

SIG Report

LanguageQuest design and Young learners

This group set out to explore what the implications of using and designing LQuests for a special target group, in this case young learners, would be. The group agreed to do a brainstorming session to first map a number of associations and dimensions to the issue at hand. This resulted in the mind map shown in Fig. 1 below.

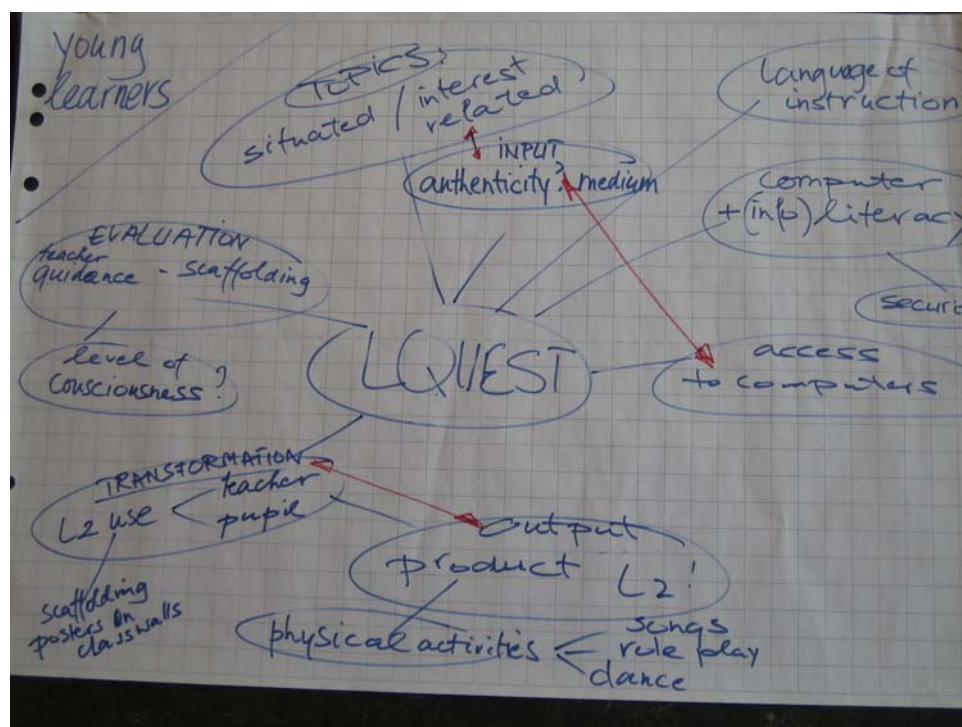


Fig.1 Result of Brainstorm Session Young Learners SIG

Some suggestions were made on a number of LQuest design aspects:

On Topics:

It was suggested that the need for the theme of the Quest to be situated and related to the current interest of the pupils might even more pressing for this particular group of learners than with older or more advanced language learners.

On Input:

This conclusion then led to the hypothesis that this 'situatedness need' might well clash with the input authenticity criterion. And – related to the source of input in Quests (i.e. web resources) – the issue of access opportunities to computers and security aspects at primary schools were mentioned as obstacles from an implementation perspective.

On Evaluation

The question was raised to what extent young learners can be expected to independently evaluate process and results. Scaffolding and teacher guidance were seen as indispensable for this phase.

Participants then formed pairs on the basis of a shared interest in further exploration of one of the issues discussed. They were given the set of links in Table 2 below to start off their Internet searches.

--

http://www.longman.com/young_learners/teachers/index.html	
http://www.cambridge.org/younglearners	
http://www.oup.com/elt/global/teachersclub/resources/young/	
http://www.anglia.nl/	
http://www.earlystart.co.uk/	
http://www.earlychildhood.com/Articles/index.cfm?FuseAction=Article&A=60	
http://barteldes.freeyellow.com/page1.html	
http://www.getlyrics.com/	
http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/en.flines.A.html	
http://www.britishcouncil.hr/english/have_fun.htm	**
http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/kid_frame.html	**
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/laac/index.shtml	
http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Dictionary.html	
http://www.wpe.com/~musici/	
http://www.primarygames.com/reading.htm	*
http://www.stars.ecml.at/en/	**
http://www.countryschool.com/younglearners.htm	**
http://www.lapasserelle.com/lm/pagespeciales/games/writestory/write_story.html	

Table 2. Links for the Young Learners SIG web research activities

As to *Topics* some general criteria for topics for young learners were suggested:

- related to the students' environment
- create curiosity from the very beginning
- Leading to inter-cultural learning
- suitable for projects
- attractive and motivating

Actual topics suggested included: Comics; Famous people; TV Characters; Animals; Children stories; Fairy tales; Adventure stories and real life situations such as the journey to school.

As to the actual use of the *language of instruction* a group came up with the results of their internet searches showing that in existing talenquests the instructions often are in the mother tongue and occasionally also in the L2 (e.g. the Valentines Day Talenquest). The option of a clickable L1 version of the instructions in the various pages was also found.

Two pairs focussed on subjects such as '*Transformation of input, Output and target language use*' and came up with the following suggestions:

- use scaffolding posters on class walls with language chunks and key vocabulary; they are particularly suitable for practicing and supporting the use of numbers and time telling
- focus on physical activities: songs, role play, dance, food preparation & cooking, games
- use cards, films, posters, maps,

The group also arrived at the conclusion that in fact any type of output you would make in L1 is in principle possible in L2.

Reference was made to the ECML project: TEMOLAYOLE Developing teachers of modern languages to young learners / Integrating the teaching of modern languages to young learners in teacher training programmes and its document 'Websites for Materials for Young Learners' at <http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/TEMOLAYOLE/pdf/D2web.pdf>

And also the Teaching Tips on www.lognman.com/younlearners/teachers/index.html were recommended.