

Reviews on Three Pilot Research Projects for Students

- tips for effective Internet search
- Internet search vs. library search
- objective info search & subjective info search
- search keywords, media literacy, plagiarism
- teacher review on the projects
- student evaluation

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Project (1) -- Using the Web

Use the World Wide Web on the Internet and complete the following task.

1. Go find the resource page of your target country at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/indexgeo.html>
2. Find answers to the following questions in the resource page.
3. Collect the facts about the target country and write an essay introducing the country. A sample essay is available on the right page of this handout.
4. The essay is due on _____

Find out the following:

- * official name of the country:
- * location and topography: Where is it located? Describe the geographic constitution of the lands.
- * nationality:
- * population: Compare it with that of Japan.
- * total area: Compare it with other country or state.
- * arable land:
- * type (form) of government:
- * head of government:
- * chief of state:
- * capital city:
- * religions:
- * labor force typology by occupation:
- * GDP per capita:
- * imports and exports:
- * history: When was it founded (become independent)?

Iran

I'd like to tell you something about Iran, or Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran's population is 66 million, about half that of Japan. And yet these people live on a land area of 1,648 million square km, which is far larger than Japan's 371 million square km and is slightly larger than Alaska. A mere 8% of Iran's land is arable. The population density is 4 per square mile, versus 840 per square mile in Japan.

Iran is located in the Middle East, bordering the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea, between Iraq and Pakistan.

It consists of one flat desert-like land with a total number of 25 provinces. Japan, by contrast, consists of four main islands with 43 prefectures plus Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hokkaido. Iran's capital city is Tehran with Tokyo as Japan's counterpart.

Iran's form of government is a theocratic republic with a president and the supreme leader. Japan is a constitutional monarchy with an emperor. Iran's head of government is a President, while Japan has a Prime Minister. Today's President is Khatami and the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Japan's Prime Minister is Hashimoto.

Iranians basically have only one religion -- Muslim or Islamic belief, with a few Christians and Jewish believers.

Iran's GDP per capita in 1996 is estimated \$5,200, about a quarter that of Japan.

Iran's labor force is divided into three sectors: agriculture (33%), manufacturing (21%) and other services.

Japan is Iran's largest trading partner. The sum of Iran's imports is 13 billion dollars and Iran's exports is 16 million.

Historically, Iran is believed to have been founded in 1979 (Islamic Republic of Iran proclaimed).

Project (1) Review

| Good points | Bad points |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. For the teacher, it was easy to control the task.2. For the students, it was easy to find the necessary information. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students didn't have to surf the Net by themselves. Consequently, they didn't learn the skill of searching for relevant information on the Net.2. Students' products tend to be all alike, simply listing the facts copied from the resource page.3. Students were not exposed to a chance to examine the information critically. |

What is needed for a better research activity would be something:

1. to build up students' basic data search skills
 - how to use search engines effectively
2. to let them browse through a variety of English Web sites
3. to induce them to realize the difference between searching for information in a high-tech way and in a conventional way; namely, on the Internet and in the libraries.

Internet Research Project (2)

Class: _____ Number: _____ Name: _____

Follow the example and complete the charts below.

| | |
|--|--|
| Query (example) | What language is spoken by the largest number of people? |
| Search engine | Altavista |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | The Languages of the World http://www.ling.gu.se/sprakfrageladan/English/eng-sprak-i-varlden.html |
| Internet search results | Mandarin, 700 million speakers |
| Reference book | International Encyclopedia of Linguistics (Bright, 1992) |
| Library search results | Mandarin Chinese. It is spoken by est. 726 mill. of people |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) 45 min (L) 15 min. Degrees of trouble: インターネットの場合色々なサーチエンジンを試していたためとても時間がかかった。本はすぐに見当がついて素早く探せた。 Differences in results:本に拠れば7億2千600万人と細かい数字が出ていて、ウェブページでは7億人と出ていた。本が92年でウェブは96年の資料を元に行っているようなので、ウェブの方が信頼できると思いたいが、人口がそれほど急激に減るとも思えずどちらの方が信頼性が高いとは言い難い。 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Query 1 | What's the name of the pet cat of Bill Clinton? |
| Search engine | |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | |
| Internet search results | |
| Reference book | |
| Library search results | |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) (L) Degrees of trouble: Differences in results: |

| Query 2 | Which country is the worst in the amount of CO ₂ emission? |
|--|--|
| Search engine | |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | |
| Internet search results | |
| Reference book | |
| Library search results | |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) (L) Degrees of trouble: Differences in results: |

| Query 3 | What countries have ratified the CTBT? |
|--|--|
| Search engine | |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | |
| Internet search results | |
| Reference book | |
| Library search results | |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) (L) Degrees of trouble: Differences in results: |

| Query 4 | Are AIDS victims increasing or decreasing? |
|--|--|
| Search engine | |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | |
| Internet search results | |
| Reference book | |
| Library search results | |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) (L) Degrees of trouble: Differences in results: |

| Query 5 | Is NAFTA successful or unsuccessful for Canada? |
|--|--|
| Search engine | |
| Resource site (The title and the URL) | |
| Internet search results | |
| Reference book | |
| Library search results | |
| Comparison | Time difference: (I) (L) Degrees of trouble: Differences in results: |

Project (2) Review

| Good points | Bad points |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="225 533 788 712">1. The students learned how to use search engines, and their skills in using search engines improved.<li data-bbox="225 770 788 1093">2. The students learned differences between doing research on the Internet and in the library. Also they learned the benefits of using them differently for different research purposes. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="809 533 1367 763">1. Most of the queries were asking for simple objective information. The whole task became like an answer-finding game.<li data-bbox="809 822 1367 1001">2. Most queries were biased toward socio-political issues. Not very intriguing for technology major students.<li data-bbox="809 1059 1367 1238">3. Some of the answers were very quickly found in an almanac or a statistical abstract in the library.<li data-bbox="809 1296 1367 1520">4. There weren't enough books in English for the project. Students ended up reading Japanese books and reference materials. |

Students' Evaluation on Project (2)

1. There were too many sites to search through on the Internet. The book search was easier and much quicker.
2. Google and Yahoo! were easier and more effective than AltaVista.
3. It was difficult for me to narrow down the scope of the search on the Internet.
4. I realized that I must become good at English to fully utilize this largest information resource in the world (Internet).
5. I realized that I have to use simple Japanese key words when I do book searches on the library catalogue computer.
6. We can get newer data on the Internet than in books. I was disappointed when I found very old data in library books.
7. I got more detailed data in books.
8. The Internet search got very smooth and fast when I realized that I should use the keyword "data" or "increase" and "decrease".
9. When I thought up the keywords "Clinton +pet," I got a really quick answer.

Research Project (3-0) For Engineering Students

Find out an answer to one of the following queries via two different approaches: the Internet search and the library search.

Queries

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Civil Engineering class | What is the longest bridge in the world? |
| Architecture class | What is the tallest building in the world? |
| Information Engineering class | What is the oldest computer in history? |

Foreseen Problems:

1. The queries are all calling for a simple objective facts.
2. An activity of reporting on some objective facts is prone to plagiarism.
3. Once they find the answer, they might lose interest in the query.
4. It might become like a fact-digging game, which offers little room for intellectual judgement, critical thinking, data analysis, authenticity evaluation, appreciation of different values, -- in other words, an insight into Media Literacy.

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Idea of a search activity for subjective information rather than objective information. An activity of searching for information on controversial issues to create one's own opinion.

Research Project (3) For Engineering Students

Write a two-page (or more) report on one of the following queries via two different approaches: the Internet search and the library search.

Queries

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Civil Engineering class | Three Gorges Dam in China Evaluate it, citing as many diverse opinions as possible, assessing its effects on nature, ecology, local economy, cultural heritage, people's life, and tourism. |
| Architecture class | The glass pyramid structure at the entrance to the Louvre Art Museum When was it built? Who ordered it to be built? Who designed it? Evaluate it, citing as many diverse opinions as possible. |
| Information Engineering class | "The media is the message." Whose remark is it? What does it mean? Explain and evaluate it, citing as many diverse opinions as possible. |

Procedure

1. Do the Internet search and write your evaluation in English. Weigh up the pros and cons, and form your own opinion. When you cite people's opinions, make sure each citation is well documented including its URL.
2. Do the library search and write your evaluation in English. Try to find books written in English as much as possible. Compare the positive and negative arguments and create your own opinion. When you cite from a book, make sure your citation is well documented.
3. Compare the two approaches in terms of the time and the difficulties and give comments in Japanese.

Students' Evaluation on Project (3)

1. For the Internet search, I would always start with keywords, but in the library, I was not able to use specific keywords on the computer catalogue. So it took a long time to find a relevant book.
2. I realized the library search was not suitable for seeking after a totally unfamiliar and unknown subject.
3. I realized the Internet search was much faster and effective in searching for information.
4. I think the Internet is useful for finding foreign information.
5. Once I got the right keywords, the Internet search became much quicker.
6. I found that on the Internet I could find a lot of different views on one subject. However, in books, I can only get general and uninterested facts.
7. I believe in reading books and increasing my general knowledge steadily. The Internet is only useful for a quick search or for a search of global scope.
8. Internet is great! You don't have to "travel" to the libraries to find information. You can search for anything right there, and anytime!
9. It was very frustrating to find that the relevant books were all loaned out from local libraries. The Internet does not have this problem.
10. Information on the Internet all seems like personal opinions. Whereas, information in books are generally written by distinguished authors and they are reliable.
11. I found the information in books was more in depth than that on the Internet.
12. The library search was not a problem for me, because I had tried the Internet search beforehand and got general information on the query.
13. Checking many heavy books on the library shelves was physically very tiring. Internet was more comfortable.
14. On the Internet, it was interesting to find that the relevant

information got broader and broader as I added different keywords and followed from one link to another. You can't do this in the library.

15. Book search is easier for me, since I'm not very skilled with computers.
16. The Internet is by far easier and more effective.
17. On the Internet, I found it very exciting to get information from all over the world in a snap.
18. On the Internet, I found that the success or the failure of searching really depended on whether I could find appropriate keywords or not.
19. Once you have a library material and a pen and a notebook, you can write a report wherever you are. It's more handy than the Internet.
20. I realized that on the Internet, there were a lot of junk information as well as useful information. Also, there were web pages which advocated completely opposite views from each other. So, I learned that I had to be cautious when I use the Internet.

Research Project (3)

For Economics Students

Write a two-page (or more) report on one the following queries via two different approaches: the Internet search and the library search.

Queries

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Sydney Olympics Was it a success or a failure? Evaluate it from various viewpoints such as its impacts on Sydney economy, preservation of nature, cultural heritage of the indigenous people (Aborigine) , tourism, city environment, and the life of the people. Was it well administered? Did it enhance Australia's national publicity, its sports activities, and its international exchanges? You don't have to write a comprehensive report. You can concentrate on one area. |
| 2 | Japanese Whaling Should Japan begin commercial whaling? Should it continue its whale hunting for scientific studies? Evaluate it, considering its effects on Japanese economy, Japanese dietary, marine ecology, endangered animal protection campaign, and U.S.-Japan relation. |
| 3 | Three Gorges Dam in China Evaluate it, citing as many diverse opinions as possible, assessing its effect on nature, ecology, local economy, cultural heritage, people's life, and tourism. |

Procedure

1. Do the Internet search and write your evaluation in English. Weigh up the pros and cons well and form your own opinion. When you cite people's opinions, make sure each citation is well documented including its URL.
2. Do the library search and write your evaluation in English. Try to find books written in English as much as possible. Compare the positive and negative arguments and create your own opinion. When you cite from a book, make sure your citation is well documented.
3. Compare the two approaches in terms of the time and the difficulties and give comments in Japanese.

English Education in Elementary School

997645 Taro Maebashi

The Education Ministry of Japan decided to allow English to be taught in elementary schools as of 2002, when a new school curriculum guideline is scheduled to be implemented.

Some are doubtful of its worth. Yoshiko Mizutani argues in Rondan (Asahi Shinbun September 16, 2000) that it may create inequality among students in Japan, for the adoption of such English classes is totally left to the discretion of each school. Carol Gluck of NewsWeek Japan introduces another opposition "... that English be mastered only by those who need it in their work, while the rest concentrate on mastering their own language, a task that is difficult enough in itself." <wysiwyg://64/http://www.msnbc.com/news/389816.asp>. Gregory Clark claims English should be taught anew in the university level, saying "... full-fledged English education should be provided at the university level, when students have clear goals and motivation." <http://www.asahi.com/english/asahi/0301/asahi030101.html>.

Keiko Abe, however, believes primary school English is worthwhile and she claims for a better overall review of the English education system as follows:

"The transition from primary school to middle school is important and there must be a more comprehensive educational framework spanning primary school levels to college levels. I think primary and middle school levels should be very closely linked." -- Language Lab, The Daily Yomiuri, May 15, 2000

Luc Pham (cited in <http://www.kirihara.co.jp/uni/corn/sum98/saltlake/saltlake.html>) also reports English teaching with the Natural Approach made a significant difference in the language development of many non-native primary-level students in Salt Lake City.

In conclusion, I think English should be taught at primary level as I have found many researchers and linguists agree that the earlier is the better for a child to start learning a second language.

<Time difference>

Internet search time: 5 and half hours

Library search time: 7 hours

< Comparative evaluation of the two approaches >

インターネット検索は適切なキーワードが見つからなかったり、キーワードをたくさん使いすぎたりして最初うまく行かなかった。しかし、サーチエンジンの使い方に慣れて来るに従って調子が出てきていもずる式に次々と色々な意見が見つかり、そこからは苦労しなかった。図書館検索では関連する本を見つけるのが大変だった。どの分野から探していけば良いのか分からず、戸惑っているまま時間が過ぎてしまい、結局助けになるような情報をあまり見つけられずに終わってしまった。今回の情報収集課題ではインターネットの方がより新鮮で速く、しかも適切な情報を手に入れられることが分かった。

Project (3) Review

| Good Points | Bad Points |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Though the searching activity for subjective information was very challenging, the students seemed to have learned an important part of Media Literacy, i.e., to look at online information critically, and to select and choose valuable information swiftly.2. The students learned how to analytically interpret the data found in web sites and books.3. The students realized the importance of combining some crucial keywords on the Internet search.4. The students realized the need for learning English harder in order to get the most of the Internet.5. The students learned the Internet is beneficial for gathering a lot of different views on one subject.6. The subjective information search activity was proven to have some immunity from plagiarism. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some students were overwhelmed by a flood of incomprehensible information in English.2. Substantial Information on some of the topics was hardly found in books in the local libraries.3. There were not a few cases where the teacher couldn't distinguish a citation clearly from a student's original text.4. There were many cases where citations were not very well documented. |

Some useful keywords
for Internet information search for students

| For objective information search | For subjective information search |
|--|--|
| Data Numbers Records Statistics List Standing Comparison Countries Facts Recent Transition Increase Decrease | Opinions Views Review Discussion Forum Criticism Critic Argument Opposition Objection Controversy Conflict Difference Comparison Assessment Evaluation Destruction Damage |

Topics suitable for researching on the Internet and in the Library

| Internet | Library |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.current issues2.quick data search3.personal information search4.controversial issues5.IT-related information6.Business-related information | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.historical events2.established values, thoughts, theories, systems3.famous people in history4.works of specific areas (literature, art, architecture, etc.)5.information about 3rd-world countries6.academic studies in depth |