



**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM "HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, EQUITY
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE"**

**USING WEBQUESTS FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH FOR
SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR ARCHITECTURE STUDIES**

***EL USO DE WEBQUESTS PARA LA COMUNICACIÓN ORAL EN INGLÉS
CON FINES ESPECÍFICOS EN LA CARRERA DE ARQUITECTURA***

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Abstract

Nowadays, graduates need to use English when accessing the labor market to communicate in professional settings and act strategically to adapt to new communicative situations. They also need to be able to use the new forms of constructing meaning and information that are constantly emerging on the Internet. The WebQuest format (Dodge, 1995) affords the design of learning activities that can be integrated in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course to help meet these needs. In this scenario, the WebQuest is a very common way of using Web resources to research a variety of topics, and if appropriately used can contribute to develop both written and oral communication. Oral use of the WebQuest is especially valid for English Foreign Language students for professional purposes. Then, if the use of WebQuests is associated with students' professional needs, their implementation can be very successful and can help students' skills both



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in language and professional development. Architecture students at Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas, have to be able to communicate in English for addressing communication issues in the Architecture sector and meeting the contemporary professional standards and requirements. This paper presents some theoretical considerations for using WebQuests for oral communication in ESP. The research was based on the dialectical materialist method and some methods at the theoretical level, empirical and mathematical-statistical level were used. As a result, some WebQuests were designed to develop oral communication in English for Specific Purposes for Architecture studies.

Resumen

Actualmente, los graduados necesitan usar el inglés cuando acceden al mercado laboral para comunicarse en situaciones profesionales y actuar estratégicamente para adaptarse a nuevas situaciones comunicativas. También necesitan usar las nuevas formas de construir el significado e información que surgen constantemente en Internet. El formato de WebQuest (Dodge, 1995) proporciona el diseño de actividades de aprendizaje que deben estar integradas en un curso de Inglés con Fines Específicos para satisfacer estas necesidades. En este escenario, la WebQuest es una forma muy común de usar recursos web para investigar una variedad de temas, y si se utiliza adecuadamente puede contribuir a la comunicación escrita y oral. El uso oral de WebQuests es válido para los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera con fines profesionales. Así, si el mismo está asociado con las necesidades profesionales de los estudiantes, su implementación puede ser exitosa y ayudar al desarrollo de sus habilidades lingüísticas y profesionales. Los estudiantes de la Arquitectura en la Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de las Villas, deben ser capaces de comunicarse en inglés para abordar temáticas sobre Arquitectura y cumplir con los estándares y requisitos profesionales contemporáneos. Este trabajo presenta algunas consideraciones teóricas sobre el uso de WebQuests para la comunicación oral en Inglés con Fines Específicos. La investigación se sustentó en el método dialéctico materialista y se utilizaron métodos del nivel teórico, nivel empírico y matemático-estadístico. Como resultado se diseñaron varias WebQuests para desarrollar la comunicación oral en Inglés con Fines Específicos en la carrera de Arquitectura.



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Keywords: WebQuest, Oral communication, English for Specific Purposes, Architecture studies

Palabras clave: *WebQuest, Comunicación oral, Inglés con Fines Específicos, Carrera de Arquitectura.*

1. Introduction

With the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of Information Computer Technologies (ICT) in education is becoming more important and lends itself to more student-centered learning settings. According to Cabero (2001; cited by Yusuf, 2005, Al-Ansari, 2006), "the flexibilization time-space accounted for by the integration of ICT into teaching and learning processes contributes to increase the interaction and reception of information. Such possibilities suggest changes in the communication models and the teaching and learning methods used by teachers, giving way to new scenarios which favor both individual and collaborative learning". A great deal of research has proven the ICT benefits to innovate, accelerate, enrich, and deepen skills, to motivate and engage students, to help relate school experiences to work practices, create economic viability for tomorrow's workers, as well as strengthening teaching and helping.

In addition, with the use of ICT in education throughout the world, universities are searching for new and effective ways of training highly qualified and competitive specialists with substantial professional knowledge and skills, ready to work at modern labor markets. In this context new global demands dictate changes in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning and teaching. An effective way to promote positive changes in the ESP teaching is to use appropriate digital tools in the learning process. In such a context the learning materials need to go beyond making the language explicit and engage learners in a process of reconstruction drawing on even the beneficial aspects of the Internet sources.

With a wide range of current Internet resources for ESP instruction, WebQuest technology deserves particular attention due to these features: it gives an opportunity to meet the needs of students with different learning styles and foreign language proficiency levels; it allows students to practice foreign communicative skills(listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in simulated



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professionally oriented situations; it fosters the increase in the range of professional knowledge and it helps organize classroom and extracurricular activities in a flexible way.(Synekop,2020) Furthermore, the WebQuest as a research activity integrates the four language skills as well as the academic ones. Scherba, N. (2019) highlights the potential of WebQuests as self-instruction and distant learning tools. WebQuests provide practical, manageable classroom strategies to scaffold a change in practice. (Murphy, C.; Abu-Tineh, A.; Calder, N. and Mansour N. 2019).

According to Luzón-Marco,M.J.(2010) ESP WebQuests should reflect the kind of communicative situations in the students discipline, and engage students in cognitive processes necessary to manage these communicative situations, e.g. students will need to use their background knowledge of the discipline to assess the situation, identify problems, use a variety of primary sources to find and articulate solutions or answers, evaluate the relevance of these sources for their purposes, and synthesize and transform information to produce an output (e.g. a written report, a presentation) as a response to the situation described in the task.

Consequently, the incorporation of WebQuests in the syllabus can reflect and satisfy learners' needs, such as communicating in the real world with a vast range of business vocabulary and communicative skills, as well as enhancing oral skills. Those advantages are taking into consideration for the design of the WebQuests proposed in this work.

On the other hand, the educational policy of the Cuban Higher Educational System demands professionals training in a foreign language and the domain of English to suit professional and work needs. It is a key competence necessary to face the challenges of modern society. Architecture students at Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas (UCLV), should be able to communicate in English effectively and to develop the four major language skills to become competent professionals in their area of knowledge.

In addition, a lack of instructional materials could be evidenced in the context of the teaching and learning process of English IV (English for Specific Purposes) for Architecture studies. The general aim of this course is the mastery of English language according to students' professional



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needs. It also aims to further develop English language skills required by students to communicate effectively in their future professional career.

Therefore, it is considered necessary to design some didactic materials that include topics related with Architecture in an interactive environment to achieve the goals of this course. Since the aim of WebQuests is to motivate and promote student's critical thinking in order to solve problems or develop projects, its implementation in the English V (ESP) course for Architecture studies would improve the students' oral communication skills.

Thus, overall aim of the present research is:

- to provide Architecture students with some WebQuests to develop oral communication in English V (ESP).

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1 WebQuests

WebQuests are increasingly common on the educational scene. As a multidimensional concept, a WebQuest is interpreted in different ways. For example, Abbit and Ophus (2008) define it as an instructional strategy, Halat (2010) – as a teaching tool and technique for internet-based learning. It is also viewed as “a teacher created lesson plan in the form of a simple World Wide Web page with active, preselected Internet links and a specific purpose for students” (Kelly 2000, p. 4). The definitions of Dodge (1995) and Brooks-Young (2006) are focused on the WebQuest as an “activity”. According to Dodge (1995), it is “an inquiry oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet” (Dodge 1995, p. 10). Similarly, Brooks-Young (2006) defines the WebQuest as “an activity based on the inquiry instructional approach where most or all of the information used by students is Internet-based” (p. 61). This gives ground to believe that a WebQuest is not only a web-based learning technology, but also a process and a strategy used by the teacher for guiding students in their problem solving activity.



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The structure of the WebQuest is important since it provides an algorithm which helps the teacher to guide the students through their research activity. According to Dodge (1997), the WebQuest includes the following stages: introduction, task, process, resources, evaluation, and conclusion. We considered them in the context of the ESP instruction. The introduction stage aims at outlining the context of the WebQuest topic, showing its relevance for students. The task stage focuses on a communicative situation which is to be realized. The process stage determines the steps the students should take in order to solve a problem. Also at this stage, differentiated activities can also be suggested according to the English proficiency level. The resources stage offers a list of Internet-resources that help students to solve the problem. The Internet-resources can also be differentiated according to the complexity level. The evaluation stage suggests different scales with criteria for assessment of the final product such as a discussion assessment scale, writing assessment scale, group self-assessment checklist. The final product of the students with various English proficiency levels is evaluated in different ways: the students who perform complicated tasks get higher grades and the students who perform less complicated tasks get lower grades. The conclusion stage implies students' summarizing their achievements and reflecting on them, which may inspire them to continue studying the topic.

2.2. Key features of English for Specific Purposes

Several authors have described the main features of ESP, among them Robinson, (1991), Hutchinson & Waters (1987, 1993); Johns & Dudley-Evans (1998, 2001); Flowerdew & Peacock (2001, 2012); (Bojović, 2018). Some of them describe ESP as the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified (Robinson, 1991); (Flowerdew, 2001); (Dudley-Evans T., 2001). Others, however, are more precise, describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes, or in terms of absolute and variable characteristics. Ahmadi and Bajelani define ESP considering the specific branches in which it is divided: "English for Academic Purposes (EAP) such as Medicine, Engineering, Theology, etc. and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) such as English for secretaries, technicians, etc." (Bajelani, 2012).



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In this sense, ESP is considered a learner-centered approach to teaching English, which focuses on developing communicative competence in a specific discipline such as economics, accounting, business, engineering, etc. It enables students to use more specific English in their field of knowledge, which motivates them to use it for professional growth. As Hutchinson & Waters state it is “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (Hutchinson, 1987). Therefore, one of the distinctive features of ESP is that of goal-oriented, since the learners learn English not for the sake of the language but because they need it for practical application in their field of study or profession.

3. Methodology

The methodological approach chosen for this research is in correspondence with the problem to be solved in this study and the general aim to be fulfilled: to provide Architecture students with some WebQuests to develop oral communication in English V to succeed in professional contexts. To accomplish this aim, it is necessary to carry out a pedagogical intervention in the context of the teaching and learning process to introduce changes in the way students develop oral communication in English V. Taking into consideration the interests, circumstances of the scenario, and the participants of the research, the use of a qualitative methodology was chosen. This is a method of inquiry in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in social sciences.

The sample chosen for this research involves a group of 20 students that are taking English V (ESP) from Architecture.

4. Results analysis

WebQuests for oral communication in English for Specific Purposes for Architecture studies

The WebQuests designed integrate the four language skills as well as the academic ones. Their instructional strategy effectively incorporates technology into teaching and learning. The results of the research suggest that this strategy may have a positive impact on collaborative working



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skills and learner attitudes. The WebQuests considered in this course contain an introduction, doable and interesting tasks, and a conclusion that brings closure to the quest, reminds the learners about what they've learned and encourages them to extend the experience into other domains.

Since the proposal of the WebQuests has to do with the process by which instruction is improved, the analysis of learning needs and systematic development of learning materials using technology and multimedia tools was essential. It is important to draw attention to the fact that the WebQuests foster oral communication in Architecture students. The WebQuests contain all kinds of resources: videos, recordings, images, crosswords, discussion forum and some others about Architecture. They were intentionally selected to meet the professional needs of Architecture students.

The WebQuests designed are: Entertainment or environment, Buildings and structures, World's most famous structures, Home sweet home, Itapu Dam, Louvre Pyramid, The Thames Barrier, Underground houses, Construction of bridges, and The truth about being an architect. The tasks are mainly of multiple-choice, short responses and open-ended response formats. Their completion requires reading, listening and writing strategies. They follow the principles of complexity gradation and collaborative work (role play, pair work, group work). This way, the instructional materials are preparing students for developing professional oral communication skills.

WebQuests	Content	Question types	Resources
Entertainment or environment? A community debate	Decisions made in towns in respect to building new projects on unused lands	Multiple-choice: Matching Filling in blanks open-ended response	Video (commentary of a reporter about the controversy about the construction of an amphitheater or an entertaining park)
Buildings and Structures	Well-known structures build	Multiple-choice: Matching	Pictures of famous structures build



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	throughout the history in the world	Writing descriptions	throughout the history in the world
World's most famous structures	Most famous structures worldwide	Multiple-choice: Matching Writing descriptions	Pictures of world's most famous structures
Home sweet home	Different kind of houses' designs all over the world	Multiple-choice: Matching Filling in blanks True or false Writing descriptions	Pictures of different kind of houses designs all over the world Listening material (comments of people who live in houses with different kind of designs)
Itaipu Dam	Description of a dam located in South America that it is been considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern Word	Multiple-choice: Matching Filling in blanks	Listening material (lecture about Itaipu Dam)
Louvre Pyramid	Description of a glass pyramid designed by one of the most famous architects of the 20th	Open-ended response Multiple-choice: Matching Filling in blanks	-Reading material about Louvre Pyramid -Listening material (architect's



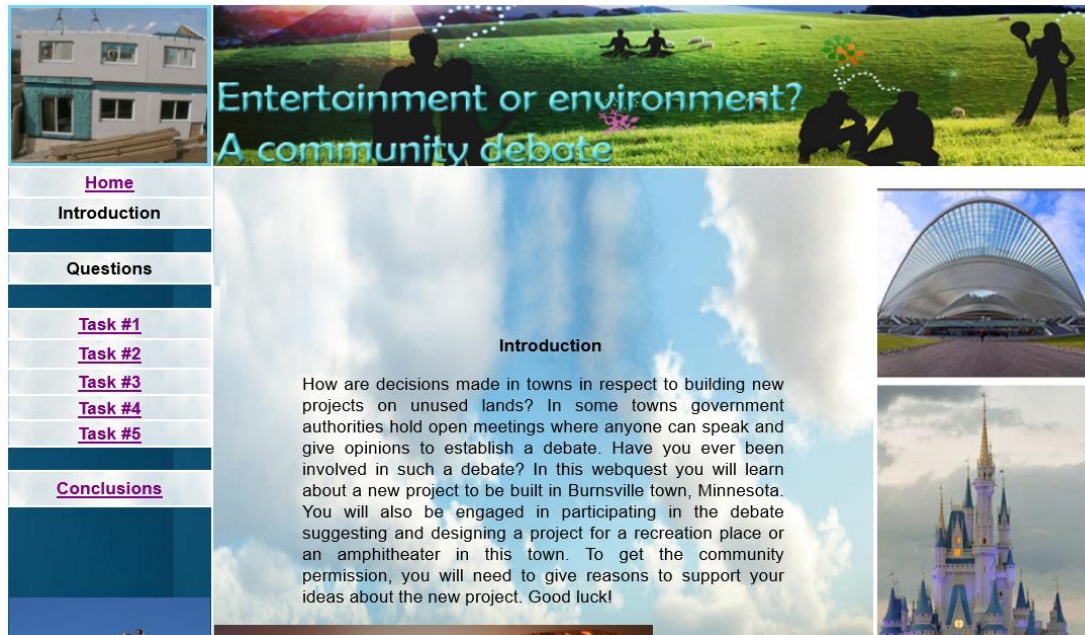
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	century in France.	short response	comments about The Louvre Pyramid)
The Thames Barrier	Description of The Thames Barrier, built to protect London from flooding	Multiple- choice: Filling in blanks Matching	Video(a tourist guide talking about The Thames Barrier)
Underground houses	Description of a very peculiar design of house which is not visible at first sight	Multiple- choice: Filling in blanks Matching	Listening material(a radio talk show about houses of the future)
Construction of bridges	Peculiarities of different kind of bridges as well as the constructive characteristics of the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol	Multiple- choice: Filling in blanks Matching	Listening material(lecture about the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol)
The truth about being an architect	Architecture as a great profession and a horrible business	Multiple- choice: Filling in blanks Matching open- ended response	Video (commentary about Architecture as a great profession and a horrible business)

Table 1. Description of WebQuests: Own Elaboration



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Home page of WebQuest: Entertainment or environment?

A community debate

5. Conclusions

- WebQuests have gained a positive reputation among foreign language teachers because they represent a motivating and optimal way of learning a language, and simultaneously develop cooperative and problem solving skills.
- WebQuests are well accepted by students and they are an interesting tool for training Architecture students since they can benefit from updated information to implement their knowledge in the field. Eventually, this additional information can be motivating and be used to prepare them to perform their job supported by communication technologies.
- Since the WebQuests presented in this paper aimed at fulfilling the students' needs, they engage students in cognitive activities necessary to communicate in their discipline, help to diversify the ESP learning at Architecture studies and facilitate the development of professional communicative skills and specifically oral.



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