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Intercultural Communicative Competence
A Competitive Advantage for Global Employability

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Intercultural Communicative Competence - A Competitive Advantage for Global Employability

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Foreword

This collection of academic essays brings together a selection of peer-reviewed papers based on contributions presented at the international conference “Intercultural Communicative Competence – A Competitive Advantage for Global Employability”, Prague, 22–23 June 2017. The articles are ordered in loosely connected thematic units that explore all aspects of teaching ICC in higher education. The collection opens with introductory studies by two of the conference key speakers, Robert O'Dowd, who presents “An Introduction to Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange”, and Margarida Morgado with her remarks on the “Intercultural Communicative Competence”.

The opening introduction is followed by studies that address the theoretical framework of the addressed issues. In her opening article entitled “Languages or Specific Purposes in Linguistics and Language Training”, Mágocsi Nyina offers a broad conceptual background, outlining a comprehensive list of the most relevant trends in recent research into languages for specific purposes with respect to the importance of ICC. Expanding on the theoretical framework of ICC in language learning in the context of higher education, Patcharerat Yanaprasart’s article “Diversity Challenges and Interculturality in Multilingual Higher Education” attempts to answer a crucial question whether the new conceptions of multilingual language policies offer a way for universities to draw up strategic measures which could create favourable conditions for the construction and transmission of knowledge in a linguistically and culturally diverse contexts. The first series of contributions concludes with a study by Timea Németh, Jon E. Marquette, Balázs Sütő, and Alexandra Csongor who discuss the intercultural competence of medical students in doctor-patient interactions, and argue that the complex tasks connected with the theoretical discussion and eventual implementation of ICC content play an increasingly important role in ESP, namely in the context of Medical English.

Moving towards the practical application of the principles of ICC, the collection offers two studies closely connected with the idea of the employability of students who have undergone or are currently undergoing different forms of intercultural training. Focusing on ICC and language education, Uwe Baumann’s and Elodie Vialleton’s article “Intercultural Communicative Competence and Employability in the Languages Curriculum at the Open University UK” analyses some of the recent changes in higher education in Great Britain. In a similar vein, Luděk Kolman and Klára Šimonová address the needs of future managers studying at the MIAS School of Business and assess the in-class use of selected IC models, hence: “Hofstede’s Model in Curriculum and Possibilities of its Substitution”.

The collection continues with a series of articles which offer an analysis of best practice and first-hand experience with the implementation of ICC content into various types of university ELT classes. In her article “Intercultural Communication: From Theories to Practices”, Alevtina A. Kolosova addresses the experience with implementing intercultural trainings in an academic course “Intercultural Communication”, and presents the programme of the course developed and implemented at the Department of Mass Communication at Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia.

Expanding on the discussion of successful integration of ICC, authors such as Houssine Soussi, Silvia Benini, Marta Giralt and Liam Murray, or Michelle Duruttya each in their specific way, address different ICT-based tools and technologies that might help facilitating the discussion of culture and intercultural encounters in the class. Houssine Soussi’s article offers an in-depth investigation of online social media on students’ intercultural communicative competence, analysing interactions of a group of Moroccan and American students in a closed Facebook group. Exploring similar ICT-supported practice, Silvia Benini, Marta Giralt and
Liam Murray introduce an educational portal Digi-languages.ie, present some of the activities it offers, and discuss data gathered during the implementation of one of these activities.

Addressing the use of ICT technologies from a completely different perspective, Michelle Duruttya’s article “Using Corpora in Teaching Languages to Enhance Cultural Competency with Focus on English as a Foreign Language” convincingly argues for the use of an online corpus in teaching a foreign language in order to promote cross-cultural competency. These three studies are complemented by a joint study by Alexandra Csongor, Jon Marquette, Timea Németh who discuss the use of “Online Educational Tools in Support of Language Development in an Intercultural Environment” in the specific environment of English and Hungarian for Medical Purposes.

The collection of essays is concluded with two research-based studies that address the issues of teaching ICC from perhaps the most important viewpoint, that is, from the perspective of the involved students. Anna Zelenková’s “Implementing Reflective Methodology in the Development of Intercultural Competence” presents the results of a qualitative action research, showing how the implementation of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle might help students develop their intercultural competence. Finally, Erika Huszár’s and Teodora Wiesenmayer’s article “Intercultural Communicative Competence: The Students’ Perspective” addresses two groups of students of Budapest Business School, College of International Business and Management who participated in a telecollaboration project and former Erasmus students, who are in their 2nd or 3rd year and examines the development of their communicative competence in a real international environment.
The ability to integrate and exploit online technologies in the classroom has become an increasingly important part of any university teacher’s skill set. Teachers not only need technological competence in order to use online applications and tools, but they also need to know how to exploit these tools in pedagogically informed innovative ways. In university education, online technologies have the potential to be powerful tools for the development of students’ foreign language skills, intercultural competence and for increasing their digital competence. But in order for this to happen, it is necessary for teachers to approach networked technologies, not simply as tools for reproducing traditional classroom practices in new formats, but rather as tools which will enable them to “adopt innovative and active pedagogies, based on participatory and project-based methods” (European Council & Commission).

One potentially effective way of engaging students in motivating and innovative online learning can come in the form of Virtual Exchange. Also referred to as telecollaboration or Online Intercultural Exchange, Virtual Exchange involves engaging students in online task-based interaction and collaborative exchange projects with partner-classes in other locations under the guidance of their teachers. In contrast to many other forms of online learning which are based on the transfer of information through video lectures or interactive quizzes, Virtual Exchange is based on student-centred, intercultural and collaborative approaches to learning where knowledge and understanding are constructed through learner interaction and negotiation.

Virtual Exchange has been in use as an educational tool for over 20 years and has been employed in a wide range of educational contexts and levels. In the field of foreign language education, the approach has traditionally taken the form of one of two models – each one reflecting the principal learning approaches prevalent in foreign language education at the time.

The first well-known model was e-tandem, which focused on fostering learner autonomy and learners’ ability to continue their language learning outside of the language classroom. In the e-tandem mode, two native speakers of different languages communicate together with the aim of learning the other’s language and messages are typically written 50% in the target and 50% in the native language, thereby providing each partner with an opportunity to practise their target language and, at the same time, provide their partner with authentic input. These exchanges are based on the principles of autonomy and reciprocity and the responsibility for a successful exchange rests mainly with the learners, who are expected to provide feedback on their partners’ content and/or on their foreign language performance. In this sense, tandem partners take on the role of peer-tutors who correct their partners’ errors and propose alternative formulations in the target language.

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1 See for example: Valtonen et al., Confronting the Technological Pedagogical Knowledge of Finnish Net Generation Student Teachers.
2 See for example: Belz’s “Linguistic Perspectives on the Development of Intercultural Competence in Telecollaboration”; or Kern’s inspiring “Technology as Pharmakon: The promise and perils of the internet for foreign language education” or O’Dowd & Lewis: “Online foreign language interaction: Moving from the periphery to the core of foreign language education?”
3 See for example: Cummins & Sayers’s Brave New Schools. Challenging Cultural literacy through Global Learning Networks; O’Dowd’s “Online Foreign Language Interaction: Moving from the Periphery to the Core of Foreign Language Education?”; or Warschauer’s Virtual Connections: Online Activities & Projects for Networking Language Learners.
4 See O’Rourke’s “Models of telecollaboration (1): E(tandem).”
The second model is usually referred to as *intercultural telecollaboration* and reflects the emphasis in the late 1990s and early 2000s on intercultural and sociocultural aspects of foreign language education⁵. This second model differs to e-tandem in the greater importance it attributes to classroom activity and in the shift of focus from language learning to culture-and-language learning. The intercultural model of telecollaboration strives to integrate the online interaction more comprehensively into the students’ language programmes and involves international class-to-class partnerships in which projects and tasks are developed by the partner teachers in the collaborating institutions. For example, students’ contact classes are where online interaction and publications are prepared, analysed, and reflected upon with the guidance of the teacher. Telecollaboration also places the emphasis of the exchanges on developing cultural awareness and other aspects of intercultural communicative competence, in addition to developing linguistic competence.

Recent years have seen foreign language Virtual Exchange gradually diverge in two paths. The first of these paths has led telecollaborative exchanges away from formal language learning and engaged learners in language and cultural learning experiences by immersing them in specialized online interest communities or environments that focus on specific hobbies or interests. Very often, this was justified by perceived weaknesses of the class-to-class model. Hanna and de Nooy (88), for example, argue that in class-to-class telecollaboration, “…[i]nteraction is restricted to communication with other learners, a situation that is safe and reassuring for beginners and younger learners, but somewhat limiting for more advanced and adult learners, who need practice in venturing beyond the classroom” (88). The authors propose that it is more authentic and more advantageous to engage learners in interaction in authentic second language (L2) discussion forums such as those related to L2 newspaper and magazine publications. Their own work focuses on engaging learners of French as a foreign language in discussion forums of French magazines such as *Nouvel Observateur*. The authors compare class-to-class telecollaboration with their model and suggest that class-to-class telecollaboration lacks authenticity as learners are not motivated by a genuine interest in exchanging ideas but rather by an obligation to get good marks for their online interaction. In contrast, by engaging learners in online discussion forums with native speakers “interaction takes place in a context driven by a desire to communicate opinions and exchange ideas rather than by assessment or language learning goals” (89).

The second, alternative path in foreign language Virtual Exchange involves attempts to integrate telecollaborative networks more comprehensively in formal education. The argument here is that if Virtual Exchange is such a valuable learning experience, then it should not be used as an “add-on” activity but rather as a recognized, credit-carrying activity which is valued and supported by university management. Based on this belief, reports have emerged of how universities are integrating Virtual Exchange into their study programs⁶, the use of alternative credit systems for students’ telecollaborative work⁷, and about the development of competence models for telecollaborative learning and for teachers engaged in telecollaborative exchanges⁸. Between 2011 and 2014 the INTENT project was financed by the European Commission to achieve greater awareness of telecollaboration around the academic world and to look for ways for its integration into university education. One of the main outcomes of this project was the UNICollaboration platform (www.unicollaboration.eu) where university educators and mobility coor-

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⁶ See R. O’Dowd: “Understanding the “other side”: intercultural learning in a spanish-english e-mail exchange”.
⁷ Compare Hauck & MacKinnon: “A New Approach to Assessing Online Intercultural Exchange: Open Badges for Soft Certification of Participant Engagement and Task Execution”; or Supporting “In-service Language Educators in Learning to Telecollaborate”.
⁸ See M. Dooly: “It Takes Research to Build a Community: Ongoing Challenges for Scholars in Digitally-supported Communicative Language Teaching”.


Instructors can establish partnerships and find the resources necessary to set up telecollaborative exchanges. Since then, UNICollaboration has established itself as an academic organisation (www.UNICollaboration.org) and holds regular bi-annual conferences for practitioners from all disciplines who are interested in Virtual Exchange.

The modules developed in the ICCAGE project which are reported in this volume reflect this second, integrative approach to Virtual Exchange. The modules use the online exchanges as part of their coursework and students received credit and recognition for their online collaboration.

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Intercultural Communicative Competence
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Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has of late become a very central concept in foreign language learning due to the ‘superdiversity’ created by increased economic globalized markets, globally networked societies, voluntary and enforced mobility fluxes of people, and to a reinforced conception of language as a language and culture that has people working in multilingual and multicultural environments and dealing daily with cultural difference, diversity and fluid value systems. In this brief introduction to ICC I will attempt to highlight what the concept of ICC entails for a foreign language teacher.

According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey’s study Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching, ICC involves attitudes on the part of speakers, such as curiosity and openness and the ability to relativize own values and to decentre from own perspectives. It also requires knowledge on the social identities of others, as well as skills to contrast and compare, interpret and relate, discover and interact with others, who are perceived as different, while becoming aware of own unconscious values, prejudices and preconceptions.

In fact ICC has been recently repositioned, as part of an educational discourse on 21st skills, in the framework of competences for democratic citizenship for living in culturally diverse societies by the Council of Europe (2016) as an integrated network of attitudes, skills, knowledge and values that go beyond those described above. Important additional skills to be developed include to learn to navigate a world where not everybody holds the same views and to be able to solve cultural conflicts. Besides acknowledging cultural diversity, the emphasis is now put on being held responsible for allowing all cultures to co-exist; the critical cultural awareness proposed by Byram et al in their Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching is now reinforced by knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication, while new attitudes are added, such as self-efficacy, civic mindedness and tolerance of ambiguity.

While decentering may appear to teachers as a natural development of critical cultural awareness in the sense of momentarily suspending one’s own views or perspectives to step into the shoes of others, just as the knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication can be interpreted by most teachers as something they already promote through communicative teaching methods, there is a whole political dimension attached to ICC teachers find hard to relate to: a critical understanding of the power relations of communication, conflict mediation and resolution skills, civic mindedness, social responsibility for linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as self-efficacy and tolerance of (cultural, linguistic, social) ambiguity.

Therefore, I propose to briefly explore some of these new layers to the dynamic concept of ICC that will require from foreign language teachers an additional effort of integration, either because they are strange to the notions themselves or because they feel they do not fall within their job description. For lack of time/space to address each individually, I will address two layers of ICC I consider particularly important and that, in my experience, teachers struggle with: the intersection of linguistic communities through the multiple identities of speakers of English (or any other language) as a lingua franca, which is connected to the notions of self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity, and knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication; and a second layer of ICC, which addresses the ideological responsibility of promoters of ICC and which connects to valuing cultural diversity and conflict-resolution skills.
The Intersection of Linguistic Communities Through Multiple Identities of Speakers

The ethnic, social and linguistic superdiversity that we are witnessing today in major cosmopolitan cities requires a lingua franca for communication, i.e. a language people use to communicate that constantly intersects other variables of ethnicity, cultures, mother tongues, and social status. A lingua franca should not depreciate any individual’s linguistic and social identities, nor should it be measured against the standards of a ‘native’ speaker; its use should rather empower individuals to communicate in public and private plurilingual settings that are often supranational (Breidbach17).

Plurilingual and multicultural environments also require new communicative linguistic and social competences for private and public encounters, such as to accept and value cultural diversity as positive if communication is to succeed (Breidbach15). This is the basis of intercultural dialogue, which can happen anywhere (at work, in school, in the media, in civil society): “an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect” (Council of Europe, White Paper 10). UNESCO (14) further highlights that intercultural dialogue “encourages readiness to question well established value-based certainties by bringing reason, emotion and creativity into play in order to find new shared understandings”. Intercultural dialogue is thus built on the acceptance that people engaged in communication will need to find some common values on which to build communication and will have to actively look for solutions to their competing worldviews and traditions (Council of Europe, Competences 7). For the dialogue to happen it is also needed that the lingua franca works as a ‘reliable interlingual mediator’. Speakers must be competent users of the foreign language and hold some knowledge on their own linguistic identities as users of that language in intercultural situations. This implies a politics of recognition of the linguistic identities of others as valuable and researchable.

In very practical terms, speakers of a lingua franca must learn to accommodate and negotiate linguistic decisions that pertain to the language, but also to their own plurilingualism and multiple identities. They need to be able to use language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. Furthermore, users of a lingua franca need to use it with intercultural awareness to the cultures of their interlocutors, who may be using non-verbal language in specific ways, using silence and gesture as complements to words, etc. (Janssen 51).

The Ideological Responsibility of Promoters of ICC

Now to the second layer of ICC that teachers find hard to accept due to its markedly political outlook: Not everything in the economy is global: most production, employment and firms are and will remain local and regional, claims Hardison (69). As it was argued in studies such as Castells’ The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, networked societies tend to reproduce and enhance the processes of exclusion of minorities, migrants, disenfranchised people to the benefits of the more powerful and the richest in the privileged parts of the world. Thus, from a (European) intercultural inclusive social and linguistic framework, users of a lingua franca need to be made aware that they hold the responsibility to uphold democracy and redress the world balance in terms of social and economic rights, which are sometimes also linguistic rights.

How does this translate into the foreign language classroom? The Council of Europe places great emphasis on the respect that is due, in any efficacious communicative event, to the mutual cultural affiliation of speakers, while also foregrounding that speakers of a lingua franca may be called upon to act as mediators between speakers of different languages, thus acting as linguistic and cultural translators. For this they will need to acquire the skills to address, manage and resolve conflicts that may arise between parties due to clashing worldviews, different communication styles or verbal/non-verbal communication attitudes.

In this sense the lingua franca user (and the fore-
ign language learner) is viewed as the individual who assists others to understand and appreciate others, which already reveals a dimension of social participation in reconciling intercultural encounters in superdiverse societies. This brings with it an added social responsibility to keep a balanced representation of the parts, to understand their cultural and linguistic characteristics and to appreciate them as something that stands for a different cultural affiliation (Council of Europe, Competences 49).

This is where, in my view, intercultural communicative competence meets the social dimension of speakers, who must prepare the ground in education, at work, in the arts and media, and other environments for intercultural respect, acceptance and conviviality. These people with lingua franca skills may be found working with minority and disadvantaged groups, migrants and refugees, with institutions and organizations, as well with multinational companies, towards democratic access to knowledge, to language and to power. What they need to learn is that cultural conflicts may be resolved through intercultural dialogue; that intercultural dialogue accepts and defends that people should have the opportunity to present their views and be respected for them despite their cultural affiliations; and that both parts of a conflict need to be willing to respect democratic decision-making and value dialogue.¹

Works Cited


¹ See for example Giménez Romero’s “La naturaleza de la mediación intercultural.”
Abstract

In an ever-developing age of science and technology, individual spheres of human activity gain a special significance which necessitates effective and professional communication. The corpus of special terminology in language is growing rapidly, the process of terminologization whose function is to denote new objects, phenomena, and processes and to verbally register systems of concepts belonging to various fields of knowledge gets activated. Interest in research into languages for specific purposes by linguists and applied linguists may be induced by the emergence of a high demand for terminology, as the most accurate description of a given field of knowledge comes as a requirement. The elaboration of the didactics and methodology of teaching languages for specific purposes both as a functional style of the national language and as a foreign language acquires a special role. Without supplying a comprehensive survey, I shall list the most remarkable trends in research into languages for specific purposes, which determine our contemporary ideas of languages for specific purposes.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, globalization, English as a Lingua Franca, English language teaching

Global Society and Language

For the past few decades there have been changes occurring and penetrating all levels of life. They have equally affected society, economy, culture, mentality, and language. No wonder, linguists are showing more and more interest in fields of research which study the connections between language and society as well as language and economy. This is easy to understand as a change of paradigm has occurred in the early 21st century.

The upcoming global society exhibits several new features. For instance, not only community activities, but also individual ones are done in a multicultural environment. New types of work now evolve in virtual time and space, while employees are expected to meet different requirements in respect of both professional qualities and language skills (Castells 3–24).

Thus a novel social structure is created which is based on free, unlimited communication and access of knowledge, and this is also due to transform man’s economic, political, social and cultural activities. The profound analysis of this extremely topical problem, however, would not fit into the framework of the present paper; therefore, I shall concentrate on dealing with questions of language and culture, arising in the processes of globalization.

We wonder whether global culture as such exists or not. The answer will be “yes” if we think of fashion, music, television programmes, food and lifestyle, i.e. the world in which we are living. Simultaneously, global culture provokes the revolt of regional cultures. In response to certain limitations generated by the influence of economic globalization, spiritual traditions of respective nations are reborn in national economies, in the sphere of politics, administration, and culture. Native language, national art, music, customs, clothes, food, etc. are likely to acquire a special significance. In this sense, globalization, which stimulates the rebirth and reinforcement of national and regional cultures, can in fact be interpreted as a factor acting as a counterbalance to national and regional cultures. The universal culture of humankind is made up of diverse cultures, and its existence is exclusively owed to a co-operation between them.

Intermediary, Auxiliary Languages – Lingua Franca

In her interpretation Ablonczy Lívia Mihályka envisages culture as a complex structure consisting of a great many systems of symbols. Language itself
is understood as an essential component of culture, which eventually does transform culture at the same time, as it supplies a set of verbal constructions facilitating the self-expression of manifestations of culture (14).

During the whole course of history, we have witnessed endeavours to search for a language applicable for communication between nations or to ascribe to a certain language the status of the “intermediary auxiliary language” (Eco 31).

Notwithstanding, the problems of a common language should be clearly distinguished from the question about the perfect language put forward by Umberto Eco since the theory of the perfect language is classed as a problem of philosophy. An international language or a world language is a language used by a significant number of speakers all over the world. Constructed (auxiliary) languages, such as Esperanto, come under this category. However, English, and most notably its variation used in the United States, has become a widespread, common language for international communication beginning with the 1970s, owing to historical and geopolitical factors impacting international affairs.

Most typically, researchers scrutinise the problems in this area, as follows: “English as a language for international communication”, “English as a world language”, “English as a language for intercultural communication”, “English as the lingua franca” (Hidasi 324–331). English has become the language of politics, Information Technology, multinational companies, finances, and, last but not least, of science.

Taking this fact into account, researchers are making efforts to explore new approaches to the problem of “globalization versus local languages”. Among them Michalchenko, Zjazikov and Csaba Földes hold that in the future, European nations will have to do their best to master as many languages as possible in order that they can stand their ground responding to present-day challenges (Földes 184–197). In addition, first language acquisition and philological research conducted into it are given a special priority in this context because changes in language mostly reflect corresponding alterations in society and in the individual’s conscience. According to the definition offered by the Russian linguist Golovin, language is a complex mechanism of signs which keeps developing uninterruptedly and works in a unity with conscience and human thought (10).

National Language – Languages for Specific Purposes

Natural human language is divided into functional variations and determined by a number of factors (such as purpose, place, social environment, form of communication and the sphere of human activity). At its core lies the national language, in the depth of which prescriptive/standard language is shaped as “the processed form of language’s life” (Pertashova 90–93).

In an ever-developing age of science and technology, the quantity of words taken as special terminology will grow rapidly, the process of formation of terms, whose function is to retain the system of concepts coming from various spheres of knowledge facilitating the nomination of new objects, phenomena, and processes will get activated. Back in the 1920s, this all too obvious change served as a stimulus for the scholars of the Prague School (Prague Linguistic Circle) to launch research into the so-called “functional dialects”. Presently these scholars are regarded as the founders of the theory of languages for specific purposes since defining the concept and status of the languages for specific purposes as well as systematic registering of lexical items in dictionaries were initiated by them.

Nevertheless, we must stress the fact that contemporary linguists still have been incapable of reaching a consensus as for the question of locating the position of languages for specific purposes in the system of languages. Some describe them as

1 LSP denotes “Languages for Specific Purposes” or “Languages for Special Purposes”, both versions of the term are in use.
a kind of sublanguage whereas others regard them as “functional style”, “register” or “genre”. It is a complex task to define languages for specific purposes. As Zsuzsa Kurtán puts it:

“difficulties in giving a clear-cut definition lie in interdisciplinarity, and they are mostly induced by already existing approaches in the background. With special fields of study as well as linguistics and related branches of science making a great progress and permanently extending, the concept of language for specific purposes is presented in a different light all the time” (37).

The majority of researchers contrast language for specific purposes with the living spoken language; in fact, they handle the special language terminology distinct in fields of usage as a subsystem and the national languages’ functional variation, which comprises a commonly used set of vocabulary items. British expert on languages for specific purposes, Roger Pearson, argues: “Defining the languages for specific purposes will depend on whether in defining it we consider them as a distinct system or as a part, but as a part which is positioned on the periphery of natural language” (30).

Many consider languages for specific purposes as a part of national languages, as a basic tool for expressing the scientific style of the standard language. Such are, for instance, the grammatical rules for combining words. Furthermore, in both we find polysemic words, homonyms, antonyms and idioms (Danilenko 305). It should be noted in parentheses that “technical language words/lexis” and “terminological vocabulary” are considered synonymous.

The mutual influence of national languages and languages for specific purposes is verified by processes of terminologization and determinologization. As it is well-known, during the process of terminologization, lexical items of standard language vocabulary acquire a new, specific professional meaning, thus becoming a part of a certain system of terminology. As a result of determinologization, on the other hand, terms from languages for specific purposes will be integrated into everyday usage (Borisova 115).

A significant interest in research into languages for specific purposes is demonstrated in linguistics and applied linguistics. It is quite natural, as it is extremely important to describe as precisely as possible the phenomena, data and ever-extending terminology to be linked to various fields of knowledge. Thus it is an inevitable task to elaborate the teaching methodology of languages for specific purposes not only in respect of native languages’ functional styles, but foreign languages, as well.

**Linguistic and Lingvodidactic Trends in Research into Languages for Specific Purposes.**

In research conducted into languages for specific purposes, two main trends can be distinctly observed. The linguistic trend primordially considers the language for specific purposes as a well-structured formation clearly exposing the feature of the system, whereas the lingvodidactic trend deems them as a means of communication, and consequently focuses on dealing with the methodology applicable for teaching it. With no pretensions for supplying a comprehensive survey on the subject, I shall continue to discuss a list of the most remarkable theories which contain contemporary ideas of the phenomenon of languages for specific purposes.

In contemporary research into languages for specific purposes, a lexical-terminological approach, originally developed by the Austrian linguist E. Wüster still plays an important role. In harmony with this approach, a high store is placed on the set of lexical items, the terminology of languages for specific purposes as well as specific ways of coining new words. According to Wüster’s theory a certain language of any field of science is a “target language”, “a means of communicating reality and facts” (Gurov 30), which is achieved via terminology.

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2 See for example: Komarova Funkcionalnaia stilistika: nauchnaia rech. Jazyk dlia specialnih celei (LSP).
At the same time, approaches focusing on functional languages or functional stylistics also commonly occur in research done into languages for specific purposes. These approaches motivate researchers to shift to syntax and take a focus on studying corpuses of texts in languages for specific purposes. The proponents of this school assert that languages for specific purposes can be detected merely in special technical texts; and accordingly these languages can be taught only on the basis of these texts.

Individual texts of the languages for specific purposes incorporate the utmost essential instances of the system of professional communication, the realisation of a multicolour professional use of the language. Homutova, a Russian expert on languages for specific purposes, says: “A language for specific purposes is realised in the form of texts in oral and written discourse. Texts of languages for specific purposes are those in which professional knowledge is accumulated and preserved” (Homutova 56).

Basic distinctive specific features in texts of languages for specific purposes will involve the use of special words and terms: “Any text belonging to a language for specific purposes is but a form of representation of the adequate terminological inventory, which is created in the corresponding syntagmatic chain by the rules of the contemporary logical syntax” (Banczerowski 447). In texts in languages for specific purposes an important role is given to linking devices, whose function is to facilitate the logical link between separate components, elements of individual statements. Amongst typical features experts also mention the frequent occurrence of passive impersonal, indefinite personal constructions, complex and subordinate phrases and sentences as well as the abundance of abbreviations, a logical explication of facts, avoiding words and expressions carrying emotional implications.

Texts in languages for specific purposes are a multifold, complex phenomenon, and according to the definition proposed by Zsuzsa Kurtán, apart from noting lexical and grammatical structures, pragmatic features are also subject to scholarly scrutiny. “A text in a language for specific purposes is a verbal or non-verbal conveyance, predetermined by a specific speech intention and convention, transmitted in an auditory or visual channel, which is mainly made up of organising links, which as a basic unit of communication fulfils the requirements of communication in a specific speech situation or context” (Kurtán 80).

Today the scholarly analysis of texts in languages for specific purposes extends to lexical, syntactic, semantic, textual structure and pragmatic levels.

The 70s brought significant changes to the research into languages for specific purposes. In Hoffmann’s theory of sublanguages, the phenomenon of languages for specific purposes is interpreted via a communication-pragmatic approach, but this theory relies on the traditional approach based on functional stylistics, lexis and terminology, as well as functional language.

Hoffmann states that languages for specific purposes are a total of language tools selected from the commonly shared system of language in a specified way and determined by communication and features of content. These tools are applied in a communication field professionally well-defined in order that employees working in the same field can mutually understand each other” (Hoffmann quoted by Grubov 32).

To date, the communicational pragmatic method plays a key role in teaching languages for specific purposes since it puts the emphasis on teaching communication in a special professional field via the language for specific purposes.

Furnishing a summary of results presented by various research trends on the subject of languages for specific purposes, V. A. Grubov, a Russian lecturer on Business German, claims that these days “in studying communication in languages for specific purposes an intercultural approach tends to come to the fore. Presently paraverbal and extralinguistic characteristics of both written and oral texts in languages for specific purposes are valued highly” (33).
Present-day processes related to gleaning, preserving, interpreting and systemising information alter our concepts of the language and the process of communication. Now researcher’s attention is focused on “the pragmatics of texts produced by languages for specific purposes, realised on an intercultural level. In fact, the main task is to isolate the culturological specifics of texts in languages for specific purposes and to take these into account in teaching special professional communication. This will contribute to eliminating problems in intercultural communication” (Grubov 33).

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Abstract

Higher education is caught between two contradictory forces: the need to compete in the international arena and to foster the national languages, cultures and values at the same time. The challenge is to find a balance between national/local and international/global solutions: on the one hand, the use of global English as a Lingua Franca for beyond-borders communication, focusing on immediacy, simplicity, economy and efficiency, and on the other hand, the choices of multilingual language policies and strategies for fairness, symmetric participation, active collaboration and relational intersubjectivity.

This contribution aims to better understand how higher education copes and can cope with the new needs of international mobility and situations of diversity in academic settings. Can a new conception of multilingual language policy offer a way for universities to draw up strategic measures, which could be a favourable condition for the construction and transmission of knowledge in a linguistically and culturally diverse context?

Keywords: higher education, English as a Lingua Franca, multilingualism, intercultural communicative competence

Introduction

Worldwide access to Higher Education brings opportunities as well as challenges to universities. These latter acquire more and more international partners as well as an increasingly diverse student audience. Internationalisation is almost the synonym for diversity, not excepting cultural issues in institutions. This reality places Higher Education between two contradictory forces: the need to compete in the international arena and to foster the national languages, cultures and values at the same time. The challenge is to find a balance between national-local and international-global solutions. The clash between these two poles creates tension in every university trying to adopt internationalisation strategies.

For some, the use of global English as a lingua franca for beyond-borders communication, focusing on immediacy, simplicity, economy and efficiency, should be promoted. For others, the choices of “multilanguaging” strategies for fairness, symmetric participation, active collaboration and relational intersubjectivity are the best. This contribution aims to better understand the cultural and intercultural dimensions of English as a lingua academica and to show how higher education copes and can cope with the new needs of international mobility and situations of language and culture diversity. Can a new conception of multilingual education offer a way for universities to draw up multilingual policies, which should be based on the ‘intercultural’ view of multilingualism and which could be favourable conditions for the construction and transmission of knowledge in a linguistically and culturally diverse context?

Our reflections rely on the results of a study mandated by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Yanaprasart, “Scientific report”) with a special focus on the way in which organisations and institutions in Switzerland manage diversity and try to identify the advantages and drawbacks of linguistic diversity in the Swiss situation as a multilingual state. The point was to uncover the language regimes and the diverging relevance of linguistic diversity as a part of organisational diversity management.

Methodology

In the SNF-project aforementioned, we started by analysing the philosophy of a French speaking university regarding the concept of diversity and explicit management measures. Next we proceeded to a discourse analysis of its language policy. Thirdly,
we conducted semi-structured interviews with “people in charge of diversity”, “task-oriented” interviews with staff or heads rather than “policy-oriented” interviews with policy-makers, revealing their attitudes towards institutional diversity. The interviews were conducted in French, and the citations in this chapter are translated from French to English.

In sum, the data collected comprise oral and written documents of many different types: a) legal and policy documents issued by various Swiss Federal Offices; b) language policies of the Swiss National Foundation and of Institutions of Higher Education in Swiss Romandie; c) official documents of institutions such as annual reports, press communications, internal magazines, brochures, guidelines, job ads; d) corporate web pages, pictures, posters, advertisements; e) oral documents such as semi-directed interviews (Yanaprasart, “Managing Language Diversity”, Yanaprasart and Lüdi, “Diversity and Multilingual Challenges”).

By means of this multi-methodological approach, we took into account various observables while ensuring the coherence of the results and allowing for comparisons and generalisations. A multi-methodological approach means more than a combination of different dimensions and aspects. It can give an overview of the relations between them. Needs, ideologies and practices were analysed in a given political, economic or linguistic context, as perceived by social actors. Furthermore, their individual perceptions, collected, contextualised and put in interrelations with discursive constructions, may inversely influence policies and measures regarding diversity management.

Theory: Diversity, a Strategic Issue for Competitiveness and Performance – Challenges in Academic Settings

Worldwide access to higher education brings opportunities as well as challenges to universities. Diversity is one of them. Many factors, such as the phenomena of migration, internationalisation and globalisation, the changing demographic characteristics of the society, and the rapid development of technology and sciences (Bruchhagen 83–92), have made the challenges of diversity an inevitable reality inside and outside of universities.

According to Scott, “universities have always had roles that transcend their national boundaries. Students and scholars have always been mobile. International research collaboration has always flourished. Scientific communities have always been global”. Universities are expected not only to recruit international students but also to internationalise their faculties, by recruiting the best talented scientific and academics irrespective of their country of origin, having coming through different systems, then being able to offer a different approach. Benefits and Challenges of Diversity (3) reported that universities need “diversity in discipline, intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and personality”. “Diversity of experience, age, physical ability, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and many other attributes” not only offers students new ideas, beneficial for a dynamic intellectual community, but also contributes “to the richness of the environment for teaching and research”. Therefore, “the diversity of a university’s faculty, staff, and students influences its strength, productivity, and intellectual personality”. Diverse backgrounds bring important new perspectives to universities. As suggested by Smith (227), engaging diverse perspectives on campuses allows them to increase “the potential to involve broad cross sections of faculty and staff who understand that intellectual and educational dimension of diversity is crucial”.

In order to entail all possible opportunities, Higher Education has increasingly questioned how diversity should be managed, encouraged and developed in its system (Clarke et al. 1). In this light, each institution needs to decide which diversity management is required to attain its objective and how diversity can be encouraged. Due to the unique nature of educational institutions (Aigare et al. 6), diversity is perceived differently than in a business environment, where diversity is said to be “good-for-business” (for more details, see Yanaprasart, “The Challenge of the Management of Diversity” 187–234). Consequently, managing diversity in Higher Education is more than having a competitive advantage in the market (Cengiz 16). As a matter
of fact, diversity has an influence on almost every facet of an institution, claim Meek and Wood (5), whether it is “access and equity, teaching methods and student learning, research priorities, quality management, social relevance, finance, etc.” This can be explained by the several roles that Higher Education plays: educator, social institution, and producer of knowledge, as Smith (5-8) points out.

If it is true that the reflection on diversity has emerged from a concern for unequal opportunities in access to education (Olivas 103–117), the focus of an international education as largely promoted in the globalised world has made the matter of diversity shift from being a mere social issue to becoming more a business one (Lattimer 3–17). Like organisations, universities, with their diverse staff, faculties and students, have their own performances to improve and their own goals to pursue. Recognising the necessity of reacting to global changes, tertiary institutions have begun to realise that an emerging institutional mission should be to focus on an inclusive curriculum (Mohanty 41–65), making the curriculum more diverse, covering diverse areas of knowledge from which all students will benefit and in which they also see themselves reflected.

However, due to the complex nature of diversity in Higher Education, leaders and faculty feel insecure when dealing with diversity related issues (Sauberrer 53). Most of them seem to prefer to focus on gender mainstreaming, by promoting equal opportunities between women and men, rather than on other keys elements of diversity (op. cit.).

Switzerland is located in the heart of Europe, where freedom of movement blurs the borders between other countries. The high rate of migration may partially explain why Switzerland is a favourite destination for visiting students (OECD). The rate of registered foreign students was 19.2% in Swiss tertiary institutions in 2006, only after New Zealand, Luxemburg, Australia and the UK. Swissuniversity. ch also states quite a high proportion of foreign university students (27.6%), Ph.D. students (50.2%), teaching and administrative staff (44.5%) (Status in February, 2015). Inbound and outbound exchange students constitute important mobility groups.

This situation brings challenges not only for politicians but also for the economy as a whole. What do these developments mean for the Swiss higher education institutions? In which direction should tertiary-education policies be developed, since they are increasingly significant on national agendas? How do the institutions perceive their role, in terms of rules and regulations?

Hofmeister claims that “while Anglo-Saxon institutions have made a huge progress on sustainably implementing and anchoring diversity issues within their staffing, teaching, research and students, European institutions do lag behind and are hesitantly absorbing or discussing Diversity Management” (in Cengiz 19); this hesitation can be explained by a high ambiguity felt by educators towards the requirements of DM (Breinbauer, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann, cited in Cengiez 26).

All in all, the fact that Higher Education institutions are not only educational institutes but also employers can explain their focus on two different interest groups at the same time. There is a rationale for tertiary institutions to engage in diversity management (Jayakumar 615-651). However, it is important to get a profound overview on the topic of diversity management and how it can be (and should be) applied in higher education to identify what the motivational argument for universities to engage in diversity management is. What are the roles and expectations tertiary institutions can look forward to, and in what perspectives?

Findings: Situation in Switzerland at the Example of UNIL

In Switzerland, the Equal Opportunity Act (Gleichstellungsgesetz (GIG)) was enacted in 1996 to protect employees from being disadvantaged because of their gender; in 1999 the Equality before Law Article (Bundesverfassung) was introduced, aimed at protecting and respecting the dignity of each human being living in Switzerland, while the principle of equal rights for all has been embodied in the Swiss Constitution since 1981, and the Federal Office for Gender Equality was set up by the Swiss Federal Council in 1988. It is currently part of the
Federal Department of the Interior. Its main objectives are to abolish any form of discrimination (direct and indirect), and particularly to enhance the inclusion of equal opportunity for women and men in all areas of life. This legislation has influenced the tasks and duties of the Swiss universities in federal and institutional instructions and regulations (for an overview, see Meyerhofer). Initiated by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET), the Federal program for equal opportunities for all at universities started in 2000.

Founded in 1537 as a school of theology, University of Lausanne (UNIL) became a university in 1890. Today, more than 2,000 researchers work at UNIL. It welcomes approximately 1,500 international students from 120 countries among the 13,500 of those who attend classes. The university proposes a wide curriculum comprising exchange programs with world-renowned universities.

On its web page, “UNIL Assets”, the university represents an international atmosphere, since one fifth of the student population and one third of the teaching staff come from abroad. In 2012, convinced that “the various experiences of its community members are the cause of scientific innovation and development of the university as an organization” (Plan of intentions of the UNIL 48). UNIL wanted “to develop and implement measures under the term ‘diversity’ considered useful and appropriate” (loc. cit.), this in parallel with the Bureau for Equal Opportunities. “Diversity must be considered an opportunity.” As written, UNIL “wants to expand the existing boundaries of equality and go beyond the laws to treat all people equally:"

The wealth of diversity at UNIL does not come solely from the mix of men and women. More and more students, teachers, and staff come from a different country, another culture, different socio-economic backgrounds, or have done their education or parts of their education or career abroad. The innovation capacity and competitiveness of UNIL depend on this growing diversity.

The UNIL undertakes to create a culture of openness and integration that is based on the differences to emphasize the benefits, and to allow each one to fully develop its potential and its skills. In this sense, it takes different measures in favour of the diversity. Under the mandate of the vice-rectorate (academic succession and diversity section), a diversity officer was nominated. Moreover, it is the only institution which has a website dedicated exclusively to diversity. Under the theme “Diversity and Integration”, three main arguments for UNIL to promote and manage diversity adequately can be identified: a) a culture of openness; b) unique experience; c) inclusion for success and competitiveness. For UNIL, individual differences are perceived as an advantage. Therefore, each individual brings with him/her a unique experience to academia and to society. To provide highly qualified individuals and ensure the success and competitiveness of the university itself and of Switzerland as a whole, the sense of inclusion within the university is crucial:

There are people who come from varied backgrounds, who have diverse prior knowledge, who have lived different educational contexts, different academic cultures, different learning cultures and who come to learn here together. How to exploit this situation at its best? How can we derive the most benefit? How to exploit constructively this diversity? (Diversity officer, interview conducted in January 2014)

As explained in Yanaprasart and Lüdi “the culture of inclusion at UNIL is portrayed as a tool to provide an opportunity for people with different backgrounds to learn from one another. Inclusion in groups is believed to create a safe environment for learning and creativity. Workshops have been organized for teachers. One of the objectives is to facilitate the inclusion of all students when teaching, rather than speaking only of ‘diversity’ in the broad sense. Participants are invited to meet, share and discuss the specific theme/s of their choice concerning their personal experiences, practices and techniques used in classroom, allowing them to identify how to integrate changes in the classroom or to create environments where diversity can thrive through increased student participation and feedback. The overall aim is to help teachers to develop his/her diversity toolbox” (7).
Concretely, five actions have been developed to underline the importance of awareness and integration:

- Development of website ‘diversity’, which puts at its disposal resources and various services for students, researchers, staff, and disabled people;
- Organisation of conferences on diversity, with the participation of international and national experts and specialists. All material is available on the Internet.
- Realisation of workshops oriented mainly on the theme of inclusion, providing practical tools to apply in teaching classes;
- Encouraging children and young people of various sociocultural and/or economic classes to pursue a higher education, through exhibitions, conferences, workshops, etc.;
- Development of the Welcome Center to facilitate the integration of new employee/s.

In 2013, the laboratory Doplab initiated the application ‘SpeakUp’ to be installed in classrooms. Questions can be asked anonymously from the students’ smart phones. This anonymous twitter is expected to create more inclusion or facilitate the interaction of students of different languages and cultures.

In terms of language issues, how do you make students from 150 countries understand the same thing when teachers give instructions? According to the Diversity Officer, it is imperative that students know what they need to learn, how to learn and to be evaluated. Teachers have to help them to better understand the instructions and objectives and especially to make these easy to be understood.

The situation in Switzerland is quite complicated with its several languages, as well as English, comments this person in charge of diversity: “These students have the ability to succeed but perhaps because the language is not theirs they will fail because they have not understood the task.” With the application ‘SpeakUp’, the Diversity Officer explains that students can ask questions in French even if the class is in English.

Confronting the real tendency of promoting English as scientific lingua franca, the university, with its institutional language policy, has been in the process of identifying some of the advantages to allowing multilingual practices to answer the local demand. In this light, UNIL accepted in 2009 under the framework of the “International Strategy of the UNIL.” “The role of multilingualism in the strategy of internationalization UNIL”, as proposed by the Language Policy Management Committee (LPMC) (created in 2003 and dissolved in 2011). This ‘multilingual language policy’ was aimed at identifying different academic and scientific situations of the university, such as training and teaching, research and scientific communication, promotion and institutional communication. The director of the language center at UNIL is convinced that an adequate multilingual profile should form an integral part of students’ education and training. Her comment is: “it is not at all the same thing that a French-speaking person lectures other Francophones being in a multilingual and multicultural context. It takes another teaching technique.” Furthermore, “a number of teachers do not do enough to exploit students’ linguistic resources. They remain in a monolingual perspective,” advanced this director:

Although we used the portfolios, many teachers remained in a monolingual perspective. They have not integrated multilingual repertoires in their entirety with all languages, varieties, all levels, all types of skills that are in them. These are resources to communicate. They were not exploited enough. There is still a fairly monolingual way of teaching.

The aforementioned language policy document proposed a clear identification of different cases and profiles of teachers, researchers and students, giving a clear image of elements to take into account during the process of internationalisation related to languages.

Teachers

For teachers/assistants whose first language is the local language teaching in the local language.
For teachers/assistants whose first language is the local language teaching in another language.

For teachers/assistants whose first language is not the local language teaching in the local language.

For teachers/assistants whose first language is not the local language teaching in a language other than the local language.

**Students**
For students whose first language is the local language
- Who go on mobility (outgoing)
- Who do not go on mobility (multiple teaching languages).

For students whose first language is the local language
- Who are studying for an entire cycle
- Who are on mobility (incoming) of short duration (multiple teaching languages).

“The role of multilingualism in the strategy of internationalization of UNIL” forms an integral part of five principal objectives of the International Strategy of UNIL: increasing its skills in research and teaching through collaboration with foreign partners; increasing the university’s international reputation in order to attract talent at all levels; facilitating the access of its students to study programs of foreign higher education institutions and strengthening the value of its degrees outside Switzerland; developing the international skills of its students; actively participating in the international development of teaching and researching (UNIL 1).

In this context, the Language Policy Management Committee (LPMC) added criteria of quality in relation with multilingualism to take into account. For example, regarding the students whose first language is not the local language and who study during one full cycle:

- For skills in the local language and other possible languages of teaching when arriving: define the level of skills for admission and verify that the student has it.
- For development of skills in the local language and possible other languages of teaching: offer credits to enlarge their multilingual repertoire.
- For a level in the local language and other possible languages of teaching required at the exam: define minimal criteria of acceptability of the quality of language in the work submitted and exams.

It can be seen that the LPMC has tried to generate a certain awareness of the importance of language factors in diversity management and the process of internationalisation.

In one sense, an awareness of the central role of language diversity and the importance of multilingual repertoire is a prerequisite to the academic, professional, social and personal development of students, teachers and researchers. The aforementioned different arguments and reasons in favour of multilingualism can be discussed in terms of strategies of internationalisation as follow:
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Strategic Philosophy Management</th>
<th>The argument that a multilingual philosophy fits better with some of the basic values of the institution: equality, fairness.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Strategic Personal Implication</td>
<td>A way to involve personal engagement (compliance factor for internal communication).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/ Image</td>
<td>Strategic Performance Management</td>
<td>The argument for marketing in the external communication in order to meet the needs of international candidates and partners (compliance factor for external communication).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Strategic Process Management</td>
<td>A source of knowledge and a reservoir of experiences, inherent to each language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Strategic Productivity Management</td>
<td>The argument for the transmission and construction of scientific knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Strategic Intercultural Asset Management</td>
<td>The argument asserting intercultural relations based on academic and scientific cultures and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Strategic Thinking</td>
<td>The argument for creativity and efficiency, diversity being correlated with quality, innovation, creativity, hybridity and dynamism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Strategic Inclusiveness Management</td>
<td>A tool to include all participants in discussions so as to reach their full potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Strategic Cost Management</td>
<td>A means to reduce cost regarding miscommunication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusion

As English is now the international language (Hu and Chen 194), Airey (4) has identified some advantages of using English as the teaching language in higher education, such as English a necessity for an academic career, a strong asset in the job market, an attraction for visiting researchers and international students and teachers, etc. However, the spread of English lingua franca has created a false sense of mutual intelligibility, where cultural differences are disappearing with the use of one unique language (Garcia and Othe guy 2). Even when a discourse takes place in a common lingua franca, an intercultural competence is needed to interpret the sense of the message (Bertaux). As Candlin (95) states, a mutual understanding requires interpretability and intelligibility skills to understand and be understood.

Cultural differences may generate a whole series of mismatches in expectations between Asian learners and Western teachers, tutors or universities in an academic context, as analysed in the study of Back. Montgomery (69) indicates that disciplinary cultures can be a source of conflict and tensions about ‘how to get things done’ in groups of different academic disciplines. For Guardiano et al. (30), “different cultural backgrounds seem to give rise to deep differences” as in the case of the rhetorical choices of non-native English student which do not conform to the Anglo-Saxon model. However, “academic writing in English as a foreign language is a cultural and linguistic hybrid,” argues Klitgard (171). Therefore, in the classroom of foreign languages, different cultural backgrounds are in a process of negotiation (Teixeira E Silva and Cavaco Martins 232). For these authors, it is imperative to “create a transformational learning environment in which new cultural forms and practices can emerge” (Klitgard 185), to “develop creative and transformative learning environment, ‘fluid’ spaces where students are allowed to visit and revisit new knowledge” (Montgomery 74).

In agreement with Postman and Wiengartner (103), who claim that “knowledge is language”, which means that “the key to understand a subject is to understand its language”, we think that promoting multilingual practices in a highly mixed linguistic
environment can actually allow the emergence of interculturality and make more transparent cultural heterogeneity on the one hand and preventing an erosion of scientific cultures, thus inspiring creativity and innovation for the quality of learning on the other. A multilingual program may allow integrating an intercultural dimension into the curriculum while promoting the diversity of languages and cultures. Multilingual students with their extensive cross-cultural experience can make use of their multilingual resources to deal with a variety of their academic disciplines in a culture-specific way. Indeed, multilingualism measures can be leveraged to create a culture of interculturality and inclusiveness (Yanaprasart “Plurilinguisme institutionnel”, “Multilinguaculturing”).

To conclude, the impact of our research on diversity management practices in Higher Education can be translated on the one hand in terms of understanding: actors need to understand the complexity of managing internal and external diversity in the context of teaching, learning and researching, and the consequences, which could improve the competitive advantage of the institution and society, and on the other hand, in terms of developing measures of diagnostics, action, advocacy, monitoring and evaluating “diversity-performance”.

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Increasing the Intercultural Competence of Medical Students IN and THROUGH Class
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Abstract

Due to globalization and migration across the globe, the student population has grown diverse and increasingly multicultural throughout higher education during the past few decades all over the world. Working, teaching and studying within a multicultural environment includes both benefits and drawbacks.

Today, we are confronted with various needs and expectations of students originating from different cultural and social backgrounds. Therefore, we have developed specialized approaches, revised our teaching methodology and implemented new tools to facilitate the students in hopes of effectively addressing these issues and ensuring the improvement of students’ intercultural competence. We introduced a new course highlighting intercultural competence, whereby students enrolled in the English, the German and the Hungarian programmes study together predominantly to learn, respect and acknowledge the importance of intercultural competence in doctor-patient interactions, while at the same time, assist one another towards understanding and embracing the cultural differences one might face in their specific countries, cultures and subcultures. During these encounters within the sphere and realm of providing professional medical care, it is not only their knowledge and skills which will develop, but their awareness with respect to intercultural competence and sensitivity. The aim of our paper is to share and demonstrate these teaching methods and tools implemented by teachers at the Medical School of the University of Pécs, Hungary.

Keywords: globalisation, English for Specific Purposes, intercultural communicative competence, medical English, higher education

Introduction

“Who understands others as well as oneself will be granted success in a thousand encounters.”

Chinese proverb

However, the current number of international students has been increasing at a more accelerated rate than in previous centuries, due to globalisation and huge scale migration. According to the estimation of Altbach and Bassett (30, qtd. in UNESCO), there will be eight million international students studying abroad by 2025. This has prompted new focal points to be integrated into 21st century education, such as creativity, problem solving, cultural awareness and sensitivity, just to name but a few. The list is endless; however, two components need to be highlighted: cultural awareness and sensitivity. Due to worldwide migration and substantial! changes in the higher education sector, they have significant impact on all nations across the globe, and contribute to effectively developing students’ intercultural competence in the long run. Medical and health care education, in particular, has witnessed dramatic demographic changes and more and more attention is paid to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, as a consequence. The entirety of this issue suggests that educating medical students about the importance of the effects of culture on health in the 21st century is undeniably vital.

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004. Since then the number of migrants has been continuously growing in the country (Németh 7). As Figure 1 illustrates, the number of immigrants in Hungary, as estimated by Eurostat, is indicated to be between 20,478 and 91,557.
At the same time, in 2012, there was an estimated 230,000 Hungarians living outside the country in one of the EU member states, though close to 500,000 is projected (Világgazdaság Online). These figures include a substantial number of health and medical care professionals. Some settle for a long term, while others relocate for shorter or longer periods of time for the purpose of professional development, to gain more medical experience and know-how and return with the possession of newly acquired knowledge, skills and techniques (Németh 5). The growing cultural diversity in many countries, resulting in the development of multicultural societies, has prompted the incorporation of patients’ cultural and ethnic background into the communication between health care providers and patients. Therefore, it has become vital for Hungarian health care and medical education to address the above issues and contribute to the development of skills and competences both for students and staff which are indispensable in the multicultural world (Németh and Rébék-Nagy 323-333).

The University of Pécs in Hungary, which was established two hundred years after the foundation of the University of Oxford, in 1367, is celebrating the 650th anniversary of its establishment this year. The language of instruction was originally Latin and later changed to Hungarian (1923), nonetheless, realizing the potential of English and German language medical education, the stakeholders of the University of Pécs decided to launch English (1984) and German (2004) language programmes to attract more international medical students, as a result of which, today, only 43% of the students are Hungarian and 57% are from all over the world. Working, teaching and studying within a multicultural environment has as many advantages as disadvantages, but, this can also be regarded as a purely positive attribute, as it promotes the development and implementation of novel, dynamic and innovative courses and curricula, research projects and programmes.
Every culture has its own worldview and beliefs regarding health, diseases, medication, remedies, treatments, and medical care. Immigrant cultures bring these beliefs and practices into the health care system of another culture, which often leads to misunderstandings and difficulties. As a result, in the early 1990s, an imperative need for interculturally competent medical and health care providers was established, resulting in several studies to explore its meaning, concepts, structure and methods (Németh). Although a high number of literature suggests that providing interculturally competent care promotes positive health outcomes for patients\(^1\), medical education in Hungary currently does not provide courses on intercultural competence, nor any similar workshops or training programmes. At most medical schools in the country, courses on intercultural competence, as a formal, integrated part of the curriculum, are still in their early stages. As a result, medical education in the country does not adequately prepare future doctors and health care providers to understand how culture influences a patient’s perception of disease and how perceptions affect treatment and, ultimately, quality of care.

\textit{Needs Analysis}

This prompted the implementation of a needs analysis. An online questionnaire was prepared in 2014 to shed some light on what the target groups thought about the importance of intercultural competence in medical and health care. The questionnaire contained ten questions in English, both closed- and open-ended. There were three target groups in the survey all at the Medical School of the University of Pécs: medical students, both Hungarian and international (N=65); academic staff, teaching different subjects to both Hungarian and international students (N=24); and doctors, with work experience both in Hungary and abroad (N=21).

\textit{Responses from Doctors and Academic Staff}

The majority (68%) of the doctors and academic staff were females, aged between 36 and 45 on average. Most of the academic staff taught English (46%) and German (12.5%) for medical purposes and the remainder (41.5%) taught various medical subjects. The doctors were specialized in different fields of medicine working both in Hungary and abroad. In replying to the question of where they think they need to have intercultural competences in Hungary, the majority of the academic staff and doctors agreed it was while working in a multicultural environment (71%) and in treating patients (82%). Regarding the importance of increasing the intercultural competence of health and medical care providers, 95% of doctors and academic staff agreed it was of primary significance. In respect to the improvement of the intercultural competence of medical students, the majority of academic staff and doctors (58%) agreed that having classes and training programmes on multicultural issues will contribute to developing these skills. Study abroad programmes (51%) and the importance of learning foreign languages (54%) were also highlighted by many respondents.

\textit{Responses from Students}

The majority (72.2%) of the students were females, aged between 18 and 25 on average. They studied medicine (80%) and pharmacy (20%) and most of them (67.2%) were second-year students. In reference to their studies, 54% studied in the Hungarian programme and 46% in the English programme. Regarding the importance of increasing the intercultural competence of health and medical care providers, 95.4% of students agreed it was of primary importance. In respect to the improvement of the intercultural competence of medical students, the majority of students (65%) agreed that offering classes and training programmes on multicultural issues will contribute to developing these skills. They also highlighted the importance of special intercultural classes, in which Hungarian students can study together with their international peers. Meeting people from other cultures (41%) and the significance of learning foreign languages (54%) was also highlighted by many students.

\(^1\) See for example Flores et al.; Torres; Betancourt.
Developing a New Curriculum

Responding to the call to teach about culture in the medical curriculum requires creating learning materials, tools and a special learning environment, which equip students with awareness, knowledge and skills with respect to culture and its impact on health. As a result, quality medical care will be delivered for diverse patient populations. This includes providing students with information and knowledge which serve to deepen their understanding of the concept of culture in health, the characteristic features of cultural interactions, and the reality that culture is not stagnant, but ever-changing. As a consequence, teaching about culture in medical education should not be reduced to stereotypic descriptions of population groups’ cultural health beliefs, norms, behaviours, and values. It should also include the analysis of cultural beliefs and cultural systems of both patients and providers to locate the points of cultural dissonance or synergy which contribute to patients’ health outcomes (Ter-Valon 570-576).

Scrutinizing the outcomes of all the three needs analyses, the following conclusion was drawn: there is a definite need for improving the intercultural competence of medical students, as at both ends of the survey (from medical students to practising doctors) it was revealed that by the time they graduate and work as physicians, these skills will be inevitable to provide quality medical care. As an initial step, this finding led to the development and implementation of the first Intercultural Competence in Doctor-Patient Communication (ICinDPC) elective course in September, 2016 by the Department of Languages for Specific Purposes. It was also of primary importance for us to make this course available not only for students of one programme, but for all the three programmes (Hungarian, English and German) as it was firmly believed that having an intercultural classroom will be an added value towards serving the purposes of raising intercultural awareness and sensitivity later on. The classes were 90 minutes long each, lasting for 14 weeks during one semester. This course aimed at increasing medical students’ awareness of sociocultural influences on health beliefs, attitudes and behaviours as well as providing skills to understand and manage these factors during medical care with patients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

21 students (six males and fifteen females, aged between 18 and 27) participated, representing eight different countries and cultures including China, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Jordan, Korea, Nigeria and Spain. The sessions focused on different aspects of providing medical and health care in a multicultural environment, from the impact of globalisation and migration, stereotyping and gender issues to culture specific health beliefs, religious views and behaviour. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of seeing the world from multiple perspectives. The method of the classes was interactive in order to create proper communication and achieve appropriate effect. The students were continuously engaged and involved by asking questions and listening to one another’s perceptions. This resulted in an eloquent dialogue between the three groups of students, and conversations and discussions even continued well after the classes.

Feedback Results

Following the end of the semester, students were asked to fill in an anonymous feedback online. The assessment below addresses strengths, weaknesses and what the course instructors intend to implement towards improving the course, prior to the upcoming semester.

Strengths

The course was offered for the first time and it is therefore regarded as a pilot program, yet, its enrolment maxed out at 21 students, although the limit was 20. Interestingly, several students sought enrolment well after the course was filled and closed. Those students who were successfully enrolled had a multi-ethnic background, eight countries and even more cultures were represented.

During the first few weeks, students were lectured with regard to the material in the curriculum and the topics to be discussed. Emphasis was placed on in-
teractivity and class participation. Information was provided on how to prepare an oral and multi-media presentation scheduled at the end of the course including an authentic case study with respect to how the physician must deal with differences in treating his/her patients and the cultural challenges likely to be encountered from the country of origin. Favorable responses to the course include the following quotes.

Table 1 – Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's one of the classes I looked forward to every week.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What I liked the most was that many times we had group work.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I liked the atmosphere of communication.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I know a lot more about other people's countries and cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can also handle unfamiliar situations better now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It made me reflect a lot about certain ideas I take for granted,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that are not universal as I once thought but only culturally learnt.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the students strongly agreed or agreed the course fulfilled objectives discussed in the first few weeks. 58% of the students responded favourably and strongly agreed in which the course satisfied their personal needs and expectations. The remaining 42% agreed. The majority of the class strongly agreed or agreed (87%) the materials covered, lectured and discussed had practical relevance. Most students strongly agreed (91%) their intercultural skills, knowledge and awareness improved as a result of the class. The majority of the students (98%) would strongly recommend this course to friends and peers. On a scale of one to five (one is the worst, five is the best), nearly all the students rated the course at a grade of five. Only a few rated the class at a grade of four. Nearly all the students strongly agreed or agreed (83%) the material presented was at a level suitable to their English comprehension and overwhelmingly was easily understood.

In summary, it can be said all students enjoyed the course and participated in uploading their oral presentations to a Padlet page (Nemeth, “ICin DPC2017Spring”), an online site suitable for class participation and sharing documents. Much of the instructors' written guidance was uploaded and no doubt served to enhance the learning experience.

Weaknesses

As regards room for improvement, the instructors agreed, more emphasis must be placed on the strategy in the development of the students' final presentation including authentic case studies. Although we subscribe to the notion in which intercultural awareness and sensitivity can be taught and learnt, we should not forget that demographic factors could influence its presence, absence, or level. A handful of students felt the onset of this course was basic with respect to defining culture, culture shock, religion, beliefs and cultural tolerance. It may be because their English was advanced and/or several of the students had moved about the globe, which means they were naturally more experienced than other students in learning about and assimilating into a new culture. Therefore, it can be claimed that prior intercultural experience, language and culture study are positively associated with increased intercultural sensitivity (Paige et al. 467-486). Of particular note is the comment from one student who hoped more Hungarian students will sign up for the course in the future. Other comments include a more intense focus on authentic medical topics from the participating students' country of origin. In addition, clinical visits, to have a hands-on experience with regard to Hungarian patients were also requested to be included next semester.
Conclusion

Our primary goal by developing a course entitled Intercultural Competence in Doctor-Patient Communication for medical students was to increase awareness of, sensitivity to, and knowledge about diversity issues in medical and health care delivery and at the same time prepare students to care for patients from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Our aim was also to give them a framework of knowledge and skills by which they will be able to recognize and appropriately address racial, cultural, and gender biases in health and medical care provision in the long run. Medical students experiencing cultural immersion demonstrated changed world views, increased cultural sensitivity, and enhanced communication skills. Studying in a multicultural classroom was an added value that enhanced their cultural awareness not only of other cultures, but their own. As a consequence, their intercultural competence increased not only in, but through the class by constantly working and communicating with their peers and learning about specific features of each other’s culture.

Awareness of cultural differences and the ability to respond to them appropriately is crucial for the effective practice of medicine. Medical and health care education in Hungary need to assure that adequate cultural awareness, knowledge, skills and attitude levels are reached during the six years of medical education. To be even more effective, curriculum development on culture must go beyond merely transmitting culture-specific knowledge and include attitude and skills components as well.

Interculturally competent medical and health care appear to be a long developmental process and a combination of various means and methods in Hungary. Its primary aim is to master specific knowledge and skills that enable medical and health care providers to deliver proper care to multicultural populations. It benefits the learning outcome if it is viewed less as a burden and rather as an enhancing lifelong learning process that makes the providers’ already well-established medical and health care skills better and more effective.

Works Cited


Intercultural Communicative Competence and Employability in the Languages Curriculum at the Open University UK
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Abstract

In recent years, higher education in Great Britain has undergone considerable change, most markedly the increase in fees from about £9,000 for a BA degree to £27,000 in 2012 in England. This fee increase has led to more questioning of the benefits of university education and a stronger focus on whether the students’ financing of their education achieves a return on investment. The increased earnings over a life time are estimated to range from £100,000 to £500,000 (Anderson) and, as repaying their student debt has become a major preoccupation for new graduates, employability has become a key theme in university publicity: “Enhance your employability” is a key message given to prospective students by the most popular degree course at the Open University, an open and distance higher education provider in the UK, rated 14th overall in a national league table for the employability of its graduates.

Research (for example Araújo et al.) has demonstrated that knowledge of a second language increases employability across Europe. The importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) for working in multicultural teams is widely acknowledged and recognised by employers (CBI 32, 49) and so is intercultural dialogue for social cohesion (CoE, White Paper 5). Degrees in modern languages, especially when they integrate the development of ICC, therefore present strong employability benefits.

This paper presents the approach the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics at the Open University in the UK has taken to integrate both employability and ICC skills in its curriculum and enhance the skills base of graduates and their chances of finding work in the national or international graduate workforce. We will describe the design principles and development of our detailed framework and supporting resource—designed to span our entire modern languages programme, in five languages, from ab initio to degree level—and demonstrate how our innovative learning design implements the framework and supports the training of highly employable multilingual global citizens able to articulate the range of skills they have developed.

Keywords: distance education, languages, curriculum design, intercultural communicative competence, employability skills

Context

Higher education in Great Britain has changed considerably over the last two decades, starting with the introduction of student fees in 1998, when students were required to pay up to £1,000 per year for tuition. Tuition fees have increased several times in the interim, and since 2012 a BA degree has costed about £27,000 in England (other arrangements exist in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland). Tuition fees have to be paid upfront every year, and student loans managed by private loans companies have therefore been introduced to enable students to afford such payments. With students undertaking a large investment in their higher education and also taking on a considerable debt which will also include loans for their living costs whilst at university, before they enter the job market, there has been an increasing focus on what benefits university education brings to graduates and also on whether students receive a return on their investment. Estimates about the increased earnings over a lifetime vary and range from £100,000 to £500,000 (Anderson). This context explains why universities have made employability and their graduates’ employability skills a key theme to attract students which is reflected strongly in university publicity. The Open University, UK, an open and distance higher edu-
cation provider, which traditionally offered part-time degrees, advertises its most popular degree course with the slogan “Enhance your employability” (“BA/ BSc (Honours) open degree”). Rankings on graduate employment are widely available and used for advertising and promotion. In a league table published by *Times Higher Education* on 16 November 2016, the Open University is ranked 14th overall by employers in a national league table for the employability of its graduates (Minsky).

In the context of higher education in the UK, “our collective understanding of employability is pivotal to modern higher education delivery, but the underpinning concepts are not yet fully formed. The measures we use are blunt instruments, incapable of reflecting the nuances and complex realities of transitioning from education to work, not least in how we measure employability for part-time and distance learners” (Kellett and Clifton). It is stated that higher education “must either deliver increased earning potential (in which it is valuable to the student), or deliver increased ability to perform a social function and/or make an economic contribution (in which case it is valuable to the public good and a subsidy is demonstrably justified). Of course, it can deliver both” (Rich 6). The recent introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework in England (Morgan), a formal scheme aiming to assess the quality of teaching in English universities, highlights the importance of employability skills as a measure of success for universities as it includes “employment” and “highly skilled employment” as part of their key metrics (Department of Education 27).

For the purpose of this article, employability is defined as “having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment, if required” (Hillage and Pollard, quoted in Rich 9). Kellett and Clifton (“Measuring gains”) stipulate that “the part-time sector must broaden its thinking from the narrowness of employment outcomes to a more nuanced clustering of plural gains: learning gain, working gain and personal gain. This embodies a more holistic fusion of skills, values and attitudes in employment journeys” (Kellett and Clifton). The design principles of the new curriculum designed by the Open University School of Languages and Applied Linguistics reflect a similar holistic view of what constitutes the learning and teaching of modern languages, redefining the discipline as a clustering of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes spanning a plurality of areas.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a well-established academic field, originating from the work of Mike Byram and his collaborators in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see for example *Teaching-and-Learning* and *Teaching and Assessing*). Within a European context, Byram’s work (e.g. *Intercultural Competence* and *The Common European Framework of Reference. The Globalisation of Language Education Policy*) has been the benchmark for ICC since the late 1990s, demonstrating its influence by its inclusion as a key component in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CoE 197). In this article Byram’s definition of ICC is used, which consists of: “knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one’s belonging to a number of social groups, values which are part of one’s belonging to a given society” (*Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice* 5). Figure 1 shows the five component parts of ICC which are expressed as “savoirs” or “ways of knowing”.

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**Figure 1 – Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, Teaching and Assessing 34)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Of self and other; Of interaction: individual and societal (savoirs)</td>
<td>Political education</td>
<td>Relativising self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpret and relate (savoir comprendre)</td>
<td>Critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager)</td>
<td>Valuing others (savoir être)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discover and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire)</td>
<td></td>
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As Canning states, “Intercultural competence, defined by Byram et al. (2004), as ‘... the ability to interact in complex cultural contexts among people who embody more than one cultural identity and language’, has emerged as an interdisciplinary field which links disciplines such as ethnography, history, language, literature, philosophy and psychology (see Crawshaw, 2005). Interculturality acknowledges that language skills alone are insufficient for an understanding of complex cultural contexts. Therefore language graduates should possess in-depth cultural insights, which will be valued by employers, rather than being ‘only’ functionally competent in the language.” (8). Canning also writes that “employability is widely cited as a key reason to study a language” and adds that “more sophisticated analyses speak of the intercultural competence and communication skills developed by Modern Languages graduates and how these skills make them highly employable, even when the employer does not require languages.” (1).

Intercultural communicative competence means, according to Jones, the ability to operate “effectively across cultures and challenging our own values, assumptions and stereotypes” (Jones 97). In the literature, the focus is mainly on the experience of international sojourners, i.e. students who spent a period abroad studying or in work placements. Coleman (1) stated that there is strong evidence that a period of study or work abroad helps students to gain employability skills. Jones suggests that the main transferable employability skills gained by interculturally competent students are self-sufficiency/self-efficacy skills and people skills (Jones 101). Although Jones’ study was predominantly based on the context of languages students acquiring these skills during residence abroad, self-efficacy skills are skills that Open University students develop in abundance too. The combined benefits of distance study and modern languages study therefore make for a particularly favourable context for employability.

The Open University (UK) and Languages at the Institution

The Open University (OU) was founded in 1969, it has been for several decades the main part-time distance education provider in the UK. It was unique as it offered, and still offers, an open entry policy at undergraduate level, in that students can commence studying at the institution without any prior qualifications. In 2017 the Open University had over 170,000 students in the UK and beyond, with the majority of students being mature students. It has a modular programme with chunks of normally 300 or 600 hours of learning per academic year, worth 15 or 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits respectively. Curriculum design and production is normally done from scratch and entirely in-house. The institution has a strong commitment to opening education to all, and makes open educational resources (OERs) available to the general public through its OpenLearn platform which offers a large range of learning materials for free. The Open University also owns the FutureLearn platform which delivers Massive Open Online Courses across the world.

More than three quarter of OU students are in employment (“Facts and Figures”), which means that employability has a slightly different focus than for most universities that cater for the 18-24 year-old age group who will be entering the job market after the end of their academic study. Nevertheless, there is still a strong focus on employability at the Open University, in line with government policy and with the institution’s strong social mission, aiming to support students to gain employment, move to more qualified or senior positions or change career pathways, while or after studying with the institution. The importance of employability skills at the OU is reflected, for example, in the employability advice that is provided to languages students (“BA (Honours) Language Studies”). It explains that language skills are regarded highly in some sectors, such as manufacturing, banking, finance and insurance because of the increasing globalisation of these industries. It also provides a detailed list of specific skills the students will develop beyond the specific knowledge gained. The focus here is on transferable and work-related skills, such as the ability to draw together information, analyse and critically evaluate it, effective communication, time management, the ability to work independently, to understand contemporary global issues and appreciate cultural diversity.
The Open University’s explicit “goal is nothing less than to make The Open University the premier university in the UK for enhancing employability and boosting career prospects” (The Open University 6). This goal is reached through the completion of qualifications developing subject specialist skills, and supported by a full career advice service, but it is also achieved through embedding employability skills into the curriculum. We will now describe how.

The Languages Curriculum at the Open University

Languages were introduced into the curriculum of the university in 1995 when the first module, in French, was made available to students. Today, the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics offers undergraduate qualifications in a variety of combinations of English, French, German, and Spanish, with a main degree of a BA in Modern Languages and embedded Certificates of Higher Education and Diplomas of Higher Education. English for Academic Purposes, Chinese and Italian are also taught as minor subjects, and Welsh through a non-accredited course. At postgraduate level, students can also study an MA in Applied Linguistics and an MA in Translation. The School has been a pioneer in technology-enhanced language learning and teaching. Apart from qualifications it also offers opportunities for informal learning, including Massive Open Online Courses. In the 2016-17 academic year, about 11,000 students were enrolled to study on languages modules. The BA programme, by dint of being a programme of distance education, does not offer an extended period of study abroad. However, students will attend a week-long intensive course in the countries whose languages they are studying. Furthermore, as these students are older and as the majority of them is in employment (69% for Languages students), a large proportion of the cohort has experience of travelling, living or working abroad.

Redesigning the Languages Curriculum

Historically the languages curriculum was developed on a module basis, with module syllabi cumulatively forming the overall curriculum. A comprehensive review of the curriculum was undertaken after the institution moved to a qualification-based offering to comply with the practical requirements of the new fees regime and loans system in England. The review highlighted some issues in terms of the overall coherence of the BA degree, between stages of study or across languages, that needed to be addressed. This review also offered an opportunity to respond to market demand and institutional policy with regards to employability skills, embedding intercultural communicative competence further into the curriculum and adding the consistent development of non-subject specific skills to the curriculum.

The design process finished in 2014, after a comprehensive review which involved all academic colleagues in the School. An immediate result was the production of an introductory module on exploring languages and cultures to better prepare students for the study of language and introduce intercultural communicative competence into the curriculum. As the institution and the School have traditionally long lead-in times, the implementation of the new curriculum for the BA has been gradual since then and will continue until 2022 allowing for a full-cycle of module redesigns. The first modules to implement the new curriculum have been three specialist modules at OU Level 1 and CEFR level A2-B1 in French, German and Spanish. They will be launched in September 2017 as part of the degree programme. Other modules will follow until the redesign is completed.

It was important to reference the languages curriculum against existing internal and external benchmark so as to ensure its validity and compliance with quality assurance requirements. The Common European Framework of Reference (CoE) of Europe (2001), by now the established international benchmark in the UK higher education sector, had already been used for the first iteration of the curriculum design and was thus referred to again in its reincarnation. The Open University had developed a new internal levels framework, which was used as well as frameworks for digital literacy and professional skills developed based on available best practice in the sector. Finally, the curriculum was referenced against the important Quality Assuran-
ce Agency’s benchmark statements for Languages, Cultures and Societies (QAA 2-3).

A main aim of the redesign of the curriculum was to highlight the multiplicity of the subject-specific knowledge, competence and skills areas which cluster to make up the field of language study, including intercultural communication competence, and to foreground non-subject specific skills, i.e. academic, digital and employability skills.

The review therefore identified twelve different components of a new and comprehensive languages curriculum. Apart from the traditional strands of content (themes), grammatical, lexical and phonological competence and language skills, knowledge of text types and translation skills, the curriculum also prominently includes non subject-specific skills: digital and information literacy to enable students to operate in our increasingly digital world at home and at work, academic literacy to enable students to acquire critical skills and produce work in appropriate academic language (both in English and the modern languages on offer), and employability and professional skills. Last but not least, our blueprint includes intercultural communicative competence. As Byram’s framework stipulates that knowledge is one important aspect of ICC, knowledge of the world will also feature alongside ICC.

The article will now focus on showing how intercultural communicative competence and employability skills have been embedded in the curriculum.
Figure 3 provides a detailed breakdown of all the learning outcomes in relation to ICC in the BA (Honours) Language Studies qualification. At the introductory level, the focus is broad and includes *inter alia* the development of awareness of the interrelatedness between languages and cultural contexts, culture-specific knowledge, intercultural encounters, awareness of stereotypes and the meaning of plurilingualism. Within Level 1 (roughly equivalent of the first year of study), there are two stages, related to the level of linguistic proficiency: beginners and post-beginners, followed by Level 2 (equivalent of the second year of degree study) and Level 3 (equivalent of final year degree study). The learning outcomes of the different levels build on each other so that through the course of study the students gain a more sophisticated understanding of ICC. The curriculum also acknowledges that at beginners' level, the students' linguistic proficiency will not be sufficient to engage with speakers of the language in the target language whereas this skill will be developed at the next level and students will gradually develop a level of sophistication to do so in the target language as they progress through level 2 and level 3. The development of criticality and the increasing reflection on stereotypes are two further main learning outcomes.
The strand on knowledge of the world is split into two aspects, the general underpinning principles, and details of the content for each level. Figure 4 shows the underlying principles on which the curriculum is designed. In line with the entire shape of the curriculum, the students are provided with a generic introduction at Level 1, covering aspects such as the students’ own culture and language biography, intercultural encounters, intercultural communication around the students own community and areas of plurilingualism and pluri-culturalism. The students will then gradually develop their knowledge of the countries and cultures where the target language is spoken from Level 1 to Level 3, and will gradually widen the geographical scope of their knowledge.

The employability and professional skills framework details skills to be developed in a range of areas: personal management (e.g. planning and organization or self-motivation), communication (i.e. oral and written communication skills that students will gradually gain in at least two languages, including cross-referenced skills in intercultural communicative competence), IT (cross-referenced to digital skills), team working (including working with others, leadership, negotiating and networking) and problem-solving (e.g. being analytical and critical, cross-referenced to academic skills).

To support the authors of the teaching materials a detailed checklist that breaks down the skills to be taught and achieved by the students has been provided (see Figure 5 for an example of one skill).
Implementation

Having developed the whole framework described above, as well as resources for course designers to support module development, like the checklist shown

In Figure 5, the School has now moved into the implementation phase, with teams of academics currently developing new modules applying the new curriculum. Designing or updating modules to reflect this new curriculum requires a change of learning design and teaching approach, which we will now describe.

Producing languages modules for distance teaching is a complex process (Coleman and Vialleton 235-236), but the methods and approaches used by the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics at the Open University are, by now, tried and tested. However, developing a new generation of modules, which cover the same level of linguistic skills as their predecessors, but teaches some new non-subject specific skills and foregrounds others, whilst not increasing the quantity of materials or the student workload, required some adjustments.

The key to this challenge was the notion of integration: the choice of content, the design of module units and activities, and teaching approach needed to allow the module designers to do more within the same time and space. The following will demonstrate how this was achieved, based on the example of one of the new modules designed: the new module French Studies 1, Language and Culture of the French-speaking world.

Firstly, the content was carefully selected to support the implementation of the new curriculum. The documents and stimuli on which activities are based were selected or designed to be multi-dimensional, and therefore support activities leading to the simultaneous development of a range of skills.

The audio-visual materials, produced in-house, were designed not just to provide input for listening and listening activities, but to support further activities and reflections. For example, the participants in the videos were chosen to reflect the students’ career aspirations. In the unit about the world of work, the learners hear an interpreter and a teacher from French-speaking countries talk about their jobs, the qualities required to be successful in their professions, and the study pathways these individuals followed to enter their careers. The videos also feature people with language skills who are working in professions not traditionally associated with languages graduates (i.e. a nurse and a shop keeper), life-long learners who changed career pathways and retrained, and individuals who work in multilingual and multicultural environments (the interpreter, working in European institutions in Brussels, and the employee of a hospital in Geneva).

Thus, the audio-visual materials covered not only language and skills development but allowed the addition of a layer of reflective activities for our students on study aims and career choices and what intercultural communicative competence means in a “real life environment”, thus supporting the aim of including employability skills and intercultural communicative competence in the curriculum.

Secondly, the structure of units and teaching approach in the module was also revised to allow for the integration of new curriculum areas. Within the module, each theme embeds the development of knowledge of the world which comprises, amongst other, geography, arts and culture and history. Furthermore each unit progresses from introductory level facts and vocabulary to language development (including functional language, grammatical, lexical and phonological competence), to culture and intercultural communicative competence. For each theme, the structure of units has been designed to operate a gradual change in perspective from the personal (developing the students’ language skills for daily life) to the societal (developing more in-depth understanding of cultures). For example, the unit on celebrations and traditions moves from talking about how Saint Nicholas, Christmas or Candlemas are celebrated in French-speaking parts of Europe, to finding out about and reflecting on the status of religion and secularism in French society today. The unit on leisure and culture starts with talking about popular hobbies and ends with a cultural exploration of Brussels and of Belgian architecture and art and their importance in the identity of the
population. The module also evolves from guided discovery of a theme to more independent exploration through online resources (which supports the development, amongst other, of digital skills and problem solving skills), and contains a combination of guided and basic production tasks in the target language and some reflective activities in English on more sophisticated cultural notions. The module also includes the introduction of task-based and collaborative activities to develop the learners’ communication and professional skills, such as team work or providing feedback to others.

The students are also exposed to basic translation skills and reflections on the cultural dimensions of languages. For example, in the French module, students will reflect on how to translate culture-specific references such as the “Guy Fawkes’ night”, a celebration specific to British culture, into French. The activity is an opportunity to think about how culture is mediated through language, and simultaneously introduces translation concepts such as equivalence, substitution or loan words.

Finally, an important aspect of our approach to implementing the new curriculum and embedding intercultural communication skills and employability was to make it explicit for students. An important part of enhancing the employability of students is to enable them to be able to articulate the variety of skills, knowledge, competences and values that they have developed through their higher education studies. As most of our students will not end up working in a field directly related to languages, to gain employment or promotion, it is crucial that they can demonstrate and talk about the numerous non-subject specific skills that studying languages at the Open University will have allowed them to develop. These must therefore be signposted throughout the learning materials so that students become conscious of them. In the module, this is done at two levels, in activities and at the end of each unit. Throughout the activities, the teaching text (the Open University’s trademark “teaching in print”) signals the different skills dimensions. For example, in the following, the activity introduction clearly makes a link between the lexical and functional area covered (talking about approximations) and professional communication:

Figure 6 – Example of link between lexical/functional competence and professional communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Étape C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here you will work on the language from the text in Étape A that is used to present figures and data. This is useful vocabulary to know especially if you ever use your French in a professional context.</td>
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Conclusion

The article set out to show the redesign of an entire BA Modern Languages curriculum at an online and distance education institution and how to widen it through the introduction of additional non-subject specific skills that benefit the students. It has provided the policy context for the increased focus in the curriculum on intercultural communicative competence and employability and shown how the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics has responded to this. The article has also demonstrated how intercultural communicative competence is playing a key role in the new curriculum and how it is integrated into it. It has furthermore shown that employability and skills for employment can be integrated into such a curriculum and that it is both possible and feasible to add these important areas into a degree programme in Modern Languages.

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Hofstede’s Model in Curriculum and Possibilities of its Substitution
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Abstract

Students recognize the need of having a sufficient theoretical background in cross-cultural communication because they understand that there are hardly any homogeneous groups in real life. They expect to become part of a team that consists of more than one culture in practice. Students of Human Resources Management are also curious about managing such teams and how to handle the differences.

Hofstede’s four-dimensional model has proved to be very effective in teaching because it is easy to understand and to apply in practical case-studies, etc. The model can be used as a basis for explanations of cultural matters throughout the whole curriculum if the teacher continues to use this model and to build on acquired knowledge. Students find the model more intuitive, compared to other models, such as those by Trompenaars, Lewis, Hall, Tönnies, or Kluckholn.

However, the model also has certain shortcomings and particularly HR students should not enter their work life acquainted with only one theoretical concept. Hence this paper will also discuss a suggestion of a new model based on semiotics and interpretation of words.

Keywords: Hofstede, higher education, human resources management, cognitive conception of intercultural communication

Introduction

Hofstede’s book Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind covers most topics that are important from the viewpoint of Human Resources Management. This practical discipline and the science, and hence the subject, should guide managers as well as students through all issues that are anyhow connected to employing people. That is, in particular, how to plan the workforce, how and where to look for the right candidate, how to read in applicants’ documents, how to properly conduct interviews with candidates in terms of etiquette, timing, belonging to specific groups, how to understand candidates’ answers concerning boosted self-promotion or underestimating oneself in order not to be overconfident, adapting the successful candidate to colleagues and culture and work, and then managing him/her. This includes particularly managing the person in question as an individual or as a member of a group, assigning tasks, agreement and disagreement, and arguments and conflicts, assessment of his/her performance, rewards and remunerations, and outplacement, too. In today’s world, it is necessary to handle all of these processes not only in one’s own culture, but also across cultures as the world becomes more internationalized than ever before.

Appraisal of the Hofstede’s model

Hofstede’s model has proved to be easy to understand by both graduate and especially undergraduate students. His description of culture as the “software of the mind” appears to be grasped naturally and understood rather intuitively than learned hardly. As the students learn first, at the very beginning that Hofstede describes personality as a result of mixture of inherited features of human nature and learned culture that is specific to a group or category and filtered through unique personal experiences, hence two human beings coming from the same culture, city, school, even family, will never think exactly the same way, the students are satisfied with the model even if they feel they do not really fit into the theoretical concept. Thus they understand that other people may not fit either.

The explanation continues with layers of culture,
i.e. practices (symbols, heroes, and rituals) and values, and a discussion of how culture is transferred from one generation to another, and how the norms of a culture are enforced by the society. This knowledge is then applied on a simplified concept of corporate culture. Nevertheless, it becomes even more attractive to students if they can apply new knowledge on facts already known.

Only after this introduction, the original four-dimensional model is introduced. Collectivism – individualism, masculinity – femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance are enough to make clear distinctions and yet to keep the model simple and easy to remember. When this knowledge is trained and fixed, students can apply the model to differences in organizational architecture and preferred configurations of organizations including planning and control in other subjects.

Basic motivation theories such as Herzberg’s Two-factor theory, Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, or McGregor’s XY theory, as well as performance evaluation systems such as 360° feedback, or performance appraisal and goal setting such as Management by Objectives already known to students, are then subject to critical assessment on several case studies from real organizational practice. Students then derive implications for managing multinational companies, international mergers, but also international marketing and negotiations.

Making a loop back to the beginning, the curriculum concerning Human Resources Management is then concluded by the viewpoint of a Czech employee working in a multicultural team or an expatriate managing local business and the many misunderstandings and cultural failures he/she can make (un) intentionally.

**Experience with Other Models**

Compared to other well-known theories or cultural models, for example those developed by Trompenaars, Lewis, Hall, Tönnies, or Kluckhohn, Hofstede’s model is simple yet useful in educational practice. The model is also well-known worldwide, which makes it easier to share knowledge based on the dimensions. However, the model is growing old and has been revised several times due to its methodological problems and very problematic replication studies, and because of adding new dimension from time to time, perhaps it has become the time to think of a substitute. However, replacing the model in curriculum is not as easy as it seems.

In comparison, Trompenaars’ model introduced in his book *Riding the Waves of Culture* is complicated to remember. Students are busy with recalling all the dimensions: universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. collectivism, specific vs. diffuse, achievement vs. ascriptive, neutral vs. emotional or affective, sequential vs. synchronic, and internal vs. external control. The question remains, how to remember the classification of cultures, and how to assign specific treatment to members of a particular culture? We should not blame the students to be remiss to memorize facts. How many of us can name the Seven Wonders of the World? We need to keep the model as simple as possible so it is easy to use and students are willing to use it also in their practice.

Edward Hall in his most recognized book *Beyond Culture* classified groups as mono- or poly-chronic, high or low context and past- or future-oriented. Although the model is quite simple, it is not as applicable to management practice, or is more valuable for personal use, respectively.

In 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies published a now-classical study *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, usually translated (if translated) as *Community and Civil Society*, where he divided cultures from his sociological perspective; this distinction proved to be helpful in demonstrating models of social grouping, however, it is of no help in cross-cultural communication issues.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s Values Orientation Theory published in the book *Variations in Value Orientations* researched 5 dimensions – attitude to problems, time, Nature, nature of man, form of activity and reaction to compatriots. This theory seems to be very helpful for clarification of differences between cultures, and particularly societies in terms of sub-groups or minorities. However, it is hardly transferrable into organizational practice.
The most recent model to gain worldwide recognition, the so-called Lewis Model named after its author, Richard Lewis, introduced in his book *When Cultures Collide* is very promising concerning cross-cultural management. The model divides people into three categories, and unlike the above-mentioned theories, is not based on nationality or religion, but behaviour. Lewis developed the model as a reaction to previous theories and focused on business people who needed a clear, brief model they could apply in their everyday practice and were rather confused by the notions, dimensions and exceptions the previous models had. He named the categories Linear-active, Multi-active and Reactive. The Linear-active group consists of the English-speaking world and Northern Europe, including Scandinavia and Germanic countries. The Reactive group covers Asia except the Indian sub-continent. The Multi-active group is, in a simplifying nutshell, the rest of the world.

However, it is not as simple as it seems at first glance. Every group has some traits from other two categories. We need to remember where on the scale the group is. Moreover, Lewis found that occupations are frequent exceptions and tend to incline to one category (e.g. engineers and accountants tend to be Linear, sales people Multi-active, lawyers and doctors Reactive). As a result of this, the model seems to manage to clearly display differences of cultures in organizational practice, but to be less useful in common cross-cultural communication. It is no wonder because the research (and the questionnaire) focused on business.

**Broad Versus Narrow Traits**

In the theory of personality there arrived a notion of broad and narrow personality traits. As Gorgievski and Stephan mention in the article "Advancing the Psychology of Entrepreneurship", there are broad personality traits, like those measured by Big 5, and there might be identified narrow traits which are important in some specific situations. The quoted authors deal with the psychology of entrepreneurship, and they ascertain that a successful entrepreneurial carrier needs some specific narrow traits which are not discernible on the broad traits level. The knowledge of cross-cultural differences brought about by Hofstede (or others) is useful for understanding what these differences are. However, it seems the characteristics described by these conceptions might be too broad to be of real help in inter-cultural communication.

To take an example, we might compare Germans and Czechs on one of Hofstede's dimensions. Both German and Czech national cultures are characterized by strong uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede et al. (188) used German national culture as an example of a strong uncertainty avoiding culture. They asserted that it is just this trait which makes Germans punctual and, in this connection, attached to the idea of railway trains being on time. Czechs are strong uncertainty avoiders as well. However, their interest in punctuality of trains is much lower than it is in the case of Germans. Germans are known as people who stick to rules. This as well might be connected to uncertainty avoidance because sticking to rules would lessen uncertainty. As we know our own people, we would say that Czechs prefer rules bending to sticking to them. Based on this thought, it could be assumed that there might exist a narrow trait in which Germans and Czechs differ. The question is, how this supposed trait might be identified and, perhaps, measured. We assume that a study of meaning (in this case of punctuality) might help.

**Cognitive Conception of Intercultural Communication**

As mentioned above, most models describe national cultures in broad terms. It is questionable if this kind of theories would enable development of narrow traits, which might help us to understand differences between individuals and social groups inside national cultures. The cognitive theory of human interaction developed by Sperber¹, and applied in the field of intercultural communication by Žegarac in the article from 2011 "A Cognitive Pragmatic Perspective on Communication and Culture", seems to be a good candidate for this role.

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¹ See for example Sperber’s study *Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*
Cognitive theory is based on the assumption that human mind does not have a direct, immediate access to the external world. Because of this, human mind deals with representations of the entities from the external world instead. Besides simple representations, cognitive theory proposes higher order representations, i.e. meta-representations and cultural representations. Meta-representations are representations of representations. Cultural representations are meta-representations which are public, used and utilised by some number of people for some amount of time. Sperber formulated the idea of epidemiology of representations, a theory of how mental representations spread through a society. Žegarac used this conception to deal with inter-cultural communication. He calls his approach a "cognitive pragmatic perspective on communication and culture". Žegarac deals with cross-cultural differences and inter-cultural communication in a more general conception of the study of social situations as contexts of social communication and interaction.

Žegarac's conception was developed in the field of intercultural pragmatics. It might be described as an attempt to model ways in which social communication develops the specific character of a given culture. The main theoretical constructs of the cognitive pragmatic perspective on communication and culture conception are meta-representation, cultural representation, and centrality of a cultural representation. A meta-representation is a mental representation of another mental representation or, more specifically, a mental representation of some subject, object, event or a state of affairs to which a belief is associated. A meta-representation might be shared by several people in a society by people speaking one to another, writing blogs or papers, making proclamations, etc. This way the beliefs and corresponding meta-representations spread through the populace and are perpetuated there. If the number of people who uphold a specific meta-representation for some non-negligible period of time is large enough, it will make a cultural representation. Meta-representations differ in the number of cultural/social group members who share them and in their stability in time. These differences might be useful in distinguishing cultural representations and those applicable only to specific social groups. Meta-representations (and cultural representations) develop and change through time, and these changes could be identified by studying differences in how individuals and social groups represent and meta-represent specific socially and culturally important entities.

A cultural representation is central for a culture group if it is causally efficacious over a large segment of society (see e.g. Žegarac). Culture groups are hardly ever homogenous, as Anheier et al. stated in their *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* under the entry subculture. Because of this, there might exist more than one cultural representation of the same entity in the same culture group. A good example is money. According to Furnham and Argyle’s book *The Psychology of Money*, for some people money is good and for other people it might be mentally represented as evil. Actually, even individuals might represent money differently in different contexts or under different circumstances. In similar cases it is to be assumed that these different meta-representations (cultural representations) will not be the same central to some culture groups. This opens a way to ask if centrality of a culture representation might be measured. However, this eventuality was not developed in the Žegarac's conception.

**Classification Experiment**

Representations might be akin to words as they stay for some object, event, or situation, but they are not the same as words. Relation of words and representations might, perhaps, be described in a similar way as Chomsky's distinction of deep and surface structures of speech as he puts it in the book *Syntactic Structures*. A rather simplified description of this distinction is as follows: A person wants to communicate something. What she would like to communicate forms in her mind as a deep structure of an utterance. If she says it, a deep structure is transformed into a surface structure. The transformation might change what is communicated. The surface structure might be simplified, even distorted. In a similar way, a representation
is on a person’s mind. Words are in the open, they are public, shared by a number of people. It is quite clear that there are not words for all the representations. If it happens that we do not find words for a representation, we feel lost and in a lack of words. However, it might be assumed that there exist words for meta-representations which are shared by substantial number of people for a non-negligible period of time. So, it might be assumed there are words which correspond to cultural representations. The idea which we would like to bring about is based on just this assumption. We hypothesise that the study of meaning of words can help us to acquire new knowledge on culture differences, and use it to extend our intercultural communication skills.

The method we would like to propose as a way to do it is rather simple and inexpensive. It was developed decades ago by G. A. Miller, then an influential American psychologist, and published in his article “A Psychological Method to Investigate Verbal Concepts”. Miller called his method “measurement of semantic distances”. He used simple paper cards on which a substantive (or an adjective) was printed. The word on a card was supplemented by a short description which specified the meaning of a word in question (e.g., water; Water flows in a river.). Usually he used about 40 cards of this kind. In an experiment he asked his subjects to sort the cards in groups of words of similar meaning. After repeating this task with some number of subjects, he applied cluster analysis on the results of sorting. Miller employed to this effect hierarchical cluster analysis. The result of this procedure is a hierarchical graph in which it is possible to determine the “semantic distance” of any two words from the set of words used by simply counting the smallest possible number of vertices connecting them. To employ the method to the aim proposed here is one more thing which should be dealt with. It concerns forming of a set of words for the sorting experiment.
Figure 1 – Dendrogram of free associates to “work”

Diagram using Single Linkage
Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine

(The translation of the examined words is as follows: Money, Salary, Reward, Benefit, Yield, Resource, Task, Competition, Maturity, Diligence, Independence, Self-development, Success, Experience, Recognition, Work, Position, Practice, Career, Superior, Contacts, Motivation, Inspiration, Challenge, Goal, Effort, Satisfaction, Pains, Stress, Boredom, Problem, Punishment, Necessity, Routine, Survival, Amusement, Recreation, Friends, and Feast.)
This matter could be dealt with by a free association experiment. If we want to study e.g. punctuality, we might start by asking people for free associates of this word. This will provide us with some number of words which people connect with its meaning. From the set of words obtained, it is easy to develop a set which could be used in Miller’s sorting experiment. The figure 1 is a result of thus obtained hierarchical cluster analysis of sorting free associations to a word “práce”, which in Czech means about the same as “work” in English or “Arbeit” in German. There is an inaccuracy in the experiment as it did not include the word studied, so it is not possible to determine semantic relations of this word to the others employed. Even so, the diagram shows what the experiment might disclose. In the figure we may see how the words group together. On the upper margin there is a cluster of six words: “money”, “salary”, “reward”, “benefit”, “yield” and “resource”. In positions from 23 to 17 there are “motivation”, “inspiration”, challenge”, and “effort”. Further on (16 – 8) there are words like “pains”, “stress”, “boredom”, “problem”, “punishment”, “routine”, and “survival”. The dendrogram ends with a bit special cluster which includes words “amuse-
ment”, “recreation”, “friends”, and “feast”. Results of this kind could be obtained from subjects of diverse or culture groups. The subjects here were students on bachelor level (28 full-time students of CULS Management and Business Faculty; 21 females, 8 males; average age 23.3).

Discussion and Conclusions

We think we really need new knowledge on inter-cultural communication. We believe the method we proposed to this end will help to achieve it, and that the study of meaning and symbols will enhance our skills in intercultural communication. However, there are some limitations to the method we proposed to employ. When using it, there should be special care undertaken to differentiate psychological and linguistic. Words do not always translate neatly. E.g., the Czech word “práce” covers meanings of both “work” and “job”. To some extent this problem might be solved by adding short definitions to the words used in the sorting experiment, as was mentioned above. There might be other problems and ways, and we shall be glad if you could turn our attention to them.

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: FROM THEORIES TO PRACTICES
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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of applying intercultural trainings in the academic course ‘Intercultural Communication’.

The goal of the paper is to present the programme of the course ‘Intercultural Communication’ developed at the Department of Mass Communication at Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia and to pay attention to the importance of combining traditional and innovative methods of teaching in the framework of the course.

The paper describes the experience of applying training technologies and using different types of student practical activities both in class and as independent work at home.

The course is intended to present essential concepts of national culture, national and universal values, and major theories of intercultural communication. Such topics as national character, cultural and ethnic stereotypes, intercultural competence, intercultural conflict, cultural shock are also included. Intercultural communication refers to both academic and applied fields of study. The course puts a strong emphasis on practical applications in real professional situations.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural competence, cultural intelligence, training, cultural knowledge, skills

Introduction

In the conditions of globalization, the important place in the system of university education belongs to the new discipline within the humanities – intercultural communication. Nowadays, the ability to communicate effectively with people from different nations and cultures has become a key ingredient for both commercial and personal success.

The study of intercultural communication takes on special significance, because it develops the students’ cross-cultural skills and offers tools for solving challenging tasks of intercultural interaction.

The success of intercultural communication depends on the development of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, on how people negotiate, meet, greet, and build relationships worldwide.

Whereas teaching intercultural communication in higher education Institutions is carried out, as a rule, in three main forms: lectures, seminars and foreign languages classes, intercultural training is becoming one of the most effective methods. Training sessions include training exercises, seminars and workshops, simulation games, intergroup dialogues, role-playing, etc. Intercultural communication refers to both academic and applied fields of study, and can be designed on the philosophy of synergetics, which gives the opportunity to realize the interdisciplinary approach to its learning and teaching (Kolosova 8).

Intercultural communication between representatives of different cultures can be challenging in many different ways in which culture groups can differ: values, beliefs, attitudes to time, communicative style, and so on. In order to handle the uncertainties we face, the students need to master both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. However, today the goal of higher education is not only to give the students theoretical knowledge and form professional skills, but also to help them deal with cultural differences, to adapt the curriculum to the challenges of globalizing world, and prepare the students to study and work in multicultural environment.

Programme description

The programme of the course consists of five modules and includes the following basic topics: Culture and communication: definitions, approaches to study; National and universal values; The history
and theories of intercultural communication; Interconnection of language and culture; Issues of language and cultural adaptation; Intercultural communicative competence and cultural intelligence; Verbal and non-verbal communication; Intercultural conflict management, and others.

Each module includes lectures, seminars, training exercises, and assignments.

The seminars are held in the form of discussions, training of selected intercultural skills, and doing different training exercises and psychological tests. On completion of the course, the students are expected to make project presentations on the following topics:

- Universal values: do they really exist?
- Social and Cultural Identities in the context of International Communication;
- Language and Intercultural Communication;
- Modern approaches to studying Intercultural communication;
- Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication;
- Cultural Variations in Communication Style;
- Conflict management in Intercultural Communication;
- Nonverbal communication;
- Styles of effective listening in intercultural interaction;
- Concept of assertiveness in Intercultural communication;
- Cultural Intelligence and intercultural competence: common and different;
- Psychology of acculturation and intercultural relations and others.

Methods

Methodological and theoretical basis of the course is founded on the philosophy of synergetics, theories of intercultural communication, cross-cultural psychology, and historical and interdisciplinary approaches to the subject. Intercultural communication incorporates knowledge from a number of related disciplines: psychology, anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, cultural and communication studies and others.

Teaching intercultural communication in higher education Institutions is carried out, as a rule, in three main forms: lectures, seminars and foreign languages classes. In our practice, we are also applying such a social and psychological method as intercultural trainings. That is why, along with the traditional forms and methods of teaching - lectures and seminars - the course ‘Intercultural communication’ provides an active and interactive format of the training sessions, which includes intercultural trainings, seminars and workshops, simulation games, intergroup dialogues, role playing, analysis of ‘critical incidents’ and ‘cultural assimilator’ as the methods of ethno-psychological and cross-cultural impact.

The teaching methodology incorporates different approaches such as, psychological, critical, interpretive approaches, and the culture specific (emic, single culture) and cultural-general (etic, universal) approaches as well. Critical thinking, problem solving and making decisions teaching technologies are used as well.

To carry out project work, students are offered topics such as: ‘Analysis of cultural identity and national values’; ‘Comparison of cultural dimensions according to Hofstede’s theory’; ‘Analysis of cultural identity and national values’; Presentation of a culture through the analysis of ‘key words’ non-equivalent lexis and non-verbal communication’; ‘Models and strategies of intercultural conflict resolution’, and others.

Results and discussion

The term ‘intercultural’ literally means ‘between cultures’, and so a fundamental question is how ‘culture’ can be defined, and hence what is meant by ‘intercultural communication’. There are many definitions of culture because it is a complex concept. We follow modern scholars who identify an intercultural situation as one in which the cultural distance between the participants is significant enough to have an effect on communication that is noticeable to at least one of the parties. (Spencer-Oatey 3). Intercultural communication “ends to describe the relations between members of different ethnic groups and languages, interacting in an international context” (Marsen 7).
Some definitions of culture are given in the book by G. Hofstede in which he calls culture “a mental software”, “a collective programming of the mind” (6), and claims that “Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game” (6). Mind the following comparison: “Our own culture is to us like the air we breathe, while another culture is like water – and it takes special skills to be able to survive in both elements” (Hofstede 23).

The students especially appreciate the so called metaphoric definitions: the comparison of culture with an iceberg; dynamic definitions – ‘cultural backpack’, and at last, the ‘onion’ model by G. Hofstede, consisting of four levels: symbols, heroes, rituals and values (8). To deeper understand the concept of “culture” the students are given the following tasks: “Surf the Internet and other resources (scientific articles, books, dictionaries) and find the definitions of the concept ‘culture’; give your own definition of the term ‘culture’; present the culture of your country or the ethnic group you belong to using the metaphoric model of an ‘onion’ by G. Hofstede”.

As a rule, after presenting theoretical materials, the students are proposed to do training exercises in class or prepare small talks or reports at home. For example, after the lecture “Culture and Communication” and discussing levels of cultural identity - a national level, a regional level, a social level, a generation level, etc.- the students are proposed to give ten or more answers to the question “Who am I?”, or create their own hierarchy of the list of such values as hospitality, openness, patriotism, sincere harmony, career, ability to influence people, honesty, friendship and others. They may add some more values if they like and put them on the place they consider appropriate.

Module 3 is devoted to theoretical aspects of intercultural communication, and includes lectures on Edward Hall’s theory of high- and low-context cultures, time’s perception in different cultures, G. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions theory, and others.

At the lectures and seminars of Module 4 “Discourse in intercultural communication”, the issues of verbal and nonverbal communication are discussed. Special attention is paid to the “key words” and “non-equivalent lexis”, and different forms of nonverbal communication such as kinesics, tactilics, vocalic, proxemics, chronemics, face expression, eye contact, etc. as well.

One of the most significant and important strands without which intercultural communication cannot be realized successfully is intercultural competence. In the latest years, new approaches to intercultural communication have been developed, which are connected with the theories developed by researchers and academics in the fields of business, cross-cultural management, marketing, and advertising. One of the new approaches to intercultural communication is the cognitive approach, which comes from cognitive psychology. Scholars working in this sphere believe that it is the cultural intelligence that gives the main key to successful intercultural communication. The exploration of such basic terms as intercultural competence and cultural intelligence in the context of intercultural communication studies can help us to answer the following questions: What does it take to communicate and interact successfully in different cultures? How to develop the awareness, knowledge and skills necessary to communicate effectively with other cultures? How do you really know whether you are a good intercultural communicator? What for and how can we assess the intercultural competence and cultural intelligence (Kolosova 15)?

Basically, intercultural competence can be defined as the ability to behave effectively and appropriately in interacting across cultures (Martin and Nakayama 47).

Analyzing the results of research from a range of disciplines, Helen Spencer-Oatey and Peter Franklin use the term “intercultural interaction competence” (ICIC) as an “umbrella term” for identifying intercultural competence, intercultural effectiveness, intercultural communication competence, transcultural communication competence, and intercultural action competence (52-53).

There are different classifications and models of intercultural competence. One of them represents the contribution of psychology and communication studies. It consists of the following components:
“open-mindedness, non-judgementalness, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility in thinking and behaviour, self-awareness, knowledge of one’s own and other cultures, resilience to stress, and communication or message skills” (Spencer-Oatey 57).

The model of the INCA Project team includes:

- Tolerance for ambiguity (TA)
- Behavioural flexibility (BF)
- Communicative awareness (CA)
- Knowledge discovery (KD)
- Respect for otherness (RO)
- Empathy (E) (Spenser-Oatey 68).

At last, we cannot help mentioning the WorldWork’s framework developed by international business and management scholars, which includes 10 key competencies: Openness, Flexibility, Personal Autonomy, Emotional strength, Perceptiveness, Listening orientation, Transparency, Cultural knowledge, Influencing, Synergy, covering 22 different factors: New Thinking, Welcoming, Strangers, Acceptance, Flexible behaviour, Flexible Judgement, Learning languages, Inner purpose, Focus on goals, Resilience, Coping, Spirit of adventure, Attuned, Reflected awareness, Active listening, Clarity of communication, Exposing intentions, Information gathering, Valuing differences, Rapport, Range of styles, Sensitivity to context, Creating new alternatives (Spencer-Oatey 76-78).

So, intercultural competence is a multi-faceted phenomenon, including three main categories, related to the outcomes of ICIC: knowledge, skills and attitudes (Spencer-Oatey 79).

Table 1. Intercultural competence as a multi-faceted phenomenon

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<tr>
<th>Categories of intercultural competence</th>
<th>Outcomes of ICIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>cognitive</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
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<td>behavioural</td>
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Knowledge means general knowledge about cultures, values and norms of different cultures; Skills are mainly connected with the skills of active listening, linguistic accommodation, rapport, and others; Attitudes enable the participants to experience interaction with members of different cultures, with different attitudes, from different perspectives and with different values (Spencer-Oatey 201).

In order to develop components of intercultural competence through university education at the lectures and seminars, various methods and techniques can be applied: cognitive, active, interactive. They can include writing essays, case studies, role-plays, self-assessment and self-awareness tests, critical incidents, culture assimilator, cross-cultural dialogues, a contrast-culture method.

In order to develop some general knowledge about cultural differences and be able to develop relationships with the representatives of various cultures and ethnic groups, it is necessary to consider the concept of cultural intelligence.

Similar to the concept of intercultural competence, the concept of cultural intelligence has different definitions and models.

Some researchers define cultural intelligence as a set of interacting elements consisting of “knowledge, skills and cultural metacognition” (Thomas 138). The central position in this conceptualization belongs to cultural metacognition that involves: (1) the ability to consciously and deliberately monitor one’s knowledge processes and cognitive and affective states (metacognitive experiences), and (2) to regulate these processes and states in relation to an objective (metacognitive strategies).
Thomas and his colleagues settle the following skill sets:

- perceptual (open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, and non-judgementalness);
- relational (flexibility, sociability, empathy);
- adaptive (the ability to generate appropriate behaviour in a new cultural setting, (the skill that perhaps most clearly distinguishes cultural intelligence from other related ideas), self-monitoring, behavioral flexibility and self-regulation);
- analytic (cultural metacognition)

(Thomas 129–130).

So, as we can see from this description of cross-cultural skills, the factors included in perceptual and relational skills are similar to some components of intercultural competence: open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, non-judgementalness, flexibility, sociability, empathy. Such components of intercultural competence as knowledge of one’s own and other cultures and self-awareness coincide with cultural knowledge component of CQ. The difference between ICIC components and components of CQ is the metacognitive aspect.

This metacognitive aspect of cultural intelligence is an integral part of other CQ models. Linn Van Dyne and Soon Ang develop the Four-Factor Model of Culture which includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions (Ang and Van Dyne 5).

In the book *The Cultural Intelligence Difference*, David Livermore defines CQ as “an ability to adapt to a variety of cultural situations” (Livermore 3).

It is important to notice that Soon Ang and Linn Van Dyne consider CQ to be culture free because “it refers to a general set of capabilities with relevance to situations characterized by cultural diversity; it does not focus on capabilities in a particular culture” (Ang and Van Dyne 9).

To summarize, CQ is a specific capability that is connected with other forms of intelligence and intercultural competence. First introduced by two business researchers, Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, cultural intelligence attracted worldwide attention of many scientists. CQ becomes a critical component of everybody’s life. It opens new experience allowing to transform cultural differences into possibilities for learning, personal growth, and relationships.

We can find different ways to measure Cultural Intelligence and assess Intercultural Competence in scientific literature, but “each evaluation exercise should not be considered as providing a right or wrong answer”. We agree with Christopher Brighton’s viewpoint, that among all existing inventories, tested scales, CQ and ICC assessments, “the use of a self-awareness inventory, or similar survey tool, is essential” and “the process of evaluation is going to be a continuous event” (Brighton 204).

What is common in the studies of IC and CQ and the concepts themselves? First of all, the idea of the interdisciplinary character of intercultural communication, and consequently, the interdisciplinary character of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence. Both intercultural competence and cultural intelligence are multifactor phenomena. They consist of many components, and many of them coincide: open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, non-judgementalness, flexibility, sociability, empathy. The difference between the ICIC components and the components of CQ is the metacognitive aspect.

Intercultural communication theories are now applied in psychology, communication studies, ethnology, education, business, health services and other public spheres. The issues of cultural intelligence are often analyzed and discussed in the works of researchers connected with business, marketing, cross-cultural management. It is important to realize that intercultural competence development and cultural intelligence learning are different approaches to intercultural communication.

Besides the concepts of Intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, Module 4 includes the discussion of the culture shock and its stages, problems of cultural adaptation, intercultural transformation of personality. The students take an active part in discussions on such topics as “National character”, “Intercultural conflict”.

Module 5 is devoted to the questions of cross-cultural management, including the concept of organizational culture and different models of interaction.
in multicultural organizations. The students prepare topics on cultural synergy and its role in intercultural communication and international business etiquette.

Conclusion

As a result of the research, we came to the following conclusions. In today's multicultural, global environment, there are different skills we can use to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. The most important of them are intercultural competence and cultural intelligence. As most components of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence coincide, they can be developed through different combined methods: academic courses, trainings, coaching with active applying such well recommended intercultural methods as "cultural incident", "culture assimilator", and others. IC develops the students' cross-cultural skills and offers tools for solving challenging tasks of intercultural interaction and acting as successful players of the global media market. Intercultural communication introduces a way of thinking that will enable future specialists to function effectively in any culture. We believe that this course is crucial for the students of different specialisations, and especially for the students of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, which hosts students from more than 140 countries. The course "Intercultural communication" incorporating cross-cultural trainings of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence, tolerance and assertiveness, provides students with deep theoretical backgrounds and practical skills they can apply in their future professional activities, in order to foresee communicative barriers, understand the causes of intercultural conflicts and adapt to different cultural settings.

Through intercultural communication, future specialists can learn a tremendous amount about other peoples and cultures, and, moreover, while learning about others they can learn something new about themselves.

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Embracing Social Media for Intercultural Language Learning

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Abstract

This research aims to describe and analyse the impact of using a foreign language in online social media on students’ intercultural communicative competence. It investigates the language, pedagogical, and organizational preconditions for implementing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) into foreign language education, using communication technologies and the social web as teaching tools for this purpose. In many countries, the learning outcomes of foreign language courses now include intercultural communicative competence, although the precise model for teaching ICC varies even across the world. Internet-mediated approaches are widely used to support intercultural learning. The interplay between computer mediated communication, culture and language is explored by analysing interactions of a group of Moroccan and American students in a closed Facebook group designed by the researcher for the sake of the study.

Keywords: computer assisted language learning, social media, intercultural competence, case study

I. Introduction

Nowadays, globalization and rapid developments in science and technology, especially advanced transport systems and online communication technologies, have changed individuals’ perceptions of spatial boundaries and those between countries and cultures, and have literally shrunk the world into a “global village”. It is noticeable that the world today is characterized by an ever growing number of intercultural contacts, resulting in communication between people with different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Accordingly, becoming interculturally competent is a vital requirement for modern citizens and qualified professionals in the contemporary multicultural world.

From the perspective of individuals, intercultural learning is the first step to become interculturally competent and to succeed in intercultural encounters. However, this competence can be addressed in a variety of ways and in many research areas, including foreign language education. In fact, language theorists increasingly acknowledge the intercultural dimension of foreign language education, and foreign language teachers’ social and moral responsibilities in this domain. Sercu, Garcia and Castro, for instance stated that: “Foreign language education is by definition an intercultural subject matter. All languages are used within particular cultural contexts and they reflect those contexts. Learning a new language, therefore, involves more than the acquisition of linguistic and communicative competence in that language. It also entails an increase in learners’ familiarity with that language’s cultural background, an expansion of the learner’s cultural awareness and intercultural competence” (85-86).

This paper aims to describe and analyse the impact of using a foreign language in online social media and especially Facebook (FB) on students’ intercultural communicative competence. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

To what extent can intercultural interactions in a FB group enhance or hinder university students’ intercultural learning? What are students’ perceptions towards FB as an online intercultural language learning environment? In this respect, this study adopted Byram’s model (Byram 34) of ICC as the main intercultural framework.

II. Research Background

Byram’s Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Within the field of foreign language learning, the most widely cited and developed conceptual framework for intercultural learning has been put forward by Byram and his colleague Geneviève Zarate as part of
their common work for The Council of Europe. Byram in his book *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* proposes a model of intercultural communicative competence, which is divided into the five *savoirs*. These five key components of ICC are: a) Intercultural attitudes, which refer to curiosity, openness, readiness, beliefs and behaviour of the interlocutors. b) Knowledge, which refers to understanding how social groups and social identities function, including one’s own groups and identities. c) Skills of interpreting and relating, which designate the ability to interpret and explain a document or an event from one culture to another. d) Skills of discovery and interaction, which refer to the ability to acquire and operate newly acquired knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time interaction. e) Critical cultural awareness, which is the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products in one’s own culture as well as another’s culture (Byram 34).

This model provides a framework for specifying objectives when planning teaching and assessment activities, in which each component of ICC serves as representative teaching goals in intercultural learning.

**Social Media and Foreign Language and Culture Learning: Towards Social Networking Enhanced Language Learning SNELL?**

Since there is no generally accepted term to define the use of social networking in language teaching and learning, we have used the phrase *Social Networking Enhanced Language Learning* (SNELL), as a key area of research and development in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) as well as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), to point out the primary focus of the present study on informal online language use in social networking sites to enhance students’ intercultural sensitivity.

The concept of *Social Networking*, which derived from the social software movement, is a collection of Internet websites, platforms, services and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing (Junco et al. 119). The use of social networking has surged globally in recent years. As of April 2017, Facebook passed 1.86 billion monthly active users, YouTube had over 1.3 billion total members, of which 1 billion active monthly users and 6 Billion Hours Video Watched Monthly, and Twitter had 313 active monthly users and 500 million tweets per day (Social Bakers Analytics).

As foreign language educators look for ways to engage and motivate students, social networking technologies are becoming a viable supplement to the traditional learning environment. Moreover, many Universities (including the majority of Moroccan Universities) are now trying the combination of distance education delivery with instructional social media and social networking, thus providing new approaches to teaching and learning that blend pedagogy and technology.

The term ‘enhance’ is central to the concept of SNELL. It is defined by the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary as “to improve something, especially in effectiveness, or to make it more attractive or more valuable, to intensify or increase in quality, value, power, etc.” Accordingly, SNELL can be defined as the process of improving foreign language and culture learning by combining it with social networking, so that they work together effectively. However, there is an ongoing debate regarding the integration of social networking in foreign language learning. Its proponents point to the benefits of using these new tools for academic purposes, and argue that contemporary language learners have become habituated to a world where social networking is the norm. Thereby, as an educational tool, social software enriches the learning experience by allowing students and instructors to exchange ideas, foster collaboration and discussion, and engage and interact using such emerging social platforms (Lederer 5).

**III. The Study**

**Background Information**

The current study was carried out at an undergraduate EFL course at the University of Moulay Ismail in Meknes (Morocco) in collaboration with the TESOL program at Emporia State University, Kansas (USA) during the spring semester of 2013. After being exposed to the use of a private FB group set up by the researcher for the sake of the study, students were asked to answer an online questionnaire.
The purpose of this survey was to measure the learners’ opinions and perceptions about the use of the FB group and its impact on their intercultural learning and experiences.

Participants
The participants in this research project were 51 undergraduate Moroccan EFL students from the University of Moulay Ismail in Meknes (Morocco) and 14 American (L1) first language speakers of English students from the department of TESOL at Emporia State University, Kansas (USA). These participants were involved in an online intercultural exchange (OIE) in a FB group for a period of eight weeks, starting from March and ending April 2013. The participants included both genders, with an age range of 19 to 42 years. The learning objectives for both groups of students participating in this study were as follows: to create bonds between both communities, to discover their own and the other’s culture; to discuss culture in general and expand their horizons, to improve their intercultural communicative competence, and to familiarize themselves with the different tools for online discussions. Both groups of students were informed of the nature of the study and their rights as participants before starting the online exchange. Each student signed a consent form to participate in the study. This form described, among other things, the objectives of the study, the conditions of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time.

Instrument
The questionnaire used in this survey consisted of two sections. Section A solicited demographic information of the students and their language usage (age, sex, nationality/ethnic background, as well as academic status, cultural background, L1 language(s), knowledge of foreign languages and educational information, such as languages they have learnt in or out of school, participants’ previous experiences concerning intercultural encounters online and in real life, including the participants’ possible friendships with partners from a foreign country and their travels abroad). Section B comprised items eliciting information on the effect of FB as an intercultural online learning environment, and explored students’ reflections on intercultural learning in the FB exchange. This questionnaire used a 5-point Likert-type scale, in which responses ranged from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The questionnaire also consisted of open-ended questions aimed at inciting participants to reflect on their intercultural learning. The items in the questionnaire covered the aspects of students’ improvement of all ICC components: knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness.

Data Collection
The present research was designed as a virtual ethnographic case study in which the methods of traditional ethnography are applied to the virtual platform of FB. It applied the principle of triangulation to bring validity and reliability to the research. Accordingly, more than one source of data collection methods has been used to collect data for this study. These instruments included online questionnaires, the FB group discussions posted by the participants, and the researcher’s “observational data”. An online questionnaire was used with the aim to draw insights from the perspective of the participants about their online activities. These insights represent the “insider’s view”, or what the linguists and anthropologists characterize as the ‘emic’ perspective (Harris 345).

Findings and Discussion
This section presents the results of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, namely the answers on questionnaires and participants’ narratives in the FB group (posts and comments). Viewed through the prism of the component features of Byram’s model, the findings revealed compelling evidence that could indeed be characterized as the five components of ICC: attitudes, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness.

Assessing Students’ Attitudes
In order to assess participants’ attitudes after their participation in the FB exchange, respondents were invited to react to fourteen statements and to rate them on a five-point Likert scale, indicating to what extent they agree or disagree. Table 1 illustrates the mean scores concerning selected results of students’ assessment of their attitudes in the online questionnaire.
Table 1 indicates that 67.68% of the respondents (the aggregated result of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) agreed that they try to understand differences in the behaviours, values, attitudes, and styles of target culture members. (mean score=3.72). Moreover, 69.22% of EFL students stated that they interact in alternative ways, even when quite different from those to which they were accustomed and preferred. (mean score=3.76). As far as the students’ willingness not to assume one’s own beliefs are concerned, 63.07% of the respondents believed that they try to understand others who have a different cultural background when they disagree with them. (mean score=3.73).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When participating in a discussion online, I demonstrate willingness to:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Slightly Agree %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly Agree %</th>
<th>Mean %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try to understand differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles of target culture members.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>21.53</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact in alternative ways, even when quite different from those to which I was accustomed and preferred.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50.76</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to understand others who have a different cultural background when I disagree with them.</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>24.61</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>24.61</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Results of the student survey

Table 1 indicates that 67.68% of the respondents (the aggregated result of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) agreed that they try to understand differences in the behaviours, values, attitudes, and styles of target culture members. (mean score=3.72). Moreover, 69.22% of EFL students stated that they interact in alternative ways, even when quite different from those to which they were accustomed and preferred. (mean score=3.76). As far as the students’ willingness not to assume one’s own beliefs are concerned, 63.07% of the respondents believed that they try to understand others who have a different cultural background when they disagree with them. (mean score=3.73).

As far as the analyses of the FB group content is concerned, the most prevalent aspect of this online intercultural exchange is that both the Moroccan and American participants displayed a great interest in their partners with regard to their various daily life experiences, which provides evidence of the fundamental component of ICC: attitude. Indeed, the content reflected students’ curiosity, openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own, willingness to relativize one’s own values, beliefs, behaviours and willingness not to assume own beliefs.

As far as positive attitudes are concerned, the data show that the participants expressed their high interest in learning particular aspects of their online partners’ respective cultures and way of life, as shown in the following examples:

Example1:
M Student#44: “I am interested in American’s experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented in films and through the media”.

Example2:
Am Student#1: “I was curious about the Moroccan way life, sometimes I got them talk about themselves their values and their culture... we also touched the issue of religion.”

Example3:
M Student#31: “I read a lot of reports concerning racial issues in America, and many considered Obama’s election as a president to be the arrival of post-racial America... I am curious to know whether this is true?”

Assessing Students’ Cultural Knowledge
As part of the process of assessing students’ cultural knowledge, respondents were asked to react to eight Likert questions concerning this sub-constituent of ICC. Table 2 illustrates the mean scores concerning some of the results of students’ assessment of their cultural knowledge in the online questionnaire.
When participating in a discussion online,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Slightly Agree %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly Agree %</th>
<th>Mean %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could contrast important aspects of the target language and culture with my own.</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td>41.53</td>
<td>27.69</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape my own culture and the target culture.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35.38</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The online intercultural exchange enabled me to learn about my own culture in addition to the target culture.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.76</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Results of assessment of student's cultural knowledge

Table 2 indicates that 69.22% of respondents (the aggregated result of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) agreed that they could contrast important aspects of the target language and culture with their own (mean score=3.80). Moreover, 75.38% of the respondents stated that they could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape their own culture and the target culture. At the end of the “cultural knowledge assessment” section of the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement “The online intercultural exchange enabled me to learn about my own culture in addition to the target culture”; the majority of 69.22% answered positively (the aggregated result of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’).

As far as cultural knowledge is concerned, the data from the FB group discussions show that the participants shared and developed knowledge of different aspects of Moroccan and American cultures, as illustrated in the following examples:

Example 4:
M Student#14: “... I am 26 years old I am a Muslim woman who observes the hijab ....”
Am Student#5: “What is hijab, can u explain plz?”
M Student#14: “The Hijab is a scarf-like accessory worn by Muslim women.”

Example 5:
M Student#19: “I have a question for u American folks! What is the difference between soccer and football?”
Am Student#12: “There is no difference, soccer is football.”

Assessing Students’ Skills
As far as assessing participants’ skills after the FB exchange is concerned, respondents were invited to react to ten statements and to rate them on a five point Likert scale, indicating to what extent they agree or disagree.

The majority of the respondents expressed that they use flexibility and strategies to enhance learning and to promote appropriate interaction behaviour, including the avoidance of offenses. Hence 70.76 % of them stated that they demonstrate a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations in the target culture. (mean score=3.87), while 70.99% of the respondents stated that they use culture-specific information to improve their style and professional interaction with their online partners from the target culture. (mean score=4.07). More, 67.68 % of the participants stated that they help to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings when they arose. (mean score=3.72).

The area of skills of interpreting and relating appeared to be the most affected component of ICC in this exchange. According to Byram, this component refers to the ability to interpret a document or event
from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own. The effects in this online FB exchange were mainly seen in the use of flexibility and strategies to enhance learning and to promote appropriate interaction behaviour, including the avoidance of offenses. The analysis of the FB narratives revealed the emergence of four major themes, as far as the category of skills of interpreting and relating is concerned: sharing instances of own culture, the ability to identify similarities between the cultures involved in the interactions, the ability to identify and interpret differences between the cultures involved in the interactions, and giving positive feedback and showing agreement. For instance, different aspects of participants’ cultures or lifestyles were pointed out in the FB posts, which demonstrated that, the participants tended to discern intercultural encounters in terms of difference. Indeed, Moroccan and American participants frequently emphasized the difference in a variety of aspects of their respective cultures, such as accepted social behaviour, language, art, food, everyday life, traditions and religion.

Assessing students’ awareness
Byram’s last objective of intercultural communicative competence is that of critical cultural awareness and political or citizenship education: savoir s’engager (34). It refers to the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries.

Indeed, the FB group project under study provided increased exposure to diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, and the analysis of students’ posts and comments revealed the emergence of three major themes, as far as the category of critical cultural awareness is concerned:

Ability to develop an intercultural perspective
A meaningful intercultural perspective arises from direct experiences with cultural diversity and cultural interactions. In the context of this research, the data showed a greater volume of posts and comments related to a change in participants’ perspective during the online intercultural exchange, as in the following example:

Example 6:
M Student#17: “Before participating in the project, I constantly worried whether I’d be laughed at, whether I’d fit in... I now realize how silly I was... I can now understand other cultures by seeing them from a different angle...”

Expressing critical personal opinions
Critical expression is the evidence that language learners have developed a certain degree of critical thinking skills. In the context of this research, the topics of discussions incited the participants to engage in critical reflection by bringing together their diverse perspectives, and by encouraging them to share their critical opinions and experiences. Accordingly, the overwhelming majority of the participants overtly expressed their critical personal opinions, and only a few of them were reluctant to openly express their critical views for the purpose of face-saving. Following are some examples that show students’ critical personal views in the online discussions:

Example 7:
Am Student#13: “I believe there is good and bad in all races, creeds, colors and religions. Whether someone is ‘nice’ or not depends on who they are as a person, not on their Nationality, Sex, Gender or Race”.

Example 8:
M Student#7: “I think generalization gives a flawed idea of how people from other country are. People are different according to way they were brought up, the education they had etc...”

Increased Awareness of Cultural Differences
Aspects of participants’ cultural differences were widely pointed out in their FB posts and comments. This wide expression shows that participants tend to perceive their online intercultural encounters in terms of difference. These differences are emphasized in a variety of aspects and have helped to increase participants’ critical cultural awareness. The following extracts are some examples from this category:

Example 9:
M Student#3: “…I am proud of the Moroccan cul-
ture and civilization but not as much as before… I realized that there are things we should change… Moroccans culturally like to hide things and act as if they do not exist…”

Example 10: Am Student#9: “…I had thought that the American values were rather ‘universal’, but after the discussions with my partners, I found it to be quite the opposite! Each country has its own values!”

IV. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this study has been to investigate the impact of using the foreign language in online social media and especially FB, on students’ intercultural communicative competence. It aimed to offer empirical evidence concerning the effects of foreign language learners’ online interactions in FB on their intercultural skills, attitudes, knowledge and awareness. Overall, it supported the claim that online interactions via FB in the foreign language can enhance learners’ ICC. The findings from the participants’ perspectives and narratives during the online exchange revealed that the intercultural online exchange facilitated their ICC enhancement in general, and their intercultural critical awareness in particular.

Works Cited


Abstract

Digilanguages.ie is a multilingual curated portal for language students and teachers; one of the three specialised domains, Transitions and Contexts focuses on the student journey both into and during their Higher Education experience in a digital world. This domain addresses different topics, among which there is the development of ICC. Developments in the types of communication, such as computer-mediated communication and collaborative technologies, continue to emphasise the various skills and social practices required of every digital citizen in our globalised and networked societies.

New forms of communication have, in their turn, created online spaces where linguistically and culturally diverse participants collaborate and interact with each other. Engagement with these spaces transforms the ecology of language learning into a dynamic intercultural process.

New dimensions of reading, writing, and communication have incidentally created new learning needs, incorporating digital literacies and intercultural competences which must be addressed.

In this article we will present some of the activities that the portal offers to students and teachers to develop intercultural awareness and ICC during their language learning process. Data gathered during the implementation of one of these activities will be examined and recommendations on the use of relevant portal activities will be discussed.

Keywords: computer assisted language learning, intercultural competence, globalisation, employability, culture

Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly globalised and the professional environments where citizens need to navigate are already multicultural and multilingual. Rare indeed is the professional working context which has remained monolingual. These factors are translated into a higher demand for interculturally competent graduates (Griffith 2), who need to have the skills to perceive, understand, and interact satisfactorily in any intercultural communication setting.

Besides the Intercultural Communicative Competence that our graduates need to acquire during their time in college to become competent in the future working force as digital citizens, they also have to be able to interact in online spaces where linguistically and culturally diverse participants collaborate and interact with each other. Cultural and Intercultural Literacy has been identified as a key digital skill that also emerges from the learner (or, of course, citizen) being a participant in online spaces. Interacting effectively and constructively with people from other cultures takes on even more importance in our global world (Dudeney et al. 35)

The globalised world demands more contact among the members that live in it, as much in the social as in the professional environment, a fact that is crucial during students’ time in college:

“As learning projects become more globalised, and more exchange based, learning how to interact with other cultures is key – not only to the successful completion of a given project, but beyond it, with wider implications in the professional sphere” (Dudeney et al. 120).

Likewise, it is not just the online interactions and the communication through social media that brings intercultural awareness among the students. During their time in college, the study abroad mobility programmes also play a significant role in the development of students’ ICC.

This study abroad experience is viewed as pivo-
tal in the development of intercultural awareness amongst students (Bennett 2). Even though the definition and concept of intercultural learning are still highly contested (O’Dowd 118), practitioners tend to agree that foreign language learning provides an ideal platform to discuss differences in cultures and to develop an openness towards others (Byram 11). As a natural extension, the period spent abroad is also perceived as an important element in fostering ICC, a perception that has been confirmed by extensive research (Deardorff 232; Bennett 12).

In this landscape, Digilanguages is a multilingual curated portal for language students that offers activities to be used independently or in a formal instructional learning context, to foster the development of digital literacies, language skills and ICC.

In this multidimensional space, activities featured include important issues related to ICC: i.e. reflections about stereotyping and cultural differences, culture comparisons and so on.

Authors like Bennett Deardorff or Witte describe intercultural learning as a progressive process that follows different steps or stages. From this perspective, Digilanguages establishes different stages according to the learner’s ICC development level: ICC part 1, Pre-mobility programme, During mobility programme and ICC part 2.

In this paper, we will first highlight the importance of ICC and language skills in a professional environment, and then we will position the Digilanguages project to present selected activities that the portal offers to students and teachers to develop intercultural awareness and ICC during their language learning process. The data gathered during the implementation of these activities will be analysed and recommendations on the use of relevant portal activities based on the development of ICC will be discussed.

Background

2.1 ICC & Competitive Advantages for Global Employability.

The development of Intercultural Competence and language skills is a key factor that needs to be regularly addressed. On one hand, Intercultural Competence, as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people of other cultures (Byram 3), has been carefully approached and promoted by higher education institutions as well as in relation to its employability aspect. Research shows in fact how the focus is on the development of graduates who are able to interact across different cultures as companions, community members and global citizens, in order to acquire values and benefits that go beyond employment and monetary profit. In response to this, many companies today have formalized their policies and strategies focused on workplace diversity, inclusion and intercultural awareness, stressing the importance and influence those factors have, among other things, on internationalisation, employee satisfaction, innovation and productivity.

Having an intercultural competence is, of course, an iterative process: actors from multicultural educational environments and marketplaces become culturally competent after passing through various stages of an intercultural competency development based on experiences, reflections, conceptualizations and experimentation.

On the other hand, research also shows that candidates with language skills are more readily recruited by companies as the development of language competencies tends to be linked with the development of a range of other skills.
Next Generation.” 27). In particular, studies carried out in Irish higher-education institutions indicate that language learning contributes to the development of the kind of transferable skills desired by twenty-first-century employers; see the collaborative Dublin City University (DCU), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) project, *Transferable Skills in Third-Level Modern Languages Curricula*, 2004.

Plurilingualism together with Cultural and Intercultural literacy contribute enormously to the development of flexibility, problem-solving skills, learning capacity and interpersonal skills, as well as creativity: all essential skills in a developing information society and knowledge economy.

2.2 The Digilanguages Portal

The aim of the Digilanguage project is to develop an open digital interactive resource centre which serves as a support, personal development platform, and pedagogical repository for both learning and teaching languages. The languages offered are English, Irish, French, Italian, Spanish, German; the audience includes - but is not limited to – third level education, first year students, students studying abroad, and language teachers.

Specifically, the project is divided into three broad areas:

1. **Digital Literacies for Language Development**, which focuses on the “individual and social skills needed to effectively interpret, manage, share and create meaning in the growing range of digital communication channels” (Dudeney et al. 2). Topics include: privacy, copyright, register, online communities, netiquette, online identity, boundaries, and plagiarism.

2. **Language Learning Strategies and Practices**, which focuses on skills needed to improve and reflect on language learning and teaching. Topics include: oral and other skills, intercultural competence, lexis and grammar, register, and domains of use, use of digital resources including CALL resources.

3. **Transitions and Contexts** focuses on the transition to and journey through third level language environments. This theme includes topics such as: intercultural communication, social media, target language practice, and preparation for study-abroad mobility programmes.

2.3 ICC and the Digilanguages portal

Intercultural communication is an area of crucial importance within the Digilanguages portal. Several activities have been created and developed around ICC; more specifically, the dedicated section has been divided in two parts, namely ICC (part 1) and ICC (part 2).

ICC (part 1) provides an introduction to the topic of intercultural communication, focusing on the importance of ICC for language learning. This section presents various platforms of communications where participants from different language and cultural backgrounds can interact with one another, while creating independent multilingual learning environments.

ICC (part 2) provides a more in-depth look at the intercultural communication theme offering activities that help users to improve their exposure to the concepts of intercultural communicative competence and cultural sensitivities. In addition, this section offers activities where users can apply their language skills, share experiences with their mobility programmes, and build a digital portfolio.

3. ICC Activities within the Portal

The five activities chosen for this paper are a sample of the type of activities that explore and develop ICC in the first learning stage and in a more advanced stage. Some of the activities deal more with linguistic issues, while others focus more on cultural perceptions of the target culture. However, all of them are based on reflective practice among the learners to explore the different intercultural issues that are brought into each of the activities.

3.1 Description of Selected Activities

**Activity 1: “Target culture on the Web... Anything new?”**

This first activity, which is part of the ICC (part 1), explores the preconceived ideas that students could have regarding several topics of the target culture, contrasting them with the information
and comments that tourists leave in websites (i.e. TripAdvisor or Wiky Travel) after visiting the target culture country.

Once the students have gathered all the information from these websites, they analyse if there are any differences between the tourists’ perceptions and their own perceptions.

Activity 2: “Learning about regional differences in your target language country”
This activity, which is part of ICC (part 2) section, focuses on the concept of regional differences and variations in a given language across different cultures. The standard language and dialect concepts and their definitions are explained in detail; it is around those the users will become familiar with regional differences and varieties in their target language country, using relevant videos and quizzes.

Activity 3: “Identify regional stereotypes of the target language using CL”
This activity, which is part of ICC (part 2) section, introduces students to the exploration of the different regional stereotypes associated with the target culture. Language learners are usually familiar with the most common stereotypes of the language and culture that they are studying. However, they might not be aware of the more specific knowledge regarding cultural regional differences. It is therefore through this activity which is based on a corpus linguistic analysis that they will be able to become more aware of the diversity and different regional stereotypes within their target culture.

Activity 4: “A Corpus Linguistics analysis and reflection: Respect vs Tolerance. Disrespectful vs Intolerant”
This activity, which is part of the ICC (part 2) section, approaches a topic which has been recently debated in the mainstream ICC: the concept of “Respect and Tolerance” (Dobbernack and Modood 1-20; Wilson 852-868). This activity aims to guide students in the discovery of concepts and word associations related to these terms, as well as their adjectives (“Disrespectful” and “Intolerant”). A corpus based analysis will be conducted by the students using specialised software and followed by the analysis of the data gathered and a class-group reflection.

Activity 5: “Comparing cultures and discovering if we are intercultural speakers”
This activity, which is part of ICC (part 2) section, is designed around the Cultura Project. This intercultural project offers the possibility to connect groups of students online in order to help them understand each other’s culture. Specifically, the created activity allows students to compare their own culture with the target culture using existing online exchanges, and to reflect upon themselves as intercultural speakers.

3.2. Feedback from the implementation of the activity: “Comparing cultures and discovering if we are intercultural speakers”
The selected activity was introduced in the PC Lab teaching hours from a Second Year of the BA in Applied Languages module. The number of students that participated in the piloting of the activity was higher than the number of responses of the questionnaire (n=13) that the students had to complete by the end of the session where the activity was implemented.

Figure 1 – Results of a post-activity questionnaire (n=13)

Did you find this activity useful? Why?

The following student comments represent a sample of the typical responses to questions about the activity.
In summary:

- The activity develops intercultural awareness according to the reflections made by students and the importance of becoming an intercultural mediator.
- Students appreciate the sharing aspect of the activity, especially because of the direct contact among different cultures.
- Students adopted a greater understanding of the value of the Erasmus experience as well as the awareness and practice of digital literacies.

Conclusions and recommendations

Through the implementation of one of the Digilanguages activities described above, we may conclude that many students are aware of the need to develop their ICC, and readily engage in the proposed activities in the PC classroom. In addition, they appreciate the deeper immersion of the five activities, enjoying challenging cultural stereotypes, and making solid preparation for the ICC Part 2 activities. It should be noted that all five activities are based on reflection, bringing out subjective opinions on sensitive and important intercultural issues. This is a necessity and a cornerstone of the pedagogical approach that was adapted by the researchers/teachers. Our main recommendation is that ICC should remain among the top necessities for students wishing to increase their employability in a globalised economy. Indeed, even beyond employability, the development of digital skills and ICC should not only be a necessity, but a standard feature of our own communicative voices as we seek to arrive at the stage where activities teaching us about tolerance, respect, and ICC become unnecessary and finally redundant.

Table 1 – Typical student responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.1 Yes, I found really useful this activity because I understood the importance of the Erasmus experience</td>
<td>R.1 The part about Digital Literacy, because it deals with a very actual, important subject that concerns a lot of young people.</td>
<td>R.1 I would not change anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.2 Yes, it helps me realize the importance to develop my ICC. I mean before, I know that, but I did not realize this is that important.</td>
<td>R.2 Seeing different opinions of similar topics</td>
<td>R.2 Include audio-visual aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.3 Yes, I did. This activity has helped me sharing my thoughts about the Irish culture with Irish students but I have also learned their opinion about my country.</td>
<td>R.3 Sharing funny experiences (like confusions when it comes to greeting someone from a different country...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.4 Yes, I think it is very interesting to be able to link other cultures and have an understanding of how each culture varies.</td>
<td>R.4 To realize the shortcomings when I deal with the intercultural things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.5 Yes, because it makes one more aware of all the other elements (besides language) that are important to work as an interpreter / language teacher / intercultural mediator.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Works Cited


Abstract

The necessity to be competent in understanding and interpreting written as well as spoken English language is vital in our society. There are many methods and approaches set to confront this particular demand, one of which corpus linguistics addresses in a most efficient way. Corpora can be used to study the purposes for which words are used in a text, and the circumstances under which they are used. This work considers the advantages of using corpora, carefully designed collections of written texts, in teaching a foreign language, thus promoting cross cultural competency. Recent development in communication and the requirements for a growing intercultural cooperation bring demands on today’s society to be able to communicate in an effective way. Languages are the most prominent part of one’s culture, that is why it is imperative to master them as well as possible to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings. This paper shows an introduction of a possible approach to fulfill this task. It demonstrates methods and views upon a tiny fraction of features of language, utilizing available data focusing on some aspects of using an online corpus, namely the British National Corpus, to provide a communicative context in language learning, concentrating on English as a second language.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, culture, English language teaching, British National Corpus

Introduction

The English language achieved a genuinely global status, because it formed a special role that is recognized in every country. The role of the English language is most evident in the countries where it has obtained priority in foreign language teaching, even though this language has no official status. It becomes the language which children are most likely to be taught when they arrive in school, and the one most available to adults, who are seeking to learn a foreign language (Crystal 3).

Today’s society uses many materials which are written in English or translated from English. The number of English language speakers is increasing in (not just) our country, while the amount of text to be translated does not decrease as a result of the integration into the European Union, requiring a considerable amount of English language materials and documentation. The laws, bank materials, international companies’ documentations, ministries as well as educational and cultural institutions use translated materials and translate their own materials. The administration used to be conducted in one language, but this has changed into an administration in two or more languages, which is the case of calls for proposals, research plans, biographies, recommendations, business plans, spending, records, reports and many other documents of the everyday life.

Undoubtedly, the necessity to be competent in understanding and interpreting the written as well as spoken English language is vital in our society. There are many methods and approaches set to confront this particular demand, one of which corpus linguistics addresses in a most efficient way.

This article considers the advantages of using corpora, carefully designed collections of written texts stored on computers or available online, in teaching of English as a foreign language. With the internet and computers widely accessible in classrooms, using corpora in language methodology is a functional and useful means to improve and enhance the interpretative and productive skills of learners, as well as their ability to learn.
This article focuses on some aspects of using an online corpus, namely the British National Corpus, to provide a communicative context in English language learning.

What is a Corpus?

According to the Corpus Encoding Standard (Ide 3), a corpus is a large collection of texts of any type, including prose, newspapers, poetry, drama, word lists, dictionaries etc. Corpora can be used to study the purposes with which words are used in a text, and the circumstances under which they are used. We can investigate how speakers and writers exploit the resources of their language; the language is being looked at in naturally occurring circumstances and cultural settings, looking at the ways similar structures serve different functions in various contexts.

Since the online corpora and the tools for analysing it are becoming increasingly accessible, corpus based research as well as studies have become progressively more common, as are their uses in teaching languages and language pedagogy.

Written and spoken varieties can be investigated regarding their preference determining patterns in language use, individual style of given authors or speakers, depending on social background or different situations, registers. Monolingual as well as multilingual dictionaries are a good collection of information on meanings that can be expressed by a word and its translations.

However, dictionaries cannot list all the possible contexts in which a word can be used and which can influence the translation of the given word into another language. In teaching English as a foreign language, it is advisable to adopt the Communicative Approach, in which words are not treated as isolated units or references to concepts, but as means of communication between the speaker and the hearer, concentrating on the meaning and usage of the given word or phrase. As Howatt (366) puts it, language is experienced as a communicative behaviour, which is why the main focus in English language teaching is put on the communicative competence of learners.

In this sense, I am not going to focus on the logic based theories of meaning, according to which a word has a meaning as an entry in a dictionary, but I am going to focus rather on the approach assuming that the meaning of a word is the function of its purposeful use in communication, the exchange of information and meanings between the speaker and hearer, or the producer and receiver.

Corpora are a useful tool for both teachers and learners to develop communicative, linguistic as well as cultural competence, and at the same time it improves the learning skills and productive and interpretative competence (Aston 1). We must take into consideration that learning a language is a matter of learning about the ways the language is used and learning how to use it, develop learning skills.

That is why corpora are a valuable tool in developing these skills leading students toward greater autonomy, providing teachers as well as learners with information about the culture of a given language as a helpful complement to other teaching aids.

Contextualizing the Learning Process with the Help of the British National Corpus

As an example, let us look at one of the largest available corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC), which was originally created by Oxford University Press, and which contains 100 million words.

According to the website of the British National Corpus, the written part of the BNC (90%) includes, for instance, extracts from regional and national newspapers, professional magazines and journals for all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and communications, school and university compositions, along with numerous other kinds of text. The spoken part of the BNC (10%) consists of orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal exchanges (recorded by volunteers chosen from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) as well as spoken language composed in different contexts, varying from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins.
The examined sample of investigated words has been chosen based on a survey conducted over a period of time among learners of English as a Second language from various European as well as non-European countries, which produced a sample of difficult words in addition to words causing problems in case of translating them from English to their respective languages. Due to the space and time constraints, only a few words had been chosen. One of the recurring statements of the enquiry respondents was that English had a multitude of words describing light or shine, e.g. glister, gleam, sparkle, etc. Related words generally cause confusion and struggle in determining their exact meanings, using them in a correct way and translating them or more importantly, understanding their meanings in other languages accurately. These are the investigated words in this study.

The Corpus Processing Tools Used for the Purposes of this Study

The Sketch Engine is a practical tool to explore how language works. Its algorithms analyse authentic texts of billions of words (text corpora) to identify instantly what is typical in the language and what is rare, unusual or emerging usage. The Sketch Engine as part of the BNC is for anyone wanting to research how words behave. It is a Corpus Query System integrating concordances, word sketches (corpus-derived summaries of a word’s grammatical and collocational behaviour), distributional thesaurus, collocations and many other useful features. As Kilgarriff and Tugwell (Kilgarriff 136) state, this information can be obtained from any large corpus, provided there are part-of-speech taggers (i.e. software that reads text in some language and assigns parts of speech to each word), lemmatisers (i.e. software which removes inflectional endings to return the base or dictionary form of a word, the lemma) and grammars available for the language of the corpus. Word Sketches build on recent developments in lexicography, corpus linguistics and Natural Language Processing to provide an improved way for lexicographers, terminologists, teachers and learners to find out what the corpus has to say about a word (Kilgarriff 136).

In Sketch Engine, the BNC has always been one of the principal corpora, both in terms of usage and demonstration of analytical tools and technologies in Sketch Engine, including concordance search, word lists, collocation extraction, word sketches and distributional thesaurus among its other features. That is why it is used in this study. The advantages of using British National Corpus are in the fact that the aforesaid corpus is (1) monolingual: deals with modern English, not any other languages, although some foreign language words may occur in the corpus; (2) synchronic: it comprises British English of the late twentieth century; (3) wide-ranging: it includes different styles and varieties, does not focus on any particular subject area, genre or register, also it contains spoken as well as written styles (The British National Corpus, Sketch Engine).

Words in Context based on the British National Corpus

We will choose a word of interest, in this case the word “glisten” (one of the words identified above, belonging to the group of difficult to translate words), and look at its occurrence in the corpus. Concordance is a very useful way to investigate large text collections (or text corpora) via results of various search queries put in context. Each concordance line shows one occurrence of a search query, usually in the middle and in red colour, typically referred to as KWIC (key word in context) (Sketch Engine).

For illustration purposes, following is a shuffled sample concordance of the verb “glisten” from the British National Corpus, as represented by the Sketch Engine (with bibliographic sources highlighted on the left side column, logged in abbreviations, all fully expandable for further insight):
The advantage of corpus concordancing is in its demonstration of the investigated word in a context. A concordance is the fundamental tool for any researcher working with a corpus, showing them what is in the corpus. In case of a more in-depth investigation, it is possible to expand a particular sentence containing the word of interest, as follows:

Figure 1 – Concordance and context of „glisten“ in the BNC

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>of 13</th>
<th>Go</th>
<th>Next</th>
<th>Last</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOB</td>
<td>fact, she could see the smooth white stones <strong>glistening</strong> on the bottom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8M</td>
<td>copulating in the dirt.</td>
<td><strong>glistened</strong></td>
<td>in the gloom as she urged herself to her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J13</td>
<td>shake that comparison: the way his skin <strong>glistens</strong>, the soft-packed oozing quality that he</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A0N</td>
<td>wind-blown rowan tree beside it. Its berries <strong>glistened</strong> red under the burnish of the breeze, which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F9H</td>
<td>out and, to my right, vast acres of mud <strong>glistened</strong> in the light of the low sun, a rich feeding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3O</td>
<td>Thurkettle &lt;p&gt; Gold... beautiful, bright, glittering, <strong>glistening</strong>, lovely yellow gold! And what's more, it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTT</td>
<td>cast by one of the infrequent street lamps <strong>glistened</strong> on a freshly pasted poster extolling the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7H</td>
<td>character to the landscape, Isolde reclines and <strong>glistened</strong> in the virgin whiteness of the Cornish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHU</td>
<td>Thirkell-designed sample pages, beautifully printed on <strong>glistening</strong> white bromide paper.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMN</td>
<td>the keep. It was dark and dank, the walls <strong>glistening</strong> with streaks of green water. When Corbett</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWF</td>
<td>and saw the tears on her cheeks that were <strong>glistening</strong> in the starlight. He put his arm about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHC</td>
<td>along lanes, the banks of which were already <strong>glistening</strong> with frost. It was cold and he thrust his</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11</td>
<td>Dollar Valley. There on the green plateau, <strong>glistening</strong> in the sunshine, was a collection of various</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JXX</td>
<td>woman murmured sympathetically, her eyes <strong>glistened</strong> with tears as she begged Laura to sit down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASR</td>
<td>basaltic glass, so when they come to rest, they <strong>glisten</strong> blankly on the ground.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8R</td>
<td>markets. But he just wobbles his tail and <strong>glistens</strong> Within his dapper profile Unaware of how</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOF</td>
<td>air. Leaves, fronds, ferns and creepers <strong>glistens</strong> , wet and hot, and the earth that covers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHA</td>
<td>However, despite being photographed in <strong>glistening</strong> black and white, its meaning remains murky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1E</td>
<td>photographs. Underground streams, once clear, now <strong>glisten</strong> with oil. Central can’t film here because</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVP</td>
<td>swung to the right and travelled downwards, <strong>glistening</strong> on a myriad crystalline particles in the</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 2 – Expanded context in the BNC

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“......arms pulling on rakes, backs stooped under burdens on their way to the steadings. Far up on the left, above the inn and the cottage row, two other figures moved, blue and white, not haymakers - Jean Bruce and young Donald, walking hand in hand amongst the bents of a neglected field at the furthest point of the McCullochs’ holding. For years it had not been worked. A grey building with a sagging roof stood inside a stone enclosure with a wind-blown rowan tree beside it. Its berries **glistened** red under the burnish of the breeze, which came in uneasy gusts from the south and east. Below them the strath spread its pattern like a map. ‘I feel like a bird,’ said Jean. She held out her arms and spread her fingers gracefully, pleasuring herself in Donald’s admiration. As he looked at her, his face closed over with a faintly embarrassed incredulity. ‘A bird?’ he chaffed her. ‘Are you a hen, then? Or a duck?’....” (The British National Corpus)
```
Learning a language involves gradual adoption of the target language as well as its culture; using corpora as a useful aid can be well utilized in order to provide learners with the most contexts possible and frequency of occurrence, i.e. surrounding them with the language learnt. A corpus is one of the means of achieving this goal. Compared with the dictionary’s broad generalizations, a corpus provides a wider range of patterns, examples thus revealing more specific aspects on the use of a particular word.

In order to discover the meanings of words, or narrow down their implications, the corpus can be used to show collocations, i.e. the habitual juxtaposition of a particular word with another word, or words with a frequency greater than chance. Collocations are a significant help in discovering meanings of problematic words, and corpus is a reliable and flexible tool used to show collocations at a click of a button as follows:

*Figure 3 – Collocation candidates of „glisten“ in the BNC*
The collocation candidates are sorted and arranged according to their logDice score, a logarithmic variant of the dice coefficient (a statistic used for comparing the similarity of two samples), which differentiates between salient candidate pairs and a sheer coincidence of some co-occurring ones, but it is crucial to note and observe all the association scores necessary to take into consideration. The association scores are, however, not the topic of this paper, that is why they are not going to be dealt with in detail.

The co-occurrence score shows the frequency of two terms occurring along with each other in the corpus in a particular order; it is an indicator of semantic proximity or an idiomatic expression, and adopts the interdependency of the two terms.

The candidate count shows the number of occurrences of the particular word in the investigated corpus.

Upon further examination of the corpus, one can learn that certain items appear in certain types of context, the tendency of an item to occur in contexts which have a particular function, in a particular structural or lexical environment or in a particular lexical field. Learners can discover, for example, that a “sweat glistened on one’s skin”, “tears were glistening in her eyes”, “a lake glistened in early morning light”, “black hair glistening with gel” and so forth. This is another good approach in contextualization of the language learnt, the communicative way making the understanding and learning easier and more straightforward for the students.

While examining the words “glisten” and its collocations, the investigator can narrow the search further and make the query more interesting as well as communicative for the students by looking for an expanded context, where these two particular words are used. The students probably have their own ideas connected to the uses of the featured words and it is very useful to let them discover those types of contexts where the examined words might occur.

Here is an example of an extended context featuring the words “glisten” and “tears”:

Learners can discover relationships between words of interest, and even prove or disprove their own ideas and opinions as to the occurrence of the investigated words in certain contexts. The example shown above comes from a book of fiction (as they can find out in the corpus references), and gives the learners the expected context, namely the situation, where the particular words naturally occur and they automatically come to mind as first when investigating a certain combination of words. This procedure can be done in class with many different groups of words, making the learning and understanding easier and more straightforward. In order to reach communicative competence, the use of expanded context is vastly effective. As Meyer states, corpora consist of texts (or parts of texts), thus they enable researchers, teachers or learners to contextualize language and can facilitate functional discussions of language as well as understanding certain cultural situations (6) e.g. what kind of language is used in a given cultural and social context.

Corpora may prove to be a very useful tool of linguistic research for teachers as well as students. In order to highlight and identify specific lexical or grammatical features or patterns, it is helpful to use concordancers, i.e. computer programs which automatically construct concordances for a more effective use of the corpora. I used the Sketch Engine for the purposes of this paper, but there are many other interfaces that students as well as teachers can use, which provide straightforward and easy to read examples and contexts. These can be used at a click of a mouse and help discover vast amount of reliable data in a communicative framework.
Conclusion

This article seeks to briefly present arguments in favour of the use of corpora in English language teaching, since it can provide learners with information and knowledge in a communicative form and readily available. Corpus use can provide opportunities for learning in many areas, it can complement the teaching process in a motivating way, promoting language use and improving the understanding by wider available contexts.

Corpus linguistics being a relatively new scientific domain is growing fast, and the materials developed for research are constantly being improved and enhanced. The great advantage of working with corpora is a range of almost endless possibilities for research, and also a very fast and effective response in using computer tools for corpus processing. That is why it is a relatively easy task to gather large amounts of data to be able to process and extract relevant and applicable information for conclusive results.

It is evident, as mentioned in this work, that English is a global language, it is the language of business and politics, and it is here to stay. That is why it is crucial to utilize and attain the most effective and valuable means of studying it and managing it, not just discovering efficient ways to make it understandable for the ever expanding audience and users, but also the means of finding the best practices in interpreting and understanding it, while keeping in mind that more and more non-native speakers use English as the main language of their communication. One of these means is offered by corpus linguistics.

Recent development in communication and the requirements for growing intercultural cooperation bring demands on today’s society to be able to communicate in an effective way. Languages are the most prominent part of one’s culture, that is why it is imperative to master them as well as possible to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings. This work shows just the introduction to a possible approach to fulfil this task, demonstrating methods and views upon a tiny fraction of features of language utilizing available data.

Works Cited


Abstract

In the last several decades, the Medical School of the University of Pécs, Hungary has successfully launched both English and German international programmes in the fields of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. Recently, a number of international students seeking enrolment at the Medical School has increased dramatically, and as a result, we need to teach, interact and communicate amongst students originating from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, in our role as language teachers, we are now expected to provide effective education to this new student population studying English (EMP) and Hungarian (HMP) for Medical Purposes.

The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate specifically the benefits of implementing online educational tools and the way they are interwoven in both the EMP and HMP classes towards effectively enhancing learners’ skills and intercultural communicative competence.

Various collaborative and educational tools including Quizlet, Padlet and Kahoot will be discussed, which are highly considered for the operational use in the design of a curriculum within an intercultural setting.

Keywords: English and Hungarian for medical purposes, computer assisted learning, English for specific purposes

Introduction

The University of Pécs in Hungary provides a pulsating and a culturally-mixed environment. Recently, in recognition of the outstanding progress made towards promoting education and lifelong learning, Pécs was awarded with the UNESCO, „Global Learning City Award“ in recognition of its efforts during 2017 (UNESCO Learning City Award). Coincidently, the international jury nominated Pécs at the height of its celebration with respect to its 650th Anniversary and Jubilee of the foundation of the University of Pécs.

The University of Pécs Medical School (UPMS) is the centre of medical, dental and pharmacological education. Recently, the university launched both MSc in Biotechnology and Medical Translation and Interpretation programmes. The number of freshmen admitted to the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy has remarkably increased in the past decade, and the institution takes pride in attracting students from 52 countries throughout the world. The total number of students enrolled in the academic year of 2016/17 peaked at 3635. 1571 students study in Hungarian, however, the majority of students participate either in the English program (1264), or in the German program (800) (UPMS Statistics). The UPMS initiated its English programme in 1984, followed by the German programme twenty years later, in 2004 (Németh and Csongor).

The main profile of the Department of Languages for Specific Purposes is the instruction and research in the field of languages for specific purposes in medicine, health, and pharmacological sciences. The instructors design curricula in support of courses relative to languages for specific purposes in English, German, Latin and Hungarian. The LSP Department adopted a genre-based approach in teaching, which means that language instruction is based on particular genres of medicine and health care. The tutors offer English and German credit courses for Hungarian students based on written and spoken genres, such as research writing, taking medical history, case reports, patient information, presentation techniques, case studies and clinical documentation.
International students are encouraged to participate in medical English courses providing insights into research writing, medical history taking, conference presentations and medical case reports. Foreign students may also enrol in elective language courses for medical purposes in Hungarian. The students study Hungarian for 4-6 semesters and acquire 4 contact hours per semester. The final language examination for medical purposes in Hungarian is a prerequisite for the Internal Propaedeutics course in the 5th semester. Comprehensive, this exam was created and is required to test the international students’ levels of communication with patients, admitted to clinics, and also at a basic level when taking medical history. It is needed for performing physical examinations, and also for being able to understand the answers and reports about the cases in English to their supervisors. In summary, what students are expected to learn is how to use the medical terminology in sentences, how to understand authentic medical discourse and how to communicate effectively in typical situations throughout Hungarian clinics. Despite situational practice, intercultural issues must be addressed during the language courses.

Languages for Specific Academic Purposes at UPMS

Language teachers at UPMS have a special role in teaching English and Hungarian for Medical Purposes at the same time. The concept of languages for specific purposes (LSP) is based on the needs analysis, and centred on language appropriate to particular disciplines and activities with respect to syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc. (Dudley-Evans and St John). As English for Specific Purposes has become more and more specific (Hewings), we now speak about English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), such as English for Medical Purposes (EMP). Consequently, we can now define the Medical Hungarian courses as Hungarian for Medical Purposes (HMP).

In having to teach both the language and medical skills, teachers today are impacted with an increase in the potential challenges with regards to offering a professionally driven top-notch education. Interestingly, most of the language teachers are not medical professionals, which entails they do not possess specific knowledge with respect to medicine. As a result, teachers are pressed to research valuable, reliable and authentic resources for the language use. In the 21st century, technology is an excellent source of field-specific content and can be easily integrated into classroom methodology (Kern). Another opportunity is to set up a collaborative model, in which both language teachers and field-specific instructors work cohesively in the language teaching process. There are several benefits of using this model, for example, providing communication partners, authentic contexts and interactions representative of the specific situations which arise in their profession. Moreover, cultural aspects of language use and communication are demonstrated in the specific field of health-care. Strikingly, what complicates the situation is that these field-specific Medical Hungarian courses are taught by teachers using English as the primary language of instruction, which, in nearly every case, is not the mother-tongue of the students.

Use of Technology in LSP Courses

Over the past several decades, technologies, in particular digital or Web 2.0 technologies and other popular online educational tools, have become increasingly important in language learning. Today, technology is commonly integrated into classroom activities. The term Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) appeared in language education in the early 1980s (Chapelle 3). Garret defines it as the ‘integration of technology into language learning,’ (Garrett 719). Distinctively, the Internet has a significant impact on language learning as a source of authentic materials and means of global collaboration and communication. Teachers increasingly integrate online educational tools into their curricula. Warschauer and Kern (2000) proposed the term Network-based Language Learning (NBLL) for teaching using Information Technology (IT).

As the digital environment changes at high speed, making the classroom as dynamic as possible is both an imperative and a challenge for teachers of languages for specific purposes. The authors previously conducted a research to gain insight into the use of digital study tools while teaching
medical English for Hungarian students and medical Hungarian for international students (Németh and Csongor). The outcomes of the survey revealed that more than 80% of the respondents prefer using both traditional, paper-based and online, web-based educational tools for studying purposes. More than a half of the students reflected on the use of online educational tools as being very useful. The results may suggest how new generations will be more inclined to use a technology-based study environment, declaring the relevance of online technologies in language learning and teaching (Németh and Csongor).

In the consideration of the use of these tools, LSP students can now interact with their peers, with learners and speakers from the target culture, and skilled professionals. There are hundreds of different technologies and tools available for language teachers and learners. Several of these are easy-to-use and are accessible to everyone. This is particularly important in an intercultural setting, where students can collaborate with each other and with language teachers and experts through IT technologies.

**Intercultural Learning with the Use of Technology- a Pilot Study**

Following their medical Hungarian final exam, international students can also participate in optional courses to improve their Clinical Hungarian skills. It is a two credit course which combines classroom activity with clinical practice. The course consists of one 90-minute classroom/clinic instruction per week. The course materials are available, yet students often have varied and very specific needs. Additionally, as remarked earlier, the teachers are not medical professionals, and so they must collaborate with skilled experts. In order to develop a suitable context for these learners, a new collaborative model was proposed. Hungarian senior medical students were asked to prepare online and simulation tasks for the international students. Student demonstrators participated both in the development and teaching of the course.

At first, the student demonstrators were asked to use current technology in creating warm-up and vocabulary-centred activities within the classroom. For example, they integrated technology into the course with the use of online word lists, flashcards and vocabulary games. The Hungarian students prepared vocabulary tasks related to the body parts, internal organs and specific diseases. When practicing medical terminology, the relevance of both cultural similarities and differences were always emphasized. Since all the international students study within the core of the English programme, the terms were either demonstrated by the use of a multimedia image or the English counterpart. In the next step, the Hungarian students were asked to create simulated role-play scenarios within the classroom, in which the international students were required to take the medical history of their simulated patients, and eventually provide professionally-driven medical guidance in the performance of the physical examination. The Hungarian students created their simulations on real cases previously encountered while serving at the clinic. The international students were prepared for the medical interactions beforehand by the use of online platforms. The students were offered prompts in English, which helped them to ask relevant questions, while the Hungarian students had corresponding answers in respect to the questions. During these simulated situations, cross-cultural difficulties were discussed which likely will arise in real-life clinical interactions with patients of different ages, ethnic groups, family and socio-economical backgrounds and religions.

**Online Tools**

There are several online tools which proved successful during the course. The Hungarian students thoughtfully developed meaningful tasks for the international students with the aim of learning vocabulary, communicating in a professional medical context, and sharing ideas with respect to the difference in cultures. Quizlet was the most widely preferred by the students. Quizlet is a free learning tool, which is a useful site for learning vocabulary (About Quizlet). Online games and quizzes proved immensely popular among students participating in the course, e. g. Kahoot. Kahoot is a collection of questions and quiz games on specific topics (Making Learning Awesome! - Kahoot). The participants
enjoyed the spirit of competition, and at the same time, the learning process grew significantly more motivating. In order to prepare for the role-playing scenarios, intercultural issues and content-specific language tasks were shared in the use of a collaborative platform. Padlet is a virtual board in which students and teachers can share links, texts, pictures, and can add posts, very much like social media (Padlet). All of the above tools are easy-to-use, and do not require any special training. Their common feature is that they encourage collaboration and can be used as virtual classes, in which participants can exchange beneficial information.

Feedback Results

This was the first semester in support of learning Clinical Hungarian within an intercultural setting including the use of innovative online technology, and therefore, it is regarded as a pilot program. Since this course is optional, only 8 international and 6 Hungarian students enrolled. In addition to the Hungarian students, Israeli, Japanese and Norwegian students agreed to participate in the study. Following the end of the semester, students were asked to fill in an anonymous feedback survey online.

Table 1 – Feedback summary of the participants of the Intercultural Learning Pilot Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you like the MOST during the classes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“To meet Hungarian students and how different each class was!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I liked the teaching method, the organization of the classes and we was active all the time so it was not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boring f.ex we played quizlet and we met other Hungarian students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“warm-up games”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The atmosphere of excitement and activity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“International team, funny and useful classes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The cases of doctor-patient communication with the Hungarian students where we got exposed to medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditions and relevant Hungarian terms. The relaxed friendly environment in classes. Quizlet method of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning many things, makes things much easier.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Meeting new people from other cultures and studying with different methods.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That they were always changing. Different locations, different Hungarian students joining, and joining the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 groups, so we had 2 teachers present. The class was very relaxed, and it wasn’t scary to make mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And of course the games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was more fun than Hungarian 1-4, I was more motivated to go to the classes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“communicate with Hungarian students and could know about the real medical situation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you like the LEAST during the classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The timepoint”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nothing, everything was really good “</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“tests”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nothing that I recall.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The lessons were too short.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Having classes in the science building instead of in the main building”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“we just did about the internal med. I would like to have done about another departments like surgery ......”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

The ever growing number of international students at UPMS is creating an exciting cultural diversity that is reflected in the classrooms and practices at the clinics and teaching hospitals. Teachers, educators and clinicians now recognize the importance of being adequately prepared for working within an intercultural environment. Today, educators are expected to learn how to teach and communicate effectively and appropriately with students originating from vastly different cultural backgrounds. From another perspective, international students are expected to learn how to communicate with Hungarian patients during their clinical practices. A diverse classroom environment is often perceived as challenging, yet simultaneously, it can bring about an opportunity for dynamic teaching and learning, all requiring substantially more diligence and patience. Using skills and tools specifically designed to be effective within intercultural environments is of significant importance. The intercultural collaborative method, in which language teachers and field-specific experts work together using the innovative online technology, proved to be an efficient and beneficial model for learners of language for medical purposes. In the operational use of online tools and intercultural communication with peers, learners are quickly motivated and rejuvenated, ideally creating a win-win relationship for all participants.

Works Cited


Implementing Reflective Methodology in the Development of Intercultural Competence
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Abstract
Intercultural education at the university level is aimed at building intercultural competence as an inevitable part of today's university graduates' profile. The reasons for the acquisition of this competence lie both in the present academic needs (internationalization of higher education) and the future job-oriented needs (internationalization of the working environment). Choosing the most adequate methods is a challenge for all teachers involved in intercultural training. It was confirmed by research that the interactive methodology is the most appropriate at any stage of education. Our paper suggests that reflective methods are appropriate for the university level as students should be given the opportunities to reflect on how they are developing as intercultural learners. Our paper presents the results of a qualitative action research based on the analysis of student reflective learning journals and discussions in class. On one hand it shows how the implementation of Kolb's experiential learning cycle in the teaching/learning process can help students develop their intercultural competence. On the other hand it can help teachers assess students' intercultural competence in terms of newly-gained knowledge, skills and attitudes, or their expected changes in attitudes and behaviour. Some pedagogical principles are explained and exemplified.

Keywords: intercultural competence, intercultural education, reflection, Kolb's experiential learning cycle

Introduction
The beginning of the 21st century is marked by accelerated global processes that have impact on all aspects of social, economic and personal life. The development of intercultural competence is an inevitable component of today's university graduates' profiles. Culture plays a vital role in universities, as higher education goes through an enormous expansion of international contacts, study programmes, joint-degree programmes, international research and mobility projects. Even before students enter the international labour market, they are exposed to the internationalization trends in schools that are creating a more mobile and global community. People with different cultural backgrounds are connecting with each other more often than ever before. We believe that all stakeholders should possess intercultural competences in order to communicate effectively, without creating conflicts in the intercultural situations.

Intercultural Competence and How to Teach It
Intercultural competence can be understood as the knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable smooth communication and interaction between members of different cultures and help avoid conflicts, misunderstandings and the loss of individual actors' integrity (Zelenková 30). Mader and Camerer (97) put the stress on attitudes as those are, in their opinion, the personal qualities which play a more important role than the knowledge of cultures. Similarly, Byram et al. state that the intercultural dimension of students is not composed of "more knowledge of other countries and cultures..... but skills that allow them to take risks in their thinking and feeling; such skills are best developed in practice and in reflection on experience" (Byram et al. 34). Deardorff's model of intercultural competence includes "the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions" (Deardorff 241). The reasons for developing this competence lie both in students' present academic needs and their future professional requirements. The internationalization of education is bringing students and teachers into
one classroom where the interaction becomes intercultural. Even if the differences may seem small or tiny, the culture will always be present in the background that makes communication a cultural act (Kramsch 82). The future professional needs lie in the internationalisation of business, the labour market and free trade. The university is the last formal educational stage to ensure the development of the competence required for successful functioning in the international and intercultural environment. Since the mid-20th century the research has investigated the nature of cultural components that influence the way people think, act and behave. However, the field of intercultural interaction is relatively young (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, Gudykunst), and since the mid-20th century, pedagogy has been developing more effective teaching and training methods. These evolved from earlier teacher-centred approaches (lectures, films) to more student-centred methodologies in the 1990s (Seeley, Byram, Byram et al., Kramsch, Tomalin and Stempleski), up to the interactive and reflective methodologies at the end of 20th and the beginning of 21st century (Byram, Landis et al., Gibson, Utley, Scrivener). We can assert that intercultural education has undergone a tremendous transformation in the past decades (Fowler and Blohm 38, cited in Landis et al.), and teachers can now use a range of methods to teach culture, intercultural relations, communication and interaction. In our article we focus on the reflective methodology, which can help raise students’ cultural awareness and develop their intercultural competence.

Reflective Methodology

In the teaching of intercultural competence, reflective learning practices and methods are part of the reflective methodology. By methodology we understand a „body of methods and rules followed in a science or profession, or the study of principles and procedures in a particular field“ (Landis et al. 38). Reflective methodology involves all methods and techniques that help individual students or groups of students reflect on their learning experience and actions in order to engage in the continuous learning process. By experience we mean an intercultural experience, an encounter or any school activity that helps to shape students’ thinking, action or behaviour. In other words, the reflective practices take part in shaping the profile of the student as a culturally competent individual. As the teaching in general “concerns values, aims, attitudes and consequences as well as skills, knowledge and competence” (Pollard 4), the implementation of reflective practices can help correct some of students’ ways of thinking and intentions, revise some values and visions and support them in their present or future work in a challenging intercultural environment. On the other hand, practising reflective methods in the development of intercultural competence enables the teachers to recognize the patterns of thought that shape students’ thinking and actions. Pollard relates reflective teaching practices to their origin in the theories of John Dewey,1 who explored the relation of reflective thinking to the process of education. The aims and goals of the reflective methodology must be clearly set in terms of planned learning objectives. They may include, for example (we are introducing examples from our own teaching practice and the research to be discussed later):

- developing chosen aspects of intercultural competence,
- developing attitudes to cultural differences or work practices,
- learning and obtaining new intercultural communication skills,
- gaining awareness of differences in normality and revising one’s own knowledge,
- gaining awareness of one’s own cultural practices,
- gaining new patterns of behaviour or new assumptions,
- exploring new ways of thinking and beliefs,
- gaining motivation for further explorations,
- raising curiosity,
- revising one’s ways of thinking,
- recognizing the importance of intercultural skills,
- examining or reviewing one’s own values.

1 See especially his books How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process and Democracy and Education, which are available in many editions and translations.
Some of the aims target the cognitive domain, but as we can see, most of them are concerned with the affective domain of the learner. Studies confirm that measuring the progress in the affective domain provides a challenge for educators (Heinz, Deward, Byram); nevertheless, the results of reflective practices may serve as a basis for assessing the advances in the intercultural learning process. The nature of reflective and experiential learning is well explained in the works of Jennifer A. Moon (A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning 69-130, Learning Journals 17-25). She introduces the teaching principles based on Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Learning Journals 10), where reflection plays an important part. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (4) can serve as a pedagogic basis and principle for any reflective classroom practice (both in the oral and written forms) that supports the learning process. The reflective methods can include, among others, learning journals or diaries, portfolios of students’ works, reflections on read books, articles or study materials, exploration methods, critical incidents, and discussion methods (panel discussion, Socratic seminar (Zelenková 2014), in which students express, present, argue about their attitudes and are called to reflect upon them. In our opinion, any of these methods can be used in the intercultural training or education. What makes the difference is the integration of a reflection phase. As Fowler and Blohm suggest, “methods per se are neutral…” (Landis et al. 37), but it is the pedagogic mastery of a variety of methods by the teacher that can have a significant impact on intercultural learning.

Research Aims and Methods

In our teaching practice in intercultural education, we use mainly the interactive methods (in order to show or simulate real-life interaction), such as simulations, discussions, films and videos, case studies, critical incidents, interactive lectures and games. In the past four years we have been trying to purposefully think of implementing Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (4) within some of the methods chosen. In this article we would like to share our pedagogic experience and the results of the classroom’s qualitative didactic research focused on raising the intercultural competence of students. Partial research results are presented as the research is still going on, the data being collected semester by semester.

The research is being carried out in special courses focused on intercultural education, such as Introduction to Culture in Business, Culture of English-speaking Countries and Intercultural Communication in Business. These courses are elective, taught in English and attended by students both from Slovakia and abroad (Erasmus Programme students). The groups are international, which in itself is an advantage, as it stimulates the intercultural environment. To implement the Kolb’s learning cycle (4) we introduced student learning journals and an intercultural manual with DVD (DEW Project Partnership) with post-viewing reflections (in written form). The number of students per semester (1 course) reaches on the average 12–15, so altogether we have collected 41 students’ reflections. Through the analysis of students’ reflections on the “experience”, we have tried to track the acquisition and development of intercultural competence. We asked the following questions:

- What new intercultural knowledge do students acquire?
- Which intercultural attitudes do they demonstrate?
- What critical cultural awareness of their own and other cultures do they demonstrate?
- Which future-oriented behaviour results from their learning?

The results of writing a learning journal are not only the record of events (happening in and outside the classroom), but also a kind of reflection on the process of learning, as they document students’ ideas, feelings, observations and vision (Moon, A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning 185 ). So, we had also some track of how students develop as learners.

Implementing Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

The pedagogic rationale behind the implementation of Kolb’s learning cycle (4) is twofold: a) it covers four phases of learning from one’s own experience (of a cultural situation), and b) it addresses four basic learning styles. Kolb’s four-part framework
consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation may be a great contribution to the learning process if teachers select training methods and techniques keeping this model in mind.

*Figure 1 – Kolb’s experiential learning cycle; http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/training/eresources/teaching/theories/kolb*

In terms of experience we must point out that people generally learn from life experience. The intercultural learning of students happens naturally through encounters with members of foreign cultures, during field trips, travels in foreign countries, and in participation in international study programmes, exchange programmes and studies abroad. There is already a well-established domain of research focused on the contribution of study abroad to the intercultural profile of students (Beaven and Borghetti). The field of applied linguistics tries not only to evaluate, but also to understand better what factors foster or inhibit students’ learning outcomes, and what personal and social variables foster or hinder second language learning abroad (313). But it is not only language development that contributes to the intercultural profile of students in study abroad (Lewis). Study abroad is considered their first-hand experience abroad in terms of intercultural and personal development which is situated in interaction, in students’ contacts in real life.

For teaching purposes, the teachers must think of any other “concrete experience” that can mediate intercultural learning. This is the place for the implementation of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle.

The teacher can design the method to begin at any entry point based either on the predominant learning style preferences of students or on the topic.

**Results and Discussion**

To organize a learning experience for the implementation of Kolb’s learning cycle, a list of teaching activities had to be developed to support different phases of the cycle. In our case, the following pedagogic approach was practised in the individual stages:

*The concrete experience phase.* The concrete experience drew on all activities chosen for the research such as simulations, invited lectures delivered by foreign lecturers, videos, peer presentations and discussions. Actually all classroom activities were reflected upon, but our analysis of students’ reflections covered mainly those mentioned above.

*The reflective observation phase.* In the reflective observation phase, use was made of journal writing (homework), structured reflection papers, and worksheets. Students were asked to write their journals and note down the answers to the above mentioned questions (what new knowledge they thought they had gained, how they felt about the activity, how they felt being in somebody else’s shoes, how the activity influenced their way of thinking, attitudes, etc.).

*The conceptualization phase.* In this phase the understanding of some theoretical concepts is happening and the new knowledge is being constructed. This phase of learning was facilitated by the teacher’s lecture on a theory that supports the conceptual understanding, e.g. on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions allowing to understand the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Hofstede et al. 5-9). The lecture, in our case, was preceded by readings assigned to students as homework. As a result, the understanding of theoretical concepts was embedded into the existing knowledge of students.

As we mentioned before, in the development of intercultural competence some knowledge is required, but in line with Byram we believe that the intercultural profile of the learner is constituted
not only by the cognitive domain, but also by the affective and behavioural domain, which can be achieved by the practice of reflection (28). For this reason the fourth phase in the experiential learning cycle is of most importance to our research.

Therefore, the active experimentation phase should allow for risks in thinking and feeling and for taking risks in behaviour. We do not know how students will apply their gained knowledge and whether and how they would demonstrate the attitudes presented in class in real life. This is what we cannot check and assess. But the active experimentation phase can contribute to the learning in that students are asked to think what they would do in certain real-life situations, how they would solve intercultural problems and critical situations and why. Again, at this stage, simulations and games can be applied, case studies solved, practical assignments or demonstrations required. According to our experience, this is the most challenging part as it requires the demonstration of students’ personal attitudes. Therefore, writing journals is a good method as it allows students to express themselves without fear and embarrassment, become more autonomous and take control of their learning, make sense of the learning experience, and express their feelings and emotional responses (Zelenková 2017).

To find out what students think of the application of the new cultural knowledge and demonstration of the attitudes to and opinions about future actions, students were purposefully asked to include into their reflections the answers to the questions: Which action would you take? In which situation? How would you check your progress? The following table of examples of students’ personal outcomes demonstrate students’ attitudes and possible future actions in the intercultural situations and encounters. It also shows how we structured the outcomes.
Table 1 – Structure for the active experimentation phase worksheet. Source: own source.

Write here what you will do as a result of studying his issue/topic/unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural issue</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management-employee relations</td>
<td>I’ll find out about the respect given to people in managerial positions.</td>
<td>When I start a new job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial styles</td>
<td>I’ll find out about how people are rewarded in their job.</td>
<td>Before I start work or will ask fellow-workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I won’t assume that everyone’s management style is the same as mine.</td>
<td>From now on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read the company’s website.</td>
<td>Before I go for the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I should learn more about different management styles.</td>
<td>Now, during my university studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I should study some other cases in intercultural management.</td>
<td>When I consider working for a multinational company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In some cultures work and action orientation is the rule; in other cultures the values are different.</td>
<td>I must think of these differences when I work in an international company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When I work with people from different cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language</td>
<td>I should be prepared to understand the differences in body language in different cultures.</td>
<td>When I deal with foreign business partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’ll try to understand different gestures.</td>
<td>While dealing with foreign clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will try to improve my non-verbal communication during presentations.</td>
<td>Before I start dealing with foreign clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>After my presentation has been recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time perception</td>
<td>I did not know that time is a different value in different cultures. I will be careful to criticize my business partners when they do not respond quickly.</td>
<td>In business correspondence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will be polite in telling people that they should have done it yesterday.</td>
<td>When I wait for the information or delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When dealing with clients from southern countries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These examples illustrate the didactic approach to implementing Kolb’s experiential learning cycle into intercultural education, mainly the phase focused on active experimentation.

The cross-cultural situations were introduced (on topics of authority, time perception, managerial styles, communication with foreigners, dress code, work relations, gender relations, etc.), then they were debriefed, discussed and reflected upon either in the discussion in class or recorded in their written reflections (journals, worksheets). The examples show how the possible shift towards the active, behavioural stage could be reached.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that the entry method is vital, as it captures the attention (simulation, native speaker guest lecture, video demonstration), but the teacher should remember that the whole learning cycle should be used thoroughly. Each component of the learning activity should offer an opportunity for reflecting, generalizing the concepts, and active experimentation. Our active experimentation phase was done in the written form of journals and worksheets. We have chosen individual student journals as we believe that they allow students to express themselves without fear and embarrassment. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (4) as a pedagogic tool in the teaching of intercultural competence is a strong pedagogic asset. When implemented properly, it allows students to make sense of their learning experiences. It makes their learning useful, and thus enables them to grow as learners and intercultural personalities.

Works Cited


Abstract

The Millennial generation is believed to spend much more time on communicating, especially with the help of technical equipment, than any generation before. Thanks to the Internet, they also have plenty of opportunities to get well acquainted with foreign cultures before actually visiting them. Although better informed than its predecessors, this generation also encounters difficulties when having to integrate into foreign (learning) environments. In our research, rather than focusing on the generally prioritized needs of the employer, we plan to pay attention to what the students expect and gain from international telecollaboration projects. We have interviewed former Erasmus exchange students about their communication problems abroad, and tried to identify which of these problems can also be simulated and practiced within the framework of our telecollaboration project, in order that the students can benefit the most from their studies abroad. The level of student mobility at our institution (Budapest Business School) is regrettably low, and we assume that involvement in like projects would also enhance the students’ willingness to participate in exchange programmes.

Keywords: Business English, intercultural communicative competence, telecollaboration, virtual and physical language exchange.

Introduction

All students studying from business English course books are to some extent familiar with intercultural issues. Their ESP classes offer various opportunities to develop their international communicatiion skills by simulating international environments, where students mock real-life business meetings or negotiations. After the theoretical input and the in-class practice, the students should be prepared to communicate successfully in an international environment.

Theoretical Background

Teaching of English as a foreign language is traditionally placed in a context where learners gain insight into the social and cultural background of (mainly British, but also American) native speakers. This tendency has been changing, and a growing number of course books – not necessarily of English for business purposes – include an increasing proportion of non-native speakers. By having become a lingua franca, English is the means of communication among the majority of non-native speakers from different countries for professional and personal purposes, too. As Chomsky argues in his book (1965), native speakers of the monolingual community have gradually been replaced by non-native speakers whose social background is an essential element in communication.

As it is highlighted by Galante in her essay on student identity in English classes in Brazil, "any spea-
ker of English who wishes to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds needs to develop intercultural awareness for effective communication” (31). She adds that learning about dominant cultures is not enough to improve communicative competence, therefore, „being able to communicate in English, especially among people who will use English as a lingua franca, includes knowing how to communicate with people from several linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (34). Another seminal aspect of ICC that Galante underlines is the necessity of „respect rather than tolerance ... the ability to understand other cultural perspectives and accept cultural relativism” (36).

Zlomislić, Gverijeri and Bugarić also argue for the importance of intercultural competence in cross-cultural communication, and highlight the necessity of knowing the cultural background of potential business partners. In their study aimed at measuring the extent that education may have on intercultural awareness, skills and competence, they claim that increasing the students’ cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness ensures the success of cross-cultural communication, and their research proved that “intercultural competence has a statistically significant positive effect on the readiness of students to participate in study and work programs abroad” (433).

Accordingly, intercultural issues have become an essential element of language teaching. Especially in courses of ESP students become familiar with cultural backgrounds of various non-native speakers of English, and have the opportunity to learn about their attitudes, values and traditions. The communication style of non-native speakers also reveals a lot about their culture, both in writing and, more emphatically, in speaking. Therefore, apart from raising their awareness, it is essential for students to explore these issues in an interactive way. As far as classroom work is concerned, they have the opportunity to listen to and read about the cultural background of various non-native speakers of English, still, they cannot explore these issues by themselves. Since only a limited number of students take the opportunity of studying abroad and interacting with peers with different cultural background, it is essential to “import” an international environment into the classroom by the means of ICT.

Among the benefits of online collaborative learning that Redmond and Lock mention is the students’ exposure to various world views and the possibility to interact with other learners, enabling them “to move from their private to the public world and dialogue to create a shared understanding of meaning” (269). In their essay providing a framework for online collaborative learning, they also mention the possible human and logistic factors that may lead to the failure of online projects.

Although more than a decade has passed since the genesis of this extensive study on telecollaboration, there are still many difficulties that the participants in such projects need to face. Despite the experts’ and practitioners’ approval and positive feedback, in his essay on the barriers of telecollaboration O’Dowd states that ‘virtual mobility’ is not widely supported on an institutional level, even if it has been proved in his Padova case study that “telecollaboration also served as a valuable way of preparing students more effectively for their physical mobility programmes” (2013: 51). Raising telecollaboration projects to university level, where such tasks form an integral part of the curriculum, would undoubtedly ease the initiatives of ‘lonely fighters’. O’Dowd also underlines the importance of „the blending of telecollaborative exchange with other issues and activities at an institutional level – such as internationalisation, physical mobility programmes and the institution’s external profile” (48). Through their interconnectedness, these issues would enhance each other to the benefit of the students, the instructors and the institution.

Student Mobility at BBS CIMB

Student mobility at all the BBS faculties is relatively low, and CIMB, which boasts a long-standing tradition of high-level foreign language teaching, is no exception.

The College’s management has been making effort to increase its level. While staying abroad with Erasmus scholarships, the students can also take up courses at CIMB. The related exams can be
taken when they return, or, sometimes, through Skype. Also, very often, the teachers assign written tasks, which must be submitted by manageable deadlines. This way the students’ studies are not prolonged unnecessarily during their foreign stay, which, given the current level of tuition fees and the limited number of state-sponsored scholarships, is a considerable material relief.

The above incentives have an undoubted positive impact on student mobility figures. We, as language teachers, however, can see that besides the financial considerations the deficiency of language skills also often hinders the students’ successful participation in the Erasmus project. The language testing of the applicants is conducted by our department, and despite our generosity, we are sometimes compelled to deny our recommendation. We also suspect that some students do not even apply as they are intimidated by the (in our opinion quite modest) language requirements. For this reason, we think it would be useful to examine the language learning habits of those who have successfully participated in the Erasmus programme.

We sent out questionnaires to 107 former and present Erasmus students who have taken part in the project in the 2015/16 and in the 2016/17 academic years. By the date of submission of this writing we have only received 12 answers, which is obviously not enough to draw far-reaching conclusions, but it is sufficient to formulate some hypotheses. In the future, we wish to send out a slightly modified questionnaire, to which, with some more intense urging, we hope to receive more replies.

Ten of the 12 students pursued their studies in English, one in French, and one in Spanish. The dominance of English seems to be overwhelming, and we believe that even if we examined a larger sample the proportions would not change. It is notable that none of those learning in English pursued their studies in English speaking countries — apparently a large number of Dutch, German and French universities offer courses in English these days. Seven of the 10 learning in English used English as the sole means of communication with fellow students and teachers as well, while two also communicated in German and one in French. The only student learning in French also used English in her communication with fellow students.

Given the relatively high number of German learners in Hungary a tentative conclusion regarding German higher educational institutions can be that they should consider offering more Erasmus courses in German.

Another obvious conclusion can be that English — and other — teachers should prepare their learners for survival in versatile cultural environments, contrary to the recent past when we solely focused on the introduction of British culture. The inclusion of cultural studies in the curriculum is a great step forward in that respect. Language-teaching-wise, the importance of communicating with non-native speakers is underlined.

Our firm belief is that the preparation for communication with non-native speakers cannot mean teaching a simplified version of the language, or the toleration of elementary mistakes in the belief that the student will mostly have to communicate with speakers of the same level anyway. The chances of successful communication are much higher if our students are able to adapt to the partner’s language level — using a less complex language with less advanced speakers and utilising the opportunities offered by using a more complex language with advanced or native speakers. The latter requires in-depth studies of the language, the former the acquisition of the ‘language simplification’ skill. Telecollaboration projects with university students of the neighbouring countries seem to be particularly suitable for facilitating both: communication between non-native speakers makes the students recognise the gaps in their vocabulary, especially in their business vocabulary, and/or develops the above mentioned ‘simplification’ skill when necessary.

Interestingly, in response to our “Erasmus questionnaire” none of our students reported on cultural clashes, difficulties deriving from differences between cultures. Seven of them categorically denied having any difficulties, while the students studying in the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland voiced their pleasant surprise at the informality of
student-teacher relations in the above countries. The main reason for this successful adaptation might be that we are talking about very young people with no fossilised mindsets. It is also relevant that they moved to other European cultures – the Netherlands (3 students), Germany (2), France (2), Spain (2), Finland, Denmark, and Portugal – which are either relatively close to our Hungarian culture, or are well known from previous holidays, television, film, books, etc.

As for the development of the various language skills, seven of the 12 students reported that it was their speaking skill that developed most during their stay, five of them adding that it was their least developed skill before they went abroad. Three reported the most significant improvement in their writing skills (one stating it was originally his least developed skill), two in their listening skills (for one that was the weakest skill) and two in their reading skills. (More skills could be mentioned.)

From this small sample it seems that despite our constant effort at communicative language teaching, we are still least successful in the creation of speaking possibilities, in setting up situations where the use and development of speaking skills is inevitable. This underlines the importance of the Skype interviews within the ICCAGE project.

Not surprisingly, it is often the weakest skills that develop most profoundly during the students’ foreign studies.

In Hungary, bilingual language exams have two main types: the so-called written exams check writing and reading skills, while the so-called oral exams check speaking and listening skills.

The table below shows how the students evaluate the development of their skills during their Erasmus-stays in this exam system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>development</th>
<th>written</th>
<th>spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2 → C1</td>
<td>2 (students)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 → C1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2 → B2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Σ</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Development of language levels during Erasmus stays
This table also clearly indicates that in the home environment we are better at teaching writing and reading skills than teaching speaking and listening skills.

We have also asked the respondents about how future Erasmus students should prepare for the Erasmus stay with respect to language learning, so they can benefit the most from their stay.

Without exception, the respondents underlined the importance of speaking to foreigners in the language of their studies, as we have seen, most cases in English, and in the language of the receiving country. The students themselves seem to be aware of the need for more speaking opportunities, which hopefully serves as a motivation for conducting the Skype interviews with enthusiasm.

All students also mentioned the importance of watching videos and films in the target language. Regrettably, only two of them mentioned the importance of more active class participation during their foreign language classes. The reasons for the latter, however, are likely to be too complex to be discussed within the confines of this paper.

The ICCAGE Project

In the second semester of the 2016/17 academic year we participated with two groups in the ICCAGE project. The first group consists of 11 first-year students specialising in marketing studies, and the module we covered was chosen to fit their specialisation. (Module 5, in which the students have to build international business relations and sell one particular product or service.) Regarding language levels the group is not homogenous, the levels ranging from B1-C1. One student did not fill in the evaluation sheet, so the number of respondents is 10.

At the beginning of their business school years the students (with one exception) have no relevant work experience and little theoretical knowledge to rely on. However, only two of the students mentioned that their partners were graduates, and that this fact caused some problems. Each student pointed out in the evaluation sheet that their partners were helpful and understanding. Eight also explicitly pointed out that the mismatch of professional language levels and the lack of professional vocabulary did not cause problems, thanks to the partners’ tolerance.

Out of the 10 respondents nine think that the part of the project they benefited from most was the negotiation conducted via Skype. Each of these nine also mentioned that it was the part they enjoyed most. One student, with relatively weak speaking skills, found the preparation of the preliminary quotation most useful and enjoyable. Interestingly, the enjoyable and the useful always coincide in the case of each student.

Of the worksheets provided they have found Worksheet 3 – preparation of the product – most useful. Although they do not mention the worksheet specifically, they all say that they appreciated the worksheets that help them to think of concrete details of the product. Interestingly, the worksheets, helping them to become aware of cultural differences (Worksheet 2) and the one helping them to develop their negotiation strategy (Worksheet 4), are not mentioned by any student as particularly useful ones. The Hungarian and the Czech cultures are perhaps sufficiently similar not to present significant cultural difficulties. As for the negotiation strategy worksheet, many details in it perhaps have already been considered while working on Worksheet 3.

Four students explicitly recommend having more Skype interviews in the project, others also mention that they have too little opportunity to speak with foreigners in English, and that they are grateful for having been provided with such an opportunity.

As far as the second group is concerned, only 13 students out of 20 filled in the evaluation sheet by the date of submission of this writing. The respondents are typically students whose language knowledge is closer to B2 level than to B1. All respondents found the Skype meeting to be the most enjoyable and/or most motivating part of the project, since they were obliged to use English. Moreover, as one of the respondents pointed out, it was a good chance to see how their knowledge of ESP could be used in a real-life situation. Another respondent valued the project’s contribution to the development of their negotiation and cooperative
skills. In spite of mentioning the Skype meeting as the best part of the module, seven out of 13 stated that it was the most difficult part, too. Among them one student claimed that it made her realise that her English was not as good as she had believed, and another that it made her more confident, which proves the project to be an authentic feedback on the students’ knowledge of English.

There were two major difficulties that students encountered during the project. The first concerns the correspondence (mentioned by eight); one student recommended Facebook as a more popular platform, where information can be exchanged faster than via emails. The other problem, mentioned by 4 respondents, was the difficulty to arrange the Skype meeting. The advantage of this difficulty was the necessity of exchanging several emails in English, where they needed to use their communication and social skills.

Two respondents suggested that the burden of group leaders be lessened, and everyone should take his or her equal share in the project. Another recommended a competition among teams. Nine respondents were eager to continue the collaboration and meet their partners in person.

**Conclusion**

First and foremost, we believe that – in line with the students’ suggestions – we should consider inserting one more Skype interview into the project. The ideal moment perhaps is when the students discuss their product ideas with their first assigned partners (not with their final negotiation partners). In the present project the feedback on the original product was provided in writing.

Our Erasmus survey also implies that the students recognise the need for communication with foreigners (not necessarily native speakers) in English, i.e. the need for projects like our ICCAGE project.

It is also likely that cultural clashes play a smaller role than we generally suppose when our students communicate with other Europeans. (Neither the Erasmus nor the ICCAGE students mentioned such difficulties.) It does not mean that we should reduce our efforts to raise their awareness of cultural differences – we do hope that our efforts contribute to our students’ successful adaptation. The geographical closeness, shared elements of history and the ever more relevant globalisation process, however, also must play a role in this success.

**Appendix 1**

**Questionnaire for Erasmus Students**

I. When and where did you study with the Erasmus programme?

II. In what language did you pursue studies?

III. In what language did you communicate with the fellow students?

IV. What was your level of the foreign language in which you pursued your studies before your Erasmus trip? (Circle the appropriate one.)

   - written  
     - B1, B2, C1
   - spoken  
     - B1, B2, C1

V. What was your level of the same language when you returned home?

   - written  
     - B1, B2, C1
   - spoken  
     - B1, B2, C1
VI. Of the skills listed below which was your weakest before the trip? (Circle the appropriate one.)

   speaking, writing, reading, listening

VII. Which was the one that developed most?

Which was the one that developed least?

VIII. During your Erasmus stay, did you have to face any difficulties stemming from cultural differences rather than from the lack of language skills? (e.g. different student-teacher -relations, student-student relations, different attitude to punctuality, etc.)

IX. How should future Erasmus students prepare for their trip language-wise? (Circle the appropriate one.)

   they should actively participate in their business language classes
   they should watch foreign-language films and YouTube videos
   they should read foreign-language books, journals, newspapers
   they should try to communicate with foreigners in the language (not necessarily with native speakers)
   they should by extra classes
   others, e.g. .............................................................................................................

If the language of communication with fellow students was different from the language in which you pursued your studies, please also fill in the following:

X. What was your level of the foreign language in which you communicated with other students before your Erasmus trip? (Circle the appropriate one.)

   written spoken
   B1, B2, C1 B1, B2, C1

XI. What was your level of the same language when you returned home?

   written spoken
   B1, B2, C1 B1, B2, C1

XII. Of the skills listed below which was your weakest before the trip? (Circle the appropriate one.)

   speaking, writing, reading, listening

XIII. Which was the one that developed most?

Which was the one that developed least?


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