

# Miradas interdisciplinarias entre **lengua, lingüística y traducción**

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**ENALLT** ESCUELA NACIONAL  
DE LENGUAS, LINGÜÍSTICA  
Y TRADUCCIÓN UNAM

# Enhancing writing and speaking skills through a webquest in two context settings

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## Abstract

This research report documents an exploratory study based on the experience of two groups of transdisciplinary areas in two universities of different states. This project took place from February to July 2018 with B1 level groups according to the CEFR at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana campus Iztapalapa (Mexico City) and the Universidad Veracruzana (Veracruz). The oral and written skills (L2) of students were poor. In addition, there was little interaction among them because of the age disparity and the lack of technological skills of some students. Although this study is not unique, its aim was to explore whether the use of a didactic resource such as a WebQuest helps learners to improve their communicative, linguistic, and digital competences. The methodology used for this work included exploratory research, the foundations of the task-based learning approach, and the collaborative teaching framework. This project describes how the WebQuest was applied in both contexts, as well as the scope and limitations of its application.

**Key words:** WebQuest, infographic, digital, collaborative work, task based, project

## Introduction

Like most teachers, we share common interests, needs, and setbacks with our students. A group of teachers were recipients of SEP scholarship in 2012 and created a teaching bond. Since then, some of the scholarship members have kept in touch and looked for ways to address their everyday teaching struggles. Therefore, the quest for teaching improvement emerged, not isolated; but rather more collaboratively. As a result, two English language teachers from two different universities decided to work in partnership, since their concerns were similar. They both wanted to improve the oral and written skills using the tools available in Web 2.0.

This project was based on an exploratory research, task-based learning, and extreme-teaching framework, since both teachers were eager to explore approaches to improve learners work and skills more collaboratively applying the same project strategy in two different college settings. In the first stage of the study, both teachers assessed the convenience of using ludic activities or interactive presentations; afterwards, both teachers chose to use WebQuest. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the implementation of WebQuest led to improved written and oral skills, critical thinking, autonomous learning, and collaborative work.

## Focus of the Research

The most recent approaches in English Language Learning intend to boost communicative interaction and get learners engaged, seeking to communicate content towards a communicative goal (Ellis, 2000, p. 196). These activities are diverse and include communication activities to task-based learning. However, not all these methodologies provide exposure to real-life language. Most of the

time, materials are adapted in order to fulfill the purpose of the lesson. Moreover, the use of Web 2.0 tools have also flipped classroom teacher instruction. These Web 2.0 tools have helped in the design of materials focused on the user, enabling instant information, collaborative work, and automatic publication.

A WebQuest as one of these tools has come to change classroom instruction. Dodge (2002) defined a WebQuest as a research-oriented activity where all or almost all of the information that is used comes from Web resources by analyzing, synthesizing understanding and sharing knowledge and skills to build new information to publish or share. Tom March (2000), one of the co-developers, states that WebQuests “allows students to construct meaning on a complex topic, preferably in a way that motivates working together and testing ideas in a real world context” (p. 55). Stoks (2002) stated that “WebQuests offers good internet-based language learning opportunities because it provides learners with exposure to authentic material, meaningful content and possibilities for real communication in the target language” (p. 1).

Using WebQuest has proved to be a valuable language learning tool since language learners incorporate a reading-to-writing approach through the internet. In addition, it has shown to be beneficial for ESL/EFL learners in light of linguistic perspectives which include (1) exposure to authentic materials (2) meaningful content and (3) possibilities for real communication in the target language (Simina & Hamel, 2005; Stoks, 2002). Hence, with the use of the WebQuest in ELT and the problem being identified, the task was to determine what activities were pertinent to carry out to enhance the speaking and writing skills.

## ***AIM***

The aim of this report is to carry out an exploratory research, to ascertain whether or not WebQuest will enhance the communicative, linguistic and digital competence among English language learners in two different contexts.

## ***Rationale***

New ways in education are facing new challenges, teachers need to implement innovative strategies and activities to increase motivation among the students which promote a more enjoyable learning process. The implementation of WebQuest in two different settings can lead to this exploratory research design since this project has not been studied in these two contexts. This research design will articulate what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyze the aforementioned data, and how all of this is going to answer the research questions. According to Burns and Bush (2006) an exploratory research design refers to gathering information in an informal and unstructured manner. It is proper when the researchers know very little about the issue and it is not limited to one specific paradigm but may use either qualitative or quantitative approaches. Therefore, the purpose is to try to explain this study by obtaining and gathering all the published information that would be useful for future references.

## ***The Research Questions***

In the light of the observed phenomenon in the students in both settings, three questions emerged:

1. Can the same activity be carried out in two different universities?  
How?
2. How can writing and speaking skills be improved among students?
3. How can the learning experience be more dynamic and accessible through the use of WebQuest?

### ***General Context of the Phenomenon***

This research was developed in two different universities. The Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa (UAM-I) and the Universidad Veracruzana (UV) in Veracruz. At the UAM-I there are eight multimedia classrooms, with computers and working Internet. It has 24 places where students can work individually. The focal group where this research took place was at Intermediate 1 - (B1 level) according to the Common European Framework. They had classes for two hours twice a week. The students were able to use the computer and internet resources on a regular basis because a multimedia room was assigned for that class and they also had access to the self access room that is called CEA (Centro de Estudio Auto dirigido).

The Language Center in the Universidad Veracruzana (UV) has thirteen classrooms all of them with computers, projectors and internet that sometimes do not work. The group where the study was carried out had one hour classes daily from Monday through Thursday. In the sessions students normally used their cellphones as a source of information like the use of a dictionary to search for vocabulary or phrases. However, for this study, they used it as a way to communicate with their classmates.

## ***Literature Review***

Education is continuously evolving, in the last three decades many critical changes have happened; technology has taken an important role that has affected the way a second language is taught. As Diaz Barriga stated (2015) “the integration of technology through processes that are operated in the teaching-learning developments, privilege and promote the pedagogical scenarios and enable real time interaction and collaboration ...” (p. 19). Hence, technology and all fast forward advances have contributed to implement and create new strategies to engage 21st Century students in the deep learning process of a language.

For Deplatchett (2008, p. 167) there are some essential skills necessary to fulfill the demands of the 21st Century. The needs for:

- Information and media literacy skills
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking and systems thinking
- Problem identification, formulation and solutions
- Creativity and intellectual curiosity
- Interpersonal and collaborative skills
- Self direction
- Accountability and adaptability
- Social responsibility

Furthermore, there are now many Open Educational Resources (OER) that can help teachers to develop those 21st century skills. One of them is the WebQuest, which is a didactic tool based on the constructivist and collaborative approaches. Gil (2007) highlights that a WebQuest “motivates, promotes and improves High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

These skills are based on Bloom’s taxonomy: analysis, evaluation, creativity and the development of autonomy and collaborative

learning. They can also be defined as a set of teaching and learning strategies promoting student collaboration in small groups (two to five students) in order to optimize their own and each other's learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Sunal and Haas (2002) pointed out that WebQuests are problem-solving activities for students that incorporate the Internet, computer-based materials, and other available resources. Adell (2006), on the other hand, stated that WebQuest is a teaching strategy in which students of all educational levels leave the role of receivers to play an active role in its formation; developing skills of synthesis and analysis to achieve a creative solution to the project; becoming constructors of their own knowledge.

In addition to the aforementioned, the role of the teacher is transformed, since he/she would guide, support, and act as a facilitator of knowledge. Then, the teacher faces the educational challenges using the tools available in Web 2.0 incorporating them into the curricula promoting not only the linguistic but also the digital skills (Roig-Vila, 2015).

To implement WebQuest in the classroom, it is necessary to consider these six stages: Introduction, Task, Process, Resources, Evaluation and Conclusion.

**Introduction:** provides key background information and should motivate students with an intriguing question or problem.

**Task:** describes the final product expected from the students.

**Process:** provides step-by-step instructions for completing the task, as well as the list of resources needed to complete each step.

**Evaluation:** explains how learners will be assessed on their final product.

**Conclusion:** summarizes the main objectives of the activity and encourages additional investigation on related topics. WebQuests also provides the development of certain capacities in learners as Roig-Vila (2014) stipulated:

1. Compare: identify, establish similarities and differences among them in relation to facts and situations.
2. Classify: Grouping defined categories and things based on their attributes.
3. Induce: deduction of generalized unknown observable principles or analysis.
4. Deduce: deduction of consequences and conditions without specifying principles and generalizations given.
5. Error Analysis: errors that identify and join in his own thoughts or from others.
6. Building help: building a support system or proof for an assertion.
7. Abstraction: Identifying and articulating the underlying theme or general information model.
8. Analyze perspectives: joint perspectives on issues or personal aspects that they identify.
9. Rigo (2015) stated some advantages that WebQuest can offer to the learning-teaching process:
  - It can be used at any level or subject.
  - It helps to establish clear achievable learning goals.
  - It aligns with contemporary curricular goals.
  - Both the teacher and the student have the opportunity to search online for materials to find the information required to complete the project or answer questions.

Regarding students:

- Acquire basic skills for searching, collecting, using and disseminating information.
- Show greater motivation towards academic work.
- Improve both digital and audiovisual communication skills.

- Develop the capacity for reflection and self-criticism.
- Participate in self-centered learning that enables them to reach higher levels in Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, creativity and evaluation).
- Learn to work cooperatively, developing skills for debate, negotiation and exchange of views.

Inside the WebQuest, autonomy is seen as the 'ability' or 'capacity' while 'taking charge' or 'taking responsibility for' or 'taking control of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981). The key element is the idea that autonomy is an attribute of learners, rather than learning situations (cf. Dickinson 1987, p. 11) For Trebbi (2006) is 'taking charge of one's own learning' is a verbiage since no learning takes place unless the learner is in charge. Benson and Voller (1997) defined learner autonomy as the ability to take personal or "self regulated" responsibility for learning and it can be an indicator to predict academic performance. Kocoglu (2010) stated that WebQuests in a foreign language classroom can be an effective tool to improve reading and writing because they provide learners authentic and collaborative tasks. By using WebQuest students would to work collaboratively to complete a task or tasks.

"A task on the other hand, is defined as an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective" (Bygate, Sketan & Swaim 2011: 11). Peter Skeman (1998) defines the task as an activity in which meaning is primary, communication is essential for problem-solving, and it can be compared with real-world activities. Under this paradigm, we deal with task based learning which focuses on the completion of the task using the learner's own knowledge. This theory includes and improves different skills, like critical thinking, cooperative learning and searching on the net among others.

Brown (2007) indicates that the characteristics of the Task Based Learning are:

- Tasks point learners beyond the form of language alone to real world context.
- Tasks specifically contribute to communication goals.
- Their elements are carefully designed.
- Their objectives are well specified.
- Tasks engage learners in genuine problem-solving activities. (p. 52)

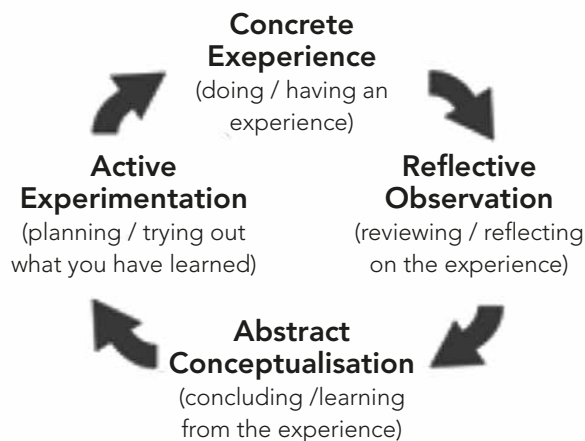
TBL (Task-based learning), or TBLT (Task-based language teaching) is an approach in which learning revolves around the completion of meaningful tasks. The main focus is the authentic use of language for genuine communication, its phases normally include a pre-task, a task (divided in different stages) and a post- task.

In the pre-task, the teacher sets the task, contextualizes the topic of the lesson, raises students' interest and prepares learners to perform the task. It is extremely important that students understand the objectives of the task during this phase. In the task the learners perform the task in small groups or pairs, and use their existing knowledge of language to express themselves in a spontaneous way. When they finish, they need to plan how they are going to report it to the rest of the class, they may rehearse and research the necessary language in order to share the outcome of what they have done. Finally, during the post- task, students evaluate their performance. It can involve feedback provided by the teacher and subsequent practice of language items that emerged from the task. It is important to stress that form-focused language work should be in response to students' production.

Regarding the exploratory research, it intends to merely explore the research questions and does not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions to existing problems. It is usually conducted to

study a problem that has not been clearly defined yet. It doesn't intend to provide conclusive evidence but to have a better understanding of the problem. When conducting it, the researcher ought to be willing to change his/her direction as a result of revelation of new data and new insights and it does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth.

Another underlying basis for this study is the extreme teaching framework (Anderson. R. & Bendix, L. 2006). It allows teachers to focus on experimenting and improving their teaching techniques without compromising quality. It encourages a scientific approach for teaching, it is based on four fundamental values: Feedback, Communication, Respect, and Courage. It is highly interactive and contains a number of specific practices. The goal of all this is to help achieve better learning. The interactive nature of this framework is inspired by Kolb's Learning Cycle mentioned by McLeod (2017). According to this model, students learn by doing and must go through the stages of experiencing, reflection, conceptualization and experimentation before they are ready for another learning cycle.

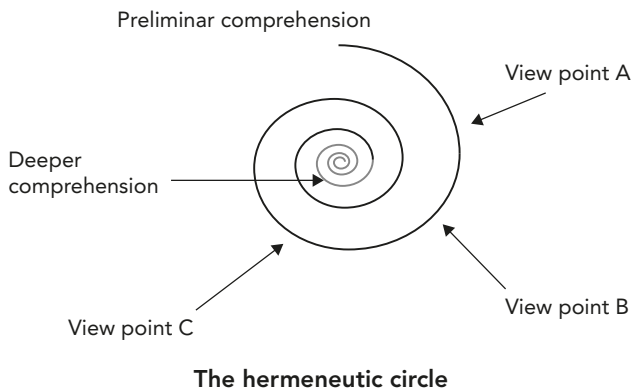


**Kolb's Learning Cycle.**

With these theories and frameworks, we based our research on to have a better understanding of the phenomenon. and the way in which these will be configured in the research project, trying to best explain and produce the answers to the research questions.

## Methodology

Despite the fact that there has been a lot of research with respect to the applicability of WebQuest in different settings, there was no evidence that this resource had been applied in our context. Bearing in mind that our main purpose was to find out if the applicability of the WebQuest was suitable to improve collaborative work, critical thinking, writing and speaking skills. Since we did not have much information about this tool, this exploratory research design began with a preliminary idea of the study and the context. We needed to clarify how we perceived this phenomenon if there was in a micro level (the result of individual perceptions of the participants) or as a macro level (as a holistic social phenomenon). Therefore, these findings could help us to develop a guideline for future teachers and educators regarding how to use this technological tool and its implications in the classroom.



We took into consideration the following categories: number of participants, age, abilities with technology, surveys and students comments at the end of the application. The schedule of the collaborative work began in April 2018, with weekend skyped sessions to discuss the design and implementation of the WebQuest in both contexts. After that, both teachers analyzed their school programs and decided to work on a similar topic. After choosing the topic, both teachers designed the WebQuest and the steps that students needed to follow in a Google Drive document and brainstormed the elements of the task. Then, they designed the task and searched for a suitable platform to host the activity. This product can be searched on <https://www.createwebquest.com/my-city-my-country>.

The tasks consisted of looking for online links and giving learners a guideline and the steps to perform each task. Each instructor gave similar instructions to their students outlining the specific requirements for the assignments. All of the students were given the grading criteria as well as specific due dates for the WebQuest assignments, the process lasted three months.

My City / My Country



## Introduction.

**Welcome: Describe Your City/Country Using a Descriptive Essay and infographic.**

**Description:** This WebQuest will enable students to practice making a descriptive essay, to practice their speaking skill and to design an infographic which describes their city/country.

**Grade Level:** College / Adults

**Curriculum:** Foreign Language

**Keywords:** descriptive essay, infographic, description, city/country,

**Author(s):** Ana Mendoza / Vilma Vázquez



## Task:

During this WebQuest you will have to create a description of your city/country by creating a descriptive essay and an infographic.

First, you will have to write a descriptive essay. By creating a descriptive essay it will help you to create an infographic easier. Your descriptive essay won't have more than 100 words about your city/country, this will help you to organize your infographic.

Then you will have to create an infographic of your city/country.

After you finish the infographic, you will have to share your task with your teachers and your classmates.

Later you will have to present your infographic to your classmates and teacher.

**Process:**

In this section you will be guided to finish your task. You will be guided from the beginning, looking for the websites resources about the definition of descriptive essay and infographic, until the last task oral presentation.

**Step 1:**

Browse some information about what is the best way to create a descriptive essay and a video in Internet. There are many websites which prepare some explanations about what is a descriptive essay and what is a video description. We suggest many websites which will help you to get information in making descriptive essays and video description. You can search that information in the links on this WebQuest or you can search in the other websites.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/03/>  
<http://www.writeexpress.com/descriptive-essay.html>

<http://bswally.tripod.com/descri.htm>

<http://assistivetechology.about.com/od/ATCAT1/f/What-Is-Video-Description.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio\\_description](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_description)

<http://www.softelgroup.com/audio-description/>

### Step 2:

Look for some information about your city/country that you need to create the description. For example take some information about the facilities like recreational parks, central park, shopping centers, or maybe you can take information about the culture of your city/country. In this second step you may need to take some pictures or photos in order to help you make the description of your city/country.

### Step 3:

After getting this information you can begin to create your description about your city/country. Make sure to describe all the beautiful sides of your city/country. And make sure to describe carefully so that the reader understands your description comprehensively.

In this WebQuest there are some links of examples of descriptive essays. You can click the link in this following step to help you understand more with examples of a descriptive essay.

[http://www.e-scoala.ro/referate/engleza\\_london.html](http://www.e-scoala.ro/referate/engleza_london.html)

<http://www.roanestate.edu/owl/LousPlace.htm>

<http://bswally.tripod.com/descri1.htm>

<http://mrscb2010.hubpages.com/hub/Descriptive-Essay-Example-My-Hometown-Is-Still-In-My-Heart>

#### Step 4:

Make description of your city/country in an infographic. Create an infographic with the information that you have in your essay.

Organize your ideas clearly and add some pictures to your infographic.

You can use some infographic creators like these.

<https://piktochart.com/>

<https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/>

A rubric was designed to evaluate each part of the task. This rubric was implemented as the grading criteria for each WebQuest assignment. Both teachers incorporated similar grading methods using the grading rubrics. For the oral performance students were graded in delivery (4 pts) content and organization (4 pts) enthusiasm, audience and awareness (4 pts). Students received points based on their ability to meet these elements. For example: in order for students to receive 4 pts, they were required to meet most of the elements described in the rubric.

#### **Conclusion:**

Present your infographic in front of the class. Use as many details. Check the rubric.

Creating an Infographic Assignment Rubric

**Evaluation:****Creating an Infographic Assignment Rubric**

| Criteria             | Points | Exemplary                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Admirable                                                                                                                                                                                   | Acceptable                                                                                                                                                                                   | Attempted                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Research And Content | 35     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of three or more websites</li> <li>– Factual information is accurate</li> <li>– Addresses topic completely and in depth</li> <li>– Content is readily understandable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of two websites</li> <li>– Most information can be confirmed</li> <li>– Addresses topic</li> <li>– Content is mostly understandable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of one website</li> <li>– Some errors in information</li> <li>– Barely addresses topic</li> <li>– Content is somewhat understandable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of only one website</li> <li>– Numerous errors in information</li> <li>– Does not adequately address topic</li> <li>– Content is confusing</li> </ul> |
| Organization         | 20     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Logical sequencing of information</li> <li>– Original and creative</li> </ul>                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Somewhat logical sequencing</li> <li>– Original work</li> </ul>                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sequencing is poorly planned</li> <li>– Little originality</li> </ul>                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sequencing is confusing</li> <li>– Inconsistent information is presented</li> <li>– Other people's ideas presented as own</li> </ul>                      |
| Graphic Design       | 25     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Graphics effectively entice audience; accurately convey message</li> </ul>                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Visuals and images are attractive; adequately conveys message</li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of visuals and images is limited; message is conveyed</li> </ul>                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of visuals and images is confusing or absent; message is confusing</li> </ul>                                                                         |
| Mechanics            | 20     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Correct grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling</li> <li>– All sources are correctly cited</li> </ul>                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Few grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors</li> <li>– Most sources are correctly cited</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Several grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors</li> <li>– Some sources are incorrectly cited</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Obvious grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling errors</li> <li>– Sources are not cited</li> </ul>                                                         |

## Oral Presentation Rubric

|                                      | 4—Excellent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 3—Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2—Fair                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1—Needs Improvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Delivery                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holds attention of entire audience with the use of direct eye contact, seldom looking at notes</li> <li>Speaks with fluctuation in volume and inflection to maintain audience interest and emphasize key points</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent use of direct eye contact with audience, but still returns to notes</li> <li>Speaks with satisfactory variation of volume and inflection</li> </ul>                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays minimal eye contact while reading mostly from the notes</li> <li>Speaks in uneven volume with little or no inflection</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holds no eye contact with audience, as entire report is read from notes</li> <li>Speaks in low volume and/or monotonous tone, which causes audience to disengage</li> </ul>                                                               |
| Content/<br>Organization             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates full knowledge by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration</li> <li>Provides clear purpose and subject; pertinent examples, facts, and/or statistics; supports conclusions/ideas with evidence</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is at ease with expected answers to all questions, without elaboration</li> <li>Has somewhat clear purpose and subject; some examples, facts, and/or statistics that support the subject; includes some data or evidence that supports conclusions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions</li> <li>Attempts to define purpose and subject; provides weak examples, facts, and/or statistics, which do not adequately support the subject; includes very thin data or evidence</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not have grasp of information and cannot answer questions about subject</li> <li>Does not clearly define subject and purpose; provides weak or no support of subject; gives insufficient support for ideas or conclusions</li> </ul> |
| Enthusiasm/<br>Audience<br>Awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates strong enthusiasm about topic during entire presentation</li> <li>Significantly increases audience understanding and knowledge of topic; convinces an audience to recognize the validity and importance of the subject</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows some enthusiastic feelings about topic</li> <li>Raises audience understanding and awareness of most points</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows little or mixed feelings about the topic being presented</li> <li>Raises audience understanding and knowledge of some points</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows no interest in topic presented</li> <li>Fails to increase audience understanding of knowledge of topic</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

On the other hand, grading for the infographic included four categories with points for each: Research and content (35), Organization (20), Graphic Design (25) and mechanics (20). Each section of the rubric had several elements describing the four grading categories. This study was carried out before the final exam. A form to triangulate information to see the pertinence of the WebQuest, was used to check the results students got in their final exam to show if there was an improvement.

### Participants

Both groups were intermediate levels at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana campus Iztapalapa (UAM-I) located in Mexico City and Universidad Veracruzana (UV) located in Veracruz, Veracruz. There were fifteen participants at UAM-I's class, eleven of them were studying a Bachelor's degree, two Master's degree and the other two PhD with ages ranging from 22 to 55 years old. However, or On the other hand, at the UV there were 17 students, only eight of them were studying their Bachelor's degree at the UV, the other nine were general public students, four workers, two elderly people, one housewife, one freelancer, one high school student, ranging in ages from 16 to 64 years old.

**Table 1.** Participants

|                    | UV    | UAM -I |
|--------------------|-------|--------|
| Participants       | 17    | 15     |
| Bachelors students | 8     | 11     |
| Master degree      | ----- | 2      |
| PhD                | ----- | 2      |
| general public     | 9     | -----  |
| age                | 16-64 | 22-55  |

## ***Setbacks***

At the beginning of the course certain difficulties were found with older students in both contexts such as:

- Some students did not have enough digital skills;
- They lacked interest in working with technology;
- They lacked interest working in teams or with classmates

## ***Implementation:***

**UAM.** First there was a discussion about the important cities and tourist places in Mexico. Students shared their ideas. Teacher explained that they were going to work on a WebQuest and explained the steps of the WebQuest and shared in the edmodo group link. The students were divided into groups of three and started working on their quest surfing the links through the WebQuest reading and commenting in their groups. Learners worked on the project for two weeks during and outside the class collaboratively. First they created a descriptive essay about the city or country they had chosen on Google Drive. Then, the teacher revised the essays and gave feedback to the students. Next, the students worked in class designing an infographic using principal elements of the descriptive essay and took notes about the process of collecting the information. Finally, after two weeks, learners presented the infographic to the class and were evaluated through a rubric.

**UV.** The introduction was to talk about cities and places, the class also created a Whats App group as a means of communication also to monitor, clear doubts and extend the information from the Web-Quest. All the students used cell phones and had Whats App as a

means of communication. In class, the groups were formed according to their personality. It did not matter if they were young or old. There were uneven groups due to the number in the group. There was an explanatory session about the WebQuest (introduction, task(s), process, evaluation and conclusion) and the link through WhatsApp where the information could be found. They surfed the links through the WebQuest read and commented in their groups. After that session, learners worked on their own for about two weeks in a collaborative manner by searching for information in order to write a 200 word descriptive essay about the city or country they had chosen. Some students, mostly the students that did not have good command of technology, did it on paper. Younger students opted for Google Drive. Once the teacher set a limited time to revise the descriptive essay, he/she revised their work and gave them feedback. Learners gathered together in and out of class to design the infographic using principal elements of the descriptive essay. In the process, they took notes about the way they collected the information. Finally, learners presented the infographic orally and were evaluated through a rubric.

## **Results and Discussion**

At the beginning of the project, both groups were considered homogeneous and through empirical observation both teachers agreed that learners were not interacting with each other and their communication skills were limited. Throughout the implementation of this study, a significant difference was shown as an indication of academic improvement, for example with the use of digital material, the number of interactions improved. With the use of WhatsApp and Edmodo as means of communication, they felt more confident to talk to their classmates and express their own ideas which helped

develop transversal competences as collaborative work, problem solving, and critical thinking, which were essential to complete the descriptive essay and infographic. There was a lot of decision making with respect to the information to be included in the descriptive essay and infographic. Two out of the three research questions were answered by the implementation of the activities carried out in both language centers, and the learner's experience. With respect to writing and speaking skills there was no concluding proof whether learners improved in the speaking and writing skills.

### ***Learner's Experiences***

In both contexts, the learners' overall comments were that **they enjoyed doing the activity**. They worked on their **oral, written and critical thinking skills** by sharing and giving their own points of view. They registered the steps of the process: brainstormed, researched, divided their tasks, gathered and shared information through technology, coordinated and elaborated their work.

**Sample student comment:** *"Even though they had several days to do it and because of the activities of each one of us it was complicated, however, we met and defined the topics of interest, which were divided so that each member shared their research about the place that we defined and reviewed computer graphic models in the internet because, although it looks easy to do, just the effort to do the best becomes complicated when elaborating. We agreed to concentrate information with one person for all integrated into a single file and define who would assume to ask who had the necessary tools to build it. Our communication was by messages (WhatsApp, Facebook or email) to review opinions on adding, modifying or deleting something*

*from the format. I think in the end, everyone's work was formed with the support of Nancy."--- Student 1.*

The learners expressed that the ones that did not have digital ability, successfully searched for information and gained more confidence, not only on the language skills but also in their technological abilities. They also stated that they became more autonomous and worked more collaboratively. They improved and strengthened their critical thinking by analyzing, comparing, problem-solving, creating and sharing information. Finally they declared that they enjoyed working on the WebQuest for the reason that it was a different team-work activity and they had never done one before. It motivated them and allowed them to develop different skills. On the other hand, the teachers' expressed that this activity was a great way to develop a lot of different skills in students, like critical thinking, working collaboratively, promoting digital, speaking and writing skills. Students enjoyed working together and helping each other. Other aspects that arose in the execution of this WebQuest were to plan the activities carefully, timing them to develop the organization of the activities so that they could develop critical thinking, collaboration and technology.

## **Conclusions**

As we have seen during this study, students needed innovative strategies that promoted their learning process more naturally and optimally. As an exploratory research, our intention was to discover if the activity could be carried out in two different universities; if students were able to perform the tasks despite the vast information on the web and the dynamic in the application of the WebQuest. The study did not intend to offer a final and conclusive

solution but to “tackle new problems on which little or no previous research had been done (Brown, R.B. 2006). As previously mentioned in section four, students became engaged in classroom activities, through the use of technology in the WebQuest proving to have a strong community environment inside and out of the classroom and the acquisition of linguistic abilities, which were demonstrated in the results of their final infographics and through the end of an oral class survey. To continue attaining better results, we must apply certain adaptations to the WebQuest as well as to create certain individual team tools to evaluate collaborative work or to state whether the learner’s autonomy was a construct of their own competency or was increased due to the use of new technological tools such as the WebQuest.

### ***Considerations:***

For further research in the implementation of this WebQuest; we need to perform a more quantitative research to find out the number and the frequency of the use of technology among different age groups, the type of consulted pages and the number of interactions. In addition, we need to develop tools to evaluate collaborative work and when working in groups in designing of the essay and the infographic. To create an instrument to auto evaluate their abilities before the implementation of the WebQuest and after. Some of the problems we encountered were the time of the implementation was shortened due to several school activities. In the case of Veracruz, some students were not included in the school platform and that is the reason why they opted for Google Docs because they were not currently studying an undergraduate or postgraduate program at the university. Also, the schedules were divergent and the connection to the internet was not always reliable.

## *Findings*

The implementation of a WebQuest as a collaborative activity contributed positively to students in two areas: the first one was in the creativity to make the infographics, developing skills such as decision making. The second was the sense of belonging to a group in a virtual way which contributed in a more committed collaborative work, however there is no conclusive evidence on the improvement of their writing and speaking skills. The student's response was positive in the sense that they showed interest in working collaboratively using technological resources; and expressed that it was a fun and motivating activity, that included more responsibility and commitment to work as a team. Another aspect to be considered is to make adjustments to this task according to what we observed and experienced limiting the topic and repeating the study in collaboration with both schools.

In reference to the experience applied to this project, both teachers noted that it is possible to work collaboratively in two different context settings, as stated in the Team Teaching framework. When doing their own research, learners were better equipped with information and materials to perform the tasks on the WebQuest, gaining more confidence in the oral presentation minimizing their mistakes no matter the learner's age. Equally important, the use of technology proved to be a useful tool to collaborate, communicate and develop interesting activities to engage the students.

As teachers, it is fundamental to reflect on ways to face the classroom issues not at as individual work but as cooperative teaching. When doing this exploratory study; it was uncertain what the outcome, achievements and shortcomings were going to be. While the activity was being developed, teachers realized that the planning stage was quite important and the design had to be specific. Each step must had been well-described in order to promote meaningful

and autonomous learning. Similarly, it was uncertain whether the methodology used would be successful in the matter of improving relationships by creating a friendly environment among students. It is necessary to encourage learners to participate more cooperatively and actively in tasks. Hence, this would promote more participation, collaborative work and improve oral expression and gaining self confidence. Therefore, this research could be perceived as a holistic social phenomenon.

To reflect that as teachers, we need to design more significant and detailed activities to let learners gain more independence and autonomy but at the same time to work in a more collaborative way. As teachers we also evaluated that context, number, type, needs, participants, and setting played a major role when carrying out the same activity and they are customarily considered in the designing of WebQuests in future practices.

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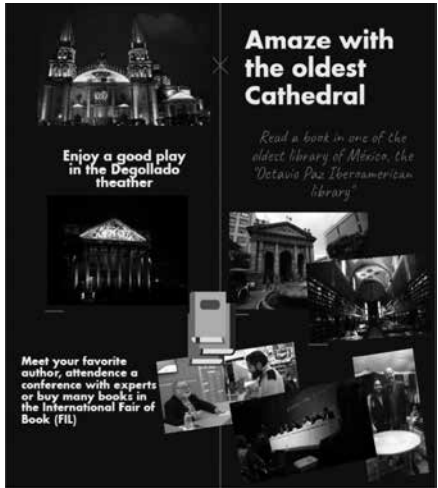
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APPENDIX

WebQuest examples





CDMX

AKA Deefe

One of the most amazing and incredible cities in the world

"It's not the city itself, it's what happens here."

Why do you have to visit Deefe?



There is a huge range of cities in the world, but if you are looking for a special place, which can offer you a unique experience, you definitely have to go to CDMX, aka Deefe.



Furthermore, there are archaeological sites such as Templo Mayor which offers an exceptional experience related to history, culture and an awesome view because of the structure.



The city is Mexico's capital and there's no doubt that it's one of the most wonderful places in the world. The Deefe had a particular history, that's the reason why there are many buildings which date from Prehispanic times, even before to nowadays. The architecture of the city is one cause feeling walk in the beautiful streets. Walking from the Zocalo to the Alameda and others at the palace is such a magical and fantastic thing, which you can do for your eyes.



There are other places which you can visit and where you can eat a delicious food. You can go to Jamaica market and enjoy different Mexican dishes. And if you want to drink something and stare at the beauty of the city you can go to Xochimilco and travel aboard a trajinera.

