

Introduction

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The third issue of CORELL is a collection of selected papers on the subject of WebQuest (WQ) in Language Education. As representative of the TalenQuest team, the project that originally developed the LanguageQuest concept, (Talen = Languages in Dutch) I have gladly accepted the GIAPEL (Grupo de Investigación y Aplicación Pedagógica en Lenguas) research group's invitation to act as guest editor for this Monographic issue.

Since its foundation in 1991, the GIAPEL has focused on the development of autonomy in language learning and has engaged in research on learning styles and the cognitive and pragmatic strategies involved in the process of acquiring, learning and using second languages. The conviction that ICT can be used as a useful resource for effective language learning has led the GIAPEL to explore how to develop autonomous language-learning skills in hypermedia environments. In the CIBERTAAAL project (Cybergenres and technologies applied to autonomy in language learning) the GIAPEL group carries out research on three planes: the analysis of digital texts, the study of the students' hyperreading strategies and of their attitudes to online learning, and the design of web tasks for language learning. The ultimate purpose is to help foreign language learners develop an autonomising wreading competence (for an explanation of the concept see Luzón, this volume) which enables them to construct meaning from digital texts effectively. Since well-designed WQs can provide support for and meet the criteria of major Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, the WQ format is used in the CIBERTAAAL project as a model for the design of webtasks that support autonomous language learning and multiliteracies competences. Results from the CIBERTAAAL project have been presented in the 2008 issue of this journal. In addition, the GIAPEL group is editing the volume "Digital Genres, New Literacies and Autonomy in Language Learning" (to be published by Cambridge Scholar Publishing), where several researchers explore the relation between these three concepts. Some of the contributions to this volume propose language learning tasks that integrate the development of autonomous learning and of new literacies.

The ambition for this monograph was to try and bring together research, practitioners' reports and data on the use and development of the WQ model in language education. After all, although the relation of the WQ concept to learning theories and educational approaches is well documented, there is relatively little empirical research¹ addressing questions related to instructional design, educational practice and implementation issues such as: how can the design and instructions of the various WQ attributes be optimized?; how do teachers and students go about doing WQs and what are the actual learning effects? And also, what teacher behaviour is helpful, because – although the WQ format supports the organisation of the learning process- the teacher's role is still vital, particularly in how and when scaffolding tools are offered and interventions realised. Research (Van den Branden, 2006) and communications with practitioners show that applying WQs and project-based teaching in the language classroom is in fact a complex activity as for most (in-service) teachers this involves a triple innovation:

1 A search for 'WQ' in ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre) produced 101 hits in March 2010. Most of those are links to theoretical papers, reports of experiences of individual teachers, a limited number of case studies and some qualitative research. Only six publications address modern language education and/or language development.

- understanding and adopting a content-oriented, task-based approach in language teaching
- extending personal ICT and materials design skills
- acquiring new or other classroom and task management skills

So as to serve a wide variety of educational professionals both in terms of roles (researcher, (student)teacher, teacher trainer, curriculum specialist, material designer) and sectors (primary, secondary, vocational, tertiary) the following objectives were defined for the publication:

- a) supporting practitioners at secondary and university levels to implement LanguageQuests by informing them on useful and interesting insights into implementation issues and descriptions of actual practices and experiences with available resources
- b) supporting teacher educators to implement LanguageQuest production & assessment modules by describing actual training practices in this area
- c) providing researchers with a review of Web- and LanguageQuest related research covering issues like effectiveness and elaboration on theoretical underpinnings.

In an attempt to arrive at a good mix of contributions the Call for papers was distributed both in professional communities of researchers and practitioners as they were seen as the primary target groups of this WQs in Language Education issue.

LanguageQuests: the first decade

Before introducing the various, interesting contributions to this issue I would like to use the occasion to present a brief overview of the TalenQuest project's rationale and results and report some personal, small-scale exploratory research into user perceptions of usability and effectiveness of one of the project's results: the LanguageQuest Assessment instrument.

As stated on the QuestGarden site the WQ model's main goal was and still is [...] *to create lessons that make good use of the web, engage learners in applying higher level thinking to authentic problems, and use everyone's time well.*

Inspired by the structured approach of the WQ format (Dodge, 1995) as a potential help to modern language teachers to relate learning to the real world the Dutch National Bureau for Modern Languages started the TalenQuest project in 2000. This state-funded project aimed to develop the concept 'LanguageQuest' as an innovative approach in language education. Developments contributing to the project's conception were:

- the arrival of Internet allowing more topical and attractive materials than in printed form
- pedagogical trends in Europe encouraging more autonomous and competence-based learning requiring customized (self-access) materials for a variety of learners and learning styles.

The project's main goal was to adapt the WQ concept to the specific requirements motivated by theoretical insights from second language acquisition (SLA)-research resulting in improved task design and methodology for realistic, content-oriented, functional, task-based foreign language learning. The project's results included a collection of model LanguageQuests, a website providing registration facilities for published WQs, an HTML-

WQ template customized for the production of LanguageQuests and a rubric for the assessment of the pedagogical qualities of WQs for language acquisition and the LanguageQuest Assessment Tool (LQAT).

This instrument, in the Netherlands also known by its Dutch name ‘the yardstick’, consists of three sets of criteria. In addition to the essential components of a WQ as specified by Dodge (1995), two sections address language learning in particular (Koenraad & Westhoff, 2003).

It was developed to encourage and professionalize digital materials selection activities among practitioners by supporting users to:

- estimate the potential effect of a WQ on language acquisition
- improve available WQs in terms of better language acquisition outcomes
- adapt or design an effective LanguageQuest

With the realization of the agreed deliverables the LanguageQuest project formally ended in 2004. However, thanks to grants for coordinating tasks and the generous contributions of volunteer team members the original project group could continue till 2009. During this period some key activities were carried out: moderating related websites, handling the assessments of submitted WQ products and developing contributions to further dissemination.

With the adoption of the project results by *Kennisnet*, the Dutch national educational network and content provider for schools, project targets at a national level had been realized and wider dissemination in Europe was realized through the EU-project ‘Moderating Intercultural Collaboration and Language Learning’ (MICaLL) and the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe’s European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) supported the LanguageQuest team to coordinate the project LQuest: “Task-based second language acquisition with the help of Internet resources” in the strand “Innovative approaches and new technologies” of the 2004-2007 round of the four-year projects programme the Centre runs. In addition to a central workshop accessible for all member states, one of the results of this LQuest project is a web portal to develop and support a European community of LanguageQuest professional assessors, developers, and practitioners. It provides facilities for hosting and locating LanguageQuests in various languages. For more information consult the web portal pages at: www.lquest.net.

The ECML project also helped the team to validate LQAT and produce a user-friendly, online version, currently available both in an English and German edition at the original TalenQuest site. Users with the intention of assessing a concept or published version of a WQ can access the LQAT page and are invited to provide some data such as an e-mail address so that the scoring results can be stored and distributed by e-mail. To share assessment activities and facilitate 'getting a second opinion' multiple e-mail addresses can be submitted. Users then score the various rubric items (n= 19) presented to them as questions in a web form. After completion of all rubric items a total score is calculated leading to none or possibly three quality stars. For more detailed information about the various stages and individual results of the LanguageQuest project see Koenraad (2008).

WQ and Teacher Competences

The definite ending of the project also makes one wonder whether the LanguageQuest project has had the impact on the professional community as originally intended. Questions that come up in this respect are, e.g.: is the WQ concept seen as having a place in language teaching and learning? To what extent are WQs actually being used in mainstream language

education. Are LanguageQuests being used in language teacher education and/or elaborated on in methodology courses. Is the LanguageQuest Assessment Tool used and does it actually help teachers in selecting and/or designing Quests?

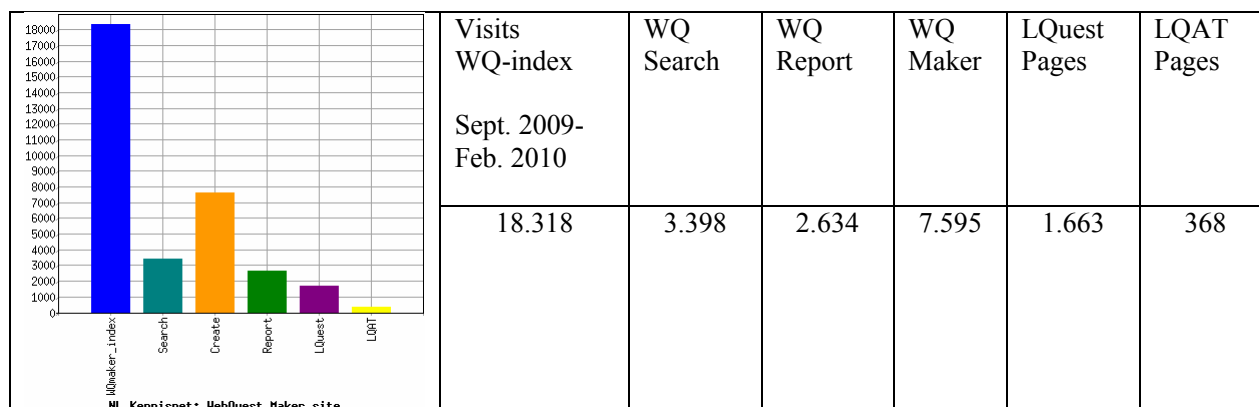
The global increase over the past years of sites that offer practical help and online tools to teachers for the design, construction and hosting of WQs, the availability of WQ repositories and the amount of publications, if only in the TESOL Quarterly database, suggest that the professional community of language teachers has well recognized the potential of Internet as a powerful digital learning environment for language learning and the opportunities it offers in presenting learners of modern languages with challenging tasks to be solved by exploring and using web based resources.

In an attempt to further substantiate these observations I analysed data related to content consultation, contribution and general web traffic for Dodge's QuestGarden and the NL WebQuest site run by *Kennisnet*, the Dutch national school net. QuestGarden, an online authoring tool, community and hosting service that is designed to make it easier to create WebQuests, serves an international community of teachers. In March 2010 it reported a total of 82726 visits and a membership representing 141 nationalities of which a fair share seems to have an American or Canadian background. No information is available on the total number of available WQs², but with an estimated number of more than 100 newly published WQ-products every fortnight the database must be substantial. Languages other than English, as represented in the title or description, at the time of writing were: Spanish (n=289), Portuguese (n=81), French (n=50) and German (12). Listed under Modern Foreign Languages / English as a second language were 1261 items, but these include WQs that are also allocated to other categories such as Art/Music or Social Sciences. Closer inspection has led us to believe that some 25% of the registered WQs are dedicated MFL products.

An analysis of the visit statistics of the Dutch *Kennisnet* WQ site, hosting a repository of WQs for a great variety of subjects and educational sectors, over the past 6 months, presents a fairly representative picture of actual, current use of the facilities.

The monthly average of visits, lasting at least half an hour, to the index of the WQ pages is approximately 3.000. The LanguageQuest pages, a sub-site of the WQ site, are visited less frequently, some 375 times per month on average. In the data collection period pages offering the 3 different language versions of the online Language Quest Assessment Tool were accessed 368 times.

Table 1. *Kennisnet* WQ site.



Furthermore a trend can be observed in a number of European countries that more and more schools, facing an increasingly diverse school population, want to develop their own or

² The current search engine could not handle a request to this effect.

customise available instructional (e)materials to serve the needs of their students. An example of a state-funded initiative to help schools and individual teachers with the customisation, production and standards-based exchange of instructional materials and facilitate the development of related policies and staff competencies is the Dutch *WikiWijs* project.

These trends and the related changing business models used by educational publishers in which mixes of textbook content and additional e-learning materials are offered to individual schools call for new teacher competences. We believe that the LanguageQuest project's efforts and instruments can contribute to the development of these competences as they can help raise quality awareness levels and support practitioners in the selection and adaptation of integrated educational materials, also in a more general sense.

From the LanguageQuest website statistics on the use of the online LQAT version and content contributions we can infer that currently it is in teacher education that the most active LQAT users can be found. Understandably so as the assessment and production of LQuests provide relevant and realistic tasks in language teacher education programmes and methodology courses in particular. And when student teachers analyse and/or design Quests the tool is helpful to scaffold these activities and organise/rationalise evaluation procedures. It also provides situated learning opportunities to refer back to theory. Besides, the LQuest web facilities and the quality assured contents can be easily integrated into initial and in-service training.

From conversations with colleagues in my own organization and other teacher education institutions I understand that the majority of Dutch language student teachers are confronted with the WQ format during their studies. Typical activities related to the introduction of the WQ concept in teacher education are (confer Zlatkovska and Stoks, this Volume):

- experiential learning: student teachers complete a WQ in a learner's role
- reflection on this experience to raise awareness of process and design features and related own beliefs about language learning
- processing of theoretical input (learning theories, SLA insights, instructional design principles)
- defining criteria, doing assessment tasks
- adapting and/or designing a WQ
- providing motivated feedback on peer products

Ideally, one of the curriculum tasks also expects student teachers to try out their WQ designs in practice. Generally this appears to be more easily realisable in Master Programmes and in-service courses where participants often have their own teaching practice (confirmed in personal communication by NL colleagues and Stoks (this Volume). Other facilitating conditions include internet access in pupils' home so that computer lab scheduling problems can be avoided and WQ activities can be set as homework assignments (although not necessarily appreciated by the pupils involved). Further research would be needed to find out if, in general, the introduction to the WQ concept in teacher education has its intended effect: students involved would be expected to use relatively more WQ products and/or complex, integrated tasks in their later teaching practice.

The current introduction of action research tasks in our teacher education curricula hopefully will contribute to the necessary increase (Seegers, 2007: 17) of WQ related instructional design and implementation research.

For me personally the question of the adoption of the WQ approach by practitioners and effectiveness of the LQAT has been particularly intriguing. Without proper funding for research I decided to do some small-scale data collection in my own work context and practice to find out more about LanguageQuest use in local school practice and user

appreciation plus perceived effectiveness of LQAT. The majority of the participants of the courses I personally coordinate in the Utrecht University Summerschool and the Master Programme of the Language Department at the Faculty of Education of Hogeschool Utrecht University of Applied Sciences have 10 or more years of teaching experience. From the intake questionnaires administered over the past two years (n = 158) it appears that 70% of these practising teachers of modern language never or only rarely make use of WQs in their teaching. Responses to other ICT-use related questions lead one to conclude that the integration of ICT in the language classroom in general is still at a very early stage.

To give a few examples: no to only rare use is reported of applications such as e-mail (47%), presentation software (68%), authoring tools (e.g. HotPotatoes, Fun with texts, etc.) (77%), text chat (87%) and voice chat (88%), wiki (81%), blogging (89%) and virtual learning environments (60%).

A comparable distribution shows in data collected from intake questionnaires I have used for recent workshops on interactive whiteboards at conferences and for language teachers, university language centres and modern language departments at secondary schools.

In one of the activities in the ICT & Language Education module of the Master Programme at Hogeschool Utrecht participants are to assess a set of 4 TL-WQs and arrive individually at a personal Top 3, ranking them on their personal criteria of expected usefulness for their language teaching practice. The results were collected with the help of an online questionnaire (version A).

Then the rationale for the LanguageQuest concept and the related theoretical underpinnings were presented and students were asked to read and discuss Koenraad & Westhoff (2003). After this students were expected to assess the same sets of Quests again but this time using the LQAT. These results were also collected with an almost identical questionnaire (version B). Slightly less than half of the respondents (47%) reported that they made changes to their personal Top 3 after using the LQAT. To study the effects in more detail we analysed the assessment results of the two largest groups, the teachers of English (n=14) and French (n=13). In both groups the average ranking order indeed appeared to have changed and in the English group this also led to a change for the number One position.

When asked for explanations for their changes of opinion typical reactions indicate that a more objective judgement could be made because more and other aspects are taken into consideration or get more attention compared to e.g. personal criteria such as a focus on layout. A (translated) quote to illustrate this point:

Yes, during the first session interest in the topic also played a role. And also the way the whole WQ was structured. 'Vamos a festeljar' is brief, simple with a clear structure and is interesting (the topic appeals to me). 'Quién tiene el poder' is more elaborate. At the time I thought the more elaborate the greater the chance that pupils lose attention. Now it appears that I should also take other aspects into consideration.

Asked about the difficulty level of the assessment task respondents' reactions indicate that the activity is perceived as slightly less challenging when done with the help of LQAT. Students were also invited to comment on this course activity. Various students, in particular those for whom the WQ concept was new, reported as most challenging elements in their task:

- assessing the suitability of the resources in terms of difficulty level of the textual information with respect to the target group

- ranking products that differ in so many aspects, e.g. lay-out, content and instructional quality of the task description, potential appeal of the task for the target group, task completion time, detail of process description, quantity of resources, etc.

Many students also testified that it had been an educationally valuable experience. We translated one typical comment by way of example;

As I have not worked with WQs yet, I took ample time to study everything well. First through the eyes of the pupil, then from a teacher's perspective. As a pupil I think it is a pleasant way to occupy oneself with language. It offers a nice and useful alternative to the textbook. The Quests were very clear and not too difficult for the pupils. As a teacher, I think, one needs to have a clear idea of what one hopes to achieve. That is what I find challenging: although WQs look attractive, are well structured and communicate well what the idea is, it looks by no means easy to me to design a WQ. So far I have always thought my ICT skills were at a reasonable level, but looking at these WQs I realised that I need to upgrade and learn a lot of new skills.[...]

The degree of difficulty also seems to correlate with the average time spent on the task: slightly more than 30 minutes per Quest in the first round versus less than 20 minutes using LQAT. It should be noted however that this difference can, of course, also be attributed to the fact that the contents of the Quests involved were already known: instructions were read, resources consulted, etc. On the other hand, from the time spent on the task and comments made by students who were introduced to the WQ concept and had used LQAT before (most of them in their Bachelor programme) we can infer that, as the LQAT categories and criteria are internalised over time, the assessment procedure can be done more efficiently and consequently takes less time.

Typical reflections on the task procedure and the use of the LQAT were that, although time consuming, the LQAT helps to:

- realise what the educationally relevant elements are
- be more critical when selecting materials
- provide arguments for one's choices

One of the statements sums it up nicely:

Using the LQAT has made me aware of the things I actually think are important. When you have no or hardly any experience with WQs one is easily impressed with a product. When analysing (that is what LQAT helps you to do) I discovered that I want to stress totally different things. My previous number One Quest did not get a single star the second time round! It was a great experience and I am happy with the tool; I will definitely use it when I am going to design a Quest myself and in case I adopt an available WQ.

LanguageQuests: future developments

One of the dimensions and variables on which WQs can be categorized is the technology involved in the provision of source materials and/or tools for the production of task results. Whereas the first generation of WQs was generally based on (static) information in Internet

pages an increasing number of WQs currently integrate Web 2.0 applications such as Blogs and Wiki's. As also pointed out by Stoks and Vickers (this Volume) the affordances of web-based technologies provide opportunities for the WQ concept to further evolve and keep up with the expectations of the current and future, digital native, student cohorts.

Of late, also so-called cross-media Quests start appearing. One specific variant is based on the Alternate Reality Game, a special type of problem solving game, in which a variety of (communication) technologies are used to involve users and support their collaboration. Digital technologies are utilised as a communication tool for international, multilingual, peer student communities that have to solve a puzzle by working as a massively, multiplayer, collaborative group, possibly also in multiple languages. In the EU project 'ARGuing' quests of this type have been developed and their potential for language education can be tested.

Another recent development is the integration of the use of 3D virtual environments. Howard Vickers coined the term *SurReal Quest* for this specific genre and elaborates on its design approach in this Volume. His earlier publication (Vickers, 2007) inspired the cross-media, interactive narrative WQ 'Panique à Bord, one the pilots in the ViTAAL project, using 3D virtual worlds for language learning. The Panique à bord'-Quest, set on board of the virtual version of the Titanic in *Active Worlds*, presents a detective-like problem solving task involving integrated training of language skills and triggering oral, synchronous interviews with the avatars of the story characters (Visser & Koenraad, 2009).



Figure 1. 3D Titanic SIM with additional objects for the Panique à bord'-Quest.

In one of the other ViTAAL experiments a virtual version of the Language Village was implemented. This format is targeted at empowering a current, real-life assessment practice for lower secondary education in use in the Netherlands and some other (EU) countries (Koenraad, 2008).

To conclude, target group can also be seen as a categorising dimension. As testified by Luzon and Fernández Fontecha (this Volume) WQs - if specifically designed - can well be

used for special forms of language education such as language for specific purposes and in content and language integrated learning programmes.

The current CORELL issue: WQs in Language Education

We are pleased to have the teacher education perspective well represented in this monograph as - in addition to design quality- the role of the teacher when learners are doing a WQ, or integrated tasks in general for that matter, is complex as also shown in the research by Segers, Droop and Verhoeven (this Volume).

We start off with Emilija Zlatkovska's contribution 'WebQuests as a Constructivist Tool in the EFL Teaching Methodology Class in a University in Macedonia' as we expect it to be helpful for readers who are not so familiar with the WQ format and its pedagogical underpinnings. And also because it highlights the relevance of the initial training and professional development of teachers when implementing WQs in education.

Hoping that her study will support the Macedonian government in its attempts to modernize national education by introducing constructivism and technology in schools and the preparation of teachers the author decided to research the introduction of the WQ format in a methods class in the EFL teacher training program in her university.

Referring to the publicly expressed concern that—while currently there are computers provided in both primary and secondary schools—teachers are not appropriately trained to even use them not to mention implement technology in their teaching Zlatkovska is convinced of the urgency and relevance of the introduction of technology training in teacher education.

One of the arguments being that due to lack of training in using technology in the teacher training programs, the student teachers resemble their previous teachers rather than the new generations of students who are highly skilled in using technology.

While any technology tool can be used to demonstrate incorporation of technology in teaching, Zlatkovska has opted for the WQ concept because of its possibility to blend with the constructivist principles of learning and thus offering opportunities to demonstrating the connection between technology and constructivism in teacher preparation programs.

She believes that WQs can help instructors better understand the social-constructivist theory and find place for incorporating technology as part of their teaching thus offering an alternative to a teacher-centred approach to learning and accommodating current student generations' learning styles that lean towards teamwork, experiential activities, multitasking, and the use of technology.

In her paper she describes the design of her research of a pilot study mapping the way four university professors responsible for the EFL teaching methodology course were introduced to the WQ concept and the use of technology to promote higher-order learning. The author documents how she only offered guidance so that each instructor could take ownership of the project and feel empowered with using the technology. Zlatkovska concludes by reporting some first preliminary results as this research is still ongoing.

Another contribution in the domain of the initial education of teachers of modern languages - but in a different cultural and educational setting- is the paper by Gé Stoks, a teacher trainer who works at the Department of Teaching and Learning of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland. Where Zlatkovska finds herself at the introductory stages of WQ implementation Stoks' wide experience with WQ design, implementation and training allows him to reflect on actual practice and evaluate returns on investment.

He describes in detail how the introduction of the WQ concept to student language teachers at his institution has evolved over the years. Student experiences and the challenges they face when designing their own WQ are well documented.

To reduce the time and energy spent on technical aspects and to help students focus on content the institution offers an alternative to working with an HTML-template for WQ production in the form of a two-year subscription for the Questgarden website (<http://questgarden.com>). To provide an even wider audience for the student products they are also published at the website www.aspti.ch/WQ. Stoks draws attention to the fact that these WQs have all been developed in the target language, pointing out missed chances for many Dutch WQs for modern languages on the Dutch TalenQuest site using Dutch as language of instruction as this greatly reduces their usefulness and above all effectiveness for foreign language education.

Students are also stimulated to design WQs on literary subjects. As literature is seen as an important element in the modern languages curriculum in the upper secondary schools (licei) in Ticino to gain access to foreign culture media-enhanced literature teaching was introduced as a master's thesis topic.

In addition to issues like the alignment of WQ topics to the textbooks used in the placement schools and the design and integration of Focus on Form elements, Stoks addresses the problem of assessing the effectiveness of WQs and pupils' progress and discusses the fundamental question of return on investment in terms of language acquisition versus the effort and time needed for (student) teachers to design and for secondary pupils to complete WQs.

The next three papers deal with WQ design for a variety of specific needs, purposes and target groups: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and language and content knowledge development in primary education.

With empirical research on WQ's effectiveness and implementation issues being so rare (also see Stoks and Segers et al., this Volume) Mará José Luzón-Marco's paper 'Webtasks for Learning Professional and Academic English: Adapting the WebQuest Model' is a highly valuable contribution. She introduces the concept 'wreading competence', specific skills where reading and writing competences meet, as a key element in a methodological approach that can prepare ESP students to work and communicate in a hypertextual, multimodal, interactive and multicultural environment. Drawing on a wide variety of WQ-related research the author elaborates the WQ design criteria specifically for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and puts forward clear arguments for the relevance of contextualized and authentic tasks, high quality input and rich resources and learner supports. In the second part of the paper the theoretical concepts and related design principles are operationalized through the detailed description of a real course task.

Another contribution from Spain is Almudena Fernández Fontecha's paper from the University of La Rioja on WebQuests for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The author introduces the term CLILQuest as a special type of LanguageQuest to serve a specific role within CLIL settings. She positions the concept within the framework of task design in general and the literature on Web- and LanguageQuest in particular. Arguments are put forward why and how integration into the curriculum through a superior unit is a fundamental feature of this learner-centred activity.

Taking the non-linguistic content of the topic as a leading principle she proposes specific design elements to promote:

- use of authentic processes and materials
- use of Web 2.0 technologies
- learners' reflection on their own processes and decisions while doing a task

- Focus on Form activities
- meaningful use of language as triggered by the real-like purpose of the CLILQuest.

The description of the task taxonomy, the related CLILQuest typology and their specific roles in the teaching Modules is made more accessible for the reader by illustrating these concepts as applied in a concrete course on climate change. Finally the author concludes that implementation experiences are needed to test the proposed design and effectiveness of the CLILQuest to see if it can function as a key part of a technology-enhanced model of Content and Language Integrated Learning.

Even though the use of WQ is widespread throughout the world, empirical research on the impact on learning and the cognitive requirements is scarce and gives little information about how a WQ could be integrated into the schools. It is also for this reason that we are happy that Eliane Segers, Mienke Droop and Ludo Verhoeven submitted their contribution reporting results from the WQ research they are involved in at the Radboud University in the Netherlands.

In their study ‘Integrating a WebQuest in the primary school curriculum using Anchored Instruction: effect on learning outcomes’ the authors address a number of design and implementation issues in WQs for primary education (in the Netherlands) that aim to combine the promotion of content knowledge and language development. At first an overview is presented of the literature of the empirical research that was published on the use of WQ, resulting in a way to integrate WQs in the school curriculum. Segers et al. report experimental research aimed at unraveling child characteristics that contribute to the learning effects of doing a WQ, taking into account the differences between teachers and grades. Based on the finding that learning gains can differ significantly between groups even though the WQ used was the same and the teachers all received the same guidance from the researchers the importance of the teacher’s role is stressed: the learning experience must be orchestrated and the WQ needs embedding in the day-to-day activities in the classroom. In her conclusion Segers and her co-authors qualify their results by pointing out that they are based on the use of merely one WQ in one school.

The final paper in this monograph describes opportunities for task and activity-based foreign language learning supported by recent technological developments.

In his contribution ‘VirtualQuests: Autonomous and Dialogic Language Learning with 3D Virtual Worlds’, Howard Vickers, initiator of Avatar Languages, elaborates on VirtualQuest, a concept also described as SurReal Quest in one of his earlier publications (Vickers, 2007). Vickers describes how the use of 3D virtual worlds can extend the concept of immersion in language education as it can support an experiential, dialogic approach to language teaching as advocated in the Dogme methodology. The authors covers aspects of this process-based, learner-centred approach with its focus on conversational communication such as its motivational power by serving immediate needs of the learner, the relation to simulation as a procedure and the promotion of learner autonomy.

By exploiting the social and communicative features of 3D virtual worlds language students can be sent on information quests throughout the 3D universe which require them to interact with native speakers of the target language in addition to pursuing traditional internet research. Output related task components require students to present their information e.g. in an audio or video podcast. This combination of web-based research and virtual social interaction allows learners to practice their language skills in a pedagogically significant manner. In the second half of the paper Vickers compares the characteristics of the LanguageQuest and VirtualQuest models and discusses the implications for learner and teacher behaviours.

Conclusion

We would like to thank the authors of the papers for their contributions. Their collective effort has led to the realization of our ambitions: to serve a diverse readership and cover a variety of aspects such as introduction to the LanguageQuest concept in teacher education, effectiveness and implementation issues and related teacher competencies in educational practice and learner autonomy related literacies. We also greatly appreciate the work done by the reviewers. In our view this collection offers an interesting insight in the way the LanguageQuest concept has been adopted and is being further developed and adapted to serve a diversity of specific needs, purposes and contexts.

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Websites

Active Worlds

<http://www.activeworlds.com/>

ARGuing for multilingual motivation in Web 2.0

<http://arg.paisley.ac.uk/>

Avatar Languages

<http://www.avatarlanguages.com/home.php>

European Centre for Modern Languages

www.ecml.at

Koenraad, Ton. 2010. LanguageQuests in Language Education: Introduction. *CORELL: Computer Resources for Language Learning* 3, 1-13.

ECML LQuest Project

http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/LQuest/html/LQUEST_E_pdesc.htm

Kennisnet

<http://corporate.kennisnet.nl/international/about>

LanguageQuest Assessment Tool. Online, English version at the TalenQuest site:

<http://www.kennisnet.nl/cpb/thema/WQ/talenquest/meetlat/index.php?lang=en>

LQuest Net (LQuest Community of Practice)

<http://www.lquest.net>

TalenQuest Project

<http://www.kennisnet.nl/thema/talenquest/english/index.html?mnndx=13&swtch=13>

Utrecht SummerSchool: Designing Activities for the 2.0 Language Classroom

<http://www.utrechtsummerschool.nl/index.php?type=courses&code=S5>

WikiWijs

<http://wikiwijsinhetonderwijs.nl/english/>

WebQuest Page / WebQuest Garden

<http://WQ.sdsu.edu/> <http://questgarden.com/>