**The Effectiveness of Using WebQuest Strategy in Improving Grammar Competence for second year preparatory school**

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**Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using WebQuest strategy in improving grammar competence for second year preparatory school students. Participants of the study were 33 (both males and females) of 2nd year students at Elwaadla preparatory school, Sedfa directorate, Assiut governorate. The instruments of the study included Grammar and Pre-Post-test and WebQuest lessons. The results indicated that the WebQuest strategy had a significant positive effect on students’ scores on the grammar test. Results also indicated that the students’ means of scores on the post-test of grammar was higher than the means of the scores on the pre-test. It is recommended to teach students through WebQuest strategy to improve other language skills such as listening, speaking and reading. My research study might be replicated with larger and more diverse samples.

**Key words: Webquest strategy – grammar competence**

**Introduction**

Nowadays, traditional classrooms are no longer convenient environments for teaching as technology has invaded all aspects of our life. A good cooperative teacher should link technology to his / her classroom as technology proved that it is a valuable source of learning.

UNESCO (2002, 3) assures that “Information and communication technology (ICT) has become, within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering the basic skills and concepts of ICT as part of the core of education, alongside reading, writing and innumeracy."

The Internet has become part and parcel of our daily life. It is useful for different aspects of life. It is used in communication. It can help a person to communicate with people in any place with minimum of times. people can use internet for the social connectivity and there are lots of social media websites Such as Facebook, Twitter, Weibo etc. Information is probably the biggest advantage. A huge amount of information available on the internet about any subject. Entertainment also can be achieved through internet. There are a lot of programs that allow people to share and download their favourite music, videos and games. It would be a great source of income. people can earn from internet through bloggers or YouTube. Students can take interest on earning through internet. Shopping can be achieved through internet and this saves time and money. Moreover, internet become one of the most important tools of education. Students can get information anytime and anywhere saving much time and effort. As a very powerful information system, it is easy, cheap and fast.

The process of research on the Internet is the most important activity for Internet users. To perform this task there are a lot of search engines which contain fields of life, but the problem is that these search engines do not consider the nature of students who do this search. They allow students to get into different websites with no regard to their age or awareness, which may endanger the education process.

Therefore, there is a need to develop educational models which should be accurate and take into their account the best Internet use. One of these models is WebQuest that was developed in the early 1995’s at San Diego State University by Bernie Dodge with Tom March. Dodge (1997) defines a WebQuest as “an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with come from resources on the Internet". He also presented the concept of two types of Web Quests, short term and long term. The major differences between them are the instructional goals and the duration of WebQuest.

There are many reasons for using WebQuest as a learning strategy since it:(1) creates effective learning; (2) is an attractive strategy of learning; (3) accommodates students' needs;(4) is an organized source;(5) saves time and effort;(6) saves time and effort; (7) promotes problem solving skills. According to Hockly (2008) there are some reasons for using WebQuest in the language classroom, they:(1) integrate between the internet and language classroom; (2) afford cooperative learning;(3) motivate learners; (4) encourage critical thinking skills;(5) can be used as a linguistic tool. While according to March (1998, 12), WebQuest: (1) increases student ‘motivation. Students face an authentic task and work with real resources;(2) develops students´ thinking skills;(3) fosters cooperative learning.

There are many criteria and standards that would guide effective use of WebQuest. In this regard, Dodge (2002) assumes that there are five criteria in this regard: (1) defining specific sites;(2) Organizing or harmonizing your learners and resources; (3) Using medium;(4) Stimulating learners' abilities to think; (5) Scaffold high expectations. There are some studies that show the effectiveness of WebQuest in learning (e.g. Garcia,2011; Laborda,2009; Ikpez & Boyd,2007). For example, the study of Garcia (2011) proves the effectiveness of WebQuest in improving fifth graders’ English language. According to Laborda (2009) WebQuest strategy has proved effectiveness in learning the communicative language of tourism (EFT). Ikpez and Boyd (2007) assured that the effectiveness of WebQuest strategy in improving critical thinking for five graders especially when the activities are chosen carefully. Vidoni and Maddux (2002) showed the effectiveness of WebQuest strategy in improving critical thinking for secondary stage students. Consequently, researchers consider WebQuest an effective strategy for improving different learning aspects and for different learning stages. Therefore, the current study will try to explore the effectiveness of WebQuest in improving grammar competence and paragraph writing.

Throughout the period of the varied communication approaches, the need for language accuracy has been pushed aside. Some learners do not pay much attention to the correct structures of their language production whether in writing or orally. So, their speech or writing contains a lot of grammatical mistakes.

Learning grammar is one of the bases of language learning to communicate effectively. Petraki and Hill (2011, 12) state that "Learning the grammar of language is an integral part of learning a second language or foreign language". Therefore, learners should maintain some competency in grammatical structures to be able to interact in language properly.

There are many reasons for teaching/learning grammar (1) Learning grammar is useful for effective communication;(2) Understanding grammar helps students write new kinds of sentences that are more effective and persuasive; (3) It is important in language acquisition;(4) is important in language acquisition;(5) is one of the basic aspects of language learning. Some studies assure the importance of teaching grammar through many techniques. Stathis and Gotsch (2011, 3) stated that:" Grammar instruction has an important role to play in helping students speak and write English more effectively. Therefore, learning grammar is a fundamental part in learning language. According to AlMekhlafi (2011, 18) students face some problems if they are asked to produce correct grammatical sentences in EFL context particularly.

**Background of the problem**

Despite the importance of grammar, the researcher observed that students were not able to answer the grammar questions correctly. To build this personal observation on an empirical basis, the researcher analysed the first-term English language exam for second year at Elwaadla preparatory school as a pilot study (see Table 1). The test paper included eight kinds of questions: dialogue, reading and matching, reading comprehension, choosing, writing questions, reading and correct. The exam's final mark was 50 and it was divided in to the following items:

Table 1"Marks of exams sections"

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grammar | Reading | Dialogue | Writing | Total |
| 18 | 10 | 15.5 | 6.5 | 50 |

Depending on the pilot study results the researcher concluded that the target students show low standard of grammar competence.

Table (1) above shows the students' rate of success in the first-term exam of the English language (second year) in Elwaadla preparatory school.



Figure 1"Percentage of success in the English first term Exam"

To be sure that the results of the exam were significant and indicate students 'deficiency in grammar competence, the researcher designed a test in grammar (see figure 1) . The results of the test demonstrated that students showed some deficiencies in grammar competence since their percentage in grammar was 20%.

Based on the obtained data and considering the results of pilot study and the reviewed literature, the researcher feels that there is a need for using an effective strategy to improve grammar competence for the target students. More specifically, the researcher suggests using WebQuest strategy for English language instruction.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem of the study can be stated as follows: Preparatory two students demonstrated low standards in learning grammar and paragraph writing. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of using the WebQuest strategy as an intervention in improving their grammar competency and paragraph writing.

**Objectives of the study**

The study aimed at:

1. Identifying the effectiveness of using the WebQuest strategy in improving students' grammar competence.

**Questions of the Study**

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How far could WebQuest strategy help learners improve their grammar competence?

**Hypotheses of the Study**

* 1. There would be statistically significant differences between means of scores obtained by the study group on both the pre- and post-administration of the grammar competence test (in favour of the post administration).

Importance of the study:

1. It might help in improving grammar competence through WebQuest strategy.
2. It might help students to be self-independent learner as the study can be enhance grammar.
3. It supports the use of technology in learning.
4. It might help parents to develop their children skills in improving English skills.

**Delimitations of the study**

The present study is limited to:

1. A class of preparatory-two students at Elwaadla prep school in Sedfa, Assiut Governorate. They will be chosen randomly.
2. Content:

* A website for teaching grammar included in the second term.
* A website for teaching writing included in second term.

1. Time:

The experiment took place during the academic year 2016/2017.

**Definition of terms**

**WebQuest**:

Dodge (1997, 1) defines a WebQuest as “an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from resources on the Internet".

March (2003. 43), on the other hand, defines a WebQuest as “a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students' investigation of a central, open-ended question, development of individual expertise and participation in a final group process that attempts to transform newly acquired information into a more sophisticated understanding. The best WebQuests do this in a way that inspires students to see richer thematic relationships, facilitate a contribution to the real world of learning and reflect on their own metacognitive processes”.

In the light of the definitions above, the researcher operationally defines WebQuest as is a strategy that allows second year students to check the web to learn grammar and paragraph writing independently through structured links.

**Grammar:**

Borry, (1975) assumes that grammar is “the ability of person to effectively use his internalized knowledge to achieve a desired communicative impact.

The researcher defines grammar competence as the ability of the second-year students to use English language correctly both orally and in writing.

**Research Instruments & materials**

* A grammar pre-post-test to measure students’ grammar competence.
* A short-term WebQuest strategy to train the study group on the specified paragraph writing skills and develop grammar competence. It includes:
  + A teacher’s guide.
  + A student’s website.

**Research design**

The study would adopt the quasi-experimental research design based on using one group.

**The study group**

The study would include a class of second year students at Elwaadla preparatory school, Sedfa Directorate, Assuit Governorate. They would be chosen randomly.

**Implementation of WebQuest strategy**

The researcher tried to attract students’ interest to participate in WebQuest strategy by telling them they will surf the internet and learn English in an attractive strategy. they will be rewarded if they were active and distinguished.

teaching grammar in light of WebQuest strategy:

The researcher

1. The researcher directed students to know the title and objectives of every lesson through introduction.
2. The researcher ensured that all students realized their task by asking them about their tasks.
3. Students took the definite time for surfing the webpages to gather information about their task through the process icon
4. Students discussed to answer questions and quizzes. The teacher makes ensured that students were working together, and they help each other to do the required task. Also, the teacher took notes on students’ work.
5. Students revised their answer.
6. Students nominated one of them to present their task.
7. Other students evaluate group’s work through the evaluation rubric.
8. The teacher evaluated students ‘work and gave them feedback which help them avoid errors next times.

**Procedures of the study**

* Revising the previous literature related to the research (WebQuest, grammar) to prepare the theoretical background and tools of the study.
* Preparing study tools in the light of framework of the study.
* Submitting tools of the study to jury members to determine their reliability and validity.
* Designing two websites for teaching grammar.
* Preparing teacher’s guide and student book and submitting them to jury members to give their remarks.
* Preparing the pre-posttest grammar competence.
* Submitting the pre-posttests to jury members to give their opinions.
* Applying test on a group of students to measure the validity, reliability and duration.
* Selecting the group of the study out of 2 nd year prep school randomly.
* Applying the study experiment as follows:
* Applying the pre-tests (grammar) for the group.
* Teaching the suggested units in the light of the WebQuest strategy for the group.
* Applying the post-tests (grammar) for the group.
* Analyzing obtained data statistically.
* Interpreting the results and writing recommendations and further studies.

**Finding of the study:**

All data were statistically treated using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program. after applying the WebQuest strategy, it was found out that, "there is a difference between means of scores obtained by the research group on the pre-post administration of the grammar competence test in favour of the post administration.

The difference between mean scores of the research group in the pre-and post-administration of grammar test can be shown in the following table.

Table (2)

T – test results Comparing the pre- test vs. post-test in grammar.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Test | N. | Mean | SD | df | T. value | significance |  | d |
| Pre | 33 | 30.03 | 13.89 | 32 | -13.14 | 0.05 | 0.84 | 4.65 |
| post | 33 | 46.85 | 9.11 |

Analysing data using a paired or correlated sample t test shows that t-value { -13.14} is significant at {0.05} level. It also indicated that the students ‘mean of scores on the post overall grammar test was higher than the mean of the scores on the pre-test, t = -13.14. The effect size value (4.65) indicates that the administration of WebQuest strategy had a very large effect on research group students ‘grammar competence in the post-test as compared to their performance in the grammar competence on the pre-test. Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

Table (2) presents a summary of the analysis of data obtained on the pre-post overall grammar competence test. For students ‘raw scores.

**Discussion**:

The study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of WebQuest strategy in improving grammar competence.

To achieve this aim, the researcher adopted the quasi experimental research (one group). The researcher used the pre-post-test for grammar competence. The results revealed the effectiveness of WebQuest strategy in improving grammar competence.

1. The researcher attributes the results to the advantages of WebQuest strategy:(1) it creates effective learning.(2) It is an attractive strategy of learning.(3)It accommodates students' needs.(4)It is an organized source.(5)It saves time and effort.(6)It promotes problem solving skills.(7)It supports cooperative and collaborative learning.(8)It provides students and teachers with authentic assessment.(9)It has variation of information sources.(10) It prompts higher order thinking skills.

**Conclusion:**

WebQuest strategy improved students’ grammar competence and paragraph writing skills for second year preparatory school. It provides students chance to exchange experiences and learn from each other. This helps low students to cooperate with high level students and learn from them.

The researcher believes that the causes of this improvement can be as follows:

* The effective learning which the WebQuest strategy provided students with.
* Cooperative learning which allows students to exchange experiences.
* Well prepared resources of learning which meets students’ needs and saves time for students.
* Scaffolding learning which WebQuest strategy supports. It is a kind of learning that helps lower students to learn in an easy way.
* Well-designed WebQuest lessons increase students’ motivation for learning.

In conclusion, WebQuest strategy proved its effectiveness in improving grammar competence and paragraph writing. It provides students with appropriate and effective environment which meets students’ needs and help them to achieve high level of learning.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation for teachers:**

* Teachers should train on the importance of integration education with modern technology.
* Using WebQuest strategy in improving other language skills as reading, listening and speaking.
* Teachers should encourage students to practice writing inside and outside classroom.
* Preparing schools with equipped labs for teaching by WebQuest strategy.

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