| **Title of example of practice:** | Intercultural communication through thematic vocabulary development |

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Institution and initiating department/faculty
(i.e. where example of practice takes/took place):
Vilnius Pedagogical University, Department of English Didactics

Departments/faculties in which initiative implemented/to be implemented:
Department of English Didactics, VPU

Abstract
(QA question: What are/were you trying to do?)
This example of practice focuses on developing political vocabulary by exposing undergraduate students of English to a contrastive study of political systems and society in the UK, USA and Lithuania. Intercultural communication features in this example of practice not as knowledge of theories or a specific skill but rather as competence integrated into the course content. Since the knowledge and understanding of the mechanism of political systems and social life in the three countries in a contrastive perspective involve (inter)cultural issues, by studying topic-specific vocabulary students gradually become aware of their own and others' beliefs and values, develop sensitivity towards cultural stereotypes and are able to reflect on the cultural factors influencing their own behaviour and that of others.

Background – contextual issues giving rise to the initiative
(QA questions: Why are/were you trying to do it? / What are/were the aims and objectives?)
The course in thematic vocabulary development is one of the four courses in the module of Modern English taught in the fourth semester within the programme of English Philology at Vilnius Pedagogical University. The other three aspects include literary text analysis, academic writing and conversation.

The focus of the English Philology Programme in the first two years of study is exclusively on linguistic competence, which in the course of thematic vocabulary development is attained via the study of political systems in the UK, the USA and Lithuania and thus is confined to a specific discourse type. Discoursal and (inter)cultural competence go beyond narrowly understood linguistic competence and seems to be paramount for the students who are about to enter the teaching profession.

Description of activity or initiative

(QA question: How is/was the activity/initiative implemented?)

The course covers the following topics: 1. The structure of society, professional activity, employment questions in the United Kingdom, the United States and Lithuania; 2. Health security and social welfare systems in the UK, the USA and Lithuania. 3. Models of governmental rule, political parties and election systems in the United Kingdom, the United States and Lithuania; 4. Mass media in the UK, the USA and Lithuania. For the implementation of the course, the following methods of instruction are used: pair work, group work, discussions, independent work and individual tasks.

Example: The topic of *The models of governmental rule, political parties and election systems in the United Kingdom, the United States and Lithuania*. First, the students are given a task to read about the political system in each country. Afterwards, they discuss their similarities and differences. Finally, the students write a comparative essay on one of the suggested topics. The essay is marked according to well-established criteria, which include content (the usage of political vocabulary and facts)and the ability to disclose the cross cultural component through comparison strategies, structure, register and (grammatical and lexical) accuracy.

The mark for the vocabulary enhancement course is cumulative. It means that it is based on the continuous assessment of different tasks performed throughout the course. At the end of the course marks for the performance of individual tasks are added up. The mark for the course constitutes 50% of the final mark for the Modern English Module.

Evaluative comments

(QA questions: What are/were the outcomes? What is/was the impact? Is/was the activity/ initiative successful? How do you know whether or not it works/worked?)

The scepticism that the students show at the beginning might be concerned with the challenging task, since they have to analyse politics, seemingly unfamiliar field for a language student. After some reading they get involved and their scepticism vanishes. Eventually their exposure to broader than merely language issues raises the students' awareness of similarities and differences between English and non-English countries, European and American perspective, of the issue of national/ethnical / religious/ etc. homogeneity, British/ American/ Lithuanian stereotypes etc. This becomes obvious from the students' essays based on their prior reading and discussion.

Advice to others

When planning the activities it is important to take into consideration some aspects. Although the students' linguistic competence may be more or less similar, their prior knowledge of political issues differs greatly. Thus, the teacher should think carefully how to choose the texts for reading so that they are neither too specific nor too general and respond to the students' level of knowledge. It is important not to shift the focus from political vocabulary to politics, because naturally the clarification of new vocabulary leads to new political information and vice versa. There is a danger of getting into a vicious circle.

Reflection/any other comments

QA question: Is/was that the best way to do it? Why/why not? What improvements or adjustments are needed?

Numerous changes and modifications are introduced every year. For example, while analysing political parties, the students were encouraged to set up their own political parties, explain their policies and introduce their political manifestos. Although it was quite a challenge, the students enjoyed it. Furthermore, more simulation tasks could be given. Reflection on oneself and others could be promoted as well.

Also the assessment criteria could be modified so that the parameter of IC is explicitly included in the marking scheme of the students' essays and the overall mark for the course.

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Further details

e.g. web links; relevant references/publications; alternative contact names

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