HOW TO TEACH BUSINESS SUBJECTS TO FOREIGN STUDENTS WITHOUT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: THE SUCCESS OF PARTICIPATIVE AND ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the development and results of a teaching-learning experience in multicultural groups of foreign students enrolled in specific economic and business courses in the University of Salamanca (Spain). The paper shows specific practical teaching strategies used to promote and active learning that give students the autonomy to learn by using self-learning techniques. The strategy is also a successful method to motivate students so they can reach the general established course goals with the maximum development of their personal skills. The satisfaction results of the end-of-course questionnaire show that these techniques are highly effective and can help to enrich the teaching-learning process of students whose primary language is not Spanish, and also those who had not had an intense contact with business subjects before. Due to their successful results, authors suggest a significant commitment with their application in similar situations where students present the aforementioned characteristics.

Keywords: Business Education, International Students, Active Self-Learning, Student-Centered Learning, Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The standardization of content and methodologies on an official course allows for balance coverage of students' learning, so they reached the established competences and abilities of each educational stage. One of the most recent teaching challenges is how to adapt the teaching-learning process to students' specific needs and characteristics. In these cases, teachers must ensure a quality learning process, with the necessary resources so students can reach the general established goals with the maximum development of their personal capabilities. On the other hand, in recent times, the introduction of new technologies (ICT) and the processes associated with them are already unquestionable within the teaching-learning process. In a context where students belong to the generation of the so-called Digital Natives (Prensky, 2001a), these new tools and digital media are emerging as essential vehicles for the actions developed in classrooms that allow the achievement of learning objectives.

The University of Salamanca, offers courses to teach Spanish to foreigners of recognized international prestige for many decades now. Each year, more than 7,000 students from many nations arrive to their classrooms to learn Spanish. However, those students have also the possibility to receive formal education in a wide variety of subjects that are valued and appreciated internationally. Among this education, students increasingly demand courses related with economy and business and, in most cases, they have not had a previous contact with these

topics or intend to have it in the nearly future. Those students are interested both in business courses with global content (International Finance, International Marketing, International Business, E-commerce…) and in those referring to Spanish economy.

The target group for these courses has specific characteristics:

1. They usually do not have a previous background on economic topics.
2. They present different levels of Spanish language knowledge.
3. They have different ages.
4. They have different objectives, interests and expectations about the course.
5. They come from a large variety of countries, with different cultural and economic characteristics.

This last characteristic makes teaching economics a challenge for the enrichment of the learning process for students, but also for the difficulty that teachers face. On the one hand, teachers must be aware of the need to adapt the objectives, methodologies and activities to be effective to the learning of all students alike. On the other hand, the intercultural variety is an important starting point to approach from different points of view the understanding and criticism of an environment in which the life of the students develops. These students, even coming from different places of origin, have common goals of acquiring values and attitudes to understand the world around them and to understand how the economy interacts with the environment. Among them we could emphasize: To be aware of the role of the economy and the company in the society; awareness of responsible consumption and ethics in economic activity; understand the importance of the environment and the technological development in society; acquire reading habits of economic press and follow up of the economic problems that affect the society, etc. It is not arguable that business ethics should be included as part of the materials of the economic courses (Smith et al., 2013; Kleinrichert et al., 2013), helping to create a more favorable attitude towards these behaviors and towards ethics in economy and organizations (Nguyen et al., 2008; McGlone et al., 2011; Kleinrichert et al., 2013). Since cultural differences affect the thinking processes of individuals (Prensky, 2001b), multiculturalism creates a conductive context to share the differences of thought and critical processes in economics.

Likewise, several studies point out that cultural differences influence the teaching-learning process, its results and also students' satisfaction (Hofstede, 2008; Pineda et al., 2009; Zeitun et al., 2013). At the same time, those cultural differences affect the effectiveness of group work: how the different members integrate within the team and how satisfied they are (So et al., 2010; Zeitun et al., 2013). Consequently, it is necessary to program the courses with specific priority objectives, depending on the characteristics of the students. This means teachers need to organize and structure courses according to criteria that improve the performance and understanding of the enrolled students. In other terms, instruments, resources, methodologies and time are adapted to allow for a proper learning and evaluation of students, bearing in mind personal and environmental factors that serve as catalysts for the process (Gagné, 2009).

The present research aims to present the learning strategies used in three different subjects with different objectives: Spanish economy (taught in Spanish), International Marketing and E-commerce and social media marketing (taught in English). Students of the Spanish economy course have almost never had contact with economic courses before. Besides, their level of Spanish was in most cases, basic. Students on the other two courses were English-native

speakers, although many of them were enrolled in minors with no relation to business and economy at all. The didactic strategies based on a series of methodological principles that we consider to contribute to greater understanding and performance in order to achieve meaningful learning. Among them, we could emphasize:

1. Active role of the student in the construction of his own knowledge.
2. Enhance the relationship between content and the environment and its usefulness in real life.
3. Favor the critical discussion and the reflective attitude that generates understanding and stimulates the participatory attitude.
4. Enhance cooperation and interaction, without forgetting individual effort.
5. Ensure an attractive working environment in the classroom.

The basic goal of these courses with economic content is the teaching of skills following Moss and Tilly (2001) approach, understood as abilities that affect the behavior of students instead of referring to technical and formal knowledge. Thus, teachers emphasize conceptual knowledge reinforced through several types of practical exercises (Clark et al., 2014). The most important thing is to get students committed using attractive and motivating resources. Our approach insists on giving students the autonomy to learn by using self-learning techniques such as:

1. The use of the problem-based learning approach.
2. Simulations through role-playing situations.
3. The use of the case study method.
4. The stimulation of public oral expression.
5. The improvement of written expression.
6. The use of transversal topics that allow students to adapt and understand the society they live in.

The programmed learning strategies have been designed with the objective of being able to be valid within the process of acquisition of abilities and attainment of learning objectives of Bloom's revised Taxonomy model (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) with an adaptation to this type of students and the objectives of the different subjects. In this sense, the age of the students allows to catalog them within the denominated digital natives commented previously. For this reason, we use the adaptation proposed by Churches (2009) and Carrington (2015) as a reference, in line with the previous model, which takes into account that learning opportunities can be valued as digital media are applied in classrooms.

We also present the results of a satisfaction questionnaire distributed among the students once the courses were finished. Results will allow for the evaluation of the degree of achievement of the objectives initially proposed by the teachers at the beginning of the courses, as several research points out the link between satisfaction and optimization of the learning process (Rapert et al., 2004; Smimou & Dahl, 2012; Childers et al., 2014). The analysis of these results will also determine a starting point for assessing the image and reputation of the University of Salamanca on these types of adapted courses, which could help for future student attraction and enrollment, as these are concepts related with course satisfaction (Douglas et al., 2006).

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES: STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING STRATEGIES

In 1956, Bloom presented a model that categorized the different thinking skills that allowed creating a passage from the acquisition of knowledge until the creation of it, establishing the starting point for a commonly accepted premise: the fundamental thing is to learn by doing. Therefore, it is important to enhance the participation and the active role of the student in his own process. Years later, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) modified the model by associating key verbs in a learning process that was marked by six stages: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create. The creation of knowledge emerges as a clear difference with the original Bloom's model where evaluation was at the last stage. Thus, we assume that the ultimate goal of learning lies not in the acquisition of knowledge per se, but in the ability to generate new structures and content with them, in an era in which knowledge sharing is part of the process of self-learning beyond the classroom. In this way, learning is not an individual activity, but it is a process of connecting individuals and sources of information, which becomes easier when these connections are fostered and maintained. Feeding and harnessing collective knowledge is one of the major challenges of the new learning context.

The revised Taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) is an appropriate model so that, according to the objectives set by the teacher, he/she can establish a road map of actions and activities to be to develop in the classroom. However, it is somewhat remote from a general environment in which new technologies break into learning methods. For this reason, it is necessary to adapt not only to this general environment, but also to an immediate and specific one: digital natives (Prensky, 2001a). Students in this category assume an active role in building their own knowledge. They are students who need interactivity (Presnky, 2001b). Digital natives use technology to find the knowledge easily accessible online so it is necessary to adapt the teaching process to make learning attractive so they feel the need to learn. In this sense, Churches (2009) presents an updated Bloom Taxonomy to the context of new technologies that is easy to introduce in a collaborative way in the classroom.

The learning process must be built on a basis of remembering and understanding knowledge, applying it later to the analysis and evaluation of different scenarios and situations in order to create and finally produce ideas that can be transmitted back to other interlocutors (Churches, 2008). The stages open a wide range of actions that translate into activities and approaches in the classroom as shown in Figure 1, where ICT are the instruments for the learning process.

Another important adaptation of the Bloom Taxonomy (2001) conceptual framework was the one developed by Carrington (2015) in the well-known Padagogy Wheel. The wheel makes it easy to articulate the activities that the teachers programme, as well as the applications and ICT tools needed according to them according to the objectives set. At a first level, the teacher identifies learning abilities according to Bloom's revised taxonomy. For each of them, the wheel details the verbs of action so that they can be assimilated to the expected learning outcomes. These verbs translate into activities that will allow evaluating if the achieved learning objectives. In a last level, the wheel offers a wide variety of apps adapting the process of learning to the digital environment in which students develop.

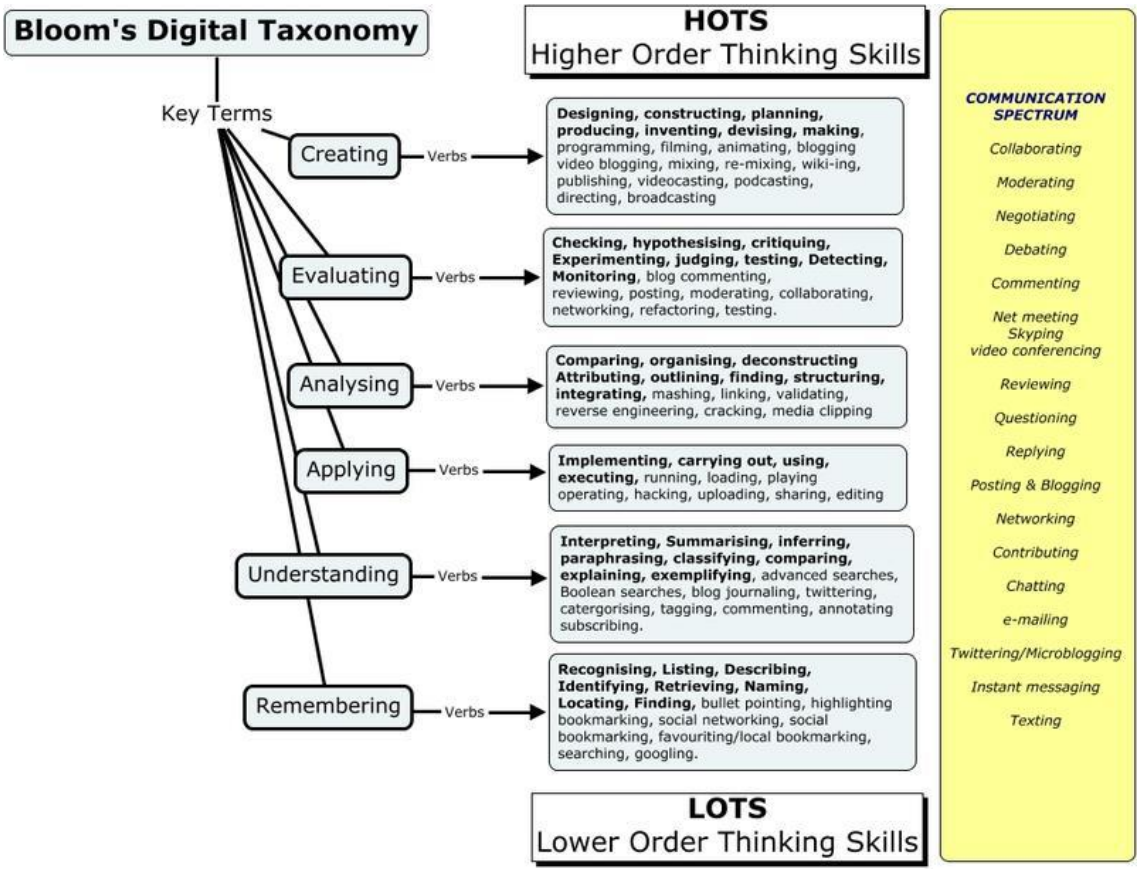


FIGURE 1
BLOOM TAXONOMY

The application of the Carrington's Padagogy Wheel facilitates the teacher to construct a coherent route to plan, program and structure the contents according to the objectives that correspond to the subject, regardless of the topic. At the same time, it ensures the students' motivation, their active role and their interactivity by presenting the learning process as an environment adapted to their ease of action in the digital age.

The strategy followed in the programming of contents and in the design of the activities in the courses described later is consistent with the logical itinerary set in the Carrington's Padagogy Wheel (Figure 2).

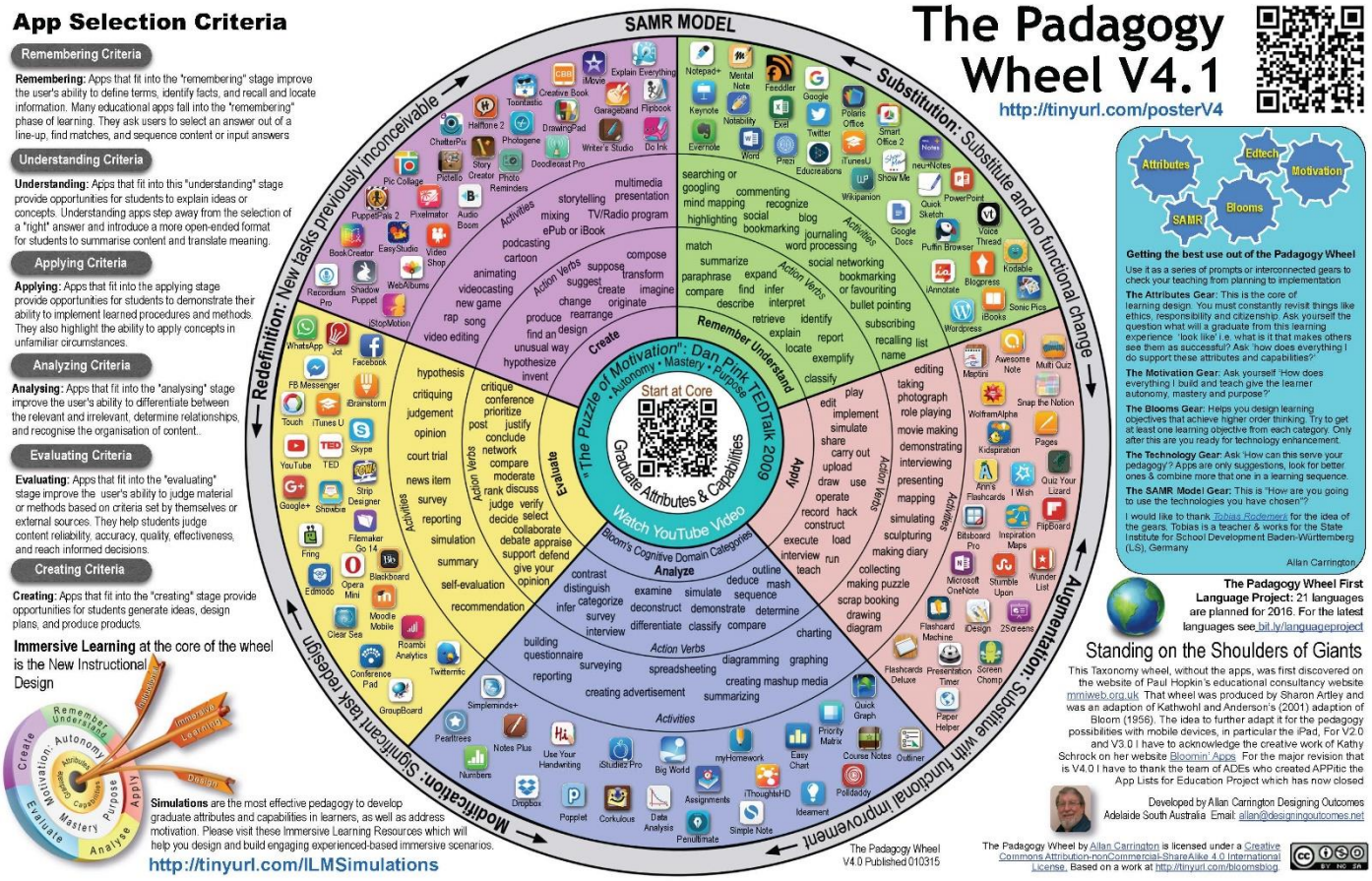
The fact that students have different interest and initial expectations about the course will affect the way they organize and implement learning strategies (Dowson and Mclnerney, 2003). Under this perspective, it is important that teachers manage the courses properly in order to ensure that this diversity of interest do not harm the common performance goal. At the same time, common course goals should not act as an impediment for students to reach their own objectives regarding their personal interests. The planned course activities, designed with a clear focus on collaborative learning, foster a great interaction between students, and between those and the teacher with improves learning results' and students' participation (Siau et al., 2003; Haseman et al., 2002).

Class diversity is also an important variable as it affects the way students assume their role in the learning process. It also has an impact on students' motivation and their own perceptions about the course (Biggs et al., 2001). In order to meet the demands of this diverse collective of students, courses focus on participative students, with activities focused on collaboration. This approach allows for the benefits of implementing these strategies in the teaching-learning process (González-Gascón et al., 2014). Consequently, students take an active role, as they have to elaborate their own strategies to apply the concepts learned to do analysis and reach conclusions, benefiting themselves from the efficacy of this type of teaching-learning model (Kember and Gow, 1990). Collaboration reinforces student learning and is part of some of the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy as it appears as an instrument that facilitates skills such as creation or evaluation in the learning process (Churches, 2009).

This teaching approach relies on the fact that knowledge does not transmit unidirectional from the teacher to the students. Education is not about "learning things" but about to solve situations using the information giving in class sessions, once a meaning has been attributed (Tourón, 2001; Tourón and Campeón, 2013). In this sense, Blair' learning pyramid (2008) already showed that the highest percentage of retention of knowledge after 24 h occurs with the active role of the student in actions such as teaching others (90%), practicing (75%) and argue (50%).

Our approach entails that students become the main players in the activities, so they transform information into expertise and learning that implement in the interpretation of different economic situations. Activities where students must face situations and manage their own knowledge and skills applying them to specific, real case studies predominate. As the course develops, students are able to face more complex situations, with greater difficulty and more variables to be taken into account (Smith et. al, 2013; Sims and Felton, 2006). This is the approach followed with the end course activities: group projects which students needed to create and present in the class. This gives the students an opportunity to reflect upon the knowledge and the concepts learned during the whole course (Poff, 2007).

FIGURE 2



THE PEDALOGY WHEEL V4.1

With all the previously mentioned characteristics, it is necessary to organize and structure the different courses' syllabus by using a set of methodological principles that take into account the objectives that students want to achieve. This is a key feature so that the students achieve greater performance and reach a significant learning. These principles include the following:

1. Learning implies a high degree of student autonomy. Students take an active role on their learning building, so teachers assume the role of a facilitator or guide.

2. Activities favor a reflexive learning that generates understanding, so we emphasize processes and activities that lead to critical thinking, analysis, discussion and consensus. By doing so, we also stimulate students' participation and their ability to give arguments and defend their ideas.

3. It exist a high component of teamwork during the course, which favors integration, cooperative learning and multicultural knowledge.

4. We stimulate the use of new information and communication technologies, as well as the correct use of oral and written expression. We put great emphasis on oral presentations in front of the class to reinforce the ability to speak confidently in public.

Nevertheless, courses particularly focus on two different methodologies that imply learning from simulation or from a particular experience, cooperative work and a realistic approach to the environment: Problem-based learning and role-playing. The Problem-Based

Learning allows integrating theory and practicing applying knowledge and skills to solve a problem usually low-structured and subject to free interpretation with an open solution (Savery, 2006). It motivates students by allowing them to apply concepts to a real situation in context, developing the ability to make economic decisions and potentiating active student-centered learning (Bonk and Smith, 1998; Bransford et al., 2000; Duch et al., 2001). Role-plays allow students to improve the knowledge of concepts and principles, by simulating a real business situation. This method facilitates the understanding of personal motivations and strengthens the processes of conflict resolution and the reach of consensus (Armstrong, 2001; Stanley and Marsen, 2012). Those learning tools enable for the construction of a flexible and adapted syllabus, which improves students' motivation and responsibility (Savery and Duffy, 1995).

The following sections describe more in detail some activities programmed in the three different courses adapted to students' characteristics and learning contents that constitute, due to their successful results, a significant commitment with their application in similar situations where students present the aforementioned characteristics.

OBJECTIVES, CONTENTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Below are some of the activities that have been successfully implemented in courses with economic content. We selected all of them taking into account the process marked in Carrington's Padagogy wheel (2015) with a logical itinerary that starts from the verbs that mark the cognitive domain collected in the Bloom's revised Taxonomy. Each one of the activities collects the basic objective pursued, the key verb according to the revised taxonomy, the corresponding action verb and the corresponding activity verbs that would best fit the selected activity. In this way, we can observe how easily applicable is the process for the development of didactic strategies in the classroom.

Courses have been taught during the last three academic years. Students mainly come from the United States and some Asian countries (Taiwan, China or Japan) and the large majority of students were under 22 years old.

Activities of the International Marketing Course

International marketing is a 45 h course distributed in 14 weeks. Its core objectives are:

1. Knowing and understanding the fundamentals of global businesses.
2. Knowing and understanding the evolution of the international marketing and its economical, professional, cultural and social consequences.
3. Knowing and analyzing the different international marketing expansion models.
4. Understanding the organizational change that implies managing an international business.
5. Knowing and understanding the marketing mix decisions on international environments.

Activity One: Role playing

Duration: 1 h

Objective: To understand how cultural differences may affect international negotiation processes.

Key verb: Create.

Action verbs: Imagine/hypothesize/suppose.

Activity: Develop a role-playing situation to learn about the cultural differences between the US and Japan.

International marketing focuses on the need of catering the different tastes and preferences of global customers. In order to assess these differences properly, students need to know about cultural dimensions and their impacts on business negotiation and final performance. Misunderstandings and different negotiation techniques can ruin a project if negotiators do not act properly.

After having discussed some theoretical issues about the impacts of culture on global business and international negotiations, students saw a video to clarify some of the core concepts when engaging in negotiations with Japanese people, such as: greetings, giving business cards, giving presents, how to behave on dinners…

Then, we divided the class in two teams, representing business people from the US and Japan. Both students had to enroll on an acting scene, where they have to represent a negotiation with a welcome dinner. They created their own gifts and business cards and distributed them to its new partners.

Teacher Assessment

This activity allows the students to know more in deep the importance of simple gestures and body language (such as giving business cards looking into others' persons' eye with both hands and handle it carefully) in international negotiations. It allows them to understand the importance of culture, traditions, customs and manners when conducting international projects. It is also a good way of memorizing and remembering concepts such as uncertainty avoidance, power distance or long-term orientation, Hofstede's cultural dimensions with high scores on Japan.

Activity 2: How to Adapt and Market Products Internationally

Duration: 1 session for preparation and 1 session for presentation.

Objective: To understand the influence of culture on the globalization of products.

Key verb: Evaluate.

Action verbs: compare/select/decide.

Activity: Launching a Spanish product in different international zones.

Marketers usually refers to the 4P's model (product, price, place and promotion) when addressing the marketing strategy of a product. However, the international context poses additional challenges when publicizing products abroad. Students, once again, need to take care of the different aspects of the culture and traditions of each country to understand how to promote products successfully.

Students were presented with a challenge. In groups of four people they need to create and advertising campaign with a logo, a brand name and a slogan and adapt typical Spanish

products (Sangria, paella and Spanish omelet) so they could be exported to different geographical areas (Western Europe, America, Asia, Arab Countries). Once the task was completed, they presented and discussed the work in front of the class, who presented additional restrictions or disadvantages they need to address (i.e.: It is forbidden to drink alcohol in some Arabic Countries, so an alcohol-free version of Sangria is needed).
Teacher assessment: This project was useful for students. Not only did they realize about the profound differences sometimes countries present, but they also learn how to react in consequence and adapt the four marketing variables to build a successful marketing campaign. Students feel motivated and the fact that other classmates contribute to the improvement of the idea makes them feel valued and part of an engaged group. They remember and more importantly apply theoretical concepts such as marketing strategies; the 4P's, cultural adaptation issues…and they reinforce important competencies such as the use of ICTs, oral exposition, synthetization of contents…

ACTIVITIES OF THE ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COURSE

Electronic commerce is a 45 h course distributed in 14 weeks within the business program (1 semester) with the following main goal:

The main objective of this course is to provide a broad overview of the dynamics of electronic commerce. The emphasis is on practical learning with case studies, class and group discussions or hands of written projects and oral presentations among others.

Specific objectives for the course were:

1. Define the meaning and scope of digital business and e-commerce and their different elements.
2. Summarize the main reasons for adoption of digital business and barriers that may restrict adoption.
3. Outline the ongoing business challenges of managing digital business in an organization, particularly online start-up businesses.
4. Understanding the organizational change that implies an electronic business model.

Activity 1: Design a Google AdWords campaign

Duration: 1 session (computers lab).

Objective: To understand the importance of social media marketing strategies and Internet positioning.

Key verb: Create.

Action verbs: Create/originate/design.

Activity: Design a Google AdWords Campaign

Digital marketing is one of the most innovative trends nowadays. Organizations are aware of the power of social media to engage customers so they use social media marketing strategies to attract customers to the store. In general, SEM (search engine marketing) techniques are hard to explain using only books and theory, as the large availability of personalization of the campaign features makes it difficult for students to understand. This is the reason why this

activity has a practical approach, so students can learn the skills by doing the campaign on their own. The session takes place in the computers lab where each student needs to create a complete Google AdWords campaign and present it to the class. The campaign needs to contain at least two ad sets with two different ads so students learn the roots of segmentation (i.e.: one campaign for women and one for men if it is a clothes store).

Teacher Assessment

Sessions in computer labs are highly effective. Students learn by doing, and they are able to correct and learn from their own mistakes. We reinforce competences such as the use of ICTs, basic in nowadays world, using a practical approach. This project helps students understand the basics of Search Engine Marketing without the complexity of a theoretical manual. They can distinguish the different parts of a campaign, and are able to use segmentation criteria properly. Students were able to create and optimize a paid advertising campaign suitable to be applied in any retailing business.

Activity 2: Role Playing

Duration: 1 h

Objective: Understand the dangers of smartphone addiction.

Key verb: Create.

Action verbs: Imagine/hypothesize/supposte

Activity: Develop a role-playing situation of treatment of addictions to mobile phones.

Smartphone usage rates are growing every day, as this device has become an essential part of our lives. Given the fact that teenagers and young adults use it several hours a day, we try to assess the different advantages and disadvantages of this technology. Besides, we try to reflect on the different impacts of these portable devices on business and ecommerce and how can companies, brands and customers benefit from it. After having discussed some theoretical issues about the impacts of the use of smartphones and technologies on our lives (such us easy access, convenience, speed, affordability…) students also need to understand their risks and potential problems (security and privacy concerns, GPS tracking, gambling, addiction…) to use it wisely.
We divide the class in two teams representing both smartphone addicts and psychologists who try to understand and help them with their problem. They have to represent a therapy session in which they described both advantages and dangers of these technologies.
Teacher assessment

This activity allows the students to know more in deep the importance of the reasonable use of technology both in live and in business. It allows them to understand the importance of the technological revolution, and how technology can either enhance or ruin someone's life. It helps them to remember basic concepts in ecommerce such as usability, convenience, positioning, privacy or security.

Activity 3: Build Your Own Ecommerce Website (end course activity)

Duration: 1 session for preparation and 1 session for presentation.

Objective: Understand and apply to a real business model all theoretical and practical concepts described in class.

Key verb: Create.

Action verbs: Imagine/invent/design.

Activity: To create an ecommerce website and their social media profiles.

At the beginning of the course, students were given a training session on the computers lab on how to create a fully operational website using Jimdo, a free software. Since the tool is very intuitive and accessible anywhere, students continue to work on this group project at home. By the end of the semester, they need to do a 15 min presentation to the class summarizing the core concepts of the course and applying them to their own business model. As long as creating the website, students open social media profiles on the top used social networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and integrate them into the project. The google AdWords campaign is also based on their business idea, so the same group works with an ecommerce project across the whole course. Students previously send a final version of the PowerPoint or Prezi presentation to be evaluated by the teacher who provided feedback before class presentation.

Teacher Assessment

Group projects are a high effective way of reinforce the concepts learned in class. By means of a real, practical example, students can develop their own learning strategies by applying theoretical concepts to real life. It also helps with to synthesize content and reinforces their ability to discuss and defend their own ideas both in written and oral form. As the teacher gives feedback back to students, it helps them to clarify concepts and reinforce what has been discussed in class. Since the oral presentations are evaluating following a double-grading system, (70% of the mark corresponds to the teacher and the remaining 30% is a peer-to-peer evaluation by means of a rubric), students are involved not only in the creation of the project, but also in the evaluation and feedback of others.

Activities of the Spanish Economy (Economía Española) Course

This is a 45 h course distributed in 15 weeks with the following course objectives:

1. To learn the present Spanish economy on its European context, as well as their relations to other countries.
2. To analyze the core macroeconomic indicators of the Spanish economy and their influence on the social Spanish reality.
3. Knowing and understanding the core economic Spanish sectors and their contribution to the countries' wealth.
4. To analyze the economic perspective for Spain.

The diploma has a clear orientation towards the field of Spanish Language and Culture and the economic courses are not compulsory, so contents need to be adapted in order to jump the initial students' knowledge on the subject and motivate them. We need to mention that the course is taught in Spanish, which could represent an additional limitation for some students, so there is a need to pay special attention to the linguistic abilities of each of the students of the class, reinforcing linguistic competences and abilities, in parallel with students' expectations to improve their Spanish language level.

In order to achieve those goals, the course integrated a set of activities some of which we describe in detail:

Activity 1: Database of Economic News

Duration: One semester.

Objective: To understand the Spanish economic situation and its social impact.

Key verb: Remember/understand.

Action verbs: Summarize/interpret/report.

Activity: Creation of an economic news compilation through Evernote.

Every week, students need to look for economic news related to the topics of the week in several media. Every Thursday, at the beginning of the session, students presented a summary of their pieces of news to the class as well as a critical comment. This activity aimed to increase the students' ability to understand and speak Spanish both in written and oral form. Although the news had a Spanish economic focus, they have allowed for debate and questions linked to the reality of the European Union, the equilibrium of the global economy or the effects of the economic crisis on different countries.

Students uploaded the news to the Evernote free software tool. Evernote is learning instrument that allows cloud storage of certain types of information generated by the user through notes. Students can organize them into notepads. The teacher generates the notepads at the beginning of the course and shares them with the students, allowing thereafter the creation and editing of embedded content. Evernote has the advantage of allowing the capture of web content through the Evernote Clipper extension application, which are available at most popular browsers. Once the course is completed, students can transfer the notes to an additional, personal notepads not connected with the class, so the contents will remain accessible for them if they prefer to have it not linked to the course. In addition, the collected news remain stored and classified for years so they can be accessed by students who enroll the course in later courses.

Teachers' assessment:

This activity gets students engaged with the reality of the Spanish economy and their social consequences. It develops the student's skills to know the different newspapers and related Spanish media, enriching their learning about the country and allowing them to integrate better with their environment. Lastly, this activity has a positive effect on their Spanish language level, as if promote the constant reading of newspapers and economic information with specific technical terminology that enlarges their vocabulary. Furthermore, the process of analysis and critical thinking in order to present the results to the class every week promotes work routines that favor their communication and oral expression skills in a foreign language.

Activity 2: What about the Economic Crisis in the World?

Duration: Two sessions (one session with students' autonomous work and additional session for the presentation of the results).

Objective: To interpret the effects of the economic crisis in different countries and their differences with Spain.

Key verb: Apply.

Action verbs: Simulate/execute/teach.

Activity: Build a chart with the evolution of the macroeconomic indicators of the student's country of origin in the period of global crisis.

The students should to elaborate a graph to analyze the evolution of the core macroeconomic indicators of their countries during the period 2006-2013, evaluating the development and stability situation using the following concepts: GDP, unemployment rate, interest rate and ratings. These concepts had already been explained in class using the Spanish economy as an example. The period of analysis is not arbitrary, as it includes the great financial global crisis. Students need to use real data from the economy of their countries using official statistical sources to create the graphs. They had to present their final analysis with an oral presentation using the aforementioned graphs.

Teachers' Assessment:

This activity highly motivates students as they learn economic concepts from the nearest reality of many countries, so they can apply those concepts to similar practical situations. Students are able to learn the differences in the international economy, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each country. They also understand how these dissimilarities imply different adjustments to the economic crisis. The students also use socio-cultural characteristics of countries to analyze the evolution of the economic indicators, discovering historical aspects that still have an impact on the current economy. Students value the different economic strategies of the countries and their consequences. They also reinforce their ICTs competences, as they need to look for information and present their conclusions to the class in Microsoft Excel format.

Activity 3: Investing in Spain. (End-course activity)

Duration: Three sessions. Two sessions for preparation and an additional session for oral exposition.

Objective: To apply the acquired knowledge on Spanish economy.

Key verb: Evaluate.

Action verbs: conclude/defend/justify.

Activity: Offer an investment opportunity to a group of investors from the country of origin to create a business in Spain.

The goal of this activity was to evaluate if the students had reached the basic competences of the course and if they were able to integrate them on a specific investment proposal project. The students had to present their investment project in Spain to an imaginary auditor during ten minutes. They were free to use any digital or printed means to support their ideas. The project required for a specific offer, based on real economic data.

Students presented high performance project in diverse fields such as enological tourism, high-speed Spanish trains, canned vegetables industries or wine exporting. All projects rely on the latest Spanish economic data available from official governmental statistics.

Teacher's Assessment:

This activity generates a high degree of motivation as students like to present and defend their projects with a professional profile. Not only did they have to consult updated sources of information about the Spanish economy, but they also needed to integrate it on a reasonable

business idea. The high performance of students allows affirming that students both understand and apply the basic concepts of the Spanish economy. Besides, they are able to interrelate them with social and cultural aspects that influence the valuation of a country and its external brand image. This means students gain a better awareness of the Spanish phenomena and can apply the economic concepts to their own countries' economic evolution. Oral presentations also evince the improvement of the Spanish level of students, and their ability to communicate in public with specific economic vocabulary and terminology.

Taking into account the digital context in which students develop their learning, a set of various apps and digital tools have been used during the different courses. These apps are present at the last level of the Padagogy Wheel, so students can use them to enhance and reinforce their learning. For example, students have used Evernote to create the database of economic news, as well as Moodle to get access to it. Students of the ecommerce and social media marketing course have used Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on their projects as well as Google Drive to share resources. Google has been the preferred method search for all students, and several Microsoft Office tools such as Word, Excel or PowerPoint. Some students used YouTube videos or the software Prezi to create their presentations.

SATISFACTION RESULTS

At the end of the semester, we distributed a questionnaire among the students who were asked about their satisfaction, their feelings about the different activities and whether they would recommend or not these courses to other students. This questionnaire permits to have an informative feedback in order to listen to students' needs and implement future course improvements. It also potentiates students' reflection about their learning strategies and final course satisfaction (Rowley, 2003), as they are the "core customers" of the service offered. Students responded the anonymous questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The high satisfaction levels obtained by the students are consistent with previous research that shows that student satisfaction increases as the class size is smaller, and also when courses are elective and not compulsory (Coles, 2002).

The following Table 1 collects some of the performance and satisfaction results (on average) obtained from the questionnaire:

Table 1
QUESTIONNAIRE SATISFACTION RESULTS

	INTERNATIONAL MARKETING	E-COMMERCE	SPANISH ECONOMY
Teacher's role in the learning process			
The instructor helped me achieve my goals	4.63	4.72	4.38
The instructor was helpful to me individually (in conferences, email exchanges, etc.)	4.94	4.96	4.38
The instructor was readily available during the class	5	4.92	4.88

The instructor provided clear constructive feedback on my progress/work	4.88	4.84	4.25
The instructor engaged the class in productive discussions	4.69	4.8	4.38
The instructor encouraged student contributions	4.88	4.8	4.75
The instructor provided opportunities for class participation	4.94	4.76	4.75
How successful was the instructor in creating an environment that was conducive learning? (1=not successful at all; 5=Fully successful)	4.63	4.72	4.5
Students' performance			
The course developed my ability to apply theory to practice	4.88	4.44	4.5
The course allowed me to synthesize fundamental knowledge and skills	4.94	4.56	4.63
The course developed my ability to think critically about the subject	4.69	4.68	4.63
Considering your reason for enrolling in this course, did it satisfy your needs? (Yes/No)	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
Would you recommend this course to other students? (Yes/No)	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes
Total students	17 (76% under 22)	41 (91% under 22)	11 (98% under 22)

CONCLUSION

Studying abroad is never easy. Young students have to face an overseas trip in which they will stay with a new family and they will meet new friends and challenges. Besides the cultural barrier and the handicap of being alone in a country with a foreign language, young students decide to enroll in business courses to have a wider perspective of the European and global economic reality. This study confirms the idea that students have different cultural values, expectations and goals when facing courses on an international country, so the teaching strategies also need to differ from what is routinely to activities that enhance learning.

This study shows the importance of motivation when addressing students with specific needs (no previous business knowledge, foreign language and different educational levels). The wide range of activities planned according to an active learning approach allows students to apply theoretical concepts to real life. Using a combination of activities of all kinds, students feel motivated and assimilate contents more easily. By promoting class participation and group work,

students perform better and have a favorable attitude towards group projects. They engage more in class discussion and they value feedback from both teachers and classmates.

The results obtained from the questionnaire support our conclusions. On average, students clearly achieve their course goals. The teacher, acting as a moderator, engages students and guides them towards a self-learning process, where students take the lead. When using case studies and problem-based learning activities students feel they are able to synthesize knowledge and skills and put them into practice. As an example, a female student affirmed that "the creation of their own ecommerce project most enhanced her learning". Other students wrote that "discussion, and mid-term and final projects enhanced her learning" or that "class discussions and relating current things to marketing concepts helped her understand". A male student also poses that "case studies and news require synthesizing course material with real-life examples". At the end, 100% of students were satisfied with all three courses.

The fact that the totality of the sample would recommend the course to other students reinforces the fact that these are the adequate techniques to implement when dealing with international students. Furthermore, it reinforces the image of the University of Salamanca as a referring center for international students who want to learn Spanish in a fully immersive experience. The institution benefits from the good critics, which favors the enrollment of new students coming from the same programs.

Therefore, and considering not only the questionnaire results but the final performance achieved by the students at the end on the course, we believe those techniques are highly effective and can help to enrich the teaching-learning process of students whose primary language is not Spanish, and also those who had not had an intense contact with business subjects before.

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