

# Chapter 11

## An Experiential Study on WebQuest and Higher Order Thinking Skills in an EFL Writing Class

**Chia Pei Wu**

*I-Shou University, Taiwan*

### ABSTRACT

*This study was conducted with 60 students in an EFL writing course for one semester. WebQuest authoring was utilized for students to improve their English reading and writing skills during the process. This study discussed the use of internet technology to facilitate classroom activities and investigated their implementation of higher-order thinking skills in their reflections. Research data was collected from students' reflective journal, in-depth interview, and the final presentation of student-created WebQuests. Findings indicated that with this experimental design, WebQuests facilitated and mediated classroom discussion along with cooperative learning. WebQuests authoring enhanced students' writing skills by reading materials in English on the internet. Higher-order thinking skills were also represented in the student's WebQuest creativity.*

### INTRODUCTION

WebQuest, an ever-lasting emerging educational technology since 1996, has been reinventing itself from time to time. In the study, WebQuest is utilized as a model as well as a technology that guides the usage of other emerging Internet technologies to facilitate English as a foreign language (EFL) students' learning. While information is overwhelming already on the Internet, classroom instruction and learning become a tremendous challenge for EFL teachers. English learning, therefore, is mediated by Internet technologies at large. With WebQuests, students may learn to find useful information on the Web, and they have to read extensively, evaluate the texts, select related information, and synthesize the content to

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generate the meaning (Crawford & Brown, 2002). WebQuests have six components, commonly referred to as building blocks (Dodge, 2004). The six building blocks include:

1. **Introduction:** In the WebQuest teaching strategy, the introduction aims to incite the students' motivation and interest. For example, by sharing some pictures of theme park amusement facilities in preparation to create a theme park adventure tour, an atmosphere that challenges the physical limits of the students will help them to prepare to accept and take charge of the task that follows.
2. **Task:** The task is the core part of WebQuest in which the students aim to achieve the outcome by the end of the course. Students incorporate the exercises for listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into the design of WebQuest activities. Dodge (2002) pointed out that the common task includes the following classifications: Retelling tasks, design tasks, mystery tasks, journalistic tasks, design tasks, creative product tasks, consensus-building tasks, persuasion tasks, self-knowledge tasks, and analytical tasks. Teachers can also create new and different tasks, through which they can help to conduct high-level thinking activities, including analysis, integration, appraisal, creation, and problem solving (Huang, 2007).
3. **Process:** In this part, teachers should accurately describe the steps and procedures to complete the task and guide students to complete the task step by step (Young & Wilson, 2002). The workflow is divided into two main stages. In the first stage, students are put into groups and assigned roles within the group to complete individual tasks. While in the second stage, each group of students integrates their individual work into the final product.
4. **Information Sources:** WebQuest learning resources are high-quality information screened by the teachers. WebQuest aims to avoid students wasting much time and effort in collecting inappropriate information. In addition to Internet resources, data sources can also be sought from non-Internet information, such as newspapers and magazines, professional reports, textbooks, digital discs, interview reports, etc.
5. **Evaluation:** Unlike the traditional approach that evaluates student performance via percentage quantification, the WebQuest evaluation approach adopts an evaluation rubric. It is a qualitative approach to evaluate the learning outcome of students as well as a criterion-referenced scoring method (Chao, 2004). The evaluation can be conducted by teachers, the students themselves, or their peers.
6. **Conclusion:** The conclusion aims to have students and teachers summarize the learning content and the learning experience. Teachers can encourage students to reflect on the entire WebQuest learning process, applying all knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking learned on the problems of other disciplines (Piercy, 2004).

Traditional English teaching conducted in a classroom is always limited in time and space. For instance, one may argue that the old theme of textbooks cannot convey the trend of the current era, and students cannot practice after class and tackle other problems. If we make use of the far-reaching advantages of the Internet to help students look for information on good quality English language learning websites, this not only will increase their interest in learning English, but it will also help students to learn how to use English and select relevant information for the vast Internet world. Therefore, if teachers want to use the Internet to assist their English teaching, they must assume the role of a leader, design the teaching activities, and even produce the Internet teaching materials and create a suitable teaching environment for the students (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018; Laborda, 2009; Liu, 2004). On the other hand, teachers must

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