

Criteria for LanguageQuests -- Assessment Tool

Section A: Critical attributes of a WebQuest: this part of the tool covers formal/organisational matters related to the product features that affect its usability for learners, help to actually do the quest and evaluate it.

1 Introduction. The issue here is to what extent the introduction helps the student to get an idea of what the task is and in what situation it is set.

0	1	2	3
Absent, or contains no relevant information	Vague sketch of situation or general description in general terms in some short paragraphs	Fairly realistic description of context with some true-to-life details	The most important contextual elements are described in a functional, lively and stimulating way

2 Task. Here the actual description of the task and the specifications of the final product are reviewed (NB: these specs should be in accordance with the criteria mentioned in 'Evaluation', part 5 of this section:

0	1	2	3
Absent, or contains no relevant information	Vague wording or task description in very general terms. No or hardly any concrete specifications for the final product	Reasonably concrete description of task and general requirements in terms of form, size and/or content of the final product	Clear and concrete description of task and detailed specifications for content, form and the quantitative dimension of the final product

3 Process. What is the quality of the descriptions of the steps students need to take to realise the task? Dependent on the type of task and the target group this process can be more or less structured.

0	1	2	3
Absent, or contains no relevant information	Process described in very very general terms. No discriminate steps mentioned. Little or no indication of roles to be assigned	Reasonably concrete description of steps to be planned for the realisation of the task and roles to be assigned. Some suggestions on how to arrive at results	Clear, concrete and sometimes detailed description of steps to be taken and planned and the roles and related tasks involved. Explicit instructions on how to realise results.

4 Resources. Are there sources of information available and to what extent are they functional for the execution of the task. These resources could take the form of documents attached to the WebQuest, WWW links, information to be retrieved by mail or from databases, and, of course, also non-digital content.

0	1	2	3
Absent, consists of just search engines, or contains no relevant information	Mainly general resources only loosely related to the task at hand, offering insufficient information and/or only partly relevant. To find useful	Resources are fairly specific and provide quite useful and relevant information. Task execution requires hardly any searches for additional	Resources are specifically well matched to task execution. Lots of information is available and can be easily located. Task can be completed without any

	information for task realisation students need to scan texts extensively and search for additional resources.	information	additional sources.
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5 Evaluation. How elaborate and detailed are the criteria for the final product on the basis of which students will be evaluated? To what extent do they provide guidelines for students to plan ahead and realise their work, including their share in the realisation of a collective outcome/result if applicable.

0	1	2	3
Absent, or contains no relevant information	Only in general terms (e.g. “Your presentation and language use will be evaluated”) or with a limited level of specification (e.g. “You will be evaluated on correct language use, functionality of the presentation” etc.)	A list of specific aspects that will be evaluated is available. For each aspect a general indication of the relevant criteria is provided. Examples are: “Adequate content”, “relatively few grammatical mistakes”, “only few spelling mistakes”, “fair contribution to collaborative process and final result’	There is an elaborate “rubric” (as in this tool) with concrete assessment criteria for a range of aspects such as minimal size, required content elements, accuracy and fluency levels, quality of presentation materials, contribution to teamwork, etc. providing a scoring range per item

6 Conclusion. After task completion, to what extent are students invited to reflect on the process, the learning and usefulness of the knowledge gained?

0	1	2	3
Absent	The task description contains an element where students are addressed in very general terms to reflect on possible effects. (e.g. What do you think you have learnt from this task?)	Self reflection is stimulated by asking students to list various things and provide examples of what they think they have learned from the task. Some structure is offered (e.g. domains like vocabulary, expressions, grammar, content and cultural knowledge etc)	Self reflection is stimulated by asking students to list various things and provide examples of what they think they have learned from the task. They are also challenged to indicate what in particular has contributed to their learning, and to think of reasons why this is so and/or could be applied in other contexts.

7 Teacher’s Page. How extensive and relevant is the information the teacher is offered on aspects such as the assumed language levels and skills of the target group, preconditions (technology, facilities etc), a profile of the students and the role of the teachers.

0	1	2	3
Absent	Info is limited and only contains elementary information with respect to the target group, estimated student language levels and curriculum objectives.	Contains reasonably detailed information with respect to the target group, estimated student language levels and curriculum objectives addressed. Has some information on	As in 2 but also includes hints and solutions for possible pitfalls and classroom management problems. Has suggestions for adaptations to special target groups (e.g. providing more or

		prerequisites & necessary preparation and hints for the execution.	less structure) and reports personal experiences or those of others.
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Section B: Criteria concerning the instructional effectiveness of the task. These criteria are based on current insights in the domain of second language acquisition

8 Language input (quantitative) Here the quantity and variety of the language materials of the resources are assessed

1	2	3	4
Sources contain little text, hardly any variation in text type, register and modality (spoken, written)	Sources provide a fair amount of text (some web pages or ‘traditional A4 printed pages’), but the text materials are not very varied (mainly short, informative texts or songs or biographical data etc)	Sources provide quite a lot of text (several web pages or ‘traditional A4 printed pages’) with some variety in terms of text types and modality.	Sources provide a substantial quantity of text, both spoken and written in a great variety of text types and lay outs processing of which is functional for task at hand.

9 Language input (qualitative) Here the degree to which the language materials that are introduced are suitable (content wise) and attractive for the learner target group is under review.

1	2	3	4
Resources score low on all of the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive (“stimulating presentation”) • Authentic • Within the sphere of interest of the target group • Of current interest 	Resources score ‘high’ on 1 or ‘average’ on 2 of the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive (“stimulating presentation”) • Authentic • Within the sphere of interest of the target group • Of current interest 	Resources score ‘high’ on 2 or ‘high’ on 1 and ‘average’ on at least 2. Or ‘average’ on 4 of the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive (“stimulating presentation”) • Authentic • Within the sphere of interest of the target group • Of current interest 	Resources score ‘high’ on 3 or ‘high’ on 2 and ‘average’ on the remaining aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive (“stimulating presentation”) • Authentic • Within the sphere of interest of the target group • Of current interest

10 Language input (adequate level of difficulty, i.e. just above the competence level of the learner (in SLA terms: Interlanguage + 1)). This aspect assesses whether the difficulty level of the input materials matches the target group and/or whether the author has provided support to adapt the level to the target group

1	2	3	4
Is much too difficult or so easy that the learner will hardly learn anything new.	Is too difficult for the target group: the available scaffolding tools such as	Is difficult for the target group: the available scaffolding tools such as	The difficulty level is well tuned by the choice of the texts and the provision of

No functional support is available that could help the learner to understand enough of the text which in fact is too difficult to be able to do the task.	dictionaries or suggestions to use specific strategies, additional information about the task, graphics, etc. provide inadequate support to understand so much of the text that the task can be done properly.	dictionaries or suggestions to use specific strategies, additional information about the task , graphical provides enough support so that texts can be understood well enough for proper task completion	scaffolding tools enabling adequate text comprehension for task completion.
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11 Process for meaning To what extent does the task require understanding of the input materials?

1	2	3	4
Task can be done with only superficial understanding of the sources materials and some cut and paste techniques.	Task can be done properly without some real understanding of the contents in the resources. Part of the final product can be realised by copying bits of content.	A fairly thorough understanding of the information in the resources is needed. If only to make an adequate selection of content for the product. Task directs towards paraphrasing and rewording of the information but some instances of 'borrowing from the original' are feasible.	Task design makes it impossible for learners to complete a task without real understanding of and reflection on a large proportion of the materials provided. Information needs to be selected, evaluated, compared, summarized. Unlike cut and paste techniques developing a personal vision contributes greatly to the outcome.

12 Process with a focus on form To what extent does the task stimulate the learner to become aware of language forms in the materials and possible irregularities in them (such as word order, use of tenses, plural forms etc.)

In no way does the task promote the learner's attention for aspects of form in the materials offered, such as word order, use of tenses, plural forms etc.	The task does promote the learner's attention for aspects of form in the resources offered but is not functional: the task can be done without actual further exploration. It is a grammatical exercise in its own right, more or less by way of <i>intermezzo</i> .	The task requires awareness of the formal aspects of the language involved and although this is also somehow related to the content aspects of the task the primary focus is on the grammatical/syntactical phenomenon in itself.	The task requires awareness of the formal aspects of the language involved but only to the extent that this awareness contributes to a better performance in task completion. The focus is on the impact of form on meaning. But learners are stimulated to pay close attention to language AND form.
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13 Language production 1(unidirectional) To what extent does the task trigger the use of the target language (L2) in various forms of presentation

1	2	3	4
Learners are allowed to use their mother tongue (L1) in all phases of doing the	Task requires a product in L2 but the necessary language materials are highly	L2 use is only mandatory for the presentation of the final product.	Task requires a fairly 'impromptu' way of presentation of the final product in

task.	structured and predefined allowing for memorisation of content for presentation. Occasional use of L1 is no problem.	(quality indication: understandable for a native speaker) . Thorough preparation for this is OK.	L2. But also in other phases (see e.g. criterion 6) L2 use is expected.
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14 Language production 2 (interaction) Assessment focus: to what extent does the task trigger communication in L2 between various people?

1	2	3	4
Learners are allowed to use L1 in all phases of doing the task. Task description is also in L1.	L2 is used for task description and additional information but there is no functional reason for learners to use L2 when doing or collaborating for task related activities.	Task contains stimuli for learners to use L2 while working on the task (in groups). The Teacher's Page has suggestions for appropriate moments for L2 use during lessons.	Learners are stimulated to use L2 in every possible way when working on tasks and during group work. The task description and all task related information and resources are in L2. Task is designed in such a way that communication beyond the classroom (e.g. with e-Twinning partner school, foreign informant/expert etc) contributes to the quality of the final product.

15 Use of strategies (receptive and productive) To what extent does the task provide the learner reasons to compensate for his lack of knowledge by using compensatory strategies (such as productive communication strategies and/or receptive guess- and prediction strategies)?

1	2	3	4
Due to detailed structuring of the task and the prefab nature of the final product no demands are made on strategic activities.	Considering the level of difficulty of the source materials and the criteria for the presentation of the final product it can be assumed that learners will have to make use of compensatory strategies. There are, however, no explicit references to this subject.	The task cannot be done well without making use of compensatory strategies. Possibilities in either the receptive or the productive domain are mentioned. There are references to exercises and training opportunities.	The task cannot be done well without making use of compensatory strategies. Possibilities in both the receptive and the productive domain are mentioned. Actual training is embedded.

Section C: Assessing to what extent the task is task-oriented rather than subject matter-oriented. These criteria have been derived from the field of ‘task-based learning’, ‘co-operative learning’ and ‘competence-oriented learning’.

16 Focus on subject matter or on task-product

1	2	3	4
The task appears to have been designed to accommodate the wish to teach and practice a certain subject-item (‘the past tense’, ‘introducing oneself’). A substantial part of the time is devoted to this (not seldom without direct and necessary link to the task-product). The product acts as a kind of encore, and is not always convincingly functional.	It is clear that the designers had distinct subject-items in mind. They are e.g. clearly emphasized in the production process. But the designers also tried to place the subject-items in a functional context. The subject-items clearly do not form the core of the student-activity. Nevertheless the mastery of such subject-items plays an important role in the assessment of the products.	The fact that the designers had certain subject-items in mind and would like to stress them, can still be recognized, but working on the product and the requirements for content and form are paramount. The achievements are mainly assessed on criteria concerning content.	Appears to be designed starting almost exclusively from the final product (a video, a website, a report, an exhibition) and the requirements for information used and acquired skills. What is learned and possibly practiced is always functional for the content and the product.

17 Concern of the teacher or concern of ‘imaginary client, person, or agency for whom the product is intended’ (degree of reality)

1	2	3	4
Is chiefly done as practice-activity. The task is at best an attempt at functional embedding. As long as the ‘subject matter’ becomes clearer, the task is allowed to be somewhat artificial. The presentation is not very functional and particularly the assessor’s concern.	The task is the primary, functional framework, but the degree of reality is substantially flawed to allow for the teacher’s assessment and his options to steer the learning process and to mark the work. Presentation: in the form of a paper or orally in front of the class.	Is basically designed starting from an imaginary, more or less realistic request from a ‘client’, but the embedding is not always consistently functional. Presentation of the product in the form of a report to the class instead of a functional enterprise such as a film-performance, a course, a brochure, a manifestation.	Is completely designed starting from a request or need of a (n imaginary) client. The product specifications and the assessment criteria stem from that request. The presentation of the product should suit the situation of the ‘client’. The assessment should be focussed on the degree of client satisfaction.

18 Closed or open tasks

1	2	3	4
The task and/or parts of the task ask(s) for one concrete result (Type: “In which of the following restaurants can you get a hamburger?”) There is only one correct solution, which was pre-determined. Resources are supplied and mandatory.	There is some variation in outcome or product, but the requirements for product and presentation are fairly rigid. There is little variation in the final products to be expected, nor is it wished for. Other resources than the mandatory ones may be used, but the latter should at least be consulted, often with set assignments.	Many different results are possible, but there is so much control that the various product do not differ very much. The use of the supplied resources is recommended. The use of these (or additional) resources is free.	Requests a product of parts of the product using specifications (Type: “Agree on a menu. You can spend € 10 each.”) Essentially there is an infinite number of different “correct solutions”. The way the students approach the problem is free. The supplied resources are optional. Originality is stimulated.

19 Everyone does the same, or teamwork with distribution of tasks

1	2	3	4
Task guides to “All students do the same”. Can be done individually.	Is presented as “teamwork”, but there is no distribution of roles and tasks. Tends more to ‘1’ than to ‘4’.	There is a distinct distribution of roles, but there is a certain overlap in the work that the team members do. Tends more to ‘4’ than to ‘1’.	Task guides to a distribution of roles in accordance with interests and talents. It pre-supposes a team. Such a team can often agree on a distribution of work and roles as far as the tasks are concerned. The roles may supplement each other, or need each other, but there is little overlap in content.

Profile

Topic/theme	
School type	
Class / Group	
Hours / number of lessons needed	
Product type (brochure, exhibition, manifestation, newspaper, advice, etc.)	
Required minimum level (CEF)	
Degree of control/structuring	
Contribution to learning to learn (much/little)	
(If applicable): Mostly aimed at mastering ..	

Total Score (The assessment of a LanguageQuest can only be completed if at least 1 point is scored for each item in section A (items 1-7))

Quality Stars and their meaning

- ★ **A useful Quest that meets all the qualifications. It can be assumed to contribute substantially to the language skills of the learners who do this quest.**
- ★★ **A good, attractive, and instructionally effective Quest that in many respects scores above average. Some outstanding features.**
- ★★★ **An excellent Quest with high scores on a wide range of criteria. Many nice, original ideas and creative instructional design choices. Really a gem.**

Conclusion

- ★ = An acceptable LanguageQuest scores:
13 points in section A (items 1 – 7) among which no more than 2 ones
18 points in section B (items 8 – 15) among which no more than 2 ones
11 points in section C (items 16 – 19)
- ★★ = A good LanguageQuest scores:
15 points in section A (items 1 – 7) among which no more than 1 one
21 points in section B (items 8 – 15) among which no more than 1 one
12 points or more in section C (items 16 – 19)
- ★★★ = A great LanguageQuest scores:
17 points in section A (items 1 – 7) where all scores are twos or higher
24 points in section B (items 8 – 15) where all scores are twos or higher
13 points or more in section C (items 16 – 19)

NB

The model for calculating the total score is partly determined by a slight preference for task or problem based education and the insight that language competence develops through meaningful activities rather than because of the systematic practice of discrete subject matter items. You may have different ideas about this. In that case, with a view to the characteristics of your learners (e.g. beginners!) and/or your personal preferences, you may prefer LanguageQuests that score only moderately on the criteria 3, 13, 14 and 16-19.

Suggestions for improvement:

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