

What students Want from the Web

Maha Ellili Cherif
and
Randy Gonzales

Outline

- Background
 - Research questions
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Summary of results
 - Implications
-

Background

- ❑ Institution: Public English-medium university in the United Arab Emirates.
 - ❑ Teachers: Different approaches to content selection.
 - ❑ Students: Females who had just entered the university and were taking foundation-level EFL courses.
 - ❑ Students: Females who were taking university-level courses.
-

Background (cont.)

- Materials development: Create self-study CALL materials that students would be interested in reading and that would also challenge them.
-

Research Questions

- What do students find interesting when reading and doing research on the Internet?
 - What topics are students familiar with?
-

Research Questions (cont.)

- What is the relationship between their level of familiarity and their interest level?
 - Are there differences in how foundation-level and university-level students respond to the questionnaire?
-

Data collection and analysis

- Sample
 - 74 students: 51% foundation students & 49% university students
 - Topic selection
 - Class discussion and students' lists
 - Controversial topics
 - Questionnaires
 - Familiarity/interest
 - Likert scale
 - SPSS package for data analysis
 - Means & cross tabulations
-

What do they find most interesting?

TOPICS	Interest Level
Comedy (funny stories like Joha)	4.19
Famous Emirati people	4.14
History of the UAE	3.95
Romance	3.88
Fashion	3.77

What do they find least interesting?

TOPICS	Interest Level
Famous Western people	2.74
Problems due to alcohol	2.70
American actors	2.62
English Poetry	2.51
French Poetry	1.81

What do they find most familiar?

TOPICS	Level of Familiarity
History of the UAE	4.30
Gulf Countries	4.22
Famous Emirati people	4.11
Marriage	3.95
Fashion	3.85

What do they find least familiar?

TOPICS	Level of Familiarity
Famous Western people	3.07
European countries	2.76
American actors	2.48
French Poetry	2.32
English Poetry	2.11

Research Question

- What is the relationship between their level of familiarity and their interest level?
-

Most Familiar & Most Interesting

Familiar	Interesting
History of the UAE	Comedy
Gulf Countries	Famous Emirati people
Famous Emirati people	History of the UAE
Marriage	Romance
Fashion	Fashion

Least Familiar & Least Interesting

Familiar	Interesting
Famous Western people	Famous Western people
European countries	Problems due to alcohol
American actors	American actors
French Poetry	English Poetry
English Poetry	French Poetry

French Poetry Cross Tabulation

	1 Not familiar at all	2	3	4	5 Very
1 Not interesting at all	32	2			1
2	14	7			
3	8	4			
4	2		1		
5 Very	1				

Famous Emirate People Cross Tabulation

	1 Not familiar at all	2	3	4	5 Very
1 Not interesting at all			1		1
2	1		5		2
3	2		3		2
4			1	12	4
5 Very		1	3	14	20

Research Question

- Are there differences in how foundation-level and university-level students respond to the questionnaire?
-

Most Interesting Comparison

Foundation	University
Famous Emirati people	Comedy
Comedy	Romance
History of the UAE	Fashion
Arabic Poetry	International Holidays
Romance	Famous Emirati People

Least Interesting Comparison

Foundation	University
Famous Western people	Khaleeji Actors
Problems due to alcohol	English Poetry
American actors	Famous Western people
English Poetry	Problems due to alcohol
French Poetry	French Poetry

Summary of results

- High interest in topics relating to local context (UAE)
 - Little interest in topics relating to the “western” context
 - High degree of familiarity with topics relating to local context (UAE)
 - Low degree of familiarity with topics relating to the “western” context
-

Summary of results (cont.)

- High interest in familiar topics & low interest in unfamiliar topics
 - Some interest in topics that teachers consider “controversial” (romance, marriage)
 - Possible discrepancy between teachers’ content knowledge and students’ interest (Emirati people, UAE history)
-

Implications

- ❑ Curriculum and materials design should relate to topics that are familiar to the students.
 - Familiar topics can increase motivation, since students are interested in them.
 - Familiarity facilitates reading.
-

Implications (cont.)

Schema theory: The reader can make sense of text when he/she relates information to the appropriate content or formal schema, or background knowledge (Carrell 1982).

Implications (cont.)

"when content and form are familiar, reading and writing are relatively easy. But when one or the other (or both) are unfamiliar, efficiency, effectiveness, and success are problematic" (Reid, 1993: 63).

Implications (cont.)

- ❑ Teachers should be open to teaching with content that can be made relevant to the local context.
 - ❑ Teachers need to learn about students' interests and content familiarity before they censor topics (romance, marriage).
-

Thank you

www.randygonzales.com
