

A webquest as a tool To promote learner autonomy In foreign language learning

Author:

Nelly Estella Pardo Espejo;

Holds a M.A. degree in English teaching as a foreign language

Universidad de Jaén España

Teacher at Degree Basic Education

Distance Studies Faculty FESAD

UPTC

Resumen

Este artículo describe la necesidad del diseño y la implementación de una WebQuest basada en la teoría del aprendizaje del constructivismo y en el aprendizaje autónomo, empleada como herramienta para la enseñanza del inglés en los estudiantes del Programa en Educación Básica de la Facultad de Estudios a Distancia FESAD de la Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia. El presente estudio se basó en una combinación de enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos. El análisis se desarrolló con base en la aplicación de instrumentos como la reflexión del profesor sobre sus clases, el análisis de las guías de auto aprendizaje, un cuestionario y una encuesta para estudiantes, y una lista de chequeo para los docentes. Finalmente, los resultados demostraron que los estudiantes disfrutaron del uso de las tecnologías, asimismo se concluyó que la Webquest fue una herramienta pedagógica con la cual los estudiantes pudieron construir su propio conocimiento y asumir la responsabilidad de su propio aprendizaje.

Palabras Clave: Nuevas Tecnologías, WebQuest, Autonomía del Estudiante.

Abstract

This article describes the need for design and implementation of a WebQuest based on the constructivism theory and autonomous learning, employed as a tool for the teaching of English in the students of the Basic Education Program at the Distance Studies Faculty FESAD of the "Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia. This study was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The analysis was developed on the application of instruments such as teacher's reflection about her classes, analysis of self-learning workshops, questionnaire and survey for students and checklist for teachers. Finally, the results showed that students enjoyed using technology; in addition, it showed that WebQuest was a pedagogical tool with which students could construct their own learning, thus students can take responsibility for their own learning developing autonomy and skills in learning how to learn.

Key Words: New technologies, WebQuest, Learner autonomy

Introduction

Today, education is being influenced by technology, which has become an important tool in teaching and learning processes. We know that to our students, these media can become as familiar as their own books. But unfortunately, many teachers are not as familiar with new technologies as their own students usually are.

For that reason, working with new technologies in the English as a foreign language classroom is a necessity that requires teachers to stay up-to-date both on the technical aspects and on the adaptation of pedagogical approaches to the world of Internet. On the other hand, because the new possibilities offered by technology are enriching and illuminating not only for the teaching and learning processes but also for promoting curriculum goals such as learner autonomy in which s/he can become the center of the learning process.

Taking into account the consideration stated, the use of new technologies has become a challenge for modern language teachers and students. Currently, new modern language teaching trends are given more responsibility for their participants own learning progress, advancements, while the teacher serves as a guide and resour-

ce expert who circulates among students, working individually or in small groups in a technology-assisted lesson.

One of the computer tools for teaching English as a foreign language is the WebQuest; a technique that was created by Bernie Dodge, a professor of Educational Technology at the University of San Diego. This tool can be used effectively to integrate ICT/develop digital competence in a classroom under a using the Internet in a constructivist approach in order to boost autonomous learning.

Therefore, as part of the research a WebQuest called "Boyacá is to enjoy it" has been designed in order to help students develop autonomy in foreign language acquisition. This tool was focused on students' work giving them the opportunity to become active participants and agents of their own learning progress, building their own knowledge through the mediation of the teacher.

Based on the most relevant aspects of the project, I will review some of that are going to justify the project development. Consequently, I will start this section with the construct related to technology in language learning.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Tecnology in Language Learning

The use of technology in teaching and learning foreign languages has been increasingly relevant over the past few years. We know that technology is becoming important in both personal and professional lives and our learners are using technology more and more. For that reason, technology in foreign language learning is not new. Also, it has played an important role in contributing to students' learning development. What is more, it also offers learners a rich and memorable learning environment with the possibility of developing and practicing language skills independently.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) are reaching into the pedagogical field of English as a foreign language. For some teachers and students its powerful presence is regarded as an opportunity for computer based authentic interaction in the target language. Therefore, many scholars Baker, Bates, Brandl, Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra, Kitade, Meskill, Mossop, & Bates, Sandholtz et al. have discussed and studied the potential of technology in language learning.

In this sense, Jonassen, Howland, Moore, & Marra¹, express the opinion that when technologies are used and integrated appropriately, these can provide a constructive

learning environment for learners to build knowledge in meaningful ways. In addition, McLaughlin and Oliver cited in Quesada² explain that ICT is one way to support Vygotsky's social interactions, when used appropriately, teachers can provide an environment in which learning is authentic and activities are interesting to students.

In the same way, Kitade cited in Quesada³ emphasizes that the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) can provide a collaborative learning environment, facilitate comprehensible and contextualized interaction, and promote learners' self-correction.

On the other hand, Meskill, Mossop, & Bates⁴ have reported that some specific features of computer technology can support both student learning and teacher instruction. Similarly, some researchers have found that the features of task-based multimedia simulation can support student understanding, promote student autonomy, and provide student opportunities for problem-solving. Other researchers such as Baker; Meskill, Mossop, & Bates⁵, have reported that Internet can develop learners' critical thinking ability and provide a rich environment for searching for information; constructing knowledge cooperatively; and interacting with each other actively.

¹ JONASSEN, D. H, MOORE, J., & MARRA R. M. 2003. Learning to solve problems with technology: A constructivism perspective. N.Y : Pearson, 2003.

² Web Based Learning (WBL): A challenge for foreign language teachers. QUESADA, Allen. 2005. [ed.] Redalyc. 002, Costa Rica : Universidad d Costa Rica, Julio- Diciembre de 2005, Revista Electrónica:Actividades Investigativas en Educación, Vol. 5, págs. 1-25.

³ QUESADA, ibidem, p. 1-25

⁴ MESKILL, Carla, MOSSOP, Jonathan & BATES, Richard. 1999. Electronic Text and English as a second lsnge enviroment. NY : National Research Center on English Learning, 1999. ED436996.

Therefore, the use of technology can provide students with an effective learning environment; a wide range of opportunities for authentic interaction in the target language; an environment in which learning is authentic and activities are interesting to students. Similarly, technology can generate opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning.

Integrating technology into foreign language teaching requires a change in educational paradigms from a behavioral to a constructivist learning approach. Language is a living phenomenon, so the best way to learn a language is through interactive and authentic environments.

As a consequence, nowadays, teachers must understand that their roles have to change and that the physical space of the classroom must also change to accommodate different kinds of interaction: small group, student to student, and student in-

teraction with the computer. We have to remember that "electronic communication can help foster a new teacher-student relationship in which the students become more autonomous and the teacher becomes more a facilitator"⁶.

Under this paradigm, teachers are beginning to integrate technology into the teaching of language and one example of this tool is the use of web-based learning, which is becoming an even more powerful interactive source that increases learners' knowledge and that guarantees quantity and quality of language input and output. For this reason, teachers are beginning to use web pages, both original and adapted, to serve as the students' primary-source materials, especially in content-based language courses.

The following section focuses on the concept of WebQuests then on its structure and finally on the advantages it can offer to teaching and learning a foreign language.

1.2 WebQuest

1.2.1 Definition

This technique was developed by Bernie Dodge and Tom March in early 1995. Bernie Dodge, a professor of Educational Technology at San Diego State University, was one of the first academics to attempt to define and structure this kind of learning activity.

Dodge first defined "a webquest as an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with

comes from resources on the Internet"⁷. But some years later, this definition was refined by the same author:

"....An inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the web. Webquests are designed to use learners' time well, to focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support learners' thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation"⁸.

⁶ WARSCHAUER, M. 1995. [En línea] 1995. [Citado el: 09 de 04 de 2009.] <http://www.gse.uci.edu/markw/call.html>.

⁷ DODGE, Bernie. Some thoughts about WebQuest. San Diego : State University, 1995. p.1

⁸ Five rules for writing a great WebQuest. DODGE, Bernie. 2005. 8, s.l. : Learning & Leading, 2005, ISTE, Vol. 28.

There are two more definitions by Benz and March which will add more details about what a WebQuest consists of. Benz describes a WebQuest as follows: "A WebQuest is a constructivist approach to learning (...).

March defines a webquest as

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.¹⁰

To summarize, we could say that a WebQuest for teaching and learning in a second language is a constructive learning activity in which internet resources are used in order to develop thinking skills to solve a real problem which encourages

Students not only collate and organize information they've found on the web, they orient their activities towards a specific goal they've been given, often associated with one or more roles modeled on adult professions"⁹

students' participation in an autonomous and collaborative way. At the same time it provides students with the opportunity to learn and put into practice linguistic skills supported by a set of linguistic and procedural activities.

1.2.2 Structure of the WebQuest

Dodge¹¹ suggests that an efficient, WebQuest must have the following structure: the introduction, the task, the process (resources, scaffolding), the evaluation (rubric), the conclusion and the teacher's page.

1.2.2.1 Introduction: This stage is generally used to introduce the theme of the webquest. Its aim is to motivate the students about the topic in the language learning context. It often introduces key vocabulary and concepts which learners will need to understand in order to complete the tasks involved.

1.2.2.2 Task: This stage is the most important aspect of a WebQuest because it explains what the students are supposed to do as they work their way through the webquest and it must imply some kind of high order thinking, not only simple search and copy and paste information.

⁹ BENZ, P. [En línea] [Citado el 04 de 06 de 2009.] <http://www.ardecol.acgrenoble.fr/english/tice/enwebquest2.htm>.

¹⁰ MARCH, Tom. [En línea] [Citado el 09 de 04 de 2009.] <http://www.ozline.com/webquestintro.html>.

¹¹ DODGE, op.cit.,

As a consequence, Dodge¹² states that the most important part in a webquest is the task issue-on-hand because it represents the final target in which the entire process culminates. "The task focuses learners on what they are going to do - specifically, the culminating performance or product that drives all of the learning activities"¹³. Therefore, Dodge¹⁴ proposed taxonomy of tasks where he describes twelve models that could help in the creation of a WebQuest. These tasks include retelling, compilation, mystery, journalist, designer, creative product, consensus building, persuasion, self-knowledge, analysis, judgment, and science.

1.2.2.3 Process: This stage aims at providing learners with the adequate guidance on how to carry out, their task; in addition it usually provides possibilities how to divide responsibilities, how to find and organize

information using predominantly internet-based resources, usually presented in clickable form within the task.

1.2.2.4 Evaluation In this stage, the students have the opportunity to self-evaluate, compare and contrast what they have produced with other learners and giving feedback on what they feel they have learnt.

1.2.2.5 Conclusion: This stage summarizes knowledge students have learned from the WebQuest and the benefits of the course and the results they have obtained; in other words, what the students know and how they were able to use in their local context.

1.2.2.6 Teacher's page: This is the information about the teacher who has designed the webquest and about the WebQuest itself.

1.2.3 Advantages of WebQuest

What are the advantages of the WebQuest? Barba stated "the WebQuest has become one of the most effective methodologies for incorporating the internet as an educational tool for all levels and across all subjects"¹⁵. But why is it effective? Dodge, And Tom

March, give the following reasons:

March,¹⁶ who is credited as being a major contributor to the development and refinement of webquest in the early stages, has summarized three main sections:

1. A WebQuest promotes student motivation and authenticity, because this tool provides students with an interesting task, real resources of the Internet to work like newspapers, magazines, scientific articles, virtual museums, general encyclopedias, and a working guidance in order for them to be able to learn more effectively and enjoyably.
2. A WebQuest requires students to think at higher levels because students' tasks are not designed to merely gather information. On the contrary, the aim of the task is that students can manipulate it, can apply, synthesize, analyze and evaluate; in other words they can transform it, compare, develop a hypothesis and find solutions in order to solve problems or to design projects.

¹² —. 2002. [En línea] 2002. [Citado el 09 de 04 de 2009.] <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html>.

¹³ —. 1998. [En línea] 1998. [Citado el 09 de 04 de 2009.] <http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/buildingblocks/p-index.htm>.

¹⁴ —. [En línea] [Citado el 2009 de 09 de 04.] <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html>

¹⁵ La Investigación en Internet con las WebQuest. BARBA, Carmen. 2002. 17 de marzo de 2002, Comunicación y Pedagogía, págs. 62-66.

¹⁶ —. 1998. [En línea] 1998. [Citado el: 09 de 04 de 2009.] <http://www.ozline.com/webquestintro.html>.

3. A WebQuest encourages cooperative learning among students because they must have their own role within their small group of study to complete the task. In this sense, March notes that a webquest is beneficial to English language learners because they provide a cooperative learning environment in which communication and problem solving are simulated.

According to Dodge¹⁷ the improvements triggered by the use of webquest in the classroom are:

It offers innovation in teaching through the effective use of ICTs, especially the resources available on the Web.

It promotes abilities to generate resources for teaching according to the needs of students

It encourages a less competitive environment in order to promote interactive learning among peers, and sharing common goals and objectives

It promotes the development of cognitive skills to achieve autonomous, independent knowledge acquisition and learning to learn.

It promotes an active processing of information, making the student select, interpret and transform it into meaningful products according to the goal or problem proposed by the teacher.

It encourages collaboration and exchange of experiences because the WQs are built to be "uploaded" to the web, turning the results into a reusable, collaborative exchange and free tool.

1.3 Learner Autonomy

Sanz and Villanueva¹⁸ report that during the last twenty years learner autonomy of the learner has become a key-concept in the domain of education in general and in language learning in particular. Similarly, today the orientations of the European Council for teaching and learning foreign languages emphasize the importance of developing the capacity to guide learning autonomously. In this field, there are many researchers and scholars investigating: Benson, Cotterall, Dickinson, Gremmo and Riley, Holec, Little, Littlewood, Ushioda, have conducted research into autonomy in language learning.

Some of the most well-known definitions in the present literature are:

"Autonomy is an adaptive ability, allowing learners to develop supportive structure within themselves rather than to have them erected around them"¹⁹

"Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning"

"Autonomy is a capacity – or detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action"²¹

¹⁷ —.1995. [En línea] 1995. [Citado el: 09 de 04 de 2009.] http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_webquests.html.

¹⁸ Le projet SMALL et les enjeux de l'hypertexte pour l'autoformation. SANZ, María Luisa y VILLANUEVA, Mercedes. 2004. 2004, in *Le Français Dans le Monde*, P. 66

¹⁹ Promoting learner autonomy: Criteria for the selection of appropriate methods. ESCH, E. 1996. *HongKong : Hong kong University*, 1996, in R. Pemberton, et al, , págs. 35-48

²⁰ HOLEC, H. 1981. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford : Pergamon Press, 1981.

²¹ LITTLE, David. 2007. *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin : Authentik, 2007.

"Autonomy is a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his/her learning and the implementation of those decisions"²²

"Autonomy is a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes"

"Autonomy is recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems"²⁴

However, the most often quoted definition is that of Holec, who defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning"²⁵; he elaborates on this basic definition as follows: determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition (rhythm, time, place, etc.) and evaluating what has been acquired. Along similar lines, Little argues that "Essentially, autonomy is a capacity--for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts."²⁶

Therefore, the learners require a change of attitude if they are not used to having control of their own advancements. On the other hand, it requires that they take responsibility for their own learning and become active participants. Besides, autonomy also means working in partnership with tutors and other students. Therefore, autonomous learners

decide what to learn, when and how to learn it by assuming degree level of responsibility for their learning. Gardner²⁷ notes that this process of personal responsibility in monitoring their own progress entails the use of self-assessment as one of the instruments to determine their level of knowledge and skills. It is seen as one of the pillars of learner autonomy because it helps learners to focus on their own development.

Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira²⁸ operationalize learner autonomy as consisting of three major competences:

- Learning competence
- Competence to self-motivate
- Competence to think critically

This division highlights the multidimensionality of the notion of learner autonomy. In addition it can be used as the basis for building conceptual tools that teachers can use to analyze critically their own practice, enabling them to expand it in the direction they find most suitable to their students' learning Jiménez Raya²⁹.

1.3.1 Learning competence: it can be defined as competence to regulate and control mental activity through the application of metacognitive knowledge and the orchestrated use of learning strategies. In this sense, a self-regulated learner typically sets personal goals, uses learning strategies, monitors progress, and adapts his/her approach to accomplish learning goals alone or in cooperation with others. This involves

²² DICKINSON, L. 1987. *Self-instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1987.

²³ DAM, L. 1995. *Learner Autonomy 3: Theory for Classroom Practice*. Dublin : Authentik, 1995.

²⁴ BENSON, P. 2001. *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. London: Longman, 2001

²⁵ —. 1981. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981.

²⁶ —. 1991. *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik, 1991.

²⁷ GARDNER, D. 1999. *Establishing self-access: from theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1999.

²⁸ *Pedagogy for autonomy in language education in Europe – Towards a framework for learner and teacher development*. JIMÉNEZ RAYA, Manuel, LAMB, T & VIERA, F. 2007. Dublin: Authentik, 2007.

²⁹ *Teacher education for learner autonomy: an analysis of the EuroPAL contribution to a knowledge base*. JIMÉNEZ RAYA, Manuel. 2009. 2009, *Innovation in language learning and teaching*, Vols. 3,3, págs. 221-238.

a. Metacognitive knowledge and beliefs about learning

Metacognitive knowledge refers to learner's awareness of their own knowledge and their ability to understand, control or manipulate their own cognitive processes. (The others are being domain knowledge, i.e. which is specific to the subject of linguistic theory, and social knowledge, concerning the social

distance between themselves and the target culture and, as such, related to social psychological theories of motivation). It can be used by the learner to control cognitive processes more effectively. It is said to be a stable body of knowledge, though, it may change over time.

b. Learning strategies

Metacognitive/self-regulatory strategies: These help students regulate their cognitive activity by engaging in active planning, checking, testing, monitoring, revising, selecting strategies, analyzing the effectiveness of learning strategies, and thinking about their performance.

Cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are used for manipulating mentally or physically information to be learnt in ways that enhance learning. These strategies contribute to deep processing of learning material and to the establishment of meaningful mental linkages. In this category we find strategies such as elaboration, translation, inference,

induction, deduction, grouping vocabulary items, creation of mental images to facilitate retention of information, and transfer.

Socio-affective strategies. These represent a broad category that involves either interaction with another person or control over emotion and affect; they are used for self-motivation and encouragement, to reduce anxiety, to promote interaction opportunities and co-operation with others. Strategies under this category include co-operation, self-talk, questioning for clarification, and self-reinforcement. It is relevant to highlight that learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication with others.

c. Attitudinal competence

This refers to the ability to generate positive attitudes towards the assumption of responsibilities in learning. Attitudes are intensive beliefs that predispose one to act and feel in certain ways. Beliefs and attitudes related to language, language learning, and language

teaching play a powerful role in affective responses to language learning. Research on the good language learner and on the role of attitudes in language acquisition has identified the following attitudes as particularly relevant in the promotion of autonomy:

- active attitude towards learning; seek out learning opportunities;
- initiative in language learning activities, tasks, and language use;
- willingness to take on responsibility;
- willingness to take risks;
- openness to cooperation;
- intellectual curiosity;
- tolerance of ambiguity;
- Confidence in one's ability to learn.

1.3.2 Competence to self-motivation

It refers to a student's motivation to learn, our focus is on the student's desire to participate and be successful in the learning process. Motivation is an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize student behavior and give it direction.

The authors argued that, in order to measure learner effectiveness, we need to take into consideration the learner's beliefs, per-

1.4 Competence to think critically

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/ or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. Those who become critical thinkers acquire such intellectual resources as background knowledge, operational knowledge of appropriate standards, knowledge of key concepts, possession of effective heuristics, and of certain vital habits of mind. Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira³⁰

The authors noted that reflection is linked to elements that are fundamental to meaningful learning and cognitive development: the development of metacognition, the ability to self-evaluate and higher-level thinking skills (problem-solving, decision-making...), the ability to ensure that learning needs are met within a context of negotiation and compromise.

Pedagogy for autonomy requires a reconceptualization of the teaching-learning pro-

ceptions, interpretations, and expectations that enable him/her to become involved, independent, and confident in his/her own learning. Even though the internal and external sources of motivation are complex and thus difficult to capture, there seem to be some factors of particular relevance for learner autonomy in a school context: attributions, motivational beliefs, intrinsic motivation, and motivational self-regulation, or self-motivation.

cess. When teachers are encouraged to foster learner autonomy in their everyday teaching they are in addition being called on to be different teachers. In other words, they are asked to have different understandings of their role as modern language teachers, to create a different relationship with their students, to conceptualise their language teaching knowledge differently, to alter their understanding of who they are in modern language teaching

Therefore, the teacher's role in language learning is different from traditional education that is why he or she must create and maintain a learning environment in which learners can be autonomous. In order to reach this goal, they have to act as facilitator, who needs to do all the efforts to help students discover their own ways of learning and to work independently. One way to accomplish this objective is designing and adapting strategies and materials properly. In this way, the students can take control of their studies and adjust them to their own needs where they are able to undertake learning tasks without direct teacher control.

30 Pedagogy for autonomy in language education. JIMÉNEZ RAYA, Manuel., LAMB, T., & VIEIRA, F. 2007. Dublin: Authentik, 2007, in Europe-Towards a framework for learner and teachers development.

2. Study Research

In this section, I present a study research including specific information about design of investigation, population, techniques and instruments.

2.1 Design Of Investigation

This investigation was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, which helped researchers to explore, examine, and identify aspects of foreign language teaching and learning in need of improvement.

I consider that these two research methods can be used in a combined manner because qualitative research is appropriate to answer certain kinds of questions in certain conditions and quantitative is indicated for others. As well, I think that both qualitative

2.2 Population

This project was carried out with FESAD (Facultad de Estudios a Distancia), which is a faculty at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia offering a program called "Licenciatura en Educación Básica", which trains teachers for primary school curricula in a distance education programme. The study was carried out with the students of fifth semester, 20 students who were enrolled in the course "English writing level I". They were adult and young adult learners, from different rural towns and villages in the

2.3 Techniques And Instruments For Gathering Data

The techniques and instruments for gathering data used in this project were the teacher's diary, analysis of self-learning workshops, questionnaire and survey for students, and checklist

and quantitative methods can be used simultaneously to give a satisfactory result for a research question.

In order to provide more validity to the current research proposal, I have to state that a quantitative type of research is part of this project because I had to categorize and to classify the information obtained from surveys, interviews. Additionally, the principle of a quantitative research method's objectivity is enhanced through enumeration, aggregation and causation.

department of Boyacá. Most of them come from a middle class background. Because of their economic situation, class attendance was reduced to two sessions a month.

That is why, this faculty is based on self-directed learning and in learner-centered approaches, so that it permits flexibility for people who may not be able to attend classes for several reasons and provides learners the chance to work at their own pace and in their own preferred ways.

for teachers. I chose these instruments because they gave me a clear idea into what extent the use of a webquest would improve learner autonomy in foreign language learning.

Teacher's reflection about her classes:

This procedure formed an inherent part of the research as it was instrumental in order to find out about research teachers' thoughts and observations and to have real contact with teaching experience.

Analysis of self-learning workshop or module:

It was developed in order to ascertain if these workshops promoted learner autonomy in foreign language learning.

Questionnaire for students:

It was necessary to design a questionnaire for students in order to discern their attitudes, opinions,

preferences toward the use of technology.

Survey for students:

It was designed with the purpose of identifying if the students raised their autonomy with the use of the webquest designed.

Checklist for teachers:

It was organized and piloted with teachers at the Degree of basic education programme, in order to compile data about their conceptions and perceptions about the effectiveness of the webquest titled "Boyacá is to enjoy it" as a means to encourage greater levels of autonomy in language learning.

Conclusions

This section includes a summary of the findings, together with the conclusions drawn from the results.

Learner Perceptions towards technology

The students expressed that they enjoyed using technology. As a consequence, they do not think that technology in class takes up much time; the students know that technology can help them to learn many new

topics and skills. The students believe that they would advance even faster if they knew how to use technology properly. Finally, the students believe that the internet can really improve their foreign language learning.

Learner Perceptions towards autonomy in language learning

The students agreed that they are able to set their personal, individual learning goals; they are able to decide on a timetable to do their tasks; they are able to locate suitable materials for their learning; the students need help from their classmates but they don't use timetables to set their learning goals.

The students also agreed that they needed to check up on their own work, an activity during which they do not show difficulties in self-correcting their learning tasks. They also are able to complete self-assessment sheets in order to reflect on the content of learning. However, it was difficult for some of them to evaluate their own performance of a learning task. In the words of Albert Camus: to observe myself critically is not easy. Insuasty states, that self-evaluation are an effective tool to achieve self-direction in learning because it allows students to check their own conceptual, procedural and attitudinal progress.

This implies that students have problems when it comes to taking responsibility concerning the effective organization of their time. In this case; it is necessary to focus on some aspects related to self-discipline which implies to encourage self-evaluation, self-control and self-consciousness. This requires, on the one hand, a change of attitude on behalf of students in which they would learn to reflect about their responsibilities regarding their learning process.

Based on these conclusions to achieve self-regulation in learning is one of the most important purposes of autonomous learning. It is achieved when students are being questioned themselves, students can judge objectively and constructively their own work and recognize their own successes and mistakes. In addition, this activity leads them to adopt strategies to improve and to correct those mistakes. Therefore it is necessary to create the habit of self-evaluation to achieve self-regulation where learners have the opportunity to practice their ability to be self-critical.

All the participants agreed that they were independent, but they also welcomed collaboration with classmates especially in a language class where communication was a key to learning. The students who liked to be more controlled (less autonomous) wanted somebody to control things and tell them what to do. The more autonomous students would eventually become aware about what they needed to do.

Promotion of learner autonomy through webquests

All the teachers expressed that the webquest "Boyacá is to enjoy it" was suitable for the pedagogic model of the institution for language teaching and learning. It also took into account the sociocultural and educational characteristics of learners and supported teachers and students in attaining the goals set by the curriculum of the program. At the same time, the webquest always presented a clear and logical structure with appropriate, comprehensible instructions and layout and it is easy to browse.

All participants were of the opinion that the webquest promoted interaction among students and teachers. This version of the webquest always gave students the opportunity to meet in small groups; in order to perform and review some the activities proposed. Therefore, the webquest always provided a balance between individual work, pair work and group and whole class work.

On the other hand, teachers noted that the webquest always provided the development of metacognitive strategies to enable them to optimize their learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating their performance in the different language learning tasks. Cognitive strategies which enabled students to understand and produce new language proficiency in order to do tasks with their language and their materials, to relate to specific activities in specific skills areas such as reading and writing and to learn deducing, taking notes, summarizing, paraphrasing, and evaluating resources. Finally, social strategies encourage students to interact with peers in the learning process and to take a positive attitude towards their own language learning.

According to teacher's role, teachers expressed that with the use of this webquest, the

teacher can assume new roles in the teaching-learning process such as facilitator, counselor, resource, and feedback provider.

Finally, they expressed that the webquest helped learners to learn autonomously inside and outside the classroom context because students could access to authentic materials towards collaborative and individualized learning, so learners always were able to undertake learning tasks without direct teacher thus showing several degrees of learning autonomy.

It is recommended that we as teachers need to understand that it is our responsibility to guide and provide learners with the skills and knowledge through learner training programs that will help them take responsibility for their own learning. Once learners have been equipped with the right learning tools they can learn to take responsibility for their own learning and perhaps they will be able to participate more effectively in online learning experiences.

It is necessary to provide learners with online resources as a learning aid because these create an excellent language learning environment especially for the autonomous learner, particularly in the early and advanced stages of learning a foreign language, when they are studying on their own.

It is recommended that in language-teaching programs, pedagogy must make room for and use of technology in general to facilitate language learning-including technological innovations. Finally, a webquest supports a constructive learning model, where learners can participate in their own learning constructing their own knowledge, thus students can take responsibility for their own learning developing autonomy and skills in learning how to learn.

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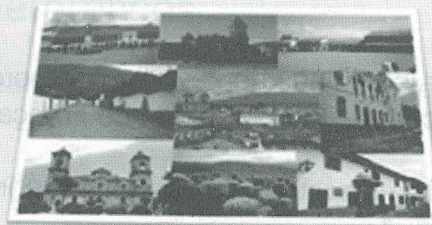
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Boyacá is to enjoy it!

Webquest for English as a foreign language

English writing Level I

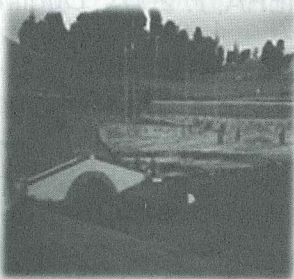
Designed by:

Nelly Estelle Pardo Espejo

nellyestelling@yahoos.es

Based on a template from [The WebQuest Page](#)

INTRODUCTION



Have you ever been in Boyacá before? How much do you know about Department of Boyacá? Boyacá is one of the 32 Department of Colombia, Boyacá is known as "The Land of Freedom" because this region was the scene of a series of battles which led to Colombia's independence from Spain. On the other hand, its beautiful landscapes, traditional culture, climate, typical dishes and celebrations make of Boyacá a wonderful place to enjoy vacations.

Therefore, it would be a good idea if a travel agency of travel offered an attractive brochure for tourists, so you will have to help this travel agency; it is a great opportunity for you to promote your region through the designing of a brochure with the most important aspects of the department.

TASK

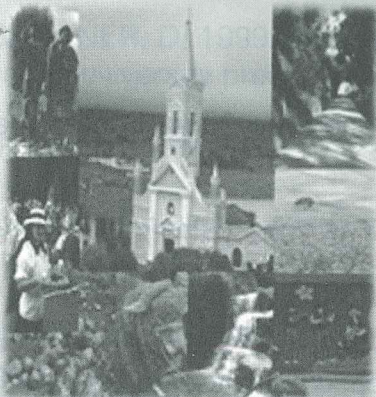
The aim of this WebQuest is that the students work and cooperate as a team, in order to produce an attractive brochure about the Department of Boyacá. This brochure will be read by the all students and teachers once finished. At the same time, it is highly recommendable that you take into account the stages typically identified in the writing

process, namely, planning, organizing, composing and revising your writing project.

Your brochure must have:

1. A geographical description as an introduction about Boyacá: (location, inhabitants, symbols, provinces).
2. A description about the climate and economy of this department.
3. A description of the main natural resources (parks, landscapes, lakes, rivers), historical and cultural places of each province: in this part, you have to locate these places on the map of Boyacá.
4. A description of the main cultural and religious celebrations: at the same time, a description about the typical dishes.

You will need for this task to look for pictures, photographs map and images.





Student 4: Celebrations (Cultural and Religious) and typical dishes.

PROCESS

In this workshop, you will be working together with your partners to do the following activities:

1. Make a group of four students, the team as a whole will be responsible for the project but both members will have their own task.
2. There are several roles to play and you have to decide which one you would like to do. The roles are the following:

- Student 1: Geographical features of Boyacá (location, inhabitants, symbols, provinces).
 Student 2: Climate, economy and products
 Student 3: Touristic places (natural resources, historical and cultural places of each province).

3. After the role selected, each member of the group have to follow three (3) stages: Pre-writing, while writing and after writing.
4. Once you have finished your section, you will need to meet with your members' group in order to collect the all information (pictures, images and photographs) and the written texts.
5. You with your partners have to design the brochure with all the information collected and the texts written, pictures, photographs, images you have found. Don't forget to create a map which shows the route to a tourist who wants to visit Boyacá. Finally all the members of the group have to prepare an oral presentation about the brochure designed, in front of your teachers and classmates.

EVALUATION

It is now to evaluate your work of this project: in this case you have to develop a self-evaluation, a survey and a rubric in individual form: It is a reflection about you learnt in this project.



Self-evaluation

Therefore, you must write a composition answering these questions:

1. What did I learn about the topics we looked for?
2. How effective was my contribution to the group work?
3. What were your good things in this project?
4. What were my fails and how could I improve them?
5. What did I learn about using the internet?

On the other hand, you must answer a survey in order to know how much the activities proposed helped you become a better writer.

Survey



CONCLUSION



You have completed your project and created an attractive brochure about Boyacá: in addition you have developed the process writing which you had the opportunity to apply strategies in order to do planning, organizing, composing and revising your writing project.

At the same time, you developed a variety of skills, including computer and internet skills, ability to cooperate with others, and both written and oral communication skills: finally, you built your own knowledge and developed your autonomy in a second language learning improving your English according to different levels: speech, writing, vocabulary and expressions.



Teacher's page



Title: Boyacá is to enjoy it!

Level: This web quest has been designed for students of the University of English as second language in the subject English Writing Level I, required level is Intermediate

Subjects: English as a second language, English Writing Level I and Geography

Objectives:

- ✓ To improve the autonomy in a second language learning
- ✓ To give the students the opportunity to use the technology in a second language learning
- ✓ To develop the process writing: planning, organizing, composing and revising
- ✓ To develop the cooperative learning in a second language

Contents: Concepts, procedure and attitudes

Concepts:

- ✓ Students will write a descriptive brochure which about the department of Boyacá.
- ✓ Students will learn about important aspects of their region.
- ✓ Students will learn how to plan, to organize, to compose, to revise and to edit a descriptive text

Credits



This webquest has been designed on the template created by webquest.org which is adopted from the one created by [Bernie Dodge](#). Thank you very much to all of them.

It's almost impossible to mention all the resources used during the creation of this webquest. So, I am grateful to all the Institutions and People who have made possible this webquest and make of the Internet a powerful instrument for learning in second language learning

Our special thanks to:



www.uptc.edu.co

http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/Rubrics_for_Web_Lessons.html

<http://viveboyaca.com/web/index.php?idTema=1803>