



## WEBQUESTS ABOUT DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

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### Abstract

The topic of digital citizenship has not yet been extensively integrated to the courses except for the social studies. This study aims to provide ways of working on digital citizenship by analyzing WebQuests (WQs) created by and for language learners. Twelve WQs created by an international group of undergraduate students in groups of four were analyzed and related tasks will be suggested. Students used a free WebQuest maker website (zunal.com) to prepare WQs under the topics of: European Citizenship, Digital Citizenship and some of the elements of Digital Citizenship that are Digital Access, Commerce, Communication, Literacy, Rights and Responsibilities, Health and Wellness and Digital Security. The tasks suggested could aid both language learners and teachers on the way of becoming and training responsible and digital citizens via language teaching.

**Keywords:** Digital citizenship, WebQuests, language education

### INTRODUCTION

In today's world where citizens are expected to 'think globally and act locally' issues around citizenship are widely taken to the agendas of our lives. As seen in Alazzi's study (2012), students describe 'good citizenship' around the topics of clean environment, obeying rules and laws, patriotism, respect others and civic knowledge. The concern for a generation of good citizens is more on the training of younger generations that is seen among the duties and responsibilities of the older generations. Despite the dynamic feature of citizenship identity, Bennett, Wells and Rank's (2009:107) dichotomy illustrates a new paradigm resulting in actualizing and dutiful citizens where younger generation is positioned as "having weak sense of duty to participate in government, focusing on lifestyle politics, mistrusting media and politicians and joining loose networks for social action and communicating through digital media". Accordingly, the new generation should be treated as they approach the citizenship issues. For a better clarification, selection from the characterizing features list by Froelich (2009:10), "networked", "more collaborative" and "more globally aware" depicts the skills required from the next generation.

Although research about citizenship has recently blossomed, the focus on citizenship education (hereafter CE) is far from being satisfactory. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that citizenship in education is limited mainly to the European projects as in this paper and in Kjellin and Stier's (2008), Davies et al. 's (2012). Initially, if citizenship education related topics are organized, one can see the two sides of the coin: focus on students' perceptions (Alazzi, 2012; Martin, 2010) and teachers' views (Leenders, Veugelers & De Kat, 2008; Zhang, 2010).

As for the CE in the formal settings, teachers play a highly influential role; nevertheless, contrary to the common belief, it is not only social studies teachers who should prepare students to be good citizens (Martin, 2010: 56). Each and every teacher, regardless of their field of study, could contribute to CE. In this respect, this study focuses on the potential contributions of foreign language teachers to CE within a thematic and interdisciplinary view.

### Citizenship Education in Turkey

Recently Turkey participated in the *Eurydice survey on citizenship education 2012*; however, since it was not a part of the Eurydice network before 2004, it could not take part in the *citizenship at schools in Europe survey*

(Eurydice, 2005). Eurydice (2012) data identified three approaches to CE: (1) citizenship education as a stand-alone subject (2) integration of citizenship education into wider subjects/curriculum areas (3) citizenship education as a cross-curricular dimension of the curriculum. Turkey fits in the first approach within this framework of approaches embedding CE in the general objectives of the education system (ibid: 18). Additionally, Turkey applies central guidelines for the assessment and evaluation of citizenship education as a general educational policy. As a final note, secondary teacher education does not encompass training on CE (ibid: 89).

The related literature in Turkey includes studies on the overview of historical background of CE (Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008) and citizenship course (Çayır, 2011) and its coursebook evaluation (İnce, 2012); however, studies on the inclusion of technology and digital citizenship are limited to social studies (Öztürk, Yiğit & Karaduman, 2012; Yiğit & Çolak, 2010).

Citizenship education, a cross-curricular theme in Turkey after the 2005 curricular reform, aims to contribute raising “patriotic and responsible citizens” as stated by Çayır and Gürkaynak (2008:51). They further investigate that citizenship duties presented at the basic education curriculum are narrowed down to the perception of democracy to voting with an emphasis on militaristic views. In sum, the current trend and impact on CE could be itemized as “strong-state tradition, national developmentalism, organic vision of society and a republican notion of citizenship” (Keyman & İçduygu, 2005 as cited in Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008). In a more recent study, Çayır (2011) analyzes the “Citizenship and Democracy Education” course developed in 2010-2011 academic year. This critical evaluation reveals the disconnection of the course content and the realities within the Turkish context with regard to the interlocutors.

### Digital Citizenship

One logical place to begin with is defining and exemplifying digital citizenship in the educational settings. To quote Ribble, Bailey and Ross (2004:7), digital citizenship refers to “the norms of behavior with regard to technology use”. Its nine areas of behavior is listed as: Etiquette, Communication, Education, Access, Commerce, Responsibility, Rights, Safety and Security. In particular, rather than taking it for granted, Digital Education encompasses both teaching and utilizing technology effectively through learning opportunities and projects.

Digital world offers a wide variety of tools especially Web 2.0 tools for the educational uses incorporating digital citizenship education. In the manual prepared by Froelich (2009), Web 2.0 tools recommended with respect for the digital citizenship were Moodle, wikis, social bookmarks, Skype, blogs, RSS, podcasting and Google tools.

### Digital Citizenship and Language Learning

To show the cross-curricular nature of the citizenship Demaine (2002:125) provided some examples; for instance, the arithmetic concepts of mean, mode and median can be used to calculate and compare the wages in different countries. Or, in geography lessons, ‘world trade and fair trade’ could be the topic of investigation to see the effect of international relations about trading on the individuals. Lastly, to our most concern, students can work on and critically assess the same news from different resources with respect to bias and point of view in English language lessons. The examples could be diversified; nonetheless, specifically for English lessons ‘digital citizenship’ can be situated in the curriculum as a content-based instruction or content and language integrated learning continuum or as a task based language-learning project.

### The Aim of the Study

Aiming to raise awareness and facilitate educational outcomes through tasks, this study positions itself as a descriptive study analyzing the written WQ content. In addition, for a detailed analysis student reflections were collected through whole group feedback discussion and interviews. The data were analyzed based on the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in which data inductively formulates the theory.

The theoretical framework of this study is Content and Language Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) that is a “dual-focused form of instruction where attention is given both to the language and the content” (Coyle, Hood



& Marsh, 2010). In view of that, the following research questions were sought answers: (1) How do the pre-service language teachers organize tasks to integrate digital citizenship into their teaching? (2) How do they reflect on their WQ experience about digital citizenship?

## METHOD

### Participants

The study group of this paper is an international group brought together by a European Union supported Erasmus Intensive program (IP) project. Forty-eight undergraduate students majoring in foreign/second language education from 11 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain and the UK) plus Turkey worked on the *citizenship in language teaching* topic for two weeks in a higher education institution in Austria in 2011. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 43. Participants included 36 female and 12 male students.

### Data collection environment

WebQuest is preferred as an ICT (Information and Communication Technology) task due to its lesson plan like format. To make students see how they can integrate DC topics into their teaching programs, a task based CLIL approach was followed. The students used a free WebQuest maker named Zunal (<http://zunal.com/index.php>), which offers its users basic and professional (pro) account options with a WQ menu. The menu includes stages of a typical WQ: Introduction, Task, Process, Evaluation, Conclusion, Teacher Page in one column and in the following column: About Author(s), Evaluate WebQuest, Reviews, Statistics, Export WebQuest, Share This WebQuest. Some additional modules are available for pro accounts such as: New Page, Table/Rubric, Quiz, FAQs, Photo Gallery, Google Map, Game: Hangman, Pre-test & Post-test. Furthermore, the personal Dashboard allows you to view and update your public profile, create a new WQ, view, update or delete your WQs, view your favorite WQs, create a classroom website or a workshop for a group of students, change your account settings and manage a group account.

### The task

The researcher formed 12 WQ groups of four that were composed of students from different countries. The groups were assigned the following topics to each group: European Citizenship, Global Citizenship, Digital Citizenship and the nine elements of Digital Citizenship that are Digital Access, Commerce, Communication, Literacy, Etiquette, Law, Rights and Responsibilities, Health and Wellness and Digital Security. Nonetheless, three of the WQs were not functioning at the time of data analysis: Global Citizenship, Digital Etiquette and Digital Law. Therefore, they have been omitted from the study. The researcher created a sample WQ to demonstrate what is expected and to give instructions for the task. Afterwards, students reflected on this ICT task during the feedback session with the whole group of students and teachers. As a final step, six volunteer students from different countries (Austria, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Turkey) were interviewed.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from nine WebQuests of nine international groups of students were organized according to the systematic layout of the WQs. The WQs prepared by groups will hereafter be numbered and referred to such as WQ1 for the International Group 1. In the WQ, the topic is introduced shortly, and then tasks and process are followed by the conclusion.

Initially, the general view of the "Introduction"s presents some common characteristics: WQ1 and WQ2 started with the definition of the topic; the former added some information about the historical Background while the latter contextualized the topic by mentioning the *digital citizenship roads* to complete and a *digital driver's license* to get at the end. WQ3 and WQ6 placed quotations from International Telecommunication Union, Kent Conrad and Nicholas Negroponte. On the other hand, WQ 5 and WQ 9 posed questions for the readers/learners seeking for personal information about the Internet use and calling for action about digital security as well. Additionally, WQ8 includes an anecdote about the health and wellness. WQ4 provides some essential tips about how to shop online safely. The remaining gives basic information about the topic under scrutiny.



For a concise and clear view of the Tasks and Process, we can list them as:

- WQ1 (European citizenship): First, groups are formed and asked to choose one of the countries listed (Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Belgium) to create a Facebook group in order to search the official and national position of the country seeking answer to the question: "Should there be a serious budget cut on financing nuclear power plants?". The groups discuss online, negotiate and try to reach a conclusion about the issue.
- WQ2 (Digital citizenship): Students complete digital citizenship roads based on the nine elements of digital citizenship by following the map and performing the tasks. At the end, they take the test on a specific website provided and upon success students will be able to get their digital driver's license.
- WQ3 (Digital access): Students are asked to find a free online English Language Teaching course, watch a movie about the course and write their impressions on a blog. After posting their blogs, they are expected to read and comment on their friends' blog entries.
- WQ4 (Digital commerce): Students make a list on how to shop online safety. Afterwards, they choose and compare two websites and write a lesson plan about Internet safety for 10-14 year olds.
- WQ5 (Digital communication): In this WQ, students are asked to utilize a variety of digital tools respectively: e-mail, Twitter, PowerPoint, YouTube and blogs. First, students in pairs write an email to both their friends and teachers with the same content. Subsequently, they view a video on Youtube about the future of communication and post a tweet about it. Next step is forming groups of four and preparing a PowerPoint presentation future digital communication. Finally, you keep a blog as a diary about your favorite lesson.
- WQ6 (Digital literacy): Students in groups find text, photo and video related to their favorite music and singers on Google, Youtube and Wikipedia. Later, they make a list of three educational activities in which they can use previously mentioned websites.
- WQ7 (Digital rights & responsibilities): In groups of three, students make a list of do's and don't's about the Internet along with three examples of possible dangers. Afterwards, students prepare a PowerPoint presentation and then an informative brochure for the families about the dangers of the Internet. Final step is making the presentation to the rest of the group.
- WQ8 (Digital health & wellness): Students in groups search and sort out information about the computer related health issues and make a poster to present the information.
- WQ9 (Digital security): In groups of three, students make a digital poster using the website Glogster. They will be expected to present their posters to their friends later.

WebQuests have been finalized in the Conclusion section mostly by summarizing the main points and referring to the previously set objectives like broadening perspectives about ICT (WQ3), developing online skills and attitudes (WQ5) or raising awareness about website types (WQ6). Some of the WQs (WQ4 & WQ8) provide additional tips and reminders about the corresponding topic. In WQ4, tips about safety and protection of personal information have been highlighter; while in WQ8 warning about the issues causing health problems have been pointed out and WQ offered some solutions to the problems.

Final point about the WQs is the materials and resources used that clearly illustrate the integration of "digital" aspect to the tasks. Main resources are the websites that can be listed as: Facebook, university websites, Blogspot, Twitter, Youtube, Google, Wikipedia, Glogster as well as several search engines to collect information. Except for the university websites used to look for free courses and related videos, all websites can be categorized as Web 2.0 tools where there is a two way interaction between the website and the user and the users are co-producers of the websites.

It is observed that majority of the tasks are instructed to be performed collaboratively from an international perspective. The emerging themes from student WQs are nuclear power plants, ELT online course, online shopping, music and singers, Internet, and computer-related health issues. The digital skills required are: online searching and discussion, creating online tasks and lesson plans, blogging, presentation and poster making through PowerPoint and Glogster.



The second research question of this study about the reflections of students can be answered with the keywords of “innovative and inspiring”. After completing their task, all students met for the debriefing session and reflected on their web-based experiences. Afterwards, six students from different countries were interviewed by the researcher. All in all, what students expressed revealed the positive effect WQs created on their learning and teaching of citizenship issues. One interviewee enthusiastically reported that “I have never thought of working on political issues in that sense, now I feel closer to integrate such issues when teaching English.” Two of the students displayed similar bewilderedness. With a varying rate, students admitted the positive role of the project on their profession with an effect on their attitude and approach to citizenship issues. Another point raised by one of the interviewee was the realization of ease of access to the citizenship issues. Finally, the Turkish student expressed “In our country, it is only a part of the social science studies course offered at the basic education level. I believe, as we do here, we should integrate the topic to all levels and subjects.” The interviews supporting the general debriefing session illustrate the insights and reflections of participants from different nationalities. One common point is their words of surprise, enlightenment and dedication to integrate citizenship to education for a more responsible and better world.

## RESULTS

The WebQuests prepared by the undergraduate students from all around the Europe display a general tendency of approaching the citizenship issues in the digital environments through tasks and solving problems collaboratively. It should be noted that the WQs had a dual purpose: to practice citizenship education and the target language.

Though the research by Keating, Benton and Kerr (2011: 232) focuses on citizenship education in England, some of the results could be generalizable such as the factor and impact of age and life stage on the civic participation, attitudinal trends and interest in politics. All of the participants in this study are eligible to vote and participate in political activities and are already involved in civic activities that directed them to apply for a project on CE. The WQs along with the reflections reveal the high level of engagement in the civics as a citizen and a prospective teacher.

The findings about the stance of pre-service teachers of English can be supported by numerous studies. For instance, in a study by Martin (2010), four content area teachers including the English education majors were interviewed and it is reported that English education majors do not see their job as only teaching the language and with a holistic perspective they intent to cover the areas of life skills. Moreover, more than half of the participants announced seeing citizenship preparation as one of their course goals with a focus on teaching values while being good citizen models as teachers in the class (ibid: 63). It is clear that the WQs prepared reflect similar position to CE especially the digital citizenship. Though, to some surprise, citizenship was integrated in line with its nine elements without any struggle. The observations of collaborative work during the WQ preparation show how student contributions could vary and how innovative approaches were followed.

Specifically, WQ3, WQ6 and WQ8 tasks are based on searching and sorting necessary resources for information as expressed by Ribble, Bailey and Ross (2004). Teaching how technology can be used for finding credible materials (ibid: 8) is considered to be the teachers’ task. This project indeed posits a significant role in guiding the participants to work out on not only citizenship issues but also digital perspective.

Furthermore, based on the Eurydice report, Kjellin and Stier (2008) focused on the attitudes and values with respect to citizenship and examined the national curricula of the five participating countries (the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, the UK and Sweden). The study published in the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” concluded that teachers are not equipped with the necessary knowledge on citizenship as the written documents presumed. Pointing out the discrepancy between the related theory and practice, self-reflection of teachers and ideology-free stance were put under scrutiny. Hence, the hands-on task based experiences of teachers such as web-based tasks as a part of their continuing professional development (both pre-and in-service) help to fill the gap between the theory and practice.



As for digital citizenship studies and topic selection, Hollandsworth, Dowdy and Donovan (2011: 55) surveyed the practice of digital citizenship in the USA schools and included the concerning skills among which are plagiarism, copyright, sharing personal information online, social networking and ergonomics. These topics coincide with the nine elements of digital citizenship; however, in the WQs social networking was not integrated to a great extent. The reason could be the perception of a weak link between social networking sites and education; the link could not be largely exemplified in 2011 when the study also took place.

As a final local and national note, this study showed a wider perspective of citizenship which was limited to “responsible and patriotic” (Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008:51) citizenship by showing a range of ways of integration for language learners. Turkish students working in international groups on a topic perceived as “social science related” reflected on the change in their stance and benefited from both working in collaboration and seeing others’ tasks as well as reflections.

## CONCLUSION

The waning of interest in citizenship education has led to increasing awareness in teacher education programs. Teachers of all fields should be fully prepared to address the issues of digital citizenship at the curriculum preparation, needs analysis, implementation and assessment levels. Also of note, digital citizenship curricula should be evaluated with a critical approach with respect to the feedback received from the practitioners (Hollandsworth, Dowdy & Donovan, 2011).

As described earlier, citizenship education in the form of preparing citizens for the democratic society could be integrated to any content area. The response to the crucial question “Does citizenship education make young people better-engaged citizens?” posed by Tonge, Mycock and Jeffery (2012) has been answered quite positively about the contribution of young people to the civic activism. Thus, transferring the citizenship education to the digital world and thereby taking a step further in terms of accessibility and motivation could lead to more prolific outcomes for the next generations.

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## Appendix

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### *List of Webquests*

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1. European Citizenship	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93957">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93957</a>
2. Digital Citizenship	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=95535">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=95535</a>
3. Digital Access	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=94969">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=94969</a>
4. Digital Commerce	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=94963">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=94963</a>
5. Digital Communication	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93954">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93954</a>
6. Digital Literacy	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93960">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93960</a>
7. Digital Rights & Responsibilities	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93953">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93953</a>
8. Digital Health & Wellness	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93963">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93963</a>
9. Digital Security	<a href="http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93959">www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=93959</a>

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