Chapter 15
VideoClipQuests as an E-Learning Pattern

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ABSTRACT

VideoClipQuests (VCQs) are a teaching-learning approach focused on the learner’s self-activity while information is collected by searching the Internet, similar (but far from identical) to the well-established concept of WebQuests. They also share some of the key ideas of Anchored Instruction while being much easier to handle and adapt.

Basically, a VCQ consists of a video clip embedded into a web page and one or more tasks that are related to the video. The central idea is to avoid the fundamental terms of the subject dealt with. In other words, the task must be verbalized in such a way that it cannot be completely understood without watching the video—an approach called “Mask the Task” in this chapter. In order to perform the task, the learner has to watch the video and look for a first cue as a starting point. Only with this cue is it possible to completely understand the task and to go after the solution.

From a psychological point of view, a VCQ confronts the learners with an insolvable task that they want to transfer into a solvable one. In such a situation, motivation can evolve easily, which is one of the main driving forces of learning.

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From a teacher’s perspective, the main advantages of VCQs are that they allow great latitude concerning the subject and the topic as well as the assessment; they can be created very easily, and they work with a multitude of learning platforms. As first evaluation results show, learners rate VCQs as being highly motivating. Thus, VCQs can be one effective element to sensibly integrate the opportunities and advantages of the virtual world into teaching.

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“To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail” – Mark Twain

Today’s teachers face an enormous change: Modern computers, e-learning, and the Internet are new tools that start to be commonly available. While it is undoubtedly true that these bear a lot of new possibilities for teaching, it is also true that these are not exploited as they could be. We will not investigate the multitude of reasons that leads to this situation, but we want to focus on one aspect. As the quotation by Mark Twain suggests, teachers are bound to their standard repertoire of teaching, and, based on our observations with in-service and also pre-service teachers, they tend to use the computer as another nail for their routine teaching.

Typically, e-learning courses are computerized versions of print-out text, sometimes with “multimedia enhancements” that correspond to the rest like a parsley decoration to a Wiener Schnitzel. The fact that these could be removed from the course without actually losing anything effectively demonstrates that there is no real gain in creating an electronic version of a course text in the first place (Mayer, 2001).

As stated by Schulmeister (2001), much educational material on the Internet reveals a lack of didactical imagination of the authors. This is a typical situation where patterns (Alexander, 1977; Gamma et al., 1995) can help authors by providing a guideline for the composition of their course. The VCQ Pattern, short for VideoClipQuest Pattern, below is an easy to implement and effective way to use the rich media that is available on modern computers as a building block for courses that support students motivation and encourage a constructivist approach to learning.

The VideoClipQuest Pattern

The VCQ (or VideoClipQuest) Pattern was designed with a certain set of expectations in mind that were formulated by expert teachers and lecturers:

1. The concept must be easy to use for both the teacher and the learner
2. It should not be restricted to a single subject or topic
3. It should support the learning management system of choice
4. There has to be a real benefit, i.e. the learning process has to be supported properly
5. It should not replace traditional methods, but add to them
6. There should be a way to share such material between colleagues
7. It should use the possibilities of the computer beyond showing text and images

These expectations can also be regarded as additional forces. We will discuss them in the rationale below.

Summary

Students work in a motivated manner on an assignment that is presented using a combination of a video clip and a task.