

Ana Bocanegra-Valle
University of Cádiz, Spain

DOI: 10.4312/SM.19.2.3-18

Paper received: 23.05.2024
Paper revised: 26.07.2024
Paper accepted: 03.09.2024
Paper published: 24.12.2024

LSP COURSES AS STRATEGIC SITES FOR INTERCULTURALISATION AT HOME: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES AND FACING CHALLENGES

Abstract

This article focuses on the internationalisation of higher education and explores the opportunities and challenges faced by LSP teachers when attempting to integrate interculturality in LSP courses and their everyday teaching – that is, when they aim at *interculturalisation at home* (Jones, 2020). It examines, among others, the instruments developed within the European Higher Education Area to introduce the intercultural component into education across Europe, the role of LSP textbooks in fostering and supporting intercultural language learning, the benefits of interculturalised syllabi and activities in LSP courses, and the contribution of LSP teachers to the interculturalisation of LSP classrooms. These issues are addressed from a pragmatic standpoint in an attempt to spark conversation and provide clear pointers for further advancement in the field.

Keywords: Languages for Specific Purposes, interculturalisation, intercultural brokers, intercultural learning, internationalisation, higher education

Introduction

Since the turn of the century universities around the world have invested numerous efforts in *internationalising* their education programmes and research offerings. Progress has been particularly significant across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where modern internationalised programmes have been developed and internationalisation strategies have been promoted – all of them with a view to improving the quality of education, research and administration services, and, most importantly, to providing students with the competences and skills they need to compete and prosper in a global job market. Within the discussions of internationalisation-related issues, student mobility ranks as a priority (De Wit et al., 2015; EAIE, 2018; Kim, 2014; Macedo Mendes, 2023); however, internationalisation encompasses other concerns beyond mobility programmes such as the use of a common language as a medium of instruction (*Englishisation* of higher education), multiculturalism and intercultural competence development, or researchers' cooperation and collaboration in view of research quality and professional development. These are all issues that concern the field of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP).

This article addresses the intercultural dimension of internationalised universities and its relation with LSP programmes and teaching practices through interculturalisation at home. In particular, it attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the instruments developed within the EHEA to incorporate the intercultural component into education across Europe?
- Why are intercultural learning and intercultural competence relevant to LSP courses?
- Do LSP textbooks promote intercultural learning and intercultural skills?
- And lastly, how can LSP courses benefit from interculturalised syllabi and activities?

Conclusions highlight the role of LSP teachers as intercultural brokers and the potential of LSP classrooms as strategic sites for intercultural learning.

The intercultural dimension of internationalised universities

Internationalisation has emerged as a critical component of the agenda for higher education in many parts of the world, but especially across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (De Wit et al., 2015; EUA, 2013). The intercultural dimension of higher education emerges from the European Parliament in 2015 with a definition of *internationalisation* as:

The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (De Wit et al., 2015, p. 29)

The internationalisation drive of higher education institutions is a complex issue with many national and institutional players involved (Robson & Wihlborg, 2019; Tight, 2022). In most cases, and not exclusively, it involves students in different ways: attracting international students helps to build an international campus by creating cultural diversity and promoting

intercultural communication; student mobility helps to improve language and intercultural skills as well as to gain those soft skills which are highly valued by future employers; also, the number of courses offering content-and-language-integrated-learning and English-medium instruction has flourished in the last two decades, playing a significant role in the internationalisation of higher education. All these facts are elaborated below.

The main purpose of international student recruitment is to generate revenues for the institution (Rhoades, 2016); however, it also helps to build an international campus by creating cultural diversity and promoting intercultural communication. Student mobility is a different strategy and implies spending a time period of study abroad. Students are offered the opportunity to work or study abroad while they are pursuing their degree, master's or doctorate programme; however, nowadays there are other formats of mobility which are on the rise, like field trips, internships or volunteering opportunities. Among the challenges that study abroad brings for students is the need for adaptation to a new environment and a new culture over a period of time, with demonstrated gains in self-awareness, sensitivity to other cultures or ability to connect with others (Kelleher, 2013). It also brings benefits for language learning, like building intercultural awareness and developing language skills (Kang, 2014; Kinginger, 2011; Mocanu, 2023).

The connection between internationalisation and employability has attracted the attention of recent literature (e.g., Bocanegra-Valle, 2020), mainly because the internationalisation of higher education is partly viewed as “a response to work environments which are increasingly globally integrated” (Gribble & Coelen, 2020, p. 1). Numerous factors contribute to making a student globally employable; however, the *international experience* (Jones, 2013) significantly enhances graduates' acquisition of the transferable skills required in today's job market (Pennington, 2020; Wiwczarowski & Czeller, 2020). As recently reported in different contexts around the world (see Coelen & Gribble, 2020), international experiences of all kinds (i.e., transnational education, internationalisation at home, intra-degree mobility or learning abroad, and full degree mobility) contribute to aligning graduates' transversal skills with those skills sought and valued by employers. Moreover, by studying abroad, graduates can improve their communication, language and intercultural skills, at the same time they can gain those soft skills that are highly rated in the labour market. In 2014 and 2019 the European Commission investigated the effects of Erasmus mobility programmes upon students' skills and employability, and gathered 78,891 responses to a number of surveys distributed among higher education institutions and employers across 34 countries (see Brandenburg et al., 2014; European Commission, 2019). The Commission's main finding revealed that “Erasmus students are in better position to find their first job and to enhance their career development” (Brandenburg et al., 2014, p. 14). Data also showed that the mobility experience was beneficial or highly beneficial for finding their first job (72% respondents) and for their overall career development (82% respondents). This report estimated that, on average, students who participated in mobility programmes possessed better employability skills after a stay-abroad period than 70% of all students. Additionally, 81% of Erasmus students reported an improvement in their transversal skills upon return; 64% of employers considered an international experience as important for recruitment, and 92% sought candidates with transversal skills developed through such experience.

Lastly, internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) and internationalisation at home (IaH) are two terms in internationalisation-related bibliography. IoC is defined as “the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support devices of a program of study” (Leask, 2009, p. 209). Among the initiatives to address this university-wide strategy, the use of the English language for the teaching of a particular subject-matter or discipline stands out as a crucial component. In this regard, English-medium instruction (EMI) courses and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) courses have grown exponentially in recent years to make an important contribution to the internationalisation of higher education (Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Dafouz & Smit, 2020). IaH has been identified as one of the two streams in internationalisation together with mobility programmes or *internationalisation abroad* (Knight, 2012) and refers to “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 69). This definition emphasises, on the one hand, the intentional inclusion of international and intercultural aspects into curricula and, on the other, the role of IaH for all students in all programmes. IaH is significant for internationalised universities because “it aims to develop international and intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes for all students, regardless of whether they also take part in mobility opportunities” (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 70). In a later work Jones (2020, p. 143) merged both notions, IoC and IaH, to claim that “Internationalisation of the curriculum at home has the potential to challenge cultural assumptions, extend knowledge and adjust mindsets by valuing the role of cultural diversity within a broader internationalisation framework”. Jones therefore suggests that the adjustment or transformation of mindsets can also occur without travelling to other countries if the international experience is embedded locally – that is, if *interculturalisation at home* (Jones, 2020) is taking place. The following sections delve into the connection between LSP teaching practices and the process of interculturalisation at home.

What are the instruments developed within the EHEA to incorporate the intercultural component into education across Europe?

The EHEA has set the framework for the integration and promotion of multicultural and intercultural awareness in current European educational systems through various instruments like the Bologna Declaration, the European Language Portfolio, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.

Under the framework of a common space for higher education, the Bologna Declaration constantly emphasises the need to take full respect of the diversity and plurality of cultures (Council for Cultural Cooperation, 1999). As an illustration, the Council of Cultural Cooperation’s Recommendation No. R98(6) contains a preamble that encourages state governments:

- “To promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication”.
- “To maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely taught”.

- To meet the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe “by appreciably developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries” (Council of Europe, 1998, p. 33).

This Recommendation aligns with the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which provides a means of fostering language learning, intercultural competence, and understanding throughout life (Council for Cultural Cooperation, 2000). As part of its educational mission, the ELP explores respect and understanding amongst European people; safeguards and encourages multilingualism and linguistic and cultural diversity; and advances lifelong language and intercultural learning, intercultural competence, and intercultural awareness. It is predicated on the idea that successful second- and foreign-language learners will gradually develop awareness of and respect for the other and the otherness. Learners are encouraged to consider cultural commonalities and differences by using two tools from the ELP: the language passport, which “describes language competencies and significant language and intercultural learning experiences”, and the language biography, which contains “information on linguistic, cultural and learning experiences gained in and outside formal education contexts” (Council for Cultural Cooperation, 2000, p. 9).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is, very probably, the instrument that most accurately expresses the Council of Europe’s concerns with the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as with the promotion of cross-cultural learning and intercultural awareness in order to produce citizens who are able to navigate multiculturalism (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence and awareness, which is one of the main ways that interculturality is woven throughout the document. It also integrates the intercultural dimension into language learning and instruction. The CEFR defines intercultural competence as embodying a collection of abilities known as intercultural competences, which consist of the following:

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;
- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations;
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships. (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 104-105)

Lastly, the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs introduced The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue during their 118th Ministerial session and defined intercultural dialogue as:

... 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, 2008, pp. 10-11)

According to The White Paper, the difficulty in communicating in several languages stands out as one of the main obstacles to intercultural dialogue and to conducting intercultural

conversations. Intercultural dialogue is supported by the development of language-related competences on the understanding that these “are not automatically acquired” but “need to be learned, practised and maintained throughout life” (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 29). The White Paper also notes that language classrooms can serve as “spaces for intercultural dialogue” (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 46), while learning materials can act as tools that raise intercultural awareness and strengthen the intercultural dialogue in a global society and in culturally diverse professions.

Why are intercultural learning and intercultural competence relevant to LSP courses?

English for Specific Purposes is characterized as “an ‘interface’ discipline” (Basturkmen, 2013, p. 2) that encompasses three areas of enquiry: teaching, discourse and culture. Given the close interrelationship among teaching, discourse, and culture, it is evident that the field of LSP also encompasses these domains, each area informing and reinforcing the others. In light of this holistic approach, it is crucial to recognize that proficiency in a foreign language alone does not guarantee success in an international professional and academic context (Aguilar, 2018). Mastery of a language must be complemented by a nuanced understanding of its specific applications within professional and academic settings, as well as an awareness of cultural dynamics. Therefore, LSP classrooms serve as strategic sites for raising intercultural awareness and attaining intercultural learning while learning a language and the discourse of a discipline.

As discussed above, for the Council of Europe culture and language are intertwined and closely connected concepts. So how important is culture in learning a language? Does learning a language mean learning a culture? As Hua (2014, p. 4) explains, culture and language are intrinsically linked to each other:

Learning another language inevitably exposes the learner to facts and practices of a society or community where the target language is used. For many language learners, learning about the cultural traditions and practices of other people is the primary motivation for learning their language. For others, language learning provides an opportunity to interact with the people whose language they are learning and to understand their culture and traditions. Language and culture, then, become intrinsically linked to each other in this specific context.

Hence, if learning a language means learning a culture: How can we introduce interculturality in the language classroom? How can language courses be helpful for intercultural learning? Following current literature (e.g. Chen & Starosta, 2000) an *interculturally sensitive individual* is portrayed by three elements: (i) the understanding of cultural behaviours; (ii) open-mindedness towards cultural differences; and (iii) behavioural flexibility in host culture. I believe that LSP courses are prepared and well-positioned to mainly address understanding and open-mindedness ((i) and (ii) above), because behavioural flexibility, however, often requires more direct interaction with host cultures.

In my maritime English courses, I present a real-life example to encourage group discussion and raise intercultural awareness. This authentic case reports the shipping accident of MV

Cosco Busan, a container ship which collided with the Delta Tower of the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge, hitting the ship's port side, breaching a couple of tanks and spilling 53,000 gallons of bunker oil into San Francisco Bay. Both the pilot on board and the ship's master were blamed for the accident. The ship's radar failed in conditions of heavy fog and, consequently, the American pilot and the Chinese master had to rely solely on speech to manoeuvre the ship. The investigation concluded with a list of errors that had led to the disaster; among them, poor communication in English between pilot and master, and cultural differences in the navigational bridge that made the Chinese master reluctant to assert authority over the American pilot.

Using this real-world example in class together with a study on intercultural competence on board by Olesya Lutsenko and Hannie Stok-Knol (2008), I invite my students to consider how the values of European and non-European nations, as well as those of the east and west, differ. They are encouraged to discuss the importance of deference to authority and power distance (that is, the relationship between higher-ranking and lower-ranking individuals) and the ways in which people in lower positions respond to those in higher positions. Some cultures are said to exhibit a high-power distance, accept an unequal distribution of power, and are very deferential to figures of authority, but, conversely, people in other cultures are said to exhibit a low-power distance, distribute power equally, and encourage participation in decisions that concern them. This indeed has an impact on the workplace. This was the case of the Chinese master who felt reluctant to assert authority over the American pilot and did not question or challenge the pilot's competence, therefore contributing to the fatal accident.

The idea of communication is another illustration. People in eastern cultures may view direct and assertive speech as unfriendly, confrontational, or rude, despite the fact that this is the norm in western cultures. Conversely, in western cultures, being passive, inactive, misbehaving, weak, uncaring, or even lazy is interpreted as a lack of assertiveness or indirect assertiveness. But respect and courtesy, harmony, and avoiding conflict are what people in eastern cultures have in mind. This leads to Hall's (1976) context theory, which holds that while some cultures communicate implicitly (high-context culture), other communicate overtly (low-context culture).

The MV Cosco Busan example has demonstrated that LSP classrooms are, as the title of this article suggests, strategic sites to raise awareness on the importance of intercultural knowledge, not only for successful communication and understanding but also for successful job performance in today's global world. It has also shown that the portion of culture that is visible is only a small percentage of a much larger whole – refer to Hall's (1976) iceberg metaphor – and, hence, it has become clear that if LSP courses aim at addressing the real dimension of the concept of culture, not only visible cultural manifestations (like food, music, arts), but also the invisible forms of culture (like non-verbal cues or contextual nuances) should be addressed in the classroom because “they are the origin of culturally specific communication patterns”, and hence, “equally determinant in foreign language learning” (Alonso et al., 2022, p. 39). Understanding these patterns can significantly impact students' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a foreign language and, particularly, in professional settings where specific communication patterns influence how negotiations, presentations or meetings are conducted.

Do LSP textbooks promote intercultural learning and intercultural skills?

According to relevant research (e.g., Aguilar, 2018; Basturkmen, 2013; Bocanegra-Valle, 2015a, 2015b, 2017), LSP pedagogy typically fails to cater for intercultural competence, and learning materials appear inadequate for the job because they tend to place a greater focus on other issues like grammatical accuracy rather than on the incorporation of the cultural dimension and the development of intercultural skills. Language classrooms can function as “spaces for intercultural dialogue” (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 46) and learning materials can serve as tools that raise intercultural awareness and strengthen the intercultural dialogue in a global society and in culturally diverse professions.

Learning materials in general, and textbooks in particular, can be very helpful for teachers when aiming to promote the intercultural dimension and integrate interculturality into the language classroom. The intercultural component has gradually increased in LSP textbooks and learning materials over the last decades. Lario de Oñate and Vázquez-Amador (2013) reported a raising trend towards the incorporation of intercultural components in the field of Business English, from no books in the 1960s to 45% in the 1980s and 75% in the 1990s. By the late 2000s around 85% of the most recent textbooks contained intercultural activities, and most of these were designed to improve students’ reading, listening and discussion skills.

Building on these findings, it is essential to evaluate how cultural dimensions impact language learning materials. Several authors have proposed criteria, guidelines, descriptors, and checklists for the evaluation of cultural issues and interculturality in textbooks (e.g., Lario de Oñate & Vázquez-Amador, 2013; Li et al., 2020; Liu, 2016; Nakayama & Kurihara, 2015; Sobkowiak, 2015). The appendix in this article contains a personal proposal of guidelines for the evaluation of intercultural competence in LSP textbooks which I developed in an earlier study that looked into the ways ESP textbooks served as providers of intercultural awareness and creators of space for intercultural dialogue (Bocanegra-Valle, 2015a). These guidelines were developed following a comprehensive work written in Spanish by Villa and Poblete (2008) that deals with competence-based learning and the assessment of generic competences within the EHEA. Villa and Poblete list 15 competence indicators for the assessment of diversity and interculturality in higher education settings and categorize them into three mastery levels, each containing a number of descriptors. Ten textbooks published by prestigious publishers (like Cambridge, Oxford, or Garnett) from a number of ESP areas (health, business, engineering, marketing, ICTs, tourism or maritime industry) were examined against the three levels and the 15 indicators for the evaluation of intercultural competence (see Appendix for the full phrasing of these indicators and levels). The main results showed that:

- The majority of textbooks contained intercultural elements at the basic level (namely, Level I), demonstrating that social and cultural diversity is portrayed in textbooks as a human phenomenon and that people interact one another with respect.
- Level 1 indicators that prevailed in the textbooks under analysis were: (i) Assimilates the diversity of the human condition; (ii) Establishes relationships with no different social and cultural treatments; (iii) Uses relationships with different people for own

development; (iv) Does not discriminate people because of different social or cultural reasons; and (v) Understands coexistence as the result of different people interaction.

- Except for three books (*Hospital English*, *New Insights into Business*, and *English for the Maritime Industry*), which also contained intercultural elements at a more intermediate and advanced levels, most textbooks remained at a basic level.
- Two of these ten books did not contain any intercultural element at all (*Medical IELTS* and *English for ICT Studies*). This was a striking finding given that professionals in these disciplines would be expected to often face intercultural encounters and intercultural communication events at the workplace.

On the basis of these findings, it is reasonable to suggest that LSP teachers should be ready to explore the textbooks and learning materials that are used, examine to what extent these include activities that aim at intercultural learning, and think about ways course materials can be enhanced in view of successful intercultural learning.

How can LSP courses benefit from interculturalised syllabi and activities?

There is plenty of literature that discusses the *need* to teach intercultural awareness (e.g., Baker, 2015; Byram et al., 2002; Liu, 2015; Moroz & Demanianenko, 2022) but there are few publications (e.g., Corbett, 2010) that show the *means* to teach intercultural awareness. What follows is, therefore, a summary of a practical activity concerned with the first intercultural skill stated by the Council of Europe (2001, p. 104): “the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other”, and which I presented in full in a previous study (Bocanegra-Valle, 2015b).

This activity incorporated interculturality into an LSP course, specifically with regard to “Shipping Business English”. Despite its narrow focus on a particular subject-specific domain, this activity may be of interest to those teachers that wish to incorporate the intercultural component into their LSP courses.

The development of this activity incorporated four phases which conform to Holmes and O’Neill’s (2012) PEER model, namely:

- *P – Prepare*: Students get ready for the intercultural experience by identifying any assumptions held about their cultural other.
- *E – Engage*: Students are given a list of guiding topics they could use as a basis for conversation, but they are also encouraged to find their own ways of engaging with their cultural other.
- *E – Evaluate*: Students observe and take notes.
- *R – Reflect*: Students reflect critically on their experience and notes by voicing their expectations and preconceptions with the cultural other.

The main objective was that students developed and delivered a 10-minute oral presentation focusing on a particular maritime commercial port in their country (describing port location, port facilities, port terminals, handling equipment, port management organization, etc.) and

preceded by an introduction on their country and culture. The connection with the official syllabus was a revision session to Unit 1 (“Port facilities and services”) and Unit 2 (“Port management and organization”).

The general aim of this activity was to take advantage of mobility students and bring foreign and home cultures together into this particular LSP course. The students taking part in this activity were 30 home students at their fourth year, who acted as audience and assessors, and 10 international exchange students, who acted as speakers and presenters. The particular aims of this activity were:

- to embed the intercultural dimension into the language teaching/learning process;
- to raise awareness of intercultural communication within the profession;
- to explore home and foreign cultures;
- to gain an understanding of the otherness;
- to reflect on one’s own culture for mutual understanding;
- to promote curiosity and openness about other cultures;
- to revise port services and management (units 1 & 2 of the course syllabus) as they exist around the world.

This activity complied with the requirements of IaH laid down by the European Association for International Education (EAIE, 2018) in three ways:

- It was learner oriented and made purposeful use of cultural diversity in the classroom for integrating experiences and knowledge of both internationally mobile students and local students from diverse backgrounds.
- It created opportunities for student engagement with *cultural others* in local society.
- It motivated students to seek the intercultural as well as the international.

The activity was developed in seven stages, namely: (i) Briefing; (ii) Draft submission and revision; (iii) Final text submission; (iv) Oral presentation; (v) Class group discussion; (vi) Individual work; and (vii) Further practice.

To my understanding, significant outcomes were the following: Firstly, the oral presentations served to provide authentic material as a baseline for oral discussion during class time and, once added to Moodle, they supplemented course activities with additional materials for autonomous work. Here, Shipping Business English learners are *intercultural learners* because they “use language to explore different cultures” (Corbett, 2010, p. 1) and “the class will itself be multicultural, providing an arena for intercultural exchange and discussion” (Corbett, 2010, p. 2).

Secondly, international cultures were compared with each student’s home culture. Home students lost their established institutional focus and were decentred in favour of visiting students, and both home and visiting students were encouraged to conduct introspective analyses of the foreign cultures in comparison to their own. It should be highlighted that the group of international students was naturally heterogeneous due to the fact that it included a variety of nationalities, they therefore contributed a range of foreign languages and cultural backgrounds to the classroom. The home students, on the other hand, were a homogenous

group of native Spanish speakers. While Spanish students were learning about Polish culture, for instance, students from Russia, Belgium, Latvia or The Netherlands were also becoming familiar with it. To put it briefly, intercultural classrooms helped overcome home students' initial reluctance to engage socially with foreign students, both inside and outside the classroom, while also offering opportunities to develop international awareness through the use of English as the means of communication.

Lastly, the English-native standard was also challenged in light of an international English model, which resembles real workplaces today and uses English as a language for intercultural and international communication – also named English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Concluding remarks

A crucial element of the internationalisation strategy in higher education is intercultural learning. Through a number of instruments, including the CEFR, the Council of Europe has established the framework for the introduction and advancement of intercultural awareness in education in the EHEA. Thus, policy makers, language programme directors and administrators, and teachers are adhering to the educational standards established by European institutions by incorporating interculturality into LSP curricula and classrooms.

Learning a language means learning a culture, and LSP classrooms are strategic sites for intercultural learning and spaces for intercultural dialogue. In the same vein, LSP courses that (i) foster intercultural awareness, (ii) integrate the intercultural component in the curriculum, (iii) promote an intercultural dialogue, and (iv) engage students with cultural others while learning a foreign language are courses that embrace the principles and goals of internationalisation at home (Jones, 2020).

Following Jezewski's (1995, p. 14) notion of cultural brokering – that is, “the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change” – LSP teachers have a key role to play in intercultural classrooms by adopting an intermediary role between learning materials and courses on the one hand, and between groups of students of differing cultural backgrounds on the other. By becoming intercultural teachers (Byram et al., 2002) or intercultural brokers (Bocanegra-Valle, 2015a), LSP teachers can promote intercultural knowledge and understanding in the short term, and potentially reduce cultural misunderstandings in the long run in the context of healthy multicultural workplace environments. As Byram et al. (2002, p. 13) put it, “[t]he role of the language teacher is therefore to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as to develop a knowledge of a particular culture or country”. Nevertheless, intercultural LSP teachers require training opportunities because, as the European Association for International Education (2018, n.p.) claims, “[i]nternationalising a curriculum is impossible without engaging the lecturers”. These training opportunities are necessary for intercultural LSP teachers to: (i) develop appropriate methodologies that support them in implementing intercultural skills and engaging students with cultural others while learning the foreign language; (ii) evaluate current textbooks and learning materials for intercultural learning; and (iii) raise awareness and gain further knowledge of the intercultural dimension within the disciplines and professions.

References

- Aguilar, M. (2018). Integrating intercultural competence in ESP and EMI: From theory to practice. *ESP Today*, 6(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2018.6.1.2>
- Alonso, I., Criado, R., Luque, G., & Torres, L. (2022). *Perspectives and Good Practices in English Language Teacher Training*. Síntesis.
- Baker, W. (2015). Research into practice: cultural and intercultural awareness. *Language Teaching*, 48(1), 130–141. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444814000287>
- Basturkmen, H. (2013). Between territories and domains: An ESP-oriented enquiry in the borders. *ASp*, 64, 2–9.
- Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining internationalization at home_. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European Higher Education Area* (pp. 59–72). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0_5
- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2015a). La competencia intercultural en los manuales de texto de inglés con fines específicos a través de la evaluación de sus indicadores y niveles de dominio [Assessing Intercultural Competence in English for Specific Purposes Textbooks by Means of Indicators and Mastery Levels]. *Cuadernos de Filología Francesa*, 26, 29–43.
- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2015b). Intercultural learners, intercultural brokers and ESP classrooms: The case of a shipping business course. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 173, 106–112.
- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2017). Intercultural dialogicity in Maritime English course materials. *EPIC Series in Language and Linguistics. Special Issue on Professional and Academic Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, 2, 92–101.
- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (Ed.) (2020). *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Internationalisation, Employability and Social Challenges*. Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b16992>
- Bowles, H., & Murphy, A. C. (2020). *English-medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47860-5>
- Brandenburg, U., Berghoff, S., & Taboadela, O. (Coords.) (2014). *The Erasmus Impact Study – Effects of Mobility on the Skills and Employability of Students and the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions*. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/75468>
- Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c3>
- Chen, G.-M., & Starosta, W. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale. *Human Communication*, 3, 1–15.
- Coelen, R., & Gribble, R. (Eds.) (2020). *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education*. Routledge.
- Corbett, J. (2010). *Intercultural Language Activities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Council for Cultural Cooperation. (1999). *Bologna Declaration*. https://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf
- Council for Cultural Cooperation. (2000). *European Language Portfolio (ELP): Principles and Guidelines*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/16804586ba>
- Council of Europe. (1998). *Recommendation No. R98(6) of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Modern Languages*. <https://rm.coe.int/16804fc569>

- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>
- Council of Europe. (2008). *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. Council of Europe. https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf
- Dafouz, E., & Smit, U. (2020). *ROAD-MAPPING. English Medium Education in the Internationalised University*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23463-8>
- De Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L., & Egron-Polak, E. (2015). *Internationalisation of Higher Education*. European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU\(2015\)540370_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU(2015)540370_EN.pdf)
- European Association for International Education (EAIE) (2018). *Internationalisation at Home in Practice*. <https://www.eaie.org/blog/internationalisation-at-home-practice.html>
- European Commission (2019). *Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact Study*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94d97f5c-7ae2-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- European University Association (EUA) (2013). *Internationalisation in European Higher Education: European Policies, Institutional Strategies and EUA Support*. <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/internationalisation-in-european-higher-education-european-policies-institutional-strategies-and-eua-support.pdf>
- Gribble, C., & Coelen, R. (2020). Introduction. In R. Coelen, R. & Gribble (Eds.), *Internationalization and Employability in Higher Education* (pp. 1–7). Routledge.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing.
- Holmes, P., & O'Neill, G. (2012). Developing and evaluating intercultural competence: Ethnographies of intercultural encounters. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36(5), 707–718.
- Hua, Z. (2014). *Exploring Intercultural Communication. Language in action*. Routledge.
- Jezewski, M. A. (1995). Evolution of a grounded theory: Conflict resolution through culture brokering. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 17(3), 14–30.
- Jones, E. (2013). Internationalization and employability: The role of intercultural experiences in the development of transferable skills. *Public Money & Management*, 33(2), 95–104.
- Jones, E. (2020). The role of languages in transformational internationalisation. In Bocanegra-Valle, A. (Ed.), *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Internationalisation, Employability and Social Challenges* (pp. 135–157). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b16992>
- Kang, D. M. (2014). The effects of study-abroad experiences on EFL learners' willingness to communicate, speaking abilities, and participation in classroom interaction. *System*, 42, 319–332. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.12.025>
- Kelleher, S. (2013). Perceived benefits of study abroad programs for nursing students: An integrative review. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 52(12), 690–695. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20131118-01>
- Kim, T. (2014). Internationalisation of higher education and global mobility. *Comparative Education*, 50, 507 – 509. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2014.949087>
- Kinginger, C. (2011). Enhancing language learning in study abroad. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000031>
- Knight, J. (2012). Five truths about internationalization. *International Higher Education*, 69, 4–5. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2012.69.8644>

- Lario de Oñate, M. C., & Vázquez Amador, M. (2013). The intercultural component in Business English textbooks. *Ibérica*, 26, 171–194.
- Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315308329786>
- Li, Y., Yao, P., & Hu, B. (2020). Analyzing English for academic purposes textbooks: A study of intercultural issues. *ELT Forum*, 9(1), 1–15.
- Liu, K. (2016). Prioritizing criteria for evaluating cultural contents in EFL textbooks through AHP. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(5), 841–850. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0705.03>
- Lutsenko, B. O., & Stok-Knol, H. (2008). Intercultural competence on board. In *20th IMEC Proceedings, The Role of Maritime English – Promoting Communication and Understanding Culture*, 11-48-11-57. <http://imla.co/sites/default/files/imec20.pdf>
- Macedo Mendes, A. R. (2023). The role of academic mobility in the (de)construction of internationalization. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 14(5A), 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v14i5A.5058>
- Mocanu, V. (2023). *Language Learning in Study Abroad: Social, Cultural, and Identity-related Factors*. Universitat de Valencia. <https://roderic.uv.es/rest/api/core/bitstreams/30052e20-858c-40e4-ad21-e981a7daec7e/content>
- Moroz, T., & Demianenko, O. (2022). Intercultural communicative competence of university students. *Scientific Journal of Polonia University*, 53(4), 67–74. <https://doi.org/10.23856/5308>
- Nakayama, N., & Kurihara, F. (2015). Can intercultural competence be developed through textbooks? An analysis of English textbooks for Japanese junior high school students. *Language Teacher Education*, 2(2), 37–58.
- Pennington, M. C. (2020). Pronunciation and international employability. In Bocanegra-Valle, A. (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Internationalisation, Employability and Social Challenges* (pp. 225–244). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b16992>
- Rhoades, G. (2016). Internationalization to what purposes?: Marketing to international students. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 6, 11–14. <https://doi.org/10.18870/HLRC.V6I2.334>
- Robson, S., & Wihlborg, M. (2019). Internationalisation of higher education: Impacts, challenges and future possibilities. *European Educational Research Journal*, 18, 127–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904119834779>
- Sobkowiak, P. (2015). Developing students' intercultural competence in foreign language textbooks. *US-China Education Review*, 5(12), 794–805. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2161-6248/2015.12.003>
- Tight, M. (2022). Internationalisation of higher education beyond the West: challenges and opportunities – the research evidence. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 27, 239–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2022.2041853>
- Villa, A., & Poblete, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Aprendizaje basado en competencias. Una propuesta para la evaluación de las competencias genéricas. [Competence-based Learning. A Proposal for the Assessment of Generic Competence]*. Ediciones Mensajero.
- Wiwczarowski, T. B., & Czeller, M. (2020). Disparities between foreign language skills taught in higher education and job market needs. In Bocanegra-Valle, A. (Ed.), *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Internationalisation, Employability and Social Challenges* (pp. 245–264). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b16992>

Appendix

Table 1: Guidelines for the evaluation of intercultural competence in LSP textbooks*.

TEXTBOOKS (ordered by publication date)		Hospital English	Medical IELTS	New Insights into Business	Professional English: Law	English for Global Industries	English for Marketing	English for ICT studies	English for the Maritime Ind.	Engineering	English for Int. Tourism
Level I: Understands social and cultural diversity as a human phenomenon and interacts on the basis of respect towards the others											
Indicators	Assimilates the diversity of human condition	X					X		X	X	X
	Establishes relationships with no different social and cultural treatment			X			X		X		
	Uses relationships with different people for own development			X	X	X	X		X		X
	Does not discriminate people because of different social or cultural reasons	X		X			X		X		X
	Understands coexistence as the result of different people interaction	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Level II: Accepts and understands cultural and social affiliations as structural, voluntary and reasonable as pertaining to human condition											
Indicators	Analyses cultural and social diversity as a product of human interaction	X		X					X		
	Aims at elucidating the reasons underlying the customs and social behaviour of different people	X		X					X		
	Understands interaction with people from other cultures and social condition as a process of personal improvement	X		X							
	Argues that people make social and cultural realities	X		X							
	Understands that diversity is inherent to human beings										
Level III: Is certain that cultural diversity is consubstantial to human coexistence and generates cohesion and social inclusion											
Indicators	Understands that human coexistence supports social and/or cultural integration	X							X		
	Understands that one's social and cultural context is embedded in transcultural connections	X		X	X	X			X		
	Investigates how to generate transcultural connections			X							
	Uses relativism in an even-tempered manner	X									
	Facilitates inclusive contexts for the establishing relationships with different people	X		X					X		

* anonymised

Izvleček

Pouk tujega jezika stroke kot strateški prostor za razvijanje medkulturnosti v domačem okolju: iskanje priložnosti in soočanje z izzivi

Prispevek obravnava internacionalizacijo visokošolskega izobraževanja ter raziskuje priložnosti in izzive, s katerimi se soočajo učitelji tujih jezikov stroke pri vključevanju medkulturnosti v svoje vsakodnevno poučevanje – ko si torej prizadevajo medkulturnost razvijati v svojem domačem okolju (Jones, 2020). Prispevek med drugim preučuje orodja, razvita v okviru evropskega visokošolskega prostora, za uvajanje medkulturne komponente v izobraževanje po Evropi, vlogo učbenikov za tuje jezike stroke pri spodbujanju in podpiranju medkulturnega učenja, prednosti medkulturnih učnih načrtov in dejavnosti pri pouku tujih jezikov stroke ter prispevek učiteljev tujih jezikov stroke k razvoju medkulturnosti v svojih učilnicah. Avtorica ta vprašanja obravnava s pragmatičnega vidika, da bi spodbudila razpravo in zagotovila jasne smernice za nadaljnji razvoj tega področja.

Ključne besede: tuji jeziki stroke, medkulturnost, medkulturni posredniki, medkulturno učenje, internacionalizacija, visoko šolstvo