

Micro-Paper 17: *WebQuests*

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Defining the Term

A WebQuest is an Internet-based research activity that relies on the selection of carefully chosen resources available online for the solution of a communicative task. A WebQuest, when properly designed, becomes then a viable alternative to the traditional activities that take place in a computer lab activity. The goal of a WebQuest is to engage students in the use of information for creative, problem-solving purposes in a collaborative fashion while providing a critical background to learn to choose quality resources in the digital world. The design of a WebQuest must lend itself to invite students to work with one another to contribute to the solution of the communicative task.

Conceptually, we have proposed to incorporate ideas about communicative competence as the basis for the construction of the tasks on a WebQuest. More recent forays into the concept are beginning to incorporate ideas such as multimodality, intertextuality, and transmediality as foundational elements of what a WebQuest that truly addresses 21st Century Literacies must look like.

WebQuests comprise six features: An *Introduction* that sets the scene and context for the actual task; the *task* itself that students in teams must develop for the successful completion of the WebQuest; the *process*, a series of steps or mini-tasks that serve as building blocks to complete the larger task; the *resources* that should help students complete both the steps in the process section and the main task; the *evaluation*, usually consisting of a rubric that indicates the criteria that teachers will keep in mind when looking at the WebQuest; and the *conclusion*, where students will find further information to continue exploring the main themes that comprised the WebQuest.

Connecting it to LSLP

Our work with WebQuests is actually a predecessor to LSLP, as a systematic attempt in our preservice teacher

education program at UPB to link communicative competence, digital literacies, and English education. As LSLP continues to participate in our teacher education structure, the idea of WebQuests will once again be part of the Communicative Competence cycle (one that has, in fact, become the recruiting ground to find our undergraduate researchers). LSLP will become more active in supporting the conceptual underpinnings of our revamped work with WebQuests, adding further conceptual elements beyond the initial proposals that harken back to the 1990s. .

Expanding Second Language Research

As a form of both social media and participatory/digital literacies, we have learned that WebQuests are a very powerful resource to integrate digital literacy and communicative competence in second language contexts. The potential in both the use and actual design of WebQuests is an area that opens a great deal of opportunities for teachers and learners to expand their boundaries of language use within online learning environments.

References

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