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## A Webquest tool to develop communicative competence in EFL students with an A2 proficiency level

*Webquest como herramienta para desarrollar la competencia comunicativa en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera con nivel A2*

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Una Nana Negra  
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El presente estudio tiene como objetivo: Desarrollar la competencia comunicativa con estudiantes de pregrado en la clase de inglés de nivel A2, mediante el diseño e implementación de una Webquest. El diseño se basa en los principios de la enseñanza comunicativa de la lengua (CLT Communicative Language Teaching) y la instrucción basada en tareas (task-based instruction). Las conclusiones muestran que el uso de esta herramienta no solo desarrolla la competencia comunicativa, sino que también incrementa la motivación en los estudiantes, desarrolla el pensamiento crítico, el aprendizaje autónomo y permite el aprendizaje diferenciado. Existen algunas limitantes como el tiempo que se debe dedicar a la planeación por parte de los docentes, la inversión económica en la adquisición de equipos y conexión a internet por parte de la institución y capacitación en el uso y diseño del recurso.

**Palabras clave:** WebQuest, Enseñanza Comunicativa de la lengua, Aprendizaje basado en tareas, Pensamiento crítico, Aprendizaje autónomo.

ABSTRACT

RESUMEN

The objective of this study is to develop the communicative competence in undergraduate A2 students of English as a Foreign Language, through the design and implementation of a WebQuest. The design is based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-based Instruction. The conclusions show that the use of this tool not only develops the communicative competence, but also increases motivation in students, fosters critical thinking, promotes autonomous learning, and enables differentiated learning. There also exist some difficulties such the amount of time teachers need to devote to planning, the economical investment administrators need to make at acquiring equipment and internet connection, as well as at professional training in the use and design of this tool.

**Key words:** WebQuest, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-based Instruction, Critical Thinking, Autonomous Learning.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

One way to avoid the problems that the Web can bring to the EFL classroom, such as inappropriate content or even the excessive amount of information posted in it, is by using WebQuests, an online tool that could help teachers organize the endless but valuable online material in English in such a way that students can take advantage of it to develop their communicative competence without being exposed to unwanted material.

This paper presents the use of WebQuests as an internet tool teachers can use to develop learners' communicative competence in an EFL classroom and reduce the risk of students viewing inappropriate content on the Web. Firstly, some general information about the use of Web in education will be presented to set the context of the research. Secondly, WebQuests will be defined, and their components and their importance in an EFL classroom will be explained. After this, Communicative Language Teaching will be described as well as the importance of tasks, and the description of proficiency levels. Then, the design on the WebQuest called "Let's go to London" will be provided and some practical guidelines will be given to make the use of WebQuests a successful experience in an EFL. Finally, the conclusions of this study which will be presented in order to devote to discussing some considerations that need attention when working with the Web and WebQuests in the classroom.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Webquest

With the sudden increase in popularity of the World Wide Web, and the massive amount of

information that it holds, back in 1995 a group of educators became skeptical about the benefits of the use of this tool in education. They thought that mere exposure to online resources was not enough to improve students' learning process. With these questions in mind, Bernie Dodge, a professor of education technology at San Diego State University and his colleague Tom March designed the WebQuest as a framework for teachers to structure student-centered learning using Internet resources (MacGregor & Lou, 2005, p. 162).

According to March (1997), "a WebQuest is an inquiry activity that presents student groups with a challenging task, provides access to an abundance of usually online resources and scaffolds the learning process to prompt higher order thinking" (WebQuest section, para. 1). The main goal of WebQuests is to promote critical thinking skills by challenging students to transform information found in the Web rather than simply searching and recalling information.

WebQuests are based on the Inquiry-based approach which differs from the traditional concept of education in several aspects. While the traditional classroom focuses on mastery of contents without any meaningful application of them, the inquiry-based classroom focuses on using and learning contents as a means to develop information processing and problem-solving skills ("Concept," 2004, Traditional approach section, para. 1).

The traditional classroom is teacher-centered, whereas the inquiry-based classroom is student-centered. In the former, the teacher is the holder of knowledge and students are receivers of information. In the latter, students feel more motivated because they are involved in the construction of knowledge. "The more in-

terested and engaged students are by a subject or project, the easier it will be for them to construct in-depth knowledge of it" ("Concept," 2004, Traditional approach section, para. 3). In other words, students become responsible for their own learning.

Thus, WebQuests come to play an important role since this model "provides teachers with an instructional framework to create meaningful online learning activities" (Zheng, Perez, Williamson, & Flygare, 2008, p. 296). As Dodge (2001) pointed out WebQuests are not a learning approach but an educational tool designed to "focus on using information [from the Web] rather than looking for it, and to support learners thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (p. 7). With WebQuests students have the possibility to actually access information, to analyze it, and to make sense out of it to solve problems encountered in real life, therefore, developing their critical thinking skills.

### Elements of WebQuests

According to Dodge (2001), "WebQuests are appealing because they provide structure and guidance both for students and for teachers" (p. 7). In his model, Dodge (1995) stated that a WebQuest must comply with six critical attributes: Introduction, Task, Process, Resources, Evaluation, and Conclusion.

The introduction contextualizes the problem to be sorted out and tells students what role to play in the activity (Sharp, 2005, p. 271).

The Task describes "crisply and clearly what the end result of the learners' activities will be" (Creating WebQuests, 1999, Task section, para.1). In this section students are presented with an activity that is connected to their real life thereby

making the task interesting and meaningful. This type of tasks develops critical thinking since students are faced to real-life problems. They are told to transform information found in the Web to create new knowledge.

The Process describes the steps that students must follow to accomplish the goal. Kelly (2000) asserted that "these steps can be broken down into as many as needed for the student to be successful" (p. 5). The purpose of this section is to present the activities (or subtasks) that students must accomplish to fulfill the task. Students are assigned their respective role for the accomplishment of the task. This section may also "provide guidance on how to organize the information gathered" (Creating WebQuests, 1999, Process section, para.3).

The Resource section provides links to the Web sites students are to use to accomplish the task. In the original WebQuest, this section stood on its own (Dodge, 1995). However, in later versions Web links are included in the Process section to make it simpler for students to navigate through the WebQuest. Teachers might include Web links to videos, podcasts, online magazines, blogs or any other online material useful for the purpose of the task.

The Evaluation shows students how their performance will be graded in completion of the task; in other words, the evaluation must be coherent with the task (Sharp, 2005, p. 271). In the original version of WebQuests rubrics were proposed as a way to evaluate students' performance. Rubrics are descriptive scoring schemes developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or processes of students' efforts (Brookhart, as cited in Moskal, 2000, p. 2).

The Conclusion briefly describes the achievements students have made by developing the task. The conclusion, as with the introduction, must be engaging, leading students to discuss their discoveries (Sharp, 2005). Other Web links can be posted here for further reading so that students can expand their knowledge on the topic of the WebQuest or even on related topics.

### Types of WebQuests

Norton and Wiburg (2003) described two kinds of WebQuests: A short-term WebQuest and a longer-term WebQuest. A short-term WebQuest can last up to three class periods and its goal is to put students into contact with a modest amount of new information and encourage them to acquire and integrate that new knowledge to their prior knowledge.

A longer-term WebQuest, on the other hand, can last from one week to one month and its goal is to make students understand, analyze and transform some information given to create knowledge (Norton & Wiburg, 2003).

### Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This paper focuses on EFL learners in Colombia where English neither has official status nor is used by educated people to communicate. The opportunities that most English language learners in this country have to develop their communicative skills are restricted to the classroom and the input obtained from movies, TV programs and the Internet. That is why the use of WebQuests becomes relevant. With this Web-based tool, EFL teachers can organize online input, such as recorded messages, articles, conversations, etc., in a meaningful communicative task that learners will accomplish cooperatively,

thus developing their reading, listening, writing and speaking skills in English.

### Communicative Competence

Since the 1970s, the purpose of second and foreign language teaching has aimed at developing communicative competence. The communicative competence concept was born in opposition to the previous approaches being used which merely focused on grammar and the correctness of the language.

Hymes (as cited in Brown, 2000) defined communicative competence as "that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts" (p. 246). From this point of view, the communication process was not an individual process anymore; it turned into a process where all speakers, listeners, writers and readers played an active role. They all worked cooperatively to understand and be understood.

Based on Hyme's concept of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (as cited in Brown, 2000) proposed four different categories: grammatical, discursive, sociolinguistic and strategic competences.

Brown (2001) presented an updated version of communicative competence which summarizes the concepts presented by Canale and Swain and other linguists:

In its skeletal form, CC [communicative competence] consists of some combination of the following components:

- Organizational competence (grammatical and discourse)

- Pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic)
- Strategic competence
- Psychomotor skills (pronunciation). (p. 68)

As the use of English is restricted to the classroom in EFL settings, English language teachers need to provide learners with classroom activities that allow them to develop communicative competence in all its dimensions. WebQuests can serve this purpose fully. They provide oral and written input from diverse sources that learners will have to decode; furthermore, they promote negotiation of meaning among learners through collaborative work.

### Principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Concerned about the development of communicative competence in EFL classes, linguists and language teachers have explored different approaches and methods that claim to achieve this goal. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) rises as one of the most important communicative approaches. Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that

both American and British proponents now see it [CLT] as an approach (and not a method) that aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. (p. 155)

CLT recognizes the importance of the social part of the language aiming at helping learners to develop not only the linguistic and pragmatic competences but also the sociolinguistic and

strategic ones in their second or foreign language through real-life activities. With CLT, the classroom stops being teacher and grammar-centered and transforms into learner and communication-centered.

Several advocates of CLT find it difficult to set a definition for such an approach. Brown (2001), among them, preferred to establish some characteristics to describe CLT. Firstly, he stated that classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence.

Brown (2001) also pointed out that "language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes" (p. 43). Advocates of CLT favor the use of games, and problem-solving tasks among others. The former, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000),

are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events - there is a purpose to the exchange. Also the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not he or she has successfully communicated. In this way they can negotiate meaning. (p. 126).

In this negotiation of meaning learners need to use all their competences to understand and convey messages. The latter encourages learners to cooperatively work out a solution for a problem by using the target language as a vehicle of communication.

The third characteristic of CLT mentioned by Brown (2001) supports the idea that "fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more impor-

tance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use" (p. 43). This last idea is better adopted in EFL settings where the time allotted to speak the language is restricted to the classroom. Teachers, consequently, must make the most of the instruction time to encourage communication.

In addition, Brown (2001) affirmed that "students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts" (p. 43). In other words, as the purpose of any language learner is to be able to use the language to communicate outside the classroom, then in-class activities should provide students with practice of real-life situations.

Brown (2001) claimed as well that CLT promotes autonomous learning. He stated that "students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of the appropriate strategies for autonomous learning" (p. 43). Teachers, in search of enhancing their students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, consciously or unconsciously, provide activities for all types of learners, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, among others. This allows learners to find their own path in their learning process.

Finally Brown (2001) pointed out that "the role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others" (p. 43). Once again, cooperative learning is highly appreciated in students' lear-

ning process. The classroom converts into a learner-centered environment where everybody participates in their own and others' learning.

### **Task-Based Instruction in Communicative Language Teaching**

The importance of communicative tasks in CLT has inspired some language experts to develop a complete approach based on the use of tasks in ESL and EFL teaching. Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that the goal of a task-based approach is to give learners a real-life task to be accomplished in a meaningful context where a lot of interaction is fostered; "such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisition as learners have to work to understand each other and to express their own learning" (p. 144). This approach converges with CLT at the following principles presented by Willis (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001):

- Activities that involve real communication are essential for language learning.
- Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.
- Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. (p. 223)

Task-based instruction, then, proposes tasks as activities that boost students' communication skills in the second or foreign language learning process. Here, the importance is not only given to the comprehensible input students receive through reading and listening but also to the comprehensible output students produce either in writing or in speaking.

Nunan (2004) conceptualized two different types of tasks: target and pedagogical. The former refers "to uses of language in the world beyond the classroom" (p. 1). This type of task is highly appreciated in EFL environments where opportunities to encounter English real-life situations are limited to classroom settings. This task also allows learners to experience language within a socio-cultural context.

The pedagogical task, on the other hand, is defined by Nunan (2004) as the kind of task that encourages learners to use the language in communicative situations at the same time as they become aware of the grammar structures they are using (p. 4). As in the target task, the main goal of the pedagogical task is negotiation of meaning.

Prabhu (as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000) referred to three different types of tasks: an information-gap, an opinion-gap and a reasoning-gap tasks. The information-gap task "involves the exchange of information among participants in order to complete a task" (p. 148); a simple example of this type of task is students working in pairs asking and giving directions about a specific place in town to trace a route in a map. An opinion-gap task "requires that students give their personal preferences, feelings, or attitudes in order to complete a task" (p. 148); a debate on the legalization of drugs could be an example of this type of task because students are to give their opinion on the topic. Finally, a reasoning-gap task "requires students to derive some new information by inferring it from information they have been given" (p. 149); for instance, a reasoning-gap task can encourage students to analyze statistics presented in a bar graph.

Taking into account that the core of a WebQuest is a task itself, all the types of tasks described

above can serve this purpose. The main task in a WebQuest is always a target task; nevertheless, the process stage in a WebQuest can involve the other tasks described above.

Besides the types of tasks, Nunan (2004) proposed five other components to take into account when working with tasks. He stated that tasks must have a clear goal and that this can be simply defined as "the answer that a teacher might give to a question from a visitor to his or her class about why learners are undertaking a particular task..." (p. 41). The goal of the task in a WebQuest is clearly described in the Task section itself. The goal can be stated as:

A problem or mystery to be solved; a position to be formulated and defended; a product to be defined; complexity to be analyzed, personal insight to be articulated; summary to be created; persuasive message or journalistic account to be crafted; a creative work; or anything that requires learners to process and transform the information they've gathered. (Creating WebQuests, 1999, WebQuest Templates Section, para. 2)

All the tasks previously mentioned aim at promoting transformation of knowledge to some degree. Specifically in EFL, learners are expected to use the target language as a vehicle to access information and use it to negotiate meaning to reach the goal. In this way, the task serves both purposes, to enhance communicative competence and to develop higher-order thinking skills.

### Proficiency Levels in EFL Learning

Advocates of CLT have been concerned not only about designing strategies for the development of communicative competence among those learning ESL or EFL, but also about designing tools to measure learners' performance in the

target language. In the United States, for example, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) standards in the K-12 school system have been adopted as a way to verify what students can do with the English language through the different school levels. Standards, therefore, “indicate...what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction. [They]...list assessable, observable activities that students may perform to show progress toward meeting the designated standard” (Nunan, 2004, p. 46). Educators can also use these standards to design programs that better suit their students’ linguistic needs.

The Council of Europe, on the other hand, taking Europe’s linguistic diversity into account, has produced The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This document can be utilized to measure learners’ proficiency in any language learned in a foreign setting. The main objective of this document is to describe:

what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. (Council, 2001, p. 1)

According to the CEFR (Council, 2001), users of the target language can be identified as Basic (A level), Independent (B level), or Proficient (C level). Each level, at the same time, is subdivided into two levels that provide a more specific description of learners’ capabilities with the language. The Basic User level is divided into A1 or A2 levels; the Independent User level is divided into B1 or B2 levels; and the Proficient User level is divided into C1 or C2 (p. 24). The Council of Europe has provided a general description of the common reference points that educators should look at when assessing learners’ performance in the target language (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Common Reference Levels: global scale

<b>PROFICIENT USER</b>	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
<b>INDEPENDENT USER</b>	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.

<b>INDEPENDENT USER</b>	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
<b>BASIC USER</b>	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The Council of Europe (2001) has also stated a more specific description of each proficiency level in terms of communicative skills to help teachers cope with learners' linguistic needs and to help learners track their own achievements and needs in their language learning process.

The Ministry of Education of Colombia (2006) has adopted the proficiency levels of the CEFR in the EFL programs at schools and universities. All these Colombian institutions use the taxonomy presented in the CEFR. The thesis of this paper, focused on EFL learners in Colombia, makes reference to the A2 level as the proficiency level that learners must have in order to accomplish the task proposed in the WebQuest presented next.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The population taken into account in this research study was 24 students with an A2 English proficiency level from a public University who

were registered in the English IV semester class. Most of them come from low income families according to the report found in the university student information system. Students were between 20 and 23 years old and had previously taken three 80-hour semester English classes at the University.

The Web links used to accomplish the task in the WebQuest match the language skills of the learners at this stage of their learning process. The Web sites show aural and written messages of "immediate personal relevance" (Council, 2001, p. 26) that allows students to get prepared to sustain short conversations in public places in London, such as a restaurant, a souvenir shop, a tourist information center and a London attraction.

### OBJECTIVES

At the end of the accomplishment of the task proposed in the "Let's go to London" WebQuest, students will be able to:

- Participate in everyday communicative situations such as asking for prices in a shop, ordering food in a restaurant, asking for schedules in a tourist attraction, and asking for directions in an information center.
- Understand basic information heard in restaurants, information centers, shops and tourist attractions.

### Procedure

As the main purpose of the research study was to establish whether students were able to use their communicative competence in English to interact in tourist settings such as a café, a restaurant, a museum, and so on, by using as study material the links posted on the WebQuest, the chosen type of research was qualitative since, according to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (as cited in Mertler & Charles, 2008), "it involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, largely narrative and visual in nature, in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (p. 192). The qualitative research allowed the researchers to gather information through direct observation and interviews. The observations were held during the activity where the "Let's Go to London" WebQuest was implemented, and the interviews were made after the same activity. As one of the researchers was the designer of the "Let's Go to London" WebQuest, the second researcher also did some observations during the WebQuest design process.

To apply the collaborative work principles of Communicative Language Teaching and WebQuests, the 24 students were organized in eight teams of three to accomplish the task. Collaborative work helped them not only to rehearse the roles they had to play in the activity but also negotiate meaning when finding new expres-

sions and decoding new vocabulary. This negotiation of meaning leads to integration of new knowledge with prior knowledge, consequently promoting higher-order thinking skills, which is also one of the principles of WebQuests.

Finally, the "Let's go to London" WebQuest can be categorized as a short-term WebQuest because it only lasts five class periods and its "instructional goal...is knowledge acquisition and integration" (Dodge, 1997, Definition section, para. 2).

### DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### "Let's Go to London": a Communicative WebQuest for an EFL Classroom



**Photo 1.** Students ordering food and taking orders at a café

### DESCRIPTION

The main purpose of the WebQuest presented in this paper is to provide EFL teachers with an example of how to design and use this Web-based tool to enhance communicative competence in an EFL classroom.

As WebQuests are designed under the principles of Task-based and Web-based learning, the

WebQuest presented here describes a communicative task that must be accomplished using online resources. The task in the WebQuest should not be planned purely for communicative purposes at the expense of sacrificing meaningfulness and enjoyment. Therefore, the task presented in this WebQuest allows students to enhance their communicative competence while enjoying learning about English culture by simulating a trip to London; hence the title of the WebQuest: "Let's go to London".

Class One:

Materials required: A computer with Internet connection, a video-beam and the "Let's go to London" WebQuest.

- The teacher presents the "Let's go to London" WebQuest to students using a video-beam and a computer with In-

ternet access. Students get the general idea of the task they are supposed to accomplish in the WebQuest. The teacher explains what each team is in charge of doing and what roles students are supposed to play.

- There is a Questions and Answers section at the end of the presentation.
- The teacher assigns teams. The teacher is free to use the group assignment technique that best suits their students' needs; nonetheless, cooperative learning techniques where high, average and low achievers are put together in the same team are highly recommended. This allows for more negotiation of meaning.
- The teacher emails the PowerPoint (see Figure 1) presentation to students.

## TASK

- **You and your friends are in London. You are either visiting or working at a specific place.**
  - Your teacher will assign you to a 3-member team.
  - Your team will be assigned a number from 1 to 8.
  - Read and follow the instructions for your team.
- **Your task will be to play the role assigned. Use the English linguistic resources you possess and the new ones you will find in the Web sites available for your role.**
- **You are required to speak English at all times.**

[Home Page](#)

Figure 1. Slide from the Power Point Presentation to introduce the task

- Homework: Students review the task and their respective roles. They can start collecting things they can use to decorate the place assigned in the WebQuest such as the restaurant, the shop, the information center and the tourist attraction.

#### Class Two:

Materials required: Minimum eight computers with internet access, paper, pencil, a dictionary, and the "Let's go to London" WebQuest.

- Students get in their teams and start searching the links provided for their roles as tourists, waiters, or clerks.
- Students take notes of new expressions and vocabulary encountered as they view the relevant Web sites listed in the WebQuest. They look up new words in a paper-based dictionary or in the online dictionary available in the WebQuest.
- Students listen to dialogues, practice pronunciation, and read information provided in the Web links.
- The teacher monitors students' work and gives students feedback on their findings and pronunciation.
- Homework: pronunciation practice of new words and expressions. Students continue collecting things for decoration.

#### Class Three:

Materials required: Minimum eight computers and the "Let's go to London" WebQuest.

- Students get in their teams and check new words' pronunciation and meaning with team members.

- Students rehearse their roles. They use their prior knowledge and integrate new expressions. Students help each other get the right questions or answers based on the role to play.
- The teacher monitors students' work and helps them with pronunciation and expressions.
- Homework: Students rehearse conversations. They bring things to decorate the designated place. Some ideas about what they can bring to decorate their corresponding place are mentioned below:
  - Travelers: fake money and passport.
  - Information center: maps, brochures, etc.
  - Restaurant: signs, table and chairs, plates, mugs, menus, etc.
  - Souvenir shop: signs, souvenirs, price tags, etc.
  - London Attractions: signs and pictures of the attraction.

#### Class Four:



**Photo 2.** Students giving and asking for information about London attractions at an information point

Materials required: Things for decoration, map with rotation of teams through the different places.

- Students arrange places for the activity (Photos 1 and 2).
- The teacher shows and explains the chart with the rotation of teams through the different places. During the first half of the class period teams 5, 6, 7 and 8 will play their roles as workers of the different places; meanwhile, teams 1, 2, 3, and 4, play their roles as tourists. During the second half of the class period, teams 5, 6, 7, and 8 will be tourists and teams 1, 2, 3, and will play their role as

workers in the different places. Students need to respect this rotation in order to have a successful activity.

- Teams rotate and each member plays the corresponding role.
- The teacher moves around the classroom observing and evaluating students' performance by using the "Let's go to London" WebQuest rubric. S/he also takes notes of students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses.
- Homework: students evaluate their own performance using the rubrics (see Figure 2) provided in the WebQuest.

EVALUATION				
	NEEDS WORK	BASIC	GOOD	EXEMPLARY
GROUP WORK	Frequently presented off-task behavior distracting the group.	Contributed to the group's goals but sometimes showed off-task behavior.	Contributed most of the time to the group's goals.	Contributed positively and actively to the group's goals.
INTERACTION	Refusal to participate in the conversation. When participating, native language was used.	Contribution to the conversation was limited. There were pronunciation and/or grammar mistakes that obscured meaning.	Contribution to the conversation was generally fluent. There were some pronunciation and grammar problems.	Contribution to the conversation was fluent with accurate pronunciation and grammar.
VISITS	Visited only one place.	Visited two places.	Visited three places.	Visited all four places scheduled.

[Home Page](#)

Figure 2. Evaluation rubric

Class Five:

Materials required: Teacher's notes on the activity, board and marker.

- The teacher collects students' self-evaluation and asks them how they felt during the activity.
- The teacher praises students for their efforts and gives general feedback on linguistic issues.
- Students take notes and practice expressions in pairs.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research study shows that although the main purpose of the Web is to inform, schools can turn the Web into an interactive learning tool through WebQuests. In our particular case, students of different undergraduate programs at Universidad Industrial de Santander with an A2 English proficiency level had the opportunity to interact in English in real life situations around the theme of a trip to London proposed in the WebQuest titled "Let's Go to London". Results indicate that the task proposed in the WebQuest increased students' motivation and helped them develop their communicative competence. This could be evidenced through an interview made to students after the activity was held; most of the interviewed students affirmed they had enjoyed the activity and had felt as if they were really touring London. The setting built in each station and the materials used were appealing adding a real life ambiance to the whole activity. Students also pointed out that they had learned new vocabulary, new phrases and had improved their pronunciation and their cultural knowledge by means of the links posted in the WebQuest.

As technology becomes part of students' everyday life, making use of WebQuests can boost students' motivation to learn a foreign language. The hands-on quality of computers, and the visual and aural materials presented in the Web make WebQuests the perfect tool to address all types of learners-kinesthetic, visual and auditory. WebQuests can also be a useful tool for foreign language teachers to enhance students' communicative competence. Written and aural English input organized in the WebQuest provides a linguistic scaffold to develop productive skills such as speaking and writing. In addition to this, WebQuests provide authentic material that can be used to bring the world into the classroom. Students can now be exposed to different cultures without the need of traveling abroad.

Web-based learning and consequently WebQuests, present some limitations, based on the findings encountered, that must be taken into consideration when using them in the classroom. Eraut (as cited in Zhao, 1998) mentioned that "the lack of time to learn and incorporate new technology and the lack of hard evidence that technology can serve their [teachers'] needs and make their work more effective and interesting" (Adoption and change section, para. 3) have led to an under use of the Internet. Apart from their instruction time, teachers have to deal with lesson planning and grading in their "free" time which leaves them with little time to learn how to use new technological tools in the classroom. But even if teachers know how to use Webquests, they may feel disinclined to use them due to the amount of time required to structure them and to find Web links suitable for the task. The researchers, both the WebQuest designer and the design observer agree on the fact that working on the WebQuest was really interesting and fun; however, they both affir-

med that designing it and making sure that all the links matched the students' level and were appropriate for education was time consuming. Time spent designing the WebQuest was four times more than the time a teacher usually invests planning a regular lesson.

Using the Web in the classroom also increases the cost of education which leads to inequity. Lai and Kritsonis (2006) asserted that "when computers become a new basic requirement for students to purchase, low budget schools and low-income students usually cannot afford a computer. It will cause unfair educational conditions for those poor schools and students" (Disadvantages section, para. 1). This drawback is even more significant in a developing country like Colombia where the gap between the rich and the poor is very large. Students at private institutions have access to the latest technology at both school and home; students in public schools, in contrast, may have limited access to technology at school and limited or no access at all at home. The sample group of the research study said in the interview carried out at the end of the activity that they had had trouble working on the assignments at home, but that had found computers available at the university computer center and, hence, had been able to work on the assignment.

To sum up, technology is here to stay, so it is school administrators' responsibility to make technology accessible in their schools, and teachers' responsibility to use it wisely in the classroom. Among many online tools now available, WebQuests can make both teaching and learning meaningful and enjoyable. When working with WebQuests, teachers need to take the following aspects into account:

- They need basic skills in the use of PowerPoint and hyperlinks and in the use of search engines such as Google.
- Teachers can initially get immersed in the WebQuest world by making lists of links related to specific topics. After that, organizing links for a WebQuest becomes easier.
- They need to be careful with the links chosen for the WebQuest. A linked Web site can hold links to other sites that might present inappropriate material. Therefore, teachers need to scan the potential sites carefully to avoid this problem.
- Teachers need to make sure that the task in the WebQuest matches the standards of their course.
- While implementing the WebQuest, teachers need to foster a student-centered environment where students become engaged in their own.
- Teachers can make a collection of their own WebQuests and use them over the years, adjusting them to students' needs. If doing so, teachers have to check the links periodically either to update or to delete broken links.

Besides all the aspects mentioned, there is a very important requirement for teachers interested in working with WebQuests: A passion to teach using the most advanced resources available at their schools. When teachers are passionate about their profession, they invest time in planning creative classes for their students using innovative tools that raise student' motivation and help them be prepared to face the real world.

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