

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Webquest on Improving English Writing Skills in Preparatory Public Schools in Qatar

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Abstract

Despite the tremendous efforts that have been exerted in Qatar to improve the teaching of EFL writing, EFL teachers still fail to deliver adequately, and the learners' writing proficiency remains below expectations. This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of WebQuest on improving grade nine EFL students' writing skills to inform teachers and policy makers for future intervention and improvement. The data is from 25 male students who study at a preparatory school in Qatar. They were selected based on opportunistic convenience sampling strategy (Duff 2008). The participants took a pre-test and a posttest about writing a descriptive paragraph. Analysis of the data found that WebQuest has made some improvement in students' performance in writing in terms of overall scores. Moreover, a significant increase in students' achievement in writing aspects (content, organization, sentence fluency, word choice and grammar and mechanics) was recorded after being taught writing using WebQuest.

Keywords: Writing; Web Quest; Web Page; Digital Resources; Writing Aspects; EFL; Teaching; Inquiry Joint Writing.

1. Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as a powerful mode of communication. Indeed, it is a fundamental human skill because it helps to express emotions, develop knowledge and build communities (Fayard and Metiu, 2013). Even though writing is of a paramount importance for students, Aika (2020) recognizes writing as a central language skill that is complex and difficult to learn and teach as it integrates cognitive, perceptual and motor skills.

Teachers of the English language are constantly facing challenges in teaching writing for different reasons. Hence, the role of teachers in motivating and raising students' interest in the writing topic is vital. A good teacher should try to keep abreast of the latest development in the educational world and use a variety of teaching methods to satisfy today's students' needs.

Within this context, today's learning cannot be achieved by joining traditional English writing classes that are no longer accepted in the digital era. For today's students, using technology and interactive tools has become more crucial as they need to adapt to the accelerating digital global transformation. These changes urged teachers to seek new and innovative methods to involve their students in inquiry activities. One novel approach is to have students search for information about a topic using web-based resources. A worthy example of such resources is WebQuest.

WebQuest is claimed to be one of the main contributions to the field of educational technology. It was first developed by Bernie Dodge at San Diego State University (Dodge, 1995). WebQuests include research-oriented practices in which students analyze electronic resources and use web-based tools that allow them to take part in community work and improve higher order thinking skills (Borthwick & Gallagher-Brett, 2014; Littlejohn & Hood, 2017).

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1.1 Webquest Overview

Web-based educational technologies have provided educators with a wide array of teaching and learning materials such as podcasts, online games and dictionaries, and online encyclopedias. However, the inappropriate use of Internet content may do some harm to the learning and teaching goals. In order to minimize the effect of this concern, some researchers recommended the use of a web-based inquiry activity called WebQuest (Kimberly & Cleborne, 2002).

The concept of “WebQuest” was originally developed by Bernie Dodge and Tom March in 1995 at San Diego State University. WebQuest is an inquiry-based activity that is supported by the principles of social constructivism in which the focus is on learner autonomy, long-life learning and the use of computer technology (March, 1998). WebQuest requires students to search for information, explore issues and problems, look for solutions, apply and synthesize knowledge, and evaluate resources (Skaik, 2015).

1.2 Components and Types of a Webquest

Although a number of procedures and techniques have evolved for presenting the activities in a web page, the content of a WebQuest activity can be divided into the following divisions: (a) Introduction, (b) Task, (c) Process, (d) Evaluation, and (e) Conclusion (Dodge, 1997). The introduction consists in introducing the problem in a context to augment the learners’ interest. The task intends to identify the activities the learners have to undertake in order to achieve the expected product. The process outlines the steps students have to go through to complete the activities. The evaluation sets the rubric against which the results are measured accordingly. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the lesson objectives; it may also encourage students to extend their learning to other domains (Sanders, 2005).

According to Dodge (1997), there are two types of WebQuest: Short-term, which can last from one to three classes. The other type is long-term WebQuest, which requires from one to four weeks to be completed. Long term WebQuest may include complex skills like: synthesis, analysis and evaluation.

1.3 Webquests and Writing Instruction

As per Skaik (2015), WebQuest writing instruction consists of three main phases: input, interaction and output. In the input phase, students access the web resources to read model texts related to the targeted genre. During the interaction phase, students interact

with the teachers, peers, and technology media to complete various activities. Finally, the output phase in which students complete the writing task and publish it on the Internet. It can be postulated that the use of WebQuest in teaching writing in EFL classes can be very important as it can improve the students’ writing competencies as well as their motivation towards writing.

In an Iranian study, Ebadi & Rahimi (2018) explored whether the implementation of WebQuest has any significant effect on 20 EFL students’ critical thinking and academic writing skills in comparison to face-to-face instruction by applying a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach. Findings of the quantitative data showed that WebQuest instruction was more effective and efficient than face-to-face instruction in developing the participants’ academic writing skills. According to the researcher, this could be attributed to the rich and authentic input the web offers, which motivated students to engage in the learning process and consequently affected their writing output. Another remarkable finding of the research indicated that students had positive perceptions towards using WebQuest in writing.

Similarly, Irzawati & Hasibuan (2019) examined the impact of using WebQuests on enhancing students’ writing achievement by adopting a quasi-experimental design in terms of pretest-posttest nonequivalent group. The study involved sixty-two of the eleventh-grade students who were allocated into two groups; experimental and control groups. Data was collected through assigning a writing test in a form of essay to both groups. Findings revealed that students’ writing achievement in the experimental group outperformed that of students in the control group. Hence, the researchers claimed that WebQuest is an effective learning tool to improve students’ writing achievement.

In a recent study, Hafidz & Ulfa (2020) studied the effect of WebQuest on enhancing eighty-five grade ten students’ writing skills in an Indonesian school. The researchers employed a pre-experimental design that includes one group pre-test and post-test. Quantitative data was obtained by administering a writing test. Findings of the study indicated that WebQuest had a positive effect on enhancing students’ writing skills. Considering the findings, the researcher concluded that using the WebQuest method appears to be a viable alternative for the teaching of descriptive writing to the tenth-year graders of MA Al-Ibrohimy Galis school.

The existing literature related to the purpose of this study in the Arab world is very limited, yet an examination of the research yielded the forthcoming results. In the Qatari context, the use of WebQuest was relatively unknown and most of the research conducted about WebQuest was to investigate the value of WebQuest as a tool that would support research, inquiry and e-learning (Abu-Tineh et al., 2019).

Awada, & Ghaith (2014) carried out a study to investigate the relative effectiveness of the WebQuest technology model in improving grade eight EFL students' writing proficiency in Lebanon and their perceptions in relevance to the efficacy of the WebQuest. The researcher adapted a quasi-experimental pre-test-posttest control group design, whereby two intact classes of twenty-seven males and fifteen females were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Three instruments were employed to collect the qualitative and quantitative data: writing assessment, writing apprehension scale and students reflective logs. Findings showed that WebQuest has a positive impact and enhanced EFL students' writing as the experimental group achievement outperformed the control group. These findings were ascertained by the results obtained from analyzing students' reflection logs, which showed that students in the experimental group perceived using WebQuest in writing as both important and useful. The researchers attributed these findings to the fact that WebQuest provides opportunities for students to read and write a variety of authentic text types on various topics.

Salem (2019) undertook a study to explore the impacts of WebQuests on developing persuasive writing skills, the impact of online learning environment on developing online social presence and sense of belonging among university students. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was adopted to collect data from seventy-two students in the college of management in Alexandria University who were randomly placed into an experimental group (forty-three), and control group (twenty-nine). Data was collected using three instruments: a persuasive writing skills test, the Online Social Presence Scale, and the Hoffman Sense of Belonging Scale (HSBS). Study results revealed the positive effect of WebQuest on improving students' writing skills in persuasive essays and their thinking skills. These findings are in congruence with those of Ebadi and Rahimi (2018) who found a noteworthy and positive impact of WebQuest-based classroom on EFL learners'

critical thinking and academic writing skills. Another interesting finding indicated that students' motivation to write was higher in the WebQuest environment. The researcher concluded by encouraging the teachers to embrace the WebQuest design in their teaching instructions, which provides students with authentic materials and increases their self-confidence and autonomy.

1.4 The Qatari Context

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar in its effort to actualize the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals stated in Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), highlights the core competencies that 21-century learners in Qatar need to acquire to deal with the complexity of modern life (QNV 2030). Considering these competencies, English language standards have been revised recently to optimize language-teaching practices in Qatar. The new standards have embraced the communicative approach in developing writing skills based on the view that language is best developed through active engagement in authentic situations (Curriculum Standards for State of Qatar 2017). National assessment studies have revealed that students lack satisfying writing skills and are poorly prepared to write from early stages in many countries, as the latest issue of Reading and Writing indicated (Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2016).

1.5 Research Problem

Despite the Ministry of Education and Higher Education efforts, the current practices of teaching writing in Qatar do not yield the desired outcomes. Writing classes tend to be outdated and teacher-centered. Accordingly, the need for an innovative writing methodology has become imperative. This study was inspired by this need, and therefore is proposing the WebQuest as an alternative approach to teaching writing in the preparatory stage in Qatar. Moreover, the present research derives from the researcher's classroom observations in Qatari public preparatory schools where students show limited competence in writing, and often state that it is difficult to write. Most students are unmotivated during the writing classes and engagement is at its minimum. Additionally, students are not given the opportunity to practice the skill within the class time and writing is often assigned as homework. Another major reason that led to this study is that although Qatar National Curriculum Framework (QNCF) (2016, p.31) highlights literacy as "essential for successful

and effective learning in all curriculum areas”, little research has been conducted on writing instruction challenges in Qatar. These concerns spurred my interest in this topic and pointed to the need to conduct a study that aims at suggesting alternatives to improve students’ writing skills.

This study aims at exploring the impact of using WebQuest on writing instruction in Qatari preparatory public schools focusing on two questions:

1. What is the effect of using the WebQuest on improving the writing skills of ninth grade learners of EFL in comparison to the regular writing instruction in public schools in Qatar?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the writing achievement of grade nine EFL students in content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency and grammar & writing mechanics after they have been taught to use WebQuest?

1.6 Significance of The Study

In the last decade, little research has been conducted on the use of WebQuest in writing instruction in EFL classes in the Arab world and in Qatar in particular. Moreover, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no other study has been found investigating the impact of WebQuest on writing instruction in Qatar. Therefore, this study could serve as an enhancement for other researchers to examine the employment of WebQuest in writing instruction in EFL classes in more depth. It could also yield information for teachers on how to integrate WebQuest in writing classes in Qatari schools.

2. Methodology

This study embraced a pre-experimental design that included one group pre-test and posttest (Frey 2018) to measure the effect of WebQuest on improving ninth graders writing skills in Qatari preparatory public schools. This design suited the objective of the study as it included an experimental treatment in which a manipulation of an independent variable is involved in the research process (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, the researcher collected quantitative data using a pre-test and a post-test to draw clear and reasonable conclusions about the intervention and end by comparing the pre-test and posttest results in reference to the effects of the treatment (Loewen & Plonsky, 2016).

2.1 Participants

In this study, the target population is limited to grade nine EFL students in male preparatory public schools in

Qatar. The sample consists of twenty-five participants who were selected to represent this population based on opportunistic convenience sampling strategy (Duff, 2008). That is to say: the twenty-five selected students study in a public preparatory school that is close to my workplace and most importantly, I have access to the English department as part of my everyday work. All the participants are native speakers of Arabic who receive English proficiency courses at a rate of five periods per week in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2020).

2.2 Instruments

To measure the effect of the WebQuest on students’ writing performance, a writing achievement test is used as a pre-test and post-test. In both tests, students were asked to write a paragraph in which they describe a person. Along with the test, the researcher designed a rubric to evaluate students’ writing. The rubric consisted of five criteria: content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency and, grammar and writing mechanics (see Appendix A). The rubric was designed after reviewing the relevant studies such as (AL-Khataybeh and AL-Awasa, 2016), (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018) and (Hafidz and Ulfa, 2020) and is mainly adapted from (South Nazarene University 2021). The writing topics were chosen in reference to grade nine official textbooks “Portal to English” series (Mitchell and Malkogianni, 2019). The pre-test included writing a paragraph about the topic: Describe your favorite friend (see Appendix B). In the posttest students were asked to write a paragraph about their favorite actor or singer (see Appendix C). However, one disadvantage of pre and posttest is the possible feeling of discomfort among participants especially those who often associate tests with failure and success. In order to overcome such issue, the researcher decided not to show up during the test administration and instructed the teacher to inform students that the tests they would be taking were simply for the sake of research and they would not be counted part of their assessment. Moreover, the researcher wrote a note at the top of the exam paper in Arabic and English “THIS TEST IS NOT PART OF YOUR EVALUATION. IT IS YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO A RESEARCH ON WEBQUEST IMPACT ON STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS”.

Expert judgement was crucial to ensure the validity of the pre-test and the posttest. For example, the relationship between the pre-test and posttest and the

research parameters was verified by three English language instructors who got them reviewed at the level of content, comprehension, correct language and what they purport to measure. The referees asked the researcher to supply students with clear instructions on what should be described (i.e. head, eyes, rest of the body, etc.) and share the rubric with them. The modifications were added so that the tests had become more adequate and clearer for students.

Regarding the reliability of the tests (Cohen et al., 2007, 146), the researcher piloted the test on a group of ten grade nine students who were not part of the study sample. Both tests yielded similar results. Moreover, the researcher tried to achieve reliability through inter-rater reliability. Another instructor was given the writings of the pilot group and the rubric to score the tests. The agreement between the scoring of the researcher and the inter-rater was very high because of the rubric that set clear benchmarks for scoring.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In the study initial phase, the researcher sought Qatar University Institutional Review Board’s (QU-IRB 1878-EA/23) approval. Before data collection, the students were asked to sign an informed consent form by their parents for taking the pretest and posttest and a child assent form (Appendix E) as well. Prior to signing the forms, the researcher, verbally, informed the participants about the purpose of the study, its benefits, significance, procedures, anonymity and confidentiality and then answered their questions about any threats, including whether it would impact their assessment or pass.

The study was implemented during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023, along a period of eight weeks. As the researcher did not have any teaching load during the implementation of the study, it was necessary to recruit a well-qualified teacher with good experience in teaching EFL to help in the implementation phase. Prior to the intervention, the researcher trained the selected teacher on using and designing writing lessons using WebQuest.

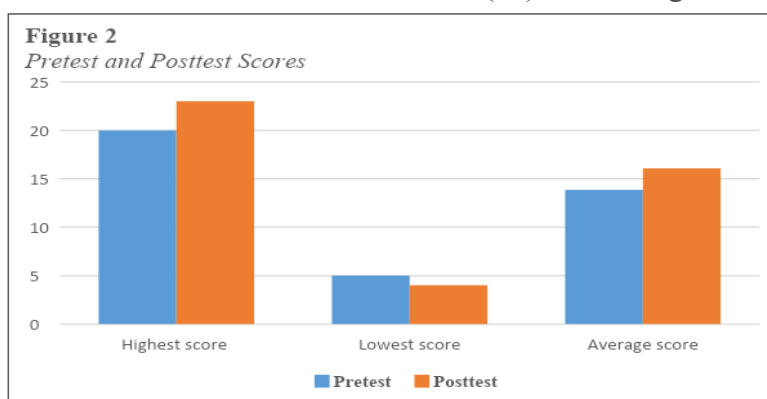
During the first week, the pre-test was administered to identify students’ capability about writing within the descriptive genre and more specifically determine the level of performance in the writing aspects mentioned in the rubric. Once the tests were collected, they were scored by the researcher out of twenty-five marks. Later, the researcher analyzed them using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet Software to determine the highest average score, the lowest average score and average score per writing aspect.

In the remaining six weeks, students were taught the description of a person using WebQuest six stages (Dodge, 1995). They were each provided with a laptop. In the introduction phase, students were introduced to the theme of the module (describing others) and their prior knowledge was activated about how people are described. In addition, some related vocabulary was taught. Students were explicitly informed that their task was to read a descriptive text so that by the end they would produce a similar descriptive text. During the eighth week, students took the posttest performance writing activity individually, in which they had to describe their favorite actor or singer.

Students’ writing performance was marked using the scaled rubric (see Appendix A) designed by the researcher. Students’ writing was scored out of twenty-five marks. The pre-test and posttest results were compared statistically by using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet Software to verify if there would be an improvement after the implementation of the intervention.

3. Findings and Discussion

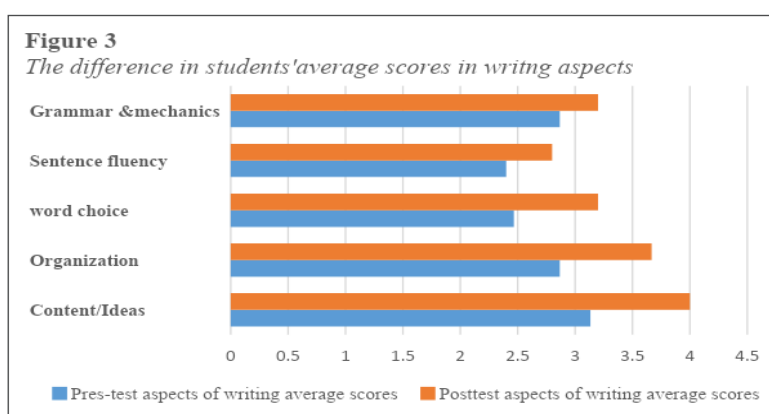
To answer the first research question about the effect of using the WebQuest on improving the writing skills of ninth grade learners of EFL in comparison to the regular writing instruction in public schools in Qatar, the overall scores originating from the pretest and posttest demo were compared. Figure 2 shows that there was progress. For instance, comparing the overall scores in both tests, it is evident that students performed better in the posttest in terms of the highest score (23) and average score (16.06).



In relevance to research question 2 about students' writing achievement at the

level of writing aspects, it is remarkable that there is a statistically significant difference in all areas (content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency and grammar and writing mechanisms (Figure 3). The increments range from 0.34 to 0.87. Therefore, it can be said that students performed better in the posttest than in the pre-test suggesting that students' writing achievement improved as a result of WebQuest instruction. For example, students committed fewer

errors in the posttest in terms of word choice (Average score=3.2) than in the pretest (Average score=2.46). Moreover, it is remarkable that the highest increment was recorded in content and ideas with an added value of 0.87. At the level of organization, students made a better performance in the posttest with (3.6) than in the pretest (2.8). As for sentence fluency, a 0.4 -added value was noted in the posttest. Besides, the difference in grammar and mechanics between the posttest and the pre-test was at 0.34.



The results of this study showed that after being taught writing using WebQuest, students scored significantly higher in the posttest than in the pre-test. There was a significant increase in content, organization, sentence fluency, word choice and grammar and mechanics. Comparing the pre-test scores to those of the posttest indicates that the traditional writing instruction was at the origin of students' limited performance to some extent. Indeed, WebQuest made some improvement in students' performance in writing in an eight-week intervention. This achievement could be explained by being exposed to authentic materials through videos and web links that enabled students to accomplish their writing task in a better way as confirmed by (Ebadi and Rahimi ,2018). They postulated that authentic inputs the web offers could affect students' writing output. Moreover, the richness and variety of web resources could be a factor for the significant improvement in students' writing performance. This idea is in congruence with Awada and Ghaith (2014) findings that WebQuest provides opportunities for students to read and write a variety of authentic text types and on various topics. Hence, WebQuest makes working on writing a kind of project that is well-staged with an opportunity to use various materials in an engaging environment, which could be at the origin of increasing students' performance and interest in writing.

Finally, the fact that three students did not show any

improvement can be explained by students' limited technology literacy or unfamiliarity with learning using technology. Indeed, learning by WebQuest requires more than being equipped with basic technology skills. Moreover, the use of technology is associated in some students' minds with games and having fun, which may have resulted in deviating from the learning itself. Such issues could be dealt with in the long- run as the incorporation of WebQuest in the culture of learning is consolidated.

3.1 Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. The choice of a male school to conduct the research was mandated for two main reasons. First, due to cultural reasons in the gulf region, males are not allowed in girls' schools. Second, yielding more valuable insights into the phenomenon made me decide to be involved directly in the process of the study without relying on second-hand accounts. In terms of the size of the sample, it is possible that a higher number of students' participation across more grade nine classes in different schools and areas in Qatar could have helped increase the validity of the findings of the study. Nonetheless, the small number of participants enabled greater depth of data collection in a very short period.

The current research provided an opportunity for measuring the impact of WebQuest on students' writing performance. Future research may focus on studying

the impact of WebQuest on teaching other language skills like reading. Moreover, the identified difference between the pre-test and the posttest in students' scores could be a potential area for more in-depth and focused future research on a particular writing aspect. Last, the finding that some students did not improve in writing even after WebQuest implementation requires a focused study on the reasons behind this to pave the way for establishing a solid foundational ground for the adoption of WebQuest at schools in Qatar.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The importance of the present study lies in attempting to investigate to which extent WebQuest can impact students' skills and performance in writing. It focused on measuring grade nine students' performance in writing based on their overall and detailed scores about ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency and mechanics and grammar. After WebQuest implementation, the data analysis showed that students' performance under each writing aspect improved proportionally in an eight-week period. This proves that if WebQuest is given due time of implementation, it might improve students' writing skills remarkably. Moreover, based on my work with the teacher on WebQuest prior to implementation, it is believed that teachers need a focused training on planning for WebQuest and linking it to learning goals so that it impacts students' learning effectively.

The findings from this study are expected to have pedagogical implications not only on teachers, but also on policy makers. The fact that this study recorded some increment in students' writing performance might be an impetus for teachers to adopt the WebQuest methodology. As for policy makers at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar, they can include WebQuest as part of teachers' professional development. Then, they may launch the use of WebQuest as a pilot program in some schools to gauge effectiveness and decide on generalizing this experience all over schools. Additionally, the current research provided an opportunity for exploring the effects of using WebQuest on teaching writing to students. Future research may focus on conducting studies about using WebQuest in teaching writing on a larger scale. Overall, WebQuest seems to be of benefit not only for students, but also for other stakeholders like teachers.

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Appendix A. *Writing rubric used in scoring pretest and posttest*

	5	4	3	2	1
Content/Ideas	The writing is focused, clear & specific. Writing is full of relevant details about the topic. Keeps reader's attention.	The writing is generally focused on the topic & purpose. Writing contains some details, but not fully developed.	The writing is somewhat focused on the topic. Details are general and not specific.	The writing is related to the topic, but does not have a clear focus. Details are not clear.	The writing is not focused on the topic and purpose. Reader will have difficulty identifying the main idea or purpose of the topic.
Organization	The writing has a clear beginning, middle & ending. Ideas & details are presented in logical order and have smooth transitions.	The ideas and details are mostly presented in logical order with some transitions.	Sometimes the writing is loosely organized. Some of the details are not in the right spot. Writing has a few transitions.	There is little organization. Transitions are weak.	The writing is disorganized. Ideas seem scrambled, jumbled with no transitions.

Word Choice	The writer uses precise,engaging, original words and phrases.	The word choices are clear. The writer uses some interesting words and phrases.	The word choices get the message across, but are not various	The writer does not use words or phrases that make the writing clear to the reader.	The Writer uses word choices that are confusing, unclear, or inappropriate, which obscures meaning.
Grammar &Mechanics	There are no errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, & spelling.	There are a few errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, & spelling.	Frequent errors in grammar, punctuation capitalization, & spelling.	There are many errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization & spelling.	The errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling interfere with meaning.
Sentence/ Fluency	The writer consistently uses a variety of sentences. The writing is natural and flows smoothly.	The writer uses some variety in sentences. Paper flows smoothly, but has some rough spots. Not all sentences begin the same.	Writer uses simple sentences. Some sentences are awkward, but most are smooth and clear. Sentences tend to begin the same.	The writer does not use much variety in his or her sentences. The writer uses short, repetitive sentence patterns.	There is little or no variety in sentences. Some of the sentences are unclear.

Appendix B. Pretest

“This Test is Not Part of Your Evaluation. It is Your Contribution to A Research on Webquest Impact on Students’ Writing Skills”.

هنأ يساردلأ كم ييقت نم اعزج دعي ال رابتخال اذه“
مادختسا ريثأت لوح ةيئح ب فسارد ي ف كنم قمهاسم درجم
قب لطلأ دن ع قباتكأل تاراهم يل ع ةي فرعملأ تالحرلأ

Write a paragraph in which you describe your favorite friend.

You may describe his physical appearance (i.e. face, height, weight, etc.) and character qualities.

.....
.....

Appendix C. Posttest

“This Test is Not Part of Your Evaluation. It is Your Contribution to A Research on Webquest Impact on Students’ Writing Skills”.

هنأ يساردلأ كم ييقت نم اعزج دعي ال رابتخال اذه“
مادختسا ريثأت لوح ةيئح ب فسارد ي ف كنم قمهاسم درجم
قب لطلأ دن ع قباتكأل تاراهم يل ع ةي فرعملأ تالحرلأ

Write a paragraph in which you describe a teacher who influenced you.

You may describe his physical appearance (i.e. face, height, weight, etc.) and character qualities.

.....
.....
.....

Appendix D. Information and Consent Form Parental or Guardian Permission for Research involving a Minor

Title of Study:

THE Impact Of Webquest On Improving Grade Nine Students English Writing Skills In Public Schools In Qatar

Your permission is being sought to have your child participate in this study. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not to give your permission.

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of using WebQuest (Web-based tool for learning) as a writing teaching method on improving grade nine students’ writing skills in public schools in Qatar. Another purpose of this study is to identify to which extent WebQuest impacts areas of writing aspects (c ontent,organization,fluency,word choice, grammar & mechanics).

Procedures:

This study will target 25 grade nine students. Your child will participate in the study by being taught writing during the usual writing classes included in his school time table for six weeks using the webQuest approach. The webQuest writing instruction allows students to have access to web resources about the type of text they are supposed to write.They interact with the teachers, peers, and technology media(computer) to complete various writing activities. Finally, students

will complete the writing task and publish it on the Internet. As part of the study, your child will also take a handwritten writing pretest and posttest on the school premises during class time. Each test will take 60 minutes .The tests’ results will be used for analysis purposes by the researcher. All information will be used to understand the impact of WebQuest on writing skills. Any information or personal details collected in the process of the study are confidential. No names will be identified during the data collection or publication of the results. Participants will be identified by using codes. Prior to taking the tests, an assent form will be given to participants to get it signed by them at home in the presence of their parents.

The parental consent and child assent forms will be explained by the researcher to students and turned in to them to get them signed in case they are willing to participate in this study. The parental consent form will be sent to parents with their children. Parents are supposed to read and sign the consent form if they agree that their children take part in this study. The child assent form will be given to participants themselves (students) and has to be signed by them at home in the presence of their parents. Both forms have to be returned to the class teacher who will collect them and turn in them to the researcher.

Benefits and Discomforts/risks:

The risks in this study are very minimal. There are no anticipated dangers to your child in this study. There is no direct benefit to the participants in the study. However, your child is expected to benefit from participating in this study by revealing the extent to which WebQuest can impact his writing achievement. A summary of research results should be offered to all the research participants and parents.

Voluntary participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your child is fully entitled to withdraw at any time or to refuse to take the tests without giving a reason and without consequences. We will respect this. Unwillingness to participate in the study and/or withdrawal from the study will not in any way interfere with the student-teacher relationship or affect student’s course grades.

The ethical aspects of the study:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the principal of the school and the research supervisor. Regarding the data collected on your child, it will be stored on the researcher’s password –secured laptop for 5 years. Then , it will be deleted

permanently. The QU-IRB and the Ministry of Public Health can access the data if needed.

The study is being conducted by for the the partial fulfilment of Msc dissertation requirements at SUNY University. For any question, you may contact,

The study is approved by the Qatar University Institutional Review Board with the approval number.....; If you have any questions related to ethical compliance of the study, you may contact them at QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa or at 4403 5307.

Please read the above information carefully before you sign. *YOUR SIGNATURE WILL INDICATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT THAT YOU WILL ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY DURING SCHOOL HOURS WITHOUT YOUR PRESENCE.*

If you do not sign and return this form, the researcher will understand that you do not wish to allow your child to participate.

Parent Signature

*I, the parent or guardian of _____, a minor _____ years of age, permit his/her participation in a research **project** named above.*

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Researcher:

Date: _____

Appendix E. Child Assent Form

Project Title:

The Impact of Webquest on Improving Grade Nine Students English Writing Skills In Public Schools In Qatar

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. We would like to find out more about how WebQuest (classroom-based lesson in which most or all of the information that students explore and evaluate comes from the World Wide Web) may impact your writing skills and achievement. You are being asked to join the study because you are grade nine students. As you see in the title of the study, grade nine students are the target. You were selected to participate in this study following the school administration approval.

