

Title of Session: WebQuests - Research About WebQuests

Moderator: Bernie Dodge

Title of File: 20031112wq

Date: November 12, 2003

Tapped In transcript for 2003.11.12 18:13:57

Room: After School Online

BJ: Welcome, everyone, to tonight's WebQuest discussion with Bernie Dodge.

BernieD: Very international group tonight

BJ: We usually start the discussions with introductions...so Helen can see the international participants

BJ: I'm a teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

BernieD: I'm Bernie Dodge, a professor at San Diego State University.

LeticiaC: I'm a pre-service teacher at the University of Houston

HelenS: I'm a student teacher in Houston - elementary level

AprilB: I am April Brown, a preservice teacher in Ohio.

JimHi: Science teacher middle school in Edgewood Kentucky

FernandaR: I'm an EFL teacher in Portugal

AmandaD: I'm a student at University of Western Ontario hoping to enter pre-service program next year

MaryFT: I'm Mary Thompson and I teach preservice teacher technology courses at the University of Houston

MarkAH: I'm a teacher educator at the University of Oregon

KeithGst1: I'm Keith Connor, an ESOL teacher in Georgia.

KristinaR: I'm an English teacher and technology coordinator at Woodland H.S., Woodland, California

IsabelP: I'm a teacher in south of Spain and also working on my PhD

JimGst12: I'm Jim, a student teacher from Western Australia.

JeanneP: I'm Jeannie Pascon. I teach middle school students in CT how to write WebQuests (and Bernie, you told me it couldn't be done...) to teach them Information Technology Literacy.

KoreenG: I'm Koreen a computer teacher in California and grad student at Sac State

BethD: Media Specialist at a middle school in Michigan

TomMarch: I'm not sure what I do, but it's in beautiful Australia and I'm happy to be here

BernieD welcomes Tom especially

AmandaD: I regret that I can not participate in the discussion tonight, I have class at 8, but am doing a research project about Webquests and am interested in your discussion

MargueritV: I'm an instructor of Ed Tech at Wright State University in Ohio

BernieD: OK.... welcome everyone. Three continents represented! Ordinarily in these monthly sessions, we look at a number of WebQuests and analyze some particular aspect of them. Tonight will be a bit different.

BernieD: With such a large group, I think we're going to have to institute a little protocol for interaction.

BernieD: If you have a question at any point, please just type a ? and wait to be recognized. If you have a comment, type a !.

BernieD: Tonight's session is about research about WebQuests. What's out there? Who's doing research? What are the challenges involved in doing research on WebQuests.

BernieD: I get email every week or two from grad students interested in doing a thesis or dissertation on this topic. One thing they often report is that their committee is reluctant to let them go ahead with a study because there's not much literature about WebQuests.... which seems like a self-fulfilling prophecy that guarantees that there will never be a research literature about WebQuests!

BernieD: My response to that kind of statement is to remind everyone that the WebQuest model didn't fall out the sky from the planet Krypton. It's just a particular packaging of concepts and techniques like cooperative learning, advanced organizers, scaffolding, problem-based learning, and so on...each of which has a huge literature base. So when it comes time to do a lit review in preparation for a WebQuest study, you construct it based on whatever aspects of WebQuests that you're interested in.

BernieD: So what kinds of studies might one try to do about WebQuests? One obvious type might be to do a quasi-experimental study in which you compare one group who learned something via a WebQuest vs another group that didn't. That helps answer the question as to whether WebQuests are better than traditional instruction. It's a practical kind of question that working teachers or principals are interested in.

BernieD: The problem in such studies is coming up with what the non-WebQuest looks like. Does it take the same amount of class time? Does it have the same amount of interaction among learners? Does it use the same information as the web provides? Once you start to define the "traditional" instruction that you're comparing a WebQuest to, you realize that this is a fairly rich experience with lots of facets, any one of which could account for much of the difference in effectiveness.

BernieD: So a downside of a comparison study like that, though, is that it doesn't add to our knowledge of how WebQuests work and what parts of the model are most important.

BernieD: So the question is... how do you go about doing that.

BernieD: This would be a good time to scan the room and see who has actually done some research in this area. Has anyone designed a research study about WebQuests?

HelenS: ?

BernieD: Go Helen

HelenS: are you referring to graduate level study? or are you asking if we have made a webquest?

BernieD: I'm asking about actual research on a WebQuest that's already been developed.

BernieD: Well.... looks like this room reflects the actual world.

HelenS: AH.... I don't think I'm doing that

AldenT: Just getting started my 570 class

BernieD: There aren't that many studies that have been done although there's one that will start to collect data next Monday.

BernieD: The researcher for that study will be arriving here at some point, and I'll introduce him when he comes.

KoreenG: We have starting collecting data on a research project we are doing with webquests

BernieD: Really!!! Tell us more!

KoreenG: Our area of focus is...

KoreenG: to describe the impact of teaching with problem-based strategies, specifically using WebQuests, and its impact on students? problem-solving skills particularly in the area of reading comprehension.

BernieD: Cool. What's the task in the WebQuest?

KristinaR: !

BernieD: Go Kristina

KoreenG: We are in the process of revising from one webquest to another

BernieD: You mean modifying an existing one?

KristinaR: Koreen and I are in the iMET program at Sac state and will be using the reading comprehension or grammar webquest designed to discover the impact on problem solving skills with students in grades 8th and 10th

JodiM: Do you know how you will assess the impact of using the webquest?

KoreenG: We are shifting from a reading comprehension webquest to a grammar webquest

BernieD: Grammar isn't something I would think of as a WebQuest task. What are the kids doing exactly?

KristinaR: we are talking about using a standards based pretest, quality of product and post test

TimLa: ?

KristinaR: Koreen can you project the URL?

KoreenG: sure...

KoreenG: <http://imet.csus.edu/imet5/koreen/imetsites/282>

KoreenG: This is the teacher tools website. The webquest itself is one of the links on the site

BernieD: "Welcome to the exciting world of teaching grammar." Nothing like a bit of humor to kick it off!

KristinaR: the webquest link explains directions for the students

TimLa: ?

BernieD: So... I guess there's some judgment required to choose which 10 grammar rules to pick, and some creative design needed to make the lesson plans. is that the idea?

BernieD: Go Tim

KoreenG: Yes

KristinaR: yes

AmyD: !

KristinaR: But please note that this is not finished

TomMarch: !

BernieD: After Tim, Amy is next.

TimLa: Couldn't a teacher just as easily do this webquest as a project in which students must teach the class without it being in the form of a webquest?

BernieD: Amy had a comment, then Tom.

AmyD: Last semester in one of my classes we created a webquest similar to this for one of our projects. We had to pick a grade and subject to teach. The kids loved it and it really made them use their critical thinking skills.

KristinaR: yes if the teacher wanted to scaffold the lesson, but students will be using the references on their own

BernieD: Go Tom

TomMarch: One of the questions I always ask when assessing WQ's is, "Could students do the task without instruction?" Seems so in this case. Bernie makes a good case for a central, organizing task.

KoreenG: What is the good case for the central, organizing task?

TomMarch: Am I putting words in your mouth?

AmyD: ?

BernieD: I think Tom is referring to my favoring a big meaty task rather than a sequence of smaller tasks in series.

TomMarch: yup

TomMarch: Also, not "discovering" found knowledge, but venturing into ill-structured domains.

CarolynHK: ?

AmyD: What is the youngest age group that can successfully do a webquest?

BernieD: But maybe this is two fairly meaty tasks, so I'm not unhappy with it. Depends on how hard it is to come up with the 10 most important grammar rules.

KoreenG: After attending the CUE conference and presentation on WebQuests I was worried that our webquest didn't meet the criteria

BernieD: I usually say 3rd grade, Amy, though there are some good ones that go lower.

BernieD: Whose presentation was that, K?

JodiM: Do you know if webquests are used in higher education?

BernieD: All the time, Jodi.

AprilB: !

BernieD: Carolyn has a question.

KoreenG: I don't remember his last name, but his first was Phillip

JodiM: Do you know of any example webquests for higher education?

AprilB: !

BernieD: Ah. Philip Molebash. The guy in Tom March's old office across the hall.

CarolynHK: If we are still interested in research and Webquests, I'm wondering what kind of activity would one compare this webquest with....one that is basically the same activity, but off line?

BernieD: Yes... that's the rub, Carolyn.

BernieD: In general I would like to see case studies or other qualitative research that looks closely at a WebQuest class and tries to tease out what's going on there. I personally think that studies that compare two different variations on a WebQuest rather than WebQuest vs. non-WebQuest are likely to be more fruitful.

BernieD: (as opposed to a comparison study)

TimLa: !

BernieD: And fortuitously, my favorite WebQuest researcher just entered the room.

JamesPF: Hi All,

BernieD: James Frazee is conducting a study using a WebQuest with college kids.

AprilB: !

BernieD: Why don't you tell us about it, James?

JamesPF: The purpose of this exploratory and descriptive case study is to advance our understanding of the effective use of the WebQuest model.

JamesPF: The study represents a plan for investigating the effectiveness of one particular element of the WebQuest model - the jigsaw cooperative grouping method.

JamesPF: The study will examine two variations of the WebQuest model, one with and one without the addition of the jigsaw method, in order to provide a comparison of the effect of the WebQuest model of instruction on students' personal agency beliefs, engagement, and learning in a WebQuest problem-solving task.

JamesPF: if this seems like a cut and paste - it is - right from the abstract (forgive me)

BernieD: Can you show us the actual WebQuest?

JamesPF: Specifically, this study will examine the practices of students from two undergraduate history classes tasked with completing an AIDS-related WebQuest project.

JamesPF: <http://www.rohan.sdsu.edu/~fnobilet/courses/hist406/index.htm>

JamesPF: curious to get feedback and to hear about other research going on.

BernieD: Your arrival doubled the number of studies in the room, James.

TimLa: ?

JamesPF: Came straight from gathering some data - sorry for the delay

BernieD: Tim has a longstanding question.

TimLa: What type of data are you gathering from your study James or in other words what is the assessment?

JamesPF: There are three main "dependent measures"

JamesPF: They are students' personal agency beliefs, engagement and learning

JamesPF: The first research Q is:

JamesPF: Will exposure to a role-specific Jigsaw activity (integrated into a team-based WebQuest focused on "Living with AIDS") produce a significantly greater increase in students' personal agency beliefs than exposure to the same WebQuest without a role-specific Jigsaw activity?

JamesPF: the 2nd Q is:

JamesPF: How is the learning process different for students exposed to a role-specific Jigsaw activity (integrated into a team-based WebQuest focused on "living with AIDS") as compared to students exposed to the same WebQuest without a role-specific Jigsaw activity?

KeithGst20: ?

JamesPF: And, more specifically: Do students exposed to a role-specific Jigsaw activity (integrated into a team-based WebQuest focused on "living with AIDS") report more time on task (i.e., in-class and outside of class in terms of individual time and group time) than students exposed to the same WebQuest without a role-specific Jigsaw activity?

TimLa: pardon my ignorance but what is a role specific jigsaw activity?

JamesPF: Sorry..

JamesPF: It is is a WQ with a jigsaw activity

TimLa: I still don't understand what a jigsaw activity is

BernieD: <http://www.jigsaw.org> [Ed. note: Fred Steinbroner leads a monthly discussion in Tapped In on Group Learning Methods, including Jigsaw activities.]

TimLa: Thanks

JamesPF: Both classes get the identical WQ, but one has more interconnectedness/interdependence

BernieD: April has a comment, then Keith

JamesPF: Educational approach where the work of a group is divided into pieces (e.g., role-specific tasks) and each member of the group learns their piece and then through the process of solving their piece of the puzzle teaches what they learned back to their fellow group members.

AprilB: I was just going to say something about WebQuest at the college level

TimLa: I understand now thank you.

JodiM: In what subject April?

JimCGst21: ?

BernieD: You mean you experienced it as a student?

AprilB: It was for poetry...yes I mean I experienced it as a student

TomMarch: !

JamesPF: While the model is very well received by teachers and students alike, there is very little in the way of empirical research on the elements that make an effective WebQuest, and most evidence of its effectiveness is anecdotal.

BernieD: Cool. Go Keith

KeithGst20: Is data being gathered about the political and social beliefs about the students participating due to the topic (AIDS)? This topic may play a part in the diagnosis of your data.

AmyD: So with this webquest each student has an individual part he/she is responsible for then reports it to the group to make the concept complete

JamesPF: There are more research Qs than I have shared, but - Yes, Keith

BernieD: Jim is next, then Tom

JimCGst21: I would like to contribute to research.

BernieD: Send James a check!

JeanneP: !

JimCGst21: My proposal is to be submitted in a couple of weeks. focus - higher order thinking and how WQ promote this

BernieD: Really! Where are you studying?

JimCGst21: Any suggestions on what else I may be able to research? My proposal is not concrete yet. Curtin University, Western Australia. Met Tom a couple of months ago.

JamesPF: Keith, really it is more about their "sensitivity" or appreciation of multiple viewpoints/perspectives - not just their tolerance -rather appreciation of what it might be like to be "living with AIDS"

BernieD: That's a long conversation, Jim. We should talk later.

JamesPF: Uncertainty is an area ripe for research

BernieD: Tom has a comment, then Jeanne and then we have to stop. Go Tom

KeithGst20: I understand, but I just wanted to be constructive with my thoughts to help promote your research.

TomMarch: I wonder what information you are gathering on participants. The reason I ask is that I see using the jigsaw as one of the scaffolds that can be varied according to user's expertise. Is there a pre-test that can identify how "expert" someone might be in problem-solving and then see if the jigsaw scaffold was helpful to them? Do you see what I'm getting at?

KeithGst20: !

MarkAH: ?

BernieD: (We have to vacate the room in 3 minutes, so I'm going to have to put a hold on new questions)

KeithGst20: Maybe logic problems, or a MENSA test, or brain teasers could be used for problem-solving tests.

JamesPF: Tom - Yes, I think I do understand what you are getting at. Unfortunately, I am working with two intact classes and am not collecting some of the data that you suggest.

JeanneP: I can hardly call this "empirical data," but...

JeanneP: When I first started teaching my 8th graders, I had a bunch of lessons teaching the information literacy skills (searching, evaluating websites, copyright, higher-order thinking, Big6 Skills, etc.) Then we went into the creation of the WQ by the students in groups. About 2/3 of the way through the year I realized that it should be a WQ itself! With the obvious task being to create a WQ.

BernieD: Good thought, Jeanne.

JeanneP: I do survey the students as they exit my Info Tech Lit class to see what they think they will continue to use in their everyday lives and for school research purposes. From their comments and my observations, I feel that they are taking much more of the ITL skills with them now that is organized into a WQ.

BernieD: OK... all, before BJ evicts us, we need to begin to end this session.

BernieD: I have one last URL to share with anyone thinking about doing research.

TomMarch: What I'm thinking is that scaffolding (jigsaws) may not be useful to adult learners, whereas it could be crucial to middle schoolers. Another study?

JamesPF: Tom, will contact you after this for some more conversation.

BernieD: I use it all the time with grad students and I think it works (though I haven't collected data to prove that!)

BernieD: <http://webquest.org/webquest-bibliography.htm>

BernieD: This is a bibliography I'm starting to collect. Most of the items are not research studies, but they might play a role in beefing up ones lit review.

AmyD: Thank you for your time. I really enjoyed learning about these webquests

BernieD: And with that, I have to thank you all for coming. If you'd like to continue the discussion for awhile, follow me to my office.

KoreenG: Yes, thank you for the feedback!

AprilB: Thank you Bernie, James, everyone.

JeanneP: It was great to hear from others using and researching WQ! Ciao!

AldenT: waves goodbye See ya!

TomMarch: Thanks, folks.