



Using Webquest in Learning Grammar: Students' Perceptions in Higher Education

Ira Irzawati

Sriwijaya University, South Sumatera, Indonesia

E-mail: irairzawati_87@yahoo.co.id

Nur Asiah

Sriwijaya University, South Sumatera, Indonesia

E-mail: asiah.nur13@yahoo.com

Doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.4n.1p.13

Received: 01/12/2012

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.4n.1p.13>

Accepted: 06/01/2013

Abstract

Webquest is an internet based learning tool that can be used by students in learning English. This study investigates students' perceptions about the use of Webquest to support learning grammar in Higher Education. Seventy-two of second semester students were involved as participants in this study. Questionnaire and interview were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The result of this study revealed that students had positive perceptions toward the use of Webquest in learning grammar. They believed that Webquest can be used as one of effective internet based learning tools in studying grammar.

Keywords: Webquest, Grammar, Higher Education, Students' Perceptions.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning foreign language through technology has become a new trend in foreign language education all over the world. As computer-assisted instruction and interactive media technologies addendum the traditional use of the chalk and the blackboard, technology is playing a greater role during class and home study. (Liu, 2009). A large number of recent researches revealed that technology yield positive outcomes for educational purposes especially dealing with increasing motivation, facilitating active learning, providing efficient resources, and giving better access to information (Kizil, 2011). Hence, teachers and students can make use technology tools as alternative media in teaching and learning English for those benefits that can be gained.

Webquest is one of internet based learning tools that can be used for mastering language. The use of it has been growing rapidly in recent years. Webquest can be considered as an instructional aid and a tool for facilitating language teaching and learning (Sen & Neufeld, 2006). In teaching and learning English, Webquest is used not only for supporting learning language skills such as: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also for studying language aspects such as: grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

As one of prominent language aspects that is included in TOEFL test, grammar is hard enough be learned. Learning grammar is quite challenging especially for students who do not have enough basic in grammar. Besides, most of students find grammar as a boring subject because it deals with rules, patterns, and drills (Yang, 1992). Thus, teacher should provide a suitable learning tool for students that enable them to learn grammar effectively and Webquest is a kind of learning tool that can be used by teachers to facilitate their students in learning grammar.

There are number of studies that have been conducted dealing with the use of Webquest as an effective instructional tool which can facilitate learning language skills (Shan, 2011; Tuan, 2011; Laborda, 2009; Chuo, 2007). However, only a few studies focused on discussing about using Webquest for supporting learning language aspects especially grammar. Therefore, the writer conducted a research entitled "Using Webquest in Learning Grammar: Students' Perceptions in Higher Education" which its purpose was to find out students' perceptions toward the use of Webquest for facilitating learning grammar in Higher Education.

2. Literature review

2.1 Webquest: An Effective Learning Tool

Webquest was introduced by Bernie Dodge and Tom March in 1995, it was designed based on constructivist philosophy, and it promoted cooperative learning and scaffolding of instruction. According to Dodge (1997), Webquest is an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from the web. In language learning, Webquest not only allows students to construct their knowledge of the language through exploring structured web resources on their own (Laborda, 2009), but also helps students become better learners by increasing

their autonomy and providing them a sense of fulfillment (Lou, 2010). Hence, it could be an alternative learning tool that can facilitate the learners in studying English.

According to Dodge (1998), a well-designed Webquest typically consists of six components, namely: introduction, task, process, resources, evaluation, and conclusion. The introduction serves to launch the topic by providing interesting background information and a blueprint for the whole quest. The task and process sections present a general description of the assigned task and the step-by-step procedure to be followed for completing the task. A set of information sources needed to complete the task is provided in the resources section. Information sources might include web documents, searchable databases on the net, and books and other documents physically available in the learner's setting. The evaluation component is usually in the form of a rubric that will be used to assess students' work, and the conclusion brings the quest to closure, reminds learners of what they have learned and encourages them to extend the experience into other domains.

There are two types of Webquest, namely: Short Term Webquest, and Long Term Webquest. Short Term Webquest focuses on learners' knowledge acquisition and integration that can be completed in one to three hours, whereas Long Term Webquest emphasizes learners' ability to extend and refine knowledge. Thus, it may take between one week and a month in a classroom setting (Dodge, 1997).

2.2 Grammar: A Prominent Aspect in Teaching and Learning Language

Grammar is defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences which is functioned as a rule to make the language output possible. As the basic rule of a certain language, grammar has prominent position in language learning and teaching (Xin, 2010). Thus, in teaching and learning language, the role of grammar cannot be neglected. It takes fundamental position that can help learners to improve and reach their language proficiency. In short, no grammar, therefore no language, is either superior or inferior to any other. (Fromkin & Rodman, 1988).

Grammar can be classified into two forms, namely; descriptive and prescriptive grammar. The descriptive grammar of a language represents the unconscious linguistic knowledge or capacity of its speakers. Such a grammar is a model of "mental grammar" every speaker of the language knows. It does not teach the rules of the language; it describes the rules that already known. Meanwhile, the prescriptive grammar of a language attempts to legislate what the grammar should be. It prescribes; it does not describe; except incidentally. Teaching grammars are written to help people learn a foreign language or a dialect of their own language (Fromkin & Rodman, 1988). Therefore, it is very helpful for effective language learning. In the other word, students will not be able to master a language well without having good grammar. A good mastery of grammar will make students learn a language easily.

2.3 Webquest and Learning Grammar: Incentive Agent

Learning grammar is not always easy for students. Most of students find it hard to understand grammar. Some of them said that grammar is not interesting, whereas others stated that grammar is complicated. The condition unconsciously decreases students' motivation in learning grammar. As a consequence, it could influence their understanding and achievement in grammar because they do not have enough motivation to improve their ability. It is suggested that, it will be meaningful and practical if the grammar rules are reflected rather in sentences or contexts than in the formula. Some possible pedagogical activities and materials are recommended to make tedious grammar learning and teaching more understandable and interesting (Xin, 2010).

Webquest is an alternative learning tool that can increase students' motivation in learning grammar. Webquest consists of motivating and authentic material tasks (Zheng, Perez, Williamson, & Flygare, 2007) cited in (Almasri, Alfadda, & Alshumaimeri, 2011). In addition, it is stimulating and useful; students remember lessons better via Webquest than through traditional ways of learning (Hassanien, 2006). In other words, Webquest is an incentive agent that can help students to increase their motivation and improve their understanding and achievement in learning language skills and components including grammar.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participant

This study used seventy-two of second semester students of a university in Palembang as participants. The participants consisted of forty-nine male and twenty-three female. Most of students never took English course and had no enough basic English. They were from non-English major. Half of them were students of Information System and the others were students of Technical Information.

3.2 Context

At the time of this research conducted, the students were taking English course for TOEFL preparation. This course was held for nine meetings. Three meetings for studying listening comprehension, three meetings for studying grammar, and three meetings for studying reading comprehension. Each meeting took 200 hundred minutes and started from 08.00am until 11.20am. Each meeting was divided into two sessions; both sessions took 90 minutes and the rest 20 minutes for break. In this study, the writer only focused on three meetings or six sessions for studying grammar.

3.3 Material

Material for learning grammar has been included by lecturer in Webquest. It covers some important items in grammar for TOEFL such as; word order, subject-verb agreement, and comparison. The Webquest can be accessed by students in zunal.com. Teacher gave link and asked students to follow instructions that need to be done in Webquest. For instance;

teacher asked students to open <http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=197151> for helping them to learn word order. Here is an example of Webquest used by students for learning word order. It has been modified into five main parts, namely: introduction, process, task, evaluation, and conclusion.

Word Order

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Process
- Task
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Teacher Page

- About Author(s)
- Evaluate WebQuest
- Reviews
- Statistics
- Export WebQuest

Introduction



Word order is the arrangement of words in a phrase, clause, or sentence.

In English, word order plays an important part in determining meanings expressed in other languages by inflections.

Word order can be in the phrase, clause, and sentence form.

The Public URL for this WebQuest:

Word Order

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Process
- Task
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Teacher Page

- About Author(s)
- Evaluate WebQuest
- Reviews
- Statistics
- Export WebQuest
- Share This WebQuest

Process



There are some basic rules in English word order that should be memorized, namely:

1. adjective + noun
2. adverb + adjective + noun
3. positive sentence -> subject + verb + object
4. negative sentence -> subject + auxiliary + not + verb + object
5. interrogative sentence -> auxiliary + subject + verb + object?

For further explanation and examples, you can check the following attached file and links.

Word Order

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Process
- Task
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Teacher Page

- About Author(s)
- Evaluate WebQuest
- Reviews
- Statistics
- Export WebQuest
- Share This WebQuest

Task



You have learned about word order in "process" stage.

Now it's time for you to do some tasks based on the guidelines in "process" stage.

There are four kinds of tasks that should be answered in this part.

The tasks are available in the following attached files.

The top screenshot shows the 'Evaluation' stage of a Webquest. It features a sidebar with navigation options: Welcome, Introduction, Process, Task, Evaluation, Conclusion, and Teacher Page. The main content area is titled 'Evaluation' and contains a table with the following data:

Task	Stage	Activities
1-11	Task	Read the passage
12-14	Task	Answer the questions
15-17	Task	Write a paragraph
18-20	Task	Write a paragraph
21-23	Task	Write a paragraph
24-26	Task	Write a paragraph
27-29	Task	Write a paragraph
30-32	Task	Write a paragraph

The bottom screenshot shows the 'Conclusion' stage. It features a sidebar with navigation options: Welcome, Introduction, Process, Task, Evaluation, Conclusion, and Teacher Page. The main content area is titled 'Conclusion' and contains a globe icon and the following text:

Congrats! You have finished all stages in this Webquest.
Remember word order is simple and easy.
Hope you enjoy doing all activities in this Webquest.

The Public CEL for this WebQuest:
<http://www.ozonwebquest.php?no=10752>

At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'DOWNLOAD' and 'PLAY NOW'.

3.4 Procedure

In this TOEFL preparation class, teaching and learning process were done through three important phases; pre-activities, whilst-activities, and post-activities. In pre-activities, the lecturer did brainstorming by asking some questions and related them to the previous lessons. Meanwhile, in whilst-activities, the lecturer gave the students some exercises related to the topic, and then discussed it together. Finally, in post-activities, the lecturer concluded the lessons and administered various kinds of exercises and quizzes.

In learning grammar through Webquest that lasted for six sessions, the students learned grammar and did exercises from the Webquest that were provided by the lecturer and researcher. Before starting the learning sessions, the lecturer introduced Webquest to the students by showing some Webquests to them which taken from zunal.com and explaining all of the components of Webquest. After the students know how to use Webquest well, the lecturer started the sessions. During the learning sessions, the students learned different grammar topic by using Webquest. The Webquests were created by the lecturer and researcher. Each topic was completed in one session. Each sessions was composed of three phases; pre-activities, whilst activities, and post-activities. In the pre-activities, the lecturer introduced the topic and task. It included the goal, procedure, time needed, and warm-up activities. Meanwhile, in the whilst-activities, the lecturer asked the students to work individually or collaboratively to complete the tasks. Here, the teacher's role was only as facilitator, organizer, and monitor and provided scaffolding for learning. The students took initiative and responsibility for their learning and asked for help when they needed it. After the task was completed, the students discussed it together with the lecturer. Finally, in the post-activities, the lecturer summarized the topic and led the students to review targeted knowledge or skills.

3.5 Data Collection

The data of this study were collected by administering questionnaire and interview to the students. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items. It used likert scale (SA= strongly agree, A= agree, N= neutral, D= Disagree, and SD= strongly disagree). Meanwhile, the interview comprised 10 questions. The questionnaire and interview were designed to find out the data about instruction and timing, task, evaluation, collaborative learning, relevance and student involvement. The categories would lead to the information about students' perceptions toward the use of Webquest in learning grammar. The questionnaire was adapted from some articles. Meanwhile, the interview questions were designed by the researcher. The questions were developed based on the research questions of this study.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to establish the whole pictures of the findings and give clear descriptions about the data. The data gained from this study were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis was represented by percentage of the data gained. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis was clarified by description based on data percentage.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Instruction and Timing

The result of the data analysis indicated that over forty percent of the students agreed that they were well-informed about Webquest's requirement. They found that Webquest had logical and relevant steps that enable them to do the task well. Besides, the instruction was useful to guide them in completing the task, and the time was sufficient for them to finish the task. However, dealing with effective introduction, forty five percent of the students preferred to stay neutral. It can be seen from the following table 1.

Table 1

No	Instruction and Timing	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Effective Introduction	5%	40%	45%	5%	5%
2.	Clear Information and Requirement	10%	60%	20%	5%	5%
3.	Logical Order	10%	50%	30%	5%	5%
4.	Relevant Step	10%	50%	20%	10%	10%
5.	Useful Instruction	10%	50%	30%	5%	5%
6.	Sufficient Timing	15%	40%	35%	5%	5%

4.2 Task

Meanwhile, in term of task, more than thirty five percent of the students agreed that the tasks were appropriate to their level, able to attract their attention, and able to increase their motivation. Therefore, Webquest could be an effective learning tool that support them in learning English especially grammar. But, in relation to improving understanding and achievement in learning grammar, fifty five percents of the students stayed neutral. It is shown in table 2.

Table 2

No	Task	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Appropriateness	15%	35%	25%	15%	5%
2.	Attractiveness	10%	50%	30%	5%	5%
3.	Increasing Motivation	5%	45%	25%	10%	15%
4.	Effective Learning Tool	10%	50%	25%	10%	5%
5.	Improving understanding and achievement	5%	20%	55%	15%	5%

4.3 Collaborative Learning

Dealing with collaborative learning, the result of the data analysis showed that more than thirty percent of the students agreed that Webquest enabled them to do work collaboratively. This collaboration was useful for them to share each other in learning. It is described in this table 3.

Table 3

No	Collaborative Learning	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Collaborative Working	15%	35%	15%	20%	15%
2.	Useful Cooperation	10%	30%	20%	20%	20%

4.4 Relevance and Students Involvement

The data analysis in conjunction with relevance and students involvement showed that fifty percent of the students agreed that the material included in the Webquest was relevant to the course. However, thirty five percent of the students preferred to stay neutral when they were asked about students' involvement in designing Webquest. It can be identified in the table 4 below.

Table 4

No	Relevance and Students Involvement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Relevant Material	10%	50%	30%	5%	5%
2.	Students Involvement	5%	25%	35%	20%	15%

4.5 Evaluation

At last, the data analysis about evaluation revealed that over forty percent of the students agreed that the criteria of scoring were suitable to the objective of the given task and the scoring was fair. It is shown in this table 5.

Table 5

No	Evaluation	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Suitable Criteria	20%	40%	20%	15%	5%
2.	Fair Scoring	15%	60%	15%	5%	5%

4.6 Interview Result

Researcher chose 20 students of 72 to be interviewed. The students were chosen randomly. The students were asked 10 questions that related to their perspective about using Webquest in learning grammar. Based on the interview, almost all of the students (90%) expressed their fondness for the Webquest when they were asked whether they liked Webquest or not. Some of them liked it because it was interesting and easy to be accessed. One of the students said:

I think that Webquest is more interesting than other web based programs, besides it is easy to access it. Studying grammar through Webquest is fun. Grammar is not so boring anymore. Webquest makes me enjoy studying grammar.

Many students commented on various resources provided in Webquest which for them were beneficial and important. As a student revealed:

In Webquest, I can find many kinds of useful and essential resources. Therefore, it was very helpful to increase my knowledge. I believe Webquest can be used as one of effective tool in learning English especially grammar.

5. Conclusion

This study showed that students of higher education had good perceptions toward the use of Webquest for supporting learning grammar. They believed that Webquest was very beneficial for them. It helped them to study and do their assignment. Besides, it was interesting too. Thus, it made them enjoy learning grammar and eager to study more. In short, Webquest is an effective tool that can facilitate the students in learning grammar.

References

- Abbit, J. & Ophus, J. (2008). What We Know about the Impacts of Web Quests: A Review of Research. *AACE Journal*. 16(4): 441-456.
- Almasri , Alfadda, & Alshumaimeri. (2011). A Preliminary Study of the Effect of Webquest on Writing Performance of Saudi Female EFL Elementary School Students. *Jalt Call Journal*. 7(3): 373-390.
- Almekhlati, A. M. & Nagaratnam, R. P. (2011). Difficulties in teaching and learning grammar in an EFL context. *International Journal of Instruction*. 4(2): 69-92.
- Baelo, S. (2010). Blended Learning and the European Higher Education Area: The Use of WebQuests. *Porta Linguarum*. 13: 43-53.
- Chuo, I. (2007). The Effects of the WebQuest Writing Instruction Program on EFL Learners' Writing Performance, Writing Apprehension, and Perception. *Teaching English as Second Language, English Journal*. 11(3): 1-15.
- Dodge, B. (1997). Some Thoughts about WebQuests. Retrieved from http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html.
- Dong, N. (1992). Second language learners' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies: A study of college students of English in Taiwan. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, the University of Texas.
- Fromkin, V. & Rodman, R. 1988. *An Introduction to Language*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc. USA. Fourth Edition.
- Guilloteaux, M. & Dörnyei, Z. (2008). Motivating Language Learners: A Classroom Oriented Investigation of the Effects of Motivational Strategies on Student Motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*. 42(1): 55-77.

- Hassanien, A. (2006). Using Webquest to Support Learning with Technology in Higher Education. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*. 5(1): 41-49.
- Hassanien, A. (2006). An Evaluation of the Webquest as a Computer-based Learning Tool. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*. 11(2): 235-250.
- Kao, C. C. The role of grammar teaching in college EFL. 255-268
- Kizil, A. (2011) EFL teachers attitudes towards information and communication technologies (ICT). *International Computer & Instructional Technologies Symposium*. 1-7
- Kung, S & Chuo, T. (2002). Students' Perceptions of English Learning through ESL/EFL Websites. *Journal of English Education*. 6 (1): 1-11.
- Laborda, J. G. (2009). Using WebQuests for Oral Communication in English as a Foreign Language for Tourism Studies. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(1): 258-270.
- Liu, I. (2009). A survey of EFL learner's attitudes toward information and communication technologies. *English Language Teaching*, 2 (4): 101-106.
- Lou, M. 2010. WebQuest [An Experimental Study on WebQuest in Promoting non-English Majors' Learner Autonomy]. *Journal of Heilongjiang College of Education*. 29(4): 148-150.
- March, T. (2003). The Learning Power of WebQuest. *Educational Leadership*. 61 (4): 42-47.
- Pazaver, A. & Wang, H. (2009). Asian students perceptions of grammar teaching in the ESL classroom. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*. 27-35.
- Prapinwong, M. & Puthikanon, N. (2008). An Evaluation of an Internet-Based Learning Model from EFL Perspectives. *Asian EFL Journal*. 1-20.
- Sen, A. & Neufeld, S. (2006). In Pursuit of Alternatives in ELT Methodology: Webquests. 5(1): 49-67.
- Shan, C. (2011). Using Webquest to Facilitate Task-based English Reading Instruction for Graduate Students. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics (Quarterly)*. 34(2): 34-43.
- Sox, A. (2009). WebQuests for English-Language Learners: Essential Elements for Design. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 53(1): 38-48.
- Tuan, L. T. (2011). Teaching reading through webquest. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. 2(3): 664-673.
- Xin, Z. (2010). Grammar learning and teaching: Time, tense and verb. *US – China Review*. 1-9.