Using Blogs with ESOL Students

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The Plan

- What is a blog?
- How do I get started with a blog?
- Why should I use a blog?
- What are some tips for using blogs?
- How else might I use a blog?
- Questions?
What is a blog?

According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog), a blog is a contraction of the term "web log." It is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.
Who uses blogs?

☐ For personal use?
☐ For professional use?
☐ What blog engines do you use?
GETTING STARTED
Where to blog?

- Free blogging websites (wordpress.com, blogger.com, edublogs.org, etc.)
- Teacher websites that have built-in blogs (teacherweb.com, etc.)
- Institution-supported management sites (Blackboard, etc.)
Why I chose wordpress.com

☐ It’s free.
☐ It’s easy.
☐ I liked the look.
☐ I can add pictures and videos easily.
Posting blogs

wordpress.com
Who Uses My Blogs
Who are my students?

- Students range from NRS High Beginning to Advanced.
- Ages range from 18 to 80 with average age in 20’s & 30’s.
- Currently many refugees (Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Burma, Cuba etc.).
- Also students from Puerto Rico and immigrants from various countries.
Where do they read and respond to the blog?

- At school in a computer lab
- At their own home
- At a friend’s or relative’s home
- At the public or school library
WHY USE BLOGS

Made with Wordle (http://www.wordle.net/)
Reading

- Students can read material they are already familiar with because it was discussed in class.
- They are motivated to read each other’s comments to blog questions.

Advanced ESL Blog November 30, 2009
Writing

- As students write answers to blog questions, they
  - have an audience for writing
  - develop vocabulary & grammar
  - use writing of others as models
  - learn how to use reference materials (bilingual and English-only dictionaries, spell checkers, etc.)
Retention

Students who are absent for short or long periods can keep up with what is happening in class.

ESL College Prep January 20, 2010 (Internet)
ESL College Prep January 20, 2010 (jpeg)
Expansion

Students can learn more about a topic introduced in class through pictures, videos, and links to additional reading.
Students can review material studied in class (especially videos & pictures).

ESL College Prep Blog March 2, 2010
Planning Future Lessons

In the comments section, students can ask questions about what they didn’t understand in class or express their opinions about what they would like to learn.

Advanced ESL Blog March 29
Sharing

- Thoughts
- Opinions
- Experiences

ESL College Prep Blog March 24
Substitute Teacher

When a teacher is absent or late, she or he can post lessons for students to work on.

ESL College Prep April 20, 2010 (Internet)
ESL College Prep April 20, 2010 (jpeg)
Announcements

- Exams
- Holidays
- Field trips
- Vacations
- Class cancellations

Advanced ESL Blog December 10, 2009
BLOGGING TIPS
Teach students how to use the blog

- How to find the blog
- Blogs are in reverse-chronological order (newest is first)
- Students often need e-mail addresses to comment and must type them correctly.
- How to write and post comments
- How to save long comments in case there is a computer glitch when posting
- How to use resource materials for posting comments (e.g., bilingual dictionaries, spell-checkers)
Post blogs on regular schedule

For example:

- Daily
- Twice a week (e.g., Mondays & Wednesdays)
- Weekly
Create a time to read and respond to blogs

☐ In a computer lab
☐ On classroom computer(s)
☐ Pass a laptop around
☐ At a school library
☐ Via internet-connected cell phones, blackberries, i-pods, or other handheld digital devices
Encourage interaction

- Ask questions or invite comments
- Ask students to come up with blog questions
- Post videos
- Post fun quizzes
- Invite students to submit pictures or videos
Make it personal and relevant

- Include pictures of students
- Post on topics of timely interest
- Ask students to submit topic ideas
Use consistent font color, size & type to signal kinds of messages.

For example:

- Green for announcements
- Red for examples
- Bold type for questions
- Italics for idioms
Don’t make it too time-consuming

Avoid:

- Long posts
- Complicated graphics or pictures
- Correcting comments
- Long responses to comments
FUTURE PLANS FOR BLOGS

- Blog with emerging literacy students
  - Create blog as LEA in class first
  - Audio blog
  - Picture blog

- Students write blogs
  - Take turns writing class blog
  - Write blogs for selves
OTHER BLOG EXAMPLES

- [x] Larry Ferlazzo
- [x] ESL Podcast
- [x] English Cafe Blog
QUESTIONS?