

Using a blog as a complementary learning tool

Mgr. Eva Adamcová
Bc. Tereza Adamcová

The Institute of Applied Language Studies
UWB

Context

- Young people and social media
- Modern technology – integral part of all levels of education
- Implementation of internet platforms to incorporate online resources (relevant + familiar to ss)
- Blog – web-based application that ss access in their free time voluntarily
- X Moodle, Portal or Google Classroom
- Blog implemented in teaching – positive experience

Overview

- Learning goals in EAP
- Aims of using class-wide blog
- Previous research in this language area
- Blog characteristics
- Topics
- Results

English for Academic Purposes

Learning goals

- Writing essays and scholarly texts
- Effective note taking – identifying main information (reading, listening)
- Critical review of articles (analysis, summary)
- **Presenting and defending arguments, reaction to counterarguments – orally in discussion and in written form**
- **Critical thinking – challenged by ‘controversial’ topics**

Aims of using class-wide blog

To determine whether, due to its real-life nature, **ss would actively and voluntarily use a blog** to

- Take part in discussions
- Develop
 - Communication skills, mainly argumentation and persuasion
 - Critical thinking skills
- Present academic skills providing
 - Examples
 - Evidence
 - Explanations
 - Evaluations

and on this basis **to assess whether a blog could constitute an effective and promising educational tool** to be used at higher levels of the education system

Previous research in this language area

- ‘Blogs, as a tool with a multitude of activities and tasks (sources) in the teaching-learning process, may help ESL learners increase the quantity and quality of their vocabulary and therefore enhance their overall proficiency. Teachers and students may benefit from using social media to supplement their learning. Students may engage in the learning process at any time and from any location.’

Source: BR, A., & G, B. (2022). Utilizing Blogs on ESL Learners’ Vocabulary Learning through Social Constructivist Theory: A Descriptive Study. MethodsX, 101970.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2022.101970>

- ‘Furthermore, the research has demonstrated that the greater use of blogs does lead to higher degrees of perceived learning by students in relation to reading, writing and commenting in.’

Source: Garcia, E., Moizer, J., Wilkins, S., & Haddoud, M. Y. (2019). Student learning in higher education through blogging in the classroom. Computers & Education, 136, 61–74.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.03.011>

Blog characteristics

- Experimentally chosen as complementary learning tool for two levels of the AEP course attended by ss at the Faculty of Applied Sciences
 - AEP4 = B1++ (70 ss)
 - AEP6 = C1 (40 ss)
- Wix – free platform (paid upgrade)
- 30 topics (social, cultural, technological and political - some from TB) accompanied by videos, reels, visuals, articles, quotations, animations
- Blog open for 2 months (February-April)
- Mistakes/errors intentionally ignored, focus on content

Family

Gender stereotypes

What is your experience with family arrangement? – 151vs, video,

Most ss agree with the traditional roles of men and women, and that homogenous societies, not diverse, are happier.

Nuclear family

Is that an optimal arrangement? Why (not)? – 138 vs, video

Most ss agree that there is an attack on masculinity in western societies nowadays and it is bad.

Technology

Artificial intelligence

Do we really need it and is it safe for humanity? Why (not)?- 131 vs, video

Ss want to use AI but are aware of safety risks

Petrol car or electric car?

Which one would you prefer and why? - 86 vs , fb reel

Most ss prefer petrol cars, aware of the flaws of electric cars – batteries, charging time, fires

Politics

Women and war

Should women fight in a war? Why (not)? - 53 vs, photo

Most ss disagree, it should be voluntary

The war between Russia and Ukraine

Should the war in Ukraine be "continued" or should efforts be made to stop it? - 105 vs, video

Just one s for discussing peace, others for war

Farmers protesting all over Europe

Do we need to be self-sufficient in food? Why (not)?- 31 vs, fb reel

All ss support farmers

Finance

The Czech crown or the Euro

Which one do you prefer and why?

CBDC: Adopting the euro = subscribing to the European central bank digital currency.

Should physical cash be cancelled? Why (not)?

Digital identity

Digital identity

Is it a threat to our freedoms? Why (not)? - 75 vs, fb reel + article

Most ss for DI

Digital driving licenses

If you lose your driver's license abroad according to any law, it will be taken away from you in the CR as well. Do you agree? Why (not)? – photo, 31 vs

All ss against

World Economic Forum: „An implant, no elections in future, you will own nothing and you will be happy.“

Should we take it seriously? Why (not)?- 83 vs, video + interview

Ss assume that implants are our future, but they do not want it

Natural sciences

Global warming

Many scientists, including Nobel laureates, disagree that global warming is happening. What is your stance and why? - 72 vs, article

Some ss agree it is happening, others do not

Organic or otherwise

Planting trees, keeping healthy lifestyle and building natural immunity by eating bio food, OR killing trees, eating artificial meat and processed GMO food? - 68 vs, video + news article + citation

Some ss agree with him that we do not need trees, most ss for GM food x some believe that deviating from the natural processes is not good

Cloud seeding

What do you think of influencing the weather by dispersing substances into the air and blocking the sun's rays? – 9 views, video

No comments

Education

Paying for education

Should students pay for university education? Why (not)? – 110 vs, **18 comments – maximum**, fb reel – animation
Ss divided, but most for free education

School and career

Is school performance a predictor of career success? Why (not)? - 59 vs, article
All ss believe it is not

Media

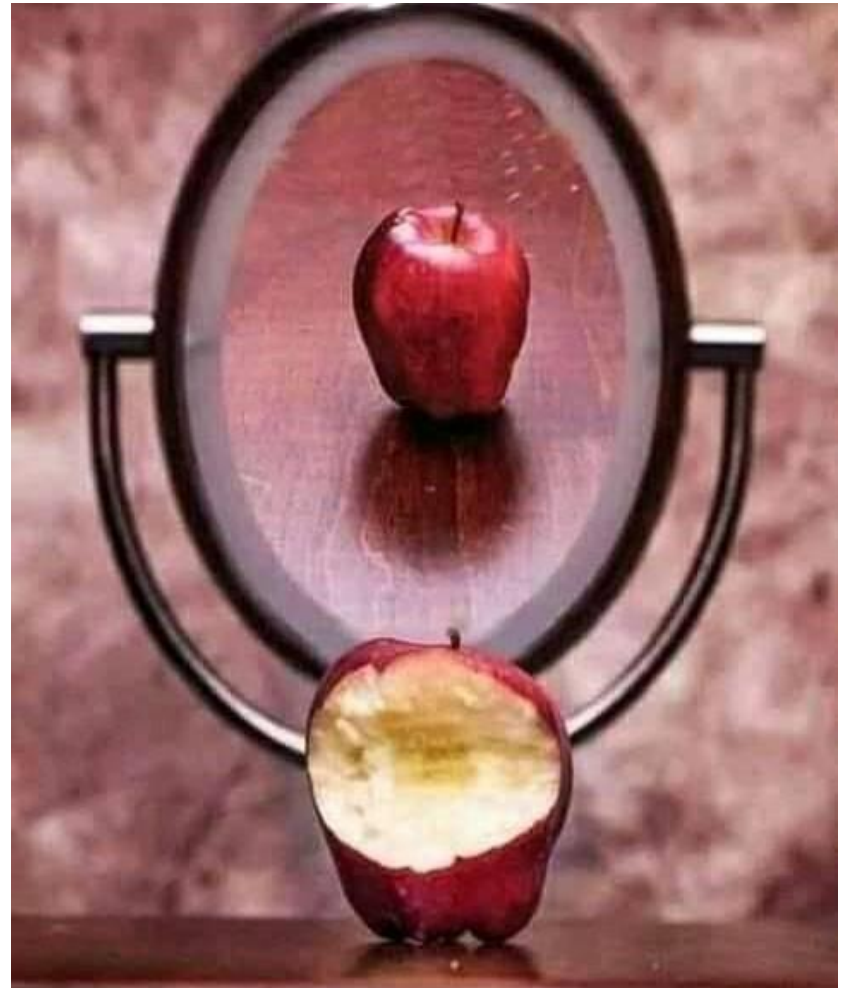
Media as a source of information

Is the media a credible source of information? Why (not)? - 47 vs

Ss believe TV, not explained

Ss do not believe other media

Media



Social sciences

Excellence/equality (= equal income) or equity (equal outcome)?

What should be preferred and why? - 38 vs, fb reel

All ss for equality, not equity

Male disposability

Hillary Clinton: “Women have always been the primary victims of war. Women lose their husbands, their fathers, their sons in combat.” Is the statement fair? Why (not)? – 37 vs, citation

All ss disagree that women are the primary victims of war because they lose husbands, fathers, sons in combat.

A stay-at-home mom

“Women who take care of home and children are lazy.” Do you agree? Why (not)? – 28 vs, article

All ss disagree

Social sciences

Crime

Have you got personal experience with crime? – 19 vs,
statistics,
0 comments

Rewriting racial history

Is this a positive trend in our culture and society? - 49 vs,
article

No ss for 'positive' racism

All ss against: 'History is history and only dictators are
rewriting it.'

Religion

Christianity

Do you think that Christianity, the main European religion, is still influencing our lives?

How? - 23 vs, 0 comments, video

Ss do not feel influenced by Christianity

Critical thinking

Social correctness

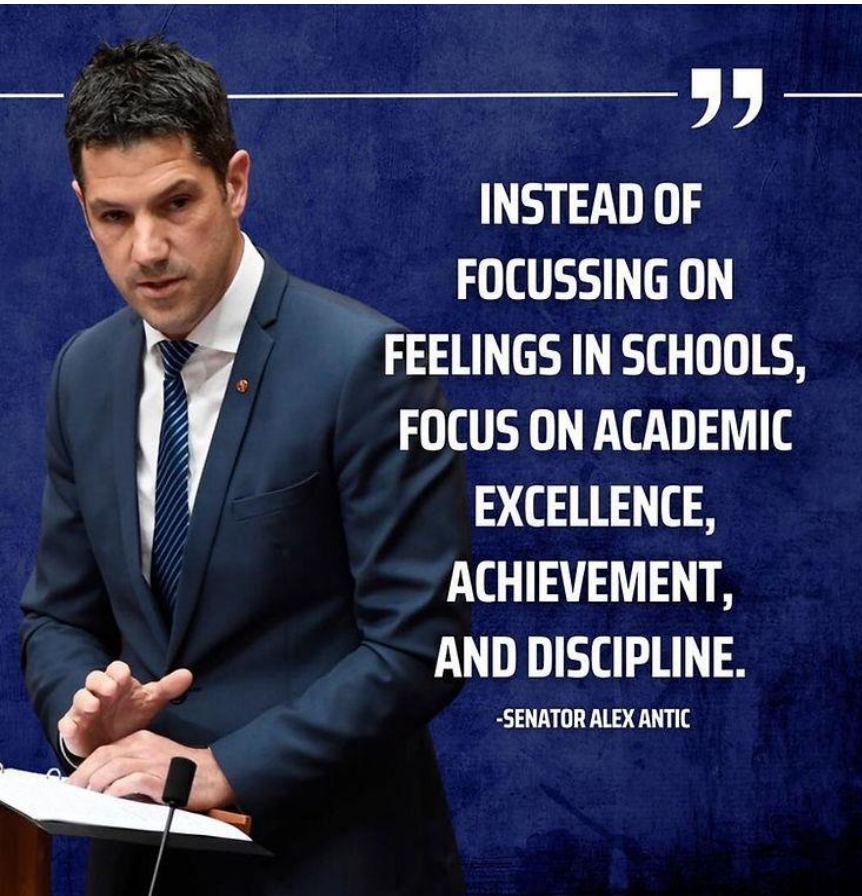
Should we be guided by facts and reason, OR should we try to be socially correct so as not to offend anyone? - - 56 vs, fb pics

Our ss are technical = fact-based, most of them use reason rather than emotions

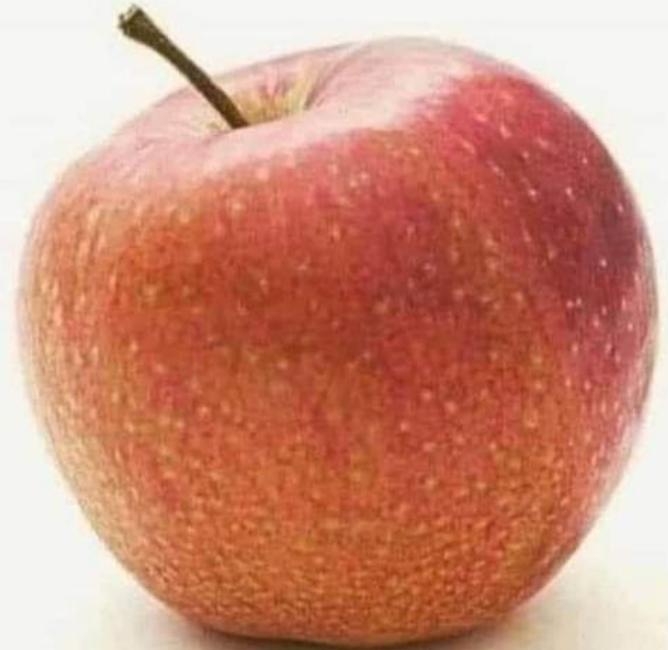
Are you a critical thinker? What strategies do you use and why?

- Strategies ss use are:
 - look at it from a third person perspective
 - ignore mainstream media
 - talk with people who are knowledgeable about the topic
 - read from different sources
 - don't rely on just one source of information
 - analyze all the gathered info
 - double check facts
 - cross-reference and verify information from multiple sources

Critical thinking



This is a Banana.

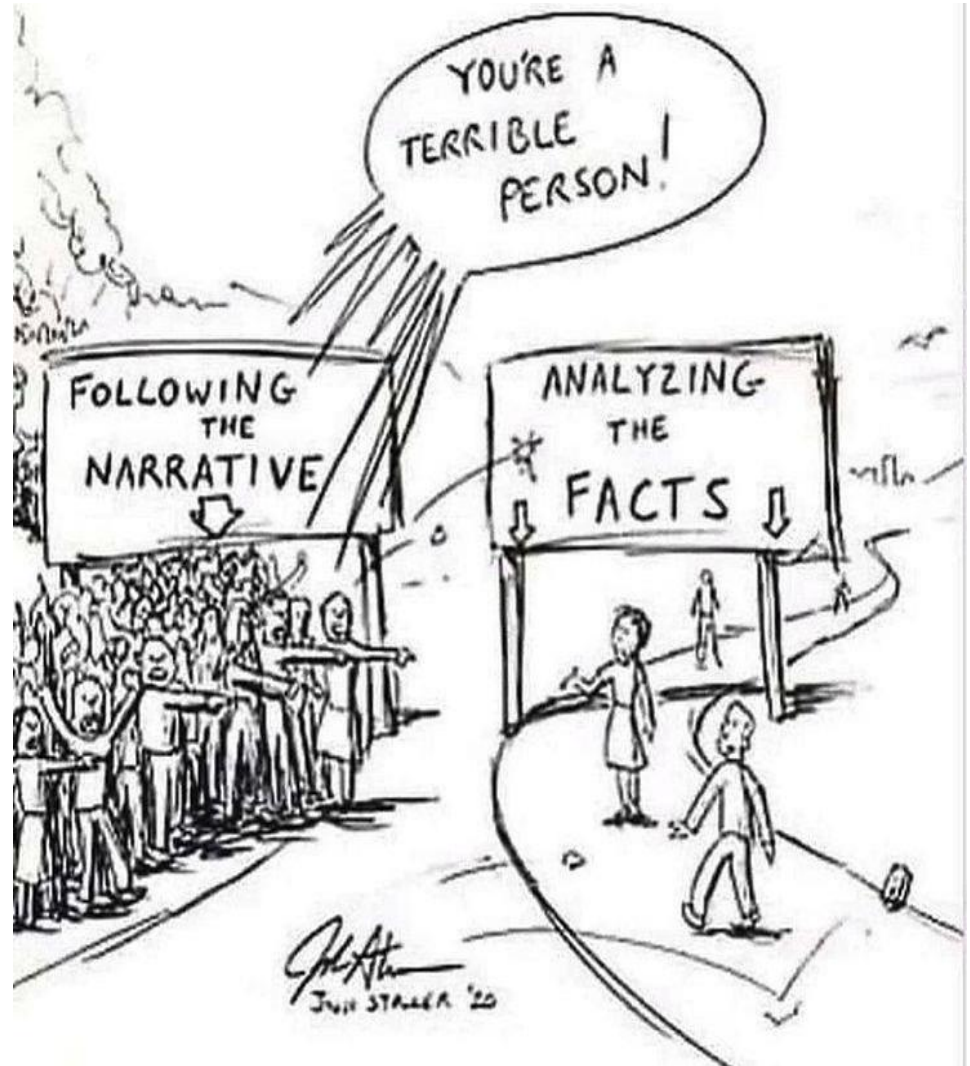


If you see an Apple, you're
a Right Wing Extremist.

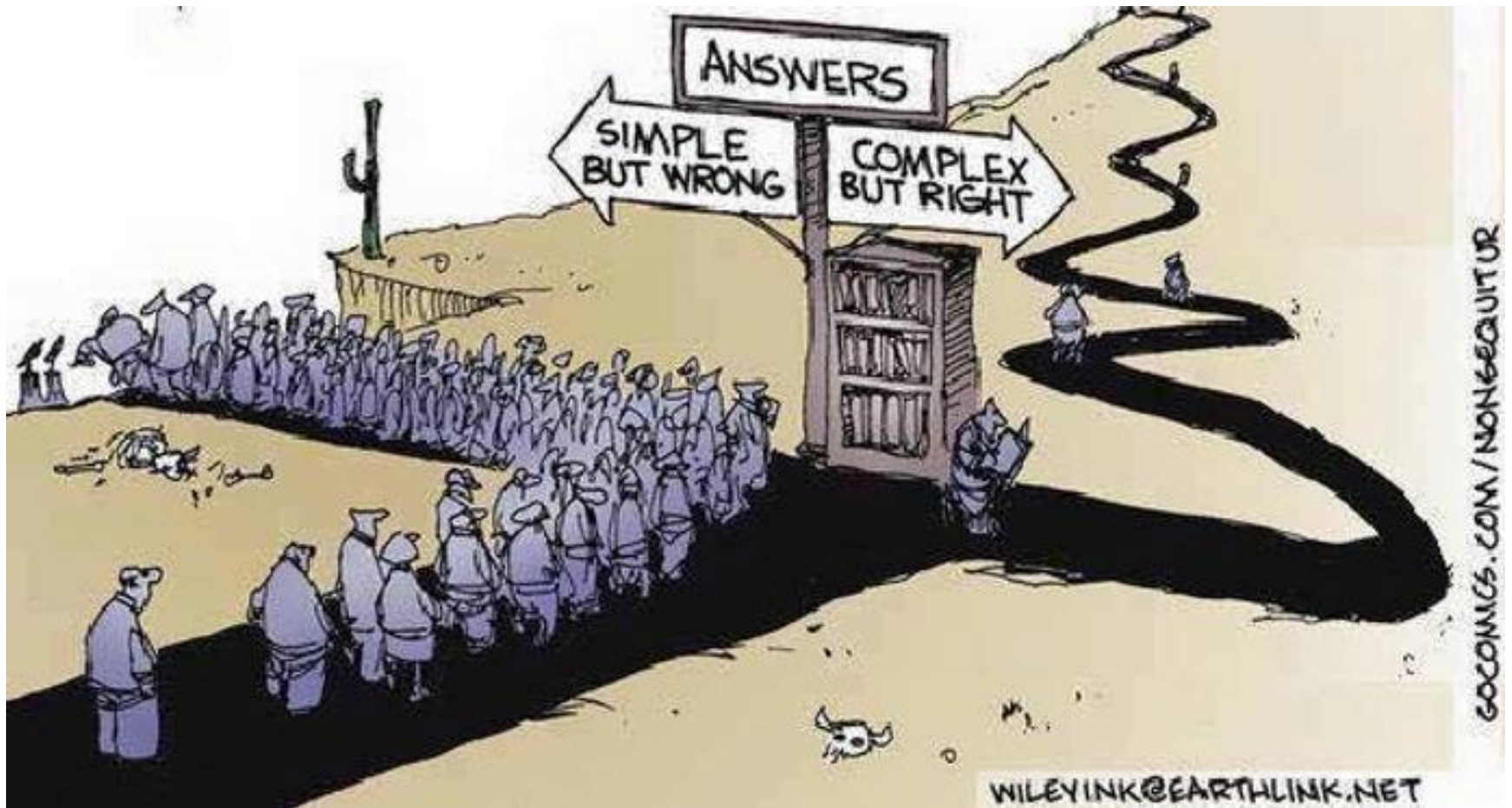
Critical thinking

A lie doesn't become truth,
wrong doesn't become right,
and evil doesn't become good,
just because it's accepted by a
majority.

-Booker T. Washington



Are you a critical thinker? What strategy do you use and why?



Music

Classical music or modern music? What music do you (not) like and why?

– 107 vs = popular topic

- Most ss listen to classical music or classical music remixes on various occasions
(Debussy, Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart, Dvořák, Liszt, Rachmaninoff)
- Only some ss listen exclusively to pop, metal, retro music, rap, jazz, electronic, and modern music, styles like D&B, hip-hop, video game or movie soundtracks
(Visací zámek, Brutus, Extraband, Kabát, Arzzen, Gotalax, Reznik x ACDC, Bad Nerves, Arctic Monkeys, Cigarettes After Sex, "Deathcore", played by bands like Lorna Shore or Mental Cruelty.)
- No brass music fans

Culture

What is your favourite cultural event and why?

- 57 vs

- Small or big rock concerts (Pilsen Majáles, Brutal Assault in Josefov or Rock for People festival)
- Slam poetry stands
- FIFA World Cup !!!
- Comic Con
- The Super Bowl
- The International Dance Day.
- Gatherings are held in clubs located in Berlin.
- Eurovision
- Pride
- Food festivals
- Chodské slavnosti

Summary

- All students made arguments at C1 level
- Some ss used AI to generate their answers
- Ss presented their stance based on common sense, general knowledge rather than sources = they need to learn to support their sources in an appropriate way
- Most students followed the posts but did not comment, but still benefited – they interacted with the resources (variability: fb reels, articles, videos, interviews, photos, animations, images, quotes)
- Ss were polite, they did not attack each other, rather they supported each other, gave each other likes, they were more likely to start a new post with similar content than to follow up on a previous post
- Average length of a post - several sentences up to a paragraph, they know from class that you cannot make a full argument in one sentence

Summary

- Some posts had a higher number of views than the number of students in the courses /104 - a great success rate
- There was no correlation between views and comments
- The average number of contributions per post was about 8 - about 10% of the students actively contributed, usually the same ones
- Topics added gradually, no influence on interest – some latter topics more popular than previous
- A psychological insight into what students think
- University ensures freedom of speech, opinion... Ss were not scared to express their opinions freely, at least the active participants. It is not known whether the inactive students were not interested in commenting or were afraid to express their opinions.

Conclusion

- The blog has proven to be effective, so the use of blogs can be recommended as a complementary learning tool.