Intercultural communication: a fundamental tool for relationships and human behaviour in international collaboration

Comunicación intercultural: herramienta fundamental para las relaciones y el comportamiento humano desde la colaboración internacional

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Abstract: English language training is a fundamental tool in human behaviour and relationships, participation, cooperation, interaction, and spread of academic as well as scientific knowledge. Hence, a superior management of graduate studies became evident. However, evidences showed how Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas professionals lacked the required skills in the language to meet up the demands of international cooperation programs. Thus, the present study aims to describe the design and implementation of an English for Specific Purposes course targeted for Cuban PhD and Master students with a focus on intercultural competence, within an advanced training program of English language for international cooperation. First, the context was analyzed resulting in a need for courses with an intercultural perspective. Then, the courses were designed for a Virtual Learning Environment and implemented in a self-access Centre for Advanced English Language Training for International Cooperation. The experience was positively evaluated. The results impacted on students' success in academic programs and cooperation project goals abroad. The project became a reference for cooperation projects in other Higher Education Institutions in Cuba.

Resumen: La preparación en inglés constituye herramienta fundamental para las relaciones y el comportamiento humano, la participación, la colaboración, la interacción y la divulgación de los conocimientos académicos y científicos. Es necesario por tanto una mejor gestión de los estudios de posgrado a tal efecto. Sin embargo, se evidenció que los profesionales de la Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas, no mostraban las habilidades necesarias para enfrentar las demandas de programas de internacionalización. Este artículo tiene como objetivo describir el diseño e implementación de un curso de Inglés con Fines Específicos para la cooperación internacional. Primero se analizó el contexto y la necesidad de cursos con enfoque intercultural. Los cursos se diseñaron para un entorno virtual de aprendizaje y se implementaron en un Centro de auto-acceso para la formación avanzada en inglés para la cooperación internacional. La experiencia fue evaluada positivamente. Los resultados impactaron en el éxito de los estudiantes en los programas académicos y los objetivos de sus proyectos de cooperación en el extranjero. El proyecto resultó un referente para otras instituciones de Educación Superior en Cuba.

Nowadays the knowledge of English as a foreign language opens new scenarios for mobility and cooperation to professionals worldwide. Anastasia Belyaeva (2015), remarks that education authorities recognize the increased role that foreign languages, especially English, play in the professional development of future specialists. (Belyaeva, 2015)

In this context, English for Specific Purposes course (ESP) grows into a typical approach to English language teaching and learning in tertiary education, in both college and continuing education, as a natural result of the increasing demand for English language skills, the rapid development of the field of applied linguistics, and advances in educational psychology. It definitely needs to develop its own methodology and curriculum separate from those of general English as a foreign languages (EFL) learning, because it has different objectives, content target learners, and goals than the broader field (Jun Lin, 2014).

Cuban universities, under the impulse of the Higher Education Ministry, have opted for internationalization as "an institutional metamorphosis each university must go through in order to achieve international and intercultural integration of its legacy" (Calvino, 2010). This process involves academic exchanges, networks and cooperation activities, along with the use of communicative and intercultural tasks supported by e-learning.

As a strategy for the internationalization process at the Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas (UCLV), a capacity project sponsored by the Flemish Institutional University Cooperation programs (IUC) VLIR-UOS in Belgium, was set up. This joint project focused mainly on the academic and scientific development of Masters and PhD students with an intercultural perspective to cope with the demands of academic programs abroad. To achieve this goal the Cuban and Belgian partners used English as a lingua franca.

However, it was evidenced that English language proficiency of the Cuban professionals was below average and their cultural knowledge on the target country was insufficient to deal with the demands of the cooperation program. Consequently, the CeBeCe project (Capacity Building for Communication in English) was launched at the institutional level, as a strategy to train those professionals in English to meet their language and communication needs.

This paper aims to describe the design and implementation of an ESP course for for Cuban PhD and Master students within an advanced training programme of English language for international cooperation at the UCLV, focused on both, communicative and intercultural competences.

It offers a framework within an exploratory research model where students' needs, goals and expectations are analysed, using qualitative techniques. A curriculum for an integrated course is presented, so that ESP learners can learn the target language in accordance to the intercultural context required for the academic mobility.

The outcome of the CeBeCE project will be reflected upon from the teacher trainers' point of view and recommendations formulated for dissemination in Cuba and for inspiring other educational centers aiming at internationalizing higher education programs.

Key features of English for specific purposes

Several authors have described the main features of ESP, among them Robinson (1991), Hutchinson (1987); Dudley-Evans (1998, 2001); Flowerdew & Peacock (2001); (Bojović, 2018). Some of them describe ESP as the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified (Robinson, 1991); (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001); (Dudley-Evans, 2001). Others, however, are more precise, describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes, or in terms of absolute and variable characteristics. Ahmadi and Bajelani define ESP considering the specific branches in which it is divided: "English for Academic Purposes (EAP) such as Medicine, Engineering, Theology, etc. and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) such as English for secretaries, technicians, etc." (Bajelani, 2012).

In this sense, ESP is considered a learner-centered approach to teaching English, which focuses on developing communicative competence in a specific discipline such as economics, accounting, business, engineering, etc. It enables students to use more specific English in their field of knowledge, which motivates them to use it for professional growth. As Hutchinson state it is "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (Hutchinson, 1987). Therefore, one of the distinctive features of ESP is that of goal-

Revista Varela, *21*(59), 149-158 | may-ago 2021 | ISSN: 1810-3413 | *Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas, Cuba*
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oriented, since the learners learn English not for the sake of the language but because they need it for practical application in their field of study or profession.

Accordingly, learners' needs for English learning and language skills are brought into the focus. Dudley-Evans and St John subscribe to the same point of view when they state "needs analysis is the cornerstone of ESP" and its proper application should result in a "focused course" where more attention is given to the design and construction of it (Dudley-Evans, 1998). In Boroujeni and Fard's opinion, detailed information about all contextual factors like learning materials, aids, and environment are included into a more comprehensive needs analysis (Lee, 2016). Since needs analysis has become a prerequisite and necessary condition, it is also expounded as a guidance of course design (Albakrawi, 2013).

The purpose of the needs analysis then, is to determine the specific focus of the participants in the development of their skills and to assist in the tailoring of the course content and materials to best encourage meaningful learning. Therefore, when designing ESP courses teachers are expected to be needs-responsive (Belcher, 2006).

Developing esp courses

As defined by Hutchinson, course design is the process of interpreting the raw needs to produce "an integrated series of learning experiences to lead learners to a particular state of knowledge". In ESP courses the language is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners (Nalan Kenny, 2020). It combines subject matter and English language teaching and such a combination is highly motivating since students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study.

ESP curriculum design goes through different stages: development, implementation, and evaluation (Belyaeva, 2015). The first stage includes analyzing students' needs, designing the course syllabus, selecting methodology and materials. The second stage is ESP teaching. During the third stage the feedback from instructors, coordinators, and students is collected in order to further modify or change the course design. Although, assessment is carried out through all the stages for effective curriculum development.

INCORPORATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE TO ESP CURRICULUM DESIGN

Nowadays the cultural dimension as a key component in the language teaching and learning process has been recognized. "The objective of language learning is no longer defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, which refers to a person's ability to act in a foreign language in linguistically, socio linguistically and pragmatically appropriate ways "(Council of Europe, 2001). Rather, it is defined in terms of the intercultural competence, which is "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, 1991 cited in (Atay, 2009). This definition, in fact, adds to the notion of communicative competence and enlarges it to incorporate intercultural competence in ESP courses as well. Thus, the process involves not only teaching the language, but also the values and skills attached to it. It's about constructing a relationship through negotiating images of the Self and the Other, cultures and languages" (Liddicoat, 2002).

The model of intercultural competence (IC) formulated by Byram and Zarate and developed by Dervin and Liddicoat was followed. According to Byram (2000), "intercultural competence symbolizes the capacity to see relationships between different cultures- both external and internal to a society-and to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other either for themselves or for other people" (Byram, 1997, p. 28).

Intercultural competence is a complex construct that involves various components. Byram's model integrates both the intercultural and the communicative dimensions and complies a set of five skills ("*savoirs*") for developing intercultural communication. These are: "attitudes" ("*savoir-être*"), "knowledge" ("*savoirs*"), "skills of interpreting and relating" ("*savoir comprendre*"), "skills of discovery" and "interaction" ("*savoir apprendre*" and "*savoir faire*") and "critical cultural awareness" ("*savoir s'engager*") (López-Rocha, 2016).

In the case of "attitudes" they refer to curiosity and openness and the ability to reflect on one's own stance toward another culture. Foreign language learners bring with them their sociocultural identity as members of their native culture to their learning experience, and even if they have acquired advanced levels of proficiency, they are nonetheless "mediators" between two cultures. The concept of "mediator" includes aspects both linguistic and cultural; by communicating in a foreign language, the learner is also becoming a dual-culture person whose native culture will always be part of his or her identity.

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"Knowledge" covers everything that is linked to declarative knowledge, or processes typical of social groups and their environments. "Skills of interpreting and relating" indicate the ability to understand the meaning of a document or a communicative act. "Skills of discovery and interaction" are the ability to acquire new knowledge, possibly in real-time communication. "Critical cultural awareness" consists of being able to evaluate one's own and the other's culture based on explicit criteria.

In addition to the dimensions and *savoirs* included in the intercultural competence, Byram and cols. also consider three possible situations in intercultural communication or interaction that may affect the relationship among the speakers: between people of different languages and countries where one is a native speaker of the language used; between people of different languages and countries where the language used is a lingua franca; and between people of the same country but different languages, one of whom is a native speaker of the language used. In the context of this research the second interaction is the one that was established. (Byram, 2002)

Following Byram's model, Fantini incorporates language proficiency to the rest of the components and highlights the most common attributes of an intercultural speaker to become an intercultural mediator: respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humour, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment (Fantini, 2001). Actually, the idea of the intercultural speaker as a mediator between two cultures, places the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning process.

He also, insists on the idea that IC has to be integrated in the curriculum and identifies three possible locations for its acquisition: the classroom, where there would be a close interaction between teacher and learner; what he calls "fieldwork", a short or long stay in the target language country, where the role of the teacher may even disappear; and independent learning, which is part of the personal development of the learner.

The three locations for IC acquisition are considered in the research context for the ESP course design, since the participants of the study are supposed to interact in the classroom (during the face to face lessons), acquire the competence mostly through independent learning (using virtual learning environments) and then they are going to continue developing the competence in the target language country.

All in all, in Byram's view, a person who has developed IC is able to build relationships while speaking in the foreign language; communicate effectively, taking into consideration his own and the other person's viewpoint and needs; mediate interactions between people of different backgrounds, and strive to continue developing communicative skills. That is precisely the intention of the ESP program with a focus on intercultural competence in this work.

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The curriculum for Cuban PhD and Master students within the advanced training program of English language for international cooperation at Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas considered the learners' background, their knowledge and skills in the target language, intercultural previous experiences, duration and frequency of the course. Also, the learners' characteristics, the objectives and contents of the course, learners' expectations, and the principles of ESP teaching and learning were part of the design. They were all welcome not only to learn, but to reflect on their learning process, by interacting, sharing their experiences, and assessing themselves through individual and peer assessment.

In this paper, the stages of ESP curriculum design were followed: needs analysis, design of the course implementation and evaluation. Needs analysis included the context, the material and human resources for the course, and the learners' needs.

Needs analysis

For identifying the learners' needs a written questionnaire and an interview were constructed following a set of guidelines proposed by Fitzgerald (In Agustina, 2014):

1. Background. Biographical information including language learning experience and current proficiency in the target language, the communicative events or situations in which learners had participated
2. Language learning styles, included information about their preferences in learning, whether they learn best through discussions, seminar, debates, etc.

3.   Language needs. They referred to the learners' reasons to take a language course including what language skills they needed to master and the situations in which the language will be used.

The interview was carried out to determine students' oral language skills, expectations and attitudes towards the kind of ESP instruction they needed. ESP learners were adults, who had some knowledge of English at different levels and they needed the language in a particular field, in order to acquire language skills to be able to participate in the program. They were required to answer some questions about students' personal information, preferred styles of learning, their experience as a foreign language learner, experiences of intercultural encounters in order to select the content of instruction and the most relevant teaching methods. The pedagogical objectives were therefore for the professors to design a course tailored to their needs.

It was evidenced that the learners had different responsibilities at their workplaces and they did not have much time to attend face to face crash courses. Hence, it was crucial to design and implement an ESP blended-learning syllabus which was a challenge for the local English language trainers and staff. The potential changes implied new teaching practices and tools to be used in a blended learning environment.

As a result a self-access Centre for Advanced English Language Training for International Cooperation (CAELTIC) was created with a Virtual Learning Environment the CEFR using MOODLE platform. It included four profiles focused on intercultural competence and customized to learners' needs. (see figure1)

Figure 1 Home page

CAELTIC Profiles
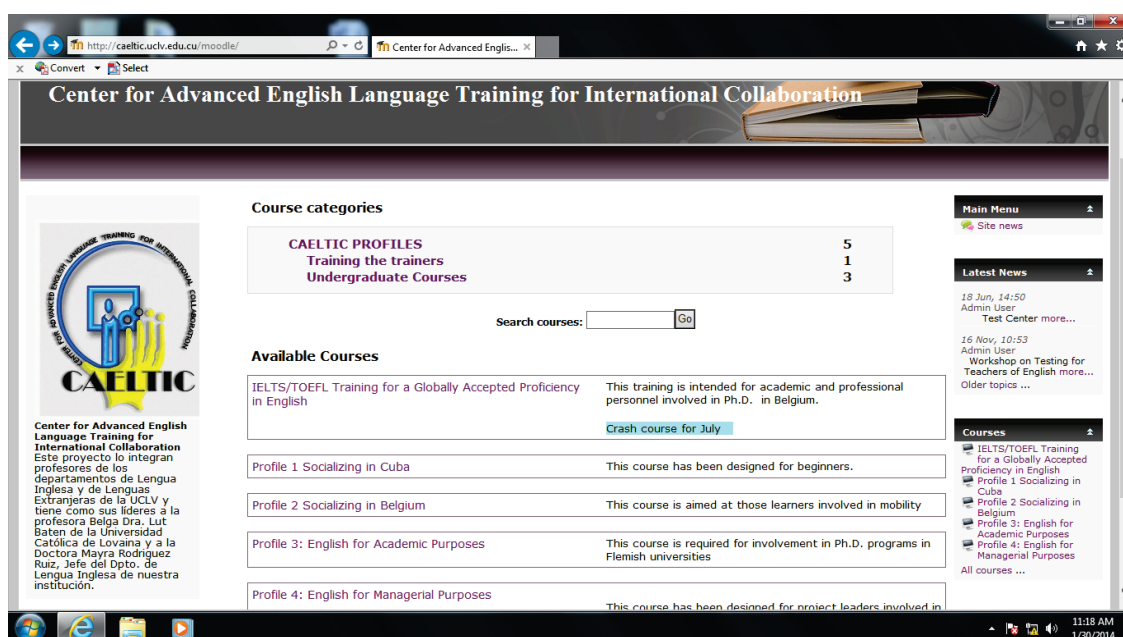
This multipurpose virtual space was materialized in a physical space in the faculty of Humanities. The center was equipped with modern technology: personal computers, laptops, LCD projectors, CD players, videos, etc. and a library for independent study.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COURSES

Under those conditions, CAELTIC staff was challenged to design and teach for the first time ESP distant courses with a specific curriculum that suited the professional needs using ICT for its implementation. To do so, CAELTIC professors were trained abroad through short courses, workshops and conferences in Belgium and the UK, on assessment, corpus linguistics, webquests design and intercultural competence. They also got some training on the use of ICT, curriculum design and assessment at home through foreign specialists.

Four profiles (courses) were designed taking into account students' needs and language proficiency:

- Profile 1 Communication skills in English for socializing in Cuba
- Profile 2 Socializing in Belgium

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- Profile 3 English for Academic purposes
- Profile 4 Managerial and business English

Profile 1 Communication skills in English for socializing in Cuba has been designed for beginners dealing with communicative situations in the home country, following Steel's perspective that native culture should be part of students' identity to become mediators between cultures. It was aimed at the level A1- A2 of the CEFR.

Profile 2 Socializing in Belgium for those students involved in mobility and with A2 language level of proficiency.

Profile 3 English for Academic purposes was required for involvement in PhD program in Belgium. It required the learners to have at least B1 language level of proficiency.

Profile 4 Managerial and business English was designed for project leaders. It required the learners to have at least B1-B2 language level of proficiency

This paper focuses on the curriculum design and implementation of Profile 2 as an example of the best teaching practices aimed at developing intercultural competence within CeBeCe project. (see table 1)

Table 1

Syllabus of the Profile 2 Socializing in Belgium

Units	Intercultural contents
1 Introducing Belgium (three webquets)	Official information (national symbols, economy, geography, government, religion) History (national holidays, identity features) Culturegram, (eating habits, dressing habits, customs, traditions etc.)
2 At the airport	Main parts of Brussels International airport, the importance of punctuality and responsibility
3 At the Accommodation	Types of accommodation in Belgium (hostels, motel, flat, students residence
4 At the Restaurant	Eating customs, table manners, dishes, recipes of typical meals
5. Health Care	Health care system in Belgium (how to proceed in case of sickness)
6. Locations, directions and building	Public transportation in Belgium: common means of transportation, types of payment, fares, maps etc.
7. Shopping	Types of stores, payment, prices, purchase online
8. At the university	University campuses in Belgium , situations at the library and other academic settings
Intercultural Website for creating a virtual social community	Useful cultural assistance for the trip: Meeting Point Forum for sharing intercultural experiences

Methodology: Communicative Language Teaching using task-based approach through WebQuests. All the units were designed in WebQuests templates. (see figure 2)

Figure 2

Profile 2 Syllabus through Webquests

Own elaboration

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The term "WebQuest" was coined by Bernie Dodge and Tom March from San Diego State University in California in 1995 to describe an inquiry-based activity that involves students in using web-based resources and tools to transform their learning into meaningful understandings and real-world projects (Albert, 2009). Rather than spending substantial time using search tools, most of the information used by learners is found on pre-selected websites. Students can then focus on using web-based information to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to address high-level questions.

With webquests, students played an active role, they were not full time in the classroom, saved time by guided browsing in the world-wide web, developing autonomous, individual and collaborative learning. Teachers played the role of facilitators / tutors, were not full time in the classroom, designed their own specific courses using up-to-date resources, experienced a new attractive way of teaching, learning from their peers´ experiences, and developing digital literacy.

The training has been managed with the previous elements in mind, and considering the profile of the Cuban professionals' cultural behavior. Every curricular unit or topic was approached not only linguistically but intending to develop intercultural communicative competence as well. For instance, the first session of the training was introduced by discussing with the participants questions like these ones:

Have you been abroad before? (if yes, mention the assignment you got, the country and describe that experience)

Where will you be assigned to this time?

Purpose of the assignment? Duration?

What concerns you about this assignment? What excites you about it?

The following learning tasks have been used to activate the learning process on the topic of mobility:

- Daily news reports (by the trainees) from different sources in English;
- Group discussions (about identity, stereotypes…);
- Project works presentations on different topics related to Belgium culture, education;
- Working with proverbs and sayings;
- Working with *realia*;
- Problem-solving tasks;
- Presenting other persons` experiences.
- Activities from the intercultural resource pack and even the version for Latin American nations.
- Discussions in potential intercultural situations for every studied context: at the airport, at a hospital, meeting with their foreign colleagues, invitations to dinners and so on. The situations have been provided by collected experiences of previous stays abroad.
- Role-plays, simulated situation in the target country for example: between a costumer and a waiter/shop assistant; a physician and a patient

In further moments of the training, as when studying the unit "At the Airport", the trainers discussed other intercultural issues with the participants: language and communication style: not only basic communication (the words) in French, English or Flemish, which for people arriving in a new land immediately cause problems of anxiety and disorientation. More specifically to the cultural dimension: direct vs. indirect communication style. How do Cubans expect to be treated? Indirect communication style people are more reserved and appear "quieter" to people of Latin American countries where the atmosphere is "livelier" and more inclusive.

In this case peer-*collaborative* tasks, which integrate language (communication), culture and content were included in the webquests.

Teaching aids: Webquests, computers, CAELTIC Moodle Platform, library

Assessment: Summative and formative assessment, the e- European Language Portfolio (e-ELP) for self-assessment)

Hours: 80 hours (a ten-week course with two face to face sessions and online activities)

The course contained all the necessary instructions, and resources for self-training on line. The resources also included an intercultural website "Meeting Point", a page for language tips and other services. As an extracurricular activity an English Club was organized and monitored by the CAELTIC staff.

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The intercultural website to assist the Cuban academics and researchers on line was of valuable help in the training process to team up and collaborate abroad. "The use of computer-mediated communication tools like social networking environments constitutes a new way of understanding social participation and collaboration" (Ferreira-Lopes, 2018). This social community was intended to aid the designed training course with on line practical activities suiting the users' goals. It also connected trainees to their foreign partners to assist them in terms of intercultural communicative competence.

The design of the web, launched under the name of Meeting Point, started by studying previous experiences with the same goals; then by surveying former, present, and future trainees for comments, suggestions, and requests for reference and help to others. Next came the design of a homepage with information about the available resources, and hyperlinks to useful sites like digital newspapers, culture sites, etc.

It was also necessary to introduce a page for language tips, with an electronic dictionary of useful words and phrases, proverbs, sayings, and quotations frequently used in English with equivalence in Spanish, since they all represent popular wisdom and universal linguistic signs. Then, another page for survival tips, containing quickies and tricks to provide the users with ideas to work out situations already experienced by other colleagues abroad was a useful resource. As other components, there were the blogs, and personal photo albums. Finally, a chat on line for quick help and comfort each other seemed to complete the desirable material.

The referred web offered trainees dissimilar options to improve their training to work or study in a different culture. In addition to the mentioned pages, they could also find invitations to use the existing services in CAELTIC, like the English Club and the preparation courses for international examinations. The invitations included necessary information (date, time, and suggested program) to participate.

The English Club

The idea of an English Club emerged as a potential alternative to enhance intercultural communication in the training course. It helped to support the UCLV-VLIR inter-university cooperation project in the hands of the English Language Department, related with the training of the university staff, so that they could use English language as an instrument for research works and at the same time as a way of improving intercultural exchange.

The English Club was an informal setting for interaction and self-development in a learning community environment, based on intercultural exchange, organized and monitored by the CAELTIC team. The most advanced talented and creative undergraduates of the English language Studies at the UCLV were in charge of designing and leading the activities in the club. Language learners in campus gathered to learn from each other by sharing a cup of coffee or tea, a song/poem/book or film presentation, and in general terms, their mutual interest in languages and foreign cultures.

Such an English Club was always a useful way to develop the intercultural communication of the UCLV staff (teachers and students).The most important benefit of creating the English Club was that it increased the members' exposure to language practice at an informal context. Another important advantage of this creation was that members increased their self-confidence. Especially timid learners, who were not good at manipulating the language yet, felt more relaxed trying to put their language abilities to a test during the activities, taking risks for the sake of communication. This encouraged all the members to cooperate with one another. They felt that they were responsible for the group and for each of its members.

Evaluation

A survey to find out students' and teachers' perceptions towards the course was administered. From the students' perspective the course had a significant impact on their academic life and it was a step forward in their professional growth. Some positive comments were related to the fact that:

- it offered more flexibility in learning the language as well as engagement, cooperation and commitment – willing to help and support with the ICT
- the fact of incorporating the intercultural approach was very motivating
- effectiveness in terms of communication

Students' perception of learning and evaluation of the teaching resources provided grounds for the teachers to reflect upon their learning proposals and to improve the teaching and learning process. Observations and discussions took place during the implementation stage as well.

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Finally, there have been significant results in CAELTIC: 250 students attained the certificate of profile 2 with satisfactory results as a requirement to move to the next profile English for Academic Purposes.

It is important to highlight that the purpose of the CeBeCe program was achieved, since professionals showed to have acquired not only the necessary language skills to communicate in English but also, a conscious understanding of the culturally appropriate behaviors, skills and attitudes in diverse global contexts. They showed an evident professional growth and performance as cultural mediators in the diverse academic settings and in scientific and social scenarios. They were able to participate in discussions, in international conferences and cooperation projects, in scientific publications in their field of research. Some of the students achieved high scores in the international exams: IELTS and TOEFL and were capable to complete the requirements for PhD and Master Programs abroad successfully.

On the other hand, the teachers profited from this experience, which resulted in professional growth by implementing computer-assisted instruction and the use of new trends in EFL teaching. They learned how to develop new didactic materials and teaching aids using ICT and were creative in the webquests designs and the conception of the course as a whole to meet the students' needs in a blended learning environment.

Implications and social impact

CAELTIC has become a reference center of teaching English for cooperation projects to other Higher Education Institutions in Cuba, like the Universidad "Jose Marti" in Sancti Spiritus and the Universidad de Oriente. It continued preparing other professionals in the UCLV and the Villa Clara province involved in cooperation projects for academic and work mobility purposes.

The results derived from this experience were disseminated at international conferences in HUPE, Croatia (2008); ICERI, Spain (2011) TEA- Conexxion VIENNA, Austria (2010) Language Teaching Symposium GHENT, Belgium (2008); Villalingua, Cuba, 2011. LINGUISTICS 2007 Havana, Cuba, in 2010 and 2012 UCIENCIA Havana University in 2012 and Pedagogy 2013 Villa Clara.

CONCLUSIONS

As foreign language learning implies not only the acquisition of communicative competence but intercultural competence as well, ESP focuses on developing learners' communicative competence in a specific discipline to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with foreign cultures.

This paper intended to make a contribution to the development of Intercultural Competence through ESP instruction within an advanced training programme of English language for international cooperation at the UCLV, so that ESP learners could learn the target language in accordance to the intercultural context required for the academic mobility in Belgium.

As shown by the analysis of the context, there was a need for ESP courses with an intercultural perspective, to engage students and professors in this practice with important implications for the internationalization of Higher Education. To that end, ESP courses were designed for a Virtual Learning Environment and implemented in a self-access Centre for Advanced English Language Training for International Cooperation.

Based on the principles of ESP design proposed by Hutchinson (1987), Dudley-Evans (1998, 2001) and other important works from the field of instructional design and intercultural communication, four profiles (courses) were designed tailored to PhD and Master students' needs.

The curriculum described in this work refers specifically to one of the courses: Profile 2 Socializing in Belgium, for those students involved in mobility and with A2 language level of proficiency, as an example for the development of Intercultural Competence in the given context. It took into account the latest approaches of the Communicative Language Teaching using webquests as task-based material. It also included intercultural activities within CAELTIC social community created for virtual and face to face learning environments.

The experience was positively evaluated by the professors and the students. The results impacted on students' success in the academic programs abroad and the cooperation project goals. Teachers also benefited from the experience since they were able to reflect upon their teaching practices and learning proposals to improve the teaching and learning process.

All in all, the CeBeCe project became a reference for cooperation projects in other Higher Education Institutions in Cuba.

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