

The Effect of WebQuests on EFL Reading Ability

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ABSTRACT: Teachers are being challenged to find ways to integrate the use of ICT into their teaching to both address these outcomes and enhance what they have previously done on their classrooms. One approach to the use of the Internet that has a lot of potentials for both teachers and learners is the Web Quest. This study aimed at verifying (1) whether the students would be interested in reading texts extensively in English; (2) whether an interactive constructivist environment would make a difference in an extensive reading task. This quasi-experimental study examined the effect of the Web Quest in extensive reading. The experiment and control subjects were from two different classes attending the fifth semester of English department at STKIP PGRI Jombang, Indonesia. The results showed that there is no statistical difference between the groups ($p=0.575$). The results also indicated that both approaches (the Web Quest and traditional) lead to learning and both are valuable teaching strategies. The results showed that the majority of students in both groups had some difficulties in reading in English. General comments follow the next discussion and end with conclusion and suggestion which might be beneficial for language learners and EFL practitioners.

Keywords: internet-based teaching, Web Quest

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English, as the first foreign language in Indonesia, has very important functions in many aspects of life. It is not only as means of international communication but also as a means of transferring and developing science and technology. In all levels of educational institution, the use of English is unavoidable. That is why English needs to be learned in formal schools. To master English, English learners need to work hard. However, working hard alone does not guarantee that the learning will be successful. English learners will need some important aspects such as motivation and strategies. If one has high motivation, he or she will find ways and strategies to improve their English by mastering the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Among the four language skills, reading is considered as the most important one because it can support the process of mastering the other skills and improving knowledge. In spite of the importance, the facts show that not all individual learners are able to read well. Nunan (1997) states that, unlike speaking, reading is not something that every individual learns to do. An enormous amount of time, money, and effort is spent for teaching reading in schools around the world. In fact, it is probably true to say that more time is spent in teaching reading than any other skills. In order to improve the mastery of reading, there are some efforts that need to be done by students as well as teachers. Some strategies in improving reading skills are introduced by experts. Thus, both students and teachers can use strategies which facilitate learning from texts. Some strategies can be employed in order that students are able to read and understand the texts. The question is whether it is enough to have the ability to understand the text while the motivation to read is still very low.

Kweldju (1997) states that motivation is an effective factor crucial to successful textbook reading. Poor motivation may cause even most able reader not to read a required textbook. High motivation, on the other hand, energizes readers to continually interact with the text. Highly motivated readers tend to involve themselves in an on-going process of interpreting and assimilating the author's main idea within the framework of their prior knowledge and experience. Teachers need to learn to manipulate this factor to promote student learning. To determine what to do, in relation to reading, it is necessary to know the perspective of reading. The perspective can be a consideration to determine whether someone is skilled or an unskilled reader in comprehending a text (Adams and Bruck: 1993).

Reading is also important in enjoyment. Teachers must try to show students that reading can be interesting and they can give logical reasons for them. Students may read for pleasure or relaxation and involve themselves in the adventures that they find in printed texts such as books, magazines, and articles from internet. Students may also gain knowledge of their hobbies and interest by browsing sources and the teachers can help by assigning them to read extensively the work of many authors. The most valuable thing a reading teacher can do for his or her students is to encourage and support them so that they have self-confidence in reading in the second language (Timothy: 1998).

One of the best ways to do is to make assignments that the students will enjoy and to give them time to read. This requires preparation and coordination by the teacher, either by setting up a reading library or by providing a guide for reading activities conducted using outside classroom resources such as the Internet. Teachers are being challenged to find ways to integrate the use of ICT into their teaching to both address these outcomes and enhance what they have previously done on their classrooms. One approach to the use of the Internet that has a lot of potentials for both teachers and learners is the Web Quest. One of the assignments in extensive reading is to read and do the tasks in a Web Quest which requires a lot of reading. It is expected that students are motivated to read more, so that it leads to the development of their learning abilities.

Web Quests originated at the San Diego State University (SDSU) Department of Educational Technology. It is an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from the Internet. The model was developed by Bernie Dodge at SDSU in February, 1995 with early input from SDSU/pacific Bell Fellow Tom March, the Educational Technology staff at San Diego University School District, and waves of participated by Dodge (2007), since those beginning days, tens of thousands of teachers have embraced Web Quests in the kinds of thinking that the 21st century requires. It is also reported that the model has spread around the world, with special enthusiasm in Australia, Brazil, China, Holland and Spain. Mostly, Web Quests have at least the same model as shown in the Web Quest template and its sections. Students will find it easier once they engage in the Web Quest and become familiar with the process. According to Hilve (2003), Web Quests include six major sections; they are introduction, task, process, evaluation, conclusion, and teacher page.

1. Introduction functions to hook the learner by establishing the situation, offering background information, and posing a question or presenting a problem.
2. Task gives a brief overview of what students are to do. It outlines clearly what the end result of the Web Quest will be: a paper, a multimedia project, a bulletin board, etc.
3. Process describes the steps of the Web Quest; it explains roles and clarifies each part of the assignment. This section includes links to supporting Internet resources. It is critical that the students are not left to wander aimlessly about the net.
4. Evaluation specifies how participation will be assessed. Often the evaluative part of a Web Quest contains a rubric or mastery checklist.
5. Conclusion repeats major themes of the Web Quest and poses additional questions for reflection.
6. Teacher page includes information to help other teachers implement the Web Quest. Goals and objectives, teaching notes, and examples of student projects can be found here.

Technologically, creating a Web Quest can be very simple. As long as it is created with hyperlinks, anybody can create a Web Quest. That means that a Web Quest can be created in Word, Power point and even Excel. A simple way of creating a Web Quest is to download a template that includes programs for each section; then, open up in a web editor; write something that relates to the topic; and to save and then upload it to a server somewhere. Lots of efforts on computer-knowledge technology are required, and those efforts often displace the time needed to create good pedagogy. Once a template is downloaded, it then comes to the steps of the Web Quest Design Process.

In a Web Quest, students visit specific web pages or web sites in the Internet, find and process information from the sites, draw conclusion, and at least, create a product: a web. Actually, students can go to the library to find resources, but here, the Web Quest allows them to use the modern way that is easier although it might be more expensive as they have to have connection to the Internet. The library, with the book collections, can be static and keep the students from the history of something. The Internet is something that is up-dated all the time and there are millions of web sites that provide the latest information. In other words, a WebQuest that is accessed using the Internet is an alternative to conventional library search.

The positive thing about Web Quest is that it creates students' responsibility in reading by having them read similar web pages but with different perspectives. This way or method of reading can be include in critical as well as creating reading, both of which lead to extensive reading activities. Creating reading involves going beyond the material presented by the author. Like critical reading, creative reading requires students to think as they read, and it also requires them to use their imagination. In doing 'the task' part of WebQuest, students are free to use their imagination to assign the reader to be somebody or something. Teachers just let them share their mental image with the group and have them illustrate the process' after reading.

Web Quest is not medium of mastering reading by presenting a list of thousands of topics assigned by the teacher. It provides an engaging and a complex backdrop on which to hang bits of knowledge that would otherwise seem static and slow (Dodge: 2001). In the earlier time, having mastered the factual information was sufficient; students could just go to the library and get the facts by searching at certain books. Today, however, students still do the same but teachers can ask them to browse, make the webQuest, summarize, paraphrase, and then finish their final project as additional assignments for them that urge them to read and understand more. So, the use of web will give a new insight in improving students' reading abilities and make them 'on task'.

Based on the facts that WebQuest can be used to enhance the reading abilities of students, this research study was intended to verify whether in a learning environment based on a WebQuest, the students would engage in an extensive reading task. The objectives of the study are:

- To verify whether the students would be interested in reading texts extensively in English;
- To verify whether an interactive constructivist environment would make a difference in an extensive reading task.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This quasi-experimental study examined the effect of the WebQuest in extensive reading. The experiment and control subjects were from two different classes attending the fifth semester of English department at STKIP PGRI Jombang, located in Jombang Indonesia. The experimental group (called as class A) consisted of 26 students. These students read a story presented through the WebQuest, mainly due to the timetable that allowed the use of the computer lab. The control group (called as class B) consisted of 27 students. These students read the same story under the guidance of the lecturer and did the same worksheet as the experimental group. These groups of students were exposed to a traditional reading class using the print-out story as a single resource. In this case, the lecturer read the story and helped the students solve the exercises.

Both group responded to a characterization questionnaire to analyze their attitudes towards reading, more specifically their attitudes toward reading in English. Two tests (Test A and Test B) were administered to both groups. Test A was done by both groups to evaluate their reading skills and to complete the characterization of the groups. During 5 sessions, the groups received their treatments; they read and analyzed the same story, and they did the same exercises. The experimental group worked on the WebQuest in 5 sessions during which the researcher took some field notes about students' reactions and attitudes. They worked in groups of five students. The control group, during 5 sessions, read the same story under the guidance of the lecturer. Following the treatment, both groups had to do a knowledge test (test B) about the story. Table 1 presents the group' treatment and the tasks during the 9 sessions (including 5 sessions for the WebQuest).

Table 1: Group's Treatment and tasks

Session	Experimental group	Control group
1	Answer questions on characterization questionnaire	Answer questions on characterization questionnaire
2	Test A	Test B
3-7	WebQuests	Print-out story/traditional class
8	Test B	Test B
9	Questionnaires about the WebQuest and the story	Questionnaires about the story

From the very beginning, the students from the experimental group were very reluctant to do the reading in the WebQuest as they had to work alone without the guidance from the lecturer. After some time, they got used to read by themselves and started to work on the WebQuest. At the same time, the students did the reading assigned in the WebQuest and tried to find the difficult words in the online dictionary. This helped them much in understanding the story and working with the WebQuest made them enjoy the reading activities without fear to make mistakes on the grammar. On the other hand, students with the traditional method of reading guided by the lecturer found it easier to work in their class as they could ask about difficult words and sentences they encountered in the story.

In the *Introduction*, the researcher defined the scenery and motivated the students to read, referring to the mystery and suspense (see Figure 1). The *Task* contextualized the adventure. In my opinion, it was motivating and challenging, as it is implied that the students assumed the role of a journalist who writes book reviews, investigated about the author, and gives their opinions about the book (see Figure 2). The *Process* showed all steps they had to follow in order to solve the task.

Figure 1. WebQuest Introduction Section

Webquest on Sherlock Holmes



Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who first appeared in publication in 1887. He is the creation of British author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The stories cover a period from around 1875 up to 1907, with the final case in 1914.

He was known as a 'consulting detective'. In the stories people came to him with strange and mysterious problems usually involving murder and robbery. Sherlock Holmes found the mysteries which were the strangest and most dangerous to be the most satisfying to solve. His friend and long time companion, Dr Watson, described Sherlock Holmes as having one of the best minds in England. Now it's your turn to become detective!

You need to read your task and then find the answers by searching the Internet.

The game's afoot, Good Luck!

PROCESS



You now need to search the Internet to find the answers to the task questions. Some questions you might think you know the answer to- this will help you recognize the correct answer when you find it.


When you have found what you believe to be the correct answer, then write your answer on paper or type it out in a word processing program, such as word .

Firstly, they had to follow the links and searched for information about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the story, and his main character, Sherlock Holmes (<http://sherlock-holmes.classic-literature.co.uk/a-scandal-in-bohemia/>). Afterward, they accessed the story and the worksheet.


Figure 2. WebQuest Task Section

TASKS

Sherlock Holmes Webquest Questions



- 1) Who wrote the Sherlock Holmes's stories? Please give HIS/HER full name please
- 2) What 3 items did Sherlock Holmes never leave the house without?
- 3) Find 3 famous quotes from Sherlock Holmes stories
- 4) Name at least 4 of Sherlock Holmes's famous cases that he solved?
- 5) Name only woman to impress Holmes in his life time and which story did she appear in?
- 6) What was the name of Sherlock Holmes's Housekeeper?
- 7) What was Sherlock Holmes's famous address? When did he start to live there?
- 8) Does that address still exist today? Provide evidence of your findings
- 9) There have been many actors who have played the role of Sherlock Holmes in hundreds of movies and television shows. Can you name four of the actors.
- 10) What was the name of the Scotland Yard inspector who worked alongside Sherlock Holmes in many of his cases.
- 11) Sherlock Holmes made this remark- " You've a magnificent brain, I'd like to present it pickled in alcohol to the London Medical Society"



The text in the WebQuest was divided into the 12 pages. The students could read the text separately and did the exercises. Alternatively, they could read the full story and then solved the worksheet. The worksheet was a Word file, which could be downloaded from intranet service at the campus and it could be printed. It was also divided into twelve parts and the exercises were chosen to guide the students to the general understanding of each chapter. They were not focusing on specific language aspects as the idea is not to practice grammar or syntax. In the end, the students were asked to write a story review to be published in an internal campus newspaper. The students had to give their opinions and they were required to be creative in presenting Sherlock Holmes into an article equipped with pictures and quizzes. The activity is the reflection of one of numerous extensive reading activities.

In the *Resources*, there is a series of links that are important and relevant about the author. There are external links and internal links to the worksheet and to the chapters of the story. In the *Evaluation*, the researcher (as the reading lecturer) defines a proportional value for the worksheet and the story review. Because the worksheet is

considered to be the most important component and a help for the text understanding, it is given the weight of 60% and the story review is given 40% of the overall evaluation.

III. RESULTS

The researcher started the distribution of questionnaires on students' characterization and needed with a test. The characterization questionnaire results showed that the majority of students in both groups had some difficulties in reading in English (61.5% were in the Experimental group and 59.3% in the Control group). They had some difficulties mainly due to the existence of unknown and difficult words. They also showed little interest in any reading activity in this foreign language. Students usually read texts that were not only in textbooks and, in the Internet; they tried to find pages of texts written in Indonesian. Table 2 shows students' responses with regard to the question: "Do you find it difficult to read in English?"

Table 2. Students' difficulty in Reading in English

	Experimental group (n=26)		Control group (n=27)	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	9	34.6	3	11.1
More or less	16	61.5	16	59.3
No	1	3.8	8	29.6

The texts applied to both groups were Test A and Test B. The former test was applied to both groups before beginning with the treatment. The results showed that the two groups of students were similar. The mean was slightly higher in the experimental group (55.80) as well as the standard deviation (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of Test A in both Groups

Statistics	Experimental group (n=26)	Control group (n=27)
Mean	55.80	50.15
Standard Deviation	18.58	14.26
Minimum	0	21
Maximum	97	78

According to the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test, no statistical difference was obtained ($p=0.182$), the group were similar (see Table 4). This non-parametric test was used to determine if a difference is existed between two 'groups'. It was also most widely-used significant test for comparing two independent samples, and may be used to test differences in ordinal data or higher. For rank data, U tests were applied to see if the ranks were randomly mixed between two samples.

Table 4. Results of test A (The Mann-Whitney-U Test)

Group	Mean ranking	Z Corrected for ties	Statistical Significance
Experimental	29.88	-1.3335	P=0.182
Control	24.22		

Then, Test B was administered at the end of the study. It was intended to check the acquired knowledge and the understanding of the story. After the study, the experimental group obtained a mean of 50.96 and the control group of 47.67 (see Table 5). Standard deviation was also higher in the experimental group.

Table 5. Results of Test B in both Groups

Statistics	Experimental group (n=26)	Control group (n=27)
Mean	50.96	47.67
Standard deviation	24.00	18.54
Minimum	2	10
Maximum	92	84

Table 6. Results of test B (The Mann-Whitney-U Test)

Group	Mean ranking	Z Corrected for Ties	Statistical Significance
Experimental	28.21	-0.561	P=0.575
Control	25.83		

The non-parametric test Mann-Whitney-U Test (see Table 6) shows that there is no statistical difference between the groups ($p=0.575$). These results indicate that both approaches lead to learning and both are valuable teaching strategies.

The results of the questionnaire, responded by the students in the end of the study, showed that experimental students liked the WebQuest, as it enhanced learning and it was fun. Given the question “Did you like reading in the WebQuest?” many of the students (69.2%) stated that they enjoyed the activity and none of the students answered negatively to this question (see Table 7). They also mentioned the fact that they could get out of the classroom, go to the computer lab, and that the WebQuests allowed them to use the Internet.

Students mentioned that they enjoyed the story as it contained mystery and adventure. However, most of them (93.3%) found it difficult because of the vocabulary. In fact, only 2 students (7.7%) thought that there was no difficulty in the activity. The story review and the exercises were considered important and relevant, according to 50% of the students, the worksheet helped them to understand the story.

Table 7. Students’ Opinions on the Use of WebQuest

Response	Experimental group	
	f	F
Yes	18	69.2
More or less	8	30.8
No	0	00

It is interesting to notice that in spite of the difficulties, 81% of the students mentioned they would like to get involved in similar activities, as using the WebQuest helped them, and they found it interesting and enjoyable.

The students in the control group responded that they liked reading the story (81.5%), mentioning that it was interesting (63%) and contained mystery (29.6%). They considered that the story was not difficult as only 11.1% of the students answered affirmatively to this question. They mentioned the fact that they had the lecturer’ help when they found a difficult word. Maybe this explains why they did not give so much importance to the worksheet or the exercises they had to do. Only one third of the students (33.3%) considered the worksheet helped them in some way.

It is important to examine whether the activity increased the students’ interest in further reading in English. Thus, the question “Would you like to read another text in English?” was asked in the questionnaire. In fact, the answers of the experimental group (see Table 8) show that in spite of the difficulty, the number of students that answered positively to this question was high (69.2%) compared to those who said they might read another text in English (23.1%) or they would not like to repeat the experience (7.7%).

Table 8. Students’ Opinion on Reading another Test in English

Response	Experimental group		Control group	
	f	%	f	%
Yes	18	69.2	13	48.1
More or less	6	3.1	13	48.1
No	2	7.7	1	3.8

The opinions of the students in the control group were mainly divided between *yes* and *maybe* (48.1%). This means that the number of students that show motivation in reading texts in English for extensive reading is higher in the experimental group and the difficulty they got initially did not affect their positive opinions.

IV. DISCUSSION

With the increasing interest in the integration of technology in education, WebQuests have emerged as a popular technology tool. WebQuests, known as Internet-based inquiry activities, are believed to support the interplay between the use of Internet technology and constructivist learning (March: 2005). The WebQuest model was primarily created as a tool to integrate effectively the World Wide Web into classrooms (Frazee: 2004). Many teachers see this as an opportunity to incorporate the web technology into their lessons.

The current and popular practice on how reading is taught in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was the beginning of the inquiry into this topic. Several scholars have reported that the

traditional grammar translation method has long been used in this context. Teachers need to explain in detail sentence structure, word meaning and usage to language learners (Fang and Warchauer: 2004). With this kind of instructional practice, it can be obviously seen that EFL students have been given limited time and opportunity to read English texts independently, as teachers would rather spend more time teaching about the language. The above method fails to promote independent and extensive reading because a lot of time is spent on analyzing the texts.

Having said that, one should ask how the current practice can actually serve the changing demands of the language learners in this century. Should the practice of traditional reading instruction be reconsidered to prepare learners for the increasing demand of new literacy? With the emergence of multi-media technology and global communication, could these innovations offer more exposure to the vast amount of information in English? Could they provide an opportunity for extensive and authentic English reading in the EFL context?

Despite such an on-going practice of traditional reading instruction, attempts have been made to introduce newer and more effective ways of reading instruction in the context of both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The use of technology has become one of the tools that educators have been interested in. among several possibilities; WebQuests have emerged as one of the popular tools offered to ESL/EFL teachers. Numerous scholars claim the usefulness of WebQuests and believe that WebQuests are excellent way to integrate the Internet into the classroom on both a short-term and long-term basis (Schrock: 1995).

Knowing that the tool is pedagogically sound and popular is not enough to warrant its successful integration into the classroom. Little is known about how this type of Internet lesson actually functions in real contexts, especially in the EFL context. However, it is not accurate to say that there has not been any successful implementation of WebQuest-based lessons in the classroom; rather, there have not been many studies that investigated the use and the outcome of this tool for EFL learning purposes. Without research that at least documents the practice embedded with the tool, or that investigates the issues arising from the use of this tool, one may lack understanding of the teachers and students' interaction within this technology-enhanced lesson of the outcomes that arise from this interaction.

In order to make the integration of technology along with the constructivist learning principle work, it is necessary to understand how such a technological tool would be used, especially concerning the ways in which teachers go about operating the tool. Additionally, we need research that informs us about whether this tool can mediate language learning. In sum, this study is expected to shed light on how a Web-assisted tool such as WebQuests could be used in real-life EFL classrooms by this technological tool within the EFL context.

V. CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained in this study, it can be said that the WebQuest is a valuable environment for an extensive reading activity. It pleased the students and because the students showed higher interest in reading other texts in English. It also developed autonomy as students did their work. Students had to solve the problems, share points of view, and construct the meaning of the text by negotiating it with their peers. It is an interesting and engaging alternative for learning.

However, not everything is easy. As it is verified in this study, using WebQuests is a more difficult and demanding activity for students than the situation they are used to, where they are helped by the lecturer and usually do not have to make effort to understand the meaning of the texts. Initially, they were also so reluctant to get involved in the activity when they found the WebQuest was written in English and they would not get assistance from the lecturer. Therefore, it is necessary for English teachers, especially those who teach reading, to consider carefully all the aspects of the task given to the students in order to provide a balanced and motivating learning environment.

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