



## Teaching And Learning EFL Successfully Through An Online Environment: An Experimental Study With ‘Legal English’ Students

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**ABSTRACT :** *Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are developing exponentially and are having a great impact on the redefinition of learning and literacy in the 21st century [1]. For this reason, experts in the education field have the need and the responsibility to adapt and integrate the curricula into a new digital context [2], making use of available digital tools in order to ensure that education is relevant to the demands of today’s society [3]; [4]. This article highlights the role of digital literacy to foster reading comprehension on the Internet in order to solve problems, activities, and tasks.*

**Keywords:** *ICT’s, new literacies, spontaneous new literacies, cybertask*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, educators in the EFL field have to adapt to many new technological advances, since the new media context has entailed changes in the teaching-learning field [5], and has also provoked changes in the university curricula design. Additionally, this change has encountered (i) a reshaping of our curricula designs in order to make them more appealing and productive for university students, and (ii) rethink new ways to implement the contents in the EFL classroom so that they reflect these technological advances.

This article describes a pedagogical implication; based on a WebQuest-based model activity, designed to be implemented and completed as an obligatory activity in a subject entitled “Legal English” (Modern Language), at university level (implemented at Universitat Jaume I, Spain). Bearing in mind that WebQuests are not a ‘new’ pedagogical intervention, it can be argued that they have not been fully exploited in university classes, in part due to a lack of conceptual knowledge of how to best implement it. Recent studies show that it is not yet possible to claim that technology has been fully integrated into language teaching, despite the many advances made thus far [6]; [7]. This study outlines a case study of a successful execution of a WebQuest-inspired teaching activity. Following a detailed description of the pedagogical intervention, we introduce qualitative data taken from two case studies of students’ final result, obtained during the in-class implementation of the teaching process.

### II. THE INTERNET AS A TOOL FOR READING COMPREHENSION FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

From a researcher’s point of view, it is important to make a three-fold distinction between (1) “New Literacies”, (2) “Spontaneous New Literacies”, and (3) “New Technology Skills” [8]. “New Literacy” can be defined as a new way of reading on the Web. Traditionally, people used to read on paper format (books, articles, newspapers), but with the arrival of the Internet in the 20th century, a new way of reading appeared (digital texts). In contrast to this idea, we suggest the notion of “Spontaneous New Literacy” which implies surfing the net in order to gather information but with the specific feature of not having received any previous learning or background information. The last term we consider worth mentioning here is the idea of “New Technology Skills”, which we define as the knowledge and ability to use and combine Internet resources in order to solve problems, activities, and tasks, or simply to satisfy needs.

It is therefore of paramount importance to make clear that there exist differences between characteristics concerning (a) Traditional Texts and the (b) World Wide Web (WWW) [8]. In traditional texts, print remains static as the information they contain do not change each time a book is opened. Print format is also linear, as it follows the intended path of the author, and it is usually sequential, as it may follow a particular order or ranking [10]. Furthermore, they contain graphics that consist of static images [9]. In contrast to

traditional texts, in digital texts (World Wide Web), the information is constantly changing, as it is frequently revised, removed, or rearranged [2].

These new formats feature non-linear hypertexts that allow readers to navigate their own course - by selecting links in a variety of orders – that may be different from the intended path of the author or other readers [10]. In addition, new formats are also typically non-sequential, as readers can jump from one place to another [9]. Finally, in digital texts, graphics on the Web appear more lifelike than in conventional texts, since multiple media images can integrate a variety of symbols and multimedia formats, such as icons, photographs, animated symbols, cartoons, advertisements, audio and visual video clips, and virtual reality environments [10].

It is important to bear in mind that although books and writing are, in many ways, being replaced by other forms of texts; these ‘traditional’ formats must still be taken into account because they offer something unique that cannot be replaced by the screen, music, images, and soundtracks. But with the advent of the Internet, we think it is of paramount importance to develop content-based materials in this new digital environment for the university curricula in order to help students understand this cyber genre. Accordingly, we deem it necessary to focus on this new digital environment (Internet) as a new tool for reading in EFL settings.

Digital texts are a fairly new medium for reading and gathering information for both teachers and students. Therefore, information gathering through electronic means requires a specific type of literacy (knowing where to look, using hyperlinks, application of critical thinking), which is especially important for facing activities or tasks related to the Web. Accordingly, it has been reported that students interacting with digital texts ‘perceive Web text reading as different from print text reading’ [9]. For this reason, as educators we need to foster new literacies in the classroom and foster reading comprehension on the Internet among our university students.

From the teacher-researcher’s point of view, what we intend is: (1) to provide instructional solutions to foster new literacies in the classroom; (2) to provide instructional solutions to foster reading comprehension on the Internet (3) to test the efficiency of the instructional approach. If we want that students become proficient in all the skills related to multiple literacies, they need to receive instruction from teachers. For this reason, what teachers really need to do is give instruction and training in various Information, Media and Technology Skills [5]:

- “Information Literacy”, e.g., access and evaluate information critically and competently; manage the flow of information from a wide variety of sources.
- “Media Literacy”, e.g., understand both how and why media messages are constructed; create media products by understanding and utilizing the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions.
- “ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy”, e.g., uses technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.

And also Learning and Innovation Skills, which are recognized as features, that distinguish students who are prepared for a more complex life and work environment in the 21st century, from those who are not. These include:

- “Critical Thinking” and “Problem-Solving” effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs; solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways.
- “Communication”, e.g. articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral and written communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- “Collaboration” demonstrates the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- “Creativity” and “Innovation” use a wide range of idea creation techniques to create new and worthwhile ideas.

Following on these ideas, we think that the new technologies in combination with the new literacies might offer a valuable support in students’ reading development if (as teachers) we provide them with all the necessary tools [11].

In addition, research carried out on these issues indicates that online reading has positive effects on student comprehension of digital texts and learning in general [12]; [13]. Moreover, the use of the Internet for reading in order to improve the general ability for student comprehension of texts can be directly related to students’ personal needs and interests, thus promoting a more autonomous student role and sense of control over their own work that might result in a higher degree of motivation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to also consider how these tools are used (pedagogical design). Thus, we now turn our attention to another aspect of this study, which is task-based learning activities, also known as “Cybertasks”.

### **III. TASK-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES. A CYBERTASK FOR ‘LEGAL ENGLISH’ (DR1009): ‘EUROPEAN UNION LAW AND INSTITUTIONS’**

It is the authors’ perspective that working with on-line task-based activities (Cybertasks) will optimally involve mutually reciprocal active participation, where both teachers and students learn media literacy skills and

competencies. Thus, we will outline the design of a Cybertask, which helps in the students' development of an autonomous reading competence [14].

In our context, a task-based learning activity is designed to engage students in searching information through the Internet in order to collect use and transform information concerning the field of 'Legal English'. In fact, this kind of task-based activity may help students to: (a) develop their metacognitive skills in order to learn how to guide their learning on their own [4], and (b) use the Internet as a tool for their personal learning plan.

This Cybertask consists of a WebQuest-based model activity to be implemented and completed as a compulsory activity (Written Assignment) to be given along the semester in the subject "Legal English" (Modern Language) (DR1009). We first present the Cybertask and the objectives anticipated for each of the activities [11].

**(Q1): What do you know about the European Union (EU)? Write about 4-5 lines using your own words.**

**Use of information:** knowing how to use specific language concepts and expressions in English.

**Information search:** the ability to identify information in different texts, and find common traits in the information found on the Web.

**Information organization:** this refers to coherence and cohesion. Coherence is adequacy of the text and semantic consistency; whereas cohesion refers to textual organizers used to cohere a text (between lines, sentences and paragraphs).

**Content:** relevancy of the answer to the question. Information relevance is important when students select ideas from the Web pages provided.

**Creativity:** being creative is a very important feature to bear in mind, since students are expected to create their own definition regarding the European Union (EU).

**Vocabulary and grammar:** are two important abilities in English language. Students should be aware of how language works, and use language appropriately and effectively to convey their message (grammatical accuracy). And knowing a sufficient number of vocabulary items may avoid comprehension problems in reading activities. Thus, students need to know how to use an item appropriately in a certain context.

**(Q2): Which of the EU treaties has more advantages for your country? Justify your answer.**

**Use of information:** relevance regarding specific language terminology.

**Information search:** identifying and finding common features in the information provided in the different Web pages offered is very important to answer this question.

**Information organization:** coherence and cohesion. Coherence is adequacy of the text and semantic consistency; cohesion consists of the textual organizers to cohere a text (between lines, sentences and paragraphs).

**Content:** information relevance is important when students select ideas from the Web pages provided.

**Creativity:** a crucial feature when deciding advantages and disadvantages of the EU in any country.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** these features contrast, since lexical items sometimes might include grammatical items. Students should be aware of how language works, and use language appropriately and effectively to convey their message (grammatical accuracy). And know how to use an item appropriately in a certain context.

**(Q3): How is the EU legislation applied?**

**Use of information:** knowing how to use specific language concepts and expressions in English.

**Information search:** identifying information in different texts, and finding common traits in the information found on the Web.

**Information organization:** students should consider coherence and cohesion between paragraphs, lines, and sentences.

**Content:** students are expected to provide relevant information to answer this question and get an excellent result.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** students are expected to employ the adequate vocabulary around the topic "EU legislation", and correct grammar use for the purpose of this activity.

**(Q4): What does the European Council do and how does it work?**

**Use of information:** using specific language concepts and expressions in English.

**Information search:** the ability to identify information in different texts, and find common traits in the information found on the Web.

**Information organization:** coherence and cohesion should be considered between paragraphs, lines, and sentences.

**Content:** relevant information is expected to be provided to answer this activity.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** should be taken into consideration when answering this activity.

**(Q5): How does the role of the Council affect in international agreements?**

**Use of information:** using specific language concepts and expressions in English.

**Information search:** identifying information in different texts found on the Web.

**Information organization:** students should consider coherence and cohesion.

**Content:** providing relevant information is paramount to answer this question and get an excellent result.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** employing the adequate vocabulary and correct grammar for the purpose of this activity.

**(Q6): How would you define ‘Code of Conduct’? Use your own words.**

**Creativity:** being creative is a very important feature to bear in mind, since students are expected to create their own definition regarding the Code of Conduct.

**Use of information:** use of specific language concepts and expressions in English.

**Information search:** identifying information in different texts, and finding common traits in the information found on the Web.

**Information organization:** students should consider coherence and cohesion between paragraphs, lines, and sentences.

**Content:** relevance of information employed regarding this question is important to attain an excellent score.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** employing lexical items and grammatical patterns to convey message adequately and appropriately.

**(Q7): What is understood by ‘Monetary Policy’? Explain in 3-4 lines using your own words.**

**Use of information:** use of specific language concepts and expressions in English regarding Monetary Policy.

**Information search:** identifying information in different texts, and finding common traits in the information found on the Web.

**Information organization:** students should consider coherence and cohesion between paragraphs, lines, and sentences.

**Content:** relevance of information employed regarding this question is important to get optimal results.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** using vocabulary and grammatical patterns adequately and appropriately.

**(Q8) Final activity: Write a short report about the following questions:**

**(Q8.1):** Do you think this kind of online activities should be promoted among university students? Justify your answer.

**(Q8.2):** Did you find it interesting, and/or useful for your academic development? Justify your answer.

**(Q8.3):** How do you think this task is related to the objectives of the unit?

**Vocabulary and grammar**

**Interests and motivation**

Regarding vocabulary and grammar, students are expected to employ the adequate vocabulary and correct grammatical patterns for the purpose of this activity.

This activity is expected to engage and expand students’ interest and motivation in regards to every single activity proposed in this Cybertask. Motivation is a very important factor to bear in mind if we want our students to engage in a particular task. Learners need to feel motivated in order to keep their attention, not only in the university setting, but also outside the classroom. For this reason, we propose this Cybertask to university students because it provides them a topic of interest, i.e. “Legal English” (DR1009): “European Union Law and Institutions” (which corresponds to one of the subjects of the Bachelor’s Degree in Law).

We need to highlight the fact that students’ attention by means of a Cybertask ensures that they are working on a topic they are interested in. Accordingly, students’ answers to this final activity provides valuable information concerning: (1) students’ improvement in their learning process through improved performance and involvement in each single activity in the Cybertask, and (2) the role of WebQuest and online materials.

Figure 1 shows the “front page” or “home” page of the digital version of the Cybertask, adapted from [15]; [11] as it is presented to the students.

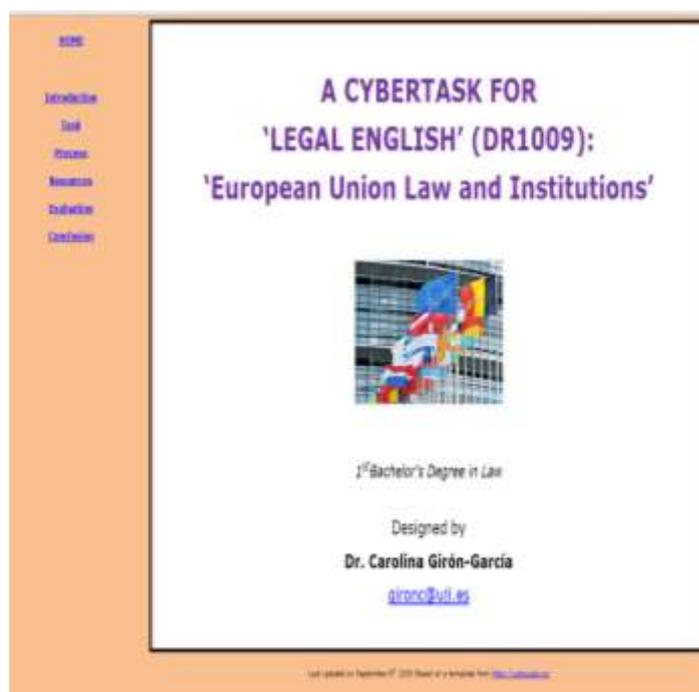


Fig. 1. Front page of the Cybertask

The home page leads to an introduction of the pedagogical framework in which the premises of the “WebQuest based model activity” are explained to the students and how it will serve the students to gain more knowledge in the content matter.



Fig. 2. Introduction

Figure 3 shows the design and presentation of the task that students are asked to complete. It provides an outline of expected learning aims, questions enclosed and supporting resources (web links, dictionaries, etc.).

**TASK**

The task proposed deals with the field of 'European Union Law and Institutions'. More specifically, you will learn about:

- (1) Historical background of the European integration
- (2) The creation of the European Communities: Evolution until 1992
- (3) The evolution of the European Communities from 1992: the creation of the European Union
- (4) The European Union in the twenty-first century: From Nice to Lisbon
- (5) General characteristics of the European Union
- (6) The system of competence of the European Union
- (7) The European Union institutions
- (8) The advisory bodies, financial bodies and other bodies of the European Union
- (9) The system of rules and legal acts of the European Union
- (10) The principles of European Union law in its relations with the domestic legal systems

In this task you will find several activities and/or questions (see **PROCESS**) that you may solve using the information provided in the different web links (see **RESOURCES**). Accordingly, you are expected to answer the activities proposed.

In the process of completing the task you will:

- Evaluate your previous knowledge in the field of 'European Union Law and Institutions'
- Make a selection of online resources according to your needs and objectives
- Follow a non-linear navigation so as to create your own navigation path, that is, you may not follow the exact order of web links proposed
- Build your own knowledge in order to answer the activities proposed

Fig. 3. Task design

In the task design, a link is provided to the 'process' (figure 4) which provides more detailed instructions on what the students should do to accomplish this part of the activity.

**THE PROCESS**

To accomplish the task:

- You do not need to surf all the resources proposed, but only the ones that you think are going to be the most interesting ones to carry out the task
- You may also choose a different order of the resources to answer the activities proposed

In order to answer each one of the activities you will need to:

- Read carefully the links provided in **RESOURCES**
- Select the appropriate information
- Contextualize the information with the task and its objectives; in other words, build the necessary knowledge adapting it to the situation

Fig. 4. Process description

This, in turn, is broken down into detailed activities (figure 5).

**\*\*ACTIVITIES\*\***

**QUESTION 1 (Q1):** What do you know about the European Union (EU)? Write about 4-5 lines using your own words.

**QUESTION 2 (Q2):** Which of the EU treaties has more advantages for your country? Justify your answer.

**QUESTION 3 (Q3):** How is the EU legislation passed?

**QUESTION 4 (Q4):** What does the European Council do and how does it work?

**QUESTION 5 (Q5):** How does the role of the Council affect in international agreements?

**QUESTION 6 (Q6):** How would you define 'Code of Conduct'? Use your own words.

**QUESTION 7 (Q7):** What is understood by 'Monetary Policy'? Explain in 3-4 lines using your own words.

**QUESTION 8 (Q8) FINAL ACTIVITY:** Write a short report about the following questions:

(Q8.1): Do you think this kind of online activities should be promoted among university students? Justify your answer.

(Q8.2): Did you find it interesting, useful or useful for your academic development? Justify your answer.

(Q8.3): How do you think this task is related to the objectives of the task?

Fig. 5. Activity description

The provision of suitable resources is key to the successful execution of the tasks. Figures 6 and 7 show how direct resources are given to the students according to task or for more general information.

**QUESTION 4 (Q4):** What does the European Council do and how does it work?

- <http://www.comifum.europa.eu/en/european-council/>
- [http://www.g2016.parliament.eu/Portals/6/PDF/FJCES/NEW113099ENG\\_002.pdf](http://www.g2016.parliament.eu/Portals/6/PDF/FJCES/NEW113099ENG_002.pdf)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2PSY\\_5ldg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2PSY_5ldg)

**QUESTION 5 (Q5):** How does the role of the Council affect in international agreements?

- <http://www.comifum.europa.eu/en/home/>
- [http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-council/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-council/index_en.htm)
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/eucouncil>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VPSY\\_jy-Ek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VPSY_jy-Ek)

**QUESTION 6 (Q6):** How would you define 'Code of Conduct'? Use your own words.

- [http://coria.europa.eu/jms/jms/1\\_6/](http://coria.europa.eu/jms/jms/1_6/)
- <http://www.coc.eu/>
- <http://www.healthgroup.com/our-company/commitment/code-of-conduct-for-data-centres.htm>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR-hyACK8>

**QUESTION 7 (Q7):** What is understood by 'Monetary Policy'? Explain in 3-4 lines using your own words.

- <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/home/html/index.es.html>
- <http://www.taxbaseonline.com/terms/m/monetarypolicy.asp>
- <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/monetary-policy>
- <http://www.bloomberg.com/topic/monetary-policy>

Fig. 6. List of resources for a specific task

**RESOURCES**

In this section, you will find a wide range of resources. Hence, you will have access to information related to the field of 'European Union Law and Institutions'. You will need to surf these links in order to give answer to the activities proposed in **PROCESS**.

---LIST OF RESOURCES---

**QUESTION 1 (Q1):** What do you know about the European Union (EU)? Write about 4-5 lines using your own words. (You may use the web link below to help you).

- [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp0t8e0R0U>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/eu>
- [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Union](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q17pJH9Hq>

**QUESTION 2 (Q2):** Which of the EU treaties has more advantages for your country? Justify your answer.

- [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A70YUa2k>
- <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaties/eu/treaties.html>
- [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaties\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Union](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaties_of_the_European_Union)
- <http://www.euro-council.org/a-bit-of-the-most-reliable-treaties-in-regard-to-the-eu.html>

**QUESTION 3 (Q3):** How is the EU legislation applied?

- [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)
- <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexvlex/summaries.html>
- [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Union\\_Law](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union_Law)

Fig. 7. Hyperlinked list of resources

Students are also provided with an example of how their work will be assessed. This is carried out through an evaluation rubric as shown in figure 8.

		EVALUATION					SCORE IN EACH ONE OF THE QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS	SKILLS	SCORES					
		1 VERY WEAK	2 WEAK	3 GOOD	4 VERY GOOD	5 EXCELLENT	
Q 1	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Creativity Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 2	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Creativity Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 3	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 4	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 5	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 6	Creativity Use of information Information search Information organization Content Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 7	Use of information Information search Information organization Content Vocabulary & Grammar						
Q 8	Interests & Motivation Vocabulary & Grammar						
FINAL SCORE: ___ / 40							

Fig. 8. Evaluation rubric

Once the students have completed this Cybertask, they are able to reflect on their knowledge with the development of the new technologies (ICTs) in order to learn and/or acquire some information in relation to the field of European Union Law and Institutions (Legal English).

#### IV. DATA COMPILATION, SETTING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

The Cybertask entitled “Legal English” (DR1009): “European Union Law and Institutions” was carried out during several days, depending on the needs of every student. The Cybertask consisted of eight activities, which were completed by a total number of 155 participants selected from the group taking the subject “Legal English” (Modern Language) in the 1st year course of the Bachelor’s Degree in Law at the Universitat Jaume I (Spain). Among these 155 students, two were selected for the purpose of case studies.

The study took place in the first semester (September-December) of the 2015-2016 academic years and students’ participation was one of the compulsory written assignments and represented 0.5 points added to the final mark at the end of the semester.

Students were required to submit their Cybertasks to a ‘Moodle’ platform called Aula Virtual (i.e. “Virtual Classroom”), so the teacher-researchers had access to all their task production. The two focal points of our study have been the “Cybertask for Legal English (DR1009): European Union Law and Institutions” and the “Final Exam” mark for data collection. Two students have been selected to examine in detail their reflections in order to observe whether the Cybertask supported the students’ development of multiple literacies associated with the 21st century competencies. The students were selected as representing excellent work (Student A, received a 9.5 out of 10 in the final exam) and average work (Student B, received a 6.5 out of 10 in the final exam).

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1. Student A

**Exam Result:** 9.5 points (out of 10 points)

The following excerpts stem from Student A's answer to the activity (Write a short report about the following questions:

**(Q8.1):** Do you think this kind of online activities should be promoted among university students? Justify your answer.

**(Q8.2):** Did you find it interesting, and/or useful for your academic development? Justify your answer.

**(Q8.3):** How do you think this task is related to the objectives of the unit?

#### Excerpt 1

Used as university students are to writing and learning from "static" sources such as books and their own notes based on the teacher's explanations; I find *promoting online activities as a really positive approach* to the contents that units are based on. Not only do these type of activities *encourage student engagement with the subject matter* but it also gives leeway for *independent learning* skills.

The student indicates that online activities contribute to her positive learning development. In addition, the student finds this type of activities engaging with the subject, since she states that as university students they are used to employ books and their notes (based on teachers' lectures).

#### Excerpt 2

Due to the reasons previously outlined, I consider the majority, if not all the activities organized with the purpose of familiarizing university students with *new vocabulary should be carried out using this type of methods*.

In terms of my own experience with online activities, I find the use of *new technologies* and interactive content as an opportunity to *enlarge in an easy way the possibilities to establish new concepts and opinions*.

Student A again highlights the sense of innovation in this type of approach to the content of the subject matter. She also values the use of the new technologies and interactive content as a great opportunity to broaden her knowledge of new concepts (build "new knowledge" from "background information") and establish her own points of view ("critical thinking").

#### Excerpt 3

I personally reckon that the activity's purpose was to emphasize and focus students on the *specific vocabulary* that is involved within the EU organization as well as the general terms that are mandatory to prove if the course in Law English is to be successfully fulfilled.

In the final excerpt, the student places emphasis on the fact that the activity's main aim was not only to help students learn on the specific vocabulary involved within the European Union Law and Institutions; but also to deepen their understanding of the concepts already looked at during the course.

### 5.2. Student B

**Exam Result:** 6.5 points (out of 10 points)

As with Student A, the following excerpts stem from Student B's answer to the report-writing activity, prompted by the same questions.

#### Excerpt 4

I think so because this kind of activities help the students to *learn on their own* about a community, in this case the European Union, and its political and economic institutions. In addition, students can *improve their skills* in connection with the language (*English*), the *search of information* through the Internet and, specially, their form of expression.

Student B discusses that the pedagogical design allowed learner autonomy and supported reflection and application of the content provided through the resources. He also valued the accessibility of the resources and the importance of developing writing skills in English, which are important in this subject ("Legal English" (Modern Language)). All this corroborates the argument that WebQuests promote autonomous work and help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

#### Excerpt 5

I have found it useful because the questions I have answered previously are *related with the career* I am doing this year. So that, all these questions could help me to have an idea about some aspects which appear in *other subjects* of the career.

Said that, I think this kind of activity can be a good influence for my *academic development*.

As with Student A, Student B also places emphasis on the fact that this task has proven useful for review of subject matter and for a deeper understanding of the concepts looked at (not only) during the unit, (but also) in future subjects in the degree.

#### **Excerpt 6**

I think this task pretends to give a *base to the students* in connection with the points will be taught in the unit, it's to say, the European Union Law and their institutions. I think it's a base because maybe the questions of this task or this unit will appear again in the next units of the syllabus. They could even appear in *other courses of the career*.

Definitely, the objectives of the unit are to give several *basic concepts* which will be useful for the *academic development of students*.

In the final excerpt, the student highlights that the Cybertask has helped the students to learn new vocabulary in relation to the EU. Similar to Student A, he also focuses on the importance of knowing some basic concepts for future subjects and for the students' academic learning.

## **VI. DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY RESULTS**

The qualitative analysis of the responses from these two students allows us to discover a network of strategies, behaviours and emotional, cultural and cognitive trends that offer a different perspective in the study of the learning profiles concerning the use of ICT's as a learning resource.

From the students' answers it can be inferred that, through their engagement with the Cybertask "Legal English" (DR1009): 'European Union Law and Institutions', the students do apply key 21<sup>st</sup> century competences. Both students mention that learning from online activities (1) implies a really positive approach, rather than learning from "static" sources (such as books) and from students' own notes (based on the teacher's lectures); (2) encourages student engagement with the subject matter; (3) allows independent learning. These type of activities also (4) offers interactive content as an opportunity to enlarge in an easy way the possibilities to establish new concepts and opinions (i.e. build new knowledge from already known information in the process of answering the different activities; and critical thinking). Among different purposes included in this Cybertask, students encounter (a) familiarizing university students with new vocabulary; (b) searching information through the Internet synthesizing and taking decisions about the use of that information; (c) improving students' reading and writing skills; and (d) broadening students' academic development.

These findings have pedagogical implications [11] for teachers. We should bear in mind that students in general, and more specifically university students, demand the use of the new technologies not only to receive instruction in the classroom, but also as a means to learn languages and content. In fact, their interests in interactive tools and the Internet also suggest the need to teach online reading from a critical point of view, since they are often "uncritical" consumers of online content. This implies that students not only have to know how to read from a computer screen, they need to develop the ability to comprehend and be able to interpret that information according to their previous knowledge; in summary, they must become critically discerning members [16] of the "Net Generation" [17].

Regarding the instructional implications of literacy instruction, these results support the proposals posed by Morgan [18], who suggests that teachers must look for different ways to integrate reading as often as possible so as to lead to students' comprehension and retention of the content of a certain subject. Teachers should also ensure that students have the adequate background information related to the content they are going to face [19] and provide instruction on the appropriate vocabulary in order that students reading awareness about different kinds of printed and online texts can be better developed. The results also support the premise that online instruction should motivate students to search and explore different websites depending on their educational needs; and encourage multiple readings in relation to a certain subject-matter from different perspectives in order to develop and promote their reading skills on the Internet.

Finally, we believe that from the educators' point of view, the development of online task-based activities (i.e. "Cybertasks", [8]) can be used to introduce new genres in instructional contexts. These Cybertasks as new task genres point towards a new direction for teaching and learning in the new literacies.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of the present work focuses on discussing the integration of new forms of literacy and the use of ICT's with the main aim of fostering reading comprehension on the Internet in EFL settings. Accordingly, we highlight the importance of helping students to use the Internet to solve activities and tasks in order to better meet their individual learning needs. Furthermore, Cybertasks can be considered as a key means of getting

students to experiment with the target language in an EFL context and within a pedagogical framework that places the ‘teacher as a helper, an ally who gives them advice’ [8].

In this study we have discussed that teaching and learning are related to information literacy and technological skills such as knowing how to select, organize and use information in order to handle new situations. Thus, we strongly believe that knowledge proficiency, not only in Web management, but also in content-based learning, will facilitate life-long learning. In fact, these are considered as the basic competencies needed for continuous and autonomous learning.

In the light of the results of the present study, we argue that the results of the Cybertasks served as a complement to the face-to-face teaching activities, teacher lectures and materials in a way that encouraged continuous and autonomous learning on the part of the students of the subject “Legal English” (Modern Language) (DR1009). Furthermore, we believe that these kind of Web-based activities favoured the students’ learning processes both inside and outside the classroom.

Concerning the conclusions drawn, we propose that it is necessary to further investigate into the technological skills that transcend basic technical proficiency and to consider the skills linked to autonomy development. The future of knowledge and culture can also be found out in digital files thanks to our universal medium, the Internet –an endless library of available resources that leads us to an open world of possibilities. Therefore, we need to combine the traditional reading culture with the current digital reading and be able to build new reading methodologies in the language education field.

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