

Using a Web quest Strategy to develop Writing Skills in English of Second Year Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

The present research has been conducted to investigate the effect of using a web quest strategy to develop paragraph writing skills of second year secondary school students. The research adopted the quasi-experimental design. Sixty students in the second year at Dr Mohammed Abu Eleyoun secondary school; Deirmawas Educational Zone, Minia Directorate of Education participated in the research that lasted for four weeks. They were assigned to an experimental group of thirty subjects, and a control group of thirty subjects. Instruments of the research included a pre-post test in paragraph writing. Findings of the research demonstrated that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group on post-test. There was a statistically significant difference between students' mean scores in the experimental and control groups on the paragraph writing test. Results of the research showed that using a web quest strategy had positive effects on the second year secondary students' paragraph writing skills. In light of the findings of the research, recommendations and suggestions for further research are offered.

Key words: Web quest strategy, paragraph writing skills, second year secondary school students.

استخدام استراتيجيات الرحلات المعرفية عبر الويب في
تنمية مهارات الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب
الصف الثاني الثانوي

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ملخص البحث

لقد تم إجراء هذا البحث للتحقق من أثر استخدام استراتيجيات الرحلات المعرفية عبر الإنترنت في تنمية مهارات الكتابة لدى طلاب الفرقة الثانية بالمرحلة الثانوية العامة. واتخذ هذا البحث التصميم شبه التجريبي. وقد تم مشاركة عدد ستون طالبا من طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي العام بمدرسة الدكتور محمد ابو العيون الثانوية العامة- إدارة ديمواس التعليمية- مديرية التربية والتعليم بمحافظة المنيا كعينة للبحث والذي استمر لمدة أربعة أسابيع. وقد تم تقسيم الطلاب إلى مجموعتين، إحداهما تجريبية والأخرى ضابطة، حيث تكونت كل مجموعة منهما من ثلاثون طالبا. اشتملت أدوات البحث على اختبار قبلي-بعدي في كتابة الفقرة. وأظهرت نتائج البحث تفوق طلاب المجموعة التجريبية على أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة في اختبار كتابة الفقرة البعدي. وقد لوحظ أن هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات الطلاب في المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعات الضابطة في اختبار فهم القراءة. مما يشير إلى الأثر الإيجابي لاستخدام استراتيجيات الرحلات المعرفية عبر الإنترنت على مهارات كتابة الفقرة لدى الطلاب. وفي ضوء تلك النتائج تم تقديم التوصيات والمقترحات لإجراء البحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات الرحلات المعرفية عبر الويب، مهارات كتابة الفقرة، طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي

1. Introduction:

Our world has faced new challenges and demands in the twenty-first century. These challenges have shown that people need to be more ambitious to achieve their goals effectively in this globalised world. Therefore, the use of technical tools as the Internet and computers has become essential for a complete educational process (Orozco & Marin, 2011). In addition, technology is one of the most significant language that supports students to gain trust and learn (Ozden & Sengel , 2009).

According to EL-khateeb (2012), the Internet is one of the most effective resources for teaching English, and teachers profit from internet sites because they help them learn new teaching strategies and approaches. Students benefit from internet sites because they promote student-centered learning and broaden their knowledge base. Glennan & Melmed (2001), mention that using computers in the educational process improves student academic achievement by inspiring lessons and enabling students to work together to learn.

On the other side, students referred to as "next generation" are looking for new ways to teach (Carlson, 2005). As a result, teachers experiment with innovative teaching techniques, such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Many educators and scholars are interested in this in order to promote the learning of a foreign language (Alshumaimeri, 2008).

Kern (2006) states that the environment is evolving rapidly, which has an effect on how students learn. Students of English as a foreign

language (EFL) seldom have the ability to converse with native English speakers. As a result, using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) can assist them in improving their writing, viewing videos, and listening to audio. There are several methods for implementing (CALL) in the classroom, one of which is known as web quest. Web Quest is an instructional technique developed in 1995 by Professor Bernie Dodge at San Diego State University (SDSU).

March (2003) sees that a web quest as a scaffolding learning system that uses links to important web resources and an authentic task for students to investigate a central, open-ended issue and to take part in a final groups phase to transform the knowledge they have obtained into a sophisticated information process.

Web quests, as one of the foundations of the constructivist method, allow for the success of research-based tasks and encourages students to practice, resulting in high thinking abilities (Lahaie, 2008). Many studies, such as Abu-Elwan, 2007; Lim and Hernandez, 2007, show that webquest is highly efficient in developing problem-solving capacity, high level thinking and creativity, increasing motivation, critical thinking, and correlating with the content.

Torres (2007) identifies web quests as task-based and content-based learning. It is a lesson prepared by teachers that takes the form of a web page with pre-selected links. It exposes students to credible materials that help them develop their language writing skills. What is more, it necessitates community communication and cooperation, allowing students to learn from one another while also developing social

skills and critical thinking. Few research, however, have investigated its impact on developing writing skills. Web quests, according to Barros & carvalho (2007), allow for the incorporation of technology into teaching and make students focus on how to utilize and find quality knowledge on the internet. Moreover, it assists students in developing autonomy as they complete their assignments, share their perspectives, debate, and solve problems.

Kurtulus and Kilic (2009), add that web quest encourages students to use the internet in a fun way and develops their attitude toward the lesson. It is a tool by which students are engaged in higher cognitive tasks and the persistence of learning activities is achieved. In the same line, Alshumaimeri and Bamanger (2013) postulate that the use of web quest as a pedagogical method is an important and creative way to incorporate the internet into EFL teaching. At present, students can communicate with one another and use computers as a valuable source of knowledge.

The ability to write is an essential communicative language skill. Writing is an activity that takes a mental effort to think out the sentences and ways to connect them in order for them to be coherent and communicative, but it is not an ability that can be mastered in isolation from the other language skills of listening, speaking, and reading (AL-Haq & AL-Sobh, 2010).

According to Salah (2018), secondary school students suffer from lack of writing skills; the students cannot write organized, coherent paragraph. They cannot use relevant words to the topics they write

about. Teachers assist their students in practicing different specific writing activities in order to make the writing process simpler. Furthermore, students can use a variety of methods to create a good composition (arranging ideas, selecting words, forming sentences and combining these sentences into coherent paragraphs). The aim of this research was to shed light on the potential effects of using web quests on developing the writing skills of secondary year secondary students in Dr Mohammed Abu eleyoun Secondary school, Deirmawas Educational Zone, Minia Directorate of Education.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Khoii and Tabrizi (2011), mention that writing is seen to be a rational activity. Additionally, it is a skill that many teachers meet difficulty in its teaching. The researcher noticed that writing skills form an obstacle for most second year secondary students. They had problems with forming correct sentences, utilizing grammar correctly and writing coherent sentences. Consequently, they got low scores on their writing tasks. This may be attributed to the conventional methods of teaching writing by most of English language teachers. Zughoul (2003) emphasizes that despite students may speak English language fluently, they may face problems in writing it; this is especially true for Arab students. More specifically, the present research addressed the following question: "***What is the effect of using a web quest strategy on developing paragraph writing skills?***"

2. Literature Review.

Nowadays, written English is one of the major instruments of

workplace communication such as emails or chat. In spite of the Internet is relatively a recent instrument in language teaching, its benefits are indisputable. Computer-mediated communication (CMC), as it is introduced by John (2005), Martonia, Anastasia, and David (2006), is a forum which provides chances for online tutorials, project-based instruction, retrieval of information from online archives and databases, interaction, peer review of writing, and practice utilizing computers. Ruthven, Hennesy, & Deany (2005) do not go beyond, stating that utilizing the Internet in writing can supply students with opportunities for interactivity with other students from different places in a way that gives students a sense of ownership and motivation to write for authentic audiences with real goals. One of the main merits of the Internet is that it allows easy and instant access to a myriad of electronic resources, thus extending the classroom beyond the four walls. Also, using the Internet helps students to be responsible for their own learning, incorporate novel ideas with prior ones, and observe and exploit the contributions of other students.

Web quests

A web quest is an inquiry-oriented activity, which some or all of the information that students interact with comes from resources on the Internet. Web quests are basically designed for language learning, and to utilize students' time properly, to focus on utilizing information rather than looking for it, and to support students' thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In the web quest, student groups have to solve a problem or perform a challenging task, often concerned

with a controversial topic or with topics which offer various views. For that purpose, students are linked to many web resources (Martonia, Anastasia, and David, 2006).

Components of Web Quests

Dodge (2001& 2004) and Turville (2008) recognize seven important components of a web quest which present the activity to students and familiarize them with the process steps:

1. **Introduction:** It offers background information on the topic to the students to prepare them to what is coming and motivational scenarios like giving students roles to play. The introduction objective is to make the activity fun and desirable for students.
2. **Task:** It is description of what students will achieve by the end of the web quest. It should be fascinating and possible to do for them.
3. **Process:** it describes the steps precisely. Students should go through in fulfilling the task, with links involved in each step.
4. **Resources:** They contain a list of the resources, such as websites, print resources that the students will need to finish the task.
5. **Evaluation:** A group of criteria or a rubric for evaluating students' work. The standards should be clear, consistent and specific to the tasks set.
6. **Conclusion:** It assists students to reflect and teachers to summarize. It reminds the students of what they have learned after finishing the activity.
7. **Teachers' page:** It provides students in written form with details about standards, objectives, and the webquest itself to help another

teacher adopt your web quest or adapt it to his or her students.

Uses and advantages of Web quests

Web quests can be utilized for many educational purposes. They help students learn in a constructive way and think critically. Kundu and Bain (2006) show how web quests can be utilized in a constructive way to promote learning. While a large portion of teaching can be directed toward transferring knowledge to students, web quests put students in control of their own learning. Constructivism approach involves open-ended search in real contexts. Furthermore, a greater comprehension of constructivism is used to design web-quests, and assignments.

Critical thinking is an essential construct in web quest learning. Vidoni and Maddux (2002) see critical thinking as disciplined, self-directed thinking that illustrates perfections of thinking in a specific mode or area of thinking. Web quests offer students a chance to use critical thinking skills. Web quests enable students to build on their prior knowledge that allows them to think at a higher level.

March (2003) postulates that web quests enable students to complete authentic projects and use technology in search and presentation of information while at the same time alleviating some obstacles teachers may endeavor to work within project-oriented learning. Web quests are generally cooperative exercises, in which students play a different role in relation to an authentic issue. As Ahmed (2012) illustrates, while other more conventional resources, such as journals can be used, the Internet is typically the main outlet for information.

The web quest itself structures authentic topic search, thereby enhancing students' ability to navigate successfully a highly unstructured environment, such as the Internet. Students then create a product that shows how they know the problem and its possible solutions. However, students can explore through web quests different aspects of the target culture and think of the discrepancies between the target country and their respective countries (Elola & Oskoz, 2008, Saniei, 2011). According to Gaskill, McNulty, and Brooks (2006), students enjoy web quests since they are given the opportunity to use the Internet to find and apply information. The students may also learn to use presentation software, which allows them to impart their information in a creative way while educating others.

Web quest is beneficial for teachers as well. Robert, Mcalack, and Stoddart (2005), state that teachers benefit from web quests in various ways. For instance, web quests provide rubrics for each project and web resource addresses. They provide authentic learning, and ideas for projects. Thus, a web quest can be a successful way to avoid boredom which obstacles the advancement of language skills.

Writing Skill

According to Zen (2005), writing skill is one of the four English language skills, commonly accepted goals of learning a foreign language, but often a skill that "falls through." Nunan (2003) defines writing as a physical and a mental act. At the fundamental level, it is the physical act of passing words or ideas to some medium, whether it is

hieroglyphics inked onto a computer. On the other hand, it is the mental work of creating ideas, thinking about how to express them, and arranging them into sentences and paragraphs that will be obvious to a reader.

Archibald (2001) sees that writing is a multidimensional skill that requires expertise and competency in a variety of areas. It is complicated due to the interaction of the writers' expertise, experience, culture, and identity with the task norms and cognitive demands. The researcher sees writing as a form of communication that enables students to express and put their feelings and ideas on paper.

Sub-Skills of Writing

Brown (2001) mentions a set of sub-skills of writing production such as, a- produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, b- produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns, c- use acceptable grammatical patterns and rules, and d- develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audiences' interpretation, using prewriting devices, using paragraphs and using feedback for revising and editing.

The Importance of Writing Skill

Writing is an effective tool of achieving academic success at school. Students, who have not acquired good writing skills, can't make full use of writing to support their learning (Graham, 2006). Similarly, Du (2009), asserts that writing is an essential skill in school community, environment and a workplace. Students use writing as an important tool to learn. Through writing, students show knowledge, express opinions to

readers and receive feedback. It can also facilitate learning in other subject areas.

Difficulties of Writing Skill

Students face difficulties in writing, these difficulties are represented in lacking of knowledge about the goal of writing, lacking of planning, organizing and revising, and lacking of grammar knowledge (Graham & Harris, 2003). Richards & Renandya (2002), view that writing represents difficulty for students in lies in both generating and organizing ideas and translating these ideas into a readable text is a difficult task.

Web quests and language learning

Halat and Peker (2011) clarify the advantages of using web quest in language learning stating that web quest enhances the effective use of time; students utilize the links given by the teacher and quest for information in a structured effective manner. They add web quest supports higher-order thinking skills. Students are asked to read, think, analyze, synthesize and evaluate. Ellis (2000) claims that web quests improve communicative interaction and enable students to be engaged in trying to communicate content towards the communicative goal.

For Torres (2007), web quest is an inquiry orientated activity placed in a relevant thematic context which implies the use of web resources and the development of higher order thinking skills in a cooperative environment. Simultaneously, he finds that web quests provide the students with the opportunity to learn, practice some

linguistic skills, and deal with authentic material in the target language and this can bolster language learning.

Stoks (2002) argues that web quests is useful for language learning in many aspects. When engaging in a web quest activity, students are exposed to the target language by surfing on the web. Making sense out of the web documents while skimming and scanning websites, is a useful exercise for students to increase their language comprehension. Besides, the problem-solving approach of web quests may facilitate language learning. Engaged in a web quest activity, the students integrate a reading to writing approach through internet. Blachowicz, Beyrsdorfe, and Fisher (2006), claim that technology such as web quests can provide opportunities for collaboration and the practice of integrated language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking.

However, according to Torres (2005), there are challenges that need to be considered while teaching languages using web quests. These challenges are represented in completing a web quest that is not designed in the students' native language requires more time and careful guidance. If students do not have sufficient language skills, they might lose interest and motivation in completing the web quest. In this case, they will not completely benefit from the experience.

2.2 Studies of using a web quest strategy to develop the writing skills.

Chuo (2007) investigated the impact of the web quest writing instruction on students' writing performance and writing apprehension. The experimental group studied by the web quest writing instruction. In

the control group, teacher-directed oral discussion in the traditional classroom provided the primary writing input. The results showed that the web quest enhanced students' writing performance significantly more than the traditional writing instruction. The experimental group class also experienced significant reduction in writing apprehension.

Termsinsawadi (2009) explored the effect of utilizing web quest strategy on developing EFL writing skills of Thai undergraduate engineering students. The participants of the study were a group of 40 second year male engineering students who were enrolled in the "Technical English 1" course in the first semester of the academic year 2009. The study used the writing pretest and posttest, interview and a questionnaire. The results revealed that the students' scores of the writing posttest significantly increased. Analysis of data obtained from learning logs showed that the effective features of the web quest strategy were the authenticity of the tasks that motivated the students to be actively involved in the instructional process, and the abundant scaffolding was found to be useful for the performance of writing tasks. The findings from the questionnaires of interview indicated that most students had positive attitudes towards the implementation of the web quest strategy as a whole. The research results also showed that these web-based learning activities could make students more engaged in the learning process.

Kocoglu (2010) examined whether or not using web quest was effective in developing writing performance of EFL students. A total of 34 first-year ELT students enrolled in a Turkish university participated

in the study. They ranged in age from 18 to 19 years old. One class, as the experimental group (consisted of 13 students, 4 male and 9 female) used web quest tasks. Other class, as control group (consisted of 14 students, 2 males and 12 females) received traditional teacher led writing tasks. The data came from writing performance test scores. The writing performance test consisted of pretest and posttest was given where students performed a writing task. The findings showed that the experimental group and the control group scored equally on writing scores.

Alshumaimeri, Almasri and Alfadda (2011) investigated how web quests affect fifth grade Saudi female EFL students' writing skills. The students a total of 63 in three classes were given a pretest prior to using web quests a posttest six weeks later. A pre-test was used to measure the participants' performance in writing before the treatment. In addition, it was used to ensure that any differences in the writing performance would be due to the experimental conditions rather than preexisting knowledge. The pretest also showed whether all groups were at the same proficiency level in their EFL writing. Then, the post-test was used to measure the students' performance in comparison to the pretest results.

The results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. There were significant differences in favor of the experimental group in terms of vocabulary, grammar, organization, content. Length and total overall scores.

Gaith & Awada (2014) investigated the relative effectiveness of

the web quest technological model in developing the English as a foreign language (EFL) writing proficiency of eighth grade students in Lebanon and decreasing their levels of writing apprehension. The study also looked into the perceptions of the participants of the relevance and efficacy of using web quest as an instructional model. The study is based on the assumption that the web quest model provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to provide supplementary activities and materials that enrich the content and exercises of the regular EFL textbooks. The study employed an experimental pretest– posttest control group design whereby two intact classes were randomly assigned to control and experimental conditions. The results of the study indicated that the web quest model proved to be more effective than regular process writing instruction in enhancing achievement and decreasing writing apprehension. In addition, the participants in the experimental group underscored both the importance and usefulness of using the web quest model in teaching EFL.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the research were sixty students enrolled in the second year of secondary stage Dr Mohammed Abu El-eyoun secondary school during the second semester of the academic year 2020–2021. The two groups were assigned to a treatment group, which consisted of thirty students, and a non– treatment group, which consisted of thirty students. The treatment group students were taught

using the web quest strategy, whereas the non-treatment group students were taught using the conventional method.

3.2 Instruments

To achieve the study objective, the researcher developed a paragraph writing test which was used as a pre-test and a post-test. The paragraph writing pre-test was used to ensure that students of both groups were at the same paragraph writing level before beginning the treatment, and thus the progress achieved by the treatment group could be attributed to the program they have been exposed to. As for the post-test, it was used to investigate the effect of using the web quest strategy on developing writing skills of that group (treatment group). In both tests, students were required to write a paragraph about the dangers that threaten the planet and suggest **solutions to protect the planet**.

3.3 Variables of the study

A – The independent variable:

The web quest strategy.

B – The dependent variables:

Writing skills of second year secondary schools students.

3.4 The Study procedures:

The researcher followed these procedures for the purpose of collecting data for the study:

- 1) Selecting the subjects from second year secondary stage, Dr Mohammed Abu El-eyoun secondary school during the second semester of the academic year 2020–2021.
- 2) Reviewing related

literature. 3) Establishing the suitability and validity of the instructional program by a jury. 4) Designing the program in using the web quest strategy.

The web quest comprises the following sections: introduction, task, process, evaluation of task performance, and brief conclusion. In the introduction, the students are told that they have been selected to accomplish a very important mission: to help get our planet out of trouble by completing the tasks. There is an engaging YouTube movie to motivate the learners to accomplish the task. In the task section, students are asked to visit a group of websites to discover the dangers that threaten our planet and to suggest solutions. They are asked to present their results, to discuss them and finally to write down a paragraph as a final product to complete the task. The process section describes how they have to complete the task. It provides the steps and websites to fulfill the task. The evaluation section shows the criteria to evaluate their work. 5) Designing a pre-post paragraph writing test. 8) Establishing the validity and reliability of the " pre-post paragraph writing test. 6) Getting the approval of the College Dean, Deputy Minister of Education in Minia, Director of Deirmawas Educational Directorate to conduct the study.7) Pre-testing the treatment group and the non-treatment group to measure their paragraph writing performance on March17th , 2021.

Table (1)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of the control and experimental groups in the pre-performance on paragraph writing test

Test	Control Group N= 30		Experimental Group N= 30		df	t-value
	mean	St.dv	mean	St.dv		
Content	1.20	1.30	1.32	1.36	58	0.08
Organization	0.40	0.68	0.30	0.58	58	0.98
Vocabulary	1.10	1.38	0.66	0.84	58	1.39
Grammar	0.73	1.48	0.63	0.85	58	0.74
Total score	3.43	4.11	2.91	3.63	58	0.89

Tabulated 't' =2.66 at (0.01) level

Table (1) shows that there was no statistically difference at (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-performance on paragraph writing test. The calculated t-values in all the sub-skills and the total score of the test were lower than its tabulated value. This means that the two group subjects were homogenous in the paragraph writing before implementing the program.

9) Post- testing the treatment group and the non-treatment group students on April,21, 2021, to measure their progress in paragraph writing after conducting the treatment.

4. Findings and Discussion

The results of the analysis of the post-test scores are shown in table 2.

Table (2)

Means, standard deviations, t-value of the control and experimental groups in the post-performance on the test of paragraph writing skills

Test	Control Group N= 30		Experimental Group N= 30		df	t-value
	Mean	St. dv	mean	St. dv		
Content	1.40	1.30	6.70	1.35	58	10.50
Organization	0.45	0.78	6.20	1.76	58	9.40
Vocabulary	1.45	1.37	5.00	0.36	58	8.51
Grammar	0.80	1.40	5.56	2.39	58	9.61
Total score	4.10	2.71	23.46	4.28	58	10.02

Tabulated 't' =2.66 at (0.01) level

Table (2) shows that there was a statistically difference at (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups favoring the experimental group in the post-performance on paragraph writing test. The students' scores showed high development in paragraph writing skills where the calculated t-value in each sub-skill and in the whole test was greater than its tabulated value.

4.1 Discussion of the findings:

The research results demonstrated that the students in the experimental group, who received instruction by the web quest

strategy, surpassed the control group who studied by the conventional method in the post-test of paragraph writing. The research results are in agreement with the study of Mrach (2007), Torees (2007), Chuo (2008), and Laborda (2009).

The improvement in writing skills of the treatment group may refer to that the students in the experimental group were given the opportunity to explore varied authentic materials through the web quest. This is supported by the study of Torees (2007) which indicated that the web quest is a successful tool for practicing writing and other skills because it provides the students with the opportunity to deal with authentic material in the target language. This opportunity can enhance the learning process. Another reason behind this significant improvement is the quality of the input that the web quest provides the students. This is in line with Chuo (2007) who found that web based learning environment classes showed significant performance in writing because of the quality of the input that the web quest gives the students. As in this research, students were asked to surf a group of web resources and read about assigned topics to complete the web quest tasks. This activity helps in enriching the content of their product.

Another reason for the improvement of students' writing performance is their exposure to different materials that web quest includes. As mentioned by Laborda (2009), web quests give students different authentic materials and assist them to explore the target language. These various materials help students utilize the language in the

correct way.

5. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1 Recommendations:

In light of the current study findings, the following recommendations can be offered.

1- The need for applying the web quest strategy different educational stages. 2- The need for training teachers on how to utilize the web quest strategy, and its applications in the teaching process. 3- English Language teachers should adopt various activities for developing the competence of their second year secondary students in mastering the writing skills. 4- Improve the students' technological skills as the internet and web technology-based method has a positive effect on students. So teachers must develop their skills. 5- Supply schools with necessary materials to facilitate using web quests.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

In light of the current study findings, the researcher suggests the following further studies:

1)-The current study should be replicated using other subjects from first and third year secondary school students. 2) Future researcher is required to investigate the effect of using the web quest strategy in developing other language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking.

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