



Using a WebQuest Model to Develop Critical Reading Performance among General Secondary Stage Students

By

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Introduction

- WebQuests are activities which are based on using resources from the Internet.
- Teachers help students use WebQuests to focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support students' critical thinking.



- The WebQuest has several advantages which include encouraging critical thinking, leading to more communication through group activities, and eliciting greater learner motivation through "real-life" tasks.



- WebQuests continue to grow in popularity, with teachers from around the world and experts in the field of educational technology espousing their potential to promote higher level thinking.



- Critical reading is very important to Foreign Language students.
- It refers to a careful, active, reflective and analytic reading.



- The possession of critical reading skills could open real possibilities in students' future working and personal lives.
- Therefore, it is essential for English as a Foreign Language teachers to help their students become critical readers.



Statement of the problem

First year General Secondary Stage students suffer from weaknesses in their critical reading performance in English. These weaknesses might be attributed to the inappropriate approaches of teaching critical reading provided to them. Using a WebQuest (WM) is, therefore, suggested to develop critical reading performance among first year General Secondary Stage students.



Questions of the study

1-What are the most important critical reading skills to be developed by first year General Secondary Stage students?

2-How far will the WM help first year General Secondary Stage students in developing their critical reading performance?



Hypotheses of the study

1-There would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-Critical Reading Test (CRT) in favor of the experimental group.

2-There would be statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group between the pre- and post-CRT in favor of the post-CRT.



Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the usefulness of using a WM in teaching critical reading to first year General Secondary Stage students to reveal if it could provide them with an effective support to develop their critical reading performance in English.



Significance of the study

The results may be significant to first year General Secondary Stage students. It may also be significant to EFL teachers and curriculum developers.



Variables of the study

- The independent variable is using the WM in teaching critical reading.
- The dependent variable is first year General Secondary Stage students' critical reading performance.



Limitations of the study

1-First year General Secondary Stage students at Asmaa' Bint Abi Bakr General Secondary School for Girls in Suez Governorate in Egypt.

2-A limited duration for the experiment(eight weeks).



Definition of terms

1- A WebQuest

It is defined as an activity that is based on using resources from the Internet and presents authentic tasks with scaffolding that encourage students' participation in an autonomous and collaborative way.



Critical reading

It is defined as a technique for evaluating what is read. It involves the ability to identify the main idea, identify relationships, draw conclusions, make inferences and comparisons.



History of WebQuests

- The first WebQuest was created by Dodge at San Diego State University in 1995.
- Since then, WebQuests have gained popularity and have become a frequent topic of discussion at conferences.



- Thousands of schools and universities all over the world and many teachers have used WebQuests in classroom language instruction.



Components of a WebQuest

1- Introduction:

It discusses the importance of the topic of the WebQuest and reasons why the topic is worth investigating.



2- Task:

It involves a description of what the learners are going to accomplish. It should be doable and interesting to them.



3-Process:

- It includes scaffolding that is well written and involves clear steps and tools for organizing information.
- It provides a clear description for the learners on how to find and organize the information via suitable tools, and what they should do to complete the task.



4-Resources:

- They provide links to high-quality Internet-based resources which the learners should use to accomplish the task.
- All web links should be pertinent to the task, make excellent use of the web and are working.
- Resources should be pre-selected by the teacher to help the learners focus on the topic.



5-Evaluation:

- It includes an evaluative tool that might be in a form of a rubric.
- Explicit directions should be involved in the WebQuest rubric so as to describe to the learners what they should exactly do to be successful with the WebQuest components.



6-Conclusion:

- It reminds the learners of what they have learned as a result of completing the activity.
- It encourages the learners to apply what they have learned in different contexts.
- It provides a summary statement about the worthiness of the experience.



Research design

The present study was a pre-, post-test quasi-experimental study. It involved two groups: an experimental group and a control group.



Participants

- The participants were first year General Secondary Stage students at Asmaa' Bint Abi Bakr General Secondary School for Girls in Suez Governorate.
- All were proficient in using computer as all of them obtained the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) before conducting the experiment.




- All of them have access to the Internet at their homes as the experimental group was required to use the Internet to complete the task.
- The students were already assigned into classes by their school. Two classes were randomly selected from one teacher's list of classes. These two classes were randomly assigned into two groups, one class as the experimental group (24 students) and the other as the control group (24 students).



- Both groups used to read and study the critical reading texts provided in their Student's Textbook by using reading software given on Compact Disks (CDs).
- Both of them were also familiar with participating in collaborative work during critical reading lessons. However, both groups were not provided any opportunities to access into the Internet during critical reading lessons.
- Their teacher of English language stressed that they both had no previous experience with using WebQuests before conducting the experiment.
- The researcher taught the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group was taught lesson (13) from the Student's Textbook by using the WM while the control group was taught the same lesson by using reading software provided on a CD that they regularly used during critical reading lessons.



To be sure that the control group and the experimental group were equivalent in their critical reading performance before conducting the experiment, the researcher pre-tested the two groups by using the CRT. Then, the t-test was used to test the significance of the differences between them on the pre-CRT.



No significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups on the pre-CRT.

This indicates that the control group and the experimental group were equivalent in their critical reading performance before conducting the experiment.



Instruments

- The Critical Reading Skills Checklist (CRSC)
- The Critical Reading Test (CRT)

The researcher validated the instruments and assessed their reliability.



Materials

1. A WebQuest Model (WM)
2. A program based on using the WM in a critical reading lesson.

The researcher validated the materials.



The researcher trained the experimental group by using the program which based on using the WM in a critical reading lesson to investigate the effect of using a WM on developing first year General Secondary Stage students' critical reading performance.



- By the end of the training sessions, the researcher post-tested the experimental group and the control group by using the CRT.
- The first hypothesis was tested. The results showed that the difference in the mean scores between the experimental group and the control group on the post-CRT was statistically significant. So, the first hypothesis was accepted.



- The second hypothesis was tested.

The results showed that the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group between the pre- and post-CRT was in favor of the post-CRT and was statistically significant.

So, the second hypothesis was accepted.



Conclusion

- The results are limited to the research participants, the material used for the treatment and the instruments used to collect the data.
- It can be concluded that using the WM proved to be effective in developing the experimental group's critical reading performance.



Recommendations

-Extended use should be made of WebQuests to be integrated into the reading lessons taught to first year General Secondary Stage students to help them develop their critical reading performance.

-Training programs should be provided to teachers of English to help them know how to use the WebQuest in teaching critical reading.

