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Sourcing the Web: revolution in technology - revolution in consciousness

Authors

Ioanna Prasoulis, Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT), Institute of Education, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, UK (phone: +44 1786 467933; fax: +44 1786 466131).

*Malcolm MacDonald¹, Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT), Institute of Education, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, UK (phone: +44 1786 467933; fax: +44 1786 466131; email: mmm1@stir.ac.uk).

Daniela Sime, Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT), Institute of Education, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, UK (phone: +44 1786 467933; fax: +44 1786 466131; email: mmm1@stir.ac.uk).

¹ Please address all correspondence to this author

"It's not what you do, it's the way you do it": the pragmatics of using a WebQuest on a cultural studies course.

Abstract

A WebQuest is a device for organising selected WebPages at one particular site for ease of use by learners studying a particular topic. This paper describes the conditions of design and implementation of a WebQuest on a British Studies course for first year undergraduates on degree programmes in learning English language. Learners were interviewed at the end of the course to evaluate the success of the WebQuest with regard to its design and implementation, its effectiveness as a resource for raising the cultural awareness of the learners and the quality of pedagogic communication that took place during the lab sessions. For the most part, the WebQuest was regarded as being successful on the first two counts, but issues were raised with regard to the quality of human communication that took place during and after the lab sessions. Points that emerged related to interaction between the course tutors and the learners, feedback to student work posted on the bulletin board and the maintenance of motivation of both tutors and learners throughout the project.

Keywords

British Studies; cultural studies; ELT; Internet; World Wide Web.

"It's not what you do, it's the way you do it": the pragmatics of using a WebQuest on a cultural studies course.

World Wide Web and Language Learning

One of the most celebrated technological and pedagogical developments of recent years has been the expansion of the World Wide Web and the proliferation of networked computers for educational use. According to David Crystal, we are now witnessing 'a potential technological revolution of unprecedented scope [which aims] to enable people all over the world to communicate with each other in seconds' (Crystal in Brett and Motteram, 2000, p.60). Flexibility, power, and ease of use are some of the general advantages the World Wide Web has over its predecessors (Catterick, 1999). The Web can be accessed any time and from anywhere, making Web-based learning independent in time and space. For the foreign language learner, the Internet can provide a more or less limitless database of authentic texts, many of which contain useful factual information about the target culture; it can also, where necessary, offer an inexpensive and widely accessible medium for communicating with other language learners and members of the target culture.

A useful synopsis of the potential provided by the Web for language learning and teaching is offered by Frizler (1998). According to Frizler, the World Wide Web

"offers real world examples of integrated knowledge; is a rich source of authentic language and cultural material; enables users to retrieve up-to-date and abundant information; appeals to students with visual/tactile learning styles; offers the opportunity to write with real purpose for a real audience; develops users' skills to skim and scan through vast amounts of information; builds critical thinking; offers opportunity for on-line publishing".

It is clear from this summary list that, as well as the narrower provision of 'authentic' texts, the Web has much to offer as a resource for a course in cultural studies. Not only does it enable learners to be exposed to 'cultural material', it also provides this material in an 'integrated' fashion. Moreover, the chance given learners by the Internet for learners to communicate with those from different cultures also permits them, if necessary, to negotiate divergent values and beliefs with their correspondents, thereby possibly reaching some mutual understanding or possibly even convergence of beliefs and values.

However, one of the downsides of the Internet is the plethora of information which it contains. It is neither desirable nor feasible that second language learners should have to plough their own way through this in its entirety in order to achieve their pedagogical goals. To remedy this, it was decided to test the potential of a WebQuest (Dodge, 1997 & 2000; Catterick, 1999) for organising preselected information from the Web for pedagogical purposes and ease of access for our learners on a cultural studies course. This paper will describe the design, implementation and evaluation of a WebQuest as a pedagogic resource on a first year British Studies course for undergraduate EFL students.

Context of Learning

British Studies is a compulsory first-year course taken by all students as part of three different degree programmes for international students at a Scottish University: the BA in English Language Teaching, the BA in English as a Foreign Language and the BA for Business Studies. The course lasts for an academic semester of 12 weeks. The learners are all non-native speakers and their level of English is that required to enter a British

University. A number of students have the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) while others have passed the IELTS examination to a level of 5.5. (or equiv).

The aims of the British Studies course are to enable learners to raise their awareness of everyday life in the UK; to reflect upon differences and similarities between everyday life in the UK and in their own countries; and to recognise and understand beliefs and values embedded in the UK culture, with special reference to the themes covered in the course. It was also anticipated that by the end of the course, learners should have developed the skills to evaluate source materials critically, especially Web-based sources, and to use the L2 to interpret and reflect upon their experiences of everyday life in the UK.

The course was organised around two superordinate questions designed to problematize what we regarded as two key issues in UK society: multiculturalism and class. After an introductory session, in which – amongst other things – learners were introduced to the computer lab, the course went on to cover eight themes derived from the coursebook selected for the course (Storry and Childs, 2000):

Introduction

To what extent is the UK a multicultural society?

- 1 Town and country
- 2 Ethnicity
- 3 Religion

To what extent is the UK a classless society?

- 4 Class
- 5 Education and work
- 6 Leisure activities: sports, eating and pubs
- 7 Sex and gender
- 8 Youth culture

Themed seminars were delivered over four hours each week. Two hours were carried out off-line in a seminar room with each theme being introduced around a number of activities designed to stimulate discussion around topics raised in the course readings for the week. Two hours were subsequently carried out in a computer lab equipped with Apple Macintosh computers. One of these hours consisted of a supervised session using Web-based materials while an additional hour was used for learners to complete follow-up activities relating to activities carried out in class.

Design and Implementation

The WebQuest is a relatively recent approach to exploiting the World Wide Web as a teaching resource. The first WebQuest was created in 1995 by Bernie Dodge at San Diego University. It was designed to provide a clear sense of direction for students as they searched the Internet for pedagogic materials. Essentially, a WebQuest consists of a series of WebPages selected by the designer as being particularly relevant to the themes of a course or project. For ease of access, these are then linked to a central Website. Although the original WebQuests were designed for native speakers in US high schools, they are now increasingly being used for teaching modern foreign languages and ELT (Dodge, 2000) as they can provide both teacher and learner with authentic material as well as opportunities for real language use, cooperative learning and development of thinking skills (March, 1998; Catterick, 1999). The WebQuest for our British Studies course was designed to enable our students to have ease of access to authentic texts that would provide them with up-to-the-minute information about everyday life and culture in the UK.

The principles of a WebQuest are not that different from any kind of lesson. All that is needed is to get the learners orientated, to give them an interesting and manageable task and to give them the resources and guidance needed to complete it. Designing a WebQuest involves five stages (adapted from Catterick, 1999):

Focus: choose a title and a theme, along topics for the various WebPages;

Search: become familiar with the resources that are available on the Net;

Organize: organize the resources;

Design: create the WebPage;

Load: find a suitable site and load it on the Web.

We shall now see how each of these five stages worked out in practice. We shall conclude with a short tour of the site.

Focus: Before creating this particular WebQuest, a title and a specific focus of the WebQuest had to be found. Once this was done the next concern was the topics that the WebQuest would cover. This part of the design was relatively time consuming as the designer had to consider the needs of the learners and to ensure that what was on the WebQuest corresponded with the course syllabus. To achieve this, it was necessary to hold a series of meetings between the Web designer and the course co-ordinator (MacDonald and Prasoulis, two of the co-authors of this paper).

Search: The next step in the design of the WebQuest was to undertake a comprehensive search to find as many suitable Internet sites as possible that were related to the topics that had been chosen. As the Internet is vast resource of information many Internet sites were found relating to British culture. However, most of them were unsuitable because they either contained stereotypical information, which we sought to avoid, or were not strictly relevant to the themes of the course. For example many WebPages gave information about British immigrants in the United States. As a result the search had to be refined to more specific information using key phrases such as 'clothes in Britain' or 'food in Britain'. To begin with, a variety of search engines were used - such as Lycos, Yahoo, Infoseek, and Excite; but in the end it was found that Altavista and Excite proved most useful as their searches yielded the most relevant information on the subject of British Studies.

Organize: A suitable HTML editor then had to be found in order to create the WebQuest. Out of the many editors available on the Web, the one which was chosen was Dreamweaver, since it appeared to be both user friendly and flexible. The main purpose of this stage was to construct the introductory page to the site and select the most suitable links before working on the graphic design element of the WebQuest. At the beginning, the background of the WebQuest was gray with little or no graphic elements. Once the introduction was written, the next stage was to produce relevant, motivating and communicative tasks for the learners. This involved embedding links to the various pages.

Design: In order to make the layout of the WebQuest more interesting and more visually appealing, a variety of graphic elements were embedded and different sizes and colors of font were utilized. A number of pictures were culled from the Internet while others were taken from Microsoft Word picture gallery. With the help of Paint Shop Pro, the pictures were put together to produce a background image for the WebQuest. Each topic has a different related background image. For example, the topic *Clothes in Britain* has a background image of different clothing through the ages, ranging from the traditional Scottish kilt to contemporary fashion items, such as baggies and pashminas. Other icons were also used as links from one page to the other.

Load: The final step was to find a suitable site to load the WebQuest onto the Internet. In our case it was possible to load the WebQuest onto our university Web space. The Internet has many sites that provide free Web space. The Web space provided by the

various search engines are considerably safer than those provided by other sites and they have the advantage of being free. Some alternative sites also provide Web space but this has to be paid for. Once uploaded on the Net some final small corrections were made and the site was thoroughly checked to make sure that everything worked. In addition a bulletin board was added where learners could post their findings from the activities as well as a dictionary and the e-mail addresses of the course tutors.

Site: The site was now complete, so we will conclude this section with a brief tour of the site. The entry level to the British Studies WebQuest is a homepage (Fig 1) which gives instructions on how to use the site and has an index or main menu with links to topic pages relating to the main themes of the course, as well as to other learning resources.

Figure 1 about here

Each topic page (Fig 2) provides a brief introduction, links to a number of relevant WebPages and to two types of activities page: in-class and follow-up.

Figure 2 about here

The in-class WebPages and activities (Fig 3) for each topic are designed to be read and completed within an hour. These are self-contained and can be completed entirely from the WebPage links.

Figure 3 about here

In the follow-up activities, students have to complete a task which requires them to locate additional resources beyond the computer lab (Fig 4).

Figure 4 about here

The learners then email the task outcome to the WebQuest controller for posting on a WebPage linked to the site. Feedback is also given on tasks to the group during later seminar sessions.

Evaluation

Individuals attach meaning to any event of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1956, 1987). These mental constructions have a direct influence on learning, especially in the classroom environment (Ehrman and Dornyei, 1998; Oxford et al., 1998). In this section, we report how the learners constructed their experience of the course described above. Last year's intake was a small cohort of eight learners: 3 Greek students, 1 Greek Cypriot, 1 Turk from Kurdistan, 1 Maldivian, 1 Japanese, and a Pole domiciled in Scotland. Five were female and three were male. Ages ranged from 18 to 32. The course was taught by two male British tutors in their late forties and early fifties, both of whom had been teaching for over twenty years. The cohort is not considered a representative sample for a systematic generalization of the results to a wider population. The aim is to address a purposive sample to provide a diversity of constructions about the materials used on the course materials, about the pedagogical communication between tutors and students and students and students, and in particular about the participants' experience of exploiting the World Wide Web. This will enable the course co-ordinator in collaboration with the Web designer to address any issues that arise for the succeeding year's course. This paper, therefore, reports what is essentially a piece of classroom action research.

Data was gathered through three small group interview sessions with the students, while individual interviews were conducted with both tutors. The students decided themselves on the groups' organization and were interviewed in the normal classroom setting. The interviews were conducted by a trained research student (Sime, the third co-author), who was not involved in any teaching activity with this group. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed and the right to withdraw participation was also explained to all participants. A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix I) was designed around open-ended questions (Drever, 1995) to stimulate reflection relating to the following areas:

- *Design and implementation of the WebQuest*: perceptions of Web-based course materials including design, selection and organization of material, relevance and usefulness of information;
- *Cultural awareness*: cultural significance of selected materials; constructions of meaning relating to the raising of cultural awareness;
- *Pedagogic communication*: interpretations of tutor-student/student-student/student-computer interaction; perceptions of computer oriented teaching/learning processes.

Although the researcher used the questions in the protocol to initiate or to promote responses during the interviews, the participants were left free to decide which aspects of the course to discuss, agree on or disagree with. For reasons of space, the narratives generated are not included here in their entirety. The richness of data gathered allowed for a grounded theory type of approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in presenting the results. The interpretations which follow are an attempt to identify the main concepts and internal connections between them.

Learning experience

Here we present our thematized interpretations of the responses of the course participants supported by quotes from the narrative accounts of the ways in which they constructed their experience of the course (Appendix II).

Design and implementation of the WebQuest

Students were generally enthusiastic about using the WebQuest as part of the British Studies course. Students found that having access to preselected WebPages saved time when searching for relevant source materials ('It's important not to waste time with the information you don't need to know. The relevant things were there, already selected, and this saved time'). The WebQuest also provided convenient access to the course materials ('You can access it at your own time, even at home, you type the Web address and, click, you are there'). Students appreciated the ease with which the course WebPage could be accessed and 'the nice links between the pages'. The WebQuest also appeared to help students work with a degree of autonomy many of them had not experienced before.

The analysis of the information from the Web stimulated by the activities on the course generated generally positive responses, although not in every case. The activities were seen as generally interesting and useful - for developing cultural awareness and language acquisition and for managing activities relating to the assignment. Students also felt that their engagement with the Web in the context of a task that required a fair degree of autonomous work led to dynamic and active learning ('I feel that I participate in the

class, as I find the information myself”). However, there was some criticism of the quality and comprehensiveness of the information provided by the WebQuest. The information selected from the Web appeared sometimes to be incomprehensible, incomplete or contradictory (‘On some issues like politics or Gaelic language, there was not enough and clear information and we did not understand these subjects’; ‘Some information was missing, other was confusing’).

Cultural awareness

The overarching aim of our course in British Studies was to enable our learners to develop their awareness of UK culture. Students generally indicated that they had learnt a lot about the British culture from the materials used on the course, which included those derived from the Web (‘It helped us to understand the way of thinking in UK and their culture, their customs, their way of living’). Interestingly, they also learnt a lot about their own cultures (‘There were many examples and I could compare with the realities in my own culture’) and about other cultures (‘It was interesting to learn about my colleagues' countries as well’). Students appeared to appreciate this pluralistic focus of the course. (‘The best thing was to share opinions about the British culture’; ‘We could compare the cultures and see the differences and the similarities between them’; ‘There were many examples coming from my colleagues and I could compare them with the realities in my own culture. It helped to raise awareness of my own culture’).

Pedagogic communication

Surprisingly, the most contentious issue that arose from the interviews appeared to be the nature of the pedagogic communication amongst the students and between the students

and the tutors while using the WebQuest in the computer lab. While the students appeared to be relatively pleased with the interaction in the lab, the course tutors were more sceptical. Students generally agreed that there was adequate opportunity for interaction using the WebQuest ('It was a different type of interacting, not a problem. We used to work 10 minutes on the Web, then 10 minutes discussing and so; there was a lot of talking with colleagues and tutors'). Students came to regard informal student chat within the lab as valid pedagogic interaction. ('Once we chatted during the class and that's interaction, isn't it?'). On the other hand, the course tutors were less enthusiastic about the interaction during the WebQuest sessions. One course tutor did feel quite positive about the quality of interaction on this particular course.('I feel that these students were above my expectations, when talking to me or in groups'). However, the other tutor felt strongly that the nature of the material limited the conversational opportunities and affected the atmosphere of the seminar ('The material is there, but is not interactive in a way. It was a bit weird to have the students reading the materials without any interaction between themselves. My instinct told me that if the students are not talking to each other or to me, there is something wrong'). The same tutor commented on students' difficulties in engaging in debate about the cultural themes on the course. He suggested as possible reasons for this either that the students might not have had prior experience in intellectually challenging discussions or that the nature of the themes selected for the course were uninteresting and too abstract to engage them at this point of their development.

Another problematic area was the quality of feedback which tutors gave to the follow-up activities mailed by students for posting on the Website. All the students felt the

tutors' feedback on their periodic contributions to the course was limited and that this was demotivating and discouraging ('Because we were not evaluated, we lost the will of doing the tasks'; 'Sometimes, the tutors didn't even comment on what we did and that's demotivating'). However, both tutors identified the 'limited' evaluation as a deliberate strategy to encourage autonomy in student contributions. Tutors also considered that publishing the students' work on the course WebPage was itself a form of affirmative feedback ('The idea was to put on the Web the materials which came from the students, so that they will have a feeling of ownership of these materials and consider it as a positive feedback').

The final controversial aspect of the course was the way the feelings of the participants changed as the semester progressed. Initial enthusiasm and excitement appeared to be replaced, in the case of both tutors and students, by a sense of disengagement and even demotivation. Each party pointed to the other as the source of this decline in motivation. One of the students felt that the tutors had flagged in their delivery of the course ('The tutors lost enthusiasm and we followed. If you lose the head, the body is dead'); while one of the tutors indicated that the students' limited contributions to the discussions and the course Web page had had an impact on him ('My feeling as a whole derives largely from the behavior of the students in the class. I never felt that the students engaged really in the type of discussion that I expected'; 'They were fairly passive in terms of their reactions to a lot of what we did, and I found it very disappointing actually'). Despite these comments, however, both tutors and students still concluded that the use of the WebQuest had been a positive experience as a whole ('It has been successful, but not

as much as the tutors thought' - student; 'The course raised a lot of questions about this type of teaching and gave us ideas about how to improve it' - tutor).

Discussion

This small scale piece of action research has indicated some beneficial, and some salutary, aspects of this particular form of Web-based learning on a cultural studies course.

Design and implementation of the WebQuest

The design and implementation of the WebQuest seems to be the least problematic issue arising from our evaluation. At a most basic level, it seemed to enable students to access the information on the Web more efficiently. The importance of this should not be underestimated for our students, many of whom were using the Web for the first time. Our learners also appeared themselves to be aware of the increased autonomy that this permitted them. However, it is difficult to know how to respond to their criticism of the quality and comprehensiveness of the information provided by the WebQuest. One could maintain that the onus is on the designer or tutor to provide the learners with a more precise selection of materials on the WebQuest; but on the other hand perhaps it is actually constructive for learners to be exposed to some of the shortcomings of Web-based materials in order to develop a critical approach to their sources (Frizler, 1998). We feel also that it is important that students should be encouraged not to be overdependent on Web-based resources, and that they should realize the value of working with a combination of Web-based sources and those from other media.

Cultural awareness

Again, the course provision appeared to be successful in addressing the aims of the course as far as they went. It is interesting that if anything, that the course appeared to go beyond the monocultural focus implied by its title. This was due to the fact that the focus of much of the debate in the class was on comparing customs from the different cultures of the participants with what they found in the UK. This raises the question of whether the narrow angle lens is the most appropriate focus for our course in British Studies, or whether it might be more fitting for a course of this nature to focus on the broader issues arising from communication across cultures, that is to say to have a more general focus on intercultural communication. In this case, the originating cultures of the participants would assume greater validity in the course content and this might help them more readily accommodate alien features of the target culture.

Pedagogic Communication

It is ironic that the most problematic issue of our evaluation related neither to the technical aspects of the WebQuest nor to its role in addressing the aims of the course. It actually turned out to be the quality of human communication during and after the lab sessions. The different issues that emerged from the participants' responses under this heading can be further categorized under three subheadings: interaction, feedback and motivation.

Interaction: It is interesting, given that the nature of classroom interaction is essentially co-constructed by both tutor and learners (Breen, 1988), that the two different categories of interlocutor appeared to have divergent interpretations of what was going on. It is

possible that it was the anticipation of bipartite communication by both parties in the computer lab that might be a central factor in this problem. Perhaps both tutors and learners were coming to the computer lab anticipating the same degree of mutual interdependence that they shared in the unmediated classroom. However, it has often been noted that the Web constitutes a virtual third party in pedagogic discourse in which it features (Higgins, 1984). Perhaps it was this element that reconfigured the interaction between tutor and learners in a way which neither party was able to anticipate, but in a way which our learners appeared to manage much better than their tutors. It might therefore be necessary to regard the communication in the lab as essentially tripartite, i.e. tutor-learner-computer. It was precisely when the students were communicating with or through the computer that both course tutors appeared to become unnerved.

Feedback: The main reason for the difference of opinion regarding feedback was that for the rest of their first year programme students were undertaking more intensive language development courses in which the linguistic and textual form of their coursework was subject to rigorous constructive feedback. However, on the British Studies course, the tutors felt they wanted to address the content of the students' contribution rather than the formal features of language and genre; also they felt that it was important for the learners to 'own' the pages which they posted on the bulletin board.

Motivation: The most positive comments relating to motivation was that the students did appear to value the increased autonomy which the WebQuest provided them with in their studies. Almost all of them had just arrived at a UK university and had experienced more didactic teaching styles in their home countries. They generally valued this aspect of

cultural reorientation ('It was unusual from all the school years when you just listen to the tutor'). However, it is clear that the learners also expected a high level of extrinsic motivation from the commitment of their course tutors. Again, this would appear to be partially derived from their expectations based on the bipartite interaction of the unmediated classroom. Reflecting on the students' comments on the tutors' engagement with the course, we had to agree that there had been a decline in energy on our part as the course progressed. Two reasons can be adduced for this. The first was a consequence of tutors' declining morale as a reaction to what they perceived as the lack of learners' participation in class discussion, this therefore becoming something of a vicious circle. The second one, which will be familiar to many of our readers, is that of perceived overcommitment on the part of the tutors' schedules. We feel that in retrospect, we underestimated the time required to set up and maintain the Web-based resources necessary for the successful running of the course, and that eventually also contributed to our energy levels declining in the delivery of the course generally, but in particular the sessions in the computer lab.

Recommendations and Conclusion

We would like, finally, to make some suggestions which could improve the conditions of use of the WebQuest in the future. These relate in particular to four inter-related issues: teaching and learning strategies, task design, learner autonomy, and resource allocation.

Strategies for teaching and learning: We feel that there is a need for both tutors and learners to engage in some preparatory reflection and training as to what to expect from the use of Web-based resources. Learners should be explicitly encouraged not to be

overdependent upon Web-based resources but to approach them critically, and to supplement them as necessary with sources from other media. Through use of the bulletin board learners should also be encouraged to free themselves from dependency on tutor's feedback and to value their own sharing and discussion of each other's contribution to the ongoing debate on the topic at hand. Tutors may also have to steel themselves at times to take a less active role in class activity in the computer lab as the computer itself becomes an integral contributor to the discourse of the classroom.

Task design: It is still hard not to respond to some degree to our misgivings about the quality and effectiveness of the pedagogic communication in the computer lab. One area which possibly requires remodeling are some of the tasks associated with the Web-based resources. We feel that there was still work to be done with these in order to improve their interactive nature, both in order to enable our learners to reflect critically on the information that is yielded by the WebQuest and in order to maximize the interaction that does take place in real time in the computer lab.

Student autonomy: One aim of being more explicit about the requirements of the course and of remodeling some of the tasks in which the students are engaged is to encourage independence on the part of our learners. In particular, learners in their turn should be encouraged to become less dependent on the enthusiasm of their mentors in order to maintain their motivation. But there may also be some uses of the WebQuest which are best suited to independent study and might therefore be allocated to unsupervised time at the students' discretion. In short, we felt ultimately that some of the activities which had been conducted in the computer lab might better be completed in unsupervised sessions.

Resource allocation: Finally, it has been our experience that it is easy to underestimate the amount of time which is required for the creation and maintenance of the WebQuest facility. As ever, it is crucial that this be adequately planned or, as we have seen, it may have a deleterious effect upon both parties' experience of the course.

In conclusion, it would appear that the technical and design aspects of using a WebQuest on our course in British Studies were regarded both by both learners and tutors as being an effective means of harnessing the World Wide Web for pedagogical purposes. However, there would also appear to be factors over and above the simple mechanics of this process which need to be taken into account for the successful running of the Web-based component of this type of course.

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Vitae

Ionna Prasoulis (BAELT, MSc CALL & TESOL) comes from Greece. She graduated with her Master's from the Centre for English Teaching (CELT), Institute of Education, University of Stirling. Her research interests include CALL, cultural studies and intercultural communication.

Malcolm MacDonald (BA, Cert TEFL, MEd, PhD) comes from the UK. He has taught ESP in the Seychelles; and EAP in schools of Medicine (Kuwait), Business (Singapore) and Human Sciences (UK). He has taught TESOL methodology in Malaysia. He is currently lecturing in Language Education at CELT. His teaching includes courses in CALL & TESOL. His research interests include CALL, materials development, second language acquisition, discourse analysis, cultural studies, intercultural communication and critical theory.

Daniela Sime (BA) comes from Romania. She is currently working for a PhD at CELT investigating the significance of non-verbal communication in the language classroom. Her other research interests include intercultural communication, ethnography, critical theory and literature.

Appendix I: guidelines for semi-structured interview

Questions used as prompts in interviewing the groups of students:

1. What do you feel about using the WWW as a source of raising your awareness of UK culture?
2. Has the information on the WWW been useful for you? If yes, in what ways?
3. Did you feel it was useful that the information was selected for you before the class? Why?
4. How easy to use was the information that was presented to you in the computer lab? Were there any particular problems with the information?
5. How interesting did you find the information from the WWW?
6. How much did you enjoy the classes in the computer lab? Justify, please!
7. Did you find the classes interactive? Was lack of interactivity a problem for you in terms of learning and enjoyment?
8. What makes a computer lab class a good or a bad class?
9. Have you used the course website much outside the class? Justify, please!
10. Do you find the course website easy to navigate around? Any particular problems?
11. What did you feel about the follow-up tasks to the computer lab classes?
12. In the end, do you feel the course has been improved by the use of WWW?
13. How do you think that we should improve the use of the WWW in this course?

Questions used in interviewing the tutors:

1. How do you feel about using the WWW in raising students awareness of UK culture?
2. Which were the criteria you involved in selecting the materials used during the lab class activities?
3. Do you think that the follow-up activities were relevant for raising students' awareness of UK culture?
4. How useful/interesting/enjoyable do you think this class was for the students? And for the tutors?
5. Did you feel that the materials on the web and the structure of the class provided good opportunities for classroom interaction?
6. Did your attitude towards the subject and respectively, towards the class, change in time? If yes, in which way?
7. Which were, in your opinion, the good and the weak points of this computer lab class?
8. How would you improve the use of the WWW on the course for the next academic year?

Appendix II: samples from interviews

ATTITUDES

A. COMPUTER USE

1. Avoids routine

It is more interesting from the computer, it's not like listening to the teacher all the time (student)

It was unusual from all the school years when you listen to the teacher (student)

2. Time saving with finding information

You can immediately check many things on the web (student)

We don't have time to read irrelevant information (student)

It's important not to waste time with the information that you don't need to know (student)

We get the information from the web, we don't need to go to the library, it saved time (student)

3. Personal convenience of access

You can access it in your own time, even at home, you type the address and click! You are there (student)

4. Active learning

It's more fun to not listen all the time to the teacher and find the information by yourself (student)

I feel that I participate in the class, as I find the information myself (student)

Some things we just took for granted from the web, we did not go and check it out there (student)

B. TEACHER – STUDENT INTERACTION

1. Feelings change in time

At the beginning, I was very proud of this page, I even recommend it to my friends (student)

It has been successful, but not as much as teachers thought (student)

At the beginning, we used to discuss things, know teachers seem to lost their interest, they don't have time to discuss it anymore (student)

They(the teachers) lost enthusiasm and we followed. If you loose the head, the body is dead (student)

They were fairly passive in terms of their reactions to a lot of what we did, which I found it very disappointing actually (teacher)

My feelings from the course as a whole derive very largely from the behaviour of the students in the class. (teacher)

Initially, I was taken aback by their difficulties to engage in discussions with me and with the other students in the class, but this became perhaps not so much a problem as the course progressed. (teacher)

(teacher)

I felt it was great initially and then I began to wonder. (teacher)

2. Teacher talks, students talk

Once somebody started to say something, the teacher used to jump and cut their answers (student)

In my country, teachers do all the talking so I am OK with that

When you struggle and express yourself- that's pushing your learning

Maybe the teachers talk too much in this class (student)

A lot of the times, I found in the class that the students were not 100% engaged in what we were doing, judging by their contributions to the discussion (teacher)

I never felt that the students engaged really in the sort of discussion that I thought (teacher)

My instinct told me that if the students are not talking to each other or they are not talking to me, there is something wrong (student)

3. Evaluation – more or less?

Because we were not evaluated, we lost the will of doing the tasks (student)

I enjoy some activities, even if they were not evaluated (student)

Sometimes they (the teachers) don't even comment on what we do (student)

I knew that nothing will happen if I didn't do them (the tasks), so I was not doing them (student)

Teachers didn't check if we are writing or not, if we were doing the tasks and that's de-motivating (student)

C. STUDENT-STUDENT INTERACTION

1. What interaction?

We worked a lot in the class on group projects (student)

It was a different way of interacting, not a problem (student)

When we had discussions, there was no pressure (student)

We used to spend 10 mins on the web, then 10 mins discussion and so; there was interaction and we did communicate! (student)

We were asked impossible things like pair-work (student)

The material is there but is not interactive in a way (teacher)

I found that these students are lacking in discussion skills. Most of them were not ready to express their own opinions, perhaps they never thought about it, they lacked experience or the issues we suggested were not challenging or too abstract (teacher)

Probably because of my lack of experience, I designed activities which asked the students to read long materials in front of the computer, without interacting with each other at all, which pedagogically is disastrous I think (teacher)

It was a bit weird to have the students reading the materials without any interaction between themselves (teacher)

2. Chat is interaction, isn't it?

Once we chatted and that's interaction, isn't it? (student)

Through e-mails, we did interact, even if not in class time (student)

D. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

1. Space and distance

It was quite uncomfortable to sit with the back to some of the students, we could not see each other while talking (student)

2. Bad air-conditioned, colourful Macs

The computers are nice and new (student)

The air-conditioning was bad (students)

I enjoyed because I could use a Mac computer (student)

JUDGING THE INFORMATION

A. USEFULNESS

1. For learning

On some issues like politics and Gaelic language there was not enough and clear information and we did not understand these subjects (student)

Some things were not understandable for some of the students- and you can't understand a culture in 3 weeks (student)

Sometimes teachers don't have enough information, they don't know about their own culture (student)

Students had the chance to see that they worked in a sort of published form, which was publicly accessible in the sense that the other students could read what they had written (teacher)

I don't know if I learnt myself anything from this course- it raised a lot of questions for this type of teaching (teacher)

2. For language learning

People want to learn the language here, everything should be language-related in this course (student)

It did provide the opportunity for the students to express themselves particularly in writing (teacher)

3. For assignment

There were many things about leisure, pubs (...) and it helped for the assignment (student)

We used a lot of information for the assignment (students)

It's useful for the course, for the exam, but not for my future (student)

For them, the priority is to pass the course or to get a good grade (teacher)

They managed to incorporate quite well the materials provided on the web in their assignments (teacher)

B. EASE

1. Of accessing

It was quite easy too access it most of the times (student)

Sometimes the WWW page was not accessible from the other building in the university (student)

2. Of presenting

Some information was missing, other was confusing (student)

The web site looks great and it gives the course a sense of identity (teacher)

3. Of using

Very easy to use, no particular problems (student)

Nice links between the pages (student)

C. ENJOYMENT

1. It was new! Was it interesting?

It was interesting and new (student)
For me, it was just interesting, at the limit, ok? (student)
There were many things which I did not know before about Britain (student)

2. *Exciting? Fun?*

I did not feel like sleeping in this class, as you normally do. (student)
Some info was good, but some was boring for me, which is quite natural, you can't please everybody
At the beginning, I wanted to show the web page to my friends, but then I lost interest
There was a lack of fun element, certainly in my contribution (...) it's a question of personality (teacher)

3. *Personal contributions to WWW*

It's nice to see your own writing on the page- they put the things we wrote on the web (student)
The idea was to put on the web the materials which come from the students, so that they'll have a feeling of ownership of these materials (teacher-designer)

D. CULTURE AWARENESS

1. *British culture*

Because we talk a lot about the British, we learn a lot about their culture. (student)
Especially the religion subject, by presenting the clashes between the two sides which is so particular for this culture was really interesting (student)
It helped us to understand the way of thinking in UK and the culture (students)
The best thing was to share opinions about the British culture (student)
It's not useful for my life, I can't be an expert in British Culture anyhow
There are many meanings in a culture, they should provide this kind of information. (student)
We have on the web an infinite amount of cultural knowledge, but how this translates in cultural awareness seems to depend a lot on the nature of the tasks involved (teacher)

2. *Own culture*

There were many examples and I could compare with the realities in my own culture (student)
Many topics were relevant for our own cultures as well (student)
It helped to raise my awareness of my own culture (student)
Some things, which are not present in my culture, I did not enjoy, maybe because I did not understand them (student)
We were trying to mobilise the students' schemata from their own culture so that they can relate where they are coming from with their experiences in Britain at the moment (teacher)

3. *Others' culture*

It was interesting to learn about other countries (student)
We could compare the cultures and see the differences and the similarities (student)
Everybody had something to say on a topic and it was interesting to see how people from other countries think (students)
The idea in our minds as tutors was to promote a skill-based approach, a cross-cultural one, but I think that we did not approach it systematically enough (teacher)

Fig.1:British Studies WebQuest Main Menu

(<http://www.celt.stir.ac.uk/resources/EL15/religion/religion.html>)

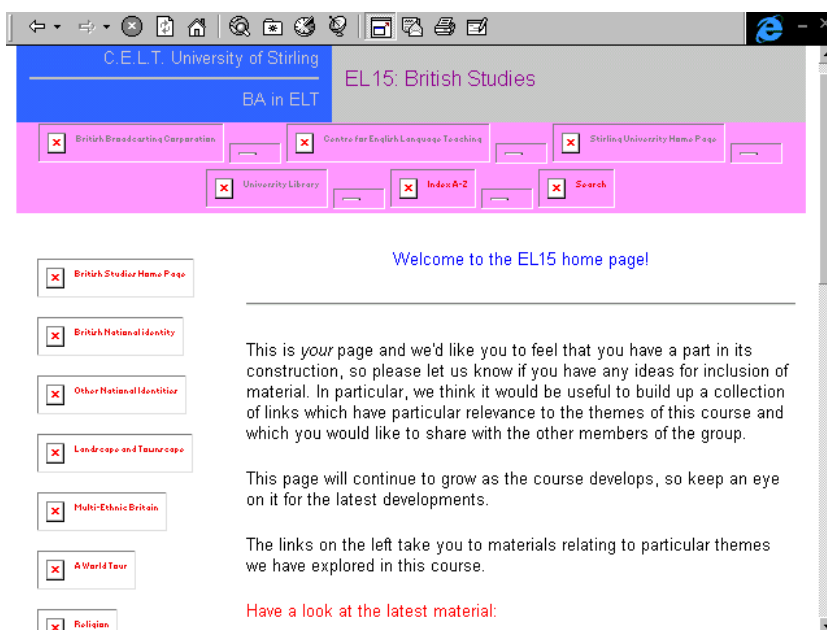


Fig. 2 British Studies WebQuest Topic Page

(<http://www.celt.stir.ac.uk/resources/EL15/religion/religion.html>)

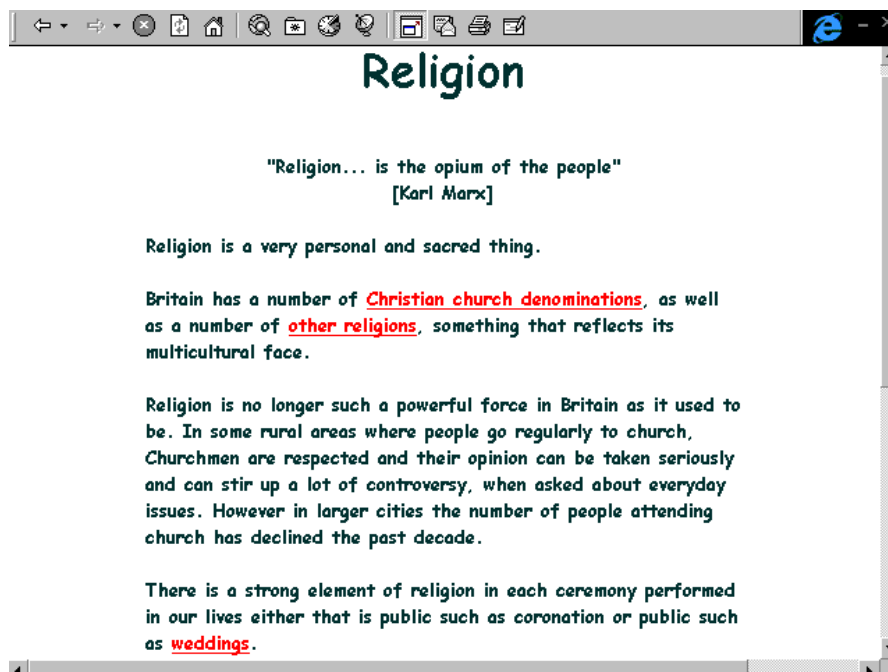


Fig. 3: British Studies WebQuest Activity Page

(http://www.celt.stir.ac.uk/resources/EL15/religion/religion.html/religionaactiv.html)

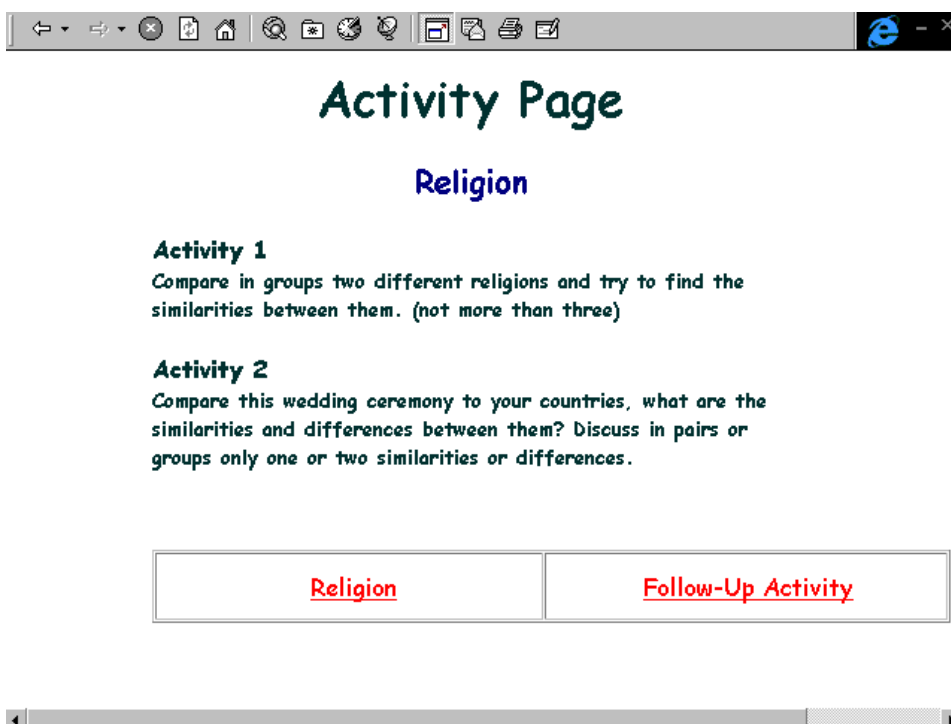


Fig. 4: British Studies WebQuest Follow-up Activity

(http:// www.celt.stir.ac.uk/resources/EL15/religion/religionfollowup.html)

