Weblogging in Kumamoto

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In this presentation, we discuss the Weblogging in Kumamoto (WinK) initiative, an attempt to incorporate large amounts of input, output, and interaction into Japanese tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula. WinK is a community of student weblogs that links students in the participating universities through a network based on readily available web tools. Distinctive features of the WinK initiative include: abundant asynchronous learning opportunities; the creation of a virtual community based in the local physical community; training in information and communication technology (ICT) tools suitable for Japanese university students; the incorporation of extensive comprehensible input; and the development of appropriate methods for language teaching in a computer environment.

Student weblogs form online portfolios for student EFL writing assignments, and spur additional work. Being online, they are available not only for teachers, but also for other students. Weblogs have a comment function, and a facility to link to other weblog posts. So, as students interact online, a community begins to emerge. Innovations such as RSS (really simple syndication) feeds facilitate community development. These feeds compile and display posts from hundreds of student weblogs, and enable students to find and respond to posts from other members of the same class, and also from students in other classes and institutions.

Teachers contribute to community building through their own weblogs, which help provide examples of good practice and highlight particularly noteworthy student posts. They serve as hubs linking together the various groups of which the community is composed. Through these interconnections, we aim to provide a classroom outside of the regular classroom where students can interact with each other asynchronously.

After presenting these facets of the WinK initiative, we discuss further developments, including the possibility of secondary school and higher education participation, both locally and internationally.

![Diagram: Traditional writing classrooms compared with the WinK weblog community](image)

**Figure 1: Traditional writing classrooms compared with the WinK weblog community**