

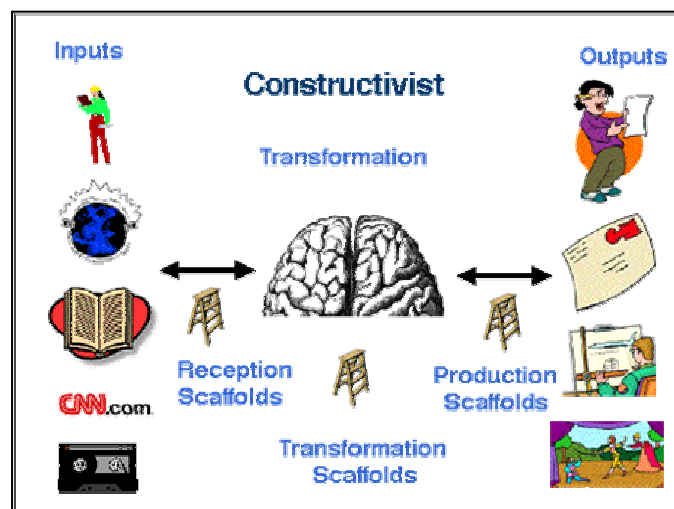
Scaffolding tools: Vocabulary acquisition Special Interest Group

This special group worked on the necessity of scaffolding throughout the process of a WebQuest, in this sense some ideas on scaffolding from Bernie Dodge were presented and were related to how it could be applied in the case of linguistic scaffolding.

Scaffold High Expectations¹

A great WebQuest asks students to do things they might not ordinarily be expected to do. **Scaffolding is a temporary structure used to help learners act more skilled than they really are.** A great WebQuest builds scaffolding into the process as needed so that the bar of what students can produce can be raised.

Reception. The Web allows us to put students in touch with resources that they might not have seen before. **If learners are not fully prepared to extract information from that resource, then everything else in the lesson will be based on shaky ground.** A reception scaffold provides guidance in learning from a given resource and retaining what was learned. Examples of reception scaffolds include observation guides, tips on how to conduct interviews, and online glossaries and dictionaries.



Transformation. WebQuests ask learners to transform what they read into some new form. Because this might not have been commonly experienced by learners in their earlier education, **they might benefit by explicit help** on such processes as comparing and contrasting, finding patterns among a number of similar objects of study, brainstorming, inductive reasoning, and decision making.

Production. WebQuests commonly require students to create things they've never created before. The production aspects of the task can be scaffolded by providing students with templates, prompted writing guides, and multimedia elements and structures. By doing part

¹ Dodge, B. 2001. "FOCUS: Five rules for writing a great WebQuest." Learning & Leading with Technology, 28, 8: 6-9. <http://www.webquest.futuro.usp.br/artigos/textos_outros-bernie1.html>.

of the work for students, we allow them to go beyond what they would be able to do alone. Over time, we hope, they internalise the structures we provide until they can work autonomously.

Vocabulary is one of the aspects that require more support and attention for students to feel confident and not frustrated in an environment where there is rich language input. The session went on by visiting and analysing some websites useful for the creation of activities that can help in this scaffolding aspect, as well as some examples of actual activities.

Linguistic Scaffolding: Vocabulary

From a psycholinguistic perspective language acquisition implies three different processes: **Input, storage and access.**

Steps to learn a word (Hatch y Brown, 1995)

1. Encountering new words,
2. Getting the word form,
3. Getting the word meaning,
4. Consolidating word form and meaning in memory,
5. Using the word

For second language learners both **explicit and incidental learning** are necessary and should be seen as complementary.

At the beginning level explicit learning seems more important than implicit learning, and the more advanced students become, the more the opposite becomes practical.

In a language WebQuest, **linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, can be scaffolded** and this may be essential to help students in the performance of the task successfully and without feeling totally frustrated.

Students should be exposed to a variety of strategies so that they can learn vocabulary in an interactive way throughout the process of the WebQuest. According to Schmitt (2000)², vocabulary learning strategies could be divide in 5 major groups: determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. Among them we may include:

- analysing parts of speech,
- analysing affixes and roots,
- checking for L1 cognates,
- using pictures,
- guessing meaning from the textual context,
- using dictionaries,
- paraphrasing and/or translating words
- connecting words to a previous personal experience,
- associating the word with its coordinates,
- connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms,
- using keywords,

² Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University.

- grouping words together,
- using verbal and written repetition,
- using word lists,
- using labels
- keeping a vocabulary (electronic) notebook
- testing oneself with word tests,
- skipping or passing new word,
- developing awareness of vocabulary learning

Many of these strategies can be practised by doing interactive online word exercises, games and puzzles in which the students may recognise or guess the word, associate it with synonyms or with any other words, use the word in context, etc.

Some final conclusions arrived at were:

- Build scaffolding into your Language WebQuest.
- Cognitive scaffolding that helps learners to be more autonomous and conscious about their learning should be included.
- Explore the links on the web site and you will find out some of the possibilities.
- Verbal interaction (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976) should be present.
- Some good connections between the use of online quizzes and platform such as WebCT were suggested.