

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**  
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**USING BLOGS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS  
THROUGH BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE**

**MA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

Literature provides valuable authentic material for language learning. Reading expands vocabulary, develops reading and writing skills, and, through the acquisition of new vocabulary, also speaking and listening skills. Still, there are several reasons why both teachers and students are apprehensive about reading. In order to facilitate reading in the classroom, online reading courses could be used. Teacher can have students write blog posts about what they have read, as this develops students' writing skills and digital competences.

In order to find out if an online reading course boosts students' motivation to read, and develop their writing skills, an elective course was compiled. This thesis provides the literature review on the bases of the course and the description and outcomes of the course developed.

The first chapter is divided into three sections. The first section gives an overview of the importance of using literature in foreign language classroom and what are the different approaches to reading. The second section explains how technology has changed what and how students read, and the pros and cons of online reading. The third section gives an overview of how to use blogs to activate students' writing skills.

The second chapter provides an overview of the elective course compiled for and piloted at a secondary school in Estonia. The outcomes of the course are discussed in the light of the research literature. The main findings are discussed and the shortcomings of the study are addressed.

The conclusion emphasises the importance of the topic and summarises the main findings. It gives an overview of how the results can be beneficial for the EFL teacher. Possible options for further study are provided as well.

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## INTRODUCTION

The most common way of introducing students to reading in a classroom is through intensive reading which means that students read in detail with very specific learning aims and tasks (British Council). For intensive reading tasks, short articles in textbooks are usually used. Extensive reading could be considered the opposite of intensive reading. Extensive reading means reading for enjoyment and general impression rather than deep understanding (Bamford & Day 2004). For extensive reading, teachers could use graded readers.

A considerable amount of research (e.g., Hişmanoğlu 2005; Collie & Slater 2006; Richardson & Eccles 2007; Puksand 2012) has demonstrated that extensive reading is a valuable source of authentic material. Reading books in a foreign language does not only help to develop vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation etc., but also writing, reading and through new vocabulary, also listening and speaking (Hişmanoğlu 2005). Extensive reading is directly connected with reading comprehension and verbal fluency. It also broadens the mind and helps to develop a positive attitude towards reading (Richardson & Eccles 2007).

Reading in the classroom has recently become more popular (Hişmanoğlu 2005) but is still rarely included in formal English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching for different reasons. These might include financial issues such as the cost of books and, as curricula are packed, there might not be enough time to fit in reading as a time-consuming activity in the classroom. Not only are teachers reluctant to use books in classroom but also students might be hesitant to read in the target language (EFL) because they consider reading a laborious, unpleasant, and for some reason, unsuccessful process. This frustration of not understanding a text and reading slowly may lead to a situation where students start to avoid reading altogether (Arnold 2009).

Another challenge is that students are perceived to be not that interested in reading in our digital era anymore. Technology has taken over many parts of our everyday life. The Estonian National Curriculum for Gymnasium Level (2011) (ENCGL) says that schools have to teach digital competences at the gymnasium level. This means that students should be able to use advancing digital technology in the fast-changing world during their studies, acting as a citizen and socialising in their community. More precisely, they should be able to find and preserve information using digital technology, to assess its aptness and reliability and to use appropriate digital technology and skills for problem solving, communicating and collaborating in different digital environments. They should know the risks of the digital environment, and be able to protect their privacy, personal information and digital identity. Finally, students should be able to create content, use and create texts, pictures and multimedia in the digital environment (ENCGL 2011). Because digital literacy is so clearly stressed in the National Curriculum, one of the solutions to try to get young people to read books might lie in using social media and blogs, that is, combining reading skills and digital competences.

One possibility of making reading more attractive to students is to make them read online in an online reading course. The benefits of having online reading material is money, as books require finances, but most schools already have a computer class, and easy access to online materials available on the Internet. Furthermore, computers are already widely used for personal and academic reasons (Arnold, 2009), and through online reading course, students can develop their computer literacy as required in the ENCG.

For example, Arnold (2009) studied the benefits of an online extensive reading course on an advanced language level, studying both a product-oriented (have the objectives of the program been met?) and a process-oriented (focus is on the activity not the outcomes) approach. The key findings of the study were that an online reading course boosted the

students' motivation to read, raised their confidence about reading, and also helped to meet the set pedagogical goals. Yet, these findings raise questions as the study was conducted among advanced language learners despite the fact that, at the beginning of his article, Arnold states that most of those who have motivational problems are low-level learners. Thus, this topic merits further study.

One benefit of online reading is its availability and ease of access (Arnold 2009), but also the ease of adding multimodal aspects such as photos, audio and video. Another benefit of reading online is connected to hyperlinks which allow student to gain even more knowledge (Silva 2009). Reading online can be made easily accessible and easy to follow for learners of all levels.

However, there are limitations to online reading. For example, reading online, only half a page fits on the screen, thus requiring the reader to scroll every once in a while. Also, studies have shown that reading online is actually slower than reading paper books (Jorge & Carcedo, 2012). It has also been argued that the text and visuals might confuse readers, overload their cognitive abilities, and damage vision (Silva 2009).

Another way to motivate students' reading and writing is to have them write a blog simultaneously to reading (Chew & Lee 2013). In this activity, students benefit from the activities of peer-reviewed blog posts by reading and discussing each other's blogs. There are several ways to use blogs in a reading course. For example, blogs can be used to promote and share reading experiences. Chew and Lee (2013) had their study group write a blog every week where they had to share something they read, have a short discussion about it, and read and comment on others' posts. Kaupmees (2015), on the other hand, gave students different topics to write on, share ideas and comment on them. Although the approaches of the two studies are different, as one focuses on reading and writing, and the other only writing in English, the medium used is the same.

It can be said that blogs add a new and interesting dimension to both reading and writing in EFL. Students might also need supervision as researchers have found that without their teacher's encouragement and concern, students might start to lose interest in the task (Chew & Lee 2015). Thus it might be interesting to study which kind of impact a supervised literature blogging course with strictly set materials has on students and their motivation.

Based on the former studies and their outcomes, this paper aims to find out if and how blogging as a method helps to activate students writing skills, and if a supervised online reading course helps to motivate students to read. A narrower aim was to find out if it is possible to introduce students to different cultural and social issues using literature. A more personal aim was to gain experience and learn how to compile a course, how difficult it is to find materials, and how to teach literature. For the purposes of the study, the research questions are as follows:

1. Does blogging help to activate and develop students' writing skills?
2. Does supervised reading help students to keep themselves motivated?

This thesis is divided into two major sections. The first chapter provides a literature review of the importance of literature in EFL, and of how technology and Internet has changed and influenced reading. The second section gives an overview of the designed course itself, and the findings. It also states the most important outcomes once again and discusses the limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER I: LITERATURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

This chapter gives an overview of three topics essential for compiling the elective course analysed in chapter two. The first chapter discusses the importance of literature in EFL classroom and the ways in which technology has changed the way of reading. In addition, it discusses how to use blogs to activate writing skills.

### **1.1 Importance of literature in EFL**

Reading correlates positively with students' marks, vocabulary range, functional reading skills and reading comprehension, verbal fluency, general knowledge, and attitudes toward reading (Richardson & Eccles 2007). Reading helps to improve academic achievement (Shipton 2015), it might turn an average student into an excellent student (Awais & Ameen 2013), and it helps to succeed in their later professions (Shipton 2015).

A study done in Estonia shows that students who read in their free time have better functional reading skills (Puksand 2012). A study by Majid and Tan (2007) in the USA shows a similar outcome. 71% of the students who considered themselves to be good readers, said that they enjoyed reading, whereas none of the students who thought themselves to be "bad" readers said that they enjoyed the activity (Majid & Tan 2007). Not only is reading important for the development of reading skills, but it is said to also be an important part for the growth of the personality as well (Awais & Ameen 2013).

There are several additional benefits to using literature in the foreign language classroom. Bamford and Day (2010) claim that students who read in a foreign language become better and more confident readers, their writing, listening and speaking abilities improve, their vocabulary expands. The probability that a book contains more unfamiliar words than spoken language is very high. Books tend to contain vivid and varied vocabulary



(Horst 2005). Furthermore, books and reading can help to increase motivation and to develop a positive attitude towards learning a new language (Bamford & Day 2010).

Generally, Collie and Slater (2006) have listed four main reasons for using literature in a foreign language classroom. Firstly, literature is a valuable authentic material in the sense that most works of literature are not designed for the specific purpose of teaching a language. Most course books use many authentic samples of language – travel timetables, city plans, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisement, newspaper, magazine articles etc. This way, students or learners are exposed to language that has not been modified and is genuine and unchanged for classroom context. Collie and Slater (2006) have also said that it is reasonable to start using literature next to textbooks once the basics of a language have been acquired. In reading literature, students have to cope with the fact that the text they are reading is meant for the native speakers and thus are exposed to different linguistic usages, forms and cultural conventions such as irony, exposition, argument, narration, and so on. Although literature might not present specific social knowledge like a bus ticket or an advertisement, it still carries important cultural information (Collie & Slater 2006: 5-6).

Secondly, Collie and Slater (2006: 6) have said that literature is important for cultural enrichment. In many cases language learners cannot visit the country the language of which is learnt. Although, literary works are fiction and thus the places and events described might not exist, they still introduce a full and vivid set populated by different characters with different backgrounds. Readers can get acquainted with their thoughts, feelings, customs and possessions. They can discover what the characters believe, fear, enjoy or buy, how they speak and behave. This can give a reader a quick insight into the codes and preoccupations of a real society. Reading literature of a historical period, for example, is one of the ways that helps us imagine what life was in one or the other time. However, literature should be

treated as a supplement to all the other types of materials and media that increase learner's insight into a specific country's culture and society (Collie & Slater 2006: 6).

Thirdly, Collie and Slater (ibid.) have stressed that reading literature helps to develop language and vocabulary. While reading a text, students are exposed to rich content in which lexical and syntactical items are made more memorable. Students become familiar with many features of written texts that help to develop and enrich their own writing skills – the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, different ways of connecting ideas. Having access to this written language might help make students more adventurous to try some of this potential to express themselves as well producing more motivated students (Collie & Slater 2006: 6-7).

Finally, reading literature is also valuable because of the personal involvement a text requires. Having more experience in reading, students eventually go past focusing on what individual words or phrases mean and begin to be drawn into the story. Readers want to know what happens as the story unfolds, they feel close to some of the characters and share their emotional responses. This might help the students to develop as persons, to feel empathy and make important choices in life. Feeling emotional relation is not only important for character development, but can have beneficial effects upon the language learning process as well (Collie & Slater 2006: 7-8). Literature deals with subjects and topics that are familiar to everyone, such as death, love, belief, etc. We will be able to relate these topics to our own lives (Hişmanoğlu 2005)

For reasons listed before, using literature is important and books present a valuable source of information in the EFL classroom. There are different approaches to treating literature in the language classroom. Broadly speaking, they could be divided into two types of reading: extensive reading and intensive reading.

### *Extensive Reading*

Bamford and Day (2004) have defined extensive reading as an approach in which learners read a lot of easy material in a foreign language. They choose what to read and read it independently of the teacher. Reading is done for overall, general meaning and students read for information and enjoyment. If a text appears to be too difficult or not interesting for the student, they are encouraged to stop reading and choose a new book.

Bamford and Day (2004) have also stressed that with extensive reading, reading speed is usually fast. As the material is easily understood, fluent reading is encouraged. Students are told not to use dictionaries as this interrupts fluency. Instead, guessing by context or even ignoring the unfamiliar words is encouraged. Furthermore, they are encouraged to expand their reading comfort zone – to read the type of books that can be read easily and with confidence as much as possible.

The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding. It is not important to understand 100% of the text, but to get the general meaning of the story. Also, reading is individual and silent, learners read at their own pace. Extensive reading is usually done as homework and is extra-curricular and is its own reward. The aim is to make the student feel the sense of achievement upon finishing a book. Sometimes, follow-up activities are offered but they should encourage further reading instead of discouraging it (Bamford & Day 2004)

Bamford and Day (2004) have listed some criteria to remember when facilitating extensive reading in the classroom. Firstly, reading material should be easy, as it is crucial that students do not struggle with difficult material because reading is done mostly for enjoyment. Too difficult material could put students off and they might even be reluctant to pick up a book in the future. Bamford and Day (2004) have also said that a variety of reading

material on a wide range of topics should be available. Different genres, authors and types of books should be offered for a flexible approach to reading, and for learners to choose themselves what they want to read. This way it can be made sure that the students really enjoy reading. Furthermore, learners read as much as possible. Being exposed to different language is important for language learning.

The teacher has several roles in guiding students towards extensive reading. Firstly, the teacher orients and guides the students, explains what extensive reading is and what its goals are. Also, the teacher might want to keep track of what the students have read and what their reactions to the stories were. Furthermore, the teacher is a role model of a reader who can recommend the students what to read. Also, if the teacher reads the same materials as their students, she or he can facilitate discussions. Finally, one cannot encourage others to do something they do not enjoy (ibid.).

### *Intensive Reading*

Intensive reading can be considered the opposite of extensive reading. Intensive reading means reading in detail with specific learning aims and tasks, and the activities include for example skimming a text for specific information to answer true or false statements, to fill gaps in a summary, to match headings to paragraphs, and first scanning and then reading jumbled paragraphs carefully to put them back into the correct order. (British Council)

Intensive reading helps students to fully understand the text. The focus is on understanding not only the context but everything, word by word. Students are instructed to translate every word they do not understand, to think about the meaning of what was written, and this way really engage with the text and the author. As the vocabulary used might not be that new, the focus of intensive reading is also on understanding grammatical structures

and the syntax of the text. This approach is suitable for students who do not enjoy reading too much, but are able to concentrate for a short amount of time as intensive reading is mentally challenging (Teacher Finder 2019).

Based on the information given by different authors, it can be said with certainty that using literature for language learning is recommended as literature is a valuable authentic material, it is good for cultural and language enrichment and, while reading, we feel personally involved as the topics are universal for everyone. Whether one chooses intensive or extensive reading, depends on the aims of a particular lesson or course. Also, what could be considered is the what and how of reading in a language classroom, for example the benefits of using technology in the form of an online reading course.

## **1.2 Technology and reading**

Technology has changed how and what we read. Although it is said that young people do not read much anymore, this is not true. What they read has changed (Puksand 2012). Not only do young people read literature, they read a lot by using social media, the written interaction in Skype or Messenger, news, and information for their schoolwork (Puksand 2012).

What has also changed is how students read. Instead of actual books, many students have opted for reading from digital devices, for example e-readers, tablet PCs, computers, mobile phones, etc. (Jorge & Carcedo 2012). As a result, teachers have started using technology for extensive and intensive reading in the classroom. Several studies have been made to map the benefits and the downsides of online reading in the classroom (Jorge & Carcedo 2012, Silva 2009, Syafi 2018).

As one of the benefits, researchers (e.g., Arnold 2009) have brought out the cost of online reading. Using a traditional reading program requires either a special library or other

printed materials both of which can cost a lot. However, most schools are already equipped with a computer class and most students also have access to a personal computer, lowering the cost of the program. Furthermore, access to paper books could be limited, but the Internet has many sources, especially for teaching English. There is a wide range of instructional content available. For example, sites such as British Council and Rong Chang offer a wide range of reading material starting with fables and folk tales and ending with science fiction stories. Also, these sites do not only offer texts, but they also have an archive of reading comprehension exercises, lists of vocabulary and puzzles (Syafi 2018). In addition, the Internet and technology are already widely used for both academic and personal reasons, that is, both reading for pleasure and for information. Finally, reading online helps to develop students' electronic literacy. They can develop their ability to use electronic devices for communication, research, and independent learning (Arnold 2009).

Another study has found that students value online reading for intensive reading purposes for several reasons. For example, students mentioned the benefit of instant access to texts the opportunity to move from one text to another, and the latter being also accessible immediately. Furthermore, students considered it to be a benefit that while reading, a variety of tools is available, for example online dictionaries, translators, and resources of information about the text (Jorge & Carcedo 2012).

Online reading also has some shortcomings. Some sites, for example, lack stability and texts can disappear overnight (Arnold 2009). Furthermore, students have noted that concentrating on a story is difficult because of the temptations the Internet poses (surfing the web, using social media, checking e-mails, etc.). Moreover, students say that reading online affects the way a story is perceived. The connection with the story and characters is superficial as the concentration level is not as high as with reading a paper book. 20% of students who read Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart" online said that reading it online trivialised

the story, making it less interesting and important (Silva 2009). Also, reading online might confuse the reader, overload their cognitive abilities (Silva 2009), and cause eye-strain and thus has to have something extra to compensate (Jorge & Carcedo 2012).

However, online texts may be complemented with graphics, still photos, audio and video, and hyperlinks, giving it a multi-modality no book can offer. The latter acts as a key factor in online reading. Reading might not be done in a linear way but more in a non-linear fashion, with hyperlinks at the click of a mouse retrieving different sections of a text (Silva 2009). This means that more information is available for the reader at all times.

Overall, technology has changed how and what students read in great extent. Although there are limitations to technology use, such as eye-strain and constant distraction, teachers should consider offering students online reading material. Reading online is cheap, a variety of material is available online, it is easily accessible and downloadable. Furthermore, students can develop their digital competences, and technology is already widely used in education and personal lives. It can also be integrated with other skills, such as writing skills or digital competences.

### **1.3 Using blogs to activate writing skills**

Teaching writing is a significant yet a challenging task. Not only is it important for the Estonian national examination in a foreign language, which for the majority of students is English, but also for the students' personal future in the globalising world. The success of students depends on various factors such as students' motivation, teachers' approaches and competences, methods used in the classroom, the provided material and its volume, and time frame (Gontšarova 2018). This subchapter briefly explains how blogs can be used to activate writing skills.

### **1.3.1 Definition of ‘blog’**

Blogs are a relatively recent writing genre but they have become so mainstream that no one really bothers to explain them (Rettberg 2008). However, some authors say that the term is problematic to define, especially because of two terms, “weblog” and “blog”, the first of which has been around since 1990s (Musa 2016). The amalgam of the words “web” and “log” have now been shortened to “blog”. Blog can be defined as an identifiable website that allows authors and readers to share information, opinions and commentary in a self-published forum. The blogger frequently and chronologically updates the information found in the blog, and the reader can then voice his or her opinion (Musa 2016).

Blogs are based on a link and help to build connections between related issues. A blog can be created around an almost endless number of themes, for example media studies, the history of technology, sociology, ethnology, literary studies, marketing, journalism and many more. Blogs can also act as lens to observe how different fields have developed up until today (Rettberg 2008). Other authors have noted six main categories for blogs: the basic blog, micro-blog, family blog, collaborative blog, commercial, corporate or advertising blog, and then more specific types of blogs (journal blog, diary blog, knowledge blog, video blog, photo blog, audio blog, niche blog etc.) (Musa 2016).

Blogs are very easy to open, operate, modify, use, maintain and update. It is a user-friendly format that can be created in five minutes. There are many free online blogging services such as blogger.com, wordpress.com and xanga.com (Musa 2016).

### **1.3.2 Blogs in EFL classroom to activate writing skills**

As mentioned before, writing is an essential skill not only for the English National Examination but for the students’ future. According to Gontšarova’s 2018 study, Bowen & Marks thought already in 1994 that writing is a “forgotten skill”. This prediction has not



come true. Writing is a skill that needs practicing as it includes different kinds of complex processes like thinking, organising ideas, analysis, concentration and critical thinking. Attention has to be given to grammar, coherence, vocabulary, etc. which makes it a difficult skill to acquire (Gontšarova 2018). However, in the information age, teachers could use blogs as a means to activate writing skills in students.

Using blogs to teach and activate writing skills has been discussed and researched by many authors and the overall reactions have been positive. Ward (2004) believes that it is reasonable to use blogs for teaching writing because they are communicative, process driven, provide a dis-inhibiting context and allow students to express their creative potential in a completely new form. Furthermore, blogs provide a genuine audience and are often peer reviewed. This means that students feel that they have an audience that is interested in their writing, making students also more interested in expressing themselves. This way students are able to see how their peers react to their writings and giving feedback encourages communication. Moreover, blogging is about reading, thinking and writing. It is a way to learn through communication and it can be said that blogging involves and evolves many different skills (Warlick 2007).

Chew and Lee (2013) had students read stories and simultaneously write a blog, and later comment on each other posts resulting in a peer-reviewed blog. Their project lasted for a period of eight weeks and the outcomes show that blogs were useful and viable platform to support extensive reading. Students gained experience in searching for reading material which would be interesting and manageable for them and also for the others to read. Furthermore, students benefited greatly from collaboration gaining communication skills as an extra value. Students liked to read each other's posts and comment on them. What was brought out as a limitation was that it was difficult to choose what to read and post as the

scope of reading material online is immense. Thus, a list with recommended material could be provided to help to make the course more user-friendly.

Alsamadani conducted a study in 2017 in Saudi Arabia among 40 undergraduates at a Saudi university. The students were asked to write both in groups and also individually on topics of their own preference during 14 weeks. What he found was that writing blog posts regularly helped students to improve their posts in terms of content. Knowing that others would read their posts, students managed to develop their thoughts, add in-depth discussion and include rich ideas. Writing collaborative posts helped students to add more ideas and approach the topic from many different perspectives. Great improvement was also seen in style as both individual and collaborative blog posts became more presentable at the end of the experiment. However, considering word choice, improvements were seen in collaborative blog posts but not individually. Only slight improvement was seen in grammar. Students often ignored capital letters, commas and full stops, and some posts showed mistakes in tense use.

It is important to bear in mind that blogs are written in an informal style. The Internet promotes the use of informal style but this aspect should be considered carefully (Crystal 2004) as after secondary school, students will mostly present their homework at the university and vocational school where formal writing is required. The same applies to the types of writing also after graduating from the university (Johnson 2004).

Sun (2010) found in his study that students tended to use more complex language at the beginning than at the end of the experiment. He explains it with an assumption that as blogs are associated with informal language use, then students subconsciously start to use language associated with this environment. However, improvements in mechanics of the language and organisation of the text were apparent. Students also reviewed and revised their own blog posts quite often without the teacher's presence or grading.

In her study, Kaupmees (2015) had seven secondary school students write three blogging assignments in a free manner and also comment on each other's blogs. What she found was similar to Alsamandi's findings. Throughout the process, students' blogs went through visible changes in the word count, construction of blog posts and also the comments they gave. As students were allowed to use other media, such as pictures, they tended to rely too much on visual material at first but by the third post, students' own ideas and thoughts carried more weight. Students started trying more and more complex structures and succeeding in them which implies that reading and writing both had a huge and direct impact on the language proficiency. Also, the fact that students started commenting on each other's last posts before the actual deadline shows that the interest in what others wrote also rose as the project advanced. The interviews also showed that in the opinion of the students who participated their language skills got better and their confidence in reading and writing increased.

All in all, it could be said that as writing skills are very important yet somehow underpracticed, using blogs for developing and activating these skills could be valuable. Blogs help to develop students' sense of content, style and, in some cases, word choice. Still, whether blogs support the development of grammar is somewhat unclear and some studies have shown that the use of blogs increases the risk of shifting from formal language to more informal use of language. However, based on the findings of different studies, it is safe to assume that blogging is an effective task-based environment which promotes authentic, purposeful language use, and enhances language use and proficiency in foreign languages.

## **CHAPTER II: EMPIRICAL STUDY – BLOGGING IN A LITERATURE COURSE**

Based on previous studies and their outcomes, the author of this paper aimed to find out how and if blogging as a study method helps to improve students' writing skills and if a supervised online course in reading helps to motivate students to read. A narrower aim was to find out if it is possible to introduce students to different cultural and social issues using literature. For the purposes of the study, the research questions are as follows:

1. Does blogging help to activate and develop students' writing skills?
2. Does supervised reading help students to keep themselves motivated?

This chapter gives an overview of the course that was designed to introduce British and American literature alongside blogging. It explains the basis of the choice of the reading material, explains the procedure and gives an overview of the students participating in the course. Furthermore, it gives an overview and analyses the results of the course based on the blog posts and feedback questionnaire filled in by students.

### **2.1 The Basics of the Course**

The idea for the course came from the author's Bachelor's thesis where the reading habits of Tartu form 9 students were studied. The findings showed that form 9 students do not read much literature in English either at school or individually (Sagar, 2017). Thus the idea of providing the students with reading materials in a form of an elective course was born.

As there is unlimited amount of resources on the Internet, the author of this thesis gave the students a carefully considered choice of authors and stories in order to avoid confusion and to make the course more user-friendly. The author asked students to read

British and American authors in order to provoke discussion of the differences between the authors of the two nations, should there be any. As the course lasted for six weeks and there were three 75-minute meetings per week, the reading material had to be short in order for the students to manage to read and write during that time. On the seventh week, only one 75-minute meeting was scheduled. The author wanted the course to take place in a classroom to closely observe students at all times. Also, having given one online reading course before, the author had the experience that students tend to miss the deadlines if they are able to do the tasks at home unsupervised.

A combination of both extensive and intensive reading was used in compiling the elective course. The course is an extensive reading course in the sense that students did not have to work through vocabulary to understand each word. Reading was done for enjoyment and pleasure. However, the fact that students had a set of follow-up questions and the reading was done for specific learning aims, suggests that the course was on intensive reading. To encourage the students' purposeful reading and to activate their writing skills, blogs were used.

As the aims and general ideas were set, course information (see Appendix 1) was shared with the students so that they could decide whether they wished to participate in the course. All in all, 14 students from a secondary school in Tartu participated.

## **2.2 Literature used in the course**

During six weeks, students read stories from six British and six American authors. Firstly, the author aimed to offer students authentic literature in English which had not been modified. The choice of authors and stories was made based on the wish to present students with as different material as possible, starting from the literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to today. The aim was to introduce different authors, genres, styles and ideas.

The authors and stories were paired based on the social aspects of the topics the stories discussed. The topics started with existence, then moved to belonging, racism, women's roles and then returned to the topic of existence alongside all the other aspects. All pairs included one British and one American author (see Appendix 2).

The first pair was of Virginia Woolf's "Kew Gardens" and Mark Twain's "A Fable" to discuss what it means to be a person, how people perceive themselves and the essence of being. The second pair included James Joyce's "Eveline" from the collection *The Dubliners* and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" to show the meaning of life through death and the different aspects of letting go. Thirdly, in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" and Toni Morrison's "Recitatif" the topic was racial issues and what it means to be a foreigner. The fourth topic discussed women in society in Roald Dahl's "Lamb to the Slaughter" and Kate Chopin's "Story of an Hour". The fifth pair was Ian McEwan's "Conversation with a Cupboard Man" from his collection *First Love, Last Rites*, and Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" in order to initiate a discussion about the worth of a human being. Finally, two contemporary authors were chosen to think about today's issues: Zadie Smith's "Now More Than Ever" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" from the collection with the same name.

I decided to present students with a set of preselected stories for two main reasons: firstly, as mentioned before, there are almost unlimited resources on the Internet and it is very difficult for students to make a choice about what to read and at which language level; secondly, I wanted to have comparable blog posts and this meant that the students had to read the same stories and write their blog posts based on the same questions.

### **2.3 Participants**

The fourteen students participating in the course were from all three forms of the secondary level. There were two students from form 10, seven students from form 11, and five students from form 12. As the students took the course as an elective, the students were from different backgrounds, language levels, and took the course for different purposes. The language level of the students was identified by the level of English class they attended.

As the course was elective and was held for the first time, the number of students participating was small. All the students participating were interested in reading literature in English.

### **2.4 Procedure**

In the course of six weeks, students were presented with two new authors each week. There were three 75-minute lessons every week for the six weeks and one final 75-minute meeting in the seventh week lasting from 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018 (see Appendix 3). First of all, a tutor blog was opened where the tasks and short stories were uploaded and updated. The platform used for both tutor and student blogs was wordpress.com (the tutor blog can be found at: <https://literatureblogjpg.wordpress.com/>).

In the first lesson, the students were shown a slideshow about different kinds of blogs and sites where blogs could be opened. Then they were given time to open their blogs, modify them and send the link to the teacher. Then they were asked to write their first blog post about their expectations for the course and how they would compare British and American culture and what they think are the different cultural values of the two countries. The following two days, they were presented with the first two authors, at first seeing a slideshow about the authors' background and then having to read the story and do the tasks.

For the rest of the weeks the outline was the same: the first lesson of the week for the presentation of the background of two new authors and then commenting on each other's previous week's blog posts. The only exception was the first lesson of the second week as the teacher was unable to be present. The following day, students read the short story of the first author of the pair and on the third day the short story of the second author of the pair.

The final meeting in the seventh week was for overall conclusions. Students wrote their last blog posts giving feedback and answering the same question about the comparison of the British and American culture and cultural values as in the very first lesson. Finally, they had to fill in a feedback questionnaire compiled by the school.

## **2.5 Results**

To analyse if blogging helped to develop writing skills, QCMap was used (<https://www.qcamap.org/>) to make a code tree to analyse different aspects of written language. In order to analyse students' reactions and their level of motivation, the author analysed the answers of the feedback questionnaire provided by the school the students attend. Also, the author compared the students' absence with the time they made their blog posts. For the analysis, the program IBM SPSS Statistics 2.0 and Microsoft Excel was used. IBM SPSS Statistics 2.0 was used for analysing if there was a correlation between students' absence and their blog posts being late, and also to analyse other variables and statistics. Microsoft Excel was used to type in the statistics for IBM SPSS Statistics and to count and to take sums.

### **2.5.1 Using blogs to activate writing skills**

#### *Content*

Students' blog posts went through considerable improvement in their content. At the end of the course, students were able to add in-depth discussion, develop and express their



thoughts. Comparing the first posts with the last posts, the first literature-based post mostly answered the teacher's assigned questions and took the ideas from the story read. However, with the final literature-based post, students also added their own ideas, thoughts and opinions to their blog which indeed was one of aims of the course. Furthermore, students were able to answer teacher's leading questions better and more thoroughly at the end of the course.

The additional material in the content of the blog posts is also seen by comparing the word counts of posts. The word count increased on the average by 160 words when comparing the first literature-based post with the last one (see Table 1). The word count increased most in the discussions of students with higher language level. In one case, the increase of word count was 1174 words, with the first literature-based post having 418 words and the last 1592 words. On two occasions, the word count decreased but the content did not suffer. These posts still were thorough and the ideas were expanded although in short, but quite satisfactory manner. Based on the table it can be seen that one of the students whose word count decreased, was of low language level and the other one was of middle-higher. Unfortunately, the course was too short to draw any conclusions about this deviation.

<b>Student number</b>	<b>Level of language</b>	<b>Word count in first (lit. based) post</b>	<b>Word count in last (lit. based) post</b>	<b>Difference</b>
1	High	390	532	+142
2	High	474	561	+87
3	Low	179	207	+28
4	Middle-Higher	342	482	+140
5	High	418	1592	+1174
6	Low	232	203	-29
7	Middle-Higher	426	391	-35
8	High	397	440	+43
9	Middle-Higher	457	486	+29

10	Low	268	364	+96
11	High	307	506	+199
12	Middle-Higher	396	473	+77
13	Middle-Lower	298	589	+291
14	Middle-Higher	553	N/A	N/A
<b>Mean:</b>		5137	6862	160,14

**Table 1:** *Language levels and word counts in posts.*

### *Style*

Stylistically, a shift from formal to informal and more personalised language was noticed. The first blog posts were formal and straightforward, answering the teacher's leading questions. However, the later posts became more and more informal and personalised in the sense that students started to use vocabulary and sentence structures characteristic to more free style of writing. For example, we can look at the first literature-based blog post by Student 5:

I think that "Kew gardens" by Virginia Woolf is all and all about life. About how everyone is living their lives and dealing with their own kind of problems. That's why I think the snail was there- a small creature trying to figure out if it should go over or under the leaf. /.../

However, in the final literature based post, Student 5 used the following type of language:

"/.../ It is the difference between cultures and here we come to face a problem... a problem of interpretation. It isn't just about language barrier. In this story there is also a misunderstanding because of cultures.

Omg. I did not intend to come to this conclusion. I was just writing this paragraph and boom. Look where we ended up. Full circle. Wow. /.../"

Comparing the two posts, it is quite apparent that the language has shifted from more formal to informal language. Although the first post contains short forms and semi-structured sentences, the general impression left is polite and straightforward. However, the final post of the same student shows, for example, extensive use of punctuation, slang words and short forms are used even more frequently.

Another example could be the difference between the first and last literature-based post by Student 13. As her first post, she wrote the following:

The first people “Kew Gardens” talks about are Eleanor and Simon. They are walking in the garden. I don’t think they love each other. They do not hold hand or even walk side by side. Simon thinks about about a woman he wanted to marry and Eleanor doesn’t seem to care. The gray-haired lady that kissed Eleanors neck is on her mind. Neither of them wants to be where they are./.../

Although the style itself is not very formal, as there are short forms and grammatical issues, the post still answers the questions in a very matter of fact way, moving from one question to another and adds only a few of the author’s own ideas. The final post, however, has more personal opinions and has even less formal language, as there are now mistakes in the use of capital letters as well:

This is by far the hardest story i have ever read. It took me a while to finish it because i had to read some parts over and over again before i started to understand. I read the story 3 times and i’m still not 100% sure i know what the author wanted to say. I honestly feel a little stupid because i do not get the story./.../

Thus, it can be assumed that blogs tend to encourage the style to shift from formal to informal as students perceive their blog posts to be their own opinion. Furthermore, reading literature while writing might help the students to find their own style to write in, based on the style of a different author read, as there are several more examples of this tendency. One being Student 12 whose first blog post was straightforward, it lacked short forms and emotion. The last post of the student, however, had mostly short forms and expressed emotions such as “I enjoyed the story” or “It was hard to read, just like the last story we read, but somehow I didn’t struggle that much on this one.” Student 13 started to analyse themselves and their feelings induced by the story in their last literature based blog post opposed to their first which was focused on answering the assigned questions. This kind of transfer of emotions was apparent in most of the students’ final posts.

### *Vocabulary*

Students performance did not show any specific changes in vocabulary during the course. The choice of words did not change much throughout the course and it seems that

the sophistication of word choice depends on the student's own personal skill and language level. The higher the level, the more sophisticated the word choice was already at the beginning of the course and did not go through almost any development during the course. Still, a slight improvement might be seen in the word choice and spelling mistakes of the lower-level students. At the beginning of the course they made more spelling mistakes than at the end of the course and they were better able to take words from the story they read and derive it into other forms for it to fit into their discussion. However, as mentioned above, there was not much development when comparing the beginning and the end of the course.

### *Grammar*

The development of grammar was most apparent in students with lower levels of English. Compared to the beginning of the course, lower-level students did not make as many punctuation, tense and other grammar mistakes at the end of the course. For example, Student 3 first literature based post:

Kew Gardens are in botanic garden. Kew Gardens is described by characters in detail, like shapes and colors of leaves. The story made me feel like its autumn and let me feel the tension between people. It was pretty hard for me to follow the story but understandable. /.../

As the final literature based post, Student 3 had the following:

Communication breaks down repeatedly in "Interpreter of Maladies," often with hurtful consequences. Mr. Kapasi, who is the interpreter of maladies, as Mrs. Das names him, has lost his ability to communicate with his wife and also Mr. and Mrs. Das who have lost their ability to communicate as normal people does. /.../

As it can be seen, the first post of Student 3 uses mostly simple sentences which often still are faulty. The post has several different mistakes in sentence structures in tenses, singulars and plurals, ascribing actions to inanimate objects and having a missing subject. All this makes the understanding of the post problematic. However, the final post of the same student is easier to follow as it has fewer punctuation and tense mistakes. The word order in sentences is also more advanced and the piece is quite smooth to read.

To give another example, Student 10 first blog post had some grammatical issues in it which made the understanding a bit problematic, such as: “Kew Gardens is a place full of trees, flowers and butterflies. It is a place that takes people in their own world and in some ways enchants them./.../”

The final post of Student 10 does not show improvement in punctuation for example, but is easier to read and understand as the word order and sentences structures are a bit clearer: “I think that the title stands for Mr. Kapasi, who works as an interpreter. People tell him their troubles and he translates them to the doctor. He is the key to seeing the reality between Mr. Das and Mrs. Das. /.../”

Thus, it can be assumed that through reading and writing on a regular basis, weaker students’ ability to handle grammar improved to some extent. Still, the development was very individual and no generalisations can be made. It can be assumed, however, that the development of the ability to handle grammar was also caused by the fact that some lower level students also had their regular English lessons during the same period with the literature blog course and the others did not.

The grammar of higher-level students did not develop much throughout the course as their control of grammar was already quite good. Only some slight differences can be seen. For example, an outtake from Student 11 first literature based blog post showing only very few grammar slips:

I think the Kew Gardens don’t have a fixed location. They could be anywhere and everywhere and I think that is rather the point, because the story describes the gardens much like the human state of being: slightly out of focus, sleepy and malleable enough for everyone to make what they need of it. /.../

For comparison, an example from the final post of Student 11 is grammatically correct:

Mr Kapasi was the interpreter of maladies in this story. He as a character has a way of opening people’s minds to the world and letting all of their pain out. He is neutral and trustworthy which makes everyone want to confess to him in search of aid. /.../

This suggests that for the higher-level students, there is no visible improvement in handling the grammar that can be accounted for the course.

### **2.5.2 Students' motivation**

In order to find out if a supervised online reading course helps to keep students motivated, students' answers for the questionnaire (see Appendix 4) compiled by the school, and the comparison of absences and posts' dates (see Appendix 5) were analysed. The author analysed these in order to find out if the support of co-students and teacher motivates a working atmosphere and students to upload their work at the right time.

#### *Questionnaire*

Of the fourteen students participating in the course, twelve answered the questionnaire. Of the twelve respondents, six students claimed that they picked the course just because they had to choose an elective course and six said that they picked the course because they were interested in the course based on the course information only. The average score that the students who participated gave to the course was 9.2 out of 10 maximum points.

The students' responses to the question "What did you like about the course?" shows that students mostly appreciated the fact that they could read and learn about new authors, the lesson was calm and that they mostly managed to do all the work in the classroom. They also liked that the lesson was different from what they had experienced so far. One student claimed that they have never had a course in the blog format. Still, for some students the workload for a 75-minute lesson was too great and they did not manage to get everything done and had to do homework.

Also, as some students mentioned that they enjoyed the teacher's enthusiasm and that the teacher's activity supported their activities throughout the course (getting an average 9.6

points out of 10) and some students mentioned that being in a classroom knowing that everyone is doing the same thing helped them to concentrate, it can be said that the presence of the teacher and other students might help to motivate students to do their assigned work.

Based on these figures, it can be assumed that generally students enjoyed the course and thus their motivation to participate was rather high. Several factors contributed to this, for example a new and unusual format of the course, the presence of the teacher and co-students, and the fact that students knew that both the teacher and co-students would read their posts.

#### *Absences vs blog posts*

In order to find whether there is a correlation between students' absence and their blog posts being late, I calculated the frequencies of how often students were absent and how often their blog posts were late. Spearman's correlation test or T-test did not give statistically important variables as the selection is too small. With calculating the frequencies and comparing them, the author aimed to demonstrate whether, if students are in the classroom, their lesson's work gets done at the right time, and if they are absent or do the tasks at home, then their blog posts will not arrive at the right time.

In Table 2 (see Appendix 5 Table 2), only the days when students had to write a blog post are shown. As it can be seen from the table, there were few absences at the beginning of the course but as the course advanced, the number of absences also grew, with sometimes 50% students being absent. Table 3 (see Appendix 5 table 3), which shows the number of blog posts being posted later than on the day the lesson, shows the same tendency. At the beginning the number of posts coming late was small, 2-3 posts per day, but starting from post 7, the number increases greatly and more than a half of posts were uploaded late that day. Post 13 shows that even though none of the students were absent that day, half of the

posts were uploaded late. This might either show that students were already tired as the course had lasted for a while or that the stories and tasks were more difficult at the end of the course. Post 13 was also right before the beginning of the assessment test week in the school which might indicate that students were more focused on their coming exams rather than reading and writing blog posts.

Analysing the absences and late blog posts student by student (see Table 4), the correlation between the students' absence and late blog posts can be seen better. Students who were not absent on the days when they were to upload a post usually were not unpunctual with the blog post as well. The more absences a student had, the more they were also late with uploading their blog posts. However, as for example Student 5 was absent two times but had five late blog posts shows that we cannot generalise. In order to draw stronger conclusions, the course itself would have had to have been stretched over a more extended period of time and had more blog posts. Also, as only the days with blog posts are presented, they do not mirror the real number of absences per student.

<b>Student</b>	<b>Absences</b>	<b>Posts being late</b>
Student 1	0	0
Student 2	0	0
Student 3	2	2
Student 4	1	1
Student 5	2	5
Student 6	0	4
Student 7	2	3
Student 8	3	4
Student 9	3	8
Student 10	3	8
Student 11	3	3
Student 12	5	10
Student 13	4	9
Student 14	5	12

**Table 4:** *Absences and unpunctuality of blog posts per student.*



## 2.6 Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to see if using blogs helps students to activate their writing skills and if a supervised online reading course helps to keep students motivated to fulfil the tasks they had been given. Overall, it can be said that the aims of the thesis were met.

Several authors (Alsamadani 2017; Chew & Lee 2013; Kaupmees 2015; Sun 2010) have conducted research and experiments with students using blogs to develop their writing skills and to discuss literature. The outcomes of these studies, however, have shown different things.

Firstly, Alsamadani (2017) found in his study that during a course lasting for 14 weeks, students managed to improve their posts by content, style and word choice to some extent. However, only a slight improvement was seen in grammar development. The results of this study showed similar outcomes. Students' style of writing went through a considerable change from formal to more informal use of language. This could be explained with the assumption that as students were asked to express their own opinion and discuss their own ideas instead of writing a very strict academic piece of writing (such as a formal letter or essay), a freer style was used. Blogs are usually associated with informal use of language as it is considered as a platform where people can express their thoughts and opinions and are not connected with formal and academic style (Sun 2010). Thus, students may subconsciously have started using language associated with this environment. However, this is in contrast with Alsamadani's (2017) research where he found that students blog posts became more presentable at the end of the course. The cause of this divergence might be the fact that students were not given any guidelines or requirements about their style or use of language in my course and this may explain the shift from formal to informal style.

Alsamadani (2017) also found that word choice improved with collaborative blog posts but not individually. In the course compiled for this study, students wrote their blog posts individually and thus the outcomes were again very similar to Alsamadani's study. There was no noticeable development in word choice. Students with high language level did not go through any changes as their vocabulary was already sophisticated at the beginning of the course. For students with low language level, a slight improvement was noticed in spelling and derivation. The reasons behind this could be that firstly, for most of the students, the new vocabulary they encountered was not retained as students were not asked to write out or work with the vocabulary any other way but to make sure that they understand the general meaning of the story. The other reason could be that for students with high language level, they had acquired the vocabulary already from somewhere else.

However, the fact that students' vocabulary use did not change throughout the course is surprising and not in accordance with some other previous studies. Hişmanoğlu (2005), Collie & Slater (2006) and Bamford & Day (2010) have claimed that reading in a language classroom is beneficial for vocabulary growth. Horst (2005) found in her study with adult foreign language learners that after a six week reading programme students recognised ten new words on average. The difference in the outcomes could be explained with the difference of the number of participants. In Horst's study (2005) the number of participants was 21, in this study it was 14. Also, based on previous studies about blogging as a facilitator for activating writing skills, blogging has proved to be a useful resource (Kaupmees 2015, Musa 2016, Alsamadani 2017). Blogging has proved to be a way to learn and to be introduced to new vocabulary through reading each other's posts (Kaupmees 2015, Musa 2016) and through collaborative blog posts (Alsamadani 2017). However, this study interestingly did not prove this outcome. This also could be attributed to the fact that the course was too short and the results had not yet become visible.

According to this study, students were able to develop the content of their blog posts throughout the course. At the end of the course, students were able to add more in-depth discussion, their own ideas and opinions to their posts. Students' posts became more detailed and thorough, students were able to expand their discussion and this was not only apparent in the content but also from the word count of individual blog posts. The word counts rose by 160 words on average, when comparing the first and last literature based blog posts. This is in accordance with several previous studies (Chew & Lee 2013, Kaupmees 2015, Alsamadani 2017) which have also shown that the more students write and express their own opinion, the better their discussions become. This is a positive tendency which proves that blogs are useful resources for developing not only writing but also argumentation and discussion skills. It is necessary to develop these skills first for the Estonian National Examination in English (Gontšarova 2018) but also for the writing assignments done in university or later (Johnson 2004). Blogs encourage discussion and communication as the author of the blog knows that they have an audience in the form of co-students and teacher (Warlick 2007).

Similarly to previous findings (Kaupmees 2015, Alsamadani 2017), students' grammar use did not go through considerable change throughout the course. Both of the previous studies showed that students' posts still showed issues with capital letters, punctuation, tenses and prepositions. In this study, the findings were similar. With already high language level students, there was very slight improvement as their grammar was already good. With lower language level students, there was a slight improvement but there were still issues with capital 'I' and punctuation. However, it is unclear whether this is a problem of faulty language mechanics or the informal use of language the Internet and blogging tends to encourage. Also, it might seem unreasonable to use blogging as a means

to develop writing skills if the benefits are limited. Still, the course lasted only six weeks and this is a very short time for such changes to become apparent.

Reading in a foreign language classroom is said to be very important. Literature is said to be a source of valuable authentic material that is rich in cultural context and thus provides support in enriching the target language. They also involve a reader as the topics books discuss are often universal (Collie & Slater 2006). There are two main ways how to use literature in a foreign language classroom: extensive and intensive reading. For the purposes of this study, the two were merged and the course seemed to show the good sides of both.

Firstly, it is said that with extensive reading it is very important that the students focus more on the context and not individual words, and that a teacher is an important example to help students be motivated in reading (Bamford & Day 2004). From the answers of the students to the feedback questionnaire and their blog posts, the students were excited and interested to read the stories that they were presented with as they were not told to work with the vocabulary and details of the language, but to focus more on discussion and presenting their own ideas. Students also said that the course itself was interesting, the enthusiasm and motivation of the teacher made them feel eager to read the stories and that the overall atmosphere of the course was good and motivating. Also, the fact that their own co-students read their stories made them more interested in writing thorough blog posts. Knowing that they have an audience makes students more motivated to express their opinion and to do it in a clear manner (Chew & Lee 2013).

Online reading is said to have several benefits. As students spend more time online than the previous generations, their reading habits have changed (Puksand 2012). Students already read from different digital devices such as computers, e-readers tablet PCs etc. (Jorge & Carcedo 2012). Student feedback to an online reading course was positive. The course got

an overall score of 9.2 out of 10 points and the students said that they liked the way the course was compiled in the sense of reading and posting online as they had not had a course like this before. The course also aimed to develop students' digital competences and their digital literacy, information searching skills on the Internet which are listed as one part of the different competences ENCGL (2011) requires schools to teach. Although there was no question concerning this in the students' questionnaire, it could be assumed that they developed this skill at least to some extent as occasionally they were required to search for information online (for reference, see Appendix 3 page 49 Week 2, James Joyce 'Eveline').

It could be said that regardless of limitations, such as possible eye strain (Jorge & Carcedo 2012) and different distractions the Internet poses (Silva 2009), students enjoy reading from electronic devices and having varied options for reading is motivating for students. Still, it should be born in mind that not all courses should be online as extensive use of electronic devices still have effects that are detrimental to health (Silva 2009).

Comparing students' absences with their late blog posts did not prove to have any significant correlations. Some parallels could be drawn, for example that the students who were not absent during the days they were to write their literature based blog posts, were not late with any of the posts, and the students who were sometimes absent during the days they were to write their literature based blog posts, sometimes had late blog posts as well. However, no definite correlation was found.

At the beginning of the study, the author also set the aim to find out if it is possible to introduce cultural and social differences between British and American cultures through literature. Unfortunately, it proved to be impossible to check if this set goal was fulfilled because the course was too short, too few stories were read and too few blog posts were written. However, this is something that could be done in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of using literature in foreign language classrooms to this extent that the fact itself is not questioned by scholars. Reading in general is said to develop different language skills, general knowledge, critical thinking, and helps to develop personality. Both the extensive and intensive reading have their own benefits and shortcomings. Intensive reading treats a text in a very thorough manner, focuses on the exact meaning and understanding of the text and is usually a preferred type of reading in textbooks and study materials. Extensive reading treats the general meaning and understanding of the text, does not focus on the small details, students usually choose the stories they want to read themselves and, as the name implies, it is done outside of classroom.

However, teachers and students are hesitant to use either kind of reading for several reasons. The curricula are usually packed and this leaves no room for reading either in- or outside of classrooms. Furthermore, buying books for traditional reading programmes is costly and needs other resources, such as good bookstores as well. Also, students are hesitant to pick up a book because reading seems laborious. They either are not used to reading or choose material which is too difficult for them to understand, and thus they get demotivated.

A solution could be to compile online reading courses. First, there are several ready-made courses on the Internet already that are available for everybody. Second, there are also resources available just for e-books which do not need a special room to be stored in. Also, students might be more motivated to read online as e-book readers, tablets and computers are widespread and students use at least one of these gadgets on a daily basis. Using technology to facilitate reading also develops students' digital competences and literacies.

Based on this, computers could also be used to tie reading and writing. Writing is a very important skill students need not only for the National Examination in English but also

in their later life. Thus, a blogging course could be offered to students to develop both of the skills. Blogs provide a multidimensional way to express one's opinion, read other students' ideas and have a discussion about them. Students feel motivated to write about their thoughts because they know that they have an audience. Blogging has also proved to positively affect students' language mechanics, word choice, style and the development of content.

Based on all these previous studies, the author of this paper compiled a blogging and reading course with an aim to find out if and how blogging helps to develop students' writing skills. Furthermore, the author hoped to find out if a supervised reading course helps to motivate students to read. A narrower aim was to learn if it is possible to introduce different cultural and social issues to students using literature, and to gain experience in compiling a course, finding the necessary materials, and teaching literature.

The course lasted for seven weeks during which students were introduced to twelve British and American writers and made fourteen blog posts. The number of students participating was also fourteen. There were three 75-minute lessons per week for six weeks, and on final, seventh, week, only one meeting was scheduled. Students were asked to open a blog in wordpress.com and to share their blog URL's with the rest of the group.

The course followed a strict outline. The first lesson of the week introduced two new authors, one British and one American. The second lesson was for reading a short story by the introduced British author and writing a blog post discussing the issues there. The third lesson had the same form but the story read and discussed was by the introduced American writer. Students were also asked to read and comment on each other's blog posts.

Analysing students blog posts, it became apparent that students blog posts went through a considerable change through these seven weeks. Students were able to improve their content, their discussion was more thorough and they were not so much fixated on

answering the questions given by the teacher but more on their own ideas and emotions. Their blog posts also became longer. Furthermore, students' writing style shifted from a formal style to a more informal style as blogs tend to facilitate informal type of writing to express one's own opinion and ideas.

Considering grammar and vocabulary, the results were somewhat surprising. For students with a high language level, there was no apparent change in the handling of language mechanics or word choice. For students with a lower language level, there were some changes in these two aspects. Lower level students were able to gain more control of their grammar use, some of the issues with structuring the sentences became less frequent as the later blog posts were easier and clearer to understand. However, there were still issues with capital letters and punctuation. Also, there were no visible changes in vocabulary. Even though students did not start using vocabulary presented to them in the short stories in their later posts, they did start experimenting with derivation which they did not do in the earlier posts. Thus, some development in the use of vocabulary was still to be seen.

Students' overall response was positive. Students liked the course and several noted that they had not had an online reading and writing course before which made it very interesting. Also, students said that the enthusiasm and motivation of the teacher helped to spark their interest, and knowing that they had an audience, made them contribute and express their ideas. Comparing students' absences with their late blog posts did not prove to have any statistically important correlations and thus no generalisations can be made on this. It can be seen, though, that those students who were not absent, were not late with their blog posts, and those students who were occasionally absent, were also sometimes late with uploading their blog posts.

All in all, both the online reading course and using blogging for developing students' writing skills could be beneficial for teachers to use, as this thesis also proved. This approach



was motivating for students and developed their discussion skills. Needless to say, the success of one online course does not mean that we should abandon the traditional way of studying, as the benefits to grammar and vocabulary development, and the stylistic shift that appeared during the course might not be desirable aims. This approach could be used as supplement to the traditional classes or maybe offered to those who have a more thorough interest in English culture, language and language mechanics.

It could be said that using blogging is a good and interesting way to activate students' writing skills, to motivate them to read literature and it might develop their digital competences. However, it has to be noted that there are some limitations to the study. Firstly, the number of students participating in the course was small enough to prevent any statistical generalisations to be made, thus it is hard to say if all the conclusions drawn are appropriate. Also, the duration of the course itself was very short which does not allow to draw any specific conclusions about the activation of writing skills. It might not be because of this course that the changes in students' language mechanics and word choice improved, but it could also be attributed to the fact that some students had their regular English lessons in parallel to the course. However, it could be assumed that the changes in style and content were because of the blogging course as in regular English lessons students write formal text, but the changes were towards more informal style.

Although this study revealed that blogging can have a positive impact on students' writing skills and they enjoyed the course, some modifications could still be made. First, the course could last for a longer time in order to see if the development of writing skills can really be attributed to the course. Also, a larger number of students could participate in the course in order to be able to draw significant conclusions and to make generalisations. Furthermore, students could be divided into groups based on their language levels in order to find out how this kind of a course affects students with different abilities and competences.

The reading material could be more varied and could include more authors and topics. However, the course developed proved the potential of online reading courses and suggests that further work in the field is likely to be productive.

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## Appendix 1 – COURSE INFORMATION

Kirjandusblogi: kuidas võrrelda Briti ja Ameerika kirjandust
<p><b>Sihtgrupp:</b></p> <p>10.- 12. klasside õpilastele, kellele pakub huvi inglise keel ja Briti ning Ameerika kirjandus, kes soovivad arendada oskust avaldada oma arvamust blogimise teel inglise keeles.</p> <p>HUM suunaaine</p>
<p><b>Eeldused:</b></p> <p>Puuduvad.</p>
I SISU
<p><b>Kursuse sisu:</b></p> <p>Tutvutakse erinevatel aegadel Suurbritannias ja Ameerika Ühendriikides kirjutatud lühijuttudega, püütakse neid analüüsida ning omavahel võrrelda. Vaadatakse kultuuri ja väärtuste rolli kirjanduses. Teksti kohta tuleb õpilasel blogi vormis kirjutada oma arvamusest ja tunnetest, mis tekkisid teksti lugedes. Aeg-ajalt tuleb otsida internetist lisainformatsiooni, et võrrelda tekste tänapäevaga. Tekste püütakse seostada mingi konkreetse stiili ja ajastuga kas Briti või Ameerika kirjanduses.</p> <p>Terve kursus toimub auditoorselt koolimajas.</p>
<p><b>Õpitulemused:</b></p> <p>Õpilane oskab ära tunda erinevaid kirjandusstiile Briti ja Ameerika kirjanduses ning ta oskab suunavate küsimuste kaudu arutleda vastava ajastu ja tänapäeva sarnasuste ja erinevuste üle. Õpilane täiendab oma informatsiooni otsimise ja töötlemise oskusi.</p> <p>Kursuse raames valmib õpilase blogi, kus on kirjas tema mõtted ja arutelud, õpilastel on võimalus üksteise blogisid lugeda ning kommentaarides arvamust avaldada. Selle kaudu arendavad õpilased ka oma inglise keeles kirjutamise oskust ja digipädevust.</p>
<p><b>Õppematerjalid, lisamaterjalid, IKT kasutamine:</b></p> <p>Tekstidega varustab õpilasi kursuse juhendaja. Tarvis on tunda arvutit ja interneti baastasemel, olla kursis erinevate blogimise platvormidega (Blogger, Wordpress jne).</p>
II HINDAMINE
<p><b>Hindamisele pääsemise tingimused:</b></p> <p>Hindamine toimub kursuse lõpus. Selleks on tarvis, et õpilane on teinud oma blogisse vajaliku arvu sissekandeid ja kommenteerinud teiste postitusi.</p>
<p><b>Lõpliku tulemuse kujunemine:</b></p> <p>Lõplik hinne kujuneb blogipostituste alusel. Kursus näeb ette, et iga blogipostitus sisaldab vähemalt 100-sõnalist sisukat ja keeleliselt korrektset vastust 1-3 arutlevale küsimusele. Blogipostitusi koguneb kursuse jooksul 13. Samuti hinnatakse kommentaare kaasõpilaste postitustele. Iga õppenädala lõpus tuleb valida, läbi lugeda ja kommenteerida ühe kaasõpilase nädala blogipostitused. Kommentaaride puhul hinnatakse keelt ja aruteluoskust, toetavat suhtumist. Kui sooritatud on alla poole kursusest, on kursus ebaõnnestunud. Hinde vaidlustamine toimub vastavalt kooli hindamisjuhendile.</p>
<p><b>Väljavõtted õpilaste tagasisidest kursusele:</b></p> <p>Toimub esimest korda.</p>

## Appendix 2 – COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Day	Topic	Nr of posts	Authors/Themes
30.10.2018	Tuesday	Introduction	1	<b>What is blogging? Difference between British and American culture and cultural values.</b>
31.10.2018	Wednesday	British	1	Virginia Woolf "Kew Gardens"
01.11.2018	Thursday	American	1	Mark Twain "A Fable"
06.11.2018	Tuesday	Introduction/Conclusion		<b>About the two new authors. Comments to previous week's posts.</b>
07.11.2018	Wednesday	British	1	James Joyce "Eveline"
08.11.2018	Thursday	American	1	William Faulkner "A Rose for Emily"
13.11.2018	Tuesday	Introduction/Conclusion		<b>About the two new authors. Comments to previous week's posts.</b>
14.11.2018	Wednesday	British	1	George Orwell "Shooting an Elephant"
15.11.2018	Thursday	American	1	Toni Morrison "Recitatif"
20.11.2018	Tuesday	Introduction/Conclusion		<b>About the two new authors. Comments to previous week's posts.</b>
21.11.2018	Wednesday	British	1	Roald Dahl "Lamb to The Slaughter"
22.11.2018	Thursday	American	1	Kate Chopin "Story of an Hour"
27.11.2018	Tuesday	Introduction/Conclusion		<b>About the two new authors. Comments to previous week's posts.</b>
28.11.2018	Wednesday	British	1	Ian McEwan "Conversation with a Cupboard Man"
29.11.2018	Thursday	American	1	Shirley Jackson "The Lottery"
04.12.2018	Tuesday	Introduction/Conclusion		<b>About the two new authors. Comments to previous week's posts.</b>
05.12.2018	Wednesday	British	1	Zadie Smith 'Now More Than Ever'
06.12.2018	Thursday	American	1	Jhumpa Lahiri 'Interpreter of Maladies'
11.12.2018	FINAL MEETING		1	<b>General feedback of the course.</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	19 meetings	12 authors	14	

## Appendix 3 – LESSON PLANS

**Week 1. Themes and aims:** Students formulate the term “blog”. They think about British and American culture literature and social issues. Students learn about two authors. Student think about topics such as the essence of being, what it means to be a person, how one perceives themselves.

### **30.10.18 Tuesday, introduction. What is blogging? Difference between British and American culture and cultural values.**

**Aims:** Students formulate the term “blog”. Students think about British and American culture, literature, social issues.

**General:** Talk about different blogs (slideshow). What kind of blogs are there? What are the main differences?

#### **Tasks:**

Sign up and open a blog in wordpress.com. Edit it and make it work.

<https://literatureblogjpg.wordpress.com/>

Write your first blog post about the cultural and culture value differences you think there are between British and American culture. Consider the following topics: different kind of people, what it means to be a person, life and death, racial issues, women and their place in the society, the worth of a human being, modern society.

### **31.10.18 Wednesday. Virginia Woolf ‘Kew Gardens’**

**Aims:** Students learn about Virginia Woolf. Students think about the essence of being/existing.

**General:** Briefly about Woolf and her life.

**Tasks for students:** Read “Kew Gardens” and answer the following questions:

- 1) Where are the Kew Gardens?
- 2) What kind of emotions does the story provoke in you?
- 3) How would you describe Simon’s and Eleanor’s relationship? Why?
- 4) On several occasions, a snail is mentioned in the story. In your opinion, why is it important for the story?
- 5) Which are the two men be talking about? What hints you to it? (research)
- 6) By introducing the two middle-class women to the story, what kind of ideas might Woolf try to convey? Compare with Simon and elderly man. (life carries on; women are better at continuing with daily chores than men)
- 7) What do you think, who could the young couple at the end represent?
- 8) Overall, what do you think the story is about?

#### **Materials:**

<http://sittingbee.com/kew-gardens-virginia-woolf/>

Cassagnère, M. L., (2013). Heavy Nothings in Virginia Woolf’s “Kew Gardens”. *Journal of the Short Story in English*. Accessed at: <http://jsse.revues.org/1341>



### **1.11.18 Thursday. Mark Twain “A Fable”**

**Aims:** Students learn more about Mark Twain’s life and his work as a writer. Students think about what it means to be and exist. Students are able to link their new ideas with previous lesson.

**Tasks:** “A Fable”. Read the text and do the following tasks:

1. What could be the theme of the story? Explain
2. What/Who do you think the animals represent?
3. What could be the moral of the story? By the cat but in general?
4. Where did the confusion in the story come from?
5. How much of the story could you apply to humans/everyday life?
6. Write a short summary where you explain where/how the essence of being/existing is apparent in this short story.

**Materials:**

<http://marktwainauthorstudy.blogspot.com/2008/06/response-to-literature-fable-new.html>

**Week 2. Themes and aims:** Students learn about two new authors. Through their work, they think about the topics such as letting go, identity, issue of death.

### **06.11.18 Tuesday. Introduction to two new authors. Comments on blog posts.**

**Tasks:**

1. Conclusions of what we have done so far. What you have learned. Read and comment one of your classmate’s blog.
2. Read a short summary of our next two authors' life:

James Joyce:

<https://www.biography.com/people/james-joyce-9358676>

William Faulkner:

<https://www.biography.com/people/william-faulkner-9292252>

Did you know anything about them before? What was the most interesting/surprising thing about their lives? Write your answer as a comment to tutor’s blog post.

### **07.11.18 Wednesday. James Joyce “Eveline”**

**Tasks:** Before you read: what does it mean to “let go”?

Read the story and do the following tasks:

- Provide a summary of the story.
- What kind of parallels can you bring between the story and Ireland’s society/issues at that time? (Do research)
- What do you think is the main issue the writer wants to draw our attention to? What is the theme or topic of the story? What kind of fears does it touch?

**Materials:**

<https://interestingliterature.com/2017/07/18/a-summary-and-analysis-of-james-joyces-eveline/>

<https://www.independent.ie/life/world-war-1/society-what-ireland-was-really-like-in-1914-30249140.html>

### **08.11.18 Thursday. William Faulkner “A Rose for Emily”**

The issue/topic of death and alienation.

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a discussion based on the topics:

- How expected/unexpected was the ending for you?
- In what area of the USA does the story take place? How did you understand? What are the things that are distinctive to the area? (Consider both landscape and society)
- How is Emily alienated from the rest of the people? (Literary elements, storyline)
- What do you think, were the townspeople aware of what was in the room upstairs, that hadn't been opened for long? Bring proof.
- Describe your overall emotions connected to the story.

**Materials:**

<https://www.shmoop.com/a-rose-for-emily/literary-devices.html>

**Week 3. Themes and aims: Students discuss topics thought about before. Students learn about two new authors. Through their work, students think about political and racial issues, being a foreigner in foreign land, and identity.**

### **13.11.18 Tuesday. Introduction to two new authors. Comments on blog posts.**

**Tasks:**

Conclusions of what we have done so far. What you have learned.

1. Read and comment one of your classmate's blog.
2. Read a short summary of our next two authors' life:

#### **George Orwell & Toni Morrison**

Did you know anything about them before? What are the issues these authors discuss? How are their approaches different? Write your thoughts as comment to tutor's blog post.

**Materials:**

<https://www.biography.com/people/george-orwell-9429833>

<https://www.biography.com/people/toni-morrison-9415590>

### **14.11.18 Wednesday. George Orwell "Shooting an Elephant"**

**Tasks:** Read the essay and discuss the following:

- Which kind of themes can you find in the essay?
- What kind of difficulties did Orwell stand against? How did he feel dealing with them?
- How is the topic of identity apparent in the essay?

- Can there be any allegory between the colonialism and the elephant?
- Who is in charge in the story? Orwell or the townspeople?

**Materials:**

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/shooting-an-elephant/summary-and-analysis>

**15.11.18 Thursday. Toni Morrison "Recitatif"**

**Tasks:** Read the text and consider following:

- Of which race was Twyla? Roberta? Why do you think so?
- How does Twyla's and Roberta's relationship change through time?
- How would you characterise both of the main characters?
- "What happened to Maggie?" Why is Maggie so important in the story? What does it indicate?
- What is the main theme/moral of the story?

**Materials:**

<https://genius.com/Toni-morrison-recitatif-annotated>

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/recitatif/summary-and-analysis>

**Week 4. Themes and aims:** Students contemplate on previous themes and topics. Students learn about two new authors. Through their work, they think about topics such as women as part of society and next to a man.

**19.11.2018 Tuesday. Conclusions. Comments. Two new authors**

**Tasks:**

Conclusions of what we have done so far. What you have learned.

Read and comment one of your classmate's blog. "Shooting an Elephant" and "Recitatif"

**Roald Dahl & Kate Chopin**

Did you know anything about them before? What are the issues these authors discuss? How are their approaches different? Write your thoughts as comment to tutor's blog post.

**Materials:** Slides. Internet.

<https://www.biography.com/people/roald-dahl-9264648>

<https://americanliterature.com/author/kate-chopin>

**20.11.2018 Wednesday. Roald Dahl "Lamb to the Slaughter"**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following:

- What can you say about the man and the woman's relationship based on the story? Think about the societal viewpoint.
- Is Mary a typical housewife? Why?

- What could the themes that were apparent in the society and in the story around the time it was written? Do research.

**Materials:** Slides about the background.

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/lamb-to-the-slaughter/summary-and-analysis>

### **21.11.2018 Thursday. Kate Chopin “Story of an Hour”**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following:

- What could the themes that were apparent in the society and in the story around the time it was written? Do research.
- How does the description of what Louise sees from the window, describe her own feelings? Bring examples.
- What kind of feelings rush through Louise?
- Think about Kate Chopin and her work. What do you think, why did she write such a piece? What did she want to say?

**Materials:** Slides

<https://www.thoughtco.com/analysis-story-of-an-hour-2990475>

**Week 5. Themes and aims:** Students contemplate on previous topics and try to link them. They learn about two new authors and through their work, students think about topics such as the worth of a human being, the grotesquery of human worth.

### **27.11.2018 Tuesday. Conclusion. Comments. Two new authors.**

Conclusions of what we have done so far. What you have learned.

**Tasks:** Read and comment one of your classmate’s blog. “Lamb to The Slaughter” and “The Story of an Hour”

#### **Ian McEwan & Shirley Jackson**

Did you know anything about them before? What are the issues these authors discuss? How are their approaches different? Write your thoughts as comment to tutor’s blog post.

**Materials:**

<https://www.biography.com/people/ian-mcewan-40564>

<https://www.biography.com/people/shirley-jackson-9351425>

### **28.11.2018 Wednesday. Ian McEwan "Conversation with a Cupboard Man"**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following topics:

- Describe your emotions after having read the story.
- How is the idea of “women are the key characters” apparent in this story?
- What does the title represent to you?
- Make an assumption, why is the main character so keen on confined spaces? Think about the relationship with his mother, other occasions of being “locked up”.

- What is the worth of the Cupboard Man?

**Materials:** A bit of the timeframe. Slides.

### **29.11.2018 Thursday. Shirley Jackson "The Lottery"**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following topics:

- Could you have expected the ending?
- Based on this story, what happens if we follow traditions blindly without knowing the background/origin of it?
- Use the help of Internet. What did Jackson want to say with the story? Is it applicable to today as well?
- How did Mrs Hutchinson's worth change throughout the story?

**Materials:** A bit of the timeframe. Slides.

**Week 6. Themes and aims: Students get acquainted with contemporary literature. Students learn about two new authors, and through their work they think about modern-world issues.**

### **4.12.2018 Tuesday. Conclusions. Comments. Two new authors.**

Conclusions of what we have done so far. What you have learned.

**Tasks:** Read and comment one of your classmate's blog. "Conversation with a Cupboard Man" and "The Lottery"

### **Zadie Smith & Jhumpa Lahiri**

Did you know anything about them before? What are the issues these authors discuss? How are their approaches different? Write your thoughts as comment to tutor's blog post.

**Materials:**

<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/zadie-smith>

<http://www.zadiesmith.com/>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jhumpa-Lahiri>

<https://www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/jhumpalahiri/>

### **5.12.2018 Wednesday. Zadie Smith "Now More Than Ever"**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following topics:

- What does the title stand for?
- The story takes place in the States but Smith is considered a British author. What is there that is British? What shows her as British author?
- What kind of issues and topics/themes can you find in the story that have been present throughout the course? How are they presented? What are the new topics added in this story? Which of these can we connect to today's society? Bring examples.
- What is the purpose of Scout in the story?

- What is “the thing” that the protagonist of the story saw?

BONUS

- Who is this “he-who-shall-not-be-named”?

**Materials:** A bit of the timeframe. Slides

### **6.12.2018 Thursday. Jhumpa Lahiri “Interpreter of Maladies”**

**Tasks:** Read the text and write a blog post considering the following topics:

- What does the title stand for?
- What kind of issues and topics/themes can you find in the story that have been present throughout the course? How are they presented? What are the new topics added in this story?
- How differently are the Indian immigrants in the States and Indian natives shown in the story? Which issues do these different people seem to face?
- Indian culture is shown throughout the story in different ways.
- How does Mr Kapasi’s view of Mrs Das change as the story develops?

**Materials:** A bit of the timeframe. Slides.

### **11.12.2018 Tuesday.**

**Aims: Conclusions and reflection. Students draw conclusions and try to link all the topics with each other. Students think and contemplate upon all the topics.**

Summary of the course. “Thank you’s” and “don’t delete your blog at least until the school year” even longer if requested.

**Tasks:** Schools feedback link: <http://bit.ly/2Q9Knc7>

Comment on the last two blog posts.

Write your very last discussion considering the following:

- In which ways are British and American literature and writers different and similar?
- Which kind of differences and similarities can you find in the ways the British and American authors discuss different cultural topics and issues? Consider all of the themes we had during the course: existence and being, death and letting go, racial issues/being a foreigner in a foreign land, the place of women in societies, the worth of a human being, and modern-world issues. Are the issues always the same? Why/Why not?
- How and in which ways does the era the writer lives in/the life they have had influence writer’s stories? Bring examples.
- If you were to describe British and American cultures now after the course, what would you say?

## Appendix 4 – QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Class
  - a. 10
  - b. 11
  - c. 12
2. I picked the course because...
  - a. I wanted this course
  - b. I had to pick something
3. My contribution to the course...  
(scale 1-10)
4. I would recommend the course to my friend.  
(scale 1-10)
5. Teacher was supportive:  
(scale 1-10)
6. What did you like about the course (methods, outline of the course, digital materials, atmosphere, etc.)?
7. Suggestions for the teacher:

## Appendix 5

**Absences per day**

	30.10.18	31.10.18	1.11.18	7.11.18	8.11.18	14.11.18	15.11.18	21.11.18	22.11.18	28.11.18	29.11.18	5.12.18	6.12.18	11.12.18
N	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Mean	0,00	,14	,07	,07	,07	,07	,36	,07	,14	,07	,36	,50	0,00	,43
Median	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	,50	0,00	0,00
Mode	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 <sup>a</sup>	0	0
Sum	0	2	1	1	1	1	5	1	2	1	5	7	0	6

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

**Table 2:** *Students' absences per day.*

**Delay of Blog Posts**

	Post 1	Post 2	Post 3	Post 4	Post 5	Post 6	Post 7	Post 8	Post 9	Post 10	Post 11	Post 12	Post 13	Post 14
N	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Mean	,14	,29	,14	,21	,36	,29	,57	,14	,29	,36	,50	,57	,50	,57
Median	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	,50	1,00	,50	1,00
Mode	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0 <sup>a</sup>	1	0 <sup>a</sup>	1
Sum	2	4	2	3	5	4	8	2	4	5	7	8	7	8

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

**Table 3:** *Delay of blog posts.*



## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Sandra Sagar**

### **Using Blogs to Activate Students' Writing Skills through British and American Literature**

#### **Blogimise kasutamine õpilaste kirjutamisoskuse arendamiseks läbi Briti ja Ameerika kirjanduse**

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#### Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva uurimistöö eesmärk on uurida, kas loodud *online*- lugemiskursus aitab tõsta õpilaste motivatsiooni lugeda ning kas blogimine aitab arendada õpilaste kirjutamisoskust. Eesmärkide täitmiseks koostati kirjanduspõhine valikkursus ühes Tartu linna gümnaasiumis.

Magistritöö koosneb kahest peatükist, milledeks on kirjanduse ülevaade ja empiirilise uuringu kirjeldus. Kirjanduse ülevaade selgitab lugemise olulisust võõrkeeleeõppes ja milliseid erinevaid võimalusi on kirjandusega tegelemiseks. Lisaks toob see peatükk välja, kuidas tehnika areng on muutnud seda, kuidas ja mida õpilased loevad ning *online*- lugemise head ja halvad küljed. Viimaseks räägib esimene peatükk sellest, mis on blogid ja kuidas saab blogisid kasutada selleks, et õpilaste kirjutamisoskust arendada. Kirjanduse ülevaade toetub varasematele uuringutele.

Teine peatükk annab ülevaate empiirilisest uuringust, tulemustest ja analüüsist, mille keskmeks on õpilaste valikkursuse käigus kirjutatud blogipostitused ja kooli poolt koostatud tagasisideküsitlus. Töö valimisse kuulusid 16 gümnaasiumiastme õpilast ühes Tartu gümnaasiumis. Kursus toimus valikkursusena, mis tähendas seda, et õpilased oli erinevatest õppeastmetest, neil olid erinevad keeletasemed ning taustad. Tulemustest selgus, et õpilased leidsid, et *online*-lugemiskursus aitas tõsta nende motivatsiooni lugeda ja teadmine, et nii kaasõpilased kui ka õpetaja loeb nende postitusi, motiveeris neid järjepidevalt blogipostitusi tegema. Lisaks selgus, et blogimine on väärtuslik meetod arendamiseks õpilaste aruteluoskust. Samas muutus õpilaste kirjutamise stiil ametlikust pigem mitteametlikumaks. Samuti märgati vaid tagasihoidlike arenguid sõnavaras ja grammatikas.

Märksõnad: inglise keel, inglise ja ameerika kirjandus, kirjutamine, blogid

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Mina, Sandra Sagar,

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Sandra Sagar

20.05.2019

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Sandra Sagar

20.05.2019

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Raili Marling