Games and projects

Name: Webquests

Aim: to use the results of the structured research of a webquest as the basis for a classroom speaking activity

Context: Young learners, ESOL, EAP, ESP

Level: A2 – C2

Type of tool: web browser on a computer or mobile device

Type of materials: AUTH, OWN, PUB

Planning: quick / long (depending on whether you are using a published webquest or creating your own)

Preparation:

A webquest is a research activity which requires students to collect information from the internet using online resources specified in the webquest. When used in language learning, the results of this research should be used in a language production activity.

There are some published webquest materials available. You can use these to trial this type of activity with your students as well as models for writing your own webquests.

Here is a model showing the main components of a webquest of use with language learners.

1. The introduction – this establishes the scenario of the webquest. This may simulate a real-world task or set the scene for a role-play.

2. The task – this gives an overview of the webquest, including both the intended outcome of the research, and the language learning objective and how that is to be assessed.

3. The process – this leads the students through the research stage of the webquest. The most effective webquests provide links to specific online resources and instructions on how to use those resources to find the information requested by the webquest and required for the production stage.

4. Production – this is the stage in which the students use the fruits of their research to complete the learning objective. This might involve a verbal report or formal presentation, a role-play with students from another research group who were given a slightly different research task, or a debate presenting opposing point-of-view, or a piece of writing such as a business or academic report, a budgeted plan, or email correspondence with another group of students.

Procedure:
This is based on the following webquest:

Introduction: You and your friends are planning a day out together in Cambridge, the famous university city in the UK.

Task: You are going to research Cambridge. You will then prepare and present your plan.

You need to create a plan that tries to meet the needs and interests of everybody in your group.

In your group, there is:
- somebody who loves art
- somebody who wants to learn about the history of Cambridge
- somebody who want to try the local food
- somebody who is a vegetarian
- somebody who needs to buy a birthday present for his/her mother
- somebody whose hobby is photography
- somebody who love live music and theatre.

You may decide to split up during the day but you want to have lunch together.

Process: Your teacher will give you a list of resources to use to research Cambridge. Find information that allows you to:

■ decide where to go and what to do

■ decide how much time you will spend in each place and on each activity

■ plan your route around Cambridge

■ calculate your budget for the day (not including birthday presents) – plan a fantastic day but try and get good value for money.

Now prepare to present your plan. Collect maps and pictures to illustrate your presentation. Make sure everybody in your group speaks.

1. **In the classroom:**

   Ask if anyone has ever visited Cambridge in the UK. What was their best memory of their visit? Brainstorm the type of information you might need in order to have good day out in a city like Cambridge.

   Introduce the webquest to the class. Read through the entire worksheet. Confirm that the students understand the nature, process and objective of the activity.

   Divide the class into research groups. Set a deadline for reporting back.

2. **Outside the classroom:**

   The students work in their research groups to use the online resources to find and select the information requested by the webquest and decide how they are going to present it in class.

3. **In the classroom:**

   Each research group presents the results of their research. You can introduce an element of competition by noting which groups, successfully met everybody's needs and wishes, did the most, and spent the least.

   Take notes and provide feedback on language use.

Variations:

This webquest can be adapted to any city. It can also be expanded to include travel to and from the city. This would require the students to research timetables and ticket prices. The day out could be extended to two so that accommodation has to be researched.

The needs and requirements could come directly from the students so that they have to meet those from their own group or that of another. In the second case, each group is planning a day out for another group who can then comment on whether they think they would or not enjoy the plan and why.

Notes:

It is very important that the links you provide and the instructions your give for using the resources those links point to are as specific as possible. You want to avoid your students wasting time conducting their own online searches or becoming demotivated with the task because they can't access the information the webquest asks for.

Before you use any webquests in class, check for and replace any dead links.

Try and avoid investing too much time in creating a webquest that relies too heavily on a single, small website as this material can be rendered instantly unusable if that website closes or is radically restructured.

Students are often more motivated if there is an element of competition in the production stage of the webquest. This could be two groups of business English students who negotiate a deal based on the results of their research, groups of students who compete to see which can present the best travel plan based on a limited budget, or debate on a controversial topic using facts gleaned from online resources rather than just personal opinions.