

## **Internet technology in a content-based syllabus for english specific purposes**

The need to promote technological literacy among students and the focus on content-based instruction as the most appropriate method to learn and construct knowledge have resulted in the development of activities to integrate the Internet into the classroom. WebQuests are activities designed for this purpose that take full advantage of the resources on Internet.

Although the WebQuests free to use on the Internet are designed for native speakers and have not been developed as activities for second and foreign language learning, I propose that they can be effectively used as activities for a content-based approach to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction.

A content-based curriculum integrates target language learning and content learning. Therefore, it is based on the content of a subject and on the use of authentic materials, and takes into consideration the students' linguistic needs and learning styles.

There are at least two major benefits of content-based instruction. First, if students are given multiple opportunities to interact with authentic, meaningful, and challenging material, the result is better learning. Second, students' motivation is enhanced with the use of authentic materials relevant to their goals.

Since the main objective of an ESP course is to help students acquire the linguistic and communicative skills related to their disciplines, a content-based approach is especially useful. Content-based pedagogy promotes synthesising and evaluating, and helps students improve their academic skills.

The Internet is a learning tool that fits well in a content-based ESP syllabus. Among the benefits of Internet use in the second and foreign language classroom, the most important are:

- Increased motivation and participation by students
- More opportunities to interact with the target language and content area because students spend more time on task.
- Greater integration of reading and writing skills and opportunities to practice them in meaningful contexts.
- The possibility to implement a pedagogy based on problem solving and critical thinking
- More self-paced autonomous learning that is learner-controlled rather than teacher-controlled.

In addition to the benefits mentioned, the Internet provides the resources necessary to carry out authentic projects and analysis, and thus develop the communicative competence of ESP students. Such resources allow teachers to design simulation activities and role-playing using authentic material.

### **Internet-based activities**

Activities that can exploit Internet resources for ESP take many forms: topic hotlists, multimedia scrapbooks, treasure hunts, subject samplers, and WebQuests. The first two are activities for learners new to the WWW and are limited to simply exploring and downloading Internet resources. These resources can be organised and used later in other Web-based activities. A topic hotlist is a Web page containing sites categorised by topic. A multimedia scrapbook is a collection of Internet sites organised into categories, such as photos, maps, and sound and video clips.

A treasure hunt develops students' knowledge of a topic by providing links to Web sites with information on that topic and by posing key questions concerning the sites. A subject sampler is an activity designed to get students to develop an affective connection to a topic by responding to Web sites with a personal perspective.

WebQuests develop problem-solving skills and promote learning through analysis of complex concepts; thus, they are the most useful for ESP teaching. The sections that follow provide a description of WebQuests and their uses and benefits. WebQuests are inquiry-based activities in which learners interact with information coming primarily from resources on the Internet. There are hundreds of Web sites that offer guidelines for teachers and samples of students' work; entering "WebQuest" in any search engine will turn up dozens of them.

Most WebQuests are designed so that students can integrate complex concepts of a specific discipline. The principles underlying WebQuests are those of constructivism. Internet technology is integrated into the course curriculum, thus enabling students to learn by constructing their perceptions of complex concepts

A WebQuest must have the following steps:

1. An introduction that explains the activity and provides background information.
2. A task that is feasible and interesting.
3. A set of information sources needed to complete the task.
4. A description of the process the learners should follow to complete the task.
5. Some guidelines on how to organise the information.
6. A conclusion that closes the quest.

There are short-term WebQuests in which the main goal is that students make sense of new information and long-term WebQuests which involve students in deeper analysis and content transformation.

In a WebQuest, students go beyond mere fact finding by studying a controversial issue in order to analyze its components and suggest a solution. First, they need to learn some basic background information about the issue. Then, working in small groups, students become "experts" on some aspect of the problem by analyzing the Web sites given to them by the teacher. Finally, students complete a real world activity such as e-mailing elected officials or presenting their interpretation to recognized experts on the topic.

Research on WebQuests has focused on their use for interdisciplinary teaching and cooperative learning. WebQuests also promote learners motivation and skills in problem solving and decision making.

WebQuests foster cooperative learning, since students usually have to collaborate and share information to solve a problem or find an answer to a complex question. They engage students in performing authentic simulation tasks by providing up-to-date information on a topic and by helping students develop critical reading and synthesizing skills. They also promote writing with a purpose for a real-world audience. WebQuests are activities specially suited to content-based language learning; students perform a real world task using authentic materials related to a topic within their academic discipline. The pedagogical principles of a Web-Quest are to assign small groups of students with a challenging inquiry, provide access to online resources, and forces the learning process to promote higher order thinking.

WebQuests complete three goals:

1. WebQuests promote motivation and authenticity. Students perform an authentic task, since they have to understand or solve a real world issue. Motivation is increased by giving students real resources and assigning them a role within a cooperative group, which implies that success depends on all members doing their jobs.

2. WebQuests develop thinking skills. The question that the students have to research and answer should be a complex one that forces them to transform information. A WebQuest activity might require the following thinking skills: comparing, classifying, generalizing principles from observations or analysis, deducing, analysing errors in one's own or others'

thinking, constructing support for an assertion, abstracting, and analysing different perspectives about issues.

3. WebQuests foster cooperative learning. Since WebQuests are concerned with complex topics, students have to cooperate and take on specific roles to complete the task.

WebQuests also meet the following four criteria for content-based activities:

1. Learning activities should provide more than one perspective on the content area. This is met by WebQuests, which offer a large number of Web pages with information on different aspects of a topic.

2. Activities should present authentic content without oversimplifying it.

3. Activities should incorporate visuals and other aids for making associations, since that facilitates deeper thinking. The Web pages used in Web-Quests contain not only text, but also pictures, sound, and even animation.

4. Activities should encourage the SQ3R formula: surveying, questioning, reading, recalling, and reviewing materials under study.

The Internet has been successfully used in ESP and content-based information. The tasks are a vehicle for presenting samples of the target language. Teachers design the tasks to pose problems of relevance to the students, who then have to solve them, not simply by collecting information, but by engaging in sub-tasks of increasing complexity.

### **Effective use of WebQuests in ESP**

Although the Internet is a useful tool in teaching, it has limitations and can pose problems for some learners. Elementary and intermediate level students can feel overwhelmed by the wealth of information and may lack the proficiency in English necessary to understand many texts. Of course, not all the information accessible on the Web is relevant for ESP students. Therefore, at every stage of an activity learners need to know the purpose of the task they are performing and what to do next.

These difficulties can be overcome with appropriately planned WebQuests. A Web-Quest must be integrated into the ESP curriculum, taking into account the overall design and goals of the course. The teacher should explain the activity, its purpose, the benefits the students can obtain by doing it, and the expected outcomes. Before starting a WebQuest, students should be given some background information on the topic of the task and some practice with the vocabulary they will encounter in the WebQuest.

The task must be challenging and relevant to the students in order to maintain their interest and enhance their motivation. The type of WebQuest and the tasks that the students have to perform must be suitable to their level of knowledge of English and the ESP content area. The topic should be familiar to them and the material should be related to their field of knowledge, in order to enhance their confidence. The number, length, and linguistic difficulty of the texts will depend on the level of the students for whom the activity is intended. When using authentic materials in ESP, especially considering the abundance of material available online, it is preferable to simplify tasks rather than simplify authentic texts. The tasks that the students have to complete should be divided into sub-tasks of increasing complexity and should be clearly described, thus guiding students work in groups, it is desirable to match less proficient with more proficient students. In this way, the more proficient students can take on the most complex roles and collaborate with the others to complete the task.

### **Conclusion**

This activity involves the use of authentic material from different Internet sources and engages students in reading extensively on a topic related to their discipline, performing tasks of increasing complexity, and creating oral or written texts to present the results of their online work.

WebQuests fit well in a learner-centred curriculum that seeks to help students develop autonomous learning. The use of technology with a content-based curriculum results in a learning environment in which students take more control of their learning. The role of the teacher is not to transmit knowledge, but to provide resources, help students develop learning strategies, guide the learning process, and offer support throughout the process.

The use of WebQuests to learn languages integrates the pedagogical benefits of project work, content-based instruction, and language learning via the Internet. ESP students become more

motivated because they are using new technologies and authentic texts to complete authentic tasks related to their disciplines,

The WebQuest is an activity that can be fruitfully exploited in ESP. It helps students develop academic skills such as scanning, skimming, paraphrasing, summarising, organising, analysing, and problem solving. Through extensive reading students acquire the vocabulary related to a topic of their discipline. By using authentic texts to perform real world tasks students become aware of concepts such as purpose and audience and see the utility of studying a second or foreign language.

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### Түйін

Бұл мақалада web-сайтты шет тілдерін оқыту, үйрету және басқа салалық бағыттарда пайдаланудың кейбір тиімді жақтары қаралынады.

### Резюме

В данной статье мы рассмотрели преимущества изучения английского веб-сайтов Интернет языка, а также и для отдельных отраслевых направлений обучения посредством использования в учебном процессе.

### Özet

Bu yazıda ESP için bir içerik-temelli yaklaşım (İngilizce özel amaçlar için) yararları dikkate alarak, ESP öğretim için uygun WebQuest farklı analiz edildi.