

Article

The Impact of Web-Quest Technology on The Development of Professional and Intercultural Competence among Economics Students in English Language Learning

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Abstract: This article examines the impact of Web-Quest technology on the development of professional and intercultural competence among economics students in the process of learning English. The study focuses on the potential of Web-Quest-based learning to integrate language acquisition with professionally oriented tasks, authentic online resources, collaborative problem-solving, and intercultural communication. Particular attention is given to the development of students' ability to search for, analyze, evaluate, and apply English-language information related to economic issues and professional contexts. The integration of Web-Quest technology creates opportunities for students to work with authentic materials, investigate economic problems, compare international business and economic practices, and present evidence-based solutions in English. The article also considers the role of Web-Quest activities in enhancing students' motivation, critical thinking, digital literacy, communication skills, teamwork, and independent learning. From an intercultural perspective, Web-Quest tasks encourage students to explore different cultural and professional contexts, recognize cultural differences in economic communication, and develop the ability to interact effectively with representatives of other cultures. The findings indicate that the systematic application of Web-Quest technology can contribute to the comprehensive development of professional and intercultural competence while simultaneously improving students' practical English proficiency and their readiness for future professional communication in an increasingly globalized economic environment.

Keywords: Web-Quest Technology, English Language Learning, Economics Students, Professional Competence, Intercultural Competence, Professionally Oriented English, Digital Learning, Authentic Materials, Online Resources, Critical Thinking, Digital Literacy, Collaborative Learning, Intercultural Communication, Economic Education, Foreign Language Competence, Independent Learning

1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies and the internationalization of economic relations have significantly transformed the requirements for professional training in higher education. Modern economics graduates are expected not only to possess theoretical knowledge of economics and finance but also to communicate effectively in English, work with international information resources, participate in intercultural professional interactions, and adapt to rapidly changing global economic environments. Consequently, foreign language education in economics-oriented higher

education institutions increasingly requires teaching approaches that integrate linguistic development with professional knowledge, digital competencies, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness.[1]

In this context, the use of information and communication technologies in English language teaching has created new opportunities for developing students' practical and professionally relevant competencies. Traditional language-learning approaches, while valuable for developing fundamental linguistic knowledge, may not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to use English in authentic professional situations. Economics students need to interpret economic information, analyze international markets, discuss business issues, compare economic systems, prepare presentations, and communicate their professional opinions using English. Therefore, learner-centered and technology-enhanced approaches that connect language learning with authentic professional tasks have become increasingly significant.[2]

One such approach is Web-Quest technology. A Web-Quest is an inquiry-oriented learning activity in which students use selected Internet resources to investigate a particular problem, complete a structured task, analyze information, and produce a final outcome. Unlike unstructured Internet searching, Web-Quest activities provide learners with a clearly defined problem, a sequence of tasks, relevant online resources, and criteria for evaluating the results. This structure encourages students to move beyond simple information retrieval toward information analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and practical application.

The relevance of Web-Quest technology in economics education is particularly associated with the interdisciplinary nature of economic knowledge. Economic processes are closely connected with international trade, finance, entrepreneurship, management, globalization, technological development, and cultural interaction. When economics students complete Web-Quest tasks in English, they can simultaneously develop language skills and explore authentic professional content. For example, students may investigate international companies, compare national economic policies, analyze global market trends, examine business communication practices in different countries, or develop solutions to an economic problem using English-language sources. Such activities create a meaningful connection between language acquisition and future professional activities.[3]

Another important dimension of Web-Quest-based English learning is the development of intercultural competence. Professional communication in economics frequently takes place across national and cultural boundaries. Differences in communication styles, business etiquette, negotiation practices, attitudes toward hierarchy, decision-making, and professional relationships can influence the effectiveness of international cooperation. Therefore, economics students need not only linguistic competence but also the ability to understand and appropriately respond to cultural differences. Web-Quest activities based on authentic international materials can expose learners to diverse cultural perspectives and encourage them to compare economic and professional practices across societies.

Web-Quest technology may also contribute to the development of students' autonomy and critical thinking. In completing Web-Quest tasks, students are required to identify relevant information, distinguish reliable sources from less reliable ones, compare different viewpoints, organize evidence, and formulate independent conclusions. These processes are particularly important for future economists because professional decision-making depends on the ability to evaluate information critically and use evidence effectively. At the same time, collaborative Web-Quest tasks can strengthen teamwork, negotiation, presentation, and problem-solving skills.[4]

The integration of Web-Quest technology therefore represents a potentially effective way of combining foreign language learning, professional preparation, digital literacy, and intercultural education. However, its effectiveness depends on the appropriate design of tasks, the selection of reliable and authentic resources, the level of students' English proficiency, the relevance of the content to their professional specialization, and the

teacher's ability to organize and monitor the learning process. For this reason, examining the pedagogical potential of Web-Quest technology in English language education for economics students is of both theoretical and practical importance.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Web-Quest technology on the development of professional and intercultural competence among economics students learning English. The study focuses on how structured Web-Quest activities can support professionally oriented language use, information analysis, collaborative learning, critical thinking, digital literacy, and intercultural communication. The research also considers the pedagogical conditions necessary for integrating Web-Quest technology into English language instruction in economics-oriented higher education.[5]

2. Materials and Method

The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative pedagogical research methods to examine the impact of Web-Quest technology on the development of professional and intercultural competence among economics students learning English. The methodological framework was based on the principles of learner-centered education, communicative language teaching, professionally oriented foreign language instruction, task-based learning, digital pedagogy, and intercultural education. These approaches were integrated to investigate not only students' linguistic development but also their ability to apply English in professional economic contexts and interact appropriately with culturally diverse perspectives.

The participants were economics students studying English as a foreign language in a higher education context. The research focused on students whose future professional activities may involve international communication, access to English-language economic information, cooperation with foreign partners, and participation in global economic processes. The students were engaged in Web-Quest activities designed specifically around economics-related topics. The tasks were selected according to students' language proficiency, professional interests, and educational objectives.[6]

The Web-Quest activities were organized according to several interconnected stages. At the introductory stage, students were presented with a professionally relevant problem or situation requiring the use of English-language Internet resources. At the information-search stage, students worked with selected websites, economic reports, international organizations' publications, business materials, statistical resources, and other authentic English-language sources. At the analytical stage, learners compared the collected information, identified relevant economic concepts, evaluated different perspectives, and discussed the reliability and relevance of the available data. At the final stage, students prepared a product such as a presentation, analytical report, comparative review, business proposal, or group solution to the assigned economic problem.

To examine professional competence, the study focused on several indicators, including the ability to understand and use professional economic terminology, interpret authentic economic texts, analyze professional information, communicate ideas in English, solve professionally oriented problems, prepare presentations, and apply English in simulated professional situations. These indicators were assessed through students' Web-Quest products, oral presentations, written assignments, and participation in collaborative discussions.[7]

Intercultural competence was examined through students' ability to identify and interpret cultural differences in economic and professional communication, compare business practices in different countries, demonstrate awareness of culturally determined communication patterns, and formulate appropriate responses to intercultural situations. Particular attention was paid to students' ability to avoid stereotypical interpretations and consider economic and professional phenomena from multiple cultural perspectives. Intercultural tasks included comparative analysis of business etiquette, international negotiation practices, management styles, consumer behavior, and communication strategies in different cultural contexts.

The study also assessed students' digital and information literacy because effective Web-Quest performance requires learners to search for, select, evaluate, organize, and synthesize information from digital sources. Students were encouraged to distinguish academically and professionally reliable sources from irrelevant or insufficiently supported information. This component was considered important because future economists increasingly work with large volumes of digital information and must make evidence-based professional decisions.[8]

Data collection was conducted through diagnostic and final assessment tasks, observation of students' learning activities, analysis of written and oral assignments, and evaluation of Web-Quest products. A comparative approach was used to identify changes in students' professional and intercultural performance following the implementation of Web-Quest-based activities. Students' performance was evaluated according to predetermined criteria covering professional language use, quality of information analysis, problem-solving ability, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and intercultural awareness.

The analysis combined descriptive interpretation of students' performance with qualitative analysis of their written and oral outputs. Particular attention was given to changes in students' ability to use English for professional purposes rather than merely reproduce previously learned linguistic structures. The quality of students' arguments, use of professional terminology, interpretation of authentic sources, ability to compare perspectives, and effectiveness of presentations were considered important indicators of learning outcomes.[9]

The methodological approach also emphasized collaborative learning. Many Web-Quest tasks were completed in small groups in order to create opportunities for discussion, negotiation, division of responsibilities, peer learning, and joint decision-making. Such organization allowed students to use English as a practical communication tool while working toward a common professional objective. The teacher acted primarily as a facilitator who provided guidance, monitored students' progress, clarified linguistic or methodological difficulties, and ensured that the selected online resources corresponded to the educational objectives.

The methodology was designed to determine whether systematic integration of Web-Quest technology could create a learning environment in which professional English, economic knowledge, digital competencies, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness develop in an interconnected manner. This methodological framework provided a basis for evaluating Web-Quest technology not simply as a digital teaching tool, but as an instructional strategy capable of connecting foreign language education with the professional and intercultural requirements of future economics specialists.[10]

3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of Web-Quest technology in English language learning demonstrated its potential to support the integrated development of professional and intercultural competence among economics students. The results indicate that the use of professionally oriented Web-Quest activities created a more interactive learning environment in which students were required to use English not only as an object of study but also as a practical instrument for obtaining, analyzing, discussing, and presenting economic information. This distinction is particularly important in the preparation of future economists, whose professional activities may require regular interaction with English-language documents, international organizations, foreign companies, business partners, and global economic information sources.

One of the most noticeable outcomes was the improvement in students' ability to use professional economic vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Traditional vocabulary exercises generally focus on memorization and reproduction, whereas Web-Quest tasks required students to encounter terminology in authentic economic materials and subsequently apply it in their own presentations, reports, discussions, and problem-

solving activities. As a result, professional terms were associated with specific economic concepts and practical situations rather than being learned as isolated lexical units. Students became more capable of explaining economic phenomena, describing market processes, discussing financial issues, and presenting professional arguments in English.[11]

The Picture 1. Web-Quest approach also contributed to the development of students' reading and information-processing skills. When working with authentic online materials, students had to identify relevant information, understand specialized terminology, distinguish central ideas from secondary information, and synthesize information obtained from several sources. This process transformed reading from a primarily receptive activity into an analytical and professionally oriented task. Students were encouraged to determine which information was relevant to the assigned economic problem and to justify their selection of particular sources and arguments.

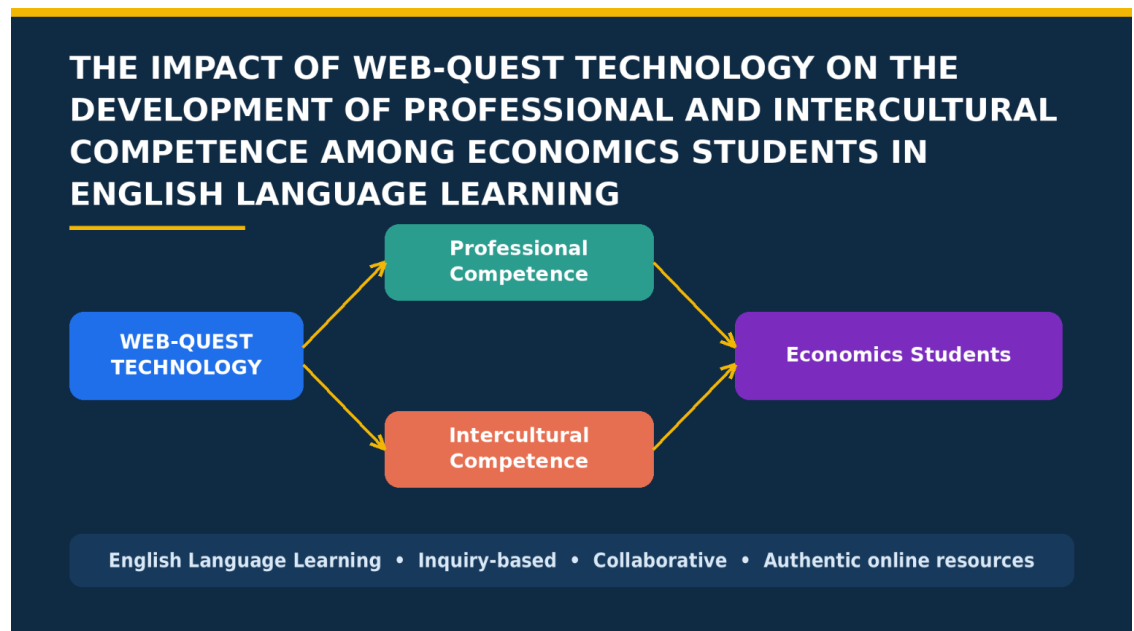


Figure 1. The Impact of Web-Quest Technology on the Development of Professional and Intercultural Competence among Economics Students in English Language Learning

An important result concerned the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Web-Quest activities typically presented students with a problem that could not be solved through the reproduction of a single textbook answer. Students had to investigate the issue, compare available information, evaluate alternative explanations, and formulate their own conclusions. For economics students, such tasks are particularly valuable because professional economic decision-making frequently involves incomplete information, competing interpretations, and the need to justify decisions on the basis of available evidence. Thus, Web-Quest technology created conditions for combining language practice with analytical and professional reasoning.[12]

The study further demonstrated the relevance of Web-Quest technology to the development of digital and information literacy. Students learned to navigate English-language Internet resources more purposefully and to evaluate the relevance and reliability of information. Rather than simply collecting large amounts of online material, they were required to select information that directly addressed the research problem. This activity encouraged a more responsible approach to digital information and strengthened students' ability to organize and synthesize information from different sources. Such competence is increasingly important for economics students because professional economic analysis depends heavily on digital databases, reports, statistical information, market data, and international publications.

Another important outcome was the development of communication and collaborative skills. Group-based Web-Quest tasks required students to distribute responsibilities, exchange ideas, negotiate decisions, and present collective findings in English. The collaborative nature of these activities increased opportunities for meaningful language use and reduced the predominance of teacher-centered communication. Students were placed in situations where they needed to explain their reasoning to classmates, respond to questions, defend their interpretations, and reach a shared conclusion. Consequently, English was used as a functional means of professional communication rather than exclusively as an academic subject.

The intercultural dimension of the Web-Quest approach was particularly significant. Economics is increasingly international in its scope, and future specialists need to understand how economic behavior and professional communication can differ across cultural contexts. Web-Quest assignments based on international business practices, negotiation strategies, management approaches, consumer behavior, and economic policies enabled students to encounter diverse perspectives. Students were able to compare professional practices in different countries and discuss how cultural factors may influence communication and business relationships.[13]

The analysis of students' activities also showed that exposure to authentic intercultural materials encouraged greater awareness of cultural differences. Students increasingly recognized that differences in professional communication cannot always be explained by linguistic factors alone. Variations in attitudes toward formality, hierarchy, time management, negotiation, cooperation, and decision-making may also reflect cultural contexts. This awareness can contribute to more effective international communication because students become more attentive to the perspectives and expectations of communication partners from different cultural backgrounds.

Web-Quest technology also appeared to strengthen learner autonomy. Students were given greater responsibility for planning their search, selecting resources, organizing information, and preparing the final product. The teacher's role shifted from the sole source of information toward that of facilitator and learning coordinator. Such an organization of instruction encouraged students to take greater responsibility for their own learning outcomes. This is particularly relevant in foreign language education because independent exposure to authentic English-language materials can support continued language development beyond the classroom.[14]

At the same time, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of Web-Quest technology depends strongly on the quality of pedagogical design. Simply directing students to search the Internet does not automatically produce meaningful learning outcomes. Effective Web-Quest activities require clearly formulated objectives, appropriate professional content, carefully selected sources, logically sequenced tasks, realistic time requirements, and transparent assessment criteria. If tasks are excessively complex or the available resources are poorly selected, students may focus primarily on searching for information rather than developing language, professional, or intercultural competence.

Another important consideration is students' initial level of English and digital literacy. Learners with limited language proficiency may experience difficulties when working with authentic economic texts containing specialized terminology. Therefore, Web-Quest tasks should be appropriately differentiated. Teachers may provide preliminary vocabulary support, guiding questions, source lists, glossaries, or examples of expected outcomes. Gradually, the level of scaffolding can be reduced as students develop greater independence.

The results also indicate that Web-Quest technology is most productive when integrated systematically rather than used as an occasional classroom activity. A sequence of progressively more complex tasks can support the gradual development of professional and intercultural competence. Initial activities may focus on identifying and interpreting information, while subsequent tasks can require comparison, evaluation, problem-solving,

negotiation, and the creation of independent professional products. Such progression enables Web-Quest technology to function as a component of a broader pedagogical system rather than merely as an additional digital technique.

The results demonstrate that Web-Quest technology can provide an integrated learning environment in which English language development, professional economic knowledge, digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and intercultural awareness are developed simultaneously. Its pedagogical value lies primarily in the meaningful combination of authentic information, problem-oriented tasks, independent research, collaborative interaction, and professional communication. For economics students, this combination can make English learning more closely connected with the competencies required in contemporary international professional environments.[15].

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that Web-Quest technology represents a meaningful pedagogical approach for developing professional and intercultural competence among economics students in English language learning. Its effectiveness is associated with the ability to integrate foreign language practice with authentic professional content, digital information processing, collaborative problem-solving, and intercultural exploration. Rather than limiting students to the reproduction of linguistic knowledge, Web-Quest activities create opportunities for learners to use English as a practical instrument for investigating economic issues and communicating professional ideas. The results indicate that Web-Quest-based instruction can contribute to the development of professionally oriented vocabulary, reading and analytical skills, oral and written communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, teamwork, and learner autonomy. Students are encouraged to search for relevant information, evaluate different sources, compare viewpoints, formulate evidence-based conclusions, and present their findings in English. These activities correspond closely to the professional requirements of future economists, particularly in an environment characterized by international cooperation and rapid access to digital economic information. In conclusion, Web-Quest technology can be considered an effective instructional framework for connecting English language education with the professional and intercultural development of economics students. Its systematic use can transform the language classroom into an environment characterized by inquiry, collaboration, authentic communication, critical analysis, and independent learning. Further research may focus on developing standardized assessment instruments for measuring professional and intercultural competence, comparing Web-Quest instruction with other technology-enhanced approaches, and investigating its long-term influence on students' academic achievement and professional communication skills.

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