University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras Campus
College of Education

TESS Program  Honors Program

Undergraduate Thesis:
The Use of Weblogs to Increase Reading and Writing Skills in the English as a Second and as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Classroom at the Secondary Level: An Application of John Dewey’s and Paulo Freire’s Theories.

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July 2011.

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Acknowledgements

This project would have not happened if it were not for all those who, in one way or another, helped and supported me through every step of this process. First, I have to thank God for giving me the opportunity to do what I love most and for always giving me the strength to continue working even when I was most tired. I bless Your Name every day.

Second, I would like to thank the Honors Program at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus and its directors, Dr. Carlos Ramos and Dr. Itsa Alegría, for providing me with the space, tools, and opportunity to do this research project. Its programs and directors like you that keep inspiring students and setting high standards in undergraduate education; I bless you both.

A very special thank you to my thesis director, Dr. Vilma Pizarro, for believing in and helping me shape my vision into a reality. God has blessed me with such a creative and wise individual to guide me in this project.

Many thanks to the members of this thesis committee and university professors, especially Dr. José Solís Jordán and Dr. Martiza Sostre, for taking time out of their very busy schedules to review this work and provide me with the best advice to make this research a success.

To my Summer Research Opportunities Program mentor at The Ohio State University, Dr. Bryan Warnick, for guiding me through the rough road of Educational Philosophy and helping me find those amazing theorists who inspire not only this work but my own educational philosophy. A special thank you to Dr. José Cruz Velázquez, whose EDUC 6588 class challenged both me and this work and helped give form to the writing of this project; without your advice and knowledge, I would not have made it this far.

To my friends and family: Lizette Pérez (mamá) and Josefina Gómez (abuela), for being those silent supporters who brought that much needed cup of coffee and plate of food even when it was not asked. To my husband, William Muñiz, for being my extra pair of ears and always being there when I needed a break; thank you for being an incredible source of support. Many thanks to my great friend Benjamin Ogrodnik for always saying yes to reading, talking about my work and giving me amazing advice. Our convos were a great stress free outlet and gave me new insight into everything that went into this project.

Last but not least, I dedicate this work to my grandfather, Angel L. Pérez Rodríguez, for being the first to see my passion and skill as an educator and for being my most priced mentor and hero; my lifetime educator; I will love you always and may you Rest in Peace.
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Chapter 1:

Introduction to Dewey and Freire’s Weblogs
I. Introduction

One of the requirements in the Honors Program at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus is to write an undergraduate thesis. Being an Education major is hard work, so having to pick a topic for a thesis was a challenge. During my EING 4017 course, I was introduced to weblog technology as a way to teach reading and writing in the ESL/EFL classroom. My professor did not encourage us to use weblogs in our classrooms. She had a very strong negative attitude toward the use of them in schools. Yet, for me, it seemed to be an exciting and innovative way to use technology in classrooms. If we think about it almost a third of middle and high school students spend at least 4 to 6 hours a day on the computer, I-pod, I-touch, Blackberry, really any technological device that has internet access and sometimes even more than that. This class sparked my interest in doing my thesis project on the connection between Education and Technology directing it towards an educational philosophy that would benefit ESL/EFL students. By remembering that professor I chose this topic: The Use of Weblogs to Increase Reading and Writing Skills in the English as a Second and as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) Classroom at the Secondary Level: an application of John Dewey’s and Paulo Freire’s Theories.

In this thesis, we studied how weblogs are connected to two important educational theories and created an efficient teaching model that incorporates these theories into the use of weblogs in ESL/EFL classrooms with the possibility of improving their reading and writing skills. The goal of this research was to accentuate the use of weblog technology in
classrooms as a plausible teaching tool by creating a pedagogical framework for its use. This study on weblogs advocates for continued research in the educational community not only on blogs but other technological teaching tools that can offer unique opportunities for learning in ESL/EFL classrooms.

II. Statement of Problem

There has been substantial research done on the use of blogs in education. Yet the setting of most of these projects has been in university and other higher education institutions. Also, even though the research on weblogs has been increasing over the past four years, there has not been a research study that connects the use of them in classrooms with an educational philosophy and/or teaching approach. Furthermore, and while there have been significant studies done about blogs in educational contexts (Bull & Kadjer, 2003, Crouch & Wasell, 2008, Richardson, 2006, 2009), there exists little information on the use of this educational tool in the ESL/EFL context. However, there exists a need for further research on how to use them in educational settings and, more specifically, on how to incorporate this tool in ESL/EFL classrooms outside universities.

III. Objectives/Hypothesis

Therefore, this research will:

1. Develop a pedagogical framework for the use of weblogs’ pedagogical characteristics.

2. Examine how weblogs possess educational possibilities when being analyzed though John Dewey and Paulo Freire’s criteria of continuity, interaction, and problem-posing pedagogy.
3. Identify the possibilities and limitations of each characteristic through the John Dewey and Paulo Freire criteria of continuity, interaction, and problem-solving pedagogy.

4. Develop a possible methodology for exploring weblog technology use as an educational tool in ESL Classrooms levels 7 through 12.

IV. Research Questions

The research question this thesis will answer is:

a. What pedagogical framework is best to enhance the pedagogical characteristics of weblogs?

b. What are the educational possibilities of weblogs when examined through John Dewey and Paulo Freire’s normative criteria: (1) continuity, (2) interaction, and (3) problemposing pedagogy?

c. What possibilities and limitations does each pedagogical characteristic possess that strengthens and/or limits the educational value of weblogs?

d. What methodology would be effective for the implementation of weblog technology as an educational tool for ESL Secondary levels 7 through 12?

V. Key Terms

In order to establish common ground for analysis and discussion, this thesis’ key terms are defined in the following manner:

1. **Weblogs** are defined as an easily created, easily updated website that consists of a series of entries arranged in reverse chronological order and updated frequently with
new information about particular topics. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other websites or other sources, or contributed by users and ranges from written to pictures, video, and audio posts (Richardson, 2009).

2. **Secondary Level of Education** in the U.S. commonly consists of grades 9 through 12, with grade levels known as freshman, sophomore, junior and senior, respectively. Some larger school districts fund secondary schools that teach only grades 10, 11 and 12. Some secondary schools include students in grades seven and eight, along with the higher grade levels. Secondary schools represent the final stage of compulsory schooling in most U.S. states. School attendance is proscribed by state law until graduation or to a specific age (http://degreedirectory.org/articles/What_is_the_Definition_of_Secondary_School.html).

3. In second language learning school settings, there are 2 types of classrooms: English as a Foreign Language (or EFL) and English as a Second Language (or ESL);
   a. **EFL** is studied by people who live in places where English is not a first language, such as Italy, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam.
   b. People who study **ESL** speak other languages, such as Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, or Swahili as their first or native language. However, they live in places where English is used as the first language such as the United States (Gebhard, 2009).

4. **Teaching Strategy or Method** is a way of presenting instructional materials or conducting instructional activities. (www.ischool.washington.edu/.../Teaching-Strategy-Vocabulary.rtf)
5. **Learning Strategy:** There are many learning strategies available and all of them adapt to the specific setting where the lesson takes place. This research will focus on *experiential learning*, which states that a student is learning by doing -- includes knowledge and skills acquired outside of book\lecture learning situations through work, play, and other life experiences. Experiential education includes adventure education, environmental education, and service learning. (www.ischool.washington.edu/.../Teaching-Strategy-Vocabulary.rtf)

6. **Reading** is defined as the capacity to perceive and understand the meanings communicated by texts. It also can be defined as the cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message. (http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=reading)

7. **Writing** is defined as groups of letters or symbols marked on a surface as a means of communicating ideas. Each symbol stands for an idea, concept, or thing (see ideogram); by using each symbol to represent a set of sounds grouped into syllables (syllabic writing), or by regarding each symbol as corresponding roughly or exactly to each of the sounds in the language (alphabetic writing). (http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=writing)

8. **Pedagogical Philosophy:** is defined as the application of methods to the theory and practice of education focusing on the nature of learning, and the purpose of education.(http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/179491/philosophy-of-education)

9. **Continuity:** Webster’s dictionary defines continuity as an uninterrupted connection, duration or continuation especially without essential change (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/continuity). For the purpose of this thesis work we will use the definition provided by John Dewey in his work
Experience and Education (1938) which defines continuity as a process were educational experiences take up something from past experiences and modifies them in ways to improve the quality of those which come after.

10. **Interaction**: the dictionary definition of interaction is a mutual or reciprocal action or influence (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interaction). This study will focus on John Dewey’s definition of the term. It states that interaction is the characteristic that focuses on the social processes that connect both the inside and outside the classroom experiences the students have (1938).

11. **Problem-Posing Pedagogy**: term presented by educational philosopher Paulo Freire in his 1970 work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It states that all educational encounters must offer subject matter to be questioned by the students instead of given knowledge to be accepted by them.

VI. **Contributions and/or Limitations of Research**

The main contributions of this research are: to provide more knowledge on weblog use in educational settings, to increase the knowledge in learning strategies in order to incorporate more technology in the ESL/EFL classrooms, and finally to help teachers enhance their knowledge on teaching techniques for reading and writing in ESL/EFL students.

The study’s limitations are (1) this research only provides a pedagogical framework on weblog use. The methodology provided in appendix is a possible application of a model for practice. (2) The study only provides brief connections to ESL/EFL settings. As part of the possible future research applications, another project could focus on the use of weblogs with English Language Learners (ELL’s) as well.
Chapter 2:

Review of Literature
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter we will discuss the literature relevant to this topic. The themes that will be developed are the birth of Weblogs, the characteristics of weblogs that make them educational, how Reading and Writing Theory connects to the use of blogs, as well as a summary of John Dewey and Paulo Freire’s Educational Theories.

I. Birth of Weblogs

To revisit the definition, *Weblogs* are defined as an easily created, easily updated website that consists of a series of entries arranged in reverse chronological order and updated frequently with new information about particular topics. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other websites or other sources, or contributed by users and ranges from written to pictures, video, and audio posts (Richardson, 2009).

![Bloggers Worldwide](image.png)

Figure 1: Weblog Users © Technorati State of the Blogosphere Report, 2010.
Created around the late nineties, weblogs began to grow in popularity in early 2004 and, three years later, there were about 200 million bloggers. The “blogosphere” (term to describe a society of bloggers) now has 133,000,000 million weblogs indexed since 2002. About 77% of Internet users read blogs and 68% are between the ages of 18 to 44. The rate of updating is 2 to 3 times per week.

Blogs range from personal to corporate. The most popular are the genre blogs that range from entertainment and music to travel and political blogs. These categories are visited by approximately 450 million internet users and 100 million bloggers a week. Blogs are written in all languages. The 5 most common are: (1) Japanese at 37%, (2) English with 35%, (3) Chinese with 8%, (4) Italian at 3% and (5) Farsi with 1%. These languages were chosen not by top languages but by the consistency of their postings.

According to Technorati, leader in blog statistics and creator of the State of the Blogosphere Annual Report which is conducted by surveying bloggers around the globe, there exist 4 types of blog users: (1) the hobbyist which characterize by those who rite blogs out of personal satisfaction and consist of the 64% of active blog users, (2) part-timers who use blogging as a part-time job, gaining approximately $6,333 gross income from blogging.
and who consist of 13% of users. (3) *Corporates* are bloggers who focus on blogging for a company or organization, gaining an average income of $17,101 and consist of 1% of the blog users’ population. Finally, (4) *self-employed* compose the largest cohort, 21% of bloggers and who are known for being full-time bloggers or who have a blog as part of their full time job.

Educational blogs (or Edublogs) are blogs written for someone who has an interest in education and includes blogs written by and for teachers, for the purpose of improving classroom instruction and informing about educational policy. Surveys show that 81% of students in grades 7-12 have e-
mail accounts, 75% have at least one Instant Messenger (IM) screen name, and 97% believe strongly that technology use is important in education (Richardson, 2009).

II. Educational Characteristics of Weblogs

Given the growth in weblog use, what then makes this technology useful for teaching, especially in the areas of reading and writing? To fully understand the potential that a weblog possesses we must understand how important it is for students to feel connected to learning and express their own opinions. In their research, Wasell and Crouch (2008) point out the benefits that teaching with weblogs possesses. They state that blogs motivate students, enhance learning environments and increase student collaboration with peers. Through their blogs, students can develop and express their own ideas as well as receive feedback from their classmates and teachers. It also transports learning beyond the restrictions that classrooms sometimes possess. Weblogs offer the opportunity to express
one’s opinions while providing an alternative ambiance for teaching by incorporating technology, a medium that appeals to the majority of the student population. But the most appealing educational possibility that weblogs possess is that students learn to write by writing, providing them with an innovative space for student involvement while guiding them to new and exciting experiences.

The subsequent question would be what characteristics do weblogs possess that make them distinctive, appealing, and valuable as a learning tool? Previous research points to four unique characteristics of weblogs that motivate students to become active partners in their learning environments. Sara Kadjer and Glen Bull (2003) indicate some characteristics that make blogs educational. These are: Multimedia, Archiving, Feedback, and Active Participation. Furthermore, connecting to the first four characteristics indicated in Kadjer and Bull’s work, the characteristics of Identity and Community Connection were identified through further analysis of research and educational theories, which brings new and exciting aspects to weblog research. The characteristics that make blogs educational suggest that as learners engage in using weblogs, they enter a process of critical thinking. At the same time, students increase the further development of basic language skills like reading and writing in the English as a Second Language Classroom (ESL).

III. Reading and Writing Theory

Trosky & Wood (1982) and Tierney & Pearson (1983) agree in their research on reading and writing that they are parallel processes; in order to become literate in both academic areas, students must learn to master both processes simultaneously and teachers must use their teaching methods remember this aspect of reading and writing teaching. Weblogs have a connection to reading and writing theory and the importance of
understanding reading/writing theory and connecting it to reading comprehension in students is essential to understanding how blogs can increase these skills in second language acquisition.

According to McKusick (2001), professor at Essex College, literacy studies have shown that the understanding of the processes of reading and writing connect to the construction of meaning. Pearson and Tierney’s work (1984), as cited by McKusick, state that there is a proposed “composing model of reading” in which readers construct meaning by maintaining an ongoing dialogue within themselves about the text and its purpose, just as writers compose to convey meaning (2). By using weblogs, students 7-12 use both of these processes simultaneously and within a community. They not only create meaning for themselves but they also create a meaning in a collective community.

Another important connection between reading and writing theory comes to us from Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986). They state that to maximize the benefits of reading and writing connection, students must believe that they have the authority to generate ideas and direct reading and writing strategies to their purposes (2). According to McKusick (2001), Bartolomae and Petrosky established a reading-writing course at the University of Pittsburgh and advocated integrated reading-writing approaches that encourage students to establish their authority to speak and help them determine importance and significance in learning these basic skills (3). Weblogs give students the opportunity to create their own ideas and meanings while acquiring reading and writing skills on their own terms.

Lonna Smith from San Jose State University argues that after preparing to read or write readers and writers move into the active stages of the parallel and complementary processes as they tackle the task of creating meaning through text.
As illustrated in Figure 6, after actively reading, the reader checks comprehension and organizes the information learned. These activities are facilitated by the writer who has edited and revised the text. Thus, information is presented in a comprehendible manner and, both reader and writer evaluate the text (Smith, 2001).
Figure 7 explains how among the many techniques that connect reading to writing some of the most prominent are increasing knowledge by reading and then use the newly learned information when they write. The writer responds to reading, and has participation in activities that promote the development of both reading and writing skills (Trosky & Wood, 1982, Smith 2001).

IV. John Dewey and Paulo Freire’s Educational Theories

John Dewey was one of America's most famous teachers of philosophy. He was also famous for proposing some controversial measures for change in the American educational system and, consequently, becoming the primary influence in the substitution of authoritarian teaching methods for learning through experimentation and practice. The Experience Continuum, one of John Dewey’s theories, allowed an educator to discriminate between experiences that are worthwhile educationally and those that are not. The Experience Continuum is composed of two principles: continuity and interaction.

According to Dewey, continuity is the first principle that makes an experience educational. It states that for an experience to become educational it has to transcend time (past, present, and future), arouse the student’s curiosity, strengthen his/her initiative, and set up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a student over dead places in the future (1938). It has to connect with his/her past learning experiences and expand future ones. It has to lead the student on a continuing growth process and avoid arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. He states that “the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (27).
Interaction is the second characteristic that Dewey suggests constitutes an educational experience. It states that education is a social process and therefore teachers must assign equal learning importance to both internal and external conditions that form situations in the classrooms which students must learn to overcome. Dewey stated that *the trouble with traditional education was not that it emphasized the external conditions that enter into control of the experiences but that it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decide what kind of experience is had* (1938).

The environment, Dewey suggests, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience that is had. There must be a relationship between the inner student and the outer social conditions in order for the student to develop as a whole. This, connected with continuity, must produce in students the desire to continue learning. For that reason, for an experience to be truly educational, it must be continuous and interactive.

Paulo Freire was one of the most influential pedagogical voices in Latin America. Working primarily among the illiterate poor, Freire began to embrace a non-orthodox framework of what is considered liberation pedagogy. His problem posing method teaches us that the students should be exposed to analyzing problems posed by the students themselves in classroom settings as an alternative to the banking teaching method. Banking education is a teaching strategy that Freire critiques in which the teacher “deposits” knowledge into students limiting their creative possibilities in the classroom. He states:

…*it (banking education) turns students into “containers”, into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher and the more she fills the receptacle, the better the teacher she is as well as*
the more meekly the students permit themselves to be filled,

the better students they are (52p).

In order for problem posing education to be effective the student has to interact and solve situations derived from their own experience that way they feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. He also states the following:

...through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the-student-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers... the teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (71p).

The consequence of Freire’s theory is for students to become producers of knowledge rather than consumers and for teachers to become both educators and educated changing the dynamics of the classroom into a learner/learner dialogue rather than an authority/student communication. This creates an educational cycle of learning.
Chapter 3:

Methodology
**METHODOLOGY**

This chapter will construct the method by which the study’s objectives will be addressed. This chapter ends with a timeline on the research development and a table that summarizes the purposes, questions, and methods used.

**I. Research Design:**

Through the readings done up to this point, and our own analysis, I have been able to point out six unique characteristics of weblogs that excite students into active learning by becoming part of their learning environments. In their study, Sara Kadjer and Glen Bull (2003) point out some characteristics that make blogs educational. These were: Multimedia, Archiving, Feedback, and Active Participation. While researching for this project I developed two more characteristics that connect to the four discovered by Kadjer and Bull while still bringing new aspects to weblog research. These are Identity and Community Connection. We explored these features through studies and examples, and we examined them in light of the 3 criteria studied in this research: Dewey’s continuity and interaction and Freire’s problem posing method. These characteristics will help us determine that weblog technology has possibilities and limitations but that overall it help make the educational process become an experience.

By connecting the use of this technology to John Dewey’s educational experience theory, as well as Paulo Freire’s problem-posing pedagogy, this study will argue that the use of modern technology can help us, as educators, appeal to our students by stimulating their learning with new methods. The main connection we are looking for is between the two educational theories studied and the main characteristics of weblog technology.
Each characteristic must possess possibilities and limitations necessary to be evaluated through the Deweyian/Freireian model we developed. We will explore each of them separately and connect to each other both as individual aspects and work together in the classroom setting.

Towards the end of this thesis, a methodology/future research project would be developed in order to help teachers use weblogs as assessment tools in everyday classroom work. This methodology will include the six characteristics of weblogs but will distribute them within a basic semester curriculum in ninth grade ESL literature. This methodology also includes basic information and characteristics of the subjects that would be best benefit from this type of assessment. Also, the methodology will include a timeline on how to evaluate the blog posts, the qualities each written post must have and the way plans and lessons should be structured to fit the needs of the students.
### II. Summary Table:

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<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Gathering</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What pedagogical framework is best to enhance the pedagogical characteristics of weblogs?</strong></td>
<td>✅ Previous research on weblogs</td>
<td>✅ Literary Analysis</td>
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<td>✅ Educational Characteristics of weblogs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develop a possible methodology for exploring weblog technology use as an educational tool in ESL Classrooms levels 7 through 12.</strong></td>
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<td>✅ Literary Analysis</td>
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<td>✅ Previous research on methodologies implemented using technology.</td>
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Chapter 4:

Data Analysis and Analyses of Results
ANALYSES OF THE EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WEBLOGS THROUGH DEWEY AND FREIRE’S THEORIES

This chapter of the thesis focuses on the analyses of the six main educational characteristics of weblogs, Multimedia, Archiving, Feedback, Identity, Active Participation, and Community and how they connect to the educational theories of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, explained in chapter 2.

Characteristic 1: Multimedia

Multimedia is defined as the aspect of blogs that allows students to do more than simple written posts. It offers students an opportunity to express their opinions through video, pictures, and audio recordings making them more appealing than other technology mediums that offer the same possibilities (e.g. online message boards and chats). This offers the students more possibilities for communication and provides a broader, more creative outlet for their thoughts and personal interests.

One of the standards for English Language Arts teaching, as stated by the NCTE, is that “Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)” (www.ncte.org/about/policy/guidelines/119263.htm). Weblogs abide by this standard in its entirety. They have students state their personal opinions and interests while at the same time developing language skills in reading and writing. When students are able to represent through multimedia what they understand when reading and writing, we can then say that they are acquiring and producing language. For ESL/EFL learners, this becomes a stepping stone into second language acquisition; helping them connect better with native language speakers.
Multimedia fulfills Dewey’s criteria of interaction because students can connect with countless aspects of their lives through the web by posting pictures, audio and videos that relate to their particular likes and dislikes. Through blogs students discover an outlet for their creativity that can be developed well into their future, connecting to Dewey’s second criteria of continuity. Since the language and grammar will be acquired through the continuous use of reading and writing, the development of language is complemented through multimedia. Multimedia also provides them with the skills to move well into the future which will be incredibly technological.

Freire would also support multimedia because his problem posing theory suggests that teachers and students become context learners in classrooms. This means that they begin relating their classroom activities to the context and world that surrounds them. Related to this idea, Marc Prensky explains in his work *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* (2001) that students are digital natives: people who are well versed in the uses and etiquette of computers, digital cameras, cell phones, text messaging, Weblogs, and the like. Furthermore, most teachers are what he would call “Digital Immigrants” which means that no matter how hard many of them try to adopt and adapt to current technological tools, they still carry accents such as printing out e-mails, write checks to pay bills, and unlike students, do not use technological multitasking often, as well as rarely use these online tools in the classroom (1).

Freire (1998) would say “*why not take advantage of the students’ experiences to discuss the problems of pollution in the rivers and the question of poverty and the risks to health from the rubbish heaps in such areas*” (36). Although Freire speaks about solving social issues through educating the illiterate in his work, when we interpret the meaning of
his work the message is clear: we as teachers should respect what the students know and understand, and they know and understand technology. Multimedia and weblogs allows students to create an ambiance in the classroom where they can help teachers learn new technology and skills while, in parallel, learn about themselves.

Multimedia does possess one very important limitation: students can post pictures, video, audio and other sources of multimedia that may not have educational value. They can also spend time looking and posting things that might distract them from actual work. We as teachers, need to set a certain kind of curriculum that allows us to have some control over what students post because like Dewey states “we (teachers) need to discriminate between experiences that are worthwhile and those that are not” (33).

**Characteristic 2: Archiving**

Archiving is defined as the aspect of blogs that helps students save all their posts in chronological order allowing them and especially the teachers to evaluate the process of writing. This is the area of weblogs that is mostly teacher-related since it encompasses the evaluation and grading factors of the weblog experience.

Dewey (1938) would support archiving. He states that when and only when development in a particular line conduces to continuing growth does it answer to the criterion of education as growing (36). Will Richardson (2009) points out that by students having a digital archive of all their written work, they have a great opportunity for student reflection because they can go back to it with ease, re-read and auto-evaluate their progress (23).
Archiving provides both the teacher and the student with an opportunity to see their development throughout time. They can read past posts and see where they still need to work harder and where they have improved. Teachers can evaluate how well their students have grown and where they are still having difficulties. It can also help students develop a habit of self-critique that will transcend to other educational experiences, levels as well as life in general. Richardson (2009) states that what students could have when archiving their work in a blog would be a comprehensive history of their work and learning throughout time that is easily searchable and shareable while providing a great resource for reflection or future study (23).

Some of the limitations that archiving may possess are that it may preserve moments that we might want to be forgotten. An example of this could be that a student posts something rude or degrading about a particular teacher or student. By having it publicized online, everyone can have access to it at any moment in time making it impossible to forget and leaving a permanent scar on both the teacher and student. Also, some students may not respond to blog posts with utmost sincerity when they know that they can be monitored by many people involved in the educational process i.e. teachers, parents, peer, and school administrators. This can have an adverse effect in what the blog is trying to accomplish.

**Characteristic 3: Feedback**

Feedback is defined as the aspect of blogs where teachers, students and classmates can post comments on each other’s entry. This encourages sharing and peer review as well as initiating a process of interaction between students/students and students/teachers that
goes beyond classroom walls. Feedback has 2 areas of involvement: student feedback and teacher feedback. Student feedback focuses primarily on student – student based.

Teacher feedback, however, serves as student feedback only directed from the teacher to the student and vice versa. This can create an ambiance of trust in the classroom that allows for a more personal teaching and learning experience. Feedback is supported by the NCTE when they state that “students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts” (4) (see NCTE Policy and Guidelines Manual [Electronic Version] for complete data).

Dewey (1938) states that the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience takes up something from those which have gone before and, in some way, modifies the quality of those which come after (35). It is the job of the students and teacher to comment on peers’ blog posts and give them real, critical, and useful analyses. Encouraging feedback will allow them to know where there is potential for growth. The
feedback aspect of the blog allows students to connect outside the confines of the classroom and helps develop other types of social networking, a social space that for many ESL students has more peer acceptance than classroom ambiance.

Freire (1970) says that in problem posing education people teach each other, mediated by the world and by cognizable objects that are “owned” by them (students and teachers) and that in banking education are “owned” by the teacher (80). Feedback allows students to teach each other. With their comments each student gives support to their peers. Richardson states in his book *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms* (2009) that there is something very powerful about easily being able to share resources and ideas with a Web audience that is willing to share back what they thought about those ideas (17).

Feedback also allows for dialogue to take place. Freire (1970) says that the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections vis-à-vis the reflection of the student. The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher and peers (80-81). Feedback here becomes a way for students to evaluate not only their growth and ideas but the growth and ideas of both the teacher and their peers. For ESL students, having peers give them positive and constructive feedback, gives them confidence, and helps them feel more comfortable when learning a second language. They lower their defenses and this helps them to focus more on learning and developing their skills.

Notwithstanding, feedback possesses limitations. It may not always be positive and it may not always be helpful. Sometimes a teacher or peer will write a one sentence
feedback post or maybe none at all. It is the job of the teacher to introduce the concept of feedback in a positive light, one that will encourage students to give feedback because “it is the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading as well as be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental” (Dewey, 1938, 39).

**Characteristic 4: Identity**

Identity can be defined as the aspect of blogs that give students the possibility to develop their personal identity through the use of a pseudonym or with the creation of their personal blog page. This provides them with a creative environment that allows for freedom of expression without accountability. It has two ways of manifesting itself: in anonymity and in individuality. For the purpose of this research, anonymity is defined as the ability to post articles and thoughts into a blog using a pseudonym and individuality relates to the capability that students possess to create a blog space that is relatable to their own particular and personal interests. This makes blogs far more appealing to students than message or discussion boards. This characteristic also makes blogs a valuable tool for ESL students to learn about themselves and try to explore aspects of their personalities that might be undefined.

Identity, for Dewey, represents the launching path to a student’s self discovery. By discovering their identity and testing their own particular interests, students define a starting point toward a more constant development of their personalities. This helps them in the path of discovering who they are and who they want to be. ESL students would have the
opportunity to explore the identity that comes with learning a new language and subsequently a new culture.

By being anonymous and individualized, students can find their place in the world and in turn, become more confident and value who they are. This process is interactive because it involves the creation of an inner self that also connects to a culture that is being taught through language. At the same time, it is continuous because self discovery will propel them to the future as more self assured, confident, creative students.

Freire (1970) would also support this characteristic. He states that it is essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation. Freire believes that students must achieve individuality. By creating an identity, whether it is anonymous and/or individual, students would be able to fully participate and participate as actors in their education. This way they become more interested in what they are studying and become more excited about learning.

The limitations with identity: students may become too comfortable with the identity they create online forgetting to develop themselves outside of the blogosphere. This can have the backlash effect of making the students become more socially inactive as well as create boundaries between interaction in the classroom and in the blog; feeling more comfortable and self secured expressing their feelings through the blog rather than in a classroom setting. Students might also create a habit of not taking responsibility for what they say in the blog which, in turn, becomes discontinuous. It may also affect ESL students’ development of verbal language skills. We as teachers must learn not to become dependent on this or any other technological tool but incorporate its use as a tool for
enriching reading and writing language skills; having blogs be a part of rather than the whole of an educational experience.

**Characteristic 5: Active Participation**

Active participation is a part of blogs that provides students with a communication tool where one can actively participate in class discussions both inside and outside the classroom giving those students who do not talk in the classroom the opportunity to state their opinions. Blogs are a collaborative space where both readers and writers are part of the learning process (Richardson, 2009).

Active participation is interactive. By participating in the blogosphere, students are part of a larger community of writers. But the most important skill that students learn is to work in groups and as a part of a community which both Dewey and Freire support and encourage. Dewey (1938) tells us that what the student learns is a way to produce knowledge and further develop skills in one situation making the blog an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the subsequent situations (44). In this sense, students are learning valuable skills that will transcend time. They learn how to become an active part of a group; a role that in the globalized world in which we teach becomes essential for survival. This is both continuous and interactive. As such, active participation has a direct connection to our next and final characteristic.

**Characteristic 6: Community**

Community is the part of blogs that gives students an opportunity to connect to their community and make them active participants in the world that surrounds them. It engages them to think outside the walls of the classroom, to tap into their own personal interests, and to connect those interests to their society, creating a link of interaction with their communities.
Community is achieved in many ways. First, Richardson (2009) explains Real Simple Syndication (RSS):

…a code usually referred to as a “feed” that makes it possible for readers to “subscribe” to the content that is created on a particular weblog so they no longer have to visit the blog itself to get to it. As it is true with traditional syndication, the content comes to you instead of you going to get it… (75).

RSS’ amazing benefit for our students is that it lets them know where their blogs connect with the rest of the World Wide Web as well as helping them find and research blogs and other readings that connect to their specific interests.

We also have blog links that connect students to the outside world. They give bloggers tools to look at their interests in a larger spectrum. Links also provide students with a broader view on individual interests, developing their expertise on a particular subject. Richardson states that being able to connect ideas and resources via linking is one of weblogging’s most important strengths and one of the key ways that bloggers build community (55).

Finally, Richardson tells us that weblogs are truly a constructivist tool for learning. The content that students and teachers create becomes a part of the wider body of knowledge that the Internet represents (27). The blog becomes a very powerful teaching and learning tool when it can create a sense of accomplishment in our students. By publishing in a larger world, students feel they are contributing to their communities, to their society, and to the world giving them a confidence that will propel them forward with a positive attitude.
What would Dewey (1938) say about this? He states that an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment (43). Through blogs students take action in their environment, creating a moment in their lives where they change, whether it is within a school community or themselves as persons.

Dewey also says that “there must be a reason for thinking that they will function in generating an experience that has educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time…” (46). Becoming part of a large community, especially for ESL students, makes blogging an experience that enriches their lives. They achieve more than one purpose. They become part of the culture through the acquisition of the language of said culture and learn basic language skills making blogging an educative experience.

In terms of Community, Freire states that students increasingly pose problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, and consequently feel challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context (1970, 81). When students write they are learning to challenge both themselves and the ambiance in which they develop their ideas.

What limitations then can community face? First, students may not want to participate. If this were to happen then we might have to evaluate how to inspire these students into becoming part of the blogging community without engaging in banking education as well as imposed pedagogy. Furthermore, the lack of face to face communication could mean that many students and teachers will feel that they are not developing relationships with the people they are in constant communication with through the blog. It is the job of the teacher to really know her/his students and find the best way to
incorporate and excite the students into learning and creating through blogs without compromising the students’ particular needs and their individuality.

**CONCLUSIONS**

John Dewey and Paulo Freire’s theories have been studied through many different educational scenarios, making them two of the most innovative educational philosophers of our time. As proven by this research project, even weblogs are connected to the central and essential themes within these educational theories.

Weblogs connect to Dewey’s experience continuum, which includes interaction and continuity, in all six of their characteristics. They have the capability to transform student writing into something that will carry the student from their past, towards their present, and into their future, in a constant growth process, while bringing the students’ interests and talents into interaction with the world around them. Weblogs are also effective in giving students an opportunity to see the world from different perspectives and to form opinions of it through their own experiences. Finally, Weblogs serve to break down school barriers and help students make connections to other students, to the teacher, and to the larger community.

Likewise, from a Freirean problem-posing perspective, Weblogs can help make students more than receivers of knowledge: they are transformed into producers of knowledge which better prepares them to change the world and society that surrounds them. Thus, using weblogs can be a way to avoid “banking education” and to promote freedom pedagogy.
Dewey (1938) says that the main purpose or objective of education is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and success in life, by acquiring organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skills which comprehend the material of instruction (46). Technology and weblogs are the means/tools of instruction 21st century that educators can use to teach our students today; students who pride themselves on being part of an info-technological society. Weblogs possess the potential to be an effective teaching tool that reaches our students in a modern, unique way that uses language in mediums they understand.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

Among the future research projects that could derive from this thesis are:

1. A look at weblogs through other educational theories such as Constructivism proposed by Jerome Bruner or The Social Cognition Learning Model proposed by Alfred Bandura.

2. Since this research focused on the use of weblogs for ESL/EFL, future research could study the use of this tool in other research settings such as first language classrooms or special education settings.

3. Finally, this research presents a possible research Theory-Into- Practice project where we use the same theories and characteristics presented in an action assessment model designed for teachers to use in ESL/EFL classrooms.

4. Analyze how the new trend of English as a Second Language teaching, English Language Learners (ELL’s) would benefit from the use on educational weblogs.
APPENDIXES
Appendix A:

Suggested Methodology for Blog Research
APPENDIX A:

SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY FOR BLOG RESEARCH

In this first appendix, we established a basic research design for the study of the use of weblogs as assessment and educational tools in ESL classrooms at the Secondary level. We designed this methodology using a sample school, which the researcher was acquainted with because of her teaching practicum experience there. However, we strongly advised that future research centers be chosen based on the mentioned criteria. We decided to select a school that meets all the criteria needed for the methodology suggested to be able to effectively help students increase reading and writing skills as an example of how the methodology and research center should abide by. This school was the Miguel Such Vocational High School. It has a very low percentage in standardized testing and a below average (34%) proficiency in English skills. Therefore, for this appendix, we will focus on the presenting Miguel Such as a variable for any school that meets the criteria to use this proposed methodology in the ESL classroom.

I. Research Design

The cognitive development of language learners has fostered lines of quantitative research that provide new insights into the world of second language acquisition. In doing so, investigators emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationship between variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The quantitative approach to research makes the assumption that knowledge is acquired through measures of control and measurement strategies (Creswell, 1994; Lucca and Berrios, 2003) Lucca and Berrios further state that quantitative studies express reality through numeric data and performance is understood in light of scores obtained through instruments.
Among the quantitative instruments used to measure the teaching of writing, I chose the Student Written Language Observation Matrix (SWLOM) which was created by the California State Department of Education. This test is a helpful diagnostic tool, particularly for less experienced teachers, for general assessment of group or individual levels of competency, and especially for determining broad placement levels for new students. It helps to identify areas of weakness, and when used longitudinally, it will indicate student progress and development. It must be used alongside the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM), also created by the California State Department of Education (2006). The SOLOM is a rating scale that teachers can use to assess their students' command of oral language on the basis of what they observe on a continual basis in a variety of situations - class discussions, playground interactions, and encounters between classes. The teacher matches a student's language performance in five mains - listening comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation - to descriptions on a five-point scale for each (http://www.bobschwab.com/assessment__swlom_and__solom.htm) (see Appendix B).

To be able to organize the data collected (explained in further detail in the data gathering phase), I will be using a Pre-Post assessment. This assessment, as explained by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children (NDTAC), refers to academic achievement tests (in reading, math, and other subjects) that are given to students to assess their academic progress from the beginning to the end of program of instruction (2). This type of assessment is valuable to the teacher and student because it provides an accurate placement before and after the use of an educational tool and data to analyze the progress the students have made (4).
Through the use of this assessment and the matrixes, we will be able to determine the level of second language acquisition of the students at Miguel Such Vocational School and have numeric results for both their pre-post weblog use that will help us assess how effective weblogs are as educational tools to increase reading and writing.

II. **Educational and Research Context and Participants:**

The study begins with the selection of the school and grade level to be studied. The researcher used the following criteria to select the school. First, it must have some form of internet and computer access for students. Second, must have below average English
proficiency on the annual report card submitted to the Department of Education as determined by the results of the “Pruebas Puertorriqueñas” and, finally, be part of the X school district/region. In terms of choosing student participants, they must be within the 15 through 18 age range, must have Spanish as their native language and have measured at Phase I or II in both the SWLOM and the SOLOM assessments.

Among the schools that upheld the established criteria the Miguel Such Vocational High School was selected as the participant school. It belongs to the San Juan Region, District IV, has a 34% English proficiency as stated in the annual report of the Department of Education for the 2008-2009 school year (see Miguel Such Annual Report [Electronic Version] for complete data). Since it is part of the vocational school system, it has computer labs and internet access. It is also near the university were students can also access the internet and computers through wireless connections. The students that participated in this study were determined by the grade the researcher/teacher were assigned at the beginning of the second semester of the academic school year 2009-2010.

Chart 2: Characteristics of the research students/participants and school © Copyright Kiara M Cruz Perez, 2010.
III. **Administrative Phase:**

During the administrative phase, the researcher will create a series of letters of consent in order to gain the necessary permissions to begin research. First, the researcher will fill out the CIPSHI format. Next, she will send consent forms for the school director, the parents and the students for permitted participation in the research. The researcher will provide the school directors with a series of lesson plans for the presentation of the weblog on and evaluation. These lesson plans (see Appendix C) range from the different criteria to curricula that the students must study throughout the semester. All these written communications (see Appendix B) will be in Spanish (the native language of the participants, their parents and the school community), and will detail the nature of the research as well as explain the possible or nonexistent risks that the participants can experience.
IV. Data Gathering Phase:

As briefly explained in Chart 5, this research study will take place during a 10 week period. During the first week of research, we will be learning about the students’ identities through icebreaker activities. By the end of the first week the researcher must have administered the SOLOM and the SWLOM and analyzed the initial findings of these tests as well as determine the initial level of language proficiency of both of the group and the individual student participant.

Chart 5: Data Gathering © Copyright Kiara M Cruz Perez, 2010.
During the second week the teacher/researcher will be presenting the concept of the weblog. The students will have written instructions with what they will be doing with the weblog for the following five weeks as well as a checklist to guide them through the process. In these instructions the six main characteristics of weblogs are used: first, in compliance with the rights of human participants, all documents will be identified with a pseudonym the students will be asked to create for their blogs and will only be known by the teacher/researcher, the thesis committee, and the student (Identity). These files will be stored at the researcher’s home and will be destroyed one year after the research process is finished as CIPSHI requires it in order to protect the participants’ identity.

Second, the students will be instructed on how to create a class blog using all the tools the blogs has to offer. These include pictures, videos, and other multimedia resources (multimedia). Third, they will be instructed on how to post a blog entry and how to respond to a blog entry (active participation). They will be asked to comment on 2 students’ blogs a week until they have commented on every classmate’s blog. Fourth, they will also be asked to comment on the posts made on their blogs at least two times a week (feedback and community). Students should also comment on the teacher/researcher’s blog at least once a week. Finally, at the end of every week, the students will have to provide the teacher/researcher with a paper copy of their blog entry and their feedbacks. These copies will be used to evaluate the students’ progress in writing (archiving).

During the following 5 weeks, the blog study will be taking place. The students blog entries will range from opinions about themes discussed in class, to highlights on school activities and media events. Sometimes the teacher will ask them to write about a specific topic while other times they will choose the topic. During the final week, students will
hand in the final blog posts and entries as well as those of the past weeks that they had not
handed in. Then the teacher/researcher will administer the SWLOM and SOLOM again.
This concludes the data gathering part of the study.

V. **Data Analysis Phase:**

The project’s data analysis will take approximately three weeks. During the first
week, the researcher will re-read all the posts of each student and compare the written
blog entries with the SOLOM and SWLOM results. These matrixes provide the
researcher with the characteristics and skills the research subjects evaluated must possess
in order to say that he/she is at a particular language proficiency level.

The teacher matches a student's language performance in five mains - listening
comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation - on a five-point scale
(http://www.bobschwab.com/assessment, _swlom_and_solom.htm) (see Appendix A).
Even though the results of the SOLOM and the SWLOM will be the primary sources to
determine language proficiency and acquisition, the students’ writing and oral skills in
the classroom and in contact with the teacher/researcher will also be considered when
choosing the student’s level of proficiency.

The researcher will add and provide statistics using the T test, used to compare 2 groups
of information. The results that are analyzed using test are the pre and post results from
both the SWLOM and SOLOM and will be compared for both globally (the whole group)
and individually (the student’s individual progress). During the second and last week, the
result charts and graphics will be made and the conclusions will be written.
Week 1:
• Re-read all the posts of each student on the blog
• Compare the written blog entries with Pre and Post SOLOM and SWLOM results.

Week 2:
Analysis of Weblog Posts through SWLOM + SOLOM Mains
• Statistical Analysis using T Test

Week 3:
Results Charts Created
• Conclusions will be Written
Appendix B:

SWLOM and SOLOM Matrix
## SWLOM Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mains</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Writes single word with no sentence structure</td>
<td>Writes short sentences with limited sentence structure</td>
<td>Writes complete sentences with developmental sentence structure</td>
<td>Writes paragraphs with fully developed sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>No logical sequence or organization</td>
<td>Lacks logical sequence and organization</td>
<td>Somewhat sequenced to substantially sequenced</td>
<td>Follows standard organization for the genre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>No grammatical relationships</td>
<td>Basic word order problems, uses only present tense form</td>
<td>Minor grammatical errors such as – s on verbs in third person singular</td>
<td>Grammar resembles that of native speaker of same age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Insufficient vocabulary to express ideas</td>
<td>Limited vocabulary, relies on 1st language for translation</td>
<td>Knows most words, but lacks vocabulary for finer shades of meaning</td>
<td>Flexible in word choice, similar to native speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>No concept of form</td>
<td>Does not differentiate form to suit purpose</td>
<td>Chooses form to suit purpose but limited in choice of forms</td>
<td>Knows different genres and makes appropriate choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Variety</td>
<td>No sentence pattern</td>
<td>Uses one or two sentence patterns</td>
<td>Uses several sentence patterns</td>
<td>Uses a full variety of sentence patterns appropriately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SWLOM: Student Written Language Observation Matrix**

Based on your observation of the student, indicate with an “X” across the bock in each category that best describes the student’s abilities. The SOLOM should only be administered by persons who themselves score at level “4” or above in all categories in the language being assessed. Students scoring at level “+” in all categories can be said to have no proficiency in the language.

**SWLOM Phases:** Phase I: score 1-5 = Non-English Proficient; Phase II: score 11-15 = Limited English Proficient; Phase III: score 16-19 = Limited English Proficient; Phase IV: score 20+ Fully English Proficient (based on a perfect score of 24). To determine the Student Written Language Observation Matrix score as a percentile, use the formula: \((\text{SWLOM SCORE} + 1) \times 4\).
## SOLOM Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mains</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Cannot be said to understand even simple conversation.</td>
<td>Has difficulty what is said, comprehends only “social conversation” spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.</td>
<td>Understand most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with repetitions.</td>
<td>Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary.</td>
<td>Understands everyday conversation and normal classroom discussions without difficulty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fluency**

|  | Speech is as halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible. | Usually hesitant; often forced into silence by language limitations. | Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussion frequently disrupted by the student’s search for the correct manner of expression | Speech in everyday conversation generally fluent, with occasional lapses as student searches for the correct manner of expression. | Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions fluent and effortless, approximating that of a native speaker. |

**Vocabulary**

|  | Vocabulary limitations so extreme so as to make conversation virtually impossible. | Misuse of words and very limited vocabulary; comprehension quite difficult. | Student frequently uses wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary. | Student occasionally uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies. | Use of vocabulary and idioms approximates that of a native speaker. |

**Pronunciation**

|  | Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible | Very hard to understand because of pronunciation problems. Frequently repeats in order to make self understood. | Pronunciation problems necessitate concentration on the part of the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding. | Always intelligible though one is conscious of a definite accent and occasional inappropriate intonation patterns. | Pronunciation and intonation approximate that of a native speaker. |
### Grammar

| Errors in grammar and word order as severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible | Grammar and word order errors make comprehension difficult. Must often rephrase/restrict self to basic patterns. | Makes frequent errors of grammar and word order that occasionally obscure meaning. | Occasionally makes grammatical and/or word-order errors that do not obscure meaning. | Grammatical usage and word order approximate that of a native speaker. |

**SOLOM: Student Oral Language Observation Matrix**

Based on your observation of the student, indicate with an “X” across the box in each category that best describes the student’s abilities. The SOLOM should only be administered by persons who themselves score at level “4” or above in all categories in the language being assessed. Students scoring at level “+” in all categories can be said to have no proficiency in the language.

**SOLOM PHASES:** Phase I: Score 5-10 = Non-English Proficient; Phase II: Score 12-18 = Limited English Proficient; Phase III: Score 19-24 = Limited English Proficient; Phase IV: Score 25 = Fully English Proficient. To determine the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix score as a percentile, use the formula: \((\text{SOLOM SCOR}E \times 4)\)

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR DETERMINING WHOLE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (combined written and oral score as a percentile)**

Whole Language Proficiency refers to the assessment of oral language proficiency and written language proficiency for the purpose of describing a student’s overall functional capacity in a second language. Whole language proficiency is described as a percentile based on the level that would be expected of a native speaker of the same age. The following formula may be used to determine the whole language proficiency based on the preceding oral and written language matrixes.

\[ (\text{SOLOM SCOR}E \times 2) + [(\text{SWLOM SCOR}E + 1) \times 2] = \text{WLP (as a percentile factor)} \]

**EXAMPLE:** A student receives a SOLOM assessment of 20 and a SWLOM assessment of 18

\[ (20 \times 2) + [(18 + 1) \times 2] = 40 + 38 = 78 \]

This student’s estimated whole language Proficiency is 78% of expected native speaker proficiency for the same age, OR, this student could be rated as 78% in the target language. (http://www.bobschwab.com/assessment, _swlom_and_solom.htm)
Appendix C:

Suggested Lesson Plans
# Suggested Semester Plan High School

## 9th Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DAY BY DAY</th>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>ASSESSMENTS/EVALUATION</th>
<th>WEBLOG ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 28 through February 5</strong></td>
<td>28- Observations 29- Observations 1-Observations/Icebreaker Activities 2- “Student Survey” 3- Short Story: <em>Eugenio el Genio</em> 3- Vocabulary on Short Story 4- Critical Thinking Questions</td>
<td>Short Story: <em>Eugenio el Genio</em> Author: Aníbal Muñoz</td>
<td>Critical Thinking Questions – to hand in Debate/ Part IV Book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>February 8 through 12</strong></td>
<td>8 – Continue with day 5 9- Weblog Day 10- Administer SWLOM 11- Administer SOLOM 12- Book Assignment</td>
<td>Computer Matrixes Who was “Cool Papa Bell”?</td>
<td>Group Work</td>
<td>Assign: Weblog addresses Pseudonyms</td>
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<td><strong>February 16 through 19</strong></td>
<td>16- <em>How to Write a Letter</em> 17- Vocabulary 18- Letter writing exercises 19- Letter to hand in</td>
<td>Literature Book: <em>How to Write a Letter</em> Author: Garrison Keillor</td>
<td>Assessment: 1. Write a letter to Luis Fortuño explaining what you think is the biggest problem in PR society and how can he fix it. 2. Write a letter to Miguel Such director providing advice as to how to make the school better. 3. Write a letter to an important person or to someone you admire and tell them why you think they are important.</td>
<td>Blog Post week 1: <em>Why people do not write letters anymore? Is it good or bad? Should we write more letters anymore?</em></td>
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<td><strong>February 22 through 26</strong></td>
<td>22- 25-Movie Comprehension Questions</td>
<td>Movie Choices: <em>Wall-E</em> <em>The Chocolate War</em> Cheaters</td>
<td>Assessment: Oral Report on Movies Students will choose a scene from the movie and re-create it to Puerto Rico. It could be a drawing, a song or a dramatic piece.</td>
<td>Blog Post week 2: <em>What was your opinion of the movie? What was the most important thing you learned?</em></td>
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| March 1 through 5 | 1- Prepare Oral reports in groups  
2- Keep working on oral reports  
3- 4 Oral reports on movie  
5- Analysis test on movie | Materials students bring to class | Assessment: Oral Report on Movies  
Students will choose a scene from the movie and re-create it as if the movie was based in Puerto Rico. It could be a drawing, a song or a dramatic piece.  
Analysis Test on Film | Blog Post week 3:  
How important is it to work in group? Should it be done more often? |
| March 8 through 19 | 8 – 17 Core Book Unit: *Thirteen Reasons Why*  
18- 19 - Finish and Hand-in group work | Core Book Unit: *Thirteen Reasons Why*  
Author: *Jay Asher* | Assessments:  
Core Book Unit | Blog Post week 4:  
Did you like the book/novel? Why or why not? What was the thing you learned from it the most? What was missing from it?  
Blog Post week 5:  
Free Topic |
| March 23 through 26 | 23-25 Oral Reports  
26- Catching up day! | Computer lab  
Library | Assessment: Oral Report  
Students will choose 1 of 3 possible topics:  
- My Favorite Recipe  
- My Favorite Sport  
- My Favorite Artist and Song | Blog Post week 6:  
Which was your favorite oral report? Why? What did you learn from your classmates’ presentations that you did not know before? |
| March 29 through April 4 | Spring Break | Spring Break | Spring Break | Blog Post week 7:  
Tell me what you did during this vacation. Why do you think it’s important to celebrate “Semana Santa”? |
| April 5 through 9 | 5- 8 Short Story  
9- Group work: The First License Plates | Short Story: *Driving the Explorer*  
Author: *Anibal Muñoz*  
The First License Plates | n/a | Blog Post week 8:  
Free Topic |
| **April 12 through 16** | 12- Exam *Driving the Explorer*  
13-15 Conversational classes related to their workshops  
16- Quiz on vocabulary words | Short Story: *Driving the Explorer*  
Author: Anibal Muñoz  
Conversational materials | Analysis Exam on *Driving the Explorer*  
Quiz on vocabulary words | Blog Post week 9: Opinion related to a hot topic on the news or social/cultural phenomenon. |
| **April 20 through 30** | 20-27 Read and Discuss Short Story *The Boy without a Flag*  
28- Creative Activity  
29- Review for test Jeopardy Style  
30- Test | Short Story *The Boy without a Flag*  
Author: Abraham Rodriguez  
Becoming a Citizen  
Assessments:  
Creative Activity: Draw your favorite scene from the story. Use a drawing; write a poem, song, anything.  
Review for test in Jeopardy style  
Becoming a Citizen  
Analysis Test | Blog Post week 9:  
What have you learned from reading *The Boy without a Flag*?  
What is the message of the story?  
Blog Post week 10:  
What did you like about the blog? Why did or did you not like it? |
| **May 3 through 7** | 3-6 Movie #2  
7- Comprehension Discussion; hand in blog posts on paper | Movie #2  
SOLOM and SWLOM  
n/a | n/a | n/a |
| **May 10 through 14** | 10- 12 Creative Activity  
13- Hand in Film Review  
14- Last day of school activity | Assessment: Creative Activity:  
Dramatize their version of the film  
Film review: Students will write a film review. It should include all parts discussed in class and how and why was the film good or bad. | n/a | n/a |
Lesson Plan I:

**Instructional Area:** Writing  
**Grade Level:** Ninth Grade  
**Topic:** Weblogs  

**Standards:**

A. **Standard Listening/Speaking:**
   1. The student uses the English language to interpret oral input, construct meaning, interact with confidence both verbally and nonverbally, and express ideas effectively in a variety of personal, social, and academic.  
   2. Listens and responds to analyze, organize, explain, describe, support, and discuss information; answers and formulates closed and open-ended discussions.

B. **Standard Writing:**
   1. The student effectively communicates to a variety of audiences in all forms of writing through the use of the writing process, proper grammar, and age appropriate expressive vocabulary.  
   2. Applies appropriate grammar, structure, and syntax; analyzes word choice to convey intended meaning.

**Materials Needed:**
Computer, TV projector, and article: *Start your own blog.*

**Objective:**

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to create a blog.

**Set Induction:**

1. The teacher will review the students’ previous knowledge on weblogs.  
2. The teacher will indicate that they will begin using a blog as part of a class project worth a full grade.  
3. She will then indicate what they are going to be doing today.

**Development:**

1. The teacher will begin reading the article *Start your own blog.*  
2. She will demonstrate what the article explains using the computer and the projector.  
3. The teacher will then ask the students to create their own blogs.

**Evaluating Activity:**

1. The students will create an email address and their own blog.  
2. They will have a pseudonym and provide it to the teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Weblog Name</th>
<th>Weblog Address</th>
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Lesson Plan II:

Instructional Area: Writing
Grade Level: Ninth Grade
Topic: Weblogs

Standards:
A. Standard Writing:
   1. The student effectively communicates to a variety of audiences in all forms of writing through the use of the writing process, proper grammar, and age appropriate expressive vocabulary.
   2. Applies appropriate grammar, structure, and syntax; analyzes word choice to convey intended meaning.

Materials Needed:
Computers

Objective:
At the end of the lesson, students should be able to create a blog post.

Set Induction:
1. The teacher will review how to use weblogs with the students.

Development:
2. The teacher will begin calling the students one by one and have them create a post.
3. She will demonstrate what they are doing incorrectly.

Evaluating Activity:
4. The students will create a practice blog post.
5. They will provide it to the teacher.
Unit Plan I:

**Instructional Area:** Reading and Writing  
**Grade Level:** Ninth Grade  
**Topic:** *How to Write a Letter* by Garrison Keillor  
**Standards:**

A. **Standard Reading:**
   1. The student uses reading strategies, literary analysis, and critical thinking skills to construct meaning and develop an understanding as well as an appreciation of a variety of genres of both fiction and nonfiction.
   2. Distinguishes between fact and opinion, infers the main idea, and distinguishes between relevant and insignificant details in a variety or texts; identifies theme.

B. **Standard Listening/Speaking:**
   1. The student uses the English language to interpret oral input, construct meaning, interact with confidence both verbally and nonverbally, and express ideas effectively in a variety of personal, social, and academic.
   2. Listens and responds during read aloud, presentation, or performance from a variety of literature, periods, genres, and styles to analyze character development, setting, tone, voice, and mood; makes connections to the text.
   3. Explains the main idea or topic and important details from learned concepts or readings, and summarizes, analyzes, and compares and contrasts a topic from a variety of text using appropriate language structure.

C. **Standard Writing:**
   1. The student effectively communicates to a variety of audiences in all forms of writing through the use of the writing process, proper grammar, and age appropriate expressive vocabulary.
   2. Applies appropriate grammar, structure, and syntax; analyzes word choice to convey intended meaning.

**Materials Needed:**

Story *How to Write a Letter*, whiteboard, loose leaf paper
Objective:
At the end of the discussion of How to Write a Letter by Garrison Keillor, students will show their understanding of letter writing by producing a letter.

Set Induction:
1. The teacher will review the students’ previous knowledge in letter writing.
2. The teacher will begin reading the story How to Write a Letter by Garrison Keillor.

Development:
Day 1:
1. The teacher and students will begin reading the story together and aloud.
2. She will ask them analysis questions along the way.
3. The teacher will conclude the day by stating that in day 2 they are going to finish the story and begin the evaluating activity.

Day 2:
1. The teacher will begin by reviewing with the students what the story is about.
2. She will ask them what they thought about what they had read so far and where they think the story is going.
3. The teacher and the students will then continue and finish reading the story.
4. After discussing the ending, the teacher will proceed to explain the evaluation.

Evaluating Activity:
4. The teacher will write the instructions on the board.
5. The students will be writing a letter on three possible topics:
   a. Write a letter to Governor Luis Fortuño explaining what you think is the biggest problem in Puerto Rican society and how he can fix it.
   b. Write a letter to the principal at Miguel Such providing advice on how to make the school better and not have it closed down.
   c. Write a letter to an important person or to someone you admire and tell them why they are important to you.
6. The students will have the rest of day 2 and day 3 to finish their letters.
7. The letters will be evaluated through a rubric that the teacher will provide them during day 1 for them to work with.

Blog Post of the Unit:

Why people do not write letters anymore? Is it good or bad? Should we write more letters anymore?
Unit Plan II
Instructional Area: Reading and Writing
Grade Level: Ninth Grade
Topic: Film: Wall E
Standards:
  A. Standard Reading:
    1. The student uses reading strategies, literary analysis, and critical thinking
       skills to construct meaning and develop an understanding as well as an
       appreciation of a variety of genres of both fiction and nonfiction.
    2. Argues on characterization techniques and character development using text
       evidence to justify responses; evaluates the setting in fiction and nonfiction;
       classifies point of view using text evidence to support responses.

  B. Standard Writing:
    1. The student uses the English language to interpret oral input, construct
       meaning, interact with confidence both verbally and nonverbally, and express
       ideas effectively in a variety of personal, social, and academic.
    2. Organizes synthesizes, outlines, and evaluates information to write a research
       paper; demonstrates voice and knowledge of topic throughout the writing.

  C. Standard Listening/Speaking:
    1. The student uses the English language to interpret oral input, construct
       meaning, interact with confidence both verbally and nonverbally, and express
       ideas effectively in a variety of personal, social, and academic.
    2. Listens and responds to synthesize, explain, describe, analyze, justify, and
       debate information; answers and formulates closed and open-ended questions.
    3. Expresses thoughts and opinions to evaluate text, debate current events,
       concepts, and literary elements; makes predictions and inferences, as well as
       draws conclusions from listening to a variety of texts, performances, and
       multimedia sources; listens to sort and prioritize information.

Materials Needed:
Movie: Wall E, TV, DVD Player, Comprehension Questions
Objective:
After viewing the movie *Wall E*, students will creatively dramatize the significance of the movie through a dramatic interpretation with dialogue and an analysis test.

Set Induction:
1. The teacher will review the students’ previous knowledge of the film.
2. The teacher will begin by handing out the comprehension questions.

Development:

Day 1 through 3:
1. The students will be viewing the film *Wall E* taking notes, and following the comprehension questions the teacher provided.

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are the names of the main characters/robots?
2. What happened in the beginning of the film?
3. What are some of the consequences for humans upon leaving earth?
4. What was Eve’s mission on Earth?
5. Name the human characters that appear on the ship and their roles.
6. What happened after Eve is returned to the ship with Wall E?
7. What was Wall E reaction towards the repair ward?
8. What was Eve’s reaction?
9. What happened next?
10. What was the reaction of the captain of Eve’s reports?
11. What did he decide to do and what happened to Wall E?
12. Summarize the end of the movie.
13. What do you think was the message of the film?
14. What was your opinion of the movie?

Day 4:
1. After the viewing, the teacher and the students will discuss the movie and the questions.
2. They will begin to discuss the comprehension questions that were handed in on the first day.
3. The teacher will then assign the oral reports they will be doing on the film.

Day 5 through 7:
1. The students will work on their creative presentations.
2. Then, they will present their scenes.
3. At the end of the presentation, the students will review for the test the following day.

**Evaluating Activity:**
1. The teacher will ask the students to choose a scene from the movie and re-create it creatively through a dramatic piece with dialogue.
2. The students will take an analysis test on March 5, 2010.

**Blog Post of the Unit:**

*What was your opinion of the movie? What was the most important thing you learned?*
My Favorite … Oral Report

Instructional Area: Listening and Speaking
Grade Level: Ninth Grade
Topic: My Favorite… Oral Report

Standards:
Listening/Speaking:
The student uses the English language to interpret oral input, construct meaning, interact with confidence both verbally and nonverbally, and express ideas effectively in a variety of personal, social, and academic contexts.

The student:
1. Listens and responds to synthesize, explain, describe, analyze, justify, and debate information; answers and formulates closed and open-ended questions.
2. Uses appropriate language structure to analyze and evaluate issues, to problem solve, to explain a process, and to express opinions integrating comparison and contrast statements.
3. Analyzes and explains the main idea or topic and important details from learned concepts or readings from a variety of persuasive texts; summarizes, evaluates, and judges effectiveness of the text, performance, speech, or literature.

Materials Needed:
Whiteboard, computer

Objective:
The students will practice oral presentation skills by creating an oral report based on one of their favorite things.

Development:
Day 1:
Set Induction:
1. The teacher will ask the students how their weekend was.
2. Then she will begin the class by demonstrating what their task consists of.

Development:
3. The teacher will demonstrate the way in which the oral reports will be conducted.
4. These reports consist of presenting their favorite _____; meaning that the student will fill in the blank with their favorite thing of choice.
5. It can be a sport, recipe, hobby, artist and song, movie, among others.
6. Afterwards, the teacher will play a game with the students to decide the order in which the presentations will be presented.

Day 2 - 3:
Development:
1. The students will continue to prepare for their oral reports.
2. The teacher will verify that they are creating the necessary props for their presentations.
3. After the second day, students will hand-in their written reports on their favorite ______.

Day 4 - 5:
Evaluating Activity:
3. The students will begin giving their presentations.
4. They all must come ready to present on the first day since the teacher will have the prior order of presentations established beforehand.
5. Each student has 10 minutes to present, including time for question and answer section.
6. The teacher will grade the reports using a rubric that they would have seen before.

Blog Post of the Unit:

Which was your favorite oral report? Why? What did you learn from your classmates’ presentations that you did not know before?
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


