

8 Teaching the use of WebQuests to master students in Pablo de Olavide University

Regina Gutiérrez Pérez¹

Abstract

This paper deals with the new pedagogical approaches that the European Space of Higher Education (ESHE) demands in the university system. More specifically, it describes the experience of teaching the use of WebQuest to future educators in the module of foreign languages belonging to the ‘Máster de enseñanza de profesorado de educación secundaria obligatoria y bachillerato, formación profesional y enseñanza de idiomas’. In the module of English, a unit is dedicated to new ways of teaching and learning. Blended learning, e-learning, tandem learning and cooperative learning are dealt with in detail. The WebQuest activity is provided as an example of blended learning and cooperative learning. This paper shows the objectives and outcomes of the implementation of this teaching experience.

Keywords: WebQuest, European Space of Higher Education, ESHE, blended learning, cooperative learning.

1. Introduction

Our proposal is based on the experience of teaching the use of WebQuest to future educators in the module of foreign languages belonging to the ‘Máster de enseñanza de profesorado de educación secundaria obligatoria y bachillerato, formación profesional y enseñanza de idiomas’.

1. Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, Spain; rgutper@upo.es

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The subject taught, for five academic years since 2009, is ‘Innovation and Research’. The main aim of this subject is to help students become familiar with the use of new technologies which have recently been introduced in secondary school centers in Andalucía. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have a number of widely recognised advantages for the new teaching methodology demanded by ESHE. We agree with [Pennock-Speck \(2009\)](#) who states that “if our university and state universities are to remain at the forefront in teaching and research in the future, we have to make sure that we implement ICT as effectively as possible in the new degree” (p. 183).

Special attention is also paid to the evaluation of languages according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Finally, new ways of teaching and learning are taught and practised thoroughly. Blended learning “designates the range of possibilities presented by combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students” ([Friesen, 2012](#), p. 1). Cooperative learning encourages students to work with and learn from each other ([Johnson & Johnson, 1998](#)). This method can help them develop leadership skills and the ability to work with others as a team.

It is in this last unit where we teach the use of WebQuests, given that it is an ideal activity to combine face-to-face learning with autonomous and cooperative work. [March \(2003\)](#) defines it in the following way:

“[a] WebQuest is a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students’ investigation of a central, open-ended question, development of individual expertise and participation in a final group process that attempts to transform newly acquired information into a more sophisticated understanding. The best WebQuests do this in a way that inspires students to see richer thematic relationships, facilitate a contribution to the real world of learning and reflect on their own metacognitive processes” (p. 43).

It is a didactic resource based on the constructivist learning and on the cooperative methodology that is very successful at the moment in pre-School, primary and secondary level.

Our main aim is to show them that WebQuests are different from other web-based lessons in that they go beyond simply answering questions. The focus is on using information rather than looking for it. They require higher thinking skills such as problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and creativity. The task can be almost anything. For instance, students can be asked to design a collage, make a powerpoint presentation, write an essay, perform a play, etc.

2. Methodology

In the subject taught, ‘Innovation and Research’, students carry out several tasks, such as devising an activity according to the new methods of teaching and learning (blended learning, e-learning, tandem learning and cooperative learning). Besides, we decided to introduce WebQuests, since they had never heard of them. For that purpose, classes in an IT classroom take place. We also make them design their own WebQuest in groups of two (three maximum in some cases).

Students are shown the WebQuest generator chosen (<http://aula21.net/Wqfacil/intro.htm>), which facilitates the task, since it is quite intuitive. The template shows that the WebQuest is comprised of six components:

- Introduction: the intent of the introduction is twofold: first, to orient the learner by setting the stage and explaining the main goals. Second, it should capture their attention.
- Task: it is a description of what the learner will accomplish during the exercise.

- **Process:** the process identifies the steps the students should go through to achieve the task. It also includes the online resources they will need.
- **Resources:** this is “a list of [websites] which the instructor has located that will help the learner accomplish the task. The resources are pre-selected so that learners can focus their attention on the topic rather than surfing aimlessly” (Lambert, n.d).
- **Evaluation:** it describes how their performance will be evaluated, and it is often in the form of a scoring rubric.
- **Conclusion:** the conclusion brings closure to the quest. It summarises what the learners will have achieved by completing the WebQuest and often encourages reflection about what was learned.

After investigating and learning how to implement this activity, students design WebQuests with diverse up-to-date topics that catch their pupils’ attention and interest (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below) and make the tasks authentic: carnival, portraits, trips, tsunamis, inventions, multiculturalism, sports, mobile phones, etc., some of them interdisciplinary, and applied to two different levels, primary and secondary education.

Figure 1. Mobile phones, friends or enemies?

The image shows a screenshot of a WebQuest page with a pink background. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Introduction | Task | Process | Resources | Evaluation | Conclusion |. Below this is the title "Mobile phones, friends or enemies?". In the center, there is a cartoon illustration of a mobile phone with a face, arms, and legs, standing next to a man in a blue suit. Below the illustration, the author's name "Author: Eva Gutiérrez and Julia Olmedo" and the subject "Subject: English" are listed. The email address "E-mail: evaquiti@hotmail.com/jolmedoaquilar@gmail.com" and the level "Level: 4th year of ESO" are also provided. The introduction text reads: "INTRODUCTION Today you are going to become real guests of a debate radio programme. The topic? **Mobile phones, friends or enemies?** Get ready to uphold your views!". In the bottom right corner, there is a small photograph of a group of students in a classroom, some with their hands raised.

Figure 2. English is multicultural

Introduction | Task | Crosses | Resources | Evaluation | Conclusion |

ENGLISH IS MULTICULTURAL



Author: Teresa Padial and Cristina Sánchez
E-mail: tercpadial@gmail.com
cristinasfuentes@gmail.com

Subject English
Level 4th of ESO

INTRODUCTION



We know English is the official language of USA, UK and Australia but...
Do you know it is also spoken in other countries all around the world?
So, we are going to create an international showroom where each group will present a country to the rest as if they were natives. You can be as creative as possible because there will be a prize for the winner group.

LET'S "ENGLISH!"

TASK For this activity, you are going to work in groups of four.
Each group will be focused on one of the following countries:
Canada
Tanzania
Zimbabwe



Most of them are short-term WebQuests designed to be completed in one to three classes. They are highly visual; they include lots of pictures, animations, maps and even sounds, tools which hold students' interest. Once they have finished, each group makes a presentation of their WebQuests and their classmates evaluate it according to Dodge's (2001) rubric for evaluating WebQuests, so that a cooperative way of evaluation is also fulfilled. The rubric² (evaluates the following):

	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Score
Overall Visual Appeal	0 points There are few or no graphic elements. No variation in layout or typography. Color is garish and/or typographic variations are overused and legibility suffers. Background interferes with the readability.	2 points Graphic elements sometimes, but not always, contribute to the understanding of concepts, ideas and relationships. There is some variation in type size, color, and layout.	4 points Appropriate and thematic graphic elements are used to make visual connections that contribute to the understanding of concepts, ideas and relationships. Differences in type size and/or color are used well and consistently.	

2. Modified by Bellofatto, Bohl, Casey, Krill, and Dodge; <http://webquest.org/sdsu/webquestrubric.html>.

Chapter 8

<p>Navigation & Flow</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>Getting through the lesson is confusing and unconventional. Pages can't be found easily and/or the way back isn't clear.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>There are a few places where the learner can get lost and not know where to go next.</p>	<p>4 points</p> <p>Navigation is seamless. It is always clear to the learner what all the pieces are and how to get to them.</p>	
<p>Mechanical Aspects</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>There are more than 5 broken links, misplaced or missing images, badly sized tables, misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</p>	<p>1 point</p> <p>There are some broken links, misplaced or missing images, badly sized tables, misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>No mechanical problems noted.</p>	
<p>Introduction</p>				
<p>Motivational Effectiveness of Introduction</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>The introduction is purely factual, with no appeal to relevance or social importance. The scenario posed is transparently bogus and doesn't respect the media literacy of today's learners.</p>	<p>1 point</p> <p>The introduction relates somewhat to the learner's interests and/or describes a compelling question or problem.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>The introduction draws the reader into the lesson by relating to the learner's interests or goals and/or engagingly describing a compelling question or problem.</p>	
<p>Cognitive Effectiveness of the Introduction</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>The introduction doesn't prepare the reader for what is to come, or build on what the learner already knows.</p>	<p>1 point</p> <p>The introduction makes some reference to the learner's prior knowledge and previews to some extent what the lesson is about.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>The introduction builds on the learner's prior knowledge and effectively prepares the learner by foreshadowing what the lesson is about.</p>	
<p>Task</p>				

Connection of Task to Standards	0 points The task is not related to standards.	2 point The task is referenced to standards but is not clearly connected to what learners must know and be able to do to achieve proficiency of those standards.	4 points The task is referenced to standards and is clearly connected to what learners must know and be able to do to achieve proficiency of those standards.	
Cognitive Level of the Task	0 points Task requires simply comprehending or retelling of information found on web pages and answering factual questions.	3 points Doable but is limited in its significance to learners' lives. The task requires analysis of information and/or putting together information from several sources.	6 points Task is doable and engaging, and elicits thinking that goes beyond rote comprehension. The task requires synthesis of multiple sources of information, and/or taking a position, and/or going beyond the data given and making a generalisation or creative product.	
Process				
Clarity of Process	0 points Process is not clearly stated. Learners would not know exactly what they were supposed to do just from reading this.	2 points Some directions are given, but there is missing information. Learners might be confused.	4 points Every step is clearly stated. Most learners would know exactly where they are at each step of the process and know what to do next.	
Richness of Process	0 points Few steps, no separate roles assigned.	1 points Some separate tasks or roles assigned. More complex activities required.	2 points Different roles are assigned to help learners understand different perspectives and/or share responsibility in accomplishing the task.	

<p>Scaffolding of Process</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>The process lacks strategies and organisational tools needed for learners to gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Activities are of little significance to one another and/or to the accomplishment of the task.</p>	<p>3 points</p> <p>Strategies and organisational tools embedded in the process are insufficient to ensure that all learners will gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Some of the activities do not relate specifically to the accomplishment of the task.</p>	<p>6 points</p> <p>The process provides learners coming in at different entry levels with strategies and organisational tools to access and gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Activities are clearly related and designed to take the learners from basic knowledge to higher level thinking.</p>	
<p>Resources</p>				
<p>Relevance & Quantity of Resources</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>Resources provided are not sufficient for learners to accomplish the task. There are too many resources for learners to look at in a reasonable time.</p>	<p>2 point</p> <p>There is some connection between the resources and the information needed for learners to accomplish the task. Some resources don't add anything new.</p>	<p>4 points</p> <p>There is a clear and meaningful connection between all the resources and the information needed for learners to accomplish the task. Every resource carries its weight.</p>	
<p>Quality of Resources</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>Links are mundane. They lead to information that could be found in a classroom encyclopedia.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>Some links carry information not ordinarily found in a classroom.</p>	<p>4 points</p> <p>Links make excellent use of the Web's timeliness and colorfulness. Varied resources provide enough meaningful information for learners to think deeply.</p>	

Evaluation				
Clarity of Evaluation Criteria	0 points Criteria for success are not described.	3 points Criteria for success are at least partially described.	6 points Criteria for success are clearly stated in the form of a rubric. Criteria include qualitative as well as quantitative descriptors. The evaluation instrument clearly measures what learners must know and be able to do to accomplish the task.	
	Total Score			/50

Each student selects the three WebQuests they had granted the highest scores. At the end of the class there is a counting of the votes and the best WebQuests get the highest grades.

3. Results

The use of the Internet provides a good exposure to the target language and makes students more independent. The WebQuests generated in groups achieve the following objectives:

- Learning to design a WebQuest through a constructivist based approach to education and inquiry-based instruction.
- Developing the task through blended and cooperative methodologies.
- Designing WebQuests to be implemented in their specialty as future educators.
- Evaluation through a specific rubric for evaluating WebQuests.

- Cooperative evaluation.

The results of this practice in the last years have been very positive. Many of the students are able to carry out their WebQuests in schools in the final period of the master. They find the experience and results extremely satisfactory, since, by implementing ICT in the teaching process, students' autonomy and motivation are fostered, they assure.

4. Conclusion

The ESHE is bringing about structural changes and new pedagogical approaches. In this paper we have proposed blended and cooperative learnings through the use of WebQuests, a student-oriented teaching approach, in order to foster autonomous learning. The positive results achieved shows that teaching tools such as this one can help teachers integrate the Internet into the curriculum while creating fun instructional activities that motivate students.

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