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CONTENT-INTEGRATED LEARNING – COSMETICS MARKETING AND RAW MATERIALS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper discusses content-integrated learning in the studies of Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics (BBC), a unique Bachelor's degree program in higher education in the Nordic countries.

Studies of Swedish language, Cosmetic Chemistry, Raw Materials and Marketing carried out in the same package, in Sweden during an intensive study week and in Swedish – yes, all this is possible. The pioneering lecturer team of three, consisting of lecturers in Marketing, Chemistry and Swedish, combine these three subjects. They travel to Stockholm, Sweden, to study with the group of BBC students. Not only once, but four successive years already.

Swedish language is the second official language in Finland and thus a compulsory subject. Learning of the field-specific terminology is often regarded difficult and laborious. Based on the Learning by Developing (LbD) model developed in Laurea University of Applied Sciences (UAS) the lecturers intend to motivate students and deepen their knowledge in the cosmetic field. LbD offers a methodology for the development of professional competences as well as fresh innovations for improving the world.

One of the objectives is to encourage using Swedish language in professional contexts. Although Swedish is a mandatory language in Finland, students usually prefer to use English. Cosmetic Chemistry and Marketing are studied side by side with Swedish during the second study year. Lecturers have decided to combine the three study subjects. The integrated study module is built to correspond to the real working life and the profession of the cosmetic expert where Chemistry and Marketing mix. This may sound like a strange combination, but in fact, cosmetics products contain both. Encouragement to study exchange in the Nordic countries is one aim of the study module.

The intensive week is organized together with local professionals in Stockholm. Several places connected to research, production, marketing and selling of cosmetic products are visited during the week. The planning process starts one year before the actual week, partly based on the experiences and feedback from the previous study unit. A timeline of the process will be presented in the article as well as the choice of local actors based on pedagogical viewpoint and trending phenomena. In all encounters with the local actors the appropriate use of the Swedish language and intercultural aspects are taken into account.

The week follows the Flipped Learning methodology. The students have numerous pre-tasks before the week to make the most of the content of the week. During the week they are active in the chosen social media channels to produce content, examples presented in the article. After the intensive week the students have some conclusive group tasks.

The study module develops both the students' and the teachers' expertise. Cooperative planning increases well-being at work and gives new pedagogical viewpoints. The students' linguistic and cultural skills in professional contexts develop widely. One objective, however, is always the openings for new partners as well as internships for BBC students.

After all, the best feedback of the study week is that despite massive workload the rumour goes around. Every autumn the new degree program students' first question is "Are we also going to Stockholm in the second year?" Social media has a huge impact on attracting new students.

Keywords: Content-Integrated Language Learning, Learning by development, LbD, Flipped Learning, Working life cooperation, Higher Education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The higher education institution network in Finland includes universities, 14, and universities of applied sciences, 23. Universities focus on scientific research and education based on it. Universities of applied sciences, on the other hand, offer a pragmatic education that responds to work life needs. Universities of applied sciences are mainly multidisciplinary regional higher education institutions whose activities highlight their connection to work life, while the basic task of the universities is to engage in scientific research and provide the highest level of education based on it. [1]

A Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics is a specialist who operates flexibly in the field of beauty and cosmetics. The education leading to the degree of Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics in Laurea University of Applied Sciences provides capabilities to develop business operations in the field. A Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics promotes networking and cooperation in the field as well as distributes diverse, up-to-date and proven information about cosmetics.

Students improve their core competence in the field by acquiring information to become specialists in two large areas of expertise: business operations in the field of cosmetics and knowledge about the raw materials used in cosmetics. Students deepen their competence by bringing together what they have previously learned into a holistic competence and by practising applying their knowledge, for example, in education, consultation and cosmetics marketing. [2]

Students develop and reform the field in projects together with work life. This is actually what this intensive study week and project in Sweden is about, but internationally from the Nordic perspective.

Learning by Developing Action Model (LbD) has been developed at Laurea University of Applied Sciences at the beginning of the year 2000 to answer to the three main tasks given to the universities of applied sciences by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland: education, regional development, and research, development and innovation (RDI). [3]

Based on LbD action model our content-integrated studies offer students work life experiences, ways to deepen their knowledge in cosmetic studies and the Swedish language. Students also take greater responsibility for their own learning.

The studies and the intensive week presented in this article will be organized for the fifth time during November 2019. Three first years it was a part of three different study courses; Swedish, Cosmetic Marketing and Cosmetic Raw Materials. Lecturers planned their own courses so that the integrated part was a prominent part of each course. Last year it was organised for the first time as separate project studies, five credit points. Studies were open for all Bachelor students, most of them were second year students, anyhow. Although the intensive week is a voluntary part of the studies, about 80 percent of students take part in it. From the beginning, the studies have included both tasks before and after travelling in addition to the week in Stockholm.

The highlight of the studies is definitely the whole week in Stockholm. Before travelling, the students have different tasks to do. Social media strategy requires planning the sharing of the outcome of the study week in social media, selecting the channels and scheduling the posting. Facebook, Instagram and blog-posts have been the channels for sharing the information about our week and excursions. In addition, the students have to familiarize with the target companies and their products in advance, point out similarities and differences in cosmetics marketing strategies. The students compare how eco-friendliness and sustainability are visible and implemented in the Swedish cosmetic market. They pay attention to such details as recyclability of packaging materials, product descriptions and how cosmetic legislation is visible in marketing and packaging texts. They also monitor the marketing and display of cosmetics in cosmetics stores and department stores.

Three lecturers have been involved from the beginning. Teija Lehto, Senior Lecturer in Swedish language is interested in integrating language studies into curriculum subjects. She is a pioneer in Laurea in integrating language studies into curriculum studies. She has worked for many years both in cosmetic and health care studies. Auli Hietanen, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, has a remarkable experience in teaching marketing and business in both university and vocational level. Marjo Poutanen, Principal Lecturer, is responsible for integrating studies of cosmetic raw materials and cosmetic legislation into project studies and Head of Master's Degree in Beauty and Cosmetics. The Master's Degree is unique in the Nordic countries.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Pedagogical Framework

The pedagogical framework of the intensive study week and project consists of four approaches, which are Content Based Language Instruction (LBI), Task Based Language Learning, Flipped Learning and Blended Learning. The two first ones connect the language studies with Cosmetic Chemistry, Raw Materials and Marketing studies, while Flipped Learning and Blended Learning describe the implementation model of the study unit.

Content Based Language Instruction (LBI) means learning the target language through content. Learning is built around a relevant content rather than a linguistic syllabus. [4]. Thus, the language is more of a tool to reach a goal, not the goal itself. In Content Based Instruction (LBI), motivation is a very important factor, and the idea is to provide the learners with motivating tasks. Significantly, stimulating content is a key factor in motivating students. In our case, a study week in Stockholm is a highly motivating factor. In LBI the aim is not to study isolated language fragments, but to learn the language in a specific context. When students are working on the content in the target country contexts they have an opportunity to hear and read, as well as write or speak the target language. The focus throughout the process is on the content and not on the language itself, thus the language learning is a byproduct of the process. In addition, CBI is student-centered as opposed to teacher-centered. [5]

Task-Based language learning is a category under the concept of Content Based Instruction. [6] A task can be anything concrete that someone does, such as painting a wall, doing groceries or buying a flight ticket. When an applied linguist refers to task-based learning, it means completing something by using the target language as a tool of communication. [7] It could be booking a train ticket or visiting a doctor. Evidently, there is a clear difference between a task and exercise. Ellis [7 *ibid.*] emphasizes the importance of social interaction and communication in Task Based Learning. Evidently, the study week in Stockholm consists of a series of task-based activities in real life situations.

Another theory applied in this paper is flipped learning. A central concept in flipped learning is to promote student autonomy, so that the student takes more responsibility for the learning process, however, on the other hand it regards learning as a social event [8]. In practice flipped learning means that the students work on a certain theme and with material related to it at home prior to classroom teaching [9]. It is often understood as becoming acquainted with material that the teacher recommends, such as texts, audios or videos or seeking interesting information independently. In our case the flipped approach means that the students have to prepare for the study week thoroughly in advance by completing different tasks that help them get the most of the week. After the study week the tasks are discussed and checked, as well as shared.

Blended learning means that the student is doing part of the work individually and part of it face to face in the classroom or learning environment. [10]. The fact that students are more in charge with their own learning and able to control it, is an important aspect of blended learning. This is one of the factors distinguishing it from technology-rich instruction. The tasks in our study week project are designed so that the student can do part of them by working online, individually or in groups. The instructions for the tasks are available online and encourage the students to use online sources when searching for information. The students can also share the outcomes online. Finally, the students are required to present their outcomes in social media channels and discuss their work with their peers.

2.2 The motivation factors behind the study unit

What makes three lecturers from totally different subject areas cooperate like this? We are extremely motivated to internationalize, to develop competences and to integrate the subject matters.

Internationalization is one of the strategic choices in Laurea University of Applied Sciences, and this one-week-long study project offers a first-row viewpoint for the students. The study week promotes long-term study exchanges in the Nordic countries or elsewhere, as well as work placements in Sweden, as they are an obligatory part of the Bachelor studies. Every study week has brought new work placement offerings in Stockholm in the companies we have visited, as the Bachelor programme in Beauty and Cosmetics is unique in the Nordic countries. Students have taken this opportunity eagerly, as the Swedish cosmetics market is slightly ahead of the Finnish one. All this adds value to the students' competences.

Another motivation factor is to develop competences. The students realize that they can trust their Swedish language skills in professional contexts. This changes the attitude of the students towards the Swedish language. They also find the Nordic cosmetics market easy and confident to approach, and learn a lot about the similarities and slight differences. Their competence about the product chain – from an idea to a consumer product – grows as we visit cosmetic laboratories, product development, marketing professionals and packaging experts. Thus it is not only the students' competence that is growing, but also the lecturers update the latest innovations and ideas in the field. We hear the latest news and we become more acquainted with the Nordic actors in the business.

The third motivation factor is the lecturers' interest in integrating the different study subjects, i.e. Swedish language, Cosmetic Chemistry, Raw Materials and Marketing. The lecturers learn from each other, not only the contents of each other's subjects but also pedagogical solutions and approach. This kind of teaching method will encourage new experiments and innovation in the future, too.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Results for students

The study project has several positive outcomes for students. Internalisation begins already in Finland, when the students familiarize themselves with the target companies. The companies represent different stages in cosmetics industry and marketing, and they are chosen and contacted by the lecturers. During the week the students contact several experts working in cosmetic field and enlarge their business networks. In addition to the company visits, the students visit as many places as possible where cosmetic products are sold: airport, cruise boats, department stores, malls, boutiques, exhibitions, and even street markets and supermarkets, just to get the idea how the marketing is done. At the same time, students learn how to travel around the city using a variety of public transport.

New places for work placement in companies and even in cosmetic manufacturing laboratories have been the result every year, and both the companies and the students have taken initiative in offering or asking for the placements. This all has increased the students' courage and self-confidence. Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetic students' wide knowledge of the cosmetic field is noted and opportunities for even longer work contracts/places are available every year.

Study exchange period in Nordic countries has not been so popular than the study exchange in English speaking countries. However, a week in Stockholm and a week speaking mostly Swedish has been a turning point for students. For them, an idea to take an exchange period in Sweden is interesting and challenging, in a nice way. Besides, many students work and study at the same time, and the outcome of the week benefits their employers, too.

During the study week the students see the making of cosmetics from the beginning to the end. The companies have presented the whole project of cosmetic manufacturing, starting from the idea and heading to the actual product. Oriflame, the famous Swedish cosmetic manufacturer, presented their way to produce some cosmetic raw materials and test their effect on skin cells. ACO Perrigo presented some of their products and their procedure from idea to cosmetic product. Several professionals from researchers with doctoral degree to creative marketing specialists have been presenting their expertise and the newest innovations and we have had the possibility to hear their stories and their professional paths. The intensive week also includes information on the Swedish economy and culture as well as differences between Finnish and Swedish trade. Therefore, other important places to visit have been the Embassy of Finland, The Finnish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce and The Finnish Institute in Stockholm.

Figure 1. Presents the group of students and lecturers from the very first intensive week, year 2015. The picture is taken at Allt för hälsan trade fair. [10]



Figure 1. Students and lecturers at Allt för Hälsan trade fair in 2015. [10]

3.2 The results for Laurea UAS and for lecturers

The visibility and awareness of The Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics Degree grows internationally with our study project. There is no corresponding university degree in cosmetics in other Nordic Countries. New openings and contacts for educational exchange are built each year.

Social media is used for sharing information and results from our week and excursions. Professional content sharing reaches several target groups, both professional and non-professional interested in cosmetics. Instagram, both Laurea UAS and students' and lecturers' personal posts, reach younger audience, including those young ones who dream to study in Laurea UAS and in our degree programme. Facebook and blogs are directed to more experienced audience, cosmetic enthusiasts, students, alumnae and cosmetic experts. As an example we share here our blog from the year 2016. [10] <https://laureagoesstockholm2016.blogspot.com>

As a remarkable result from first study week Laurea UAS was asked to join the Swedish-Finnish Chamber of Commerce. This membership offers several possibilities for Nordic contacts for both students and for lecturers on our Degree programme.

3.3 Feedback from students and from collaborators

Student feedback has been excellent from the beginning. Target companies and collaborators have expressed their satisfaction and welcomed us warmly back after the visits. New openings for collaboration and exchange are appreciated widely. The student feedback emphasizes encouragement to speak Swedish in professional contexts, versatile and interesting programme, the feeling of being on an intensive business trip and learning from each other.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the intensive study week project has been a success each year, and the lecturers are highly motivated to develop the contents and the tasks carried out during the week. The same goes with the companies, as there are several actors like the Finnish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce or Aco Cosmetics who each year offer more and more to our student group. We aim at win-win-situation for both sides, as our students come to the meetings well-prepared and thus give ideas to the receiving companies, too. The students are very eager to enrol in the project course, and every year the number of participants has been about 30, which is the practical maximum for the receiving companies. All in all, we think that the study week in Stockholm has established its existence.

Every year is slightly different from the previous one, as we lecturers try to respond the feedback, develop new tasks, contact new companies and speakers and leave something out. We also have followed another strategic choice in Laurea University of Applied Sciences, digitalization, as all the reporting from the study week takes place in social media and we urge the students to use several digital applications throughout the study unit.

We are proud to apply content-integrated language learning for our Bachelor of Beauty and Cosmetics students internationally, and it is a delight to hear the first-year students' first questions when they start their studies: "Can we also choose the Stockholm study week during our second year?"

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