

A WebQuest is a constructivist learning activity that uses resources from the Web and presents authentic tasks in context, encouraging students' participation in an autonomous and collaborative way.

Typically, a WebQuest has 5 parts: the introduction, the task, the process (resources, scaffolding), the evaluation (rubric), and the conclusion.

Some definitions:

A WebQuest is...

[...]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. (Dodge, 2001¹)

[...]built around an engaging and doable task that elicits higher order thinking of some kind. It's about doing something with information. The thinking can be creative or critical, and involve problem solving, judgement, analysis, or synthesis. The task has to be more than simply answering questions or regurgitating what's on the screen. Ideally, the task is a scaled down version of something that adults do on the job, outside school walls. (Dodge in Starr, 2000²)

[...]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. (March 2003³:43)

From the point of view of second language learning, WebQuests are in connection with the methodological approaches of Content Based Learning (CBL) and Task Based Learning (TBL).

Advantages of using WebQuest (in general):

- Clear structure and effective use of time.
- Motivation (authentic material, autonomy, creativity, tasks connected with reality, etc.).
- Collaboration and cooperation among students (interdependence, responsibility).
- Promotion of high order thinking processes (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, etc.)

¹ Dodge, B. 2001. "FOCUS: Five rules for writing a great WebQuest." Learning & Leading with Technology, 28, 8: 6-9. <http://www.webquest.futuro.usp.br/artigos/textos_outros-bernie1.html>.

² Starr, L. 2000. "Meet Bernie Dodge -the Frank Lloyd Wright of learning environments!". Education World. <http://www.education-world.com/a_tech/tech020.shtml>.

³ March, T. 2003. "The learning power of WebQuests". Educational Leadership, 61, 4: 42-47.

WebQuests and Second Languages

⇒ Main difficulties:

1. When doing a WebQuest in a Second Language, the L2 is more an enemy than a friend.
2. The thinking processes in an L2 are more complex.
3. The student spend more time in the comprehension of an L2 and the coordination of ideas than in their L1.
4. This lack of command and comprehension may imply a decrease in the motivation of the students.

Not only are the resource sites far less transparent, but producing something in the target language- thinking in the target language- takes some getting used to. (Benz, 2001:1⁴)

Second Language Acquisition and WebQuests

Exposure, use and motivation, then, are three essential conditions for language learning. One without the others, or even two without the third, will not be sufficient. [...] we have a fourth condition, which, although not totally essential, is highly desirable. [...] It is generally accepted that instruction which focuses on language form can both speed up the rate of language development and raise the ultimate level of learners' attainment. (Willis, 1996:15)

Chapelle (2001)⁶ establishes six criteria for CALL evaluation: language learning potential, meaning focus, learner fit, authenticity, impact, and practicality.

- a. *Language learning potential*, refers to the extent to which an activity can be considered to promote language learning rather than simply serving as an opportunity for language use.
- b. *Meaning focus*, refers to the extent to which learners' attention is directed toward the meaning of the language.

⇒ If we include an element of **direct instruction** in the original WebQuest model, this will guarantee that the WebQuest is a language oriented activity and the student will be aware of their language learning experience. Thus, the WebQuest will fulfil the criteria and the four essential conditions for language learning.

⁴ Benz, P. 2001 "WebQuests for Language Learning"
<<http://www.ardecoul.ac-grenoble.fr/english/tice/enwebquest2.htm>>. [Consulta 05/06/2004].

⁵ Willis, J. 1996. A Framework for Task-Based Learning. Harlow: Longman.

⁶ Chapelle, C. A. 2001. Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition: Foundations for Teaching, Testing and Research. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Problem	Solution
Lack of command of language	Adapting the complexity of the task
Difficulties with the comprehension and coordination of ideas	Adding background information Integrating the WebQuest in the context of a bigger learning unit
No direct instruction of language	Incorporating a new instructive element: "the language workshop"

☆ The result is an adaptation of the original WebQuest model that includes a definition, a set of principles to design the WebQuest and a new distribution of elements and parts for a WebQuest for second languages (Pérez Torres, I. 2004⁷).

Definition: 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.

Principles to be applied in the design of a WebQuest for L2:

1. A WebQuest for second languages must promote the *significant use of the L2*, by using authentic materials from the Web.
2. *The level of linguistic knowledge* of the students will be crucial for the design of both the task and the process. Less knowledgeable students should be asked to do a less complex task or should be given more linguistic support.
3. *Linguistic and non linguistic goals* should be clearly stated and the task should be designed to attain those goals.
4. *The result of the task* should be a product that imply the significant and communicative use of the language.
5. *The process* of the WebQuest will be supported by an abundant scaffolding, appropriate to the students' needs and it will include:
 - *A Background activation phase* to speed up the comprehension and coordination of ideas.
 - *A Language workshop*, with all sort of activities to help students learn and improve the lexical, syntactic and language use aspects, as well as practise the strategies related to different language skills.

⁷ Pérez Torres, I. 2004. PhD "Diseño de Webquests para la Enseñanza/Aprendizaje del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera: Aplicaciones en la Adquisición de Vocabulario y la Destreza Lectora".

- All kind of support and guides so that the student can carry out the task effectively and attain the anticipated goals. This will include lexical and syntactical support, such as lists of words, guiding questions, grammar help, etc.
6. The WebQuest *must be integrated into the syllabus* as a continuity or part of another unit or activity.
 7. The WebQuest *should be planned to practise the language skills* that we want the students to improve.

<i>Elements of the original WebQuest model</i>	<i>Elements of the WebQuest for L2 model</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Task - Process - Resources - Scaffolding - Evaluation - Conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Task - Process - Language Instruction - Resources - Scaffolding - Evaluation - Conclusion

The Process is divided in four sections:

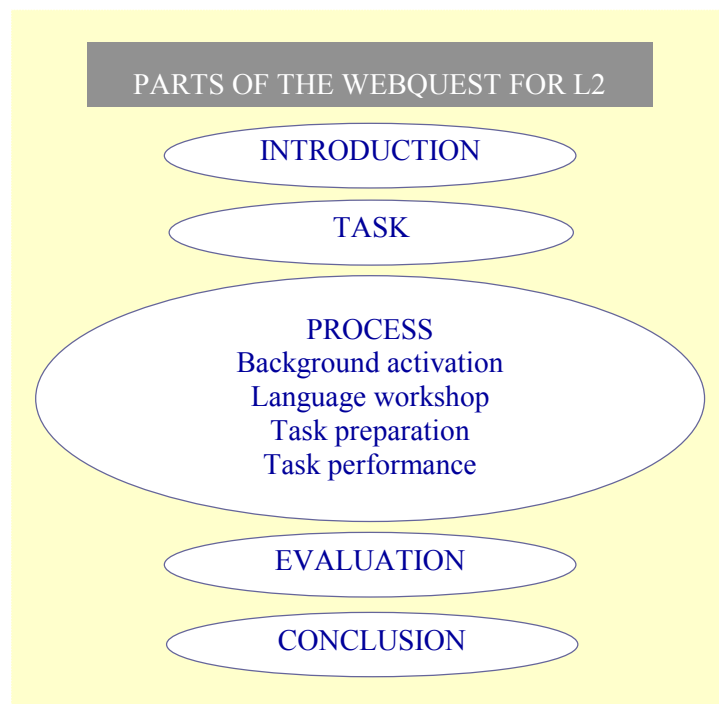
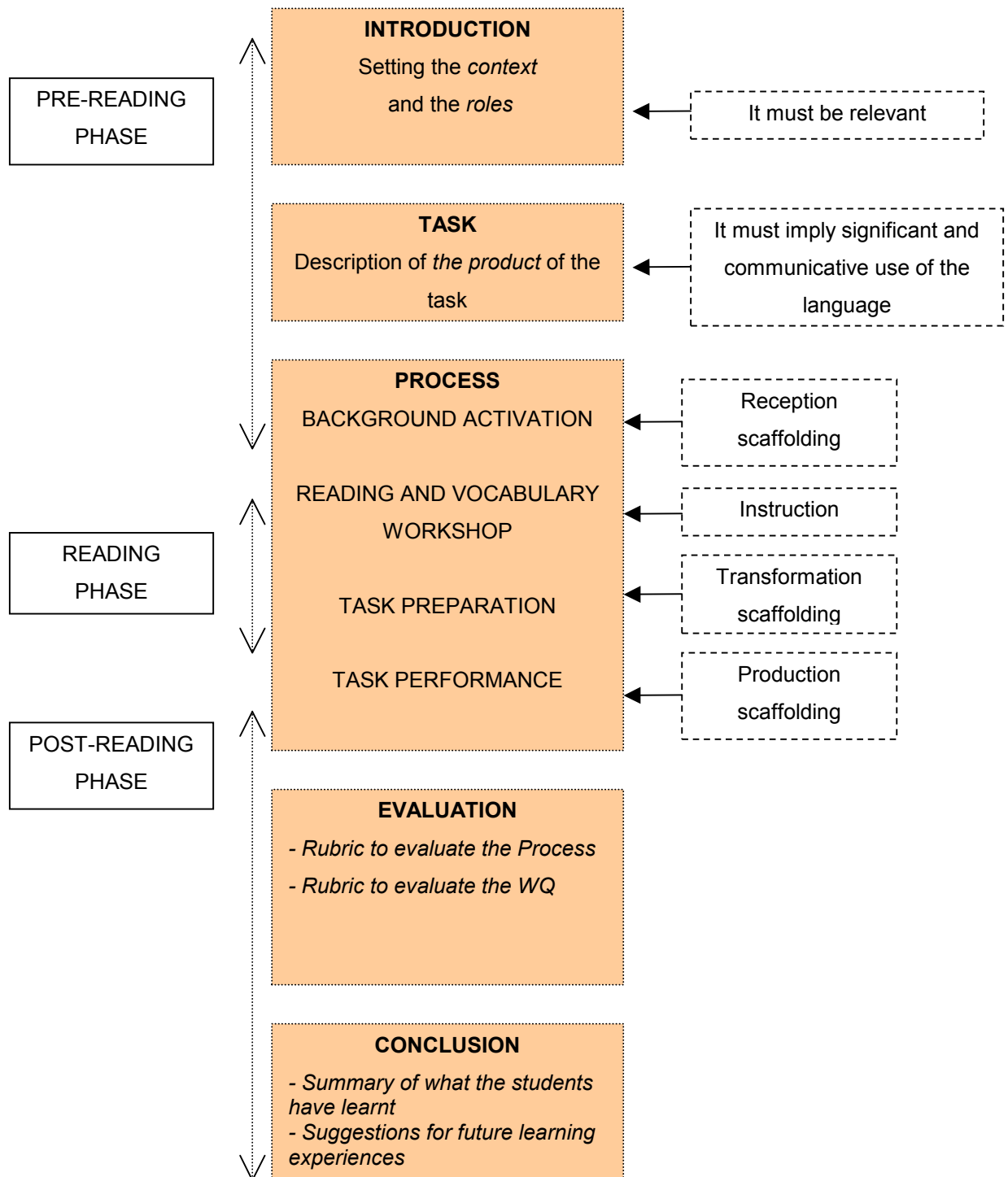
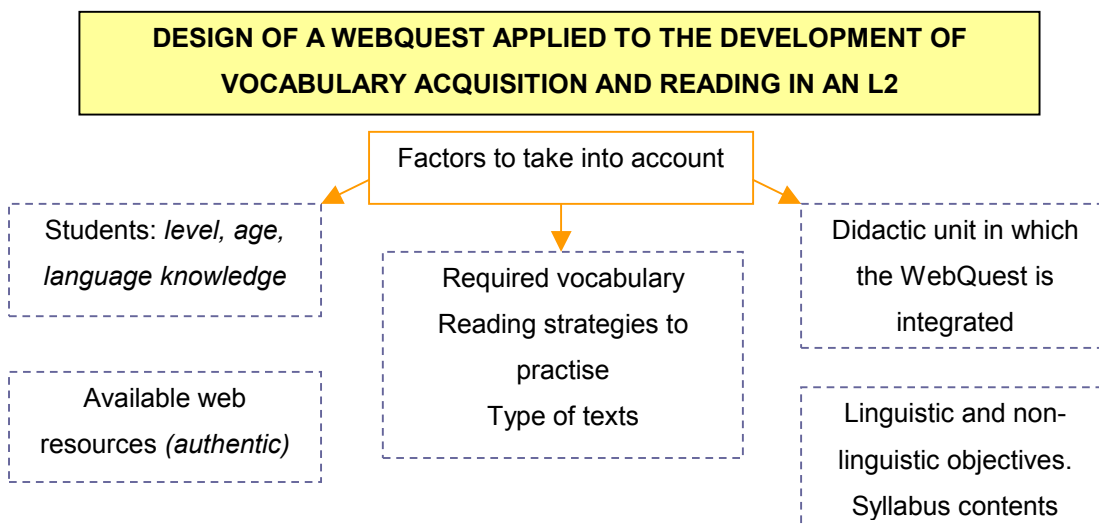


Diagram of the model of WebQuest for second languages applied to vocabulary acquisition and reading





Example

Today's News

Introduction | Task | Process | Evaluation | Conclusion

Which newspaper would Tony Blair or Margaret Thatcher read?
 What is in page three in The Sun newspaper?
 What is the difference between a news story and a feature story?
 After taking part in this WebQuest, you will be able to answer these and many more questions about British newspapers.

Introduction

British newspapers are a good source of information about British culture and people. But students often find newspapers difficult to understand. By learning the conventions, structures and language features of British newspapers you will be able to enlarge your knowledge of English autonomously through reading authentic texts in printed or online newspapers.

For this reason the English Department has organised a seminar about the press in Britain and the students have applied to participate in various activities.

We congratulate you because, among more than one hundred applicants, you have been selected for taking part in these activities concerning newspapers and therefore, it will be expected that by the end of the seminar, you will be familiarised with this literary genre.

URLs:

Second language WebQuest workshop <http://www.isabelperez.com/webquest/taller/l2/index.htm>

WebQuest Today's News http://www.ugr.es/~inped/module4_4/m4_2.htm

WebQuest bibliography http://www.isabelperez.com/tesis/bibliography_webquest.htm