CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.0 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Malaysian university students and educators regarding the use of class blogs in assessing students' performance in ESL courses, as well as giving feedback to the students' blog entries. Hence, the data consists of the student and teacher participants' perceptions on using class blogs as a form of assessment in ESL courses in various aspects related to the Humanistic approach to language learning and assessment. Some of the aspects are motivation, active and collaborative learning, autonomous learning, non-threatening learning environments, peer-assessments, self-assessments, and assessment for learning. The respondents consist of those who have experienced as well as those who have never experienced using class blogs in the ESL courses before. This is to see if there are any differences in their perceptions through which better conclusions can be drawn.

The analysis procedures, which have already been explicated in Chapter Three, involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The following sections present the results of the analysis:

4.1 Analysis of the data from the Questionnaires

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires was done both quantitatively and qualitatively so as to see the respondents' perceptions of the use of class blogs as a

form of assessment as a whole. The analysis of the data was done according to the different parts of the questionnaires, i.e. Part A and Part B, and according to the different groups, as explained in Chapter Three. It must be noted that the quantitative analysis of the data from the questionnaires would precede those which were qualitatively analysed.

4.1.1 Part A: Participants' perceptions of the different aspects of a blog

In the Part A of the questionnaire, all student and teacher respondents across the four groups were asked to indicate their feelings towards the different aspects of blogs by drawing the relevant emoticons or smileys. The following sections present the findings on the aspects most favoured and least favoured by the respondents, according to the respective groups.

4.1.1.1 Group 1: Malaysian ESL University Students Who Have Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.1: Group 1 participants' perceptions of the different aspects of a blog.

1= really liked the aspect. **2**= liked the aspect. **3**= disliked the aspect. **4**= really disliked the aspect.

*The numbers in the following tables refer to the number of respondents.

Features of A Blog.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total**
Flexible layout choices	3	17	-	-	**20**
Internet-based (accessibility)	7	12	1	-	**20**
Audio upload feature	11	8	1	-	**20**
Video upload feature	7	11	2	-	**20**
Picture upload feature	11	8	1	-	**20**
Games or other applications upload feature	6	9	5	-	**20**
Ability to share views with friends	9	10	1	-	**20**
Ability to share views with the public	3	15	2	-	**20**
Ability to get feedback from other blog readers	5	13	1	1	**20**
Freedom of being creative	9	11	-	-	**20**
Freedom of expression	7	12	1	-	**20**
Typing instead of writing	5	13	2	-	**20**
Provide a sense of identity to the blogger	6	12	2	-	**20**
Total	**89**	**151**	**19**	**1**	**260**
Percentage	**89/260 x 100 = 34.23%**	**151/260 x 100 = 58.08%**	**19/260 x 100 = 7.31%**	**1/260 X 100 = 0.38%**	
	= 92.31 %		**= 7.69%**		

Table 4.1 shows the number of Group 1 participants who indicated their feelings towards the different features or aspects of a blog, as required in Part A of the questionnaire. It can be seen that, generally, most of Group 1 respondents like all of the aspects of blogs, as listed in the questionnaire. This is evident from the accumulated percentage of those who indicated that they really liked or liked the listed aspects of a blog, that is 92.31 %. Only 7.69 % of Group 1 respondents indicated that they disliked or really disliked some of the aspects of a blog.

In terms of the specific feature of a blog, 100% of Group 1 respondents generally liked the 'flexible layout choices' and 'freedom of being creative' aspects. It can be said, therefore, that all student respondents who have experienced using class blogs in their ESL courses like flexibility. This finding can be linked to the Humanistic approach of language learning that emphasizes the importance of freedom to enable students to make their own initiatives in any matter which relates to their deeper feelings (Stevick, 1982, pp. 15-16). In other words, most youngsters like the fact that they are given the choice to determine something, based on their own interests and affective needs.

A number of similarities and differences can be seen when the responses of the respondents are compared between the aspects of "audio upload feature", "video upload feature", and "picture upload feature". Identical findings were found between the "audio" and the "picture" upload features. "Video upload feature", on the other hand, showed fewer number of respondents who really liked the feature, and there was one extra respondent who indicated that he or she disliked this feature. This could be attributed to the fact that it is much easier to upload pictures and audio files on the blog. Uploading videos, which are of bigger size compared to picture and song files, may discourage some to upload videos on

the blog as it is more time-consuming. This is evident in most personal blogs which frequently displays songs and pictures, rather than videos, to complement their blog posts.

It could also be seen that there was quite a large number of Group 1 respondents, i.e. 25% of all 20 respondents, who indicated that they disliked the feature of 'Games or other applications upload feature'. The possible reason for this can also be related to the reason why some students disliked the 'video upload feature' above. Just like videos, uploading games or other types of applications on the blog is more complicated. It requires more sophistication as well as patience, compared to just uploading photographs and songs, which can just be done in seconds.

Overall, there were more Group 1 respondents who liked to share views with their friends, compared to with the public. In fact, 9 of the respondents really liked to share views with their friends, and only 3 indicated so for sharing views with the public. This observation can also be tied to one of the explanations of the Humanistic approach to language learning, as explained in Chapter Two. In this learning approach, it is believed that learning will benefit from students having wholesome relationships with their own friends or class mates (Stevick, 1982, p. 13). Most probably, students might feel more at ease and less threatened if they are sharing what they have written only with the friends that they have known, rather than sharing information with the whole public in general. The relationships established might encourage students to write more on the blogs as they know who their audience is, and they know what their audience likes to read.

Of all the aspects listed, only the aspect of "the ability to get feedback from other blog readers" had one respondent indicating that he or she really disliked the aspect. The

majority of the respondents indicated that they liked getting feedback. This finding can be easily reasoned out through the theories on motivation, positive reinforcement, and the Humanistic approach, as explained in Chapter Two. There is, however, a possible explanation for that one respondent who really disliked getting feedback from other blog readers. The theories on individual differences and multiple intelligences could be used to explain this observation. There are many types of personalities and perhaps, this one respondent might possess a more introverted type of personality. This type of person likes to do things on his or her own and do not favour interaction with others. In terms of multiple intelligences, this person might have intrapersonal intelligence. A person of this personality does things best when he or she is alone and he does not need other people to keep him or her motivated.

4.1.1.2 Group 2: Malaysian ESL University Students Who Have Not Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.2: Group 2 participants' perceptions of the different aspects of a blog.

1= really liked the aspect. **2**= liked the aspect. **3**= disliked the aspect. **4**= really disliked the aspect.

*The numbers in the following tables refer to the number of respondents.

PL= Public universities. **PV**= Private universities.

Features of A Blog.	**1**		**2**		**3**		**4**		**Total**
	PL	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	
Flexible layout choices	5	4	5	6	-	-	-	-	20
Internet-based (accessibility)	3	6	7	4	-	-	-	-	20
Audio upload feature	3	6	4	3	3	1	-	-	20
Video upload feature	3	7	5	3	2	-	-	-	20
Picture upload feature	7	8	3	2	-	-	-	-	20
Games or other applications upload feature	5	4	4	4	1	2	-	-	20
Ability to share views with friends	4	3	4	7	1	-	1	-	20
Ability to share views with the public	1	2	7	4	2	4	-	-	20
Ability to get feedback from other blog readers	4	4	5	5	1	1	-	-	20
Freedom of being creative	5	7	4	3	-	-	1	-	20
Freedom of expression	3	6	4	3	2	1	1	-	20
Typing instead of writing	3	4	5	6	1	-	1	-	20
Provide a sense of identity to the blogger	2	5	6	3	2	2	-	-	20
Percentage	**48**	**66**	**63**	**53**	**15**	**11**	**4**	**-**	**260**
	(48+66) / 260 X 100 = 3.85%		**(63+53) / 260 X 100 =44.62%**		**(15+11) / 260 X 100 = 10%**		**4/260 X 100 =1.54%**		
	88.47%				**11.54%**				

Table 4.2 shows the number of Group 2 participants who indicated their feelings towards the different features or aspects of a blog, as listed in the questionnaires. As a whole, the majority of Group 2 respondents, that is 88.47% of them, favour the different aspects of a blog. Only 11.54% of Group 2 respondents reported their negative feelings towards some of blogs' features. In Group 2, the participants' responses were categorized according to their institutions, i.e. whether they were from public or private universities, just to investigate if this is a salient factor determining their differential responses.

Of all the aspects of a blog listed, 100% of Group 2 respondents liked the 'flexible layout choices', 'accessibility', and 'picture upload' aspects. For the feature of 'flexible layout choices', similar finding was found for Group 1 respondents. The same explanation could be used here, as youths in general like elements of flexibility and freedom in their life, including in the writing and learning processes.

The possible reason all Group 2 respondents favoured the 'accessibility' feature was that these groups of students might have always been using blogs in their daily lives and have always wanted to use such a familiar and easily accessible Web-based tool in their English language learning. The 'accessibility' aspect is also related to the aspect of freedom mentioned earlier. The ability to access the blog at any time of the day would provide them freedom as to when they can read or write blog entries. As mentioned in Chapter Two, an affective education, as preached by the Humanistic language educators, should be built on a methodology for freedom (Blum, 1998, p. 11, as cited in Chambers, 1999, p. 36), as this is the type of learning environment favoured by most students.

Also, the reason all Group 2 respondents liked the ‘picture upload feature’ could be linked to the fact that it is the easiest and fastest file to be uploaded on the blog, compared to audio and video files. More youngsters, also, like to express their individuality through pictures, rather than the other channels. This is relevant as the data from the table shows that up to 15 Group 2 respondents really liked the ‘picture upload feature’. For both ‘video’ and ‘audio’ upload features, there were a few respondents who indicated that they did not like the features. This could be attributed to the fact that not everyone owns a lot of audio files to be shared and not everyone has the video-recording devices. Pictures are the easiest files to be uploaded, especially that most basic phones nowadays have basic photo-capturing functions. These photos can be uploaded to blogs in an instant.

Of all the listed aspects of a blog, the data showed that ‘the ability to share views with the public’ had the most number of respondents who disliked the aspect. As mentioned in the earlier sub-section, this observation was linked to the fact that youngsters feel more comfortable sharing their views with the ones that they have known well. Students might feel worried about the perceptions of those whom they have never met before. The respondents also might be less interested to know what other strangers think about their blog entries. This is the least favoured aspect amongst Group 2 respondents.

It could be seen that there was one respondent who indicated that he or she really disliked the ‘ability to share views with friends’ aspect. Perhaps, this student comes under the introverted type of personality and has intrapersonal intelligence; the type of person who is mostly doing things on his or her own and does not like to share things about them with others. There were also one public university student who indicated that he or she really disliked the ‘freedom of being creative’ and ‘freedom of expression’. Perhaps, this / these

student/s are more comfortable with being spoonfed with all the information needed by the teacher and does not mind being imposed to do things that may restrict their freedom.

Overall, as mentioned earlier, the majority of the respondents, regardless of institutions, favoured the different aspects of a blog. It was seen that those who did not favour some of aspects of a blog mostly came from public tertiary institutions. Out of 30 responses that indicated negative perceptions about the different aspect of blogs, 19 came from public university students. That means 63.33% of Group 2 respondents who did not favour some of the aspects of a blog were public university students. Only 36.67% of them came from private tertiary institutions. A possible explanation for this might be that private university students are usually given more freedom in many aspects of their college and academic life. That is why most of them are more open to the different aspects of a blog compared to those from public institutions, whose interests might have been a little bit more restricted by their university rules. This explanation can also be used to explain the fact that all of the respondents who indicated that they really disliked the four aspects of a blog come from public institutions.

In addition, the type and background of the students who generally enter or choose to enter private institutions of higher learning might differ from those who choose the public institutions of higher learning. It is believed that private university students' less conservative backgrounds could be the reason why most of them have more positive perceptions towards the different aspects of a blog.

4.1.1.3 Group 3: Malaysian ESL University Educators Who Have Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.3: Group 3 participants' perceptions of the different aspects of a blog.

1= really liked the aspect. **2**= liked the aspect. **3**= disliked the aspect. **4**= really disliked the aspect.

*The numbers in the following tables refer to the number of respondents.

Features of A Blog.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total**
Flexible layout choices	4	5	1	-	10
Internet-based (accessibility)	2	7	1	-	10
Audio upload feature	2	5	3	-	10
Video upload feature	1	6	3	-	10
Picture upload feature	7	2	1	-	10
Games or other applications upload feature	-	7	3	-	10
Ability to share views with friends	7	3	-	-	10
Ability to share views with the public	6	4	-	-	10
Ability to get feedback from other blog readers	7	3	-	-	10
Freedom of being creative	5	5	-	-	10
Freedom of expression	5	5	-	-	10
Typing instead of writing	6	4	-	-	10
Provide a sense of identity to the blogger	6	3	-	1	10
Total	**58**	**59**	**12**	**1**	**130**
	58/130 X 100 = 44.62%	**59/130 X 100 = 45.38%**	**12/130 X 100 = 9.23%**	**1/130 X 100 = 0.77%**	
	= 90%		**= 10%**		

Table 4.3 presents the number Group 3 participants who indicated their feelings towards the different aspects of a blog. There were 10 respondents in this group. Overall, it could be seen that the majority of teacher participants in this group favoured all of the aspects of a blog, as listed in the questionnaire, with the percentage of 90%. For all aspects of a blog, at least 70% of them indicated that they positively identified themselves with the blog features.

It could be seen that all Group 3 teacher respondents indicated their positive perceptions towards six of the listed blog aspects. The aspects were ‘ability to share views with friends’, ‘ability to share views with the public’, ‘ability to get feedback from other blog readers’, ‘freedom of being creative’, ‘freedom of expression’, and ‘typing instead of writing’. For the first three aspects, it can be deduced that most of the teacher respondents who have used class blogs themselves in their ESL classrooms liked and acknowledged the interactivity of blogs. This is parallel to the Humanistic approach to learning which acknowledges the power of relationships amongst human beings on one’s learning (Stevick, 1982, p. 13).

The findings from the other two aspects: ‘freedom of being creative’ and ‘freedom of expression’, on the other hand, reflects all of the teachers’ Humanistic views that people should have freedom to show their creativity and express themselves. For the aspect of ‘typing instead of writing’, it can be concluded that all of the teachers like blogging for the fact that they can express themselves more quickly and easily, with the ability to edit their work without the fuss of pens and correction pens.

In addition, it is evident that not even one Group 3 respondents really liked the aspect of ‘games and other applications upload’. As explained in the earlier sub-sections, this could be attributed the fact that games and other applications require more HTML sophistication, thus making it longer and more difficult to be used by bloggers.

Similar observation, as in Group 1 and 2, could be seen in Group 3 as most of the respondents in this group also evidently like the ‘picture upload feature’ more, compared to the ‘audio’ and ‘video’ upload features. As reported in Table 4.3, 7 of the respondents really liked this aspect, whereas there are only 2 and 1 respondents who really liked the ‘audio’ and ‘video’ upload features, respectively. The possible explanation for this is similar to the one discussed in the Sections 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2.

Another striking observation was that, one of the teachers indicated that he or she really disliked the aspect of ‘providing a sense of identity to the blogger’. It is possible that the respondent personally felt that blogging is a platform that is too personal and that he or she does not like to reveal too much about him or herself on such a public website. The theories on the different types of personalities and multiple intelligences, as explained in the earlier sub-sections, can also be used to explain this finding. It is possible that someone who is introverted and has intrapersonal intelligence would not appreciate this feature of a blog.

4.1.1.4 Group 4: Malaysian ESL University Educators Who Have Not Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.4: Group 4 participants' perceptions of the different aspects of a blog.

1= really liked the aspect. **2**= liked the aspect. **3**= disliked the aspect. **4**= really disliked the aspect.

*The numbers in the following tables refer to the number of respondents.

PL= Public universities. **PV**= Private universities.

Features of A Blog.	**1**		**2**		**3**		**4**		**Total**
	PL	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	**PL**	**PV**	
Flexible layout choices	3	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	10
Internet-based (accessibility)	3	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	10
Audio upload feature	-	1	5	4	-	-	-	-	10
Video upload feature	-	2	5	3	-	-	-	-	10
Picture upload feature	2	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	10
Games or other applications upload feature	3	1	2	3	-	1	-	-	10
Ability to share views with friends	2	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	10
Ability to share views with the public	1	2	4	3	-	-	-	-	10
Ability to get feedback from other blog readers	2	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	10
Freedom of being creative	4	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	10
Freedom of expression	3	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	10
Typing instead of writing	2	1	3	3	-	1	-	-	10
Provide a sense of identity to the blogger	1	1	4	3	-	1	-	-	10
Total	**26**	**27**	**39**	**35**	**-**	**3**	**-**	**-**	**130**
	(26+27) / 130 X 100 = 0.77%		**(39+35) / 130 X 100 =56.92%**		**3/ 130 X 100 = 2.31%**				
	97.69%				**2.31%**				

As presented in the above table, responses from Group 4 respondents also indicated that the majority of them favoured all of the listed blog aspects. 97.69% of them reported that they liked all the aspects of a blog, and only 2.31% thought otherwise.

It can be seen in Group 4 that all of the teachers liked 10 out of the 13 blog aspects listed. Evidently, the aspect that is favoured most by Group 4 respondents was ‘accessibility’. There were 70% of the respondents who indicated that they really liked this feature. Similar observation was found in Group 2 students who all indicated that they liked this feature. As explained in Section 4.1.1.2, this could be attributed to the fact that the ability to access the blog at any time of the day would provide the teachers freedom as to when they can read others’ blog entries or write their own blog entries. In terms of teaching, in particular, the accessibility feature is really needed by busy teachers who may not have time to assess students’ work through conventional methods. The freedom to access students’ work at any time of the day without the fuss of pen and paper might be the reason why this is the aspect favoured most by this group of respondents. This is parallel to the methodology of freedom as emphasized by the Humanistic approach to learning (Blum, 1998, p. 11, as cited in Chambers, 1999, p. 36). Half of the respondents indicated that they really liked the picture upload feature. The ease of uploading pictures, compared to the other files, is the most possible reason for this finding.

For ‘games or other applications upload feature’, it was evident that one respondent indicated that he or she disliked this aspect. As explained in the earlier sub-sections, this could be due to the need to have more knowledge on HTML in order to be able to upload this feature on the blog. There was also one respondent who reported that he or she disliked the aspect of ‘typing instead of writing’. A possible reason for this would be, some people

still prefer the conventional ways of writing using pen and paper. For some people, their ideas flow better this way. There was also one respondent who reported that he or she disliked the aspect of ‘providing a sense of identity to the blogger’. Similar to the previous sub-section, this particular respondent may feel uneasy exposing his identity on the blog, and he or she may personally not feel that blog is able to provide a sense of identity and individuality to people. The theories on personality and multiple intelligences also can be used to explain this particular phenomenon which reflect people’s unique differences.

4.1.1.5 Qualitative analysis of the overall participants' perceptions on the different aspects of a blog.

Table 4.5: The number of respondents who liked the different features of a blog, across all groups.

Apart from the above results which were reported discretely according to the groups, this section aims to analyse the above results across the 4 different groups. The following table will be used as the basis:

Features of A Blog.	Group 1	Group 2	Average	Group 3	Group 4	Average
Flexible layout choices	20	20	**20**	9	10	**9.5**
Internet-based (accessibility)	19	20	**19.5**	9	10	**9.5**
Audio upload feature	19	16	**17.5**	7	10	**8.5**
Video upload feature	18	18	**18**	7	10	**8.5**
Picture upload feature	19	20	**19.5**	9	10	**9.5**
Games or other applications upload feature	15	17	**16**	7	9	**8**
Ability to share views with friends	19	18	**18.5**	10	10	**10**
Ability to share views with the public	18	14	**16**	10	10	**10**
Ability to get feedback from other blog readers	18	18	**18**	10	10	**10**
Freedom of being creative	20	19	**19.5**	10	10	**10**
Freedom of expression	19	16	**17.5**	10	10	**10**
Typing instead of writing	18	18	**18**	10	9	**9.5**
Provide a sense of identity to the blogger	18	16	**17**	9	9	**9**
Average	**18.46**	**17.69**	**-**	**9**	**9.77**	**-**

Table 4.5 presents the number of respondents who really liked or liked the different aspects of a blog, as indicated in the specific tables earlier. It could be seen here that amongst the student participants, regardless of exposure to blogs in ESL courses and regardless of institutions, all of them reported positive feelings towards the feature of ‘flexible layout choices’. This makes this aspect the most favoured aspect amongst the student participants. The reason might be the layout feature of a blog is easy to be changed and maintained and offers youngsters with more graphic or visual ways to express their individualities. Amongst the teacher participants, on the other hand, there were 5 aspects that were favoured by all of the respondents, regardless of whether or not they have used blogs in class before and regardless of institutions. The aspects were ‘ability to share views with friends’, ‘ability to share views with the public’, ‘ability to get feedback from other blog readers’, ‘freedom of being creative’, and ‘freedom of expression’. All of these features are interactive in nature and indicate that teacher participants value the interactivity of blogs the most.

Table 4.5, also, it is evident that amongst student participants, the least favoured aspects were ‘games and other applications upload feature’ and ‘ability to share views with the public’. The ‘games and other applications upload feature’ was also least favoured among the teacher participants. It can be said, therefore, that this feature was less favoured by all participants of this study, across all groups regardless of backgrounds. Perhaps, this is because this is not the primary characteristic of a blog and the games upload feature also may require more HTML sophistication from the bloggers. Bloggers also had other means, besides blogs, if they want to play games online.

In terms of exposure to the use of blogs in ESL courses, all respondents from Group 1 and Group 2 favoured the 'flexible layout choices' aspect in a blog. Similar number of respondents from both of these groups was also reported to favour the aspects of 'video upload feature', 'ability to get feedback from other blog readers', and 'typing instead of writing'. This shows that these four aspects were not dependent on the exposure that the respondents had in terms of the use of class blogs in their ESL courses. Difference, however, was seen for the aspect of 'ability to share views with the public'. Group 1, which consisted of students who have had exposure to blogs in their ESL courses seemed to favour this aspect more than those who have not (Group 2), with a difference of about 20%. Perhaps only those who have actually used blogs knew that this is an important feature of blogs that makes blogs even more interesting and interactive than other forms of media.

Another example would be for two other aspects namely 'audio upload feature' and 'freedom of expression', both indicating that the students who have had exposure to blogs favoured these aspects more than those who have not by a difference of about 15%. On average, Group 1 respondents were reported to have more positive feelings towards the different aspects of blogs with an average of 18.46 with a difference of just about 0.77. This subtle difference indicates that the exposure of students to the use of class blogs in their classrooms did not affect the perceptions they had on the different aspects of blogs. One reason for this is perhaps, in this millennia, almost all students are exposed to blogs in their everyday virtual communication, even if they do not have blogs on their own.

Comparison between Group 3 and 4, however, yielded a different result. On average, Group 4 respondents, i.e. teacher participants who have not used blogs in their ESL classes reported their positive feelings towards the different features of blogs more than those who

have been using class blogs in English lessons. Perhaps, this could be attributed to the fact that those who have used blogs have learnt the pros and cons of each feature and looked at these aspects in a more practical perspective. Those who have not used blogs in classrooms may have a more idealistic perspective towards the different features of blogs. Nonetheless, the difference here is also subtle, that is only about 0.77 difference. Almost all of the features showed that there was no stark difference between the responses of Group 3 and Group 4 respondents. Only for ‘audio upload feature’ and ‘video upload feature’ that there was about 20% difference between the two groups’ responses, with those from Group 4 reported having more positive feelings towards the blog features than those who have actually used class blogs themselves. All of the above analysis may be used to answer this study’s research questions through the following sections in this chapter.

4.1.2 Part B: Participants' perceptions of the use of class blogs as a form of assessment and giving feedback.

For Part B, the respondents from all groups were required to indicate 'yes/no' to the questionnaire items and provide reasons for their answers. The findings were reported in the following sections, according to the groups the respondents were in.

4.1.2.1 Quantitative analysis of Part B responses

The Yes/No questionnaire items were analysed quantitatively across the four groups of respondents in the following sub-sections:

4.1.2.1.1 Group 1: Malaysian ESL University Students Who Have Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.6: Number of Group 1 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' questionnaire items in Part B.

Questionnaire items		Yes	No	Total
1. Class blogs [a form of learning]		20	-	20
2. Class blogs [a form of assessment]		20	-	20
	(b)	N/A	N/A	N/A
3. Feedback		-	20	20
	(b)	19	1	20
4. Peer-assessment		20	-	20
5. Self-assessment		17	3	20
6. Assessment for learning		20	-	20

Table 4.6 shows the number of Group 1 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' items in the Part B of the questionnaires. As Group 1 respondents have all experienced class blogging as a form of learning and assessment in their English courses, Question 2 (b) was non-applicable for this group.

Referring to Question number 3, which focuses on whether or not they had received feedback from their English language teachers, 19 of the respondents pointed out that they would like to get feedback from their ESL teachers through the class blogs, although they

had never received comments on their assessed blog entries. This is a relevant observation as Kim (2008, p. 1347) postulates that feedback enhances one's self-motivation.

With regard to peer-assessments (Question 4), 100% of the respondents indicated that they like or would also like to get feedback from their own course mates on their posted blog entries on the class blogs. This finding is in line with the fact that peer-assessment has been proven to be a reliable means of assessing one's language performance (Saito & Fujita, 2004, p. 32). For Question 5, there were 17 respondents who specified that they like or would like to assess their own work on the class blogs. These respondents represent the majority of them who believe in active and autonomous learning (Yuh-Mei, 2008, p. 237). The 3 other students who did not favour self-assessment, on the other hand, represents some groups of students who are still not confident about the efficacy of this assessment method on their language learning. In terms of motivation, all 20 Group 1 respondents agreed that the presence of feedback will encourage them to post English blog entries or open a blog account to post English blog entries in the future. This is a reflection of the students' beliefs that motivation harnessed through class blogs will ensure life-long language learning.

4.1.2.1.2 Group 2: Malaysian ESL University Students Who Have Not Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.7: Number of Group 2 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' questionnaire items in Part B.

Questionnaire items	Yes		No		Total
	PL	PV	PL	PV	
1. Class blogs [a form of learning]	3	5	7	5	20
2. Class blogs [a form of assessment]	9	10	1	-	20
3. Feedback	9	10	1	-	20
4. Peer-assessment	10	10	-	-	20
5. Self-assessment	5	6	5	4	20
6. Assessment for learning	6	9	4	1	20

Table 4.7 shows the number of Group 2 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' items in the Part B of the questionnaires. More private university students were found to have experienced class blogs as a form of learning in their ESL courses.

When asked whether they would like class blogs to be incorporated as a form of assessment in their future English courses (Question 2), 19 of Group 2 respondents, i.e. 95% of them, said 'yes'. This might be attributed to the fact that the use of ICT is a motivating factor by itself. Only one respondent indicated that he or she did not want to have class blogs as a form of assessment in his or her future English courses. Theories on individual personalities and multiple intelligences can be used to explain this minority

group. 19 respondents also said ‘yes’ when they were asked if they would like to receive feedback from their English language teachers on their blog entries, if class blogs are used in their ESL courses (Question 3).

For Question 4, all of Group 2 respondents indicated that they would like to get feedback from their own course mates on their posted blog entries if class blogs are used in their English courses. In short, all respondents who had not used class blogs as a form of assessment in their ESL courses before had positive perceptions towards peer-assessments. Similar justification used in Group 1 earlier could also be used here to explain why Group 2 students favor peer-assessments in their ESL courses.

In terms of self-assessments (Question 5), however, the findings were quite mixed. The percentage of students who favoured self-assessments, i.e. to assess their own work, if class blogs are used in their English courses, was only 55%. Although that was still a majority of Group 2 respondents, but the number of those who actually did not want to assess their own work on class blogs was very high, i.e. 45%. Those from private tertiary institutions seemed to show more positive reactions towards peer-assessments.

In terms of life-long learning, that is beyond what is required in a particular course, 75% of Group 2 respondents agreed that the presence or absence of feedback on their class blogs would affect their motivation to either continue to post English blog entries on their own blogs or open their own blogs to post English blog entries in the future.

4.1.2.1.3 Group 3: Malaysian ESL University Educators Who Have Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.8: Number of Group 3 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' questionnaire items in Part B.

Questionnaire items		Yes	No	Total
1. Class blogs [a form of learning]		10	-	10
2. Class blogs [a form of assessment]		10	-	10
	(b)	N/A	N/A	N/A
3. Feedback		3	7	10
	(b)	5	2	7
4. Peer-assessment		8	2	10
5. Self-assessment		4	6	10
6. Assessment for learning.		8	2	10

For Question 3, of all 10 teacher participants, only 3 of them had actually provided feedback to their students assessed blog entries. However, the majority of them (5 respondents) indicated that they would like to provide such feedback through the class blogs to their students in the future. Only 2 respondents did not feel like doing so.

In terms of peer-assessments, 80% of the respondents indicated that they would encourage their students to provide feedback on their own course mates' work in the class blogs of their English courses. With regard to self-assessments, however, the majority of the ESL educators from Group 3 pointed out that they would not encourage their students to assess

their own work on the class blogs of their English courses. It is evident that the educators themselves are also still not confident about self-assessments in language classrooms.

In terms of life-long English language learning, 80% of Group 3 respondents thought that the presence or absence of feedback on their students assessed blog entries would affect their motivation to continue to post English blog entries or open their own blog accounts to post English blog entries in the future. Only 20% thought that feedback did not affect their students' motivation to do so.

4.1.2.1.4 Group 4: Malaysian ESL University Educators Who Have Not Used Blogs as a Form of Learning and Assessment in Their ESL Courses.

Table 4.9: Number of Group 4 respondents who responded to the 'Yes/No' questionnaire items in Part B.

Questionnaire items	Yes		No		Total
	PL	PV	PL	PV	
1. Class blogs [a form of learning]	1	-	4	5	10
2. Class blogs [a form of assessment]	4	5	1	-	10
3. Feedback	5	5	-	-	10
4. Peer-assessment	4	4	1	1	10
5. Self assessment	4	3	1	2	10
6. Assessment for learning	4	4	1	1	10

Based on Question 2, 90% of Group 4 respondents reported that they would like to have class blogs incorporated as a form of assessment in the English courses that they will be teaching in the future.

When asked about providing feedback (Question 3), all Group 4 respondents indicated that they would provide feedback to their students on their assessed blog entries, of class blogs are used in their English courses. In terms of peer-assessments (Question 4), 80% of Group 4 respondents specified that they would encourage their students to provide feedback on their course mates' work in the class blogs, if class blogs are used in their English courses.

With regard to self-assessments (Question 5), 70% of Group 4 respondents indicated that they would encourage their students to self-assess their own work in the class blogs, if class blogs are used in their English courses. There was 80% of Group 4 respondents who pointed out that the presence or absence of their feedback on their students assessed blog entries would affect the students' motivation to continue blogging in the future.

4.1.2.2 Qualitative analysis of Part B responses across four groups

The qualitative analysis of the data from Part B of the questionnaires was done according to different themes which were deemed relevant to the ESL field in general and the Humanistic approach to language learning and assessment in particular. The themes can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

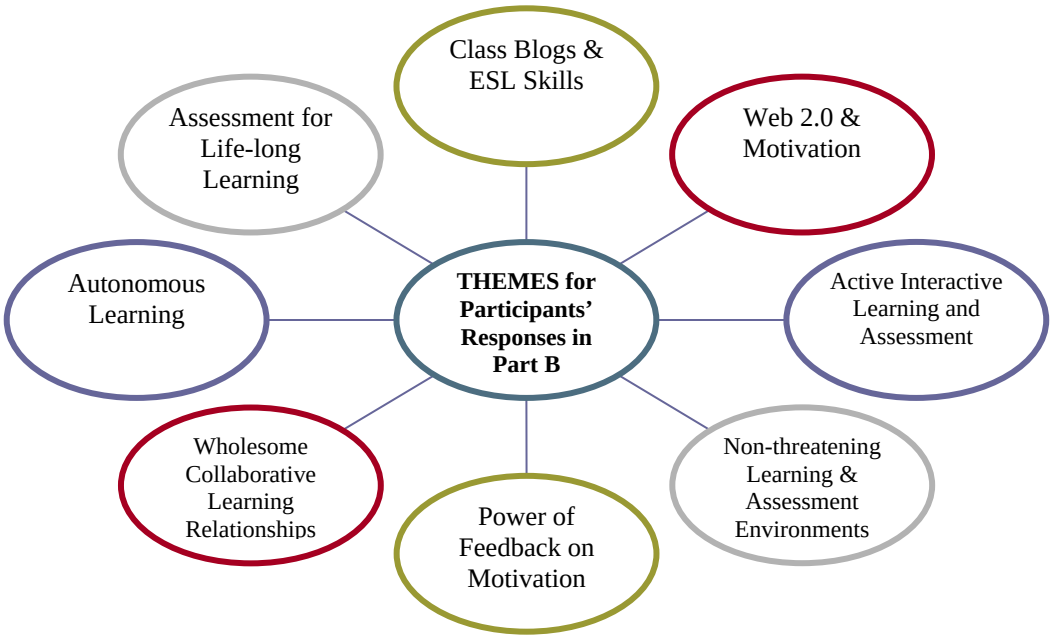

Figure 4.1: The themes for qualitative analysis of Part B responses across four groups

4.1.2.2.1 Class Blogs and ESL Skills

Amongst student respondents who had actually used class blogs as a form of assessment, 19 out of 20 respondents indicated that class blogs are useful in improving their English language skills (item number 2 (a) (i)). In general, the respondents indicated that class blogs provide a new platform for them to practise and improve their English language skills. There were also a few respondents who said that class blogs could not improve one's ESL skills. The participants' perception on the relations between class blogs and ESL skills can be summarized in Table 4.10:

Table 4.10: Participant's Responses on Class Blogs and ESL Skills

REASONS SKILLS	POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS	[%]	NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS	[%]
WRITING	Class blogs would require them to always write in English	60% from G1 + G2.	Some students may simply 'copy-and-paste' their work.	10% from G4
	Less confident students would edit their comments before posting them.	70% from G3+ G4		
	Through on-going practice and based on the comments given.			
SPEAKING	Students would discuss with their course mates by using English language as a medium of instruction	-20% from G1 + G2.	Class blogs may only be able to improve one's writing skills but, not speaking skills.	5% from G1 + G2
	Students can be more interactive with their friends than they used to.	-10% from G3+ G4		
READING	Class blogs force them to always do their reading	30% from all groups	-	-
	Class blogs attract them to read more English texts			
GRAMMAR	Through writing practice and reading materials, students can improve their grammar	10% from G1+G2	-	-
VOCABULARY	They encounter new words daily on the blogs.	10% from G1+G2	-	-
	students will need to start looking for new words in order to write something.	10% from G3+G4		
ESL STUDY SKILLS	Blogs served as another channel for them to study English, besides conventional ways like using reference books.	50% from G1 + G2	-	-
CREATIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS (CCTS)		5% of G1 + G2	-	-

Referring to Table 4.10, the respondents stated their reasons for their opinions. Firstly, as indicated above, the majority of the respondents said that productive skills of writing and speaking skills are said to be improved through class blogs. This is relevant as blogs, by nature, are interactive and encourage communication amongst bloggers and readers. In terms of speaking skills, perhaps, the students were referring to the interactivity and informality of blogs that usually require them to use conversational written English to communicate. Reading skills can also be improved through class blogs for the above reasons. This would help students to improve their English literacy skills.

Although grammar is just one of the mechanics of their ESL skills, this component was also said to be improved as it is important and encompasses all other four language skills. In general, when it comes to educators' responses on the class blogs' usefulness in improving students' English language skills, 95% Group 4 respondents agreed that class blogs can be useful. Class blogs are said to be useful by 90% of the students since they would have the opportunity to write, express, and share their ideas with one another. This is parallel to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two on Web logs.

4.1.2.2.2 Web 2.0 and Motivation

Overall, about half of Group 1 respondents indicated that class blogs serve as a new platform for them to learn English and assess their English language skills. The students agreed that class blogging is a more fun and less stressful way of assessing their English language skills. Addressing such affective factors is clearly a reflection of the Humanistic approach to language learning. The following diagrams summarize the participants' responses that are related to the concept of motivation.

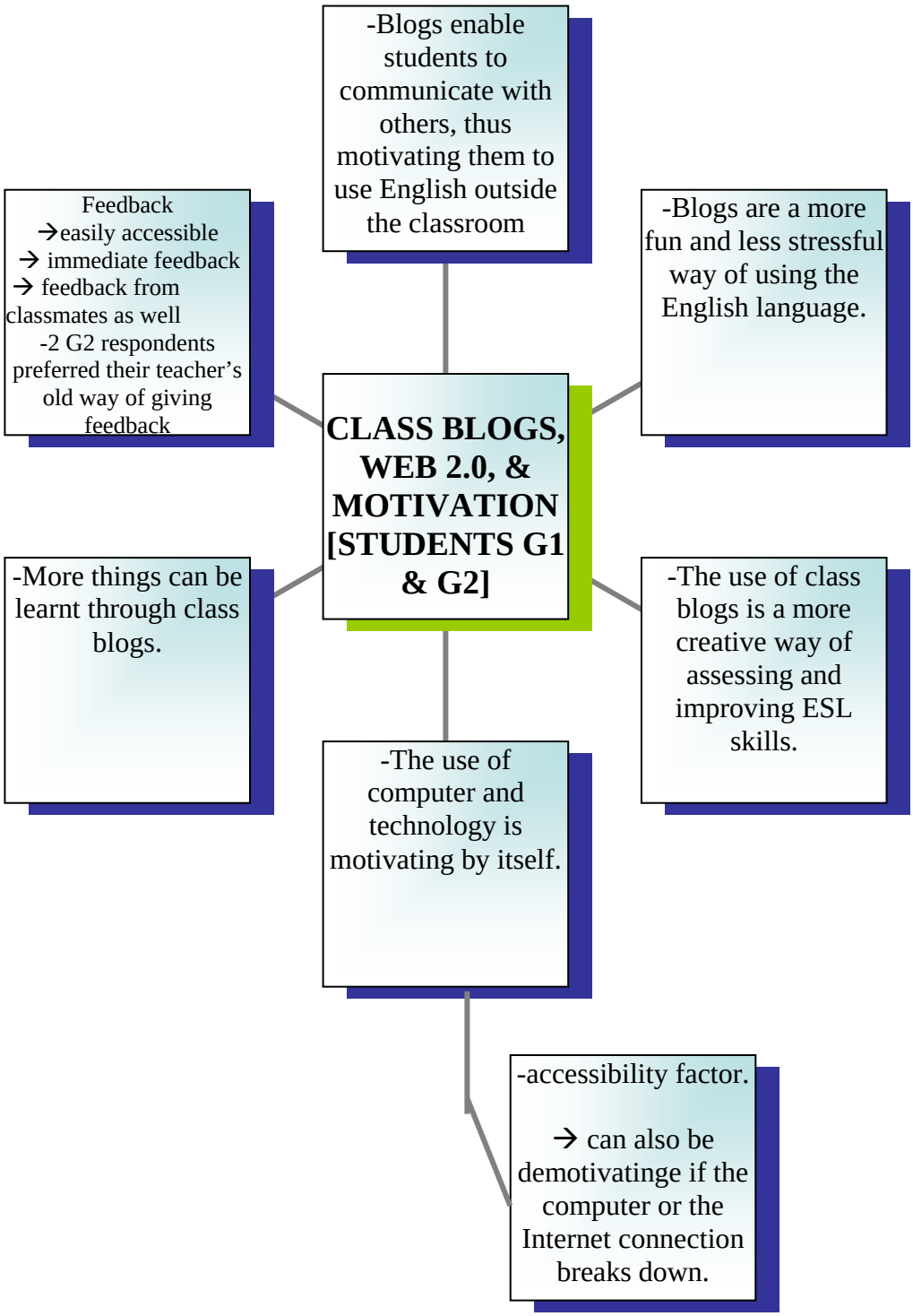

Figure 4.2 Student participants' responses on how class blogs can be motivating/demotivating

Referring to Figure 4.2, respondents specified that the use of such a Web application in English language assessment enables them to communicate with others as well as have a good time. The reason why they felt that it is more fun to use class blogs is perhaps because the usual form of language assessment is considered boring by many students. As many students pointed out that English language is a difficult subject for them to improve in, a new, more fun, and less stressful method of language assessment is definitely desired.

The use of computer and/or the Internet itself is said to be a motivating factor by half of the respondents. After all, these are what the students do on a daily basis. The use of such a Web application means that assessment is made accessible even from the students' own homes or anywhere else where Internet connection is made available. Accessibility, however, can be a disadvantage by itself as stated by one respondent. Another respondent pointed out the time factor, saying that the use of class blogs means that they only have to spend about 10-15 minutes to post their assessed blog entries.

Group 2 students, who have not used class blogs before, also indicated that they would like class blogs to be incorporated. The reason quoted most for this perception is also the accessibility factor. Half of Group 2 participants said that the easily accessible nature of class blogs would allow them to access their teachers' comments on their work anywhere and whenever they are connected to the Internet. This is one of the motivating factors for using class blogs as a form of assessment.

The easily-accessed nature of class blogs allows feedback from not just the teacher and the students' classmates, but possibly other bloggers or anyone else for that matter. There are 90% of Group 2 respondents who had indicated that class blogs are motivating because

they can get feedback from a myriad of sources. This aspect will increase students' motivation to further improve their ESL performance across all skills, especially writing.

As stated in Figure 4.2, there were two Group 2 respondents, who prefer their teachers' old way of giving feedback as they do not have easy access to the Internet. The use of such a Web application, thus, can be problematic for those who are not privileged with easy Internet connection. Some students might need to travel further and spend more money on cyber cafes, for example, just to get their assessment done.

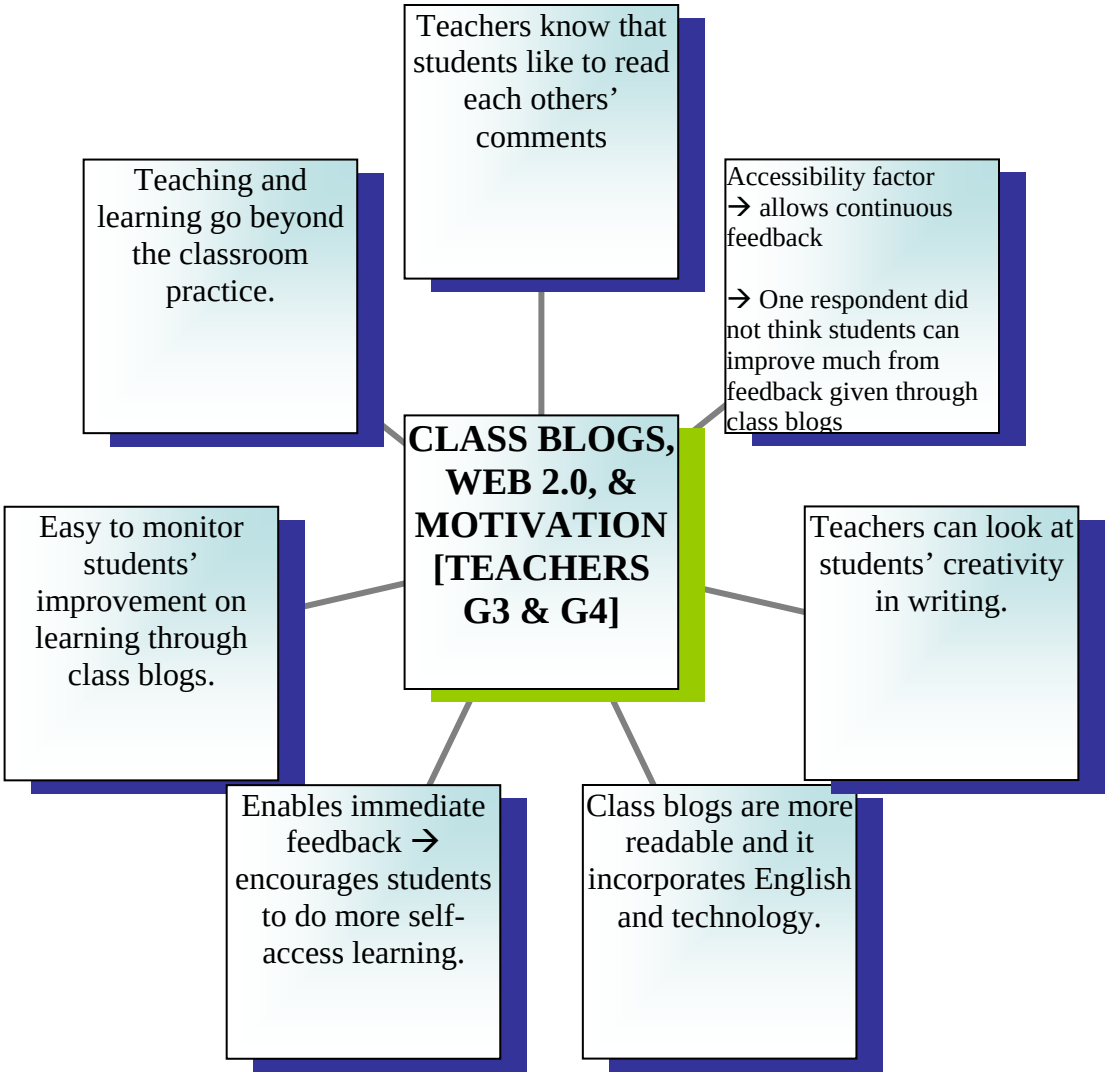

Figure 4.3 Teacher participants' responses on how class blogs can be motivating/demotivating

Figure 4.3 shows the reasons why the teacher respondents feel that class blogs is a motivating or demotivating factor in an ESL course. Half of Group 3 respondents indicated that it is definitely more motivating to use class blogs as students get to use the and that they like to read each others' comments. Also, although 95% of Group 3 teachers admitted that they did not provide feedback to their students, 90% of them said that they would like to. This is because of the accessibility factor. Amongst Group 3 teachers, five said that this

is motivating because students would be more motivated to learn if there is immediate and continuous feedback. This is parallel to the Humanistic approach to language learning as reviewed in Chapter Two.

Nonetheless, there were also some negative perceptions on this issue from 3 respondents. One of them said that it is unnecessary and tedious to provide continuous responses on his or her students' work on the blog. Two other respondents also said that class blogs are not a fun, motivating and less stressful way of English language assessment as it can prove otherwise, i.e. more stressful, when there is a problem with the Internet connection.

Amongst Group 4 respondents, 90% of them indicated that they would like to do so and gave reasons relating to the accessibility feature of class blogs. This is a plus point for all educators who are always busy in their profession. Other reasons quoted are similar to those from Group 3. One respondent added that class blogs provide a way for teachers to reach to all of their students as there are too many students to attend to in the classroom.

Overall, Group 4 respondents, despite not having tried class blogs for themselves, had a very positive perception about this new assessment tool's role in motivating ESL learners. This is in line with the Humanistic theory of language learning and assessment's belief in motivating learners through a medium that the learners and educators actually enjoy. There were one to two Group 3 respondents, however, who did not believe in this, based on the practical reasons that they had experienced themselves. Thus, the Humanistic approach may not apply in certain circumstances, especially when it deals with technical issues such as the Internet connection problems.

4.1.2.2.3 Active Interactive Learning and Assessment

The Humanistic theory of language learning and assessment believes that learners benefit more through active learning and assessment experiences. From the findings of the questionnaires, some student and teacher participants did provide some insights on this matter. They can be summarized as follows:

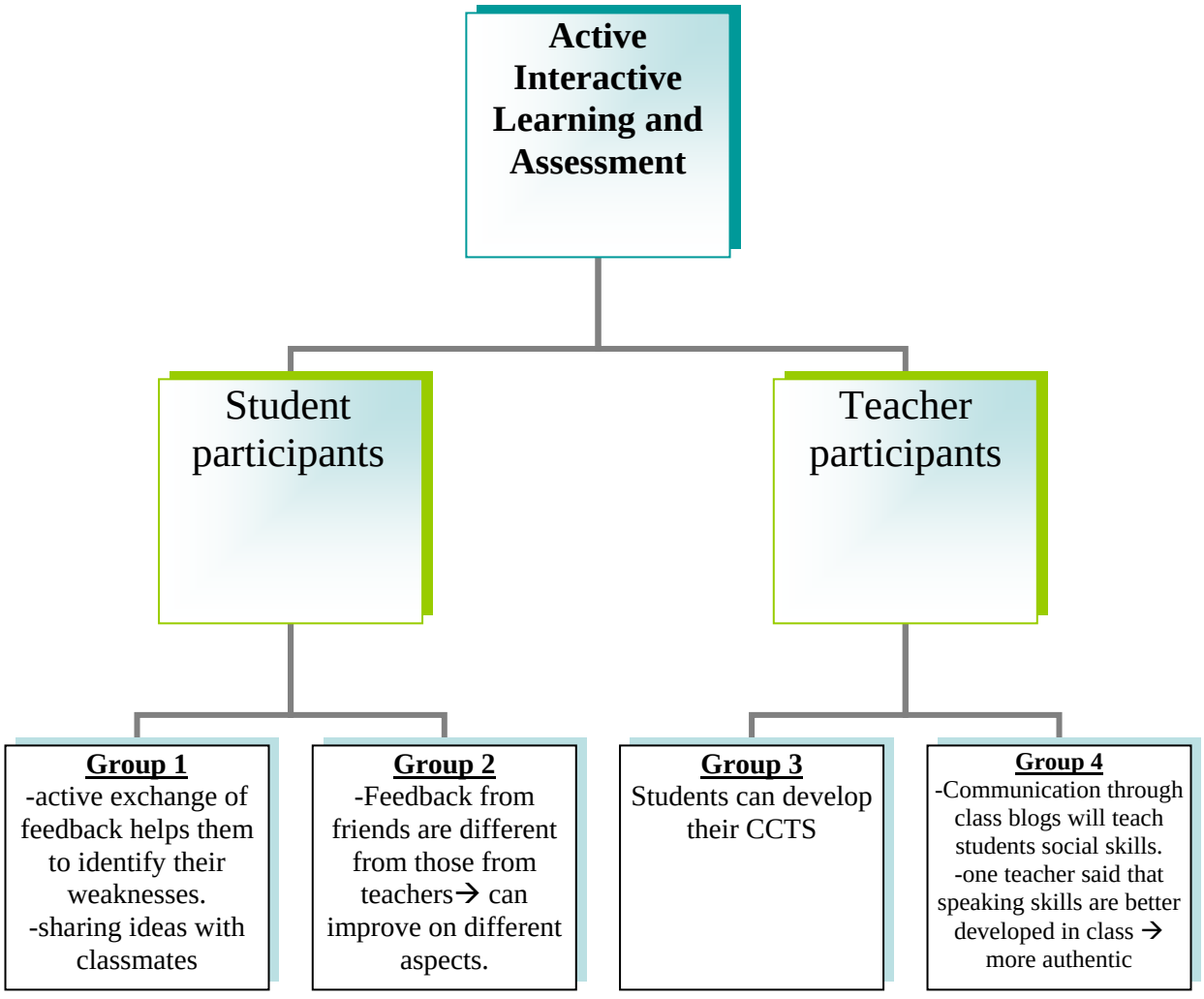

Figure 4.4 Students' and teachers' responses on the effects of the use of class blogs on active interactive learning and assessment.

Amongst Group 1 respondents, 80% of them indicated that active learning that is enabled through giving and receiving feedback to one another. All of the above reasons given show that using class blogs as a form of assessment allows students to actively be involved in learning with their class mates and thus learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses.

As stated by half of Group 1 respondents, active learning is also possible through sharing ideas with their class mates on the class blogs. This provides a new dynamic platform for students, regardless of levels, to voice out their opinions and consequently conduct active discussions. Active learning was also seen in terms of student-teacher communication. There were 95% of Group 1 respondents stated that teacher-student feedback exchange would help them improve their English language skills even more.

4.1.2.2.4 Non-threatening Learning and Assessment Environments

The Humanistic theory of language learning emphasizes the importance of non-threatening learning and assessment environments for learning to take place effectively. Figure 4.5 shows the participants' responses regarding this aspect:

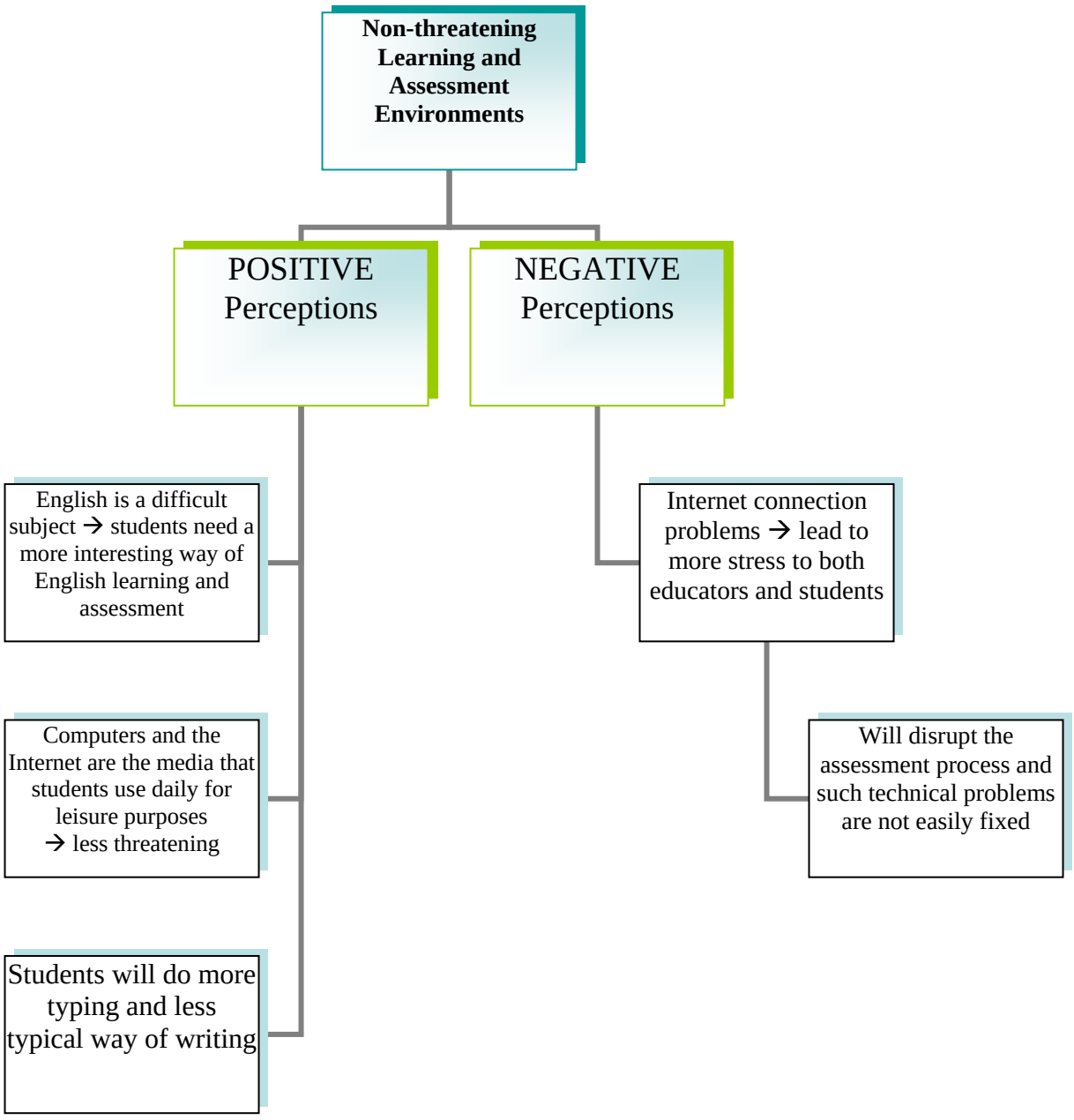

Figure 4.5 Participants' responses to on the relation of using class blogs and the aspect of non-threatening learning and assessment environments

Figure 4.5 presents the participants' responses to the aspect of 'non-threatening learning and assessment environments. There were at least 80% of Group 1 and Group 2 students who agreed that class blogs present a more fun and less stressful way of assessing their English language skills. From the above positive reasons, it is implied that class blogs

might lessen the typical anxiety that accompanies students when it comes to English language assessments.

There were 90% of Group 3 teacher respondents who also expressed their positive perceptions on this aspect. Nonetheless, a quarter of respondents across all groups pointed out that Internet connection problems may, on the contrary, bring a lot of stress if there are any technical problems. The reasons are shown in the diagram above.

4.1.2.2.5 Power of Feedback on Motivation

As reviewed in Chapter Two earlier, feedback in assessment is a powerful element in motivating second language learners. Motivated language learners are likely to be more actively involved in language learning processes and view assessment as a part of the learning process. This, consequently, will positively impact their language learning performance, as postulated by Carl Rogers' Humanistic theory of language learning. The power of feedback on motivation can be traced through all participants' respondents across all four groups, as summarized in Figure 4.6:

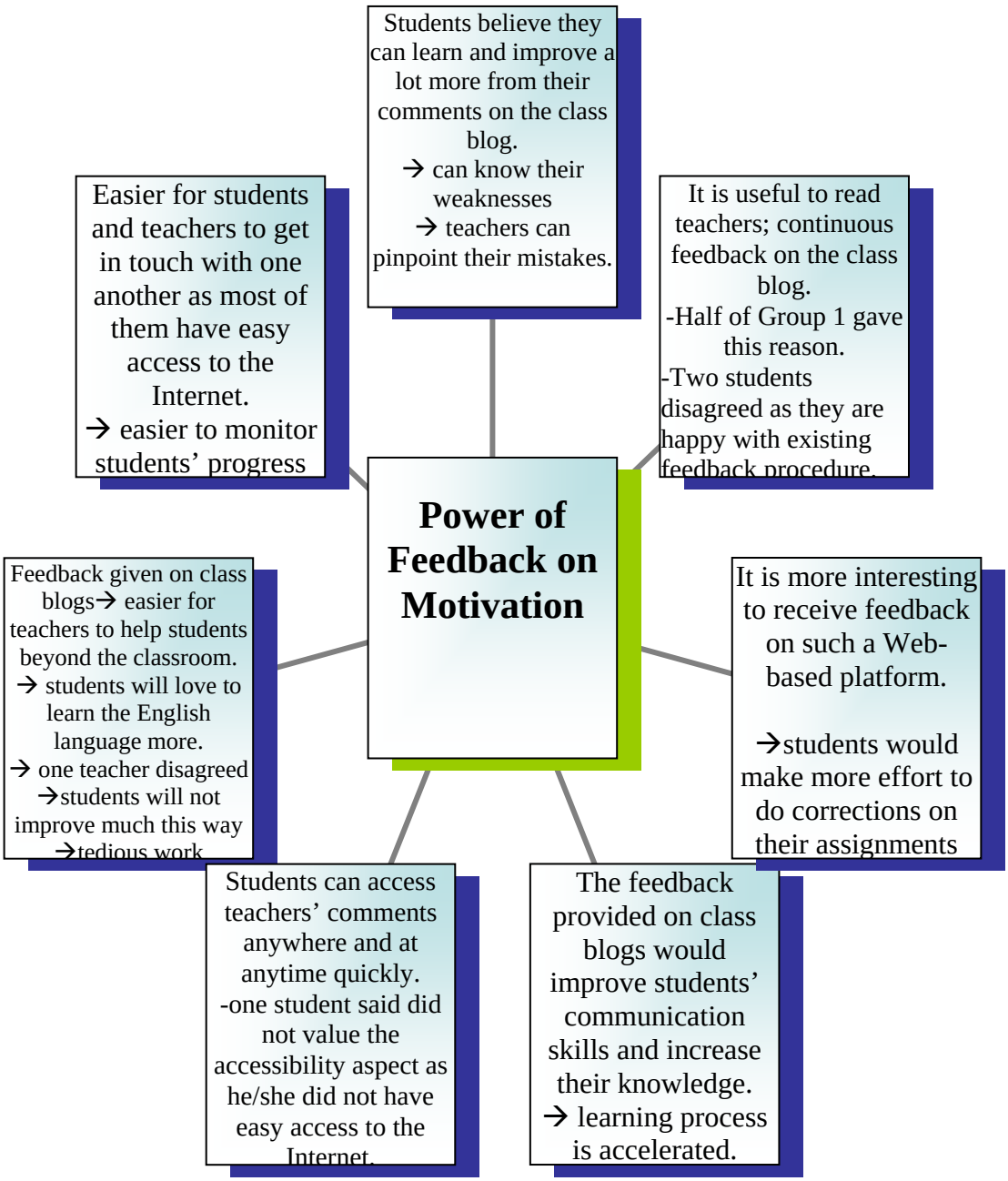

Figure 4.6 Students and teachers' responses on the power of feedback given on class blogs.

Referring to Figure 4.6, 90% of the respondents indicated their positive perceptions on the power of feedback given on class blogs. The fact that students indicated that they want to read their teachers' continuous feedback on the blog shows that the students acknowledged

the importance of regular feedback on their English language learning development. The negative perceptions on this issue, as a result of accessibility problems, again shows that technical issues are the main problem that may hinder students from wanting to try a new form of Web-based assessment like class blogs.

One teacher respondent from Group 3, however, said that their comments will be useful in improving their students' English language skills only if the students' work in the first place was done by themselves. If the work was only 'copy-and-pasted' from other sources, then such comments would not serve any purpose.

In short, the participants' responses show that the positive effects of providing feedback on class blogs far outweigh the possible negative effects. All this shows that the educators' and students believe in the power of feedback in language assessment .

4.1.2.2.6 Wholesome Collaborative Learning Relationships

The Humanistic theory of language learning emphasizes on wholesome collaborative learning relationships between teachers and students and amongst students themselves. When it comes to language assessment, peer-assessments are believed to be a way for establishing such wholesome collaborative learning relationships amongst the students. A question on peer-assessments was thus included in the questionnaire for both student and teacher participants to respond to. Their responses to this item are summarized in Figure 4.7:

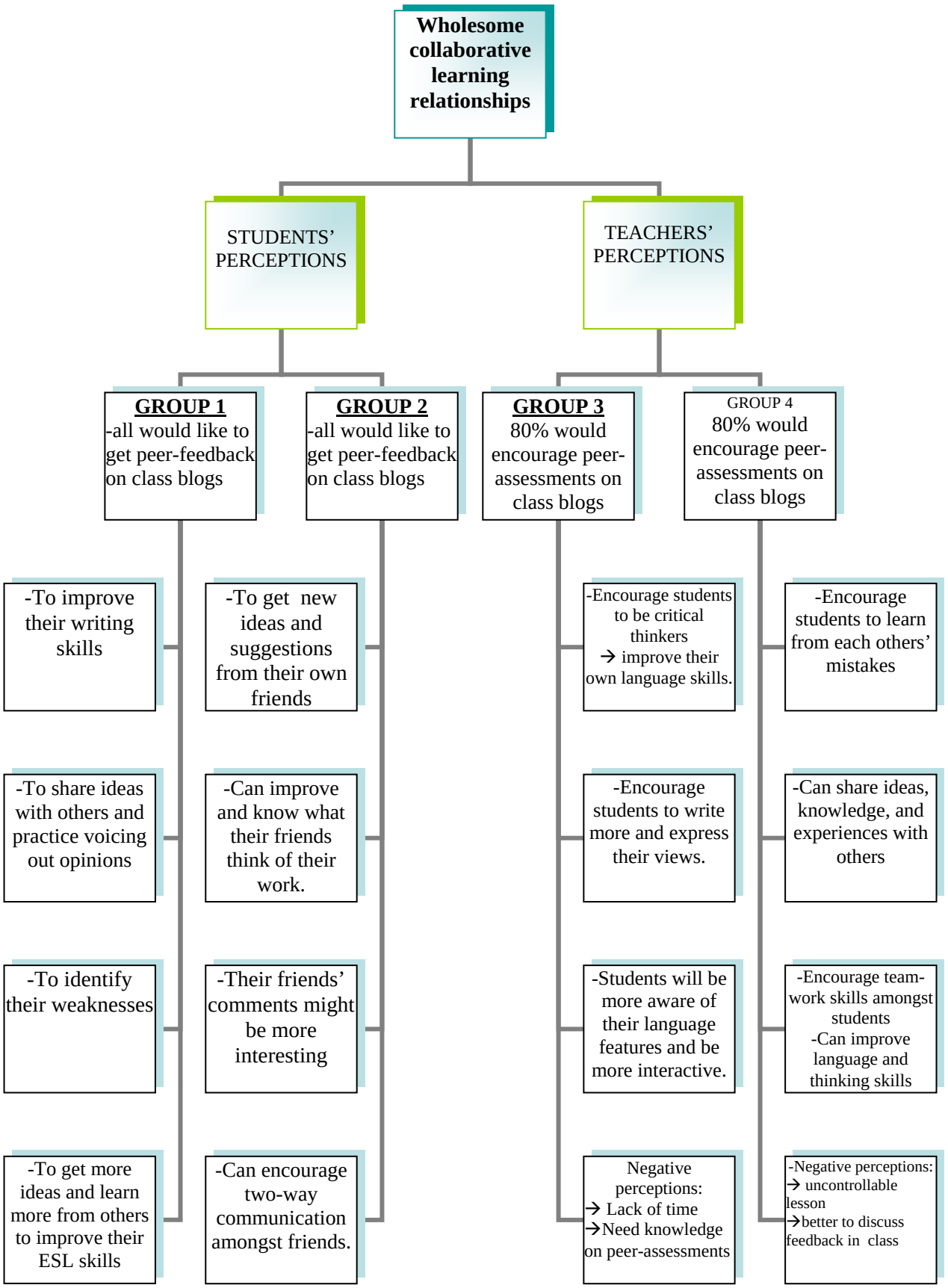

Figure 4.7 Participants' responses on the relations of the use of class blogs and peer-assessments.

Figure 4.7 shows the teacher and student participants' responses regarding the relations of using class blogs as a form of assessment and creating wholesome collaborative learning relationships, as emphasized by the Humanistic approach.

Responses from Group 1 show that all of them believed that peer-assessments will assist their language learning processes. Group 2 respondents, also, said that their friends' different ideas may be able to provide them with creative ideas on how to improve their writing, knowledge, and their general language skills. Evidently, all student participants favoured peer-assessments and look forward to its incorporation in their future language assessment procedures.

Teacher participants, however, had differing views on the issue of peer-assessments. 80% of Group 3 respondents indicated that they would encourage their students to provide feedback on their course mates' work on the class blogs of their English courses. From the positive reasons given above, it shows that students will learn to not just give a simple 'yes' or 'no' response as they may need to provide justifications. This will expose them to the dos and don'ts in writing.

Similarly, there were 80% of Group 4 respondents who would encourage peer-assessments on class blogs. From the positive responses in the diagram that students will not only improve their language skills through class blogs but also practise their social skills. As stated in the diagram, there were some negative perceptions from Group 4 respondents. One of them who would not encourage peer-assessment on the class blogs said that lessons may drag and become uncontrollable unless the teacher could control the peer-assessment function on the blog. The other respondent said he or she preferred to discuss feedback in

the classroom as this more ‘authentic’ method would better enhance his or her students speaking skills. Overall, the majority of the student and teacher participants favoured peer-assessments on the class blogs as this assessment technique was believed to encourage English language and thinking skills improvement and promote interactivity amongst class members.

4.1.2.2.7 Autonomous Learning

Active learning through assessment procedures is one of the features of a Humanistic way of learning a second language. As explained in Chapter Two, Humanistic theory of language learning believes that active learning will contribute to the development of autonomy in learners. One way this could be materialized is through encouraging students to assess their own work. The respondents’ perceptions on this assessment method were analysed from the findings of one question item (Question 5) in the Part B of the questionnaires and can be summarized in Figure 4.8:

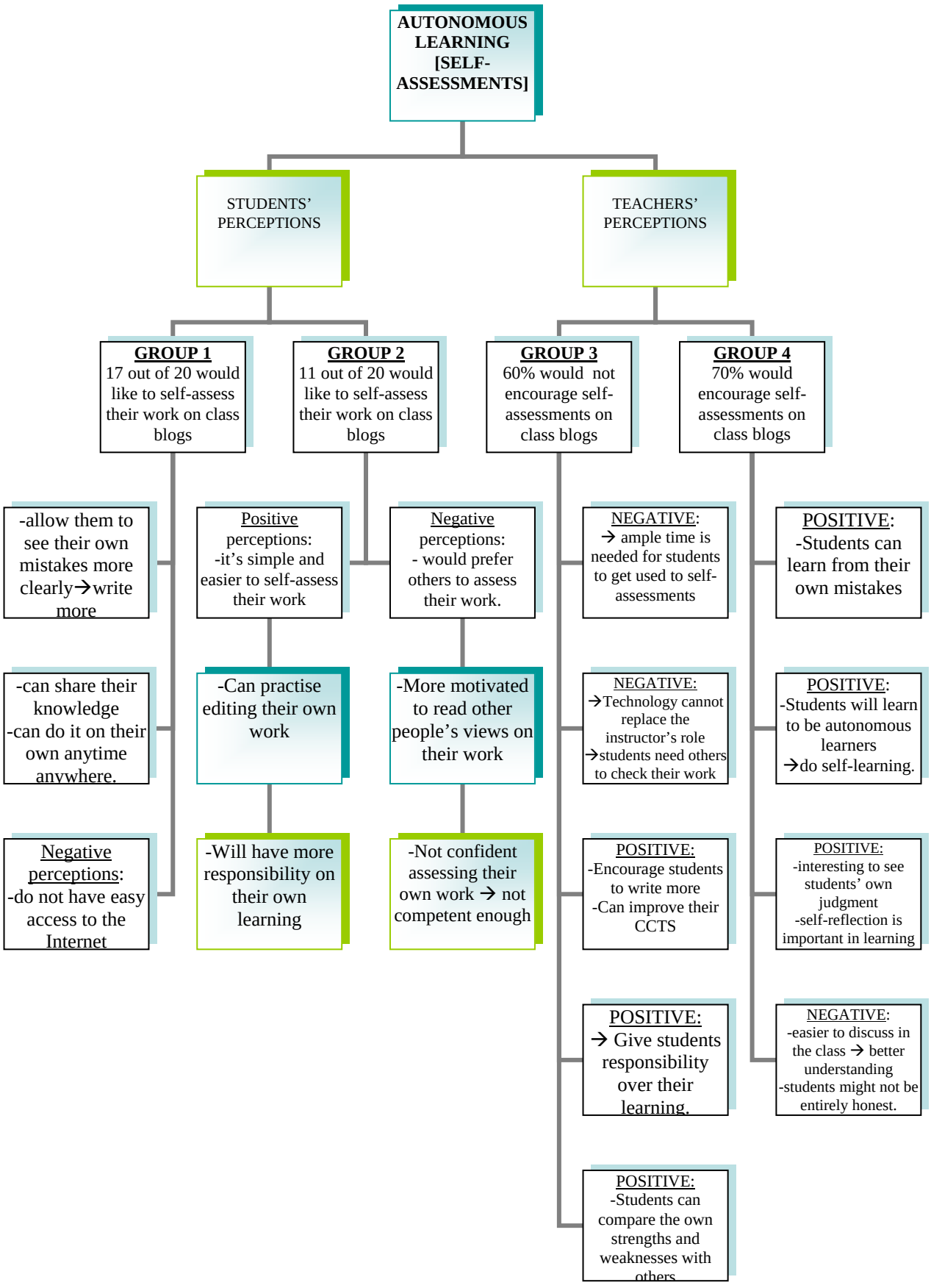

Figure 4.8 The effects of using class blogs as a form of assessment on autonomous learning.

It can be seen, therefore, that the majority of Group 1 students can see the benefits of self-assessing their own work on the class blogs, thus showing positive perceptions towards self-assessments in general. Problems with Internet connection, however, may present problems to a few of them.

Different findings were found in Group 2 students who have not experienced using class blogs as a form of assessment in their ESL courses before. The positive responses shown in Figure 4.8 shows that the students believe self-assessments can help them produce better piece of work. Students can also show what they actually think and feel about their own blog entries. Addressing this affective factor is parallel to the core aspect of the Humanistic approach to language learning. It is assumed that those who showed negative perceptions on self-assessments mostly think that others would provide clearer and more sincere comments on their work, compared to if they do it on their own.

There is a stark difference in the responses of Group 3 teacher participants; 60% of them did not believe that doing self-assessments on class blogs is a good idea. They stated that learning from others' comments would be a better way for students to improve their language skills. Thus, it can be said that most of Group 3 respondents had negative perceptions on self-assessments on class blogs because of the time issues and they felt that comments from others would benefit the students more.

In contrast, there were 70% of Group 4 respondents who showed positive perceptions towards self-assessments on the class blogs of ESL courses. Those who had negative perceptions pointed out that discussing students' work in the classroom will allow students

to get a better understanding of their work. Honesty issues may also arise, especially if marks are awarded to such self-assessments.

Overall, it was clear that there were contradictory findings between the student and the teacher participants across all groups when it comes to self-assessments.

4.1.2.2.8 Assessment for Life-long Learning

Active collaborative and autonomous learning, as highlighted in the Humanistic theory of language learning explained earlier, are not proposed just for the mere purpose of enhancing students' language performance within a particular course, but also aim to sustain the language acquisition for a longer time. This is where the issue of 'assessment for learning' comes in. Question 6 of Part B of the questionnaires was analysed in order to discover the participants' responses on this aspect. The question sought to investigate the respondents' views on whether or not they feel the presence or absence of feedback would affect the students' motivation to continue to post English blog entries on their own blogs or open their own blog accounts after the completion of their English courses.

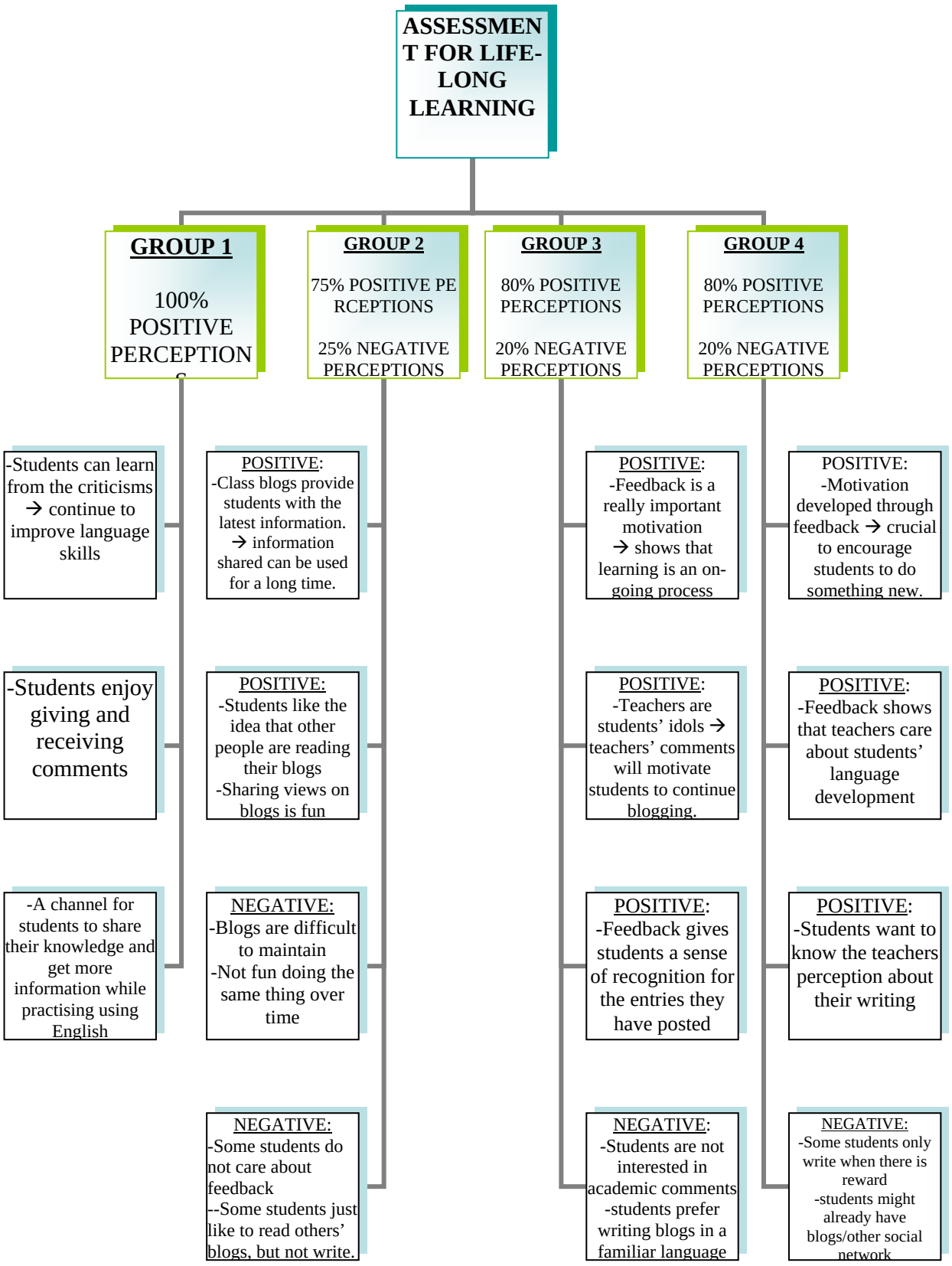

Figure 4.9 The participants' responses on the relations between the use of class blogs as a form of assessment and 'assessment for life-long learning'.

It is apparent from Figure 4.9 that all Group 1 students had positive perceptions towards the idea of fostering life-long language learning through the use of class blogs as a form of assessment. It is assumed that the students' own positive experience using class blogs has contributed to this finding.

In Group 2, although the majority of the respondents still showed positive perceptions towards the issue of 'assessment for life-long learning', 5 of the 20 respondents thought otherwise. What can be implied from Group 2 respondents' positive perceptions is sharing views and information on blogs is by itself fun, and thus they would continue to write on their blogs or open their own accounts even after the completion of their ESL courses. Those who said that blogs are difficult to maintain explained that it would be difficult to get 'followers', i.e. fan readers, if one is not creative enough in their blog entries. The feedback given also might not be significant if blogging is the respondent's very passion from the beginning. One, therefore, would still be blogging even if he or she knows that no one is reading his or her blog. There were also some who are too afraid that what others say might bring him or her down, thus discouraging him or her from blogging after the completion of the ESL courses.

One Group 4 respondent added that students usually feel 'honoured' if their thoughts are being accounted for. This would motivate them to continue blogging, especially if they have a good rapport with their English language teachers. Another Group 4 respondent also mentioned that feedback has a great role in motivating language learners to further use the language as the absence of such feedback would not allow them to know the areas in which they need improvement.

Another Group 4 teacher said that students would probably be motivated to continue writing English blog entries after completion of a course because students might want the freedom to actually write something without having to worry about their teachers' views. Another respondent highlighted that with the experience using class blogs and receiving feedback, students would realize that blogs are a perfect tool to express themselves and simultaneously improve their English. With that in mind, perhaps the students will feel more motivated to write more English blog entries in the future. In terms of negative perceptions, one teacher pointed out that if students have already considered blogging as their passion, any further encouragement in the form of feedback on the class blogs would be redundant.

4.2 Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were analysed according to the nine themes in the following sub-sections. The first three themes only looked at the educators' perceptions about blogs and class blogs as a form of assessment in general. The remaining themes were all related to the inter-connected aspects of the Humanistic approach of language learning, as discussed in Chapter Two, such as non-threatening environments, motivation, feedback, active learning, collaborative learning, autonomous learning, and assessment for learning. The respondents were varied, consisting randomly of Malaysian university ESL educators who have used and have not used class blogs as a form of assessment in their ESL classes. The following are the nine sub-sections that represent the themes, through which the data from the structured interviews were analysed.

4.2.1 Blogs and ESL classrooms

A range of distinctively different reasons were given by the educators when they were asked why they like blogs or blogging. Figures 4.10 and 4.11 present the responses of both groups of interviewees on this issue:

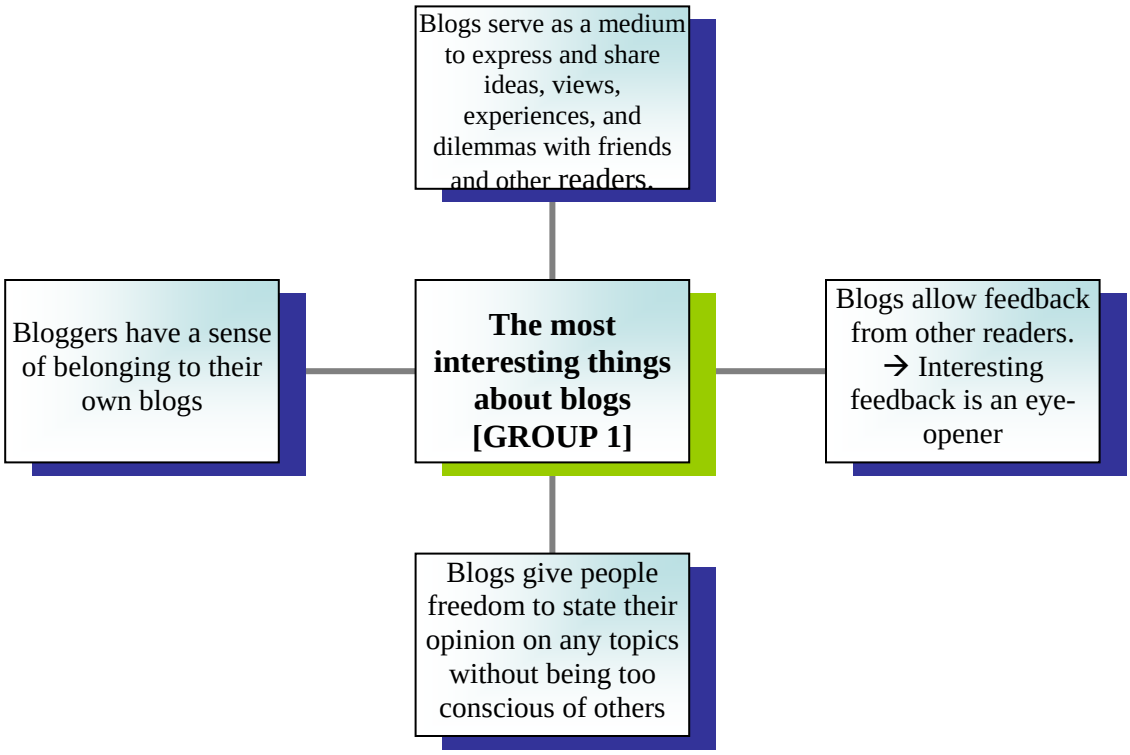

Figure 4.10 Responses of Group 1 interviewees on what they like most about blogs

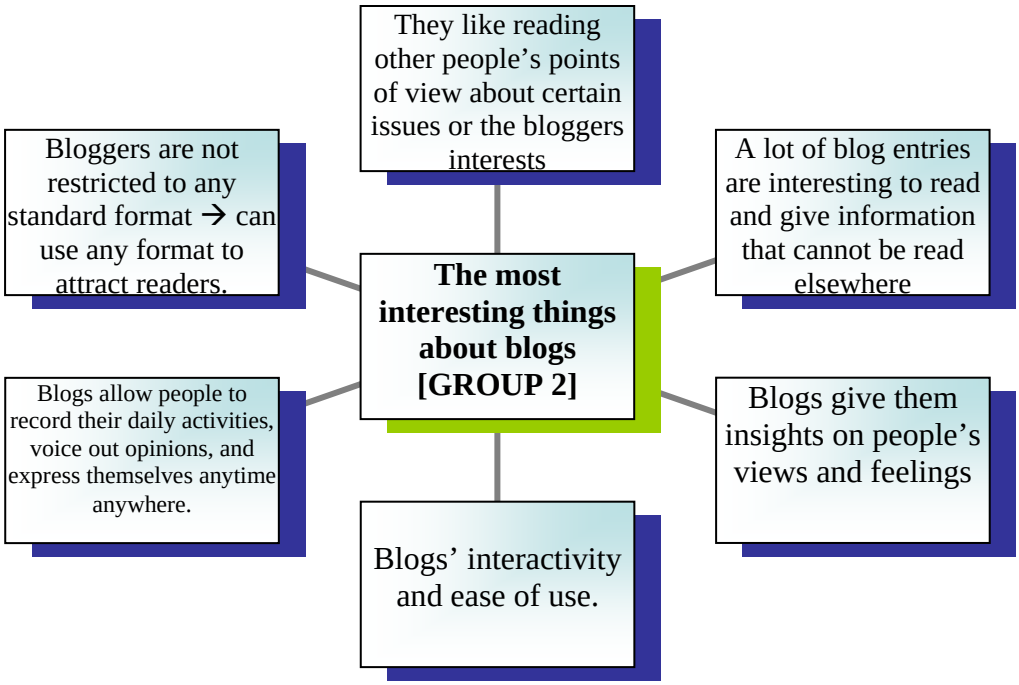

Figure 4.11 Responses of Group 2 interviewees on what they like most about blogs

As evident from Figure 4.10 and 4.11, 90% of the interviewees mentioned the things they like most about blogs. There was one respondent, however, who pointed out that sometimes people could be too critical when posting comments on the blogs by using vulgar words to voice out their feelings. The teacher said that this feature of blogs may not be appropriate in ESL lessons. Thus, there should be some guidelines, if blogs are to be used in an ESL course.

The interviewees were also asked about the potential of using blogs in ESL courses. All interviewees who have used blogs in their ESL courses showed positive perceptions. Their perceptions are summarized as follows:

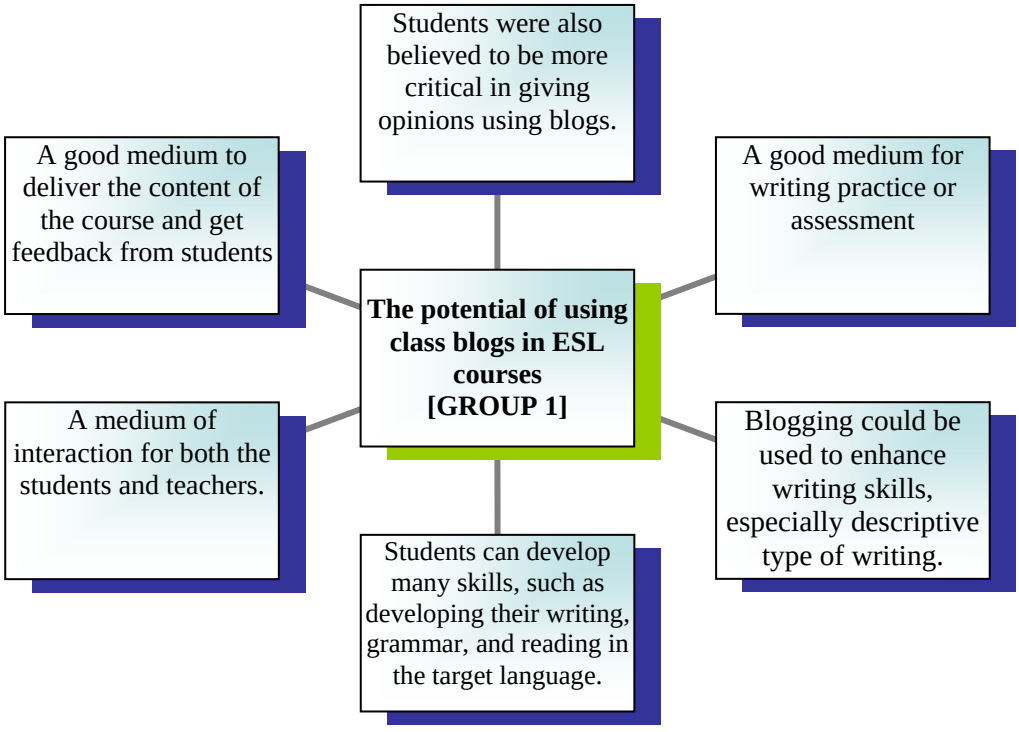

Figure 4.12 Group 1 responses on the potential of using class blogs in ESL courses

Overall, it can be deduced from Group 1 responses that with ample guidance and clear instructions, blogging could be successfully used in ESL courses.

Educators who have not incorporated blogs in their English lessons also expressed their views on the potential of blogs to be used in ESL courses. There were 90% of Group 2 interviewees who felt that blogs have great potential to be utilized in ESL courses in Malaysia, as evident in Figure 4.13:

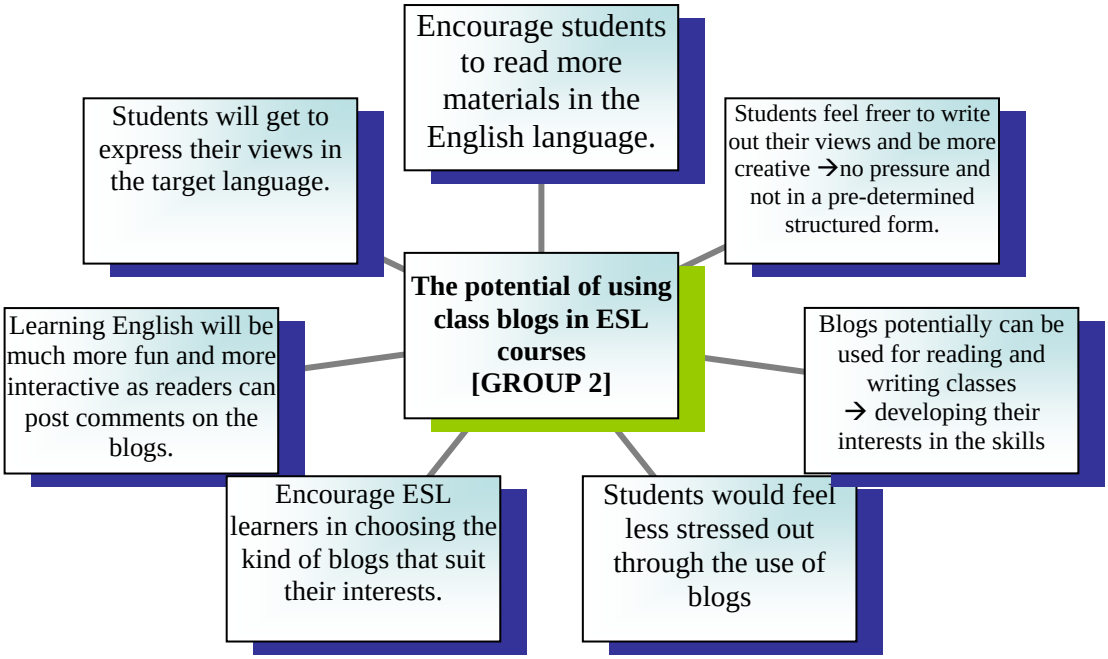

Figure 4.13 Group 2 responses on the potential of using class blogs in ESL courses

Nonetheless, one of Group 2 interviewees felt that the typical use of informal language in blogs might actually worsen the students' language skills, especially in their spelling.

Amongst the interviewees who have incorporated class blogs in their ESL classes, they described their different experiences in many aspects. One of the interviewees indicated that in her experience, the students did not spend too much time on the class blogs. It was more of an exposure to the technology for the students. Students would only be using the class blogs outside the classroom whenever they had free time. Another interviewee described that her students would need to post comments on the class blog (set up by the

teacher) based on the class activity in which the teacher would write about. Students mostly used the class blogs to post comments on any related articles posted by the teacher. The students also developed their own blogs based on any topics discussed in class. Based on one of the interviewees' experience, her students enjoyed writing their own blogs as they were given the time to think and reflect upon related topics online. Another interviewee indicated that all her students responded to every entry that is compulsory for them to post comments, but only a few responded to entries which are not compulsory for them. One interviewee also pointed out that she was pleasantly surprised with the outcomes. She managed to see her students' improvement in both communication and writing skills. Evidently, all of Group 1 interviewees' responses are positive, thus verifying the feasibility of using class blogs as a form of assessment in ESL courses.

Since educators who have not used blogs in their English lessons before did not have any experience using class blogs to draw on, they were asked on their understanding of class blogs in general. Some of them saw class blogs as a platform to share ideas, something like an online forum. One of them indicated that class blogs are an open place for everyone in the class to participate in a discussion of topics. Students and teachers were believed to be able to express their opinions freely, but with some guidelines. Another teacher stated that she believed class blogs present a place where lessons or class notes will be posted on the blogs and the blogger can invite comments from the visitors. One of them felt that class blogs are set up by a class with a particular objective in mind, i.e. something that is perhaps conducted to set the ball rolling. One more teacher interviewee indicated that class blogs are where entries are submitted by the students pertaining to some assignments or tasks. Overall, it is evident that the educators' views of class blogs are quite close to the original definition as explicated in Chapter One and Two earlier.

4.2.2 Class Blogs and ESL Skills

The interviewees gave differing views when asked about how far they think class blogs could actually be useful in improving students' English language skills. All of the interviewees who had incorporated class blogs before said that the class blogs could be very useful. One pointed out that this is the case only if students are given a set of ground rules, i.e. no plagiarism and using English with the grammatically correct sentence structure and correct spelling. A respondent also specified that class would be beneficial if the students felt less threatened in giving opinions and writing on the class blog. The respondent indicated that class blogs provide a medium for the students to practise their language skills consistently. Class blogs were also said to help enhance students' English language skills to a certain extent as teachers are still required to give more input in a face to face communication or lectures. An interviewee pointed out that everything depends on how the instructors handle the activities, the skills being focused on, and the activities conducted on the blog.

Educators who had not incorporated class blogs before also expressed their views on class blogs' roles in improving students' English language skills. Most of them felt that class blogs could be useful in improving students reading and writing skills as students will inevitably read other students' views and would be required to do some write-up. They, however, felt that teachers need to stress on the use of proper language and appropriate ideas as students might have the tendency to use language features that are too informal. They believed that class blogs would somehow improve students' language skills as they may be conscious that their peers will be reading their writing too. But one of them indicated that class blogs may be more useful in developing students' critical thinking skills

and their skills to express opinions. Another interviewee mentioned that blogs would provide opportunities for students to participate in the discussion at their own comfort and convenience. This setting, i.e. class blogs, will be helpful especially to those students who are not confident with their speaking skills or those who lack confidence in speaking in front of the class. Thus, it was felt that the motivation to learn English will increase and students will subsequently improve their language skills. According to one interviewee, sufficient monitoring by the teacher, however, is needed.

One of the interviewees, in fact, believed that class blogs could be useful in improving students' English language skills to a great extent. She believed that teachers cannot afford not to start using blogs in teaching. This is believed to be a way to help students to use the language in a means which most students are adept at. The teacher, however, pointed out that complications may arise if teachers cannot keep up with the technology. There might be teachers who are not computer literate and thus, face problems creating and maintaining these class blogs. In such cases, students might not be able to make full use of class blogs to improve their language skills.

4.2.3 Class Blogs as a Form of Assessment

The interviewees had provided different views on several aspects of using class blogs as a form of assessment in general. Interviewees were asked on their perceptions on the issue, especially on the advantages and disadvantages of using class blogs as a form of assessment, the appropriate weightage for students' participation in the class blogs, how difficult it is to manage class blogs, and marking entries on the class blogs.

The advantages and disadvantages of using class blogs as a form of assessment as pointed out by the interviewees from both groups can be summarized in Table 4.11:

Table 4.11 The advantages and disadvantages of using class blogs as a form of assessment.

Groups	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
GROUP 1	→ Class blogs have interesting features like pictures, songs, and videos that can be uploaded → Learning becomes more interesting and students feel more eager to participate in the task. → Easily accessible → Students would have fun writing comments and reading their classmates' comments → More freedom for students to be more creative in giving out ideas and expressing their views on certain issues. → Easier for students to communicate with the teacher → allows two-way communication → Improvement in students' vocabulary development. *Teachers still have to monitor the students' responses, based on her own experience.	→ Plagiarism → where students simply copied their entries from their friends or other blogs → Difficult for teachers to check. → Students may not acknowledge the sources of their work Internet connection → may result in delays on the part of the students → Students might face problems to go online at the required period of time and in return, fail to complete the assessment tasks. → Students tend to uses improper language, resembling the kind of language they usually use in text messaging. → The number of posts could be overwhelming and sometimes they were out of topic.
GROUP 2	→ Students would be able to learn to relate their ideas with others' → Less paper marking on the part of the teacher → assess the blog entries by impressionistic marking. →learners will be more alert in doing the online assessment as they need to do it in the real time. → the less structured nature of class blogs may lead students to perform better in the assessment tasks → to cater to students' differing learning styles → may benefit those students who do not like to be pressured to write within the class period → Improve students' outlook and skills in reading and writing.	→ Plagiarism → outcomes are debatable → no real monitoring → Students use colloquial language → Impressionistic marking→ not a reliable way of assessing language skills → Printing out the threads of blog responses can be tiresome → Lack of time and facilities → Not all students have access to the Internet → Not all students are technology savvy → Less competent ones might find it a hassle.

When asked about the appropriate weightage for students' participation in class blogs, the interviewees had almost similar views on this, and they were dependent on several aspects. One of the interviewees said that it depends on the activity or the task itself. If it is a writing task, she felt that it could be higher, as in around 20% of the overall marks allocated for the course. But if it is a proficiency course, the interviewee felt that 5% would be sufficient for 5 blog entries as it was just an exposure to the technology for her students. Similarly, another interviewee said that 5% for five entries which they are required to respond to is appropriate. Two other interviewees also felt that the weightage should only be around 5-10% of the overall marks as class blogs are still a new form of assessment in ESL courses.

ESL teachers who had not used class blogs in their lessons were also asked of the appropriate weightage for students' participation in class blogs. Four of them indicated that it should only be about 5-10% of the overall marks. This is similar to the views of interviewees who have experienced using class blogs before, as explained above. They did not think that it should be given more than 25% weightage of the overall assessment. One of the interviewees stated that she might give 10% for students; participation and another 10% weightage for the students' language use since it is for ESL courses.

In terms of the management of the class blogs, the interviewees' responses are diagrammatically presented in Table 4.12:

Table 4.12 Interviewees' responses on how difficult it is to manage class blogs.

Groups	POSITIVE Responses [EASY]	NEGATIVE responses [DIFFICULT]
GROUP 1	Easy to manage→ because students were still needed to submit a hard copy of all the entries that they had posted for marking purposes. Easy → because class blogs are done systematically. *Two other interviewees simply said that it is manageable to use class blogs as a form of assessment	A bit difficult → the postings would be too many and the educators have to search for the posts of each student in order to calculate the marks.
GROUP 2	Easy → because everything could be done online.	→ There might be initial hiccups but she thought that it is not much different from other assessment forms. → The initial hiccups were technical problems and the Internet- or computer-savvyness of the students or the teachers. Difficult→ To record all marks at the same time as may respond to the class blogs at different times More difficult → for bigger classes → Difficult to monitor the reliability and validity of students' responses

It is evident that Group 1 interviewees had more positive experience in terms of managing class blogs. There were 80% of Group 2 respondents who still had doubts on managing class blogs as a form of assessment since they have not had any experience using them before.

In terms of marking and the paperwork, three interviewees felt that class blogs actually increased the marking and paperwork to be done as the teachers needed to assess five

entries for only 5% of the overall marks. If students write five entries on their own (not plagiarized), with each consisting of one paragraph, the students will get 5/5 marks. The marking was actually increased as they were too many posts to be marked. Another interviewee, however, felt that it depends on the purpose of the assessments. If marks were given more on the content, than the language, maybe impression marking could be used to mark the blog entries, thus assisting the marking processes to be done. One interviewee said that class blogs lessen the paperwork that has to be done as teachers do not have to carry papers to be marked everywhere. All that is needed is a computer or a laptop. Another interviewee indicated that class blogs neither lessen nor increase the paperwork to be done as in her case, it was just a 5% assessment.

Teachers who have not used class blogs before also had differing views on this issue. Three of the interviewees were confident that class blogs would lessen the marking and paperwork. One of them believed that teachers can save time for marking and they would save the paper and trees too. Another interviewee also felt that class blogs would lessen the work load because most of the marking will be done virtually and teachers can convert the responses of the assessment on softcopy form. Teachers might not need to print them out unless they are printing the results of the test. It was pointed out that the whole point of using class blogs is to lessen the marking through computing the grading and marking. One of the interviewees, however, felt that it would not be much different from other forms of assessment. Nonetheless, the teacher pointed out that extra marking might be involved as they are adding a new component for assessment.

The respondents had differing views too when they were asked whether class blogs should only be limited as a learning tool, not as an assessment tool. One of them said that

sometimes it was hard to recognise students' own writing in the assessed blog entries. In such a case, perhaps it is better if class blogs are used only as a learning tool. Another interviewee felt that it can be used as an assessment tool as class blogs educate students to be more independent, provided that they are give clear instructions beforehand. Two interviewees felt that class blogs could serve both purposes, as learning and as assessment tools. They felt that it is truly dependent on the language instructor's intention in using the class blogs in the ESL classrooms.

All of the interviewees who had not used class blogs before felt that class blogs can be both learning and assessment tools. One of the interviewees believed that teachers can make class blog learning and assessment fun and interesting that will suit the needs of the students. Another interviewee stated that the assessment may motivate students' learning. A teacher also indicated that assessment needs to assess what the students know based on what they have learned from a course. Hence, the interviewee felt that class blog learning and assessment should be integrated, Another teacher respondent pointed out that class blogs can be used as a form of assessment provided that proper guidelines on what and how to assess are drafted out properly. This is so that all teachers can treat and grade students in a systematic manner. One of the teachers, however, felt that class blogs should first be used as a learning tool so that learners will develop interest in learning the language and learn the language at their own comfort. The teacher felt that students should not feel intimidated with the assessment responses that can be viewed openly. Nonetheless, the teacher believed that using class blogs as a form of assessment can be considered if the learners are at a higher proficiency level.

Most of the interviewees who had incorporated class blogs in their lessons believed that class blogs are not just a fad, and it will continue to develop in years to come. One teacher said that it will develop as many people will be having their own blog pages and class blogs will be something that is easy to be conducted in ESL courses. Another respondent also pointed out that blogs are here to stay and they will develop together with the invention of technology and development of educational technology. One more teacher mentioned that technology changes over time and blogging is the current technology that is getting a lot of attention amongst educators. Thus, educators must always anticipate new forms of assessments to be incorporated in the near future as well. Educators also must keep up with the technology and prepare the students for it. She stated that when the time comes, there is a possibility that class blogging will not be incorporated in ESL courses anymore and that they will need to incorporate the latest technology in their assessments.

Educators who had not used class blogs before also showed positive perceptions about the development of class blogs as an assessment form in years to come. One teacher indicated that class bogs could be further developed based on the teachers' initiatives. Another teacher stated that class blogs are not a fad and will develop further especially with all the studies being conducted on blogging and the widespread use of the Internet. Another interviewee also agreed that class blogs will continue to develop as a form of assessment and it can be one way of assessing ESL students' performance if enough research is done on how to carry it out effectively. One of the teachers believed that class blogs should be around for the next decade, at least until a new technology tool is invented. After all, class blogs are already integrated as a form of assessment in a number of Malaysian universities.

4.2.4 Class Blogs and the Humanistic Approach to Language Learning

There were 90% of the interviewees who could point out the relations between using class blogs and the Humanistic approach to language learning. Both of the groups' responses are summarized in Figure 4.14:

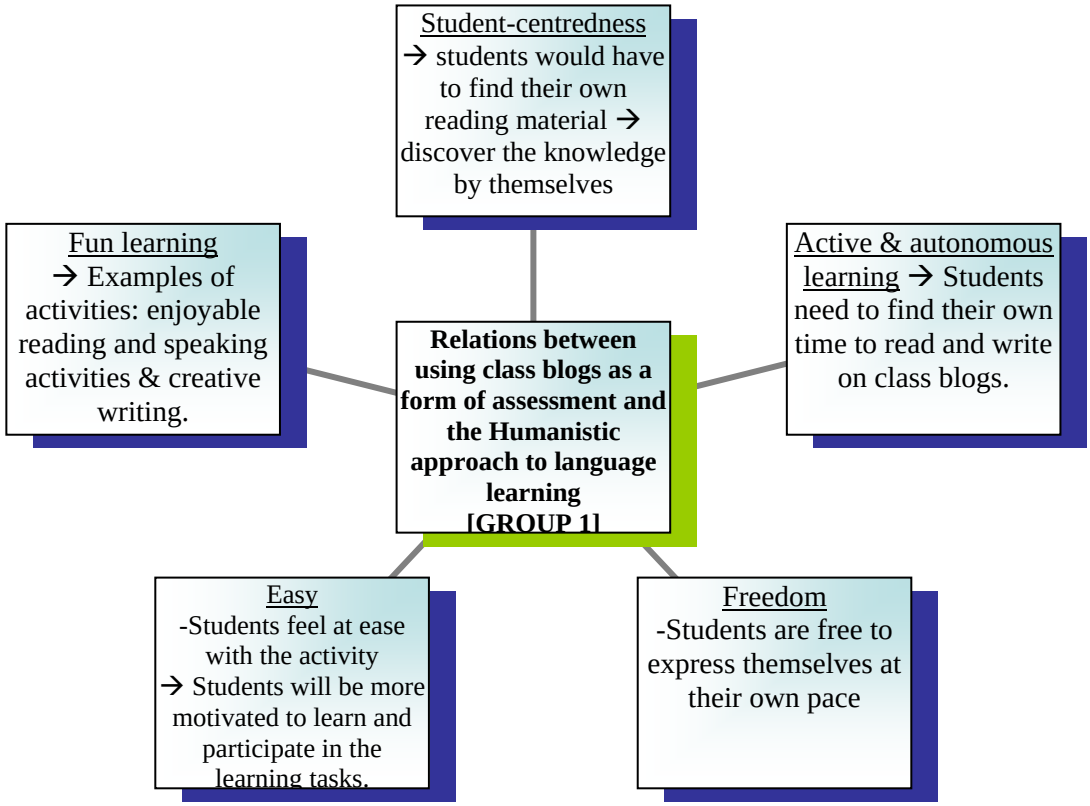

Figure 4.14 Group 1 responses on the relations between using class blogs as a form of assessment and the Humanistic approach to language learning.

The aspects mentioned above show that Group 1 teachers believed that such Humanistic approach can maximize students' potentials while engaging themselves in class blogging. All of the above aspects actually are a reflection of the student-centred approach; an approach that is always encouraged to be used in ESL classrooms.

Only 80% of the interviewees who had not experienced using class blogs before were familiar with the Humanistic approach to language learning. These are the responses gathered from the interviewees:

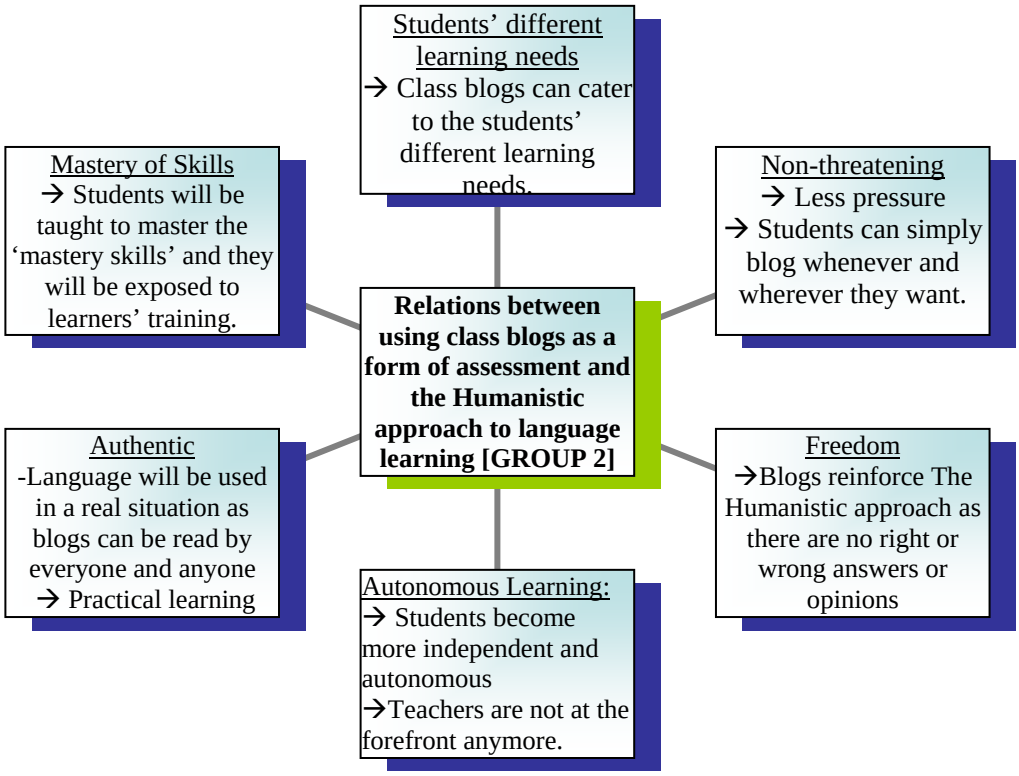

Figure 4.15 Group 2 responses on the relations between using class blogs as a form of assessment and the Humanistic approach to language learning.

4.2.5 Non-threatening Learning and Assessment Environments

As explicated in Chapter Two, the Humanistic approach to language learning believes that students should be learning in non-threatening environments so that they can harness, develop, and exhibit their true potential. The same goes to ESL assessments. At least 80% of the interviewees agreed that class blogging is a less intimidating form of assessment and this can actually enhance students' learning. One of the interviewees stated that teenagers nowadays like technology and they are always eager to learn something new related to it.

The students would feel embarrassed if they cannot keep up with it. They would, therefore, do whatever it takes to be familiar with it. It is clear here that when the form of assessment is a fun and familiar tool, it will become less intimidating and learners will feel more motivated to improve their skills. Another interviewee also indicated that class blogging is definitely less intimidating as students can do express themselves and post comments, at their own pace without the watchful eyes of the teachers. They can post it whenever they are really prepared. Two other interviewees also had similar views. One of them added that a less intimidating form of assessment such as class blogging helps enhance students' learning as the assessment could be done informally. Students are also free to access the webpage at anytime they want at any place. It was also mentioned that class blogging can become a student-teacher way of communication without any barrier.

One teacher interviewee who had never experienced using class blogs in her ESL classes stated that using class blogs as a form of assessment may be less stressful but not less intimidating. This is because others can see and read the students' work and for a student with weak writing skills, this can be very intimidating. The teacher did not think that class blogs can necessarily enhance students' learning, especially for English which is grammar-based. The teacher believed that human contact, i.e. between students and teachers, is still needed. If the assessments tasks only require understanding of concepts and theories, then blogs may enhance students' learning or understanding of the topics. Another teacher, however, had a different opinion on this. The teacher felt that using class blogs as a form of assessment is less intimidating. This is because class blogs may help those who lack the confidence to speak in the classroom. Class blogs would most probably allow such students to respond to a given question, for example, and quality-wise, their responses might be better. The teacher felt that those who were not interested to participate in class before

would definitely be interested to do so because of the extra marks they would get. Another teacher also had similar views as some students might fel more intimidated to participate in the classroom. Another interviewee said that it depends on the students themselves. Students who are not good with technology might find class blogs assessment even more intimidating. The interviewee, however, felt that it is always good to learn something new. It can be concluded that despite the differing perceptions, most of the interviewees from both groups agreed that class blogs are less intimidating to a certain extent in different learning contexts.

4.2.6 Class Blogs and Motivation

As explained in Chapter One, Malaysian students mostly have motivational problems when it comes to learning English as a second language. Most of them find English courses boring and unimportant, thus feeling reluctant to be involved in the tasks conducted in the classrooms and give their best performance in the language skills. When the interviewees were asked about to what extent they felt that class blogs may be the answer to Malaysian students' reluctance to learn English, 60% of Group 1 interviewees showed positive perceptions about this possibility. On the other hand, 80% of educators who had not experienced using class blogs before in their ESL classes only believed in this to a certain extent.

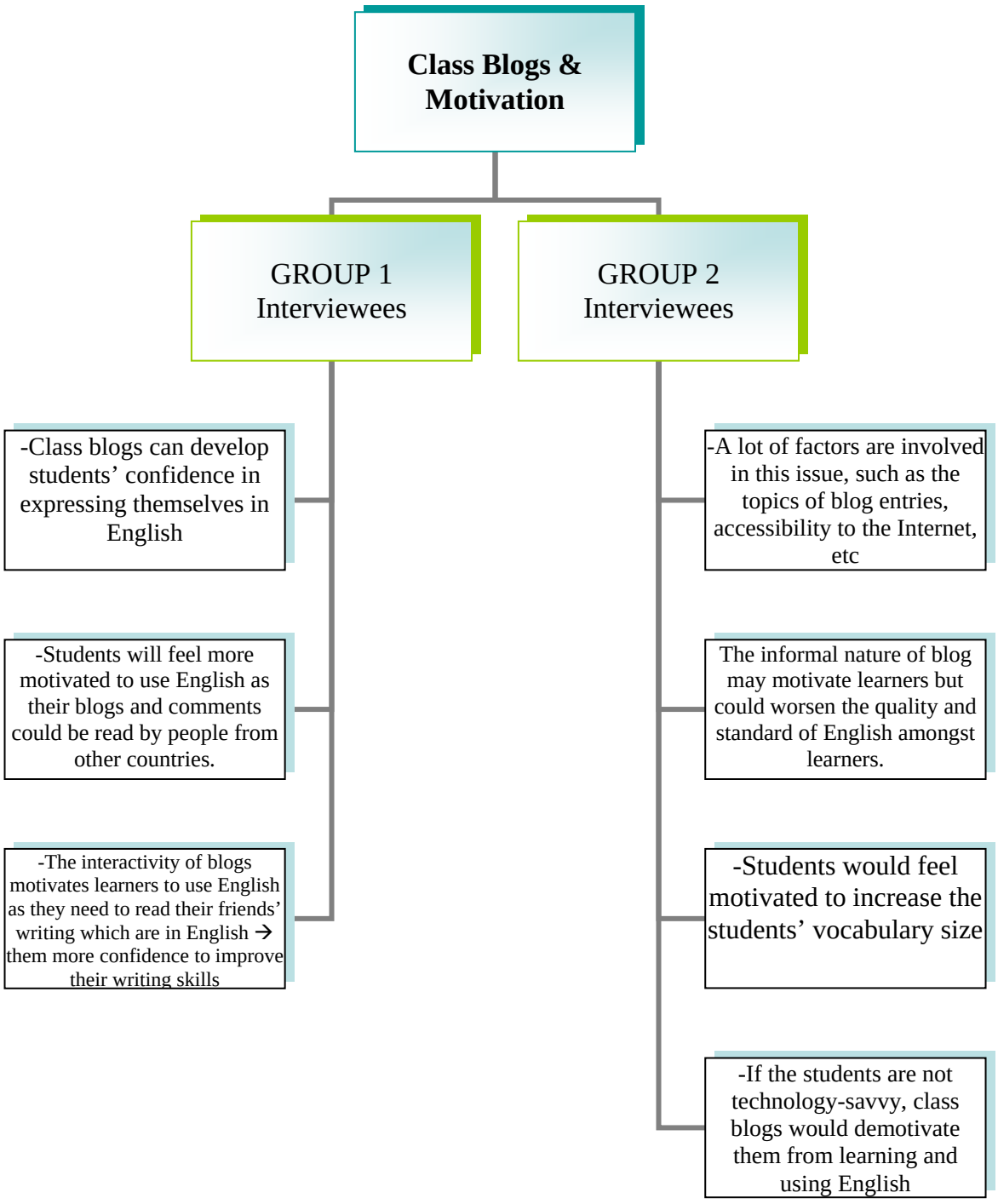

Figure 4.16 Class Blogs and Motivation

Two other teacher respondents from Group 1 said that class blogs may only be the answer to Malaysian students' reluctance to learn English to. A teacher said that it depends on the activities included on the class blog. The activities should be interesting enough to attract

the students. Another teacher pointed out that more in-depth research should be carried out concerning the use of blogs to enhance students' English language competence.

The last two responses from Group 2 interviewees above show that motivational factors depend a lot on the students themselves. Nonetheless, the educators stated that blogs are a step in the right direction to motivate students to express themselves in the target language. Another educator pointed out that students' motivation to learn English through class blogs is very much dependent on the access to the state-of-the-art technology. Class blogs will not be the answer to students' motivational problems if the facilities such as the computers and the Internet are not available to them.

4.2.7 Power of Feedback

When asked about Group 1 interviewees' feelings about giving feedback through the class blogs, four of them stated that they would like to do that. One of the respondents indicated that through feedback, she believed that students would feel appreciated but she could not do that because of the time constraint. Another teacher pointed out that since class blogging is done online, students will get immediate responses and they might find it interesting as it is interactively done. A different teacher said that it is very crucial to provide feedback to students as they would be encouraged to write more. The feedback given also would benefit the whole class as learners can learn from their friends' mistakes too. Another interviewee, however, indicated that giving feedback through the class blogs will not be useful. She believed that teachers could provide guidelines of the activity so that from there, students would already know what is expected from them.

Educators who had not experienced using class blogs in their classes before mostly had positive perceptions about giving feedback through the class blogs. They believed that the feedback provided would motivate and encourage their students even more. Another teacher felt that the feedback would only be effective if they are immediate. Otherwise, the feedback would be ineffective. One of the teachers pointed out that giving feedback through the class blogs can be positive of the responses are useful for other students too, so that similar types of mistakes would not be made again. Nonetheless, the feedback could be negative of the feedback is not constructive and bring embarrassment to the students. This will definitely affect the students' motivation to learn English or even participate in other discussion.

Another teacher elaborated on the issue as well. She said that if we take class blogs as a formal assessment, then the online feedback would also be pretty much formal. This might discourage and demotivate students as they might get stiff responses. The teacher also pointed out that the teachers' feedbacks may also be checked on by their superiors. For that reason, they may be guarded in their responses too. Another respondent mentioned that class blogs is imperative and crucial. The teacher indicated that class blogs is a mechanism that will escalate their reflection processes.

In terms of continuous assessment or feedback, most of the interviewees expressed that it is essential in students' ESL learning and assessments. Two of the interviewees stated that continuous assessments ensure that the students practise their English consistently. The teachers believed feedback is important as without it, students will not know how they are doing in the course. The learning process, thus, will not be complete. This is because she felt that students need to know how they are doing in the course and to make sure that they

are on the right track. Another interviewee also had quite similar views as she said that continuous assessment through class blogs is essential in providing consistent activities for students to use the English language and consequently improve their language skills. Another teacher respondent pointed out that language instructors could see the progress of students' performances from time to time through continuous assessments on the class blogs. However, one teacher pointed out that it also basically depends on the skills being focused on in the course.

4.2.8 Active, Collaborative and Autonomous Learning (Peer- and Self-Assessments)

As reviewed in Chapter Two, the Humanistic approach to language learning believed that learning is most effective when students are actively learning. This involves learning through collaborative tasks with their peers as well as doing self-learning when they are given opportunities to develop their autonomy in learning and thus be responsible of their own learning. The same goes to ESL assessments. Students are believed to learn more through assessments if they are involved in peer- and self-assessments, i.e. the assessment methods that are believed to foster active learning amongst ESL learners. In the interviews, the teacher respondents were asked about the advantages and problems that they can see from allowing students to peer-assess and self-assess their own work on the class blogs.

In terms of the advantages, the teachers who have used class blogs stated that if students are allowed to correct others' or their own mistakes, they will be able to remember the language features better for their own future use. Another interviewee also felt that students will be able to be more critical and learn from each other better through peer- and self-assessments. Another educator pointed out that this type of assessment would encourage

self-editing and also peer-motivation. Students also will be more careful in writing, especially in their use of grammar since they are aware that their writing will be read by the entire class. As a result, students might refer to dictionary or books before posting their tasks on the class blogs. This would indirectly motivate them to improve their writing skills.

The advantages of peer- and self-assessments, anticipated by the interviewees who had not incorporated class blogs before were: developing students' intrinsic motivation; developing critical thinking skills; be more aware of students' own performance; fostering active learning; and receiving feedback from both teachers and peers. In terms of developing critical thinking skills, one teacher pointed out that through self and peer assessments on the class blogs, students would learn how to justify their views, and not just agree and disagree without knowing the underlying reasons. Students are also believed to learn from one another's mistakes if they peer-assess or self-assess their own work. They could also compare their work with their friends through this assessment method. This way, learning processes will be taking place.

In terms of the problems that the educators could see happening from peer- and self-assessments, most of them expressed their worry that the corrections might not be accurate as students might not have sufficient knowledge to do assessments on their own. It was pointed out that teachers must first give some input to the students before asking them to peer-assess or self-assess their work on the class blogs. If not, students might post irrelevant comments, unless such comments can be filtered by a particular software on the Internet. Two other interviewees said that there is a possibility that students might be

biased. They might give more marks to their own friends to comfort them and fewer marks to those who they do not like.

In terms of the problems that may arise from allowing students to peer- assess and self-assess their own work on the class blogs, educators who had not used class blogs before listed out some of the anticipated problems. Some of the problems could be students who give unconstructive comments on their to their peers, bad class rapport as a result of untactful comments, and students who refuse to peer-assess and self-assess their own work. Students might also feel less confident and less motivated as their responses could be viewed openly. This is especially relevant if students are not sensitive in wording their comments to their friends' work. Students might feel offended if this happens. Students, hence, first need to be taught the soft skills of responding appropriately.

4.2.9 Assessment for Life-long Learning

Active, collaborative and autonomous learning, as advocated by the Humanistic approach to language learning do not only aim to foster effective learning environments but also aim to sustain the learning so that learners could continue to develop even after the completion of a particular course. Peer- and self assessments, for example, are proposed so that learners could continue to improve their language skills independently from the assessments that they have done. This is a reflection of 'assessment for learning'. The interviewees thus were asked about their perception on how far they think class blogs can encourage students to continue to learn English upon completion of the ESL courses.

According to one Group 1 educator, once students have their own blogs and their own circle of friends or readers with whom they exchange views and consistently read their blogs, she believed that students will never stop blogging. If this is the case, students might continue to use the target language through blogs even when a particular ESL course has ended. Another interviewee also stated that there is a possibility for students to continue to learn English as a result of using class blogs as students will be more interested in learning as blogging is currently the new trend among youngsters. One more educator also felt that class blogs that are used in an ESL course might encourage students to treat blogs as a lifelong learning tool. It also depends on how interesting the activities on the class blogs are. One interviewee said that if the blog is full of colours, pictures, exciting activities, and can be linked to helpful websites, no doubt students will continue to use blogs in the long run.

Educators who had not experienced using class blogs in their ESL lessons before had different views on the issue of 'assessment for life-long learning. Most of them believed that class blogs can encourage students to continue to learn English even after the ESL course has ended as students might get used to using blogs already by then. Students, therefore, can continue blogging and improve their language skills on an on-going basis, with supplementary features such as nice pictures and graphics. One interviewee believed that a lot f the students who have experienced using class blogs may go on to develop their own personal blogs upon completion of the course and continue to post English blog entries. Another teacher pointed out that this issue is highly dependent on the students' own interests. If the students like what they have done so far on the class blogs because they have received good responses from readers, perhaps these students would like to blog more independently in the future by using the target language. Those who are not really Internet

savvy or those who did not have constructive experience with class blogging may not feel motivated to use this Web tool to as a language learning tool. It depends a lot on several factors such as the students themselves, their attitudes, motivation, and interests. Another teacher pointed out that class blogs may motivate students to at least maintain their interest in reading English materials online, which is a way of improving one's reading skills.

4.3 Summary and Discussion of the Main findings

The discussion and conclusion of the findings were drawn in light of the study's research questions. The research questions are:

1. How do Malaysian university students perceive the use of class blogs as assessment tools in ESL courses?'

2. How do Malaysian university educators perceive the use of class blogs as assessment tools in ESL courses and its potential of use in giving feedbacks to students?

Overall, the findings of this study have provided evidence for the feasibility of using class blogs as an alternative form of assessment and giving feedback in Malaysian ESL courses, based on Carl Rogers' Humanistic approach to language learning. Based on the participants' responses to the questionnaires and the interviews, it could be seen that the participants mostly expressed their positive perceptions towards the idea of incorporating class blogs as a form of assessment in ESL courses in Malaysia. In the questionnaires, participants from all groups mostly expressed their positive perceptions towards most of the

aspects of a blog as listed in Part A and other related aspects of using class blogs as form of assessment in Part B.

4.3.1 Research Question 1: *How do Malaysian university students perceive the use of class blogs as assessment tools in ESL courses?*

Generally, in terms of the blogs aspects that the students favour, student participants, regardless of groups and tertiary institutions (Group 1 and Group 2), reported their positive feelings towards the feature of 'flexible layout choices'. This makes this aspect the most favoured aspect amongst the student participants.

In terms of exposure to the use of blogs in ESL courses, on average, Group 1 respondents were reported to have more positive feelings towards the different aspects of blogs, compared to Group 2 respondents, with an average of 18.46, with a difference of just about 0.77. This subtle difference indicates that the exposure of students to the use of class blogs in their classrooms did not affect the perceptions they had on the different aspects of blogs. One reason for this is perhaps, in this millennia, almost all students are exposed to blogs in their everyday virtual communication.

For Part B of the questionnaire, most of the students who have not experienced using class blogs before indicated that they would like class blogs to be incorporated as a form of assessment in their future English courses. The majority of the student participants in both groups also indicated that they would like to receive feedback on their assessed blog entries, both from their teachers and their friends. In general, the student respondents showed positive perceptions towards peer-assessments.

The majority of students specified positive perceptions towards assessing their own work. Nonetheless, quite a great number of students who have not used class blogs in their ESL course before indicated that they did not want to assess their own work on class blogs because of they feel they lack competence and confidence to do so. Students, however, regardless of groups, agreed that the presence of feedback will encourage them to post English blog entries or open a blog account to post English blog entries in the future.

The qualitative analysis of Part B of the questionnaires was done according to several themes. In terms of class blogs and ESL skills, the findings indicate that the majority of student respondents across all four groups believed that class blogs can be useful in improving the students' English language skills, especially in reading and writing skills. Some students also pointed out that some mechanics of English language skills, such as grammar, were also believed to be improved through the use of class blogs as a form of assessment in ESL classrooms.

In terms of Web 2.0 and motivation, most of the student respondents said that the accessibility feature of class blogs would motivate them to learn more. The accessibility of class blogs was believed to enable continuous feedback to be given to learners to improve their learning. Nonetheless, technical issues such as the Internet connection problems may otherwise demotivate learners to use class blogs and thus will not be able to improve much through this form of assessment.

In terms of active interactive language learning and assessment, most students stated that class blogs would enable them to learn more, especially through the feedback received from fellow friends. They believed that they will learn and improve further through their

mistakes in and the feedback provided on their blog entries. Students also believed that through class blogs, they would be able to experience more fun and less intimidating language learning and assessment experience. This is because students mostly enjoy blogs in the first place and using such a Web tool is something that they are already familiar with. Internet connection problems, nonetheless, were pointed out as something that may make learning and assessment more stressful than it used to be.

Student respondents also indicated that the feedback provided by their teachers and friends on their assessments would motivate them to improve more in their English language. They indicated that class blogs that are managed by the whole class could foster wholesome collaborative relationships among the class members, as highlighted in the Humanistic approach to language learning.

In terms of self-assessments, students who have used class blogs before mostly showed positive perceptions towards the idea of assessing their own work. They believed they will improve more this way. A number of students who have not used class blogs before in their ESL courses, however, expressed their worry about assessing their own work. They prefer to read others' feedback on their own work and did not feel confident about doing it. When it comes to 'assessment for learning', most of the learners agreed that the presence or absence of feedback would affect their motivation to either post English blog entries on their blogs or open their own blog accounts (if they do not have one) to post English blog entries in the future. Most of them indicated that they would continue to practise using English even after the ESL courses have ended.

4.3.2 **Research Question 2:** *How do Malaysian university educators perceive the use of class blogs as assessment tools in ESL courses and its potential of use in giving feedbacks to students?*

Amongst the teacher participants, regardless of whether or not they have used blogs in class before and regardless of institutions, positive perceptions towards interactive features of blogs such as the 'ability to share views with friends', 'ability to share views with the public', 'ability to get feedback from other blog readers', 'freedom of being creative', and 'freedom of expression' were indicated.

On average, Group 4 respondents, i.e. teacher participants who have not used blogs in their ESL classes reported their positive feelings towards the different features of blogs more than those who have been using class blogs in English lessons (Group 3). This could be attributed to the fact that those who have used blogs have learnt the pros and cons of each features and looked at these aspects in a more practical perspective. Those who have not used blogs in classrooms may have a more idealistic perspective towards the different features of blogs. Nonetheless, the difference here is also very subtle, that is only about 0.77 difference.

For Part B of the questionnaires, teacher respondents who have not used class blogs before specified that they would like to have class blogs incorporated as a form of assessment in the English courses that they will be teaching in the future. Teachers from both groups also indicated that they would like to provide feedback on their assessed blog entries through the class blogs to their students in the future.

In terms of peer-assessments, most of the teacher respondents from both groups showed positive perceptions towards the idea of encouraging their students to provide feedback on

their own course mates' work in the class blogs of their English courses. In terms of self-assessments, however, only Group 4 respondents mostly indicated that they would encourage their students to self-assess their own work in the class blogs, if class blogs are used in their English courses. The majority of teachers from Group 3 who have incorporated class blogs in their ESL lessons before, nonetheless, indicated that they would not encourage their students to assess their own work on the class blogs of their English courses. This difference might be attributed to the fact that experienced teacher bloggers might have foreseen that self-assessment is difficult to be managed in the classrooms, based on their experience using class blogs as a form of assessment in their ESL courses. Furthermore, all teacher respondents believed that the presence or absence of feedback on their students assessed blog entries would affect their motivation to continue to post English blog entries or open their own blog accounts to post English blog entries in the future.

The qualitative analysis of Part B of the questionnaires indicated that most of the teacher respondents believed that using class blogs as a form of assessment would be useful in developing students' English language skills. The interactive nature of class blogs was believed to enable learners to read more, practise more writing, and develop more critical thinking skills along the way. Nonetheless, a few of the educators pointed out that the students' English language skills could not improve much if they simply 'copy-and-paste' others' views as their blog entries.

Teacher respondents also showed positive reactions towards the use of Web 2.0 tool such as class blogs in motivating language learners. The ability to provide continuous feedback anywhere and at anytime was pointed out as the main motivating factor in using class blogs

as a form of assessment. Some teachers, however, also pointed out Internet connection problems as a possible drawback of using class blogs as a form of assessment. Problems in Internet connectivity may disable them from providing continuous feedback to learners, and learners will not improve much if this should happen.

Teachers in this study also reiterated that active interactive learning and assessment could be established through the use of class blogs as a form of assessment. They indicated that students will learn more through peer-assessments and the interaction between learners on class blogs would also develop students' critical thinking skills as well as social skills. Most of the teachers also believed that the use of class blogs would present a more fun and less intimidating way of assessing students' English language skills. The teachers also pointed out that this is only the case if there is no Internet connection problem involved.

The teachers also believed in the power of feedback on their students' motivation to learn English. They showed positive perceptions towards students developing wholesome collaborative relationships with one another through the use of class blogs as a form of assessment. In terms of self-assessments, most teachers who have used class blogs before would not encourage their students to assess their own work. They were not confident about this assessment method and believed that comments from others would benefit their students more. Teachers who have not used class blogs before, however, showed more positive reactions towards self-assessments among their learners. The teachers also mostly believed that their absence or presence of feedback would affect their students' motivation to post English blog entries on their own blogs or open their own blog accounts to post English blog entries in the future, upon completion of the ESL courses.

The analysis of the structured interviews, according to the different themes also indicated that most teachers, regardless of whether or not they have used class blogs before, had positive reactions towards using class blogs as a form of assessment in ESL courses. The themes were: *Blogs and ESL classrooms; Class Blogs and ESL Skills; Class Blogs as a Form of Assessment; Class Blogs and the Humanistic Approach to Language Learning; Non-threatening Learning and Assessment Environments; Class Blogs and Motivation; Power of Feedback; Active, Collaborative and Autonomous Learning (Peer- and Self-Assessments);* and *Assessment for Life-long Learning.*

The analysis indicated that most of the interviewees showed positive perceptions towards the above aspects of using class blogs as a form of assessment. They believed that it is possible to use class blogs as a form of assessment and they believed class blogs have great potential to improve students' ESL skills. Most of them could relate using class blogs as a form of assessment to the relevant aspects of the Humanistic approach to language learning. They indicated that assessment through class blogs would be less intimidating and more fun and students will be more motivated to use such a Web tool in English assessments. They also believed that class blogs serve as a good platform to provide feedback to students. Furthermore, they believed that active, collaborative, and autonomous learning can be made possible through the use of class blog assessments. They also showed positive reactions towards the issue of 'assessment for life-long learning' amongst their language learners. Only several problems were pointed out as indicated in the report earlier. In general, the educators believed that the aspects highlighted in the Humanistic theory of language learning can be done through class blog assessments to enhance students' language learning skills and experience, and develop them into more wholesome learners.