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Chapter 4 Internet-based project work

- **Why do Internet-based project work?**
- **Basic projects**
- **Internet-based simulations**
- **Webquests**
- **Webquest creation**

Why do Internet-based project work?

There are many reasons for using Internet-based projects in the classroom:

1. **Internet-based projects are a structured way for teachers to begin to incorporate the Internet into the language classroom.** They take time to plan and design, so we should check the Internet to see if something appropriate already exists before creating our own project.
2. **Internet-based projects are group activities. They lend themselves to communication and the sharing of knowledge that are two principal goals of language teaching.** The use of projects encourages cooperative learning, and therefore stimulates interaction.
3. **They can be used simply for language learning purposes, but can also be interdisciplinary, allowing for cross-over into other departments and subject areas.** This can often give them a more 'real-world' look and feel, and provide greater motivation for the learner.
4. **They encourage critical thinking skills.** Learners are not required to simply regurgitate (repeat) information they find, but have to transform that information in order to achieve a given task.

- In the context of doing project work, the Internet can be thought of as an enormous encyclopedia because
- it gives our learners quick access to a wealth of information which they can use to carry out their project tasks.

A good example of such a source is Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), a collaborative encyclopedia produced by and for the Internet community.

Wikipedia:

- has thousands of articles on many different subjects, and
- is an ideal place to start when doing project work that requires factual information about people and places.

Project work online can be:

- a simple low-level project like making a poster presentation about a famous person, or
- high-level research work about a subject presenting polemical views and opinions in a report or debate.

In order to prepare for Internet-based project work, you will need to do the following:

- **Choose the project topic**
  Will your learners be researching famous people, an event or an issue?
- **Make the task clear**
  What information will they need to find - biographical, factual, views and opinions?
- **Find the resources**
  Which websites will your learners need to visit?
  Do these websites contain the information they need and are they at the right level?
- **Decide on the outcome**
  What is the final purpose of the project?
  For example, will your learners be making a poster, a presentation or holding a debate?

Basic Projects

A low-level project - My favorite actor

For this project, you will need:

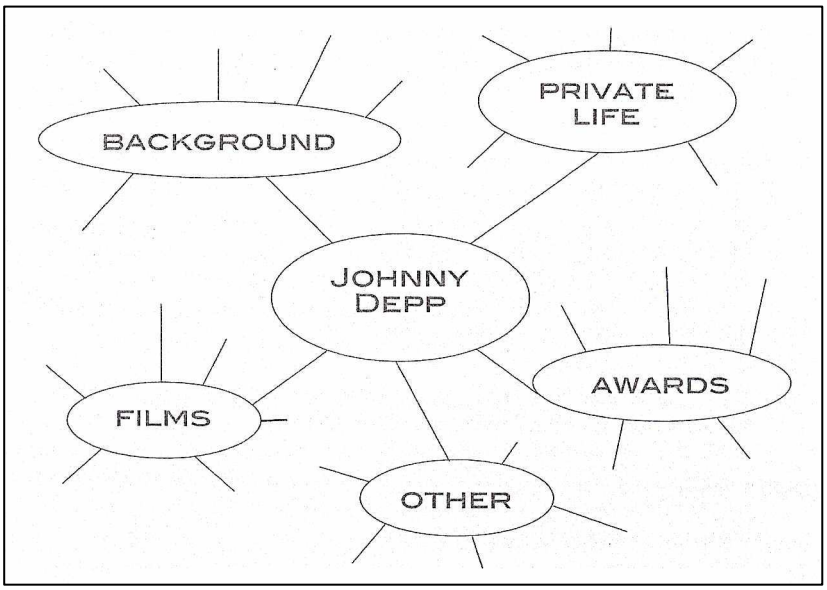
- three lesson periods of at least 45 minutes each (two if the first lesson is done for homework).
- access to the Internet for the second and third of the three suggested lessons.
- word processing software such as Microsoft Word or OpenOffice.

This is a common topic for project work. The Internet provides the information they will need to fill the gaps in their knowledge about the actor.

This particular project aims to provide the opportunity to focus on these language areas: **countries, nationalities, dates, places, past tenses, likes and dislikes, and opinions.** During the project, learners research their favorite actor and prepare a poster presentation about them.

First lesson

If you are short of class time, a good deal of this first lesson can be done for homework and then finished off with the collaborative element in the second lesson. Be careful, however, to emphasize that what you are looking for at this stage is what they already know, and that *they* do not need to go to the Internet for any information at all.



Have your learners write down the name of their favorite actor and mind-map what they know about him or her. Use this diagram as a guide:

Once they have written down what they know, have them make a list of things they don't know, but would like to find out.

Second lesson

This second lesson requires a fair bit of work on the part of you, the teacher. If you think you may be short of lime, limit the names of actors in the first lesson to a small selection that you have already researched.

Before the lesson, you will need to find useful sites to match the choice of actors your learners made. Make sure that they are simple enough for the level, and include as much of the information sought as possible. Remember that for biographical information you can search using a part phrase such as *"Johnny Depp was born in".*

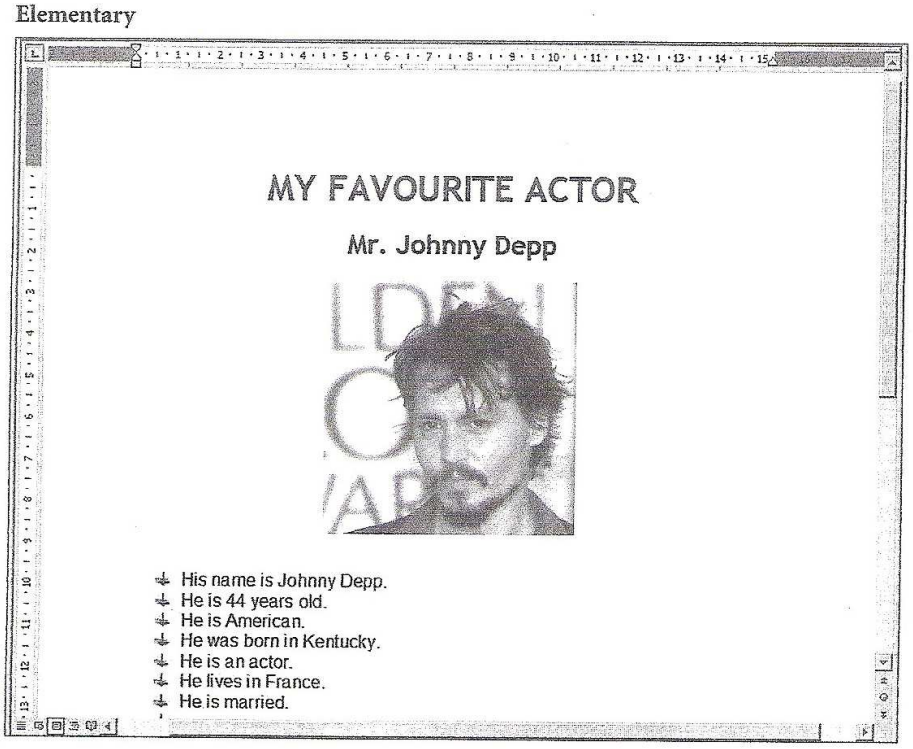
In the next stage, you will need to provide them with a model biography. Check out Wikipedia for examples (e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Depp) and rewrite one example to your students' language level. You may decide to do some comprehension work on your model text at this time, working on the structures and vocabulary areas that you want them to include in their biographies.

Third lesson

This third lesson involves making the final product. By now, your learners will have collected all the information they need and will also have seen your model biography, so they should be in a position to come up with one of their own.

One way of doing this is to have them prepare a short text based on the model from the previous lesson, and then to work this up into a poster (using Microsoft Word or similar) with il1ustrations and photographs also taken from the Internet. Remember that you can use http://images.google.com for relevant images.

Their final projects might look something like this:



A high-level project - Global warming

This project aims to provide learners with the opportunity of examining a serious issue in depth. You may want to work beforehand on some of the language areas useful for the activity, for example giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing. However, this will depend on the level of your learners. It *is* ideal for groups at an upper-intermediate level and above.

While the lower-level project we have just looked at *is* an ideal opportunity for developing specific communication skills, this project goes deeper into a topic and encourages more complex thinking and reasoning processes. With higher-level projects like this one there *is* plenty of opportunity for cross-curricular applications, working with teachers in other departments where possible, and for covering other areas of the overall syllabus above and beyond the teaching of English. For this project, you will need:

- three lesson periods of at least 45 minutes each.
- access to the Internet for the first and possibly second of the three suggested lessons.
- optionally, access to video recording equipment for the third lesson.

First lesson

This lesson can easily be done in 45 minutes, but learners would benefit from more time for their research into the topic and for the subsequent discussion of their findings, if that time is available.

Brainstorm what your learners know about global warming. Use this chart as a starting point:

Global Warming				
Evidence for	**Evidence against**	**Countries involved**	**Possible effects**	**Possible solutions**

Now divide them into five groups, one for each topic in the table above. Take them to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming as a starting point, and give them time to add to their column. They may also use their own search skills to find out more, if there is time. Return to whole class discussion, and discuss the contents of the refined table.

Second lesson

This second lesson will also fit into a 45-minute period, but again the depth and quality of their preparation will improve if they are given more time. Since in the third lesson they will be role-playing a television debate, you might *also* like to encourage them to think about how they can enhance the final product with, for example, the use of props and arrangement of the furniture.

Divide the class into four groups, working towards a special television debate on global warming:

- TV debate presenters.
- scientists who deny that global warming exists, or that it is potentially dangerous.
- environmental campaigners wanting to inform the public of the dangers.
- TV studio audience.

In the third lesson, you will have the actual debate, so now they must prepare their section of the debate.

- **Presenters**
  Decide which areas you want to cover in the televised debate. Who will speak first? How long will they speak for? Will interruptions and questions be permitted and how will you manage them? What questions will you need to ask? How will you deal with difficult speakers, or members of the public? Will you need any visual aids for your introduction?
- **Scientists**
  Look back at what your group discovered in the 'evidence against' column of the global warming table in the last lesson. It's your job to convince the studio audience, and the viewing public, that global warming does not really exist, and is certainly not dangerous. Your view is that it is a naturally occurring phenomenon and not man-made. Decide on your arguments, and prepare any visual elements you may need to illustrate your points.
- **Environmentalists**
  Look back at what your group discovered in the 'evidence for' and 'countries involved' columns of the global warming table in the last lesson. It's you job to convince the studio audience, and the viewing public, that global warming does exist, and is definitely dangerous. Your view is that it is man-made, and the product of certain countries. Decide on your arguments, and prepare any visual elements you may need to illustrate them.
- **Studio audience**
  You may decide individually on your views of global warming, based on what you found out in the last lesson -look back at the global warming table for a reminder. If you decide that you do not believe in global warming, prepare a couple of questions or statements to support the scientists (evidence against). If you opt to support the environmentalists, prepare a couple of questions or statements in their favour. If you adopt a more pragmatic view, that (rather than worrying about the cause and whose fault it is) we should instead be looking at ways of dealing with rising global temperatures (possible solutions), then prepare a couple of questions for that standpoint.

Each group should now prepare their role, doing further research if necessary, and preparing charts and other visual aids if they will be of help to them.

Date	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
10		Flight: Barcelona–London Flight number: Departure time: Arrival time: Price:	London hotel Hotel name: Address: Booking name: Price:
11		Transport: London–Manchester Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price:	Manchester hotel (2 nights) Hotel name: Address: Booking name: Price:
12		Transport: Manchester–Liverpool Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price:	Transport: Liverpool–Manchester Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price:
13	Transport: Manchester–Glasgow Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price:		Transport: Glasgow–Belfast Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price: Belfast hotel: Hotel name: Address: Booking name: Price:
14		Transport: Belfast–Bristol Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price: Bristol hotel: Hotel name: Address: Booking name: Price:	
15	Transport: Bristol–London Type: Departure time/place: Arrival time: Price:	Flight: London–Barcelona Flight number: Departure time: Arrival time:	
			Total cost:

When you have all the information you need, prepare a written report for your boss, detailing the complete itinerary, including all travel, accommodation, meeting and entertainment information.

A general English simulation

As observed above, simulations need to address potential real-life situations in order to appeal to the learner. The business-oriented example above is a clear case of this approach, but how can this kind of activity be prepared for learners of general English?

The activity above could easily be adapted for a more general context by turning it into a holiday being planned by a group of friends, or even a school trip. In this context, small groups would plan an itinerary around the United Kingdom, researching travel options, accommodation and things to do in each place visited. This might be presented as an award given to the students, with a limited budget, making the actual logistics more challenging, but more real. Shorter simulations are also possible, as in this example.

Situation

As chairperson of the student committee you have been nominated to present the student awards this year. Your job is to propose the prizes to be given, and to arrange for them to be bought and delivered. There are three prizes:

- Best student – €300 prize money
  winner: Francine Dumas, 17 – interests: computers, science.
- Best volunteer – €250 prize money
  winner: Pawel Krajka, 15 – interests: the environment, hiking, travel.
- Best sporting achievement – €200 prize money
  winner: Pablo Castro, 16 – interests: extréme sports, climbing, camping.

Your committee has decided to buy the prizes online. Visit the following online shopping sites and find three possible prizes for each person.

- http://www.amazon.co.uk
- http://www.pcworld.co.uk
- http://www.dell.co.uk
- http://www.expedia.co.uk
- http://www.opodo.co.uk
- http://www.extremepie.com
- http://www.simplyhike.co.uk
- http://www.blacks.co.uk
- http://www.gear-zone.co.uk
- http://www.ecoshop.com.au

Complete this chart. Remember to include a picture of each potential prize, as well as the site it is available from and the price.

Person	Suggestion 1	Suggestion 2	Suggestion 3
Francine			
Pawel			
Pablo			

Now write a short report for the committee, explaining the three possible choices for each person and making a personal recommendation about which one you feel should be bought. Include your chart.

Webquests

Webquests are mini-projects in which a large percentage of the input and material is supplied from the Internet. Webquests can be teacher-made or learner-made, depending on the learning activity the teacher decides on. What makes webquests different from projects or simulations is the fairly rigid structure they have evolved over the years, and it is this structure - and the process of implementing webquests in the classroom - that we will be exploring here.

Bernie Dodge, a Professor of Educational Technology at San Diego State University, was one of the first people to attempt to define and structure this kind of learning activity. According to him, **a web quest is 'an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet'.** He goes on to identify two types of webquest:

- **Short-term webquests**
  At the end of a short-term webquest, a learner will have grappled with a significant amount of new information and made sense of it. A short-term webquest may spread over a period of a couple of classes or so, and will involve learners in visiting a selection of sites to find information, and using that information in class to achieve a set of learning aims.

- **Longer-term webquests**
  After completing a longer-term webquest, a learner will have analyzed a body of knowledge deeply, transforming it in some way. They will have demonstrated an understanding of the material by creating something that others can respond to, online or offline. This is the big difference between the longer-term and short-term webquests - learners have to transform the information they acquire, turning it into a new product: a report, a presentation, an interview or a survey. Longer-term web quests might last a few weeks, or even a term or semester.

Webquests have now been around long enough for them to have a clearly-defined structure. However, this structure, while being unofficially recognized as the definitive schema for these activities, should only really be taken as a basic guideline and you should design your web quests to suit the needs and learning styles of your group. In the example, we will be examining an ELT webquest about responsible consumerism. It is designed for intermediate-level learners. There are usually four main sections to a webquest:

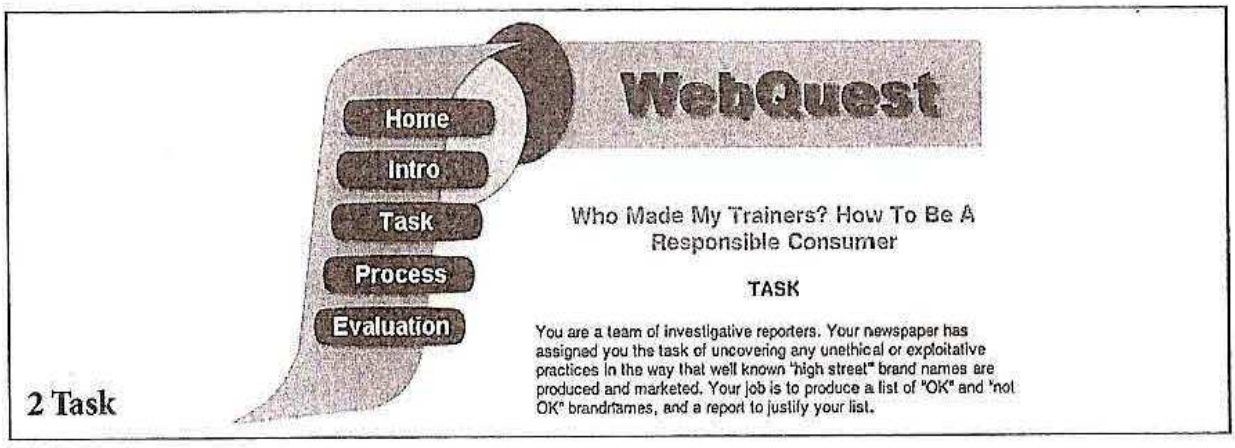
Step 1 – Introduction

This stage is normally used to introduce the overall theme of the webquest. It involves giving background information on the topic and, in the language learning context, often introduces key vocabulary and concepts which learners will need to understand in order to complete the tasks involved.

In the example opposite, learners are introduced to the idea of responsible consumerism by considering various scenarios relevant to their own circumstances.

Step 2 — Task

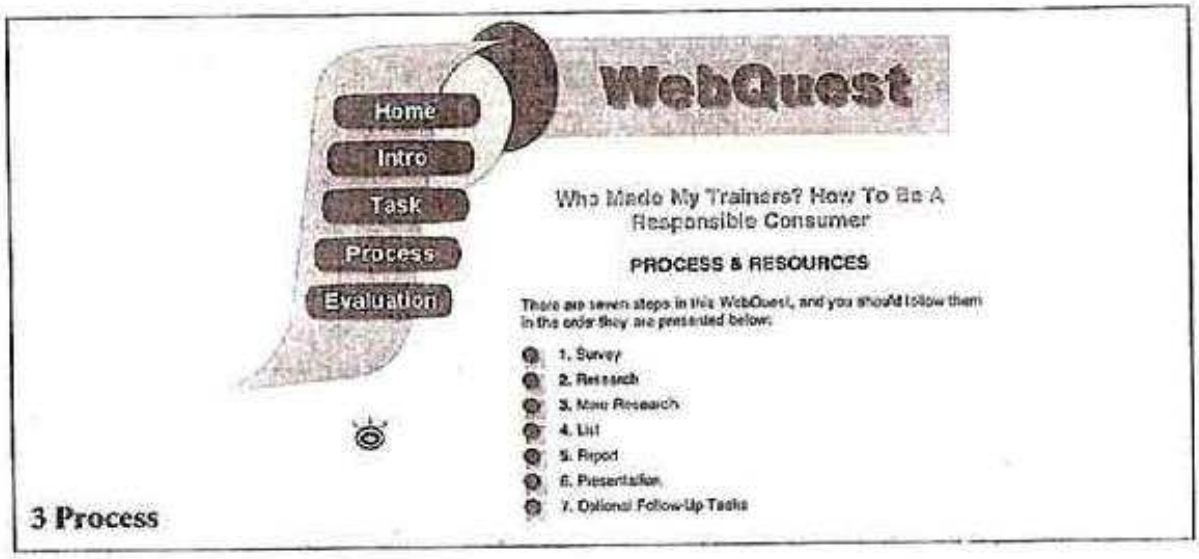
The task section of the webquest explains clearly and precisely what the learners will have to do as they work their way through the webquest. The task should obviously be highly motivating and intrinsically interesting for the learners, and should be firmly anchored in a real-life situation. This often involves the learners in a certain amount of role-play within a given scenario, as in the example, 'You are a team of investigative reporters'.

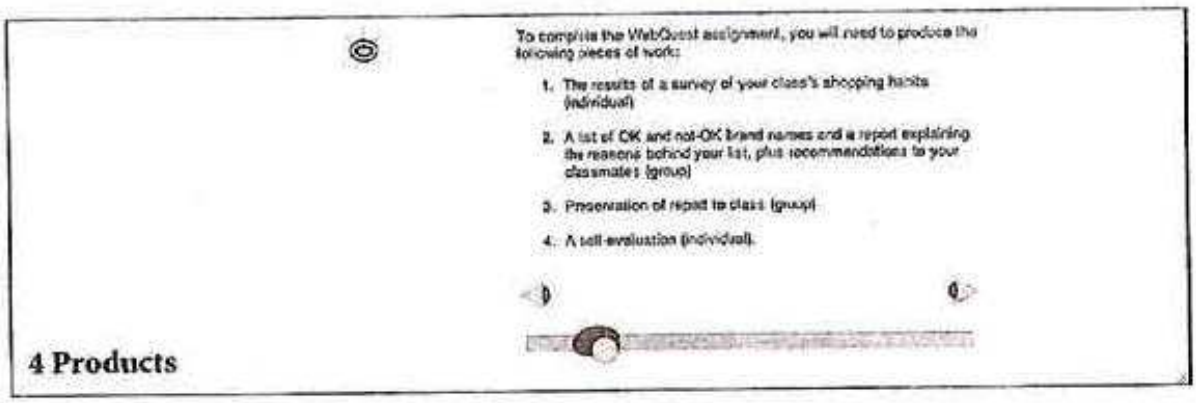


Step 3 — Process

The process stage of a web quest guides the learners through a set of activities and research tasks, using a set of predefined resources.

These resources are predominantly Internet-based, and are usually presented in clickable form, that is, as a set of active links to web sites within the task document. It's important to bear in mind that it's much easier to click on a link than to type it in with any degree of accuracy.



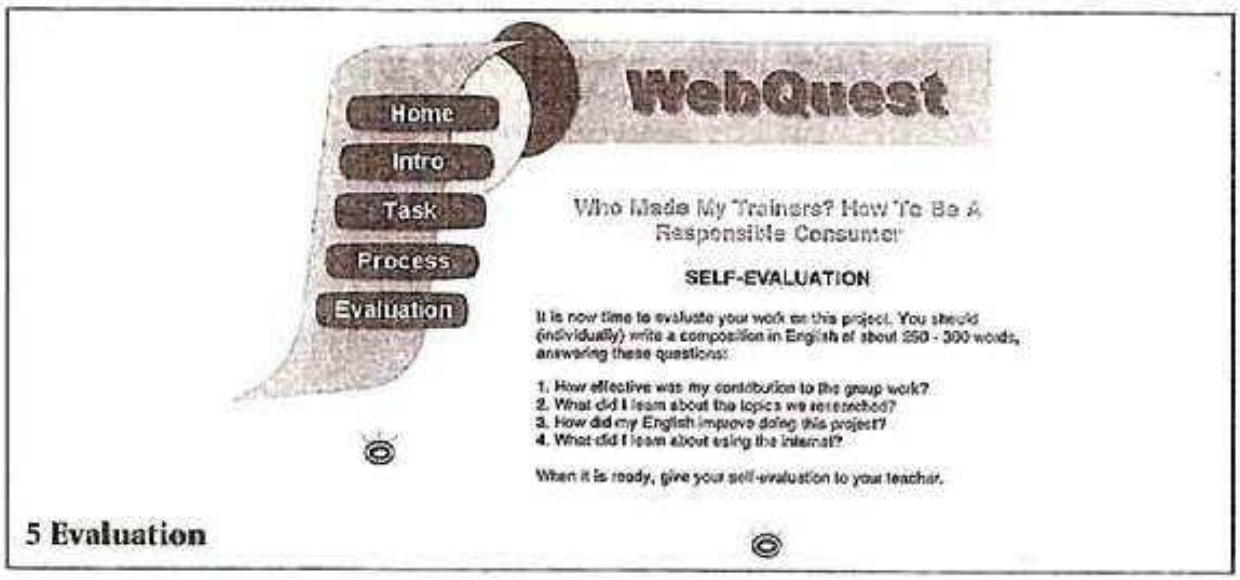


In the case of a language-based web quest, as opposed to a purely content-based one, the process stage of the web quest may introduce or recycle lexical areas or grammatical points which are essential to the task. The process stage of the webquest will usually have one or sometimes several 'products' which the learners are expected to present at the end. These 'products' will often form the basis of the evaluation stage.

Step 4 – *Evaluation*

The evaluation stage can involve learners in self-evaluation, comparing and contrasting what they have produced with other learners, and giving feedback on what they feel they have learnt and achieved.

It will also involve teacher evaluation, and good webquests will give guidance to the teacher for this particular part of the process. Since Bernie Dodge developed his model in 1995, many educators have added both to the theory and the' practice of webquests, and it is now possible to find several good examples of them in many different subject areas.



Webquest Creation

Creating a web quest does not require much detailed technical knowledge. It is relatively easy to produce a professional-looking and workable design using any modern word processor. The skill set for producing a web quest is very similar to what we explored earlier for planning Internet-based lessons, and might be defined as follows:

- **Research skills** (see Chapter 3)
  It is essential to be able to search the Internet and to quickly and accurately find resources. The best search engines currently available are Google (www.google.com) for wide searches over a large database of websites and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) for a more theme-based approach.

- **Analytical skills** (see Chapter 3)
  It is also very important to be able to cast a critical eye over the resources you do find when searching. The Internet was once described as 'vanity publishing gone mad', and it is worth bearing in mind that quality is not guaranteed. Make sure to check out any website you are considering using thoroughly before basing any activity around it. Simply because the author of a website believes elephants to be bulletproof - a real example - doesn't mean that they really are.

- **Word processing skills** (see Chapter 2)
  You will also need to be able to use ~ word processor to combine text, images and web links into a finished document. This particular set of skills can be acquired quickly and easily.

Before sitting down to plan a web quest - as noted at the start of this chapter - it is always worth searching around on the Internet to see if someone has produced something which might fit your needs. There are plenty of webquest 'repositories', so there is little point in reinventing the wheel. Use Google to have a good look round before you do the hard work yourself - try a search for ELT web quests - or start with one of these sites:

- http://www.webquest.org
- http://www.fi.muni.cz/ICT4ELT/websites/webquests_nepouzivase.html
- http://www.theconsultants-e.com/webquests/

In the event that you do have to design and produce your own webquest, Tom March, a colleague of Bernie Dodge, has produced a flow chart for the design process, which you can see opposite. Let's examine how the process works.

Exploring the possibilities stage
In this section, we decide what we're going to base our web quest on, and start to find resources.

- **Choose and chunk the topic**
  The first thing to do is to decide on a macro (or large) topic and then break it down into micro (smaller) chunks of topic areas which will be addressed in the process stages of the webquest. In our example, the macro topic is 'responsible consumerism', the micro topics include: animal testing, child labor, sexism, ethical production and marketing.

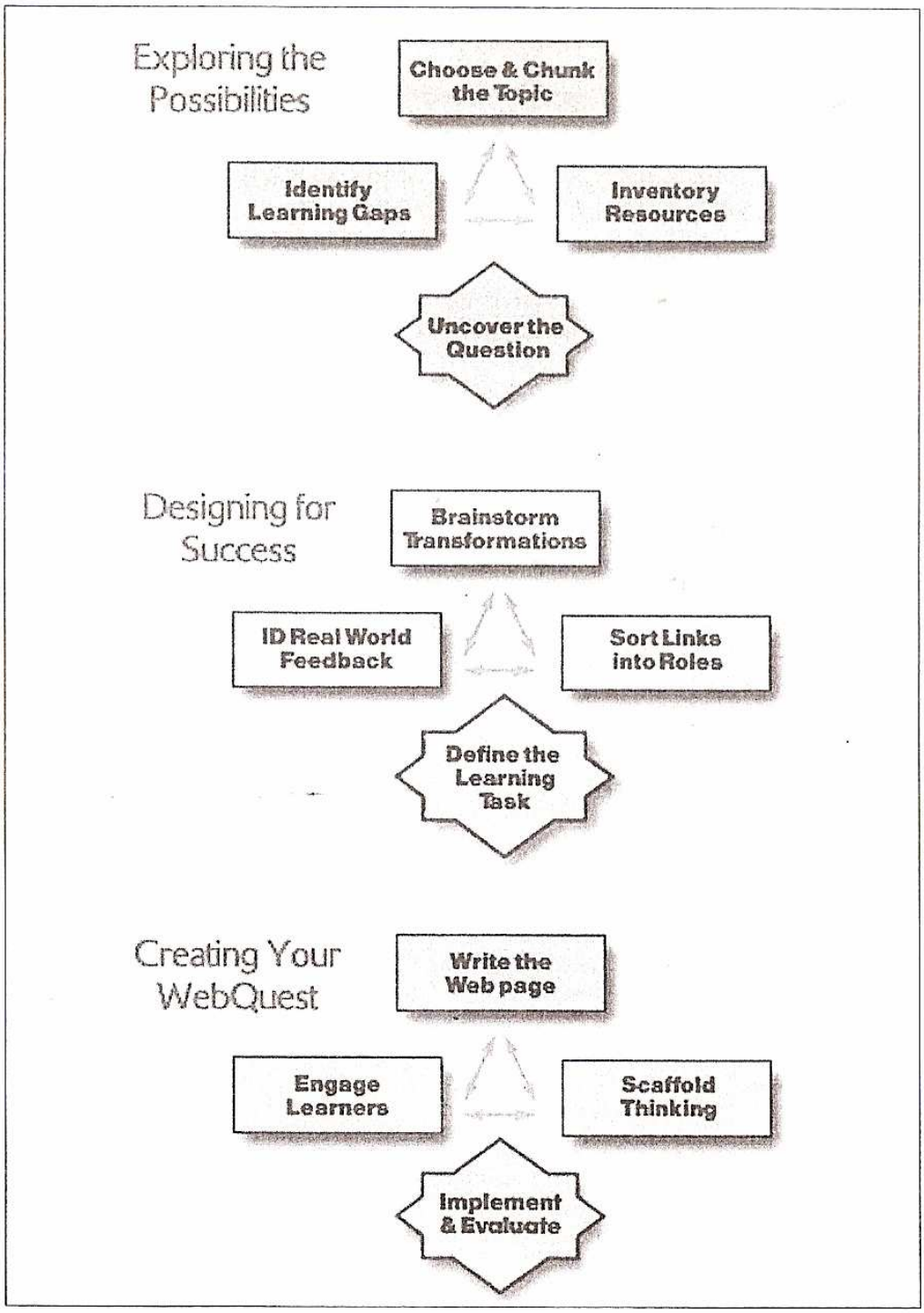
- **Identify learning gaps**
  As we have seen, web quests are good for dealing with critical thinking skills, problem solving and group dynamics. Identify which areas your learners would benefit from, and design tasks for the process stage accordingly. The sample webquest we have been looking at has a wide variety of personal interactions and content interactions designed to activate critical thinking skills and encourage collaborative work.

- **Inventory resources**
  This involves collecting the resources for the webquest, including links to appropriate websites, images with which to decorate the web quest and media files. You will need to find all this before you move on to the design process.

- **Uncover the question**
  In this stage, you need to ensure that you have a central question or idea which has no single answer, and which necessitates research and interpretation. This is the central purpose of the web quest. In our example, the introduction states 'you will investigate the way your favorite brands - of clothes, fast food, cosmetics, etc - are produced and marketed, with a view to becoming better informed and therefore a more discriminating consumer'. This, then, is the 'question' - and it is something that your learners should be interested in, but not have fully formed ideas about.

Designing for success stage
In this stage, we further structure the webquest and ensure that the learning outcomes and knowledge transformation stages are clearly delineated.

- **Brainstorm transformations**
  This involves deciding what your learners will be doing with the information they find on the websites. Bernie Dodge identified this stage as what happens between 'learning inputs' and 'learning outcomes'. This is where you flesh out the tasks in the process stage, guiding your learners through the information they uncover, and helping them towards an understanding and transformation of that information as they work towards the products they need to put together.



The webquest design process

- **Identify real-world feedback**
  Tom March feels that learners should be engaged with the wider world when they are working with webquests. This means that you might try looking for ways in which the information necessary for the web quest might be gathered from real people - by the use of email, polls and questionnaires. This can also be 'offline', in the sense of interviewing colleagues, staff, friends and family. In our example, learners conduct a class survey on their favourite brands - and this could perhaps be extended through the school, or put online as an electronic survey, thus widening the access to the 'real world'. In a school this would involve interviewing other classes, while an online survey can quickly be put together using a tool such as Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com).

- **Sort links into roles**
  The links you identified in the inventory resources section should now be assigned to the various sections of the process stage of your webquest, ensuring that the websites are easily navigable, understandable and contain the information that your learners need to work through the webquest.

- **Define the learning task**
  This refers to the products which are the direct result of working through the webquest in the sample we have looked at, learners have to produce:
  - a survey results of class shopping habits.
  - a list of acceptable and unacceptable brands. a report to the class on the brands.
  - a presentation of the report.
  - a self-evaluation.

Creating your webquest stage

In this stage, we move on to the production of the webquest and its implementation.

- **Write the web page**
  If you're familiar with web design tools you will be able to turn your webquest plan into a website and put it on a web server. But this is, perhaps, a slow way of preparing a web quest. The easiest way to do this is to use Word, adding links to each section of the webquest, some images to liven up the material and the links to the resources your learners will visit.

- **Engage learners**
  Now you have your webquest in place, think about an engaging and stimulating introduction as a lead-in to the quest itself. Hopefully your webquest will have plenty of motivating tasks and websites in it, so the final thing that you need to do is to get learners involved from the outset, and to draw them to a conclusion that clearly demonstrates what they have covered and that rounds the quest off satisfactorily. In our sample, learners are invited to consider a variety of consumer situations in the introduction phase and to evaluate their learning and participation in the conclusion.

- **Scaffold thinking**
  In this stage, you need to think about the instructions given in the webquest itself. These instructions should not only guide the learners through the webquest, but should also deal with the learning gap identified in the exploring the possibilities stage, and guide them towards answering the question. This will involve not only support in the content area but will also help with the language needed to carry out the webquest. Ensure that your learners have access to the language that they will need to use.

- **Decision: implement and evaluate**
  The final stage is to tryout the webquest with a group or two, take feedback from them and also consider how it went for you, and make appropriate changes for future use.

Note that webquests can also be produced by learners as part of a more detailed and longer term project. Often, this significant investment in the materials production side of the teaching/learning process is a highly motivating class activity in itself.

Conclusions: ***In this chapter, we have:***

- looked at extending Internet usage from the simple lesson plan described in Chapter 3 to more extensive project work, simulations and webquests.
- seen how the Internet can be used as an access point to real-world knowledge which our learners might lack.
- examined how the Internet can act as a springboard for authentic, relevant simulation work and as the source of materials which promote collaborative learning, communication, knowledge sharing and higher-level thinking skills.
- explored the area of motivation and considered how this can be increased with careful task design and judicious choice of Internet content.
- looked at the methodology for creating and using webquests.

ON THE CD-ROM YOU CAN HEAR A TEACHER TALKING ABOUT DOING INTERNET-BASED PROJECT WORK WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND WATCH A TUTORIAL WHICH GIVES YOU MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE 'WHO MADE MY TRAINERS?' WEBQUEST.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE!