of social presence are: *emotional expression*, *open communication* and *group cohesion*.

Emotional Expression

Statements in the blogs considered that express emotions include: the use of *autobiographical write-ups*, *emoticons*, *self-disclosure* and *humour*. Emotions are linked to persistence and task motivation and to higher-order thinking; emotional expression is shown in the ability and confidence to express feelings that are related to the educational experience.

- *Autobiographical Write-ups WRITE-UPS*

Blogs that show students' responses to the educational experience are presented in autobiographical write-ups which, provide vivid information about how the e-learning experience has shaped and affected their lives and learning. Through these write-ups, students reflect on their learning and talk about their experiences; examples of such write-ups are presented in the following:

by IBUKUN AWOTILE - Tuesday, 7 August 2012, 10:36 PM

So far, so good have found gns106 thesis writin interestin and fun, it will go a long way in sharpening my writing skills, although its quite stressful, but the reward great

by OLAMIDE ALEX ADEYEYE - Tuesday, 8 January 2013, 8:46 AM

it's an innovation in which i believe all other institutions should emulate! one major thing i love about this site is that it has greatly reduce addictions on other social

medias where students just chats thier destinies away.with this we have a platform wher we can both socialize and learn!

by AGAPE OLUWANIFEMI OLUSOLA - Friday, 11 January 2013, 6:24 PM

This course has helped me in so many ways. It has helped my communication skills, it has helped me in the careful use of my time and so on.

MY LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN FUTA:

The day I was admitted in FUTA, is a "red letter day" that's on 26th of Jan, 2010 ... I really love the activites in the university, in the academic, in their religious life, the student Union life, is so wonderful but what that is giving me challenges is the general course: MEE 101. I know that I shall make it successfully to the end. To my fellow futarians, Futa is the university that is most peaceful. Love you.

- *Emoticons*

Furthermore, to compensate for lack of physical presence and visual cues in the online discourse, students employed compensating redundancies such as emoticons to add affective component to the discourse at hand. The emoticon used in the example provided expressed the author's frustration and anger:

by FORTUNE OLADIPUPO - Tuesday, 7 August 2012, 11:41 PM

I'm so tired of Gns102, all this audited courses are killing me. Wish there were an easier way out... 😞

- *Self-disclosure*

Self-disclosure involves sharing of experiences, feelings, attitudes and interests; it encourages others to reciprocate and the effect is that it results in mutual trust and a sense of belonging. Comments in this category are similar to autobiographical write-ups. Examples are presented in the blogs where the bloggers express themselves without reservations:

by LAWAL KEHINDE - Friday, 2 December 2011, 09:37 AM

I feel very bad that *ASUU* is always going on *strike* because of salary increment.....

by OYEFUSI OLUWATOBI NURUDEEN - Tuesday, 17 January 2012, 09:23 PM

I hope asuu call this strike of a thing off, we are tired of staying at home

By MAYOWA DAVID OGUNBANJO - 26/12/12, 03:23 Christmas is in the air but i have

over feed myself and today 'boxing day' my stomach is not at rest...

by TOLULOPE SAMUEL ABIODUN 1/01/13, 03:39 Happy new year ma! Ma am having a

problem posting online

EXAMINATION TENSION I am having examination fever.

- *Humor*

Garrison et al (2000) claim that humour is a contributive factor to social presence and eventually to learning. It decreases social distance, is useful in constructing social cohesion and lays the foundation for critical discourse. An example is provided in the blog below:

By ISAAC TAJUDEEN MOMOH 20/01/13, 10:46

If you've read this before, simply enjoy a refreshing laugh...The interior of the casket was very comfortable and Ufiaka soon fell into a very deep sleep... All this while, Ufiaka was enjoying his beauty sleep inside the Casket completely unaware of the new passengers who boarded at Umutu and Ubiaruku. The pickup van arrived Amai just after 5p.m. and the driver, who was now very hungry, stopped in front of a busy bukataria to have a quick bite before proceeding onto the next village. The sudden stoppage and revving of the pickup's engine woke Ufiaka who then opened the lid of the casket and rose up. Trouble come start! The passengers in the back of the pickup jumped out of the vehicle from various points and took to their heels in various directions. The people eating in the buka (including the mama-put and her service girls) who saw the white casket open, and a "ghost" step out, ran off all over the place some with balls of eba and akpu in their hands. Ufiaka, seeing people running 'helta skelta' was convinced that armed robbers were operating and decided to take-off in the direction three of the passengers, including the woman, were running. When the three passengers realised that Ufiaka was running towards them, they increased their speed and shouted "ghost! ghost!" ...

6.3 *Open communication*

Open communication, which involves the use of reciprocal and respectful exchanges that are concerned with attending to the contributions and comments of others, includes the use of risk-free expression, acknowledgement or recognition of others, and provision of encouragement. Open communication encourages mutual awareness, and through the latter, relationships and group cohesion are built and sustained and interactive behaviour encouraged. The blog posts considered employed only comments in which others were acknowledged or recognised.

- *Acknowledgement/Recognition of Others and Provision of Encouragement*

These are instrumental in forming and maintaining relationships. Acknowledging the contributions of others and providing encouragement are crucial to developing and sustaining relationships among participants in a communicative encounter. Examples of blogs where writers acknowledged or recognised others include the following:

By SEGUN EMMANUEL ADEYEMO 20/01/13, 18:53 keep up the good work.....

By FAITH ADEYINKA OLUNLADE 23/12/12, 18:37 Thank you for leading us into the digital world. This mode of teaching the course is effective & interesting.

by OLUSOJI ISAAH MEDOYE11/01/13, 12:18 Hello ma, i appreciate this gns course alot. It has broading my scope of learning. Bless you ma!

By GBENGA FADOPE23/12/12, 01:33 Good morning ma, i have really gain good understanding on the topic "time management" i have been able to draw out my sticky note on my laptop. ma, it really help me alot, i have been able to adapt to the sticky note, thank you very much ma.

By NOBLE CHINONSO ERIC15/01/13, 20:07 E-learning is transforming and improving the learning method in Nigeria, hence I'm happy it's happening here in FUTA, thanks to the management staff, and also a very big 'thank you' to GNS dept. for such a successful interactive forum like this, thank you Ma for making this happen

The contributions of Wangari Muta Maathai to environmental conservation is acknowledged in the blog below:

by EBUKAN EZE - Wednesday, 8 August 2012, 12:56

Wangari Muta Maathai, a person with enough reasons to be weak: a woman in Africa, a black in the global society, born in a rural area. Yet, she was never weighed down. She promoted a decent environment and merited her Nobel price for peace in 2004.

by Emmanuel Titus - Wednesday, 8 August 2012, 01:11 AM

History will never forget the works of Wangari Muta Maathai, a Kenyan lady, who took a step to protect the environment by setting up a foundation called Green Belt Movement. The main objective of the foundation is AFFORESTATION (the planting of trees) so as to protect the environment and provide firewoods for cooking fires... Since its establishment, the foundation has been able to plant over ten million of trees...

6.4. *Group cohesion*

This involves activities that build and maintain a strong sense of solidarity and promote a sense of belonging. Group cohesion is linked with critical inquiry as it lays the foundation for the cognitive work that groups engage in, higher-mental processing are facilitated when students perceive themselves as part of a group rather than as separate individuals. The type of interaction that takes place when students engage in group work involves soliciting collaboration and assisting. Examples of these are presented below:

- *Soliciting Collaboration*

by ADENIKE BAMIGBADE - Tuesday, 7 August 2012, 10:01 PM *Friends...let's talk on this.*

- *Assisting*

by JOY AMAJIOYI - Wednesday, 8 August 2012, 03:29 AM

I want to encourage everybody to please take GNS102 so serious. From my findings, I have discovered that the most common and probable cause of failure are negligence and complacency...

7. **Conclusion**

This exploratory study which investigated the use of blogs in promoting metacognitive learning in a second language situation and in forming a community of language learners in an L2 situation, concludes that blogging is linked with higher-order thinking and with the formation of community of learners. This result corroborates

findings from a study by Hopson et. al (2001-2002) that identified technology as the stimulus for restructuring and redesigning the classroom to create room for the development of higher-order skill evaluation. Similarly McIntosh (2005, p. 6) cited in Blackstone, Spiri and Naganuma (2007) claims that: “Blogging ... breaks down the barriers of the four-walled classroom, helping achieve the aims of the 3rd millennial classroom: collaboration, inclusiveness, flexibility and bringing more relevance to learners”. Even though the small sample size used in this study makes it difficult to draw generalisations, the result of the study shows that blogs are useful for the development of metacognitive skills, associative thinking and creation of interactive learning communities.

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