

**EdCW 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference Education in a Changing World: Global Challenges and National Priorities****QUEST TECHNOLOGY AS INSTRUMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN DIGITAL EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

Digital education and technology are becoming a significant and integral part of everyday studying instruction, especially in the context of pandemic with COVID-19 and quarantine when traditional classroom teaching is impossible and it should be substituted with effective methods and instruments of teaching. With the widespread use of instructional technology, web-based educational resources are more and more integrated into the curriculum of higher education. The Internet is a significant toolkit for English as a Foreign Language learners because it provides them with authentic language input. On the other side, students turn to make hasty and random choices with little analysis and evaluation. A quest designed by means of digital resources may help to overcome this difficulty and can be considered an effective tool providing the formation and development of intercultural communicative competence among bachelor students within the framework of two disciplines: "English as a Foreign language" and "Theory and practice of intercultural communication". In the article the authors define the terms "quest" and "WebQuest", reveal the functions of educational quests, consider the existing classifications of quests, analyze the stages of work with a quest and possible algorithms, suggest the possible content of quests, and present the results of experimental education and provide some mechanisms for integrating quests into the process of forming intercultural communicative competence.

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*Keywords:* Intercultural communicative competence, quest technology, teaching culture

## 1. Introduction

The Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education 3 ++ sets the task for the educational system to use modern educational technologies to form the required competencies. One of such educational technologies is a quest designed by means of digital resources, which can increase the motivation of students to study a discipline, which ultimately increases learning outcomes, and also forms a certain level of necessary competencies. And, as a consequence, the task of the teacher in this context is to master such a tool as a quest technology to improve the quality of educational process for students in general, and in particular, facilitating the process of learning English as a foreign language (Ivanov, 2019).

A significant argument in favor of using quests designed by means of digital resources in learning comes from data from the Institute for the Future, California, which conducted research and found that people around the world spend about three billion hours a week playing online games. On the one hand, this is too much time for solving virtual problems, when an array of urgent problems in everyday life requires prompt solutions.

Thus, we have a parallel educational resource, where young people acquire knowledge and develop competencies often more successfully than mastering academic subjects in educational institutions.

The use of information and communication technologies in education is widely discussed by the scientists from all over the world. In Russia the effectiveness of digital technologies is considered in the researches of Lupaş (2016) Lyakh et al. (2019); Ivanova et al. (2020).

The quest technology as a learning task was first considered by Dodge (2001) and March (1998), and later by Marzano (1992), Mozer (2001). In Russia, quest technologies are considered in the studies of Daneykin et al. (2019), Isakova and Isakov (2019), Kvashnina et al. (2017), Melnik et al. (2019), Melnik et al. (2019), Nimatulaev et al. (2018), Popov et al. (2016), Prokofieva (2019), Razdobarova et al. (2019), Yagubova and Muriev (2018) and Vali (2017).

Quests designed by means of digital resources were considered as self-contained "inquiry-oriented" activities on the web. WebQuest is "designed to support the learners' thinking at levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" by processing the information given in authentic web resources used in the assignments. Therefore, the focus is not on the content itself, but on using content as a tool for developing thinking skills by providing the learners with the assignments that require them to practice those skills (Amer & El-Okda, 2006).

## 2. Problem Statement

In connection with everything said above, it is extremely important to integrate digital resources into the framework of ELT classroom. And, as a consequence, the task of the teacher in this context is to master such a tool as a quest technology to improve the quality of educational process for students in general, and in particular, facilitating the process of learning English as a foreign language in digital environment.

### **3. Research Questions**

The study is supposed to answer the questions:

- What is a quest designed specifically for teaching purposes in digital environment?
- What are the requirements for the structure and content of the quest in the context of digital education?
- What are the criteria for the selection of the teaching material?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify the ways to improve the process of developing the intercultural communicative competence for bachelor students by means of digital resources.

### **5. Research Methods**

When working on the research tasks, we use the methods of linguistic analysis and educational representation of language material, including: linguocultural analysis, component analysis, contextual analysis, modeling, discursive tactics.

### **6. Findings**

As a result of scientific analysis we have identified the notion of a quest, its structure, and criteria for teaching material selection.

#### **6.1. The origin, nature and definition of a quest**

There are several approaches to the modern interpretation of the concept of "quest". Firstly, a quest is understood as a computer game. Secondly, a quest is understood as the plot of a literary work. Such a plot can be traced from ancient mythology ("The Myth of the Twelve Labours of Hercules", "The Myth of Perseus") to modern works (J.R.R. Tolkien "The Lord of the Rings", B. Akunin "Quest", A. Fomin "Bread Quest ", S. Derkach "Quest "). Thirdly, a quest is defined as a website on the Internet that students work with while completing a learning task. Fourthly, the quest is defined as the activity oriented towards the solution of the problem. Fifth, a quest (WebQuest) is understood as a special new educational technology.

Thus, a quest may be understood as an innovative pedagogical game technology using Internet resources, which provides the performance of educational, search and cognitive problem tasks by students in accordance with the game concept / plot, during which they select and organize information, perform independent, research work (Matsevich, 2019).

## **6.2. The functions of quests designed by means of digital resources**

The main functions of quests in the educational process are: general motivational - encourages the study of the discipline; educational - saturates the content of the academic discipline with a variety of materials through the use of Internet resources; developing - provides the development of cognitive, mental activity, the subject position of the participants, their communicative and information competence through work in a group, self-presentation skills, general reflection.

There is a number of arguments for using quest designed by means of digital resources in the classroom (Dodge, 2001; Dudeney, 2000; March, 1998). Firstly, quests designed by means of digital resources (WebQuests) have some obvious benefits over textbook based instruction. WebQuests are mostly learner-centered tasks which require active learning. Besides reading and reproducing, while working with a WebQuest students apply, synthesize, analyze and evaluate information. WebQuests can also provide with team and co-operative activities. Secondly, WebQuests are a quite easy way for teachers to start to integrate the Internet into the English as a foreign language classroom while no special technical knowledge is necessary to produce or use them. Thirdly, they develop higher level thinking skills (e.g. comparing, classifying, inducing, deducing, analyzing errors, constructing support, abstraction, analyzing perspectives, etc). Being both motivating and authentic tasks WebQuests encourage students to regard the activities they are performing as something "real" and "useful".

## **6.3. The structure of WebQuest**

The structure of a quest includes goal setting, planning, goal implementation, analysis of results.

The WebQuest in the ELT Curriculum course should be designed to teach a major topic, i.e. teaching culture on the bases of decision making, linguistic bases, psycholinguistic bases. The first step is to think of an authentic broad activity. After completing the tasks included in the WebQuest, students are expected to be able to: define culture; show awareness of the importance of teaching culture in EFL curriculum; show awareness of the different task types that can be used in teaching culture; write a short essay of approximately 300 words about Culture in ELT Curriculum; assess culture learning tasks using a set of criteria worked out for this purpose; adapt and design a task for teaching culture to the Russian context. The results of the quest should be assessed using valid criteria, indicators, methods, methodology of measurement and evaluation of the structural components of the intercultural communicative competence of students. In this aspect the research of Razdobarova et al. (2019) is of a particular interest for us.

Furthermore, linguocultural approach should be implemented to enable students be open to learning not only their own, but also foreign culture: social, psychological and other intercultural differences (Yagubova & Muriev (2018).

A set of assignments are designed to achieve those objectives. The first activity is a resource based assignment in which students are referred to some Internet sources in order to define culture. In the second activity students are required to scan appropriate sections in Internet sources from activity 1 to identify the arguments for and/ or against teaching the target language culture. The next activity requires students to look for ideas about how to teach culture in another set of sources. Then students are required

to discuss their views about teaching the target culture. After that students should collaborate in working out a plan for writing their essays. They also peer edit each other's essays before writing the final drafts and submitting them for final checking.

For selecting the resources for culture-based quests a number of criteria may be used: authenticity (both texts and tasks should be authentic), appropriateness to students' proficiency and academic levels, brevity, variety, practicality.

#### **6.4. Development of intercultural communicative competence for bachelor students by means of WebQuest technology**

Experimental education using web quest technology was carried out within the framework of the courses "English as a Foreign language learning" and "Theory and practice of intercultural communication" for bachelor students of Pedagogical education program with two profiles, profile "Russian and foreign (English) language learning" in the Pskov State University. 17 students of this educational program took part in the experimental education.

Merill (2002, pp. 44-45) highlights five main principles for learning promotion by means of a quest technology:

1. Being engaged in solving real-world problems.
2. Existing knowledge should be activated as a foundation for new knowledge.
3. Knowledge should be demonstrated to the learner.
4. New knowledge should be applied by the learner.
5. New knowledge should be integrated into the learner's world.

Before organizing experimental education, students were offered an assignment on creating an image of themselves in a multicultural world ("My ideal intercultural self"). The students prepared individual collages in which they reflected the main aspects of their life after university. Based on the content analysis of students' creative works, items that were repeated in all works were identified: profession, learning foreign languages, travelling, family, further education, self-development (development of intercultural competence). Analysis of the works revealed that students have a simplified perception of a foreign language and an understanding of the role of intercultural competence. The majority goal is to "speak English like a native speaker". In a number of responses, respondents declare their intention to marry a foreigner whom they will plan during an international academic internship. Several students associate their future work with another country, where they will teach Russian to English-speaking people. Work is perceived as a bridge connecting students with the country of the target language. Among the qualities necessary for successful intercultural interaction, students note such as openness, kindness, flexibility, rejection of stereotypes, a positive and active position in intercultural interaction, curiosity. Thus, according to the students, knowledge of a foreign language is important, first of all, for getting a decent job, 17 students think so (100%); 15 students (88%) plan to continue studying English after graduation, as well as to master other foreign languages; 15 students (88%) believe that knowledge of a foreign language will allow them to travel; for 11 students (64%), knowledge of a foreign

language is necessary for a happy marriage; only 2 students (11%) believe that a foreign language is necessary for self-development and the formation of intercultural competence.

The WebQuests were created using web technologies and were of a research and project nature. The following quests were prepared for experimental teaching: “Around the world in 24 hours” (type of quest - “Investigative Journalism”), “Magic Garden” (type of quest - “Creative task”), “Globalization or New Wonderland” (type quest - "Scientific Research").

The problem of a quest is aimed at checking the formation of students' competencies in these disciplines and reflects the following components of intercultural interaction:

1) features of interaction between representatives of different cultures in the process of communication (knowledge of lexical units, including stable phrases, evaluative vocabulary, clichés of speech etiquette, proverbs and sayings (greetings, representations, expressions of feelings and expressions of emotions, farewell, etc.), reflecting the culture of communication of the countries of the studied language);

2) the peculiarities of everyday life and everyday life of representatives of different cultures (knowledge of the peculiarities of the perception of time in different nationalities, priorities in the distribution of affairs during the day, the peculiarities of food intake, everyday life, attitude to clothing and material goods, attitude to work etc.);

3) differences in life styles lifestyle of representatives of different ages in different cultures (peculiarities of family relationships; attitude towards the child and attitude of the child towards parents; problems of modern adolescents, subcultures; care and respect for the older generation, etc.);

4) organization of free time for representatives of different cultures (national sports; national art, music, literature, etc.);

5) education (features of school and university education; the image of a teacher in different cultures);

6) travel (ethnographic realities; geographical names; nature; the ability to navigate in the city of the country of the target language, and in case of difficulty - turn to local residents for help, etc.);

7) culture and values (national holidays and festivals; traditions and customs; significant dates; stereotypes and prejudices; comparison of the studied cultures with the native culture, etc.);

8) history (political relations between Russia and Great Britain, Russia and the USA, etc.).

Quests involved sequential completion of research assignments by students using Internet resources, the correct completion of which allowed the team to receive a hint key for the next assignment. On the way to achieving the goal in the web quest, students encountered antiheroes who hinder progress and offer tasks of increased difficulty. In the process of completing the web quest, all participants had access to each other's progress / rating, which is a certain motivating factor.

Upon completion of the experimental teaching, the students were interviewed, the analysis of the results of which revealed changes in the students' perception of the role of a foreign language and the development of intercultural competence (“My second ideal intercultural self”). Students demonstrate an awareness that flexibility and openness contribute to overcoming intercultural misunderstandings caused by different communication styles or differences in language skills. Students experienced an internal shift towards awareness of the need to develop intercultural competence, this is obvious from the fact that all

17 students reflected this component in their answers, in which they note their readiness to adapt and adapt to different cultural conditions. So, for example, students began to keep records of intercultural cases, in which they reflect the cases of their interaction with foreign students. However, they believe that a positive attitude is the key to the formation of intercultural competence. Students talk about a world without borders: planning to work for their country and for the whole world, to be patriots with a consciousness open to the whole world. There are statements among students that it is not borders that form a country, but language and culture: globalization has made the borders between countries conditional, citizens of the European Union freely cross borders and end up in another country. The disappearance of borders does not lead to the disappearance of a country. However, with the disappearance of language and culture, the country will cease to exist. Students note the need to perceive representatives of another culture not as strangers or foreigners, but as individuals with their own characteristics. An example is given that representatives of other cultures, speaking loudly in public places, do not pursue the goal of invading the local culture, this is their individual feature. In addition, all 17 students believe that working in the country of the target language, surrounded by native speakers, will automatically contribute to the formation of an "ideal intercultural self". As before, 15 students (88%) plan to continue studying foreign languages after graduation. Also 15 students plan to travel actively.

## 7. Conclusion

Considering the analysis being performed about quests designed by means of digital resources (WebQuests) as an educational technology, we can state that it can become an effective means for developing intercultural communicative competence for a new generation of students in new conditions of digital education due to both pandemic situation and high level of technological development.

However, quests designed by means of digital resources can be effective if the teacher follows the necessary requirements in designing the structure of educational WebQuest and selecting the material for it.

Experimental teaching with quests designed by means of digital resources within the framework of the disciplines "Foreign language" and "Theory and practice of intercultural communication" shows that students perceive intercultural communication as an important condition for interaction between representatives of different cultures, as well as they realize the need for the development of intercultural competence and determine own trajectory of development of knowledge, skills and abilities, without which intercultural interaction will not take place.

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