

Blogging in the L2 Classroom

Center for Language Study Brown Bag 4/3/2014

I. Topic overview

Blogs: A few definitions

- “[an] online journal that an individual can continuously update with his or her own words, ideas, and thoughts through software that enables one to easily do so” (Campbell, 2003)
- “an easy to maintain online journal that can provide foreign language learners a venue in which they can reflect, comment, question, review, and communicate—outside the classroom in an authentic environment” (Pinkman)

Moving from “blogs” as a noun to “blogging” as a verb: Blogging often (but not always) involves:

- Creating an aggregation of online texts that is durable (stay online) and visible
- Expression of individual or collective voice
- Dialogue with others through reading/viewing/listening and visible commenting
- Designing meaning (often, “writing”) regularly over time, with contributions that are usually time-stamped and displayed most recent first (“reverse chronological order”)
- A sharing of many other traits with extensive writing. Authors can:
 - Design more often and at a faster pace than more formal genres
 - Address a diversity of topics
 - Design individual approaches to topic, purpose, and audience

Some attested benefits of blogging in the L2 classroom--blogging can be used to:

- Develop L2 expression skills (see extensive writing comparison)
- Create conditions for authentic communication (“real” audiences)
- Foster a sense of voice in the L2
- Develop learner independence and motivation
- Help with the development of sense of community in the L2
- Promote analytical and synthesizing skills, as well as metacognition and reflective learning (review and revise one’s own designs)
- Promote multimodal awareness, flexibility and design skills (hence “design” and not just “writing”, even in mostly written blogs)

II. Some available blogging tools and resources

Classes*v2 (<https://classesv2.yale.edu/portal/>) - Forums, wikis **can** be used for blogging
WordPress (<http://wordpress.com/>) - Free, popular platform (used in all Yale Commons sites)
Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/>) - Free, popular platform integrated w/ Google services
Tumblr (<http://www.tumblr.com/>) - Free, simple platform best for visually centric, short text
Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/>) - “Microblogging” platform for brief, frequent posts
Medium (<http://www.medium.com/>) - Hybrid between Twitter and long-form blogging
VoiceThread (<http://voicethread.com/>) - Paid service for text, visual, audio blogging, dialog

Yale Commons (WordPress) (<http://commons.yale.edu/>) - Much support available here
University of Mary Washington blogging resources (<http://umwblogs.org/>)

III. Some (P)edagogical questions and (T)echnology decisions (*in italics*)

1. P: What background do you and the students have with respect to reading, writing, and using blogs? And other online composition/writing/design tools?
T: Conduct a survey or other assessment beforehand?
2. P: What is/are the learning goal(s) at hand? What competencies are being addressed?
T: What kind of blogging tool will best suit your project?
3. P: Who will participate in reading, commenting, writing, etc.?
T: Enabling access to blogs for those outside your institution, privacy settings
4. P: Will students be working by themselves, in pairs, or in small groups?
T: Deciding on blog format: individual blogs, pair or group blogs, class blogs, etc.
5. P: Will you (the instructor) participate in the activity? How?
T: Balancing visible contributions w/ behind-the-scenes work
6. P: How will topics for blogging be determined? Will Ss have choice?
7. P/T: How will blogging frequency and length be decided?
8. P: What, if any requirements for commenting will there be? Or, how can a culture of commenting be cultivated in the classroom?
9. P: How (and how often, by whom) will assessment take place?
P/T: Building community and setting criteria for posts, length, comments, frequency, etc.
10. P/T: How will blogs be managed after the school term has ended?

IV. Further reading

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