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**The Effectiveness of a Web Quest Program in Developing Secondary  
School Students' English Reading and Writing Skills**

**A Thesis**  
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## **Chapter One**

### **Background and Problem**

#### **Introduction**

English is considered one of the international languages all over the world; it has become the language of business and an instrument of communication. Reading is one of the most important skills in English. Reading is also important for students because it is a means of enriching their information and helping them achieve progress in all subjects. Nunan (1995:72) stated that “learners are socialized into reading and the motivation for learning to read is not only for enjoyment or information but because the aspiring reader wants to gain access to the community of readers”.

Lindsey (1996:103) stated that reading helps writers discover structures, forms and voices, just as writing helps readers uncover meanings and strategies. Teachers therefore prepare readers for reading by making explicit connections with the readers' lives. Teachers can do this through activities such as autobiographical writing before reading, response journals and class discussion. Reading and writing are closely related. Developing reading skills through writing is an effective strategy. Writing also helps to establish the connection between oral and written language. Research has shown that it is helpful to guide children through the process of writing down what they can say about what they have experienced.

Barnett (as cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 2001) explained that reading is seen as the learner's dynamic participation in the construction of meaning and a receptive skill that involves communication. Additionally, Lee and VanPatten (2003) defined reading comprehension as a method for acquiring meaning from a specific content to understand a message. Lee

(2002: 63) stated that the acquisition of linguistic outcomes and language development are additional advantages derived from reading.

The research in reading in foreign languages and computer-based instruction has focused on aspects such as the effect of hypermedia annotations, software programs and web instructional medium in language acquisition. Concerning the role of advance organizers or multimedia annotations in foreign language reading, Lomicka (1998: 47) showed that advance organizers offer information about unfamiliar words, reduce dictionary consultation and facilitate the reading comprehension process.

With regard to how learners used multimedia annotations to support reading comprehension, Lomicka (1998) proved that multimedia annotations had a positive effect on comprehension and construction of a situation. Students used multimedia annotations to build a strong text-based understanding, and did not use or explore other available resources for translating and paraphrasing in order to comprehend the text. In addition to that, Sakar, and Ercetin (2005: 30) found that learners preferred visual annotations than textual and audio annotations. And learners had a positive attitude towards reading hypermedia.

But, Ariew, and Ercetin (2004: 240) found resistance to the use of multimedia which is exemplified in annotation use and reading comprehension. They found that pronunciation, videos, and audio recordings negatively affected reading comprehension even though the students reported a positive attitude toward annotations and hypermedia reading. Other investigators had stressed the effect that the interactive online database and a software program had on learners' vocabulary development. Yoshii (2006:90) studied how glossary type in an online reading program affected the achievement of new words. He found that glossaries enhanced learners' vocabulary acquisition, and glossaries were

useful for second language learning. So, he recommended that teachers should continue using glossaries in reading materials.

With regard to the impact of web instructional medium on second language comprehension, Stakhnevich (2002:5) stated that students who read on the web performed better than students who used a traditional approach. Moreover, he showed that the web environment had an impact on the level of reading comprehension and some web features such as pictures, videos, electronic dictionaries, and that web animations helped to acquire a better understanding of the topic. Moreover, students with different levels of proficiency equally benefited from the project.

Liaw (2006:57) studied how an online learning environment developed learners' cultural knowledge through reading articles of students' own culture in a second language (English). He found that students developed cultural knowledge and they became critical thinkers of their own culture and other cultures. Students used online references to look for more articles about the topic discussed and they decreased the use of the dictionary after two readings. This research seemed to support that through computer-based reading activities learners could receive immediate feedback, use different types of annotations that helped them acquire a better understanding of the content, increased their vocabulary, and developed their reading comprehension. Moreover; learners had a positive attitude toward the application of computer-based reading activities in foreign language.

Writing is even one of the most serious problems in most schools. Many teachers do not know it is a problem, and if they do know, they do not pay any attention to it (White and Arndt, 1991), cited in Mc Donough and Shaw (2003: 4-5). This cannot solve the problem of writing due certain reasons. Some of these reasons are attributable to students as well as to

teachers. Students do not know that writing could be learnt and acquired, and is not just a talent. They do not know that writing goes through multi stage processes- gathering and organizing ideas, writing rough drafts and finally revising and refining before handing it out for reading. Students should know that the only one way to learn writing is by practicing writing.

Despite such an on-going practice of traditional reading and writing instruction, attempts have been made to introduce newer and more effective ways of reading and writing instruction in both ESL and EFL contexts. The use of technology has become one of the tools that educators have been interested in exploring and experimenting with. Among several possibilities, the Web Quest has emerged as one of the popular tools offered to ESL/EFL teachers. Numerous scholars claim the usefulness of the Web Quest and believe that the Web Quest is an excellent way to integrate the internet into the classroom on both a short-term and a long-term basis.

For Marco (2002: 20-23) the Web Quest activities have been designed for English native speakers and have not been created for teaching to the second and foreign language learners. However, Marco suggested that the Web Quest can be used for content-based approach such as English for Specific Purpose (ESP) learning. So, the basis is the subject content and the use of authentic materials and thinking on the students' linguistic needs and learning styles. These ideas are related to the communicative approach suggested by Lee and Van Patten (2003) for teaching foreign languages. In this method learners developed a communicative competence that was defined as the ability of interacting in real communicative settings. It was a dynamic exchange of information and a linguistic capacity of adapting to the environment and interlocutors.

With reference to the Web Quest as authentic learning assignments, March (2004, p.3) explained that the Web Quest is a “scaffolding 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”.

For Dodge (1995:10-13) an efficient and useful Web Quest should improve learner’s use of time. Furthermore; the Web Quest should promote group activities, include motivational elements such as a role to play, and it has to be designed in a single discipline or can be interdisciplinary.

Shan (2011:34) concluded that the Web Quest is compatible with the concept of task-based learning for second language learners because it usually includes a task and a group activity with an end goal of creating a document or artifact that collects, summarizes, and synthesizes the information gathered.

The internet should be integrated in the teaching and the learning process because it is full of authentic materials and it gives up to date information. It becomes available everywhere; students can log into the internet through their mobiles. It is a way of interactivity and motivation. The WebQuest is a valuable tool in teaching, it makes students more active and makes them creator of knowledge. Teachers should change their traditional methods of teaching into the WebQuest. Students feel the spirit of ownership when they do a WebQuest. The WebQuest should be used in teaching reading and writing skills. Using technology in learning and teaching is one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Learning through researching on the Web should be a

lifestyle to students and all of us. Researching on the web enhances many skills, such as evaluating information, autonomous learning, etc.

### **1-1. Context of the Problem**

In the Egyptian public schools, there is no space for using the internet to develop reading and writing skills. The teacher uses the textbook only, as if it is the only source for information, and this does not give the students any opportunity to express themselves freely. Moreover; there is no space for teaching writing as a process, which is a part of the learning tasks that should be done by the students according to the Ministry of Education objectives.

The researcher read the Ministry of Education specifications for the first year secondary promotion examination 2013-2014. He found that students are assigned to answer an unseen text of about (100- 120) words, is provided. This may be a story, a factual text, a letter, an e-mail or a dialogue. Most vocabulary and all structures should be from the set books. The students are asked to answer four open-ended questions and two multiple choice ones with four options each. Another question in reading: a set of six varied questions (3 factual and 3 opinion), based on the reading materials in the set books provided. Students are asked to answer only four questions. Concerning writing, students are asked to write a paragraph, a letter, or an email of about (90) words about one of the two given topics appealing to the students' age, interests, likes, aspirations, etc. The title of the paragraph should be self-explanatory; no guidance is given.

Moreover; a lot of poor readers and writers at the secondary stage do not possess knowledge and skills necessary for creating a good reader and effective writer; so, there is an urgent need to address the students' poor performance in reading and writing in a nontraditional way. And in spite of the great importance of the internet in the process of teaching and

learning English, it is to some extent marginalized, and the Web Quest which is a very useful tool for instruction is almost unknown in our Egyptian schools. There is dearth of studies that integrated this tool in teaching and learning English.

## **1.2. Pilot Study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study in order to identify the level of the students in reading and writing skills. The researcher administered a test on reading and writing skills for (N: 36) students at the first year secondary school, selected randomly. The results showed that five students got 70% and above of the scores, five students got less than 70% - 50% and 26 of the students got less than 50% of the score. (See appendix 2)

The researcher analyzed the results of the test, he found that most of the students are in lack of the following reading and writing skills: **reading skills:** 1- Getting the main idea from a written paragraph, 2- Determining where specific information is, 3- Using context to determine the meaning of words, 4- Finding pronoun referents, 5-Determining the tone and the purpose of the author, and 6- Finding unstated details (inferring).

**Writing skills:** 1- Correctly applying the mechanics of writing, 2- Suggesting a title to a paragraph or a written text, 3- Writing an introduction, supporting examples and a conclusion to a paragraph, 4- Writing a personal opinion about a text, 5-Using discourse markers and connectors, and 6- Summarizing.

It became clear to the researcher that the poor performance of the students in reading and writing skills may be related to the traditional methods that are followed in teaching reading and writing skills in our schools.

-The researcher conducted an interview with (10) teachers to determine how far they use the Internet and the Web Quest as an instructional tool in

teaching reading and writing skills. They responded that they use the textbook only.

- The researcher observed (10) teachers while presenting their lessons to identify what strategies they are using to develop reading and writing skills. He found that teachers used the bottom up strategy in teaching reading; i.e, they explained the meaning of every word in the passage. They did not teach the strategies of how to answer the questions of the passages. Students were dealt in a passive way; they were not given the chance to tell their points of view about the passage. They did not let students relate what they read with their own lives. They did not allow students to analyze what they read.
- The researcher also found that teachers did not integrate reading with writing skills. They did not brainstorm students before writing. They taught writing as a product not as a process.

### **1.3. Problem Statement**

Based on the literature, the pilot study and the researcher's experience, it was noticed that the majority of the students are poor at reading and writing skills due to following traditional instruction inside classes. And they need to use web based practice to enhance these skills.

### **1.4. Questions of the Study**

The following research questions were addressed in the present research:

**Main question:** What is the effectiveness of the Web Quest as an instructional tool in developing reading and writing skills for the first year secondary school students?

To answer the above main question, the present study also answered the following **sub questions**:

1-What are the features of the suggested reading and writing WebQuest program?

2-What is the effectiveness of the suggested program in developing reading skills?

3-What is the effectiveness of the suggested program in developing writing skills?

4- To what extent have the students a good attitude towards the program?

### **1.5. Hypotheses of the Study**

1-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-post overall reading and writing skills test in favor of the post test.

2-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- post overall reading skill test in favor of the post test.

3- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre - post reading sub skills test: (1- getting the main idea,2- finding pronoun referents, 3- using context to determine the meaning of words, 4- determining the tone and the purpose of the author, 5- finding unstated details, and 6- determining where specific information is found) in favor of the post test.

4-There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- post overall writing skill test in favor of the post test.

5- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-post writing sub skill test: (1- applying the mechanics of writing, 2- suggesting a title for a paragraph or a text, 3- writing a personal opinion about a text, 4- writing an introduction, supporting details and a conclusion to a paragraph, 5-

summarizing, and 6- using discourse markers and connectors) in favor of the post test.

6-The experimental group will have a good attitude towards the suggested reading and writing WebQuest program.

### **1.6. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is threefold:

- 1- Designing a Web Quest program.
- 2- Assessing the effectiveness of the Web Quest as an instructional tool in developing first year secondary school students' reading and writing skills.
- 3- Enhancing the students' attitude towards the WebQuest program.

### **1.7. Instruments of the study**

- 1- Student selection questionnaire
- 2- Pre- post reading and writing skills test
- 3- Reading and Writing Skills Program (traditional and WebQuest)
- 4- A rubric of writing a paragraph
- 5- Attitude Questionnaire

### **1.8. Participants and research design**

This study utilized a quasi- experimental pre-post test one group design. One intact class was randomly chosen from a First Year Khedaweya Secondary School for boys at Sayeda Zeinab, Cairo to be the experimental group (N: 30).

### **1.7. Delimitations of the Study**

This study is delimited to:

- One experimental group of students from the first year Khedaweya secondary school, Sayeda Zeinab Directorate, Cairo.
- Treatment for the experimental group for one term.

- Developing these reading skills: (1) getting the main idea, (2) finding pronoun referents, (3) using context to determine the meaning of simple words, (4) determining the tone and the purpose of the author, (5) finding unstated details (inferring), and (6) determining where specific information is found.
- Developing these writing skills: (1) applying the mechanics of writing, (2) suggesting a title for a text, (3) writing a personal opinion about a text, (4) writing an introduction, supporting details and a conclusion to a paragraph, (5) summarizing, and (6) using discourse markers and connectors.

### **1.8. Significance of the Study**

This study might be significant for the following reasons:

- It will show the importance of the Web Quest as an instructional tool.
- It will provide teachers, researchers and other interested persons with effective strategies of reading and writing utilizing the Web Quest.
- It is a step to provide curriculum designers with a useful tool in developing English reading and writing skills utilizing the Web Quest.

### **1.9. Definition of Terms**

#### **1- Reading skill**

Reading skill is the ability to get the main idea and to know what the purpose of the written text is. It is the ability to read about some topics using the Web Quest. It is the ability to get the main idea and details about a specific topic using the Web Quest. It is a process of dealing the learner with the text; he/she uses specific strategies and skills to be able to understand the text. The reader here interprets what is going to happen and he activates his prior knowledge in the context of this topic. The

reader negotiates with the meaning in the text. The reader should be a critical thinker, able to apply, evaluate, analyze and synthesize what he reads to cope up with the required skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The learner uses information that he gets from the passage in other formats, such as discussion, presentation, word processing document, etc.

In this study, reading skill means that students are assigned to read about specific topics, in groups of six, on the internet using the websites that are provided for them to perform the required tasks. These reading sub skills are: (1) getting the main idea, (2) finding pronoun referents, (3) using context to determine the meaning of simple words, (4) determining the tone and the purpose of the author, (5) finding unstated details (inferring), and (6) determining where specific information is found.

## **2-Writing Skill**

**Meyers (2005)** states that writing is a way to produce language you do naturally when you speak. Writing is speaking to others on paper-or on a computer screen. Writing is also a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on a paper and reshaping and revising them.

Writing skill is a process which requires the writer to be competent in grammar, to be persuasive, to be able write effectively. The writer in this process should be able read about specific topics and then writes about it using the Web Quest as an instructional tool. The writer here reads about specific topics on the internet individually or in groups. He/she tries to gather some information about these topics. He/she writes about these topics, he applies what he reads through his writing. He gives his/ her opinions, and evaluates what he/she reads. Students transform what they read into another shape of writing; they can write a word document about what they have read.

In this study, writing skill means a process in which students discover and organize ideas and work through stages of writing, namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. These writing sub skills are: 1- Correctly applying the mechanics of writing, 2- Suggesting a title to a paragraph or a written text, 3- Writing an introduction, supporting examples and a conclusion to a paragraph, 4-Writing a personal opinion about a text, 5-Using discourse markers and connectors, and 6-Summarizing.

3- The **Web Quest**: The Web Quest is a scaffolding learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students' investigation of a central and an open-ended question. It develops the students' expertise and participation in a final group process. The students transform what they read on the web into a new format. They can represent the information they read in a shape of a website they create by themselves, presentation, posters, brochures, or a word document (March, 2004, p. 3).

In this study, a webQuest is an internet-based activity that guides students to perform a written task that requires them to work in groups, divide assignments among each other and gather information from a variety of internet resources.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2: will deal with the review of related literature studies of the WebQuest, reading and writing skills.

Chapter 3: will deal with research methods and procedures

Chapter 4: will deal with data analysis, results and discussion

Chapter 5: will deal with summary, conclusion, and recommendations

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of literature and related studies**

This chapter is in two sections; section one is a review of literature and related studies about computer assisted language learning (CALL). It gives an overview about the WebQuest; it shows the role of the Web Quest in learning and explains the advantages and disadvantages of the Web Quest. It sheds lights on the WebQuest and EFL. It identifies the obstacles and solutions related to the Web Quest for second languages. Section two is on a review of literature and related studies on traditional reading and online reading. It will also focus on the integration of reading and writing skills and on the role of the teacher in teaching both of them integratively.

#### **2.1.1. Section one: Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)**

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the computer mediated communication and the internet have reshaped the use of computers for language learning. Gündüz (2005:194) stated that today, there is a huge amount of foreign language materials besides the traditional grammar book and dictionary. These materials include course books, workbooks, programmed courses, cue cards, charts, newspapers, posters, picture cards, cutouts, and so on. These are supplemented by other media, such as radio, television, slides, OHP, video tapes, games, toys, realia as well as computers, multimedia and the internet.

Crystal (1987: 377) stated that micro computers used as word processors besides audio, make teaching of all four language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing very interactive. He also added that a great variety of FLT exercises, such as sentence restructuring, checking of spelling, checking of translations, dictation tasks, and cloze tests can be computationally controlled using texts displayed on the screen.