

BENEFITS OF USING WEB-QUEST TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH LESSONS AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotation: In the article were benefits of using web-quest technology in English lessons as foreign language analyzed.

Key words: web-quest, benefit, teaching, English, foreign language.

A webquest is an activity that requires learners to use the Internet in order to complete a task. Webquests can extend over an entire course, several classes or be integrated into a single lesson.

According to M.Renau "In 1995, Dodge and March presented WebQuests to the educational community. WebQuests allowed educators to see how the Internet could be used in classrooms for inquiry-based teaching and learning. When working with WebQuests, learners take newly-acquired information and transform the information into authentic learning".

Dodge states "...that WebQuests allow learners to have a structure to their learning that allows them to "act more skilled than they really are" and allows the "bar of what students can produce to be raised". Scaffolding learning makes learners work with new approaches with the help needed to succeed in these attempts."

In our opinion, WebQuests can help students to acquire, and transform knowledge using constructivist learning and high-level, critical thinking in the classroom. A WebQuest is developed around an authentic topic relevant for students' everyday life. We can find some papers describing the successful implementation of WebQuests in a particular classroom.

In the last years, the inclusion of WQ in our classrooms have been very successful, so numberless web pages have been formed in order to help teachers to create new ones or to reuse WQ from other teachers.

It is obvious that the implementation of WQ for teaching and learning a second language might be more complex than learning any other subject in the first language of the student. It is for this reason that a difference in the structure of WQ must be applied to make them a useful tool also in the area of language teaching in a L2 context.

A WebQuest for teaching and learning a second language is an inquiry oriented activity placed in a relevant thematic context, in which the development of the task implies using web resources and developing high order thinking processes in a collaborative environment. At the same time, it provides the students the opportunity

to learn and put into practice some linguistic skills, supported by a set of linguistic and procedural scaffolding.

Employing authentic web pages in a second language classroom can be motivating and not unduly daunting to learners since as Kienbaum, Russel and Welty (1986 cited in Chappelle) found, from an attitude survey, elementary and advanced level foreign language learners express a high degree of interest in authentic, current event, materials. Furthermore, as Guariento (2000) account makes plain, students are more motivated when studying with lessons based on the latest news and current events, than when using the relatively dated materials of coursebooks.

The concept of the webquest, as an effective instructional/learning strategy, also draws its strength from several decades of cognitive science research. In particular, Caine argued in favor of the natural acquisition of knowledge saying that knowledge is what results when „information felt“ meaning and „deep meaning“ come together. Drawing from this theory, we can claim that a further advantage for the implementation of Web quests, lies in their structure. A Web quest’s structure, models the cognitive and physical process the learner must go through to perceive and produce the new language. Thus, it is clear that Web quests, by modeling an implicit process through which new language and linguistic rules can be acquired, can assist learners to naturally internalize and automatically reproduce the process of learning.

Another key issue that Web quests address, is learners’ mindful engagement with instructional materials. While engaged in the Web quest students are active contributors, to their language learning, than passive recipients of knowledge, since they are cognitively involved in seeking answers, making generalizations and testing hypotheses that they have generated. In this way , knowledge is constructed by the learner in the sense that he has to relate new elements of knowledge to already existing cognitive structures.

Having discussed the benefits of web quests and authentic web pages in language learning, we will, in this part of the paper, suggest a course that uses the internet, and specifically Web quests, as a delivery medium, and on line newspapers, to facilitate and promote in depth, active learning. Newspaper articles have long been a staple item, in both reading and conversation classes because they are generally short, predictable in style, timely in content, and easy to find and use. One can hardly deny the usefulness of reading English newspapers in the process of learning. The only, and the most crucial, problem with them is the price. Therefore, electronic newspapers are a great chance for educators and learners, since they are easily accessible and virtually free. The issue of the use of on line newspapers has been taken up by many researches.

A possible explanation of the efficacy and positive attitudes towards web-based language instruction could be attributed to the provision of opportunities for students to read and write a variety of authentic text types and on various topics. Yet, future research should be conducted involving representative samples of different EFL populations and grade levels in order to determine to what extent the findings of the present study are generalizable as well as determine the effect of context-specific factors such as gender, linguistic composition, and levels of first and foreign language proficiency on the interface of technology and language achievement and dispositions.

Conclusion

It is likely in the future, that computer technology will remain a key component of almost everything we do. As such, language teachers should keep themselves fully abreast of how computer technology can benefit language teaching and educational outcomes, more generally.

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