

IN PURSUIT OF ALTERNATIVES IN ELT METHODOLOGY: WEBQUESTS

Ayfer ŞEN & Steve NEUFELD

Ayfer Şen is a Senior Instructor at the School of Foreign Languages, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. She has a BA in English Language and Literature from Eastern Mediterranean University, and an MA in TEFL from Bilkent University. She is currently doing her PhD study in ELT Department at Eastern Mediterranean University.
e-mail: ayfer.sen@emu.edu.tr

Steve Neufeld is a Senior Instructor at the School of Foreign Languages, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. He has a BSc and BEd from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and an MSc from the University of Leicester, UK. He is on the Executive Board of the EMU Distance Education Institute and is conducting research into various aspects of education technology, including blogs, wikis, and lexical analysis and vocabulary profiling.
e-mail: steven.neufeld@emu.edu.tr
web site: http://www.seedwiki.com/wiki/steve_neufeld

ABSTRACT

Although the Internet has opened up a vast new source of information for university students to use and explore, many students lack the skills to find, critically evaluate and intelligently exploit web-based resources. This problem is accentuated in English-medium universities where students learn and use English as a foreign language. In these cases, the task of finding and extracting relevant and useful information is daunting for students. Also, they spend too much time looking for information and become demotivated or end up copying and pasting without enough time to think critically about the issues.

In response to the challenges faced by students in effectively exploiting web-based resources, the School of Foreign Languages, Eastern Mediterranean University, has recently begun using a new approach developed in the late nineties in America known as WebQuests. The Modern Languages Division of the SFL provides service English courses for students studying in various departments, and one of its aims is to link English language with concepts used in the departments by benefiting from the resources on the Internet. The underlying principles inherent in the design and implementation of WebQuests provide a reason and motivation for students to use and produce English with real tasks relevant to their departments while exploiting the richness of the Internet. It can be further surmised that the use of WebQuests has broader implications in helping students develop better digital literacy, even when English is not their native language.

This study introduces the idea of WebQuests and the adaptation of this approach using sample tasks which were developed and piloted at the Modern Languages Division, SFL, EMU. In this article the details in the preparation, design, implementation of WebQuests and the results obtained from teacher and student questionnaires are presented.

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to deny the impact that technology has had on our lives today. The Internet, which has been with us for over forty years, has pervaded almost every orifice of modern society. It transcends cultural, physical and spatial borders; it encompasses developed and developing worlds; having an e-mail address or website has become as commonplace as having a telephone and now ELT practitioners are experimenting with the use of blogs and wikis in their teaching contexts. We use it to communicate with each other on a daily, hourly or instantaneous basis; we turn to it to learn more about issues that concern us; we can travel vicariously to the farthest corners of the world in a flash; we play games to entertain ourselves, download music and videos, and do our banking. Schools, as the prototypes of the communities that we live in, must obviously provide an education that not only embraces the Internet but also equips our students with the ability to use it (or whatever information technology advances it will lead to in the future) wisely, productively and for the benefit of society..

Considering the effect the Internet has had in everyday life, it would be unwise to keep our doors closed to the use of informational technology in our classrooms and not equip our learners with the skills they need to survive in the real world. This is perhaps the single most compelling reason which drives many educators to try integrating informational technology into the classroom; we perceive the need to provide a rational link between 'education' in our schools and the contribution to society that students will make after graduation. There are plenty of alternatives for teachers who are willing to experiment and incorporate informational technology in

their classroom teaching, both as an instructional aid and as a tool to facilitate learning. In this paper, the focus will be on one of these tools—the WebQuest.

WebQuests

WebQuests were developed in America by Bernie Dodge in 1995, primarily for teachers in the secondary school system and for use with different disciplines regardless of the age groups of its users. Dodge (1995) defines a WebQuest simply as “an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet...” He further emphasizes the importance of WebQuests in an interview saying that it is a tool which creates the “great” teacher of the future (Dodge, 2000).

Those teachers who have professional experience in preparing and implementing them in the classroom confirm that the essence of WebQuests lies in the given task which requires a higher order of thinking. In other words, students are not expected to just receive information passively but rather to use it actively to achieve a certain purpose. Fundamental to this approach is that the student should not just sit in front of the computer and answer a list of questions but indulge in critical thinking which involves “problem solving, judgment, analysis or synthesis” as stated by March (1997), who has worked closely with Dodge and made significant contributions to the promotion and development of the concept of WebQuests..

Here, it is necessary to repeat a well-known fact that the use of technology does not replace the role of the teacher in the classroom. On the contrary, the use of WebQuests highlights the importance of the teacher in setting up the tasks relevant to the needs of the learners. The teacher’s primary role is to serve as a facilitator, using their knowledge about the educational background of the students in order to decide on how the students themselves can best advance their own intellect. Despite the fact that the sources on the Internet provide a great learning opportunity, especially through the use of innovative approaches like WebQuests, it is the teachers who play the crucial role in successfully conceiving, designing, implementing and evaluating WebQuests.

Pedagogical implications of WebQuests

The underlying reason to use WebQuests is not simply the popularity of the Internet or the Web but rather the pedagogical implications that its use promises to the innovative teacher. WebQuests present a unique opportunity to combine a wide range of effective instructional practices in one activity, integrating technology, scaffolding, collaborative learning, critical thinking, authentic assessment and constructivism all in one seamless bundle. March (1998) elaborates on this issue in terms of three main contributions that WebQuests have on students learning.

The first of these is increasing students’ motivation to learn through the challenge of confronting authentic tasks, which require them to solve a problem, to make a comparison, or to construct a hypothesis in relation to a real-life situation using real sources; they are motivated because the effort that they must put into the given task goes beyond the walls of the classroom. The WebQuest tasks require the students to reflect on their own perspectives, thereby strengthening the link between themselves and the task.

The next is developing critical thinking skills again through the use of a real-life situation which requires the students to construct an appropriate solution to a problem. The elements of cognitive psychology and constructivism are embedded into the WebQuest task as the students are not only required to comprehend the collected information but also analyze, synthesize and transform it into something new by adding their own perspectives which becomes evident in the completion of the given task. Scaffolding is another important contribution as students are guided towards the main task step by step, completing one stage at a time.. Together these help students develop an in-depth understanding of the main issues they are confronted with through the consolidation of their prior knowledge with the new information they discover. This provides them with coping strategies to use when they encounter a similar issue again in a different context by activating their schemata.

The last is creating an opportunity for collaboration as students need to work together to complete the given task, an vital element of the learner-centered approach. Collaborative tasks diminish the feeling of isolation students may have when encountering problems for the first time, as there will be peer support provided through group work. This will also help maintain motivation at a higher level as they must continue to work together toward achieving a common goal.

Types of WebQuests

There are two main types of WebQuests defined primarily by the scope of the tasks involved: short term or long term. Both employ similar principles and methods but for different purposes. Short-term WebQuests are designed to be completed within less than two or three lessons with a limited amount of new information for

students to comprehend and process. Long-term WebQuests are usually designed to span a week or a month's period depending on the given tasks, which usually require the learners to analyze new information and show their understanding by elaborating or synthesizing their ideas

Things to be considered while using a WebQuest

There are certain things to be considered carefully during the stages of design, preparation and implementation of the WebQuest tasks.

1. Before embarking on the design and preparation phase, it is crucial that teachers have an in-depth understanding of the rationale for using WebQuests.
2. Next, teachers may adapt an existing WebQuest task that has potential to meet the course objectives. Sometimes it is necessary to start from scratch. In this design phase, it is equally important to consider not only how the task supports the syllabus, but also when to introduce the task to the students. The task should be flexible in order to cater for the differences among learners' understanding of the given task and their ability to reflect on it. So there should be ample potential for learners to come up with creative and diverse solutions and results to the given task through active construction of meaning within the learner's own context.
3. Subsequent to this, the primary resources need to be found on the Internet that will be made available for students to refer to in the appropriate stages of the given task. This is necessary in order to maximize the time and effort towards the contribution to students' critical thinking skills and avoid unnecessary and time-consuming searches.¹ Such guidance will provide them with a 'map' to be followed in order to successfully achieve the aim of the WebQuest. Another important consideration is to provide information sources that require students to construct or interpret a meaning or 'intellectual value' and not simply ask them to process information as 'given' without any reflection on its validity or reliability.
4. A fundamental feature in designing a WebQuest is to give enough time for students to analyze, critically evaluate and assess the collected information in order to incorporate all relevant views and perspectives into their own unique solution to the task. It should be designed in such a way to motivate learners to learn how to effectively use the Web as a source for learning beyond the assigned project.
5. During its implementation the teachers should act as facilitators and try to shift the responsibility of learning within the context of the WebQuest to the students. It is also important to maintain cooperation among students through the use of collaborative group work. Students should not work in isolation as it is important that they share their ideas with other students in their group. The skill and ability to work effectively in a team is increasingly seen as essential in today's workplace. As many students are not accustomed to tasks that not only require creative thinking but also team work, it is important to provide some scaffolding, such as a schedule for students to plan their study in terms of where to work, when to work, and with whom. WebQuests are based on the intensive use of technology, so it may be necessary to help students arrange where and how they will make use of these resources, such as in a scheduled lab hour, in class or at periods when students are not in class.

Essential components of WebQuests

As in all learner-centered learning tools, the use of WebQuests also requires the structured organization of the task as a whole. It shifts the responsibility of learning to the students and therefore it is crucial for the task to be self explanatory. In other words, students should be able to follow the steps involved in the task with ease by following simple and clear instructions. Dodge (1995) suggests the following six issues in building a successful WebQuest:

1. An attractive introduction in order to create curiosity in learners to do the given tasks.
2. A clear statement of the purpose of the given tasks which may sometimes include a "focus question" to better guide the learners and help them to keep on the track.
3. Resources in the form of a list which include relevant Internet links necessary for the given task.
4. Unambiguous descriptions of the process which learners are required to go through to successfully complete the WebQuest, such as direction on how to use the given resources, follow the stages involved in the task, employ the scaffolding provided and keep to the assigned roles or duties to maintain cooperation.

¹ Sometimes the task itself may be to improve students' ability to search for information, an essential skill to be learned in research. However, in general, WebQuests guide students to the resources that are essential for the task, so the task becomes more of an issue of how they exploit this information to solve a problem, rather than tasks based primarily on a retrieval of facts and figures.

5. Providing explicit criteria informing the students about the evaluation process for the given task, often in the guise of a rubric designed by the teacher for authentic assessment.
6. Concluding the task in such a way that students are encouraged to reflect on everything they acquired through different stages of the WebQuest.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) is an English-medium university with seven faculties and three schools. The School of Foreign Languages (SFL) serves the existing faculties and schools at EMU by offering English courses for general and academic purposes. The general English courses, which incorporate the main academic skills, are offered through the Intensive English Division (IED) for students prior to their departmental study at EMU. In the Modern Languages Division (MLD), students' academic skills in English are focused on in relation to their departmental needs either as compulsory or elective courses.

This experimental mini-scale study on the suitability of WebQuests took place at the Faculty of Communications and Media Studies (FCMS). Although this article concentrates solely on the FCMS experience, WebQuests were also piloted and evaluated in several other faculties and schools at EMU and are still in use in some.

The context of the study, FCMS, has three departments which are Journalism, Radio, TV and Film Studies, and Public Relations and Advertising. During the first two years of study, students in all departments have common courses and the EFL courses are among those which are offered to students in their freshman year regardless of their departmental specialization. Of the five teachers who offer the EFL courses, all have the basic skills in using computers for academic purposes. Two had taken an in-service teacher training course in the use of computers and teacher development (the CCTD) and were well informed about the use of the Internet in language teaching. The other three teachers, although they had not taken any such in-service training, were aware of the importance of the technology in learning and were willing to incorporate technology into language teaching.

The freshmen studying at FCMS are those who have passed the EMU English Proficiency Test, either as graduates of IED or directly after registration to the university. Therefore, for some students, the EFL courses are among the first university courses that they take and therefore not all are aware of the requirements of an academic study environment where English is the medium of instruction.

In terms of the facilities, there are two main laboratories with internet access which are open to students unless they are scheduled for a class. In addition, there are two more computer laboratories which do not have internet access. Unfortunately, in all laboratories there are no sound cards on the computers and consequently no headphones for listening purposes.

Reasons for using the WebQuest Tasks at MLD

As mentioned earlier, Webquests tasks are used as a strategy which serves a variety of purposes, but the specific reasons for using them at FCMS were to:

- increase students' exposure to English language;
- provide a structured assistance in using internet sites as a source of learning;
- improve students' critical thinking skills;
- provide a medium for cooperative learning;
- facilitate students' learning through the use of the WebQuest tasks by showing them how to cope with the Internet
- increase students' motivation by creating a link between the departmental courses and the use of English

The raison d'être for piloting WebQuests was to motivate the students to use the Internet as a learning tool by providing them with a context that presented a real learning need and task authentic to their discipline. Indirectly, it aimed at increasing students' exposure to English language with materials provided on the Internet. Therefore, the first WebQuest task was introduced to the students and its usefulness was examined through the informal feedback collected from the teachers and students who experienced its implementation at FCMS. The results were interpreted as positive and consequently WebQuests were introduced in MLD courses in the other faculties and schools at EMU, and at upper levels of the IED preparatory program.

Preparation of the WebQuest Tasks

After deciding to use a WebQuest task as a part of the EFL courses due to the reasons pointed out above, first, search engines were visited to find examples of WebQuest tasks available on the Internet.

Then, from the huge numbers found, a few were chosen as appropriate to the FCMS. The EFL teachers teaching at FCMS analyzed these tasks and identified their weaknesses and strengths considering the needs of the students and the requirements of their field of study. Finally, instead of adapting the existing ones, it was decided to create one which was parallel to the course objectives and appropriate to the students' profile. Of course, there were elements of the examples that had been analyzed which provided inspiration and ideas. During this process all EFL teachers teaching at FCMS provided feedback about the wording of the instructions and did the proof reading. They also provided feedback about the quality of the tasks required from learners to complete. After this collaboration it was finally possible to start the web site design of the first WebQuest, which served as a model for the second one using the same approach applied to the first.

Initially, the WebQuest tasks were planned on paper which enabled all the EFL teachers to be fully involved in their conception and design. Then, the WebQuests were discussed in teaching team meetings for EFL teachers at FCMS and within a month they were ready to be published on the Internet. During this stage, a one-on-one refresher session was provided to the designer to revise the use of an HTML editor (FrontPage) in preparing the tasks incorporated into the WebQuest. This process was actually akin to a WebQuest in itself, in that it was an authentic task that required collaborative and cooperative learning strategies in problem solving. Like WebQuests, it was a great challenge to sort out the problems together, and eventually the first one was finalized. As in the other stages of the preparation of the WebQuest tasks, the FCMS colleagues worked collaboratively to provide feedback about the user friendliness of the site and troubleshooting links, etc. after publishing it on the Internet.

For the second WebQuest, it was decided to broaden the WebQuest experience for students by giving them the opportunity to be involved in the process of actually creating the WebQuest they would later be asked to participate in. In particular, they showed an interest in its preparation and contributed to its design in terms of colour, font and graphics.

Implementation of the WebQuest Tasks

Since the course syllabus was already quite full, it was decided not to occupy students for a long period of time. It was also pointed out that the task should allow flexibility and should not clash with other commitments that students had. So, it was decided to complete it in a month. Meanwhile, students were required to write an essay and also do a presentation while they were working on the WebQuests. The topic of the essay and the presentation required them to analyze a media product related to their departments, e.g., a newspaper article, a print media advertisement or a film. Although they were given three options related to their departments, they were free to choose any of these regardless of their departments. Although in the first WebQuest students were asked to prepare a print media advertisement, in the second WebQuest they were given the flexibility to prepare something relevant to their departments.

Where to carry out the WebQuest was one of the major questions that required careful organization. There were not enough computer laboratories with Internet connections for all students to make use of, and nearly all EFL courses were at the same periods which made it impossible to do the WebQuest tasks during class hours. However, since the main aim was not the final result of the tasks, but rather the process that the students were required to go through, this was not a significant problem. Therefore, it was decided to occupy the available laboratories at alternating periods for a week in order to introduce the WebQuest site, the guidelines and the tasks to all students with a hands-on session. As an alternative, in case of technological problems, it was also possible for teachers to introduce the guidelines in class using an overhead projector or a data projector. In the second semester courses, some teachers especially preferred this method as they found it more practical since students were already familiar the nature of the WebQuest tasks. Then it was decided to leave students free to work independently outside the class provided that they submitted their work either through the e-mail or by hand at announced dates for each step in the given WebQuest task. Moreover, it was suggested that students should be informed that they could get in touch with their teachers through e-mail when they encountered problems. It was also decided to give feedback to students' work in class or during office hours in order to better guide them for each step of the assigned WebQuests.

Implementation of the WebQuests in this Study

During the first implementation of the WebQuest tasks, all students, regardless the courses that they had taken at FCMS, were given a WebQuest task called "Preparing a Print Media Advertisement" (See Appendix 1). Then, this was followed by another WebQuest but which was only offered to students who were taking the second semester EFL courses. This WebQuest was called "The Real Truth about Tobacco" (See Appendix 2).

WebQuest 1: Preparing a Print Media Advertisement

- Students were required to prepare a print media advertisement after completing three task sheets.
- They were asked to form pairs in class and give their names to the teacher with their chosen role: either an advertising executive or a graphic designer.
- The first task was for them to read an article and answer the given questions. Although the aim was to help them in planning their project, they had to read the article in order to be able to familiarize themselves with the concepts required to answer the questions.
- Then, according to the responsibilities of the roles they had chosen, either as the advertising executive and the graphic designer, they had to individually fill in two task sheets.
- Finally in the third task given, they had to work together to prepare their own advertisement.
- After all students completed their projects, their work was displayed in the faculty corridors where they could receive informal feedback from their peers and teachers.
-

WebQuest 2: The Real Truth about Tobacco

- Students were required to create a memorable message highlighting the harmful effects of tobacco to a school boy who was suspected of smoking.
- They were asked to work in groups of three and picked a letter at random from A, B, and C to determine which tasks they should do and then gave their names and roles to the teacher.
- For the first task they had to conduct research on tobacco by visiting the site that they were assigned and, working individually, to answer the questions using the information given in the site.
- Then, for the second task, they were asked as a group to collect advertisements made for or against the use of tobacco and then analyze them individually with the guidance of the questions assigned to them.
- Finally, they were asked to work as a group to convey their message about tobacco use through a poster, or an article, or a song/music video/skit using a scenario/TV commercial.

Evaluation

As said before, the most important thing was the process. So students were asked to go through different stages, working individually and then collaborating with each other. The aim was to assess the process, not the product. Therefore, students were not only guided and given feedback at different stages but they also received a number grade assigned for different steps involved into the WebQuest task, which is contrary the assessment of authentic tasks as in the case of WebQuests. However, all the teaching colleagues at FCMS decided to structure the assessment in a summative way in order to create an instrument for motivation which was thought to be the most appropriate method considering the educational background of the students who were studying at FCMS: mostly from an exam-centered system where the teacher was the authority. It was thought that for the successful completion of the tasks it was necessary to keep the students on track using such a strategy.

For the first WebQuest the first task which was done in pairs was worth two points. The second and the third tasks were done individually and each was worth two points. To get full marks, both students had to complete their individual assignments; if one student did not then both received only two points out of four for this part which appeared as individual work but required them to be responsible for each other. The fourth task was worth three points and the remaining one point was given for punctuality.

The second WebQuest required students to work in groups of three and involved three tasks. For the first two tasks they had to work individually in their assigned tasks, but similar to the first WebQuest, they were encouraged to have group responsibility. These tasks were assigned three points each, but if one of the group members did not do the required task the other group members were penalized for this and they were not awarded any points. The third task was for three points and there was one point for punctuality.

On the internet site for each WebQuest ‘stars’ represented the number grades, in order to create the concept of ‘reaching the stars’ which was a more motivating concept than numerical values. In subsequent uses, some changes were made in the evaluation procedures as teachers did not want to punish the students when their partners did not fulfill their responsibilities. So, both for the first and the second WebQuest tasks, three points were given for each task and one point for punctuality.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The authors worked together to prepare the questionnaire used to get feedback on the WebQuest approach. It was first distributed at FCMS, and then administered at the other faculties who had also introduced WebQuests and wanted to evaluate their effectiveness through the same questionnaire.

For this paper only the results of the questionnaires (See Appendix 3 and 4) implemented at FCMS among English I (EFL 109 and EFL 119) and English II (EFL 110 and EFL 120) students and teachers will be reported.

The data was collected from 43 students English I students who were given Preparing a Print Media Advertisement (WQ1) and 34 English II students who were given The Real Truth about Tobacco (WQ 2). Excluding the researcher, 5 teachers from FCMS took part in the study.

The questionnaires given to the teachers and the students were parallel and students were given the opportunity to choose between Turkish and English versions of the questionnaire prepared for them. While the students expressed their personal experiences regarding the WebQuests, the teachers expressed their perceptions on students' experience to do with the WebQuests.

Relevance

Both the students and the teachers were content with the relevance of WQ1 in terms of its usefulness and relevance to FCMS and the EFL courses. However, in WQ2 students felt neutral while the teachers were mostly negative about its relevance. Teachers strongly disagreed that it was related to the EFL courses. In addition to the results obtained from the questionnaire, in the written comments section, teachers stated that WQ1 was more meaningful for students' needs whereas the materials used in WQ2 were not relevant.²

Instructions and timing

Students who did WQ1 partly agreed that they were effectively introduced the task, were well informed about its requirements, were confident on what to do, found a logical order and relevance among the steps included into the task and found the instructions useful. They also thought that the starting and the finishing dates of task were at an appropriate place in the syllabus, the given time was sufficient and the language used in the instructions appropriate to their proficiency level. Teachers for WQ1 were again more positive compared to the students. However, in WQ2 teachers were less positive and they were negative towards it concerning the instructions and timing. Unlike teachers, students were mostly neutral about the instructions and timing about WQ2 but they partly disagreed that the starting and the finishing dates were in the most appropriate place in the course syllabus. The written feedback obtained from the teachers concerning this issue was also negative as they stated that the tasks were integrated into the syllabus inefficiently. On the other hand, students raised another issue arguing that the time given for completing the assigned tasks was not sufficient.

Although the instructions and timing of the WebQuests were parallel in both, teachers thought that the instructions and timing were more effective in WQ1. The only difference between the instructions was that the first one was given in laboratories whereas WQ2 was mostly introduced in classrooms for practical reasons such as inadequate technical facilities and not being able to take students to the computer laboratories to introduce them the WQ2. For example, in the written feedback section some students expressed that there should be 'visual explanation' and 'examples' in order to make the tasks more understandable.

Task

In WQ1 students partly agreed that they accomplished the requirements of the WebQuest task, connected to the relevant sites in order to do the task with no difficulty, improved their research skills using the Internet, completed the task with success but they were neutral about its contribution to their language proficiency in English, attractiveness and entertaining aspects. They also preferred to stay neutral when they were asked if they wanted to do such tasks again. Similar to students, teachers were also positive about these issues in relation to WQ1. The students who were involved in doing WQ2 were mostly neutral and they partly disagreed about its contribution to their language proficiency in English, attractiveness and entertaining aspects. However the teachers were mostly negative about WQ2 unlike WQ1 and they strongly disagreed that it was an enjoyable task to do. However, some students expressed their interest in WebQuests defining them as 'enjoyable' and 'good for self-improvement'. These students who expressed positive thoughts about WebQuests also found the final task 'reasonable' compared to the other tasks. Despite these positive ideas there were some students who

2 Such a response was quite striking as the second WebQuest task offered a chance for students from different departments to create something relevant to their departmental study while the first WebQuest task was aimed at the majority of students who were studying in the Public Relations and Advertising department with a specific area on preparing a print media advertisement. Although 'banning smoking' was not covered either as a departmental or an EFL topic, the final task offered the students an opportunity to create something relevant to their field of study and accomplish the aims highlighted as the reasons for having WebQuest tasks in EFL courses.

thought that WebQuests were ‘a waste of time’ and ‘boring’. Teachers said that the students did not benefit from these tasks and felt demotivated. There were some teachers who argued that the prepared websites for the WebQuests were not interesting as a factor for students’ unwillingness to do the given tasks..

The main difficulty about WQ2 was that there were certain technical problems which did not exist while doing WQ1. One of these problems was that some of the internet resources chosen for the WebQuests needed a java-enabled browser. This wasn’t a problem in the first WebQuest but an unfortunate change in Microsoft’s marketing strategy in the updated version of Internet Explorer meant that the second WebQuest, which had also been prepared using web sites with interactive javascripts, ran into an unexpected problem. The updated versions of Microsoft’s Internet Explorer required that a Java plug-in had to be downloaded separately. Most of the users were not aware of this which caused failure in their attempts to open the site to do the tasks. Another problem was the lost e-mails. Some students were using Hotmail, some Yahoo and some their student accounts on the university server to send their messages. Due to the university firewalls and priority ranking for communications, messages from students using an external mail server were sometimes delayed or never delivered to the teachers. So some students had difficulty in convincing their teachers that they had in fact done the tasks on time and as required.

Evaluation and feedback

Concerning the evaluation and feedback in WQ1 students partly agreed that they were effectively guided by the teacher, the scoring criteria was appropriate and relevant to the objectives of the given task and scoring was fair. Teachers agreed with the students and they were slightly more positive about the guidance provided to the students though the completion of the task. In WQ2 both the students and the teachers were neutral about these issues concerning evaluation and feedback. In written comments section students suggested that WebQuest tasks ‘should not be graded’ and should be ‘held on voluntary basis’.

Collaborative learning

Students who did WQ1 stated that they were neutral about the task in terms of enabling them to work cooperatively with their classmates, its usefulness and learning from their peers while doing the given task. They partly agreed that they fulfilled their roles in the preparation of the given task. Similar to the students, teachers had nearly the same opinion about WQ1. In WQ2, for collaborative learning, teachers preferred to stay mostly neutral while students were mostly a bit more negative about this issue. Similarly, in the written comments section students expressed that working alone was better compared to working together with their peers and they argued that working alone should also be made possible.

This was an expected feedback since students were not fully aware of the importance of working collaboratively with their peers and they were confident in working with their peers. They mostly could not benefit from each other since they lacked both awareness and skills necessary for collaboration.

Student involvement

Students who did WQ1 preferred to stay neutral about contributing to the preparation of WebQuest tasks but they partly agreed that teachers and students should design the WebQuest tasks together. Teachers were slightly more positive in expressing their interest about contributing to the preparation of these tasks and collaborating with students during their design process. In WQ2, although teachers were more positive in these issues, students partly disagreed to contribute to the preparation of the WebQuest tasks and were neutral in working together with teachers to design such tasks.

Despite the difficulties faced during the implementation of WebQuests, teachers were willing to work on their improvement and design the second task together with the students. Especially in written comments, although there were a few students who suggested replacing WebQuests with something else in the course, teachers stated that in future it would be possible to prepare more relevant and beneficial WebQuest tasks. They also stated that both teachers and students needed time to get used to the idea of WebQuests and self study.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

WebQuests are undoubtedly applicable in an EFL context, but based on our experience and research, the implications for successful implementation suggest that:

- Teachers and students should be made aware of the underlying principles and methodology of WebQuests.
- Wherever possible, WebQuests should afford teachers and students maximum potential for input into their preparation, design and implementation.

- ❑ WebQuests should be incorporated into the course syllabus and seen as an integral component by both teachers and students.
- ❑ All parties involved in a WebQuest should receive adequate orientation.
- ❑ The WebQuests should be scheduled to minimize potential conflicts with deadlines for other major works of assessment.
- ❑ The tasks should be meaningful, challenging and enjoyable.
- ❑ The tasks should be interrelated with each other.
- ❑ Some tasks should be carried out during class period in order to effectively monitor that the overall aims and objectives of WebQuest has been understood.
- ❑ The WebQuest tasks and their evaluation should both be sympathetic to the concept of formative assessment of authentic tasks in which the end product is not the sole measure of success, but creativity and development through the process is also considered.
- ❑ Technological problems can not always be anticipated, so the guidelines and assessment should be flexible enough to cater for unforeseen complications.

REFERENCES

- Dodge, B. (1995). Some thoughts about WebQuests. Retrieved 21 May, 2004 from http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_webquests.html
- March, T (1998). Why WebQuests? An introduction. Retrieved 21 May, 2004 from <http://www.ozline.com/webquests/intro.html>
- March, T. (1997). A WebQuest exploring transformative thinking in WebQuests. Retrieved 21 May, 2004 from <http://www.ozline.com/webquests/intro.html>
- Starr, L. (2000). Meet Bernie Dodge—the Frank Lloyd Wright of learning environments. Retrieved 21 May, 2004 from http://www.education-world.com/a_tech/tech020.shtml

Appendix 1: Teacher Notes for WebQuest 1

PREPARING A PRINT MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT

Aim: familiarising students with the use of the Internet as a source of information
creating a situation for students to use English language
improving students' field knowledge

How: students will visit the suggested sites and examine them
↓
students will complete certain worksheets in relation to the visited sites
↓
students will use this information as a guide in the successful completion of their group project

When: will start in week ? and will be completed in week ?
(exact dates will be decided on later)

Where: will be started in the labs (lab hours will be assigned for each group)

Topic: creating a print media advertisement

Roles (Pair Work)

Advertising executive : writes the slogan and the body copy of the print advertisement (should work in close relation with the graphic designer)

Graphic designer : designs the print advertisement of the product (by focusing on the design features)

Each Pair : finalise the whole project

SOME POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED:

How will teachers monitor the process of the research on the Internet?

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Via e-mail: | students may direct questions to their teachers when they encounter difficulties |
| Hard copies of the worksheets: | students will be responsible for handing in the online task sheets to their teachers at regular intervals (dates will be specified by class teachers and the first task sheet will be introduced by class teachers) |
| Regular meetings: | giving feedback to students either in class or in office after the completion of the task sheets |
| Lab hours: | There will be a lab hour in order to introduce the project to the students which will be on Eagle site |

What will be the end product of this project?

a printed version of the prepared advertisement

How to evaluate the completed projects?

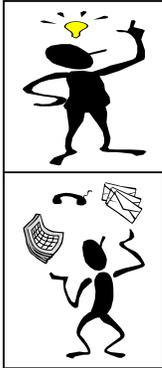
provide the rubric for the whole project

individual grades for each task sheet and then

collect the scores from different students who worked for the same partnership to find out their overall score by referring to the rubric

PROJECT: PREPARING A PRINT MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT

STEP 1: In this project you will work in pairs. Decide who you will work together and then read the responsibilities of each person.



ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE

You will write the slogan and the body copy of the print advertisement of a product that you will decide together with your partner. While doing this you should work in close relation with your partner (the graphic designer).

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

You will work on the design features of the print advertisement of a product that you will decide together with your partner. While doing this you should work in close relation with your partner (the advertising executive).

STEP 2: Decide who will be responsible for which role and start doing the related tasks. Start with Task 1!

TASK 1: BOTH FOR THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND THE ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE

In order to prepare a print media advertisement, you need to decide on certain things before you start. Work together with your partner in order to decide on these important issues.

Step 1: Visit the site: <http://adbusters.org/spoofads/printad/>

Step 2: Complete "TASK SHEET 1" according to the information you collected from this site together with your partner .

TASK SHEET 1

1) What is your communication objective (aim)?

2) Who is your target audience?

3) What is the concept (message) of your advertisement?

STEP 3: After deciding on the major elements of your print advertisement in pairs, now you can start working alone. The Advertising Executive should work on "Task 2" and the Graphic Designer should work on "Task 3".

TASK 2: FOR THE ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE

In order to write a good slogan and an effective body copy for your advertisement you need to collect information on this issue. Visit the following sites and fill in "TASK SHEET 2". Don't forget to discuss the findings with your partner and then show it to your teacher.

After collecting the required information, you can start writing the slogan and the body copy of your own advertisement.

| |
|--|
| <hr/> <hr/> <p>2. What kind of writing style is used in this advertisement?</p> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <hr/> <hr/> <p>3. What are the other design features used in this advertisement?</p> <hr/> <hr/> |

TASK 4: FOR THE FINAL PROJECT

You have already decided "what" to advertise, "for whom" and "why" while doing Task 1!!! Now, you can start thinking about the details of your print media advertisement. Work together with your partner and make use of the advertisements that you have analysed.

EVALUATION

REMINDER!!!!!!

YOU WILL GET A PAIR-WORK GRADE FOR THIS PROJECT.

YOU WILL NEED TO COMPLETE ALL FOUR TASKS.

IT IS NECESSARY FOR ALL PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS TO PUT A LOT OF EFFORT INTO THIS PROJECT.

RUBRIC IS AS FOLLOWS

- TASK 1: ONE STAR (PAIR-WORK) ★
- TASK 2: ONE STAR (INDIVIDUAL) ★
- TASK 3: ONE STAR (INDIVIDUAL) ★
- TASK 4: TWO SARS (PAIR-WORK) ★ ★

TOTAL: FIVE STARS (★ ★ ★ ★ ★) = 5 POINTS

- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ EXCELLENT WORK
- ★ ★ ★ ★ VERY GOOD JOB
- ★ ★ ★ GOOD JOB
- ★ ★ OKAY, but...??
- ★ ??

Appendix 2: Teacher Notes for WebQuest 2

THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT TOBACCO

Aim: familiarizing students with the use of the Internet as a source of information
creating a contextualized situation for students to use the English language
improving students' subject-matter knowledge

How: students will visit the suggested sites and examine them
students will complete certain worksheets in relation to the visited sites
students will use the collected information as a guide in the successful completion of their group project

When: Students will have one week to complete each task
The whole project will be completed in three weeks

Where: The project will be started in class (deadlines/procedures) and the tasks will be completed **outside** the class.

Introduction:

Ali is a secondary school student who is 15 years old.

His parents think that he smokes. Everybody around him, his parents and teachers, tried to explain the harms of tobacco but he still thinks that it isn't really so bad.

In fact, he thinks it's pretty cool. But he might listen to you. After all, you're a university student and you are young enough to understand his feelings as a friend.

*His parents believe that **only you** can help him. They've asked you to convince him to quit smoking.*

To do so, you must fight against young people using tobacco. So, create a memorable message for Ali. Do a good job - it could be a matter of life and death!!!

The Task

Ali, like most young teenagers, doesn't particularly like to read, so you must approach him in a more creative way.

He is, after all a member of the MTV generation. He'll listen to a rap song; he'll hang a poster in his room.

But to earn his respect, you must first demonstrate your knowledge of tobacco and your commitment to fight its use by young people.

So here's what you've got to do:

- Become an expert about tobacco use and issues surrounding its use.
- Create an ad or poster that visually conveys the message you want to get across.
- Demonstrate your commitment to fight tobacco use by writing a letter to a tobacco company and an editorial for the local paper.
- Get Ali's attention and give him a memorable message using a music video, skit, or TV commercial.

Responsibilities:

You are going to work in groups of three and you have to work together for each task by following the guidelines.

Task 1:

Step 1: Conduct research on tobacco by visiting the following sites.

Each student should visit a site.

(Student A) Site 1: How Tobacco Harms Your Body

(Student B) Site 2: The Harms of Tobacco

(Student C) Site 3: Smoking and the Work Environment

Step 2: Answer the following questions after reading the information given in the articles.

Step 3: Come together and decide which facts from the collected information can be used to convince Ali to stop smoking.

Think about the following questions:

1. What diseases are caused by smoking cigarettes? Smoking cigars? Chewing tobacco?
2. Why do people smoke?
3. Why is it difficult to stop smoking?
4. What are the facts about nicotine?

Task 2:

Step 1: Collect tobacco advertisements, posters, etc., from the Internet by using search engines e.g. Google, Yahoo, Altavista.

Step 2: Then write the name of the brand whose advertisements you want to analyse, e.g. “Marlboro advertisements”.

Step 3: Finally, click on the search button.
From the list given, visit some sites and choose two advertisements to compare and contrast according to the following criteria:

Student A: What graphic design techniques did they use to appeal to you?

Student B: What does the copy of the advertisement say? What information is given in the copy to appeal to you?

Student C: What does the image of these advertisements say? What is being implied through these advertisements?

Task 3:

Design an advertisement or poster to convey your message about tobacco use.

OR

Write an article for “Gudem” which is a magazine published in the faculty of Communications and Media Studies.

OR

Create a song and a music video for it.

Create a skit using a scenario related to youth using tobacco.

Create a TV commercial.

Feedback: After completing each task, students will receive feedback.

Evaluation: Task 1: accurate and relevant information (3 points, one for each site)
Task 2: analysis of the advertisements (3 points; one for each question)
Task 3: creative, appealing and professional presentation (3 points)
Punctuality (1 point)

Appendix 3: Summary of Questionnaire Results

| | SD 1 | D 2 | PD 3 | N 4 | PA 5 | A 6 | SA 7 |
|---|---------|--------|----------|----------|----------|--------|---------|
| 1. In general terms, I found the WebQuest task useful. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 2. The WebQuest task was related to my departmental needs. | | | T2 | S2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 3. The WebQuest task was related to the content of the EFL course. | T2 | | | S2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 4. I was effectively introduced to the WebQuest task before I started doing it. | | | T2 | S2 | S1 | | T1 |
| 5. I was well informed about the requirements of the WebQuest task before I started doing it. | | | T2 | S2 | S1 | | T1 |
| 6. I was confident in terms of what to do when I started doing the WebQuest task. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 | | T1 |
| 7. The steps of the WebQuest task had a logical order. | | | | S2 T2 | S1 | | T1 |
| 8. The steps of the WebQuest task were interrelated with each other. | | | | S2 T2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 9. The instructions given at different stages of the WebQuest task were useful in guiding me to complete the whole task successfully. | | | | T2 | S1 S2 | T1 | |
| 10. The starting and the finishing dates of the WebQuest task were in the most appropriate place in the course syllabus. | T2 | | S2 | T1 | S1 | | |
| 11. The time allocated for the completion of the WebQuest task was sufficient. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 12. The difficulty level of the language used in the instructions of the WebQuest task (and in related sites) was appropriate to my proficiency level of English. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 13. I was able to accomplish the requirements of the WebQuest task. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 14. I faced no difficulty in connecting to the relevant sites to do the WebQuest task. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 15. The WebQuest task contributed to my research skills using the Internet. | | T2 | | S2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 16. The WebQuest task contributed to my proficiency in English language. | | T2 | S2 | S1 | T1 | | |
| 17. I successfully completed the WebQuest task. | | | T2 | S2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 18. The WebQuest task was good enough to capture my attention and interest. | | | S2 T2 | S1 | T1 | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|----------------|----------|----------|--|
| 19. I enjoyed doing this WebQuest task and I want to do in future, too. | T2 | | S2 | S1 | T1 | | |
| 20. I was effectively guided by teacher feedback through the completion of the WebQuest task. | | | | S2 T2 | S1 | T1 | |
| 21. The scoring criteria were appropriate and relevant to the objectives of the Webquest task. | | | | S2 T2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 22. Scoring of the WebQuest task was fair. | | | | S2 T2 | S1 T1 | | |
| 23. The WebQuest task enabled me to work cooperatively with my classmates. | | | S2 | S1 | T1 T2 | | |
| 24. I found it useful to work together with my friends during the completion of this WebQuest task. | | | S2 | S1 T2 | T1 | | |
| 25. I learned a lot from my friends while doing this WebQuest task. | | | S2 | S1 T1 T2 | | | |
| 26. I fulfilled my role in the preparation of this WebQuest task. | | | T2 | S2 T1 | S1 | | |
| 27. In future, I want to contribute to the preparation of the WebQuest tasks. | | | S2 | S1 | T2 | T1 | |
| 28. I believe that students and teachers should design the WebQuest tasks together. | | | | S2 | S1 | T1 T2 | |

Appendix 4: Summary of written comments

| | FCMS Teachers | FCMS Students |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| appropriacy | Meaningful for Ss needs (WQ1) Material not relevant and websites not interesting (WQ2) | Working alone is better |
| timing | Inefficient allocation into the syllabus | The time given for completing the assigned tasks was not sufficient |
| likes | | Enjoyable and good for self-improvement The final task was reasonable |
| dislikes | Ss did not benefit Ss felt demotivated | Waste of time Boring |
| comments/suggestions | Must be integrated into the course syllabus (WQ1) In future we will be able to prepare more relevant and beneficial WQs (WQ1) Ts and Sts need time to get used to WQs and self study (WQ1) Need to be re-designed/re-scheduled WQ2 | Other things should be done instead of WQs Should not be graded and should be on voluntary basis There should be visual explanation and examples Working alone should be possible |