Title of Session: Weblogs in English Language Teaching - What are weblogs?
Moderator: Bee Dieu
Guest Speaker: Anne Davis
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Room: After School Online Room

BeeD: Welcome to Evonline's 2005 first chat on blogging!

BeeD: Some quick useful tips before we start.

BeeD: If you find the text chat area is scrolling down too fast for you

BeeD: you can use the "actions" field just above and to the right of the text display area

BeeD: to "detach" the discussion and enlarge it for easier viewing

BeeD: You can also select larger fonts.

BettinaM: better now

BeeD: OK?

JeanMC: OK

SaroltaG: Lovely.

YuhuaStelC smiles

AlejandraW: ok

JanetLuc: Thanks!

BeeD: For our premiere we are pleased to welcome Anne Davis as our guest speaker

BeeD suggest a round of applause

CleveM: clap clap!

JeanMC: Applauses

BogdanT: applauses

BeckyMa: clap, clap

JanetLuc: Yea!!!

BeeD: and the session title is: What are blogs?

JaninaT: Hurray!

SaroltaG: Clap, clap

TeresaD: clap, clap

AnnePD: Thank you, thank you!

BeeD: We usually introduce ourselves for the record.

BeeD: Aaron, perhaps you would like to introduce our guest of honour first

AaronPC: Absolutely!

BeeD: and then give us a line about yourself

AzzamP joined the room.

AzzamP: hi there

BeeD: Welcome Azzam...take a seat

BeeD: we are just starting

AzzamP: great

AzzamP: sorry for being a bit late

AaronPC: Ok....I'm Aaron Campbell coming to you all from Kyoto and......

AaronPC: the title of our chat today is 'What are weblogs?'....

AzzamP: great

AaronPC: and our guest speaker is Anne Davis.

AaronPC: For those of you who are not already familiar with Anne and her work, you are in for a real treat...

AaronPC: Anne is coming to us from Atlanta, Georgia...

AzzamP: I'm based in the UAE but currently chatting with you from Poland

AaronPC: where she is an instructional technology specialist at the Georgia State University College of Education.

AaronPC: Those of us who have been following the use of weblogs in education...

AaronPC: all know and respect Anne for her work in using weblogs in elementary school settings...

AaronPC: and for her own reflective/research blog entitled, Edublog Insights...

AaronPC: where she shares her thoughts and experiences of using weblogs in the classroom.

AaronPC: Anne also moderated last year's ESL/EFL in weblogs along with Sandy Peters...

AaronPC: both of whom were kind enough to invite me to join them.

AaronPC: I can't tell you how much I have benefited from my interaction with Anne....

AaronPC: for she constantly shares so much of her knowledge and expertise...

AaronPC: and the care and positive energy she gives to others is truly inspiring. Thanks Anne!

AaronPC: So...with great pleasure, I will now pass the floor over to Anne Davis....

AaronPC: Please give her a very warm welcome!

CleveM: clap clap!

AnnePD: Greetings everyone!

AzzamP: welcome Anne

AnnePD: A warm welcome to Aaron, Graham, Bee and all the weblogging participants!

BettinaM: welcome Anne, really nice to have you here with us

AnnePD: I am glad to be here today. You're about to enter the wonderful world of weblogs!

TeresaD: welcome, Anne, an thank you for being here for us

SaroltaG: Welcome, Anne!

AnnePD: I'm going to try to answer the question "What Are Weblogs?".

BogdanT: nice to meet you, Ann!

AnnePD: Well, actually they can be anything you want them to be. That's what's so wonderful about them.

PaddyG: welcome and thank you in advance!

BeckyMa: Hello Anne

BeeD: We will have time for introductions by participants and questions in the end

BeeD: sorry Anne

BeeD: I believe it is better if Anne presents first and then we can chat and make questions.

BeeD: If you need anything you can send us a private message so as not to interrupt the presentation

GerryGst4 thinks that will also help with the transcript after the fact

BeeD: Just highlight our names in the grey window on the left and double click

BeeD: .a little window will pop up and you can type your text in there.

BeeD: Please continue Anne...just some reminders

AnnePD: You can use them for communications to parents, dialogue with your classes, sharing learning, exploring language, telling stories, empowering students and oh, I could go on and on. But let me first tell you my story of learning about weblogs.

BeeD listens attentively

AnnePD: So....What are weblogs? And specifically, how can we use weblogs in education?

AnnePD: I still remember the day I was introduced to weblogs. This was new and interesting.

AnnePD: A website that you could publish instantly.

AnnePD: A website that cost little or nothing.

AnnePD: A website that provides a comment feature that allows interacting from others.

AnnePD: A website that is dynamic and focuses on content from the participants. Wow, I thought. The possibilities are limitless!

AnnePD: It's about listening, talking, collaborating, having a dialog and sharing. Plus it can work for any subject. Weblogs provide a window of opportunity to open new doors of communication and sharing among students and educators.

BeeD nods and smiles happily

AnnePD: The opportunity to see how we could have a voice and just maybe that voice could make a difference, for students and teachers. I have not been disappointed.

AnnePD: First and foremost, I am an advocate for putting this in the hands of students.

AnnePD: Weblogs are unique spaces for us to use in education. We can use weblogs with students to make writing THE focus.

AnnePD: We can give them ownership and provide a rich and diverse array of writing experiences. It's a way to let our students know that their writing matters.

SergeiG joined the room.

AnnePD: Then as I worked with the students and mostly LEARNED from the students I began to use my own voice to talk about the process.

BeeD: Welcome Sergei...take a seat...Anne is talking about her experience with blogs

AnnePD: It is so amazing to me to merge minds with this amazing community of educational webloggers. We all decide what we want to write about, then the interchange of thoughts and ideas begin. An idea forms, others reply to the idea (either on their own site or yours), and all this knowledge and experience sharing leads us to thoughtful insights about what we are doing in our classrooms.

AnnePD: Then there's the element of anticipation and excitement of seeing someone comment on your site. Someone cares about what you wrote. Someone wants to add to it. Someone agrees or disagrees.

AnnePD: It is ongoing and provides an excellent avenue for review and rethinking about what you wrote.

AnnePD: It is empowering for students in a way that is hard to describe. This space belongs to them. They have ownership of the process.

AnnePD: We are building learning communities unlike any we've had before. It's exciting!

GerryGst4: An audience

BeeD: interaction...

AnnePD: So, I think I have started us off, what do you think?

SergeiG hello there... catching up

JeanMC: It's exciting and I would be interested in knowing more about how you work with your students

BeeD: I share the same experience Anne

TeresaD: it's been fabulous for me, Anne, because I've been able to have my efl beginners write simple messages and use the language they learn in class.

BettinaM: I think that's great, when your students have the time and resources at hand, but if it is not so...?

TeresaD: in a very natural and exciting way for them

CleveM: I'm curious about the different types of student blogs

PaddyG: I feel the excitement too - but hesitate at how to make this manageable with a class of learners

AzzamP: I'm not sure how this differs with other OLE's like Yahoo Groups

BeeD: We will be going into them next week Cleve

AlejandraW: have you been able to get all students involved?

NuraH: Better than a yahoo group or a forum where you anticipate other peoples reactions.

BeeD: Absolutely Nura

AidenY joined the room.

BeeD hugs Aiden

AnnePD: One of the ways I use blogs with the students is to have them write about current events, then give their opinions and learn to end their posts with a thought provoking question to invite participation from others.

NuraH: Weather people read or not you go on your own speed….you have something to say and you say it.

AidenY waves to all

SergeiG hi Aiden

AnnePD: You can manage it by starting simple. Take one part of your classroom and invite discussion and reflection. Pose questions about what they are learning and invite responses.

AnnePD: Have a class blog first and let the student participate through comments is one way to start simple.

BeeD: I have used even the setting up process as an occasion for using the target language for instructions, suggestions...

TeresaD: absolutely bee

AidenY whispers 'hi' to Sergei, listens to the presentation

BeeD: and the ones who know better are delighted to help the others

AaronPC: Can be done cooperatively as well.

CleveM: sorry Anne but are your classes ESL?

BeckyMa: What age students are you referring to?

YuhuaStelC joined the room.

LornaB: Do you set a time limit for students to comment on a particular topic?

BeeD: Mine are EFL students between 14 and 17

AzzamP: what level of English should the students have to be successful text-based bloggers?

AlejandraW: so I understand, Bee that you get them to work together in the computer lab rather than individually from home first?

AnnePD: I have ESL students in my groups but it is not just ESL. In fact one student last year spoke no English when he began.

AnnePD: Mostly my students are 5th graders but I have done projects on Literature Circles with university students.

AzzamP: Impressive Anne!

AnnePD: Now I also remember when I first started exploring uses of weblogs. I really was not quite sure how to proceed.

BettinaM: students tend to get involved when they see a benefit from the tool, I'm mean, apart from being graded or evaluated... at least young adults behave like that

AnnePD: I started by just recording what was happening with a session where I was working with a group of fourth graders who were being introduced to PDAs to use in their reading classes.

BeeD: you learn as you go...and improve on it...ideas start flowing then

AnnePD: I did not know how to make it interactive. I was hesitant to write, not sure just what to write. As I was logging the journey I was also busy searching the web for other examples of weblog use. I was lucky to find some good examples.

AnnePD: Will Richardson was one, Joe Luft another. They were my mentors - online mentors who didn't even realize at the time how much I was learning from them. I really liked the way they chronicled what they were learning.

AnnePD: Then I just dove in and started blogging and I have to tell you that it is the best inservice ever. I don't think I ever learned as much from any other community.

AidenY: I think that's the journey I'm taking now with my own research. I'm following Renata's example.

AnnePD: Aiden, that journey sounds great.

BeeD: reflective writing

GerryGst4: How where the weblog activities integrated in student assessment?

AidenY: yes, and this is what I want to show the other 3 Taiwanese teachers who'll be participating in my work for the next 6 months

BeeD: we learn as we narrate

JanetLuc: Do your schools provide student email addresses? Do students use their personal email? Do they need email addresses to contribute to a class blog?

AnnePD: One of my favorite blogs was called Idioms Are Fun! I posted idioms students had written little stories or sentences about and had illustrated. Then all class members made a sentence with that idiom in the comments section. The students loved it and they were using the language!

BeeD: it is superb!

SergeiG great idea Anne!

AidenY: Great idea, Anne

AlejandraW: love the idea, Anne

TeresaD: it is, Bee. I've seen it. Love it

AzzamP: in other words, this is a form of action research

AnnePD: We give students an email address but it is not an active one. They don't use it - that's how we worked it in elementary grades. They don't have to have email.

AidenY: Azzam, mine is. But we could also make use of blogs in an interactive way, like what Anne was saying

BeckyMa: How can you have an email address that is not an active email address?

JanetLuc: Thanks, Anne

AnnePD: It is a school email address but not active for them to use. Other bloggers have told me that they just make up email addresses but I don't know about that.

SaroltaG: My students refused to blog. I've been wondering ...If you tell your students (mine are 19-23 year olds) that blogging is a must and it'll be integrated in their assessment, do you think this will adversely affect the benefits of blogging?

SergeiG don't tell them that it' s a must...

JaninaT: What do you mean - refused Sarolta?

BettinaM: that is what I was saying

AzzamP: mmh ... teaching English through the medium of blogs ... nice

BettinaM: it depends on the students' ages

SaroltaG: Well, they just said they wouldn't do it and came up with excuses.

BeeD: I make it part of the assessment scheme...part of the school year program the first day they come to class

JaninaT: Did you just tell them to do it in their free time?

BettinaM: Young adults that work and study will tell you they don't have time for this... unless you give them sth in exchange

AzzamP: how much work is done before you enter the computer lab, i mean are drafts done in class?

BettinaM: at least in Argentina, they behave like that

BeeD: the set up phase for me takes about 2 to 3 weeks and it is done in the computer lab

AnnePD: I have had students do drafts before class and also have had them post during class. It's a mix.

PaddyG: It makes sense to start with a class blog in class time

JaninaT: I don't think there is any problem with making it part of their grade.

SergeiG someone wrote me:" have your sts come up with an idea, product, something meaningful to them

AzzamP: do they use spellcheckers in Word before posting?

BeeD: then they can post either from home or the school library

AidenY: Azzam, this sem, we don't use the computer lab, the students will have to post from their home computer

BeeD: or sometimes in class

NuraH: I think it works if the student's know that their work will be assessed for marks....

BeeD: when we have booked the computer lab for a special event they have to report on

JaninaT: My students would almost never do it unless I made it part of their grade. But for a few of them, it takes on a life of its own.

AlejandraW: a combination of classwork and homework might work better

PaddyG: it can be assessed but surely would be nice to think not all work was done because it was for marks!

AnnePD: This year I had my students write letters to my preservice teachers. They expressed their ideas on good teaching. The university students responded to them. They were amazed at the younger students' postings and this made them eager to try out their own blogs. Think of ways to amaze and hook them into the power of blogging!

BeeD: wonderful...as you say...the possibilities are ilimited

CleveM: that's brilliant!

AaronPC: Yes...tap into their intrinsic motivation!

NathanL: the classes that used blogs here were required to write a reflective piece for grade each week .. they were required to start a blog for those reflections

AlejandraW: how creative of you, Anne ...

GerryGst5: That is a better approach than to "force" them to do it.

AlejandraW: making it meaningful

PaddyG: agreed - motivation must be the key

NuraH: Anne: purpose...real communication

AzzamP: I guess the key is to make tasks that are fun, not so academic

BeeD: when I started I invited Graham Stanley to be a mystery guest

JeanMC: Good idea Bee

AnnePD: Sometimes I am still startled that I am writing my thoughts for anyone to see. I never imagined such a venture but it is great. It is hard work but the rewards are many.

BeeD: and he left clues on the collective blog for students to guess where he was from

BeeD: and what he did

BeeD: they were reading the blog every day

PaddyG: it's like any task in class that will depend on topics and interest of your own sts - who better than the T to know what makes them tick?!

BeeD: and searching like mad

NathanL: the reflective piece had always been in a word processing document .. they didn't like the change because they couldn't "hide" in a private communication to the teacher -- our students are all Grad Students - 25-50

AaronPC: I agree Anne...it's like giving a part of yourself for others to benefit from.

SaroltaG: Yes, I expected they would contribute to blogs as part of their work load, homework. Thanks, Bee. I see it now that more time in the computing lab together would probably help us all.

BeckyMa: Bee, Who is Graham Stanley?

JaninaT: If s/s have few opps to speak English in real life they can be so thrilled when someone really communicates with them through their blog

BeeD: a teacher...a blogger from Barcelona and our co-moderator in this workshop

CleveM: Anne (or anyone), what are some "don'ts" with Ss blogging? We always talk about the cool stuff...

PaddyG: So we could also have smn outside the classroom 'posing' as a famous celebrity - my teens would enjoy that!

BeeD: but who unfortunately cannot be with us here today

BeeD: because he is working

AnnePD: Last year Sandy and I created a list of possibilities for weblog use in education. Later check it out at http://anvil.gsu.edu/NECC2004/stories/storyReader$13

SergeiG thanx, Anne

AlejandraW: thanks, Anne

BeckyMa: The site will be helpful. Thanks, Anne.

BeeD: they are in our recommended readings for next week

BeeD: What have been the challenges you have faced Anne?

AnnePD: I don't approach it so much as Don'ts with the students as encouraging them to be ambassadors for their schools and yes even the world. Students love that they can be part of these discussions. At the same time you can make it quite clear that if they abuse the privilege they lose it. They understand that. You have to build a community right

within your classroom. I don't just let them loose on the web. We have purposes and they have ownership and respect.

TeresaD: absolutely, Anne. agree 100%

BeeD: yes...this is part of our role as educators

YuhuaStelC: I once read an article about CMC, in which the author suggested 'writing as talking' ..so is it possible that by encouraging learners to blog, we can expect them to improve their speaking to some extend?

GerryGst5: Anyone heard of fanfiction.com?

AnnePD: Challenges have been getting other teachers to see the possibilities, getting school administrators at the higher levels to take worthwhile risks for children to enter the information age and learn how to communicate in it.

JaninaT: Yes, this is a HUGE challenge for me at uni level

AnnePD: The greatest part for me is that the students are writing to learn. I am too! I love using weblogs with students!

BeeD: I had blogs blocked at school because the librarian complained the students were having FUN!!!

AlejandraW: lol

AaronPC: hahaha

AnnePD: Oh no, Bee!

NuraH: fun with learning

PaddyG: We're lucky here as the boss it pretty open minded

BeeD: It took me weeks to deblock them

AzzamP: going beyond "improving one's English" --> electronic literacy

PaddyG: I've been asked to find ways to GET sts and Ts onto the net!

AlejandraW: It might prove useful to get all the school staff involved in the project ...

GerryGst5: Do the students patrol for comment spam on their own?

JeanMC: Barbara!...Le systeme français!...:)

PaddyG: I'll be giving feedback from this course to all the teaching staff - hope that gets them involved

AnnePD: We need to be advocates for good use of weblogs and keep telling our stories. We need to be responsible and help educate others. I really believe weblogs can make a difference if we use our voices in good ways!

AlejandraW: me too, Paddy

AaronPC: Anne...some people fear the risks of children writing on the internet, have you ever run into any problems from students refusing to blog or from parents concerned about blogging?

PaddyG: Great some bosses/administrators think that way

BeeD: there are banned words the computer blocks...like the obvious ones   and others like games...so now I go to the technical dept and ask him to unblock the sites I want them to go to

AzzamP: I like the metaphor "voice" --> giving voice to our students

NuraH: An Ideal medium for culturally ORAL students who hate to write…

AnnePD: I have never had any students refuse to blog or had parents concerned about blogging. However, I make it a point to meet with them early in the year and give them ownership of the project by inviting them in and explaining our goals and purposes. They love it!

AzzamP: thanks, **NuraH**!

PaddyG: in terms of quality of writing... that will depend on the task set I guess

AaronPC: Great to hear!

AnnePD: Having a door open to a greater community of learners is such a wonderful thing for educators. We can learn, we can grow, and we can listen to all these voices and emerge the better for it. So can our students.

BettinaM: Anne, how or what did you do to encourage other teachers to start blogging at their classes, I mean, apart from giving seminars

BeeD: yes Anne..I have had parents come and say that they were impressed at the amount of writing their children were doing on the net for my classes...and how interested they had become

GerryGst5: I think that the quality likely goes up just because of the fact that more people are reading than just the teacher.

NuraH: very good bee

AzzamP: doesn't the novelty wear off?

BeeD: so explaining what you are doing to parents and children as Anne suggests is a good way of having them on your side

PaddyG: I'm going to set up a blog linked to our school website and invite sts and past teachers to participate - I hope this will encourage present teachers to participate, get enthused, then start their own

NuraH: writing is a hard skill to master...so anything that will make the students frequently write and build their fluency and confidence is great...

AnnePD: This year I have the principal blogging, the counselor, the technology specialist and some third grade teachers. You have to be willing to spend some one-one-one time and kind of hold their hand during the process. Teachers are not used to being "out there" with their voices. We feel comfortable but we have to remember that this takes time and encouragement from us.

BeeD: How do you do with the correction

BeeD: Anne?

BeeD: I think you said they drafted it before in class

GerryGst5: The "novelty" will wear off as the blog becomes just another learning tool - that is why the suggestions Anne is providing help a lot.

AzzamP: Thanks, Gerry

AnnePD: Nura, I couldn't agree more. Writing - I have a great concern that we don't have much time for it for students. Quick writes, etc. Just make writing THE focus!

AzzamP: I like the idea of quick short writing tasks, Anne

GerryGst5: Every grade 6 and 7 in our small district has an ibook - the novelty of the technology wears off. The computer is just another tool.

NuraH: agree Azzam

AnnePD: All of my student posts are not 100% correct. They are learning the language. That's OK! The process is the important part. I put a disclaimer about that on my class

blog last year and those reading the student blogs respected that and encouraged the students!

JaninaT: If you have low level writers, I think lots of choice is good...

JaninaT: So don't define the task too strictly

BeeD: Just like paper and a pencil Gerry

GerryGst5: That is right Bee

AzzamP: focusing on the process of improving one's writing rather than the product

BeeD: but a more modern tool which allows us to do more things than a paper and a pencil

AnnePD: You have to oversee the process with the students and challenge them. They will rise to the occasion! I think the discussions we have in class, the talk, the dialog are what make blogs work! You become a team!

AaronPC: yes Azzam...blogs are very much a process tool.

PaddyG: knowing it's going public will help some sts to be more careful about accuracy, won't it?

AaronPC: Teamwork!

TeresaD: yes!

GerryGst5: So, it is back to the teacher to provide creative opportunities with the computer - I think blogs are a great way to work with that.

AnnePD: When I mixed my elementary students with high school journalism students from Will's class I was so excited about the fact that my students wanted their writing to be good! They had an audience they cared about. So as a teacher we can create and set the stage for good learning experiences on blogs. It is great!

AnnePD: Everyone is giving such good ideas! I can tell this group is going to do good things with blogging!

GerryGst5: If you haven't seen fanfiction.com check it out. Blogs could facilitate this type of interaction on a local or wider scale.

AaronPC: Wonderful Anne...

AnnePD: I really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you and I wish you a very successful blogging experience!

GerryGst5: Sorry it is http://www.fanfiction.net/

BettinaM: no doubt knowing that sb. is going to read you work, motivates and encourages you as a student

AaronPC: Thank you so much for coming Anne!

NuraH: thank you for your time Anne

BeeD: Thank you so much Anne for being here with us today

AzzamP: thank you for the inspirational talk

YuhuaStelC: thank u

SaroltaG: Thank you very much, Ann.

SergeiG: Thank you, Anne!

JeanMC: Thanks, gracias, merci.

AnnePD: Everyone is more than welcome! I look forward to hearing more from this group!

GerryGst5: Thanks Anne

TeresaD applauds Anne warmly

AlejandraW: thanks, Anne, it has been great to listen to u

BeeD claps wildly

AzzamP: I feel more confident about experimenting with blogs   , thank you Anne

JanetLuc: Thanks, Anne!   learned a lot.

AidenY: I'll be saving this chatlog and give it to the teachers participating in my research

AidenY: Thanks Anne

BettinaM: Thank you Anne, hope to keep in touch

TeresaD: thank you, Anne

AaronPC: clapping loudly

AidenY claps hands

GerryGst5: (((((clap))))))

JeanMC claps

NuraH: clap clap clap

BeeD: The transcript will be posted to the respective Yahoo file

PaddyG: thank you!

LornaB: It's inspired me to have a go!

CleveM: thanks Anne and everyone

NuraH: thanks and bye everyone

BogdanT: thank you, Ann!

AidenY: goodnight everyone from Taiwan!

AzzamP: thank you all for your contributions

JeanMC: Bye everyone. Thanks Anne, Bee and Aaron...and Graham

TeresaD waves bye to all

BeeD waves bye