Title of Session: EuroLang - Blogging
Moderator: Phil Benz and Bee Dieu
Guest Speaker: Graham Stanley
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Room: After School Online

PhilB: Tonight's Euro Language Teachers Forum will feature Barbara Dieu and Graham Stanley presenting their work with weblogs or "blogs". let's begin doing introductions now.
PhilB: If everyone can please type a real short intro please...
BernardG joined the room.
PhilB teaches English and does teacher training in southern France.
TeresaD: I teach efl in the Lisbon area, 5th graders this year
DafneG: Dafne from Venezuela in Spain, ESP teacher of architecture students. Finishing doctoral dissertation on e-learning
SanaM: My name is Sana and this is my first time in Tapped In. I'm currently a student teacher
PhilB: Please, everyone, a brief intro. Bonsoir, Bernard.
BeeD: Barbara Dieu teaches English at the Lycee Pasteur, a Franco-Brazilian school in Sao Paulo, Brasil and is very fond of international projects involving new technologies
BernardG: Hi, I'm Bernard from Lycee l'oiselet in Bourgoin-Jallieu France
BeeD welcomes Bernard
GrahamS: II teach efl in Barcelona, at the Univeristy of Ramon Llull (Toruism school) and the British Council
PhilB: Also, if you find the discussion going too fast for you, you can use the "actions" field just above and to the right of the text display area to "detach" the discussion and enlarge it for easier viewing.
BeeD: Merci for the reminder Phil
DafneG: you can also select larger fonts
SanaM: thank you for the tips
BeeD: if you have left your glasses somewhere and cannot find them
PhilB: OK, I'm turning tonight's discussion over to Bee and Graham, let be just remind everyone to please introduce yourselves and we'll get right into tonight's discussion about weblogs or "blogs"
GrahamS: Shall I begin?
PhilB: Please!
BeeD: The floor is yours...
GrahamS: Well, a weblog (or blog) as most of you know is a frequently updated website
GrahamS: ...with links and comments (it's often compared to an online diary and journal)
MaryV joined the room.
GrahamS: ...where the later items are at the top and older items can be found further down the same page or in a separate archive page
BeeD: with the great advantage that you do not need to own any specific software or have

any knowledge of html

MaryV: Hello, sorry I am late

GrahamS: exactly, so it's ideal to use with learners of all ages

PhilB . o O (Mary, we're just getting started, no problem. Please introduce yourself.)

BeeD welcomes Mary

GrahamS: It's actually as old as the Internet itself, but it only became popular with the advent of Blogger software.

GrahamS: This enables blogs to be made for free, and can be found at http://www.blogger.com

MaryV: I teach 15-20 year-olds in France. Hello everyone

GrahamS: It enables instant publishing of content (their motto is "push button publishing for the people")

BeeD: There are many other bloggin sites which offer the same service but this one has proved to be reliable

GrahamS: It's also the best place to start if you are unfamiliar with weblogs

DafneG: I have not found it very friendly, though

GrahamS: ...as it's easy to use. You can find a link to Vance Steven's tutorial on how to set up a Blogger site on http://blog-efl.blogspot.com, my weblog about using weblogs in ELT

BeeD: Graham has opened a blogger on EFL bloggers and bloggers in the classroom, where he discusses the different ideas

BeeD: lol...we are repeating each other...

GrahamS: I think it takes a little while to get used to it

BeeD agrees with Daphne that some things are not yet to the point

GrahamS: I began blogging by accident when I couldn't use the British council's Global Village environment with my students this summer, and I must admit, I did have problems at first

BernardG: Is it possible to insert photos in a blog ?

BeeD: No problem Bernard...but you need then some knowledge of html

GrahamS: Well, I became interested in using them with students and started off http://www.blog-efl as a way of getting to know their possibilities

GrahamS: You can link to photos and other files without much problem, although the Blogger site (free) doesn't let you upload photos

BeeD: Shall we go for a tour? Graham has compiled a number of addresses and examples which are a must

GrahamS: sounds like a good idea

TeresaD: great

BernardG: ok

DafneG: ok

BeeD: Just click on the address given, and Graham can show us the best places to visit and comment on them

MaryV: OK

DafneG: is the url complete?

BeeD: You forgot the .blogspot.com, Graham

GrahamS: Sorry, the full URL is http://blog-efl.blogspot.com

GrahamS: You'll see that I have included links on the left hand side to articles about and

examples of blogs

TeresaD: and you've also created an archive, something I have yet to do, Graham

GrahamS: The Mad Blogs and Englishman (by Jim Duber) link was one of the first articles that helped me understand about blogs

GrahamS: The beauty of blogger is that the archiving is automatic

TeresaD: I see

DafneG: have you used the xanga blogs?

GrahamS: I have added some things to my blog to make Blogger more interactive - Blogspeak, for example, to allow the postings of comments

BeeD: I saw you have discussed them in webheads Dafne...but have not used them yet

DafneG: http://www.xanga.com it is very friendly

BeeD: which I shamelessly copied

GrahamS: I haven't used Xanga blogs yet, but I have heard good things about them

GrahamS: I think the important thing is to find a system you are happy with

BeeD: What sort of made me decide for blogger though was the home page of Xanga

BeeD: which was full of sex blogs and things which I thought might not be appropriate for my high school students...but that was then...do not know whether it is still there

GrahamS: I started setting up a Schoolblogs weblog, but it kept crashing on me. At least Blogger is reliable

BeeD . o O (not that I have anything against sex...just thought the parents might object)

DafneG: you can look at this one we used last year
http://www.xanga.com/home.aspx?user=w4w

DafneG: to prepare for an online conference

GrahamS: One thing about blogging is the question of how parents feel about their children posting to a blog

BeeD: looks nice Daf

DafneG: yes, Graham I had the same experience with schoolblogs

GrahamS: I have heard from some teachers who have had negative reactions

SanaM: what kind of problems do parents come across?

BeeD: they feel their children are having fun and not really learning anything...lol

TeresaD: I like it, Daf. very nice.

GrahamS: I heard from one teacher who said that the parents complained that they didn't want their children connected to Internet...exactly, Bee - they didn't associate it with learning

BeeD: Xanga home page looks more conservative now

DafneG: thanks, Tere

SanaM: so what would you tell parents? What are children going to learn?

PhilB: Fear of the internet is a difficult obstacle to overcome.

BeeD: I had this problem at school...they had banned all the blogging sites and I had great difficulty in convincing them this was part of my homework and course

DafneG: it happens with chat, too

GrahamS: I think the weblog has to speak for itself, although you have to be careful that students don't post anything that might be offensive or libelous (this was the case in the Summer when I started)

SanaM: I am a bit confused here

BeeD: I have started bloggin in my classroom

SanaM: so blogs are basically what we are doing right now

DafneG: what do you mean, Graham

GrahamS: Bee, why don't we have a look at your site?

BeeD: it's an experiment I would like to show you tonight

TeresaD: Sana, with my 7th graders last year, my idea was to use the blog as an extension of English outside the classroom

PhilB: Bee, Graham, can you explain how "blogs" are different from chat and message boards?

DafneG is eager to see Bee's blog

BeeD: Have a look at http://beeonline.blogspot.com

GrahamS: Certainly.

BeeD: The difference between a message board and a blogger does not seem big if you just consider the thread of messages. However,

BeeD: the most significant, I would say, is that a blogger is an interactive online environment with user control while the message board is in the hands of the teacher or the webmaster responsible for it.

GrahamS: chats are similar to 'conversation in slow motion' and weblogs can be like this, but even more slow motion

SanaM: so there is a leader in during every discussion

GrahamS: The advantage is in the organisation

BeeD: It's all a matter of who is at the command of the joy stick and pulls the trigger...

SanaM: are blogs centered around one topic?

GrahamS: With a weblog, you have one ongoing chronologically ordered resource

SanaM: oh, ok, I understand it better now

GrahamS: There are weblogs which are about one specific topic, and others which are more general

BeeD: Beeonline is a collective class blogger and each student has its own blogger

DafneG: nice place, Bee, I especially like that you do not feel caged

TeresaD: not necessarily, Sana. they can be anything you want to talk about and have your students talk about

GrahamS: Beeonline could be called a 'class blog'

BeeD: A blogger allows the students not only to upload their individual comments and reflections at any time they see fit, but also create their own layout using pictures and links, edit, review and publish .

DafneG: I hate the claustrophobic feeling of many columns with different content

GrahamS: ...where the whole class, teacher (and invited guests) contribute to build a community

TeresaD: I agree, Daf

BeeD: If you click on the bloggers on the left hand side, you will see what I mean...Have a look at Francoise's blog...the first one

SanaM: are the conversations live on beeonline? or can you post your comments anytime?

MaryV: who has access?

GrahamS: Sana, the conversations are live if 2 people are posting at the same time...

GrahamS: The owner of the blog retains access and invites the people he/she wants to

BeeD: I have different kinds of interaction here...the message blog for people who are not

members, the comment area where you comment on different postings and the main area where members discuss.

GrahamS: The contributors who are not administrators can only post and edit their own contributions

BeeD: On top of this each student has his/her own blog, which is marked and evaluated according to certain criteria

SanaM: oh that is wonderful

SanaM: I like how you can post pictures

DafneG: I like Leonardo's blog, its layout

TeresaD: Bee, do you have a blog rubric?

DafneG: very simple, and readable

BeeD: Let me post it here

BeeD: http://members.tripod.com/the_english_dept/critblog2.htm

SanaM: Leonardo's blog is like a personal diary

DafneG: it has a nice selection of colors

SanaM: more like a journal where he is writing his reflections of the day

TeresaD: yes, and that is one of the aims of a blog, Sana

BeeD: So students keep personal diaries which they have to write according to the criteria given

GrahamS: The beauty of a blog is in its flexibility - you could use it only to inform students about class assignments, etc

SanaM: oh I understand

DafneG: great rubric, Bee

GrahamS: ...or invite students from other classes (international exchanges) like Bee has

BeeD: and Beeonline is a collective blog where everyone interacts and I have occasional guests who come and talk to my students...like Graham is doing

TeresaD: yes, Bee. congrats

GrahamS: One of the important things I think, is to respond quickly and frequently to the students

SanaM: that is a great rubric

BeeD: Have a look at the interaction my students had with our first guest, Dennis Newson, whom I had invited to test the blogger

BeeD: http://beeonline.blogspot.com/2003_08_01_beeonline_archive.html

BeeD: It is way back at the bottom...Dennis had posted a riddle they had to respond to...cannot find it now

GrahamS: I think that is a great idea - inviting a mystery guest

GrahamS: The key is to keep the students interested

SanaM: of course

GrahamS: ...so that they keep posting

SanaM: it would also be great to invite people with great knowledge on a certain topic that the class could be researching on

BeeD: Graham also posted as the mystery guest and they were talking about him in the corridors...asking me questions

SanaM: that way they are able to interview this person. what a great resourse

BeeD: Yes Sana...this would be great as well...

DafneG: I still prefer Valencia to Barcelona, Graham ;-)

GrahamS: You have much better parks, Dafne

DafneG . o O (reflecting on a post by Graham))

SanaM: the great thing is meeting people from all around the world

GrahamS: but Barcelona beats Valencia for architecture!

DafneG: only Gaudi's work

BeeD: Students own their individual bloggers and can make them interactive and collective if they wish. They may invite whoever they want to participate. They may give members administrative rights as well. So I believe this is one other step towards student autonomy and empowerment.

DafneG: the others have copied him

GrahamS: and Puig i Cadalfach, domenech i Muntaner...

SanaM: I completely agree BeeD

TeresaD: absolutely, Bee.

DafneG: yes, I know them too

DafneG . o O (no more interruptions on my part)

BeeD: It is a much richer and more dynamic learning environment as it is the students who monitor their own learning process.

GrahamS: this is what I like about it

DafneG agrees

BeeD: So this is my answer to the message boards, Phil...:-)

GrahamS: It's a much more 'Dogme' approach to giving student writing practice

PhilB nods

SanaM: this way students are able to stay on their own pace and maintain their learning process

GrahamS: And as it is linear, it's easier to read

TeresaD: and talk about their learning process too, Sana

GrahamS: It also seems more personal

BeeD: Yet, when there are a lot of postings, my students complain it's very difficult to keep up

PhilB: It must be difficult coaching students towards the level of responsibility necessary for this sort of thing to work.

BeeD: see Francoise's comment

GrahamS: I like the idea of letting the students post when they're ready to do so.

DafneG: if they are not graded, yes, Phil

SanaM: I'm sure it is, also students who are unable to speak up may find this a great opportunity for them to post their mind on a blog

BeeD: She says: "Now that we are meeting each other a little bit better, I'd like to know, where are you from, what do you do? Because so many persons have posted that I can't find anything about you!"

DafneG: that's what good about adding pics, Bee

DafneG: you can relate ideas with faces

GrahamS: Now that's a good idea

TeresaD: true, Daf

BeeD: Graham gave them a link to his site...they loved it

BeeD: But I cannot do the same for mine...for safety reasons...they are minors remember?

GrahamS: it was actually a friend's site...with photos of my cats

DafneG: cute

BeeD . o O (they do not need to know)

SanaM: how do you keep students from having unprofessional postings

GrahamS: If you are administrator, you can edit all postings

BeeD: They never tried it...I told them this is a school assignment

GrahamS: I had to do that with my first student blogs

TeresaD: establish rules and make a compromise with them, Sana.

SanaM: oh that is great Bee

MaryV: And in practice?

BJ . o O (you could also have a contract which the students would sign)

TeresaD: I told mine they would be writing for me, their colleagues and for anybody who would like to take a look, so they had to be careful with language

BeeD: I do not have administrative rights to their personal blogs...so it is their responsibility to keep them right

SanaM: I'm sure once the students find it a great way to learn and expand their views, they would not want to lose their right to participate

TeresaD: and also with content

DafneG: and their grades ;-)

BeeD: There's a student who wanted to put a four letter word in his posting...he asked me if he could...I told him I would rather he did not do it...he explained why...I told him is was his responsibility...if he felt it was necessary to convey his feelings he might do it...

BeeD: Have a look at: http://bewd.blogspot.com/

PhilB: My problems usually come when students are new to online discussion, and they believe they can get away with pranks thanks to the miracle of anonymity.

DafneG: but students can get very responsible with their postings, if they know they are going to be read by others

GrahamS: Did you find they took some time getting the idea behind blogging , Bee?

BeeD: September 14th post

GrahamS: The concept is a little difficult to understand at first

BeeD: Some of them never really connected...some are lagging behind...have a look at Victor's or Laurent

SanaM: I'm sure it is difficult for younger students because it was a bit difficult at the beginning for me to

GrahamS: Did you drop them in at the deep end, or introduce them gradually?

BeeD: some are more worried about the layout and the looks than the content...see Marina's

DafneG: some people do not like this kind of genre

SanaM: but as I read all these blogs by students, it sort of reminds me of pen pals

GrahamS: I think that's all part of it - I read one of your students, Bee, talking about how she was motivated to learn html because she wanted to redo her blog template

BeeD: I try to sit by them and explain what it is all about...and the importance of reflecting on one's work...and writing down for practice

BeeD: but it is not always easy

BeeD: change takes time

BeeD: some are more open

BeeD: others are more closed

BeeD: I give them time

SanaM: that is great Bee

PhilB: Sounds like a good recipe for success.

BeeD: one thing is sure...the more exposed they are to it, the easier it will be the next time they have to do something like that

TeresaD: it sure does, Phil

SanaM: Bee, how long did it take for your students to make their own blogs

DafneG: if students are used to writing journals, the change will be easier

BeeD: They started them in March...but blogging got in full swing by the end of May and it is consolidating now (for some)

BeeD: I hope to use them in TPE (French program) next year

DafneG: do you establish a minimum of postings, Bee?

SanaM: that is not long at all

GrahamS: Am I right in thinking you bring up what they write in class discussion, Bee?

BeeD: In the personal bloggers they have to write about what they had in class that week and their extra exposure to English + anything else they want to comment upon

BeeD: I am trying to make them reflect but this is a skill which still seems difficult for most

PhilB: We're getting close to the end of our weekly session. I want to remind everyone that archives of these discussions are available right here in this room. And next week's discussion... help me out here Bee...

BeeD: they basically relate, describe what they did

GrahamS: It's certainly a good genre for practicing this

SanaM: Thank you everyone for helping me out

BeeD: Next week I will try to present the plan and schedule for the Time project, which I represent . I will also talk about the Classroom Twinning Activity which will turn around the 50th Anniversary of the Unesco ASPnet School Project

PhilB: Next week I believe Bee will be presenting her Twinning project?

SanaM: Bee, I am glad you educated me on blogs and introduced me to something I will surely use in the near future

DafneG: thanks, Graham, Bee, and Phil

PhilB: Yeah, that's it.

MaryV: this has been an introduction to something new for me. Most interesting. Thank you very much.

GrahamS: thanks too

BeeD: You are welcome Sana...and if you would like to become a mystery guest, just drop me a line...bwjdieu@terra.com.br

PhilB: The following week I'll present the new face of the Viva virtual village.

SanaM: Thanks Graham and Phil

TeresaD: thank you Graham, Bee and Phil

BernardG: Bye everyone

BeeD: Thank you all for being here with us tonight

PhilB: Thanks so much, Graham. I hope you'll come and present Blogs in more detail in some future session.