FB-BASED INTERNATIONAL PROJECT AS AN EXAMPLE OF INTERNALIZATION AT HOME

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Abstract:
One of the key objectives of the course of legal English at the NCU is to teach students communication skills in the legal context and, thus, prepare them to enter a competitive global market. The question is whether the market nowadays is still looking for traditional lawyering skills. The presentation examines how the creation of small Polish-Czech classroom space in Facebook with learning taking place across traditional boundaries revealed that to build international careers in the future, Polish students need to be supported in developing skills from the area of attitudes in an international setting as today's market requires experts who can cross boundaries of their discipline. Considering the low interest of students of law in learning mobility, the solution might be to acquire those skills through Internationalisation at Home, the example of which is the project described in the article.

Keywords: legal English, student mobility, internationalisation at home, project-based learning

Introduction:
“The legal profession is undergoing dramatic changes (…) and legal educators must anticipate these changes to effectively prepare students for the practice of law in the twenty-first century” (Munneke 2001). Such and similar postulates call for re-skilling and up-skilling of lawyers and the recognition of non-traditional skills in lawyering (Connor 2017). No matter whether the aim is to gain new skills and stay in the same role (re-skilling) or gain new skills and change roles (up-skilling), the fact is that apart from hard knowledge future lawyers will need a broad spectrum of soft skills (Connor 2020). Added internationalisation of the legal profession, students of law need a wider perspective, tools, and skills to work in an international setting. This means universities now need to determine what law graduate profile they would like to design and what learning outcomes they must achieve to gain the competencies needed to build international careers. This research investigates whether an online language project carried out between two universities in the area of legal English can contribute to the development of soft skills modern lawyers need and whether, considering Polish mindset, Internationalisation at Home (IaH) through such a project is the path to achieve learning outcomes in the Polish setting that are normally gained by the student through the period of mobility abroad. The article is written from the Polish perspective.

Since first introduced in 2001 by Crowther (Crowther at al. 2001), the definition of IaH has evolved to include various aspects, e.g., internationalization of the curriculum and campus internationalization, this study bases on a considerably new definition of the concept. Beelen and Jones understand IaH as a purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments (Beelen and Jones 2015). The strong elements of this definition are the stress on the purposeful activity as a result of which all students, and not only those on mobility, benefit and incorporating this activity also as part of informal curriculum. Additionally, Beelen and Leask emphasise that IaH is not a concept in itself, but various activities provided to students at their home institution to develop international and intercultural competencies through achieving learning outcomes (Beelen and Leask 2011).
1. Research Questions

The research question results from informal interviews the author conducted with her students at the beginning of a legal English course in which they expressed considerably low interest in student learning mobility. The overall aim was to gain insight into obstacles to mobility among this group of students and whether participation in an international project during the course can contribute to the change in their mindsets.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study included 39 undergraduates in a full-time five-year degree programme and 20 undergraduates in a part-time five-year degree programme enrolled in a legal English course during the summer semester of 2020/21. All the students were second-year students who had taken secondary school leaving examination in English at B2 level and had a year break in EFL education in case of full-time students and from 1–15-year break as regards part-time students. They were all young adults at the age of 20 in the group of full-time students and between 20-35 in the group of part-time students.

2.2. An Overview of the Legal English Course

The main objective of the course is to learn the legal language in order to practise law in an international context. Apart from the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), students develop some lawyering skills like drafting documents, writing letters to clients, drawing up and negotiating contracts, client interviewing, mediating disputes to name just a few. Since the grading of the course relies on final written and oral examination (100%), the bulk of the course, although addressing written and oral communication, basis on exam-oriented activities. What is important in terms of internationalisation, the course is aligned with the Polish Qualifications Framework adopted in the form of Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 14 November 2018. In accordance with this document which was created, among others, for the needs of the labour market and, graduates are expected to have language skills relevant to the field of study in accordance with the requirements set for the level B2 or B2+ depending on the cycle of the degree programme. The document is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which allows the comparison of qualifications from different European countries. Therefore, it is an important step in making students more mobile. It is through this mobility experience that students gain other competencies that hopefully will translate into international careers.

2.3. An International Task-Based Project

As part of the Legal English Course, NCU students have the opportunity to participate in an international project run in collaboration with Masaryk University in the Czech Republic. Although there is an agreement between the two universities under Erasmus+ programme, the project is an initiative of two legal English teachers from the above universities, is not tied to contractual agreements of involved institutions, and is not formally enshrined into the syllabus of the Polish course. It has been developed in such a way that each teacher follows her syllabus, but due to the overlap in the syllabi in the area of presentation skills, there appeared space for international collaboration. The project was originally designed at the beginning of 2020 to complement face-to-face courses. Nevertheless, due to the COVID-19 situation, it was moved online and has become an almost natural part of online teaching. So far there have been two editions of the project. The objective of the project is to enrich the learning experience and promote student IaH through creating an informal online learning space in Facebook in which learning takes place across traditional boundaries.

The project involves a task-based activity in which the central task is to produce a team
presentation on a criminal law legal issue that implements information and/or opinions from students from the other country. The presenters of one team are from the same university, however, the presentation is recorded and made available to all students. The seminar groups of students from both universities are paired into a closed Facebook group in which they interact, individually as well as a presentation team. Within the project activity, the students practise not only language skills, but mainly communication and professional skills, e.g., social media interaction, posing and answering questions, researching legal information, mediating and/or translating legal regulations, giving opinions, giving feedback. To maximise the students’ productivity, the project was broken into several tasks, which are listed in the table below.

Table 1. Project activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Synchronous /asynchronous</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Forming national teams of 3-4 members</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>MSTeams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Selecting a topic from the list prepared by a professor of criminal law at the NCU Faculty of Law</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>MSTeams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Introducing the team and institution</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Exchanging information and views on studying and practising law in both countries</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>MSTeams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Researching the topic</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Writing an abstract and sharing it with other Polish groups</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>MSTeams Padlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Posting questions about legal regulations of the issue for the Czech students to answer</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Answering questions posted by the Czech students relating</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Preparing the presentation including visuals</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Incorporating answers from the Czech students into a presentation</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Presenting</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Giving feedback on national presentations</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>MSTeams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Publishing recorded presentation</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Providing comments to Czech students on their presentations</td>
<td>asynchronous</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Exchanging opinions on the project, learning experience; Talking about academic and professional plans including possible learning mobility</td>
<td>synchronous</td>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>international</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>MSTeams</td>
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</tbody>
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### 2.4. Research Instrument

The entry and exit questionnaire and entry and exit self-reflection were used in order to allow the participants to reconstruct the details of their learning experience. The questionnaires and self-reflection tasks were conducted in English to incorporate the activities into the course and take the advantage of the informality of the English language compared to the Polish language. The general idea of entry and exit self-reflection was adopted from new functionality in the Erasmus+ App via which students do self-assessment questionnaires relating to learning mobility outcomes in the areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (De la Torre 2021). Both questionnaires comprised the same list of potential obstacles to student learning mobility adopted from the Eurostudent Project (2012-2015) and included difficulties such as additional financial burden, separation from family and friends, loss of paid job, insufficient skills in a foreign language, difficult integration into the structure of home study programme, lack of motivation, lack of information provided by the home institution, low benefit for studies at home, problems with...
recognition of results achieved abroad, limited admittance to mobility programmes, problems with access regulations to the preferred country, insufficient marks for studying abroad (Eurostudent Project 2012-2015).

The entry self-reflection was done before the project start and involved questions about the general level of English and what competencies students would like to improve in this course. The exit self-reflection required students to reflect on the project experience after its completion in terms of gains in learning outcomes and obstacles in its implementation.

3. Results

59 students did both the entry and exit self-reflection as they were obligatory and a part of the project. In the entry self-reflection, all of the students generally expressed their wish to improve their communication skills, in particular speaking. Only 11 students, however, came up with an action plan they might implement outside the class in the coming semester.

The exit self-reflection focused on the project as a learning experience and asked students about their opinions on gains in the areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the learning outcomes very well known to students. The inspiration also came from the Erasmus Skills Project, which adopts definitions of KSAs after the Council of Europe that interpreted knowledge as all the topics and issues one must know to perform a job, skills as abilities to do the job, and attitudes understood as values one must have or develop to do this job effectively (OJ C 189, 4.6.2018) and thoroughly discusses KSAs in international mobility experience (De la Torre 2021).

Polish students found it easy to report on added value in the area of knowledge and skills whereas in the area of attitudes, they needed some help in the form of discussions and feedback to communicate gains. The following was reported:

3.1. Gains in the Area of Knowledge
   a. the unique opportunity to learn about the Czech law
   b. the opportunity to do comparative research
   c. deepening the knowledge of domestic criminal law through the in-depth analysis of an intriguing topic

4. Gains in the area of skills
   a. improving communication skills (both spoken and written) in English
   b. practising legal English in the authentic context

5. Gains in the area of attitudes
   a. confidence in being able to study in English
   b. awareness of the importance of teamwork
   c. awareness of the fact that motivation impacts final performance
   d. awareness of the role of open-mindedness in international projects

6. Complaints
   a. low engagement of other team members
   b. difficulties in forming and then working in a team
   c. unwillingness to share and publish the final product (presentation)
   d. technical problems
   e. too time-consuming
   f. too many tasks

The entry questionnaire was introduced to complement self-reflection. Since it was voluntary, the reception was low (19 students out of 39) and, therefore, it cannot constitute a basis for more general conclusions. The students were asked to express their opinion on obstacles to student learning mobility by rating their answers from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire did not cover part-time students as this is a group in full employment and usually
already having their own families. The list below shows obstacles arranged in order from very big to very small.

1. additional financial burden
2. separation from family and friends
3. loss of paid job
4. insufficient skills in English
5. difficult integration into structure of home study programme
6. low benefit for studies at home
7. problems with recognition of results achieved abroad
8. low benefit for work in the legal profession in Poland
9. insufficient marks for studying abroad
10. problems with recognition of results achieved abroad
11. lack of motivation
12. lack of information provided by home institution
13. limited admittance to mobility programmes
14. problems with access regulations to the preferred country

The exit questionnaire was done by 25 students out of 59 and showed the students did not significantly change their perception of obstacles to learning mobility and obstacles 1-3 were exactly the same. However, English was no longer perceived as a big obstacle as it was ranked 10 unlike motivation which was previously ranked 11 and now 4. These results should, nevertheless, be interpreted with caution due to (1) low number of the students surveyed (2) Covid-19 pandemic, which might have been generally demotivating.

It might be of significance to compare the results in the group of law students with those obtained from the group of alumni who did not engage in international student mobility (Bryla and Ciabiada 2014). Interestingly enough motivation is ranked 3 and insufficient foreign language skills 7-9, which shows that motivation is still a key player in undertaking learning mobility.

Conclusion:
The purpose of this study was to see what obstacles to learning mobility students of law at the NCU face and whether an international language project implemented outside the traditional classroom in online space can alter their way of thinking about learning mobility abroad. The research showed that perceptions of mobility cannot be changed by a single action. However, due to international context in non-traditional learning space in which various project tasks were conducted, the students participated in a totally different learning experience. This exposure to internationalisation gave them confidence in using English as the language of instruction in their field of study. Additionally, they gained awareness that to be more competitive internationally, they not only need to speak English fluently but to have the ability to work in teams and to show more proactive attitude. The remedy to the first issue seems to be more project-based learning, which by no means is a novelty in English language courses. It is, nevertheless, newness in a legal English course as it allows to practise traditional lawyering skills along a set of emerging new skills including digital presentation, project and knowledge management, and leadership, teamwork to name just a few. Addressing the issue of motivation, on the other hand, would require rethinking and redefining progress as growth and added value. On the practical side, this means a change in the final grading of the course to include group project work.

Interestingly, both motivation and teamwork fall within the area of attitudes, which brings back the concept of re-skilling and up-skilling already in the educational phase and the significance of non-legal skills. As Connor put it: “It is now no longer controversial to say that focusing just on your legal knowledge and technical skills might have got you where you are
today, but it won’t get you to where you want to be in the future” (Connor 2020). Experts have identified 3 frameworks for future lawyers (Connor 2020), i.e., T-shaped, O-shaped, and the Delta Model lawyers. T-shaped lawyers, or boundary-crossing lawyers as they are sometimes called, have deep knowledge of one legal discipline, acquired competencies from other disciplines, and are good team workers, communicators, networkers, critical thinkers, and project managers. O-shaped lawyers, on the other hand, are capable of developing ‘O’ behaviours such as optimism, open-mindedness, ownership, originality, and being opportunistic. This means O-shaped lawyers have a proactive mindset as well as legal, business, and customer knowledge (Connor 2020). Finally, Delta Model of lawyers builds on the T-shaped model and emphasises the people dimension to include relationship management, entrepreneurial mindset, emotional intelligence, communication, and character (Connor 2020). This raises a significant question as to which competencies are critical and how to train them.

Although most students participating in the project perceived its added value and appreciated an international dimension, still very few expressed interests in learning mobility abroad during informal interviews after project completion. Therefore, the solution for educating Polish students in skills required from future lawyers might be IaH as mobility-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes obtained at home have the potential of being translated in the future into competencies (De la Torre 2021 et al.). Besides, due to the integration of international and intercultural project into the syllabus of a legal English course, all students, instead of just a few, can benefit from it (Beelen & Jones 2015). In the author’s opinion, building mobility culture among law students should take place throughout the entire study period. Participation in formal and informal internationalisation initiatives at home will allow the students to grow and hopefully embrace student learning mobility in higher years of their degree programme.

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