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**TALLER 4: ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS Y DESARROLLO DE COMPETENCIAS EN EL ÁMBITO EDUCATIVO**

**Title**

**English Language Training Program for Internationalization at The** **Universidad Central** **“Marta Abreu” de Las Villas**

***Title***

***Programa de entrenamiento en idioma inglés para la internacionalización en la******Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas***

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***Abstract:*** This article presents the design and implementation of an advanced English training program for the professionals involved in collaboration projects within the internationalization process at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas, Cuba, supported on the curriculum design theory. It offers a framework within an exploratory research model where students’ needs, goals and expectations are analysed, using qualitative techniques. The study was carried out in the English Language Department. The outcome was an English for specific purpose program in a virtual learning environment, including five profiles customized to the learners’ needs, to develop the communicative competence in different academic contexts.

**Keywords:** *Curriculum Design; ESP Course Design; English Foreign Language Teaching Higher Education; Internationalization*

***Palabras Claves:*** *Diseño curricular; Diseño de cursos de inglés con propósitos específicos; Enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero; Internacionalización*

**1. Introduction**

The globalized world is imposing collaboration and interaction in all fields of life and higher education is not an exception. Universities around the world have been turning to internationalization processes.

The definition of Internationalization refers to the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution (Knight, January 2003).

The establishment of functional collaborations and partnerships with several of the world’s top Universities improves academic excellence and technology development. Such partnerships enhance and promote joint research, student and staff exchange, mentoring, curriculum enrichment, and access to advanced international pedagogies and laboratories. Such collaborations enhance networking and result in syllabus enhancement, access to proven teaching pedagogies. They also provide faculty, students, and researchers with resources for international cooperation and active participation in multidisciplinary research projects. (Jibeen, December2015). Hence, International relations among universities has a great impact on the quality of education influencing curriculum design, best pedagogical practices, research, and mobility.

Cuban universities 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.

In this context of internationalization, English increases its importance by becoming a lingua franca used by professionals as a means of communication for the presentation and discussion of papers in international symposia, the dissemination of scientific-technical discoveries, for the participation in international collaboration projects and in academic exchange programmes among universities that involve e- learning cooperative activities. Nevertheless, the limitations of Cuban professionals communicating in English is a fact that hinders their professional growth and the success internationalization strategy at the UCLV. Hence, an English program for specific purposes for the professionals involved in collaboration projects at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas was needed to develop the communicative competence in different academic contexts.

This paper describes the design of an English Language Training Program for internationalization process at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas, Cuba, supported on the curriculum design theory. It offers a framework within an exploratory research model where students’ needs, goals and expectations are analysed, using qualitative techniques.

INTERNATIONALIZATION PROCESS THROUGH ESP CURRICULUM DESIGN

In this globalized world universities are going through an Internationalization process in which international and intercultural dimensions are incorporated into the teaching, research and service elements of an institution (Knight & International Association of Universities, 2006).

As a strategy for the internationalization process at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas (UCLV), different collaboration programs with universities in the world have been set up. Nowadays the UCLV has more than 200 active collaboration projects in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, North America and Asia. Some of them sponsored by the Institutional University Cooperation Program (UIC) of the Council of Flemish Universities (VLIR), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the NGO Norwegian People's Aid (APN), the European Commission, the International Science Foundation (IFS), Regional and Local Governments and Institutions of Spain, Germany, Italy and Belgium, the Ibero-American University Association for Postgraduate Studies (AUIP), among others.

These joint projects, focus mainly on the academic and scientific development of the UCLV professionals with opportunities for exchange internships abroad, pre- and postdoctoral scholarships, participation in international conferences etc. To achieve this goal, the members of the projects use English as lingua franca.

However, it has been evidenced that the English language proficiency of the Cuban professionals is below average which hinders their professional growth (Moya, 2005) In this context, an ESP flexible curriculum is needed to train those professionals in English to meet their communicative needs.

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES. CURRICULUM DESIGN

Nowadays the increasing importance of the teaching and learning process of foreign languages, especially English, is highly recognized because of the role it plays in the professional development.

In this sense, English for specific purposes (ESP), grows into a typical approach to English language teaching and learning in tertiary education.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is not General English (GE) teaching and learning, but it is specialized English. It has been growing as a distinct discipline since1960s. ESP is focused-English learning and teaching situation in which teaching methods and learning environment are different from General English.(Rahman, 2015)

It develops its own methodology and curriculum separate from those of general EFL learning, because it has different objectives, content target learners, and goals. (Jun Lin, 2014)

A needs analysis would be the starting point to develop an ESP course 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, a special attention should be paid to curriculum design.

A well-designed curriculum directly impacts on how a teacher teaches and on how a student learns. 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 to further modify or change the course design. Although, assessment is carried out through all the stages for effective curriculum development.

The program proposed followed the principles of ESP and considered the learners’ background, their knowledge and skills in the target language, duration, and frequency of the course. Also, the learners’ styles, the objectives and the contents needed as well as the learners’ expectations.

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 implied new teaching practices in a virtual learning environment.

of the scientific literature published in relation to the topic of the presentation. Authors who deem it necessary can create sub-sections using hierarchy 1.1 and including a title to be developed. The introduction should not be lacking in the exposition of the problem that favors the realization of the study, the statement of the objective (s)

**2. Methodology**

A qualitative methodology with a descriptive and exploratory approach was used in this research for the analysis of the professionals' needs. The ESP curriculum design stages 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.

To identify the learners’ needs an interview was applied. An interview was carried out to identify 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. 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.

As a result, an English language training program for the internationalization process at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas was designed and implemented for its professionals to develop the communicative competence in English. The study was carried out in the English Language Department at the UCLV.

**3. Results and Discussion**

**English Language Training Program for Internationalization at the UCLV.**

The program was designed considering the structure and requirements of postgraduate courses in Cuban Higher Education institutions. It includes an introduction, the target audience and the requirements to enroll the training, the course graduate profile , the overall aim, the 5 profiles, its aims , contents, bibliography, assessment and evaluation.

**Title:** English Language Training Program for Internationalization at the UCLV

* **Introduction:**

In the twenty-first century context, English increases its importance by becoming a lingua franca with impacts on all areas of knowledge and spheres of life in the current processes of globalization and economic internationalization.

That is why the English language has a crucial role in the professional growth as a means of communication for the presentation and discussion of papers in international symposia, the writing and understanding of scientific literature, participation in international collaboration projects and the dissemination of scientific-technical discoveries. Therefore, the importance of the English Language Training Program for Internationalization of the UCLV is an urgent need as a guarantee of a continuous professional growth.

* **Target audience:** UCLV professionals interested in the English language for professional purposes.
* **Requirements:**

Be a university graduate of any specialty

Have an A2 level in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

* **Graduate profile:**

English language communication in social, academic, and professional contexts. Translation of scientific articles on their research field.

Presentation of papers in English language in international conferences.

Lesson planning and teaching in English on their own fields.

Writing and understanding academic articles, curricula, summaries, reports in English.

* **Overall aim:**

To develop communicative competence in the English language considering its four dimensions (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic).

This is embodied in the ability to understand, express, and interpret thoughts both, orally and in writing in an appropriate range of social contexts in which intercultural understanding is also necessary for a successful communication performance.

* **Structure of the program:** The profiles, the aims and the contents are to be mentioned.

Profile 1. General English language training for internationalization: aimed at communicating in English at a B1 level of the CEFR to understand information in survival and academic situations in a university context. It deals with communicative functions such as: meeting colleagues, giving personal information, talking about qualification, education , research topic, responsibilities at workplace.

Profile 2. English language training with an intercultural approach for the socialization in international contexts. Aimed at communicating in English at a B2 level of the CEFR to achieve a successful professional performance by understanding and expressing themselves appropriately. Potential situations at the airport, at the accommodation, shopping, at the doctor’s, at the university with an intercultural focus are provided and strategies to cope with cultural misunderstandings, identity features of cultures and their own culture.

Profile 3. English language training for Academic purposes for internationalization. Aimed at communicating in English in academic and professional contexts at a B2 level of the CEFR.

Oral presentations using PPT, understanding lectures, writing scientific articles, reading articles and textbooks are activities included in the course.

Profile 4. English language training for teaching and mentoring purposes in international contexts. Aimed at communicating in English at a B2 level of the CEFR to teach and mentor in international contexts. Language classroom, lesson planning, microteaching of subjects belonging to their fields are the main topics.

Profile 5. Training in English language translation. Aimed at translating academic texts from English to Spanish. The contents included are translation techniques, translating authentic texts belonging to their research topics.

**Basic bibliography:** Moodle CAELTIC Platform. Available in <http://caeltic.uclv.edu.cu/moodle/>. Online course for profile 2 and Additional materials for profiles 1, 3, 4, 5.

Face2face pre intermediate, intermediate Textbooks. Chris Redston & Gillie Cunningham. Cambridge University Press for profiles 1 and 2

Students' own articles (authentic materials from different specialties) for profile 3

Language for Teaching. British Council course for profile 4

Students’ articles (different specialties), Bilingual dictionaries, encyclopaedias, computer tools for translation for profile 5

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

Systematic evaluations are carried out, such as role plays, simulations, presentations, microteachings, translations of articles. At the very end of the training students present, discuss, and deliver paper related to their research topic. This final paper integrates the skills developed to achieve communicative competence in the English language in all the profiles taught.

Since Moodle has been the digital platform available to work with in our university, we have implemented it. (<http://caeltic.uclv.edu.cu/moodle>)

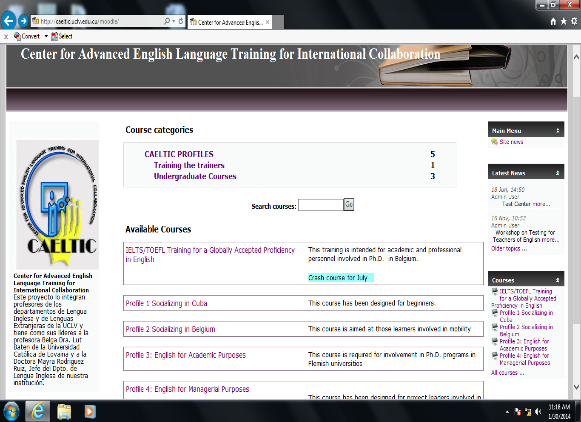


Fig.1. English language training program for internationalization at the UCLV in Moodle Platform.

Fig.2.Homepage Profile 2

Fig.3. Profile 2 Syllabus

This virtual environment turns out to be an important instrument since students do not depend on a specific location to work; learners and instructors can work and communicate wherever they are and can comment on their works as interaction takes place. In addition, learners can easily attach documents of all format types (text files, sound, picture and video files, etc.)

Two hundred and fifty participants successfully finished the program. The results impacted on learners’ success in the academic programs abroad and the cooperation project goals. From the participants’ perspective the course had a significant impact on their academic life. The success has been evident in the increased participation in international events, in their field of research and in their active participation in cooperation projects. In addition, some of the students achieved high scores in the international exams: IELTS and TOEFL as a requirement for PhD and Master programs abroad.

On the other hand, the teachers profited from this experience, which resulted in professional growth. They learned how to develop new teaching aids using ICT in a blended learning environment.

**4. Conclusions**

This paper aims to contribute to the development of English language skills for professionals at the UCLV through an English Training Program for Internationalization. As shown by the analysis of the context, there was a need for this program following an ESP approach to meet students’ needs and so, to engage students and professors in this practice with important implications for the internationalization of the UCLV.

To this end, ESP blended learning was designed and implemented in the English language department at the UCLV for a Virtual Learning Environment.

All in all, the experience was positively evaluated by the professors and the participants. It became a reference for cooperation projects in other Higher Education Institutions in Cuba.

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