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Easier said than done. Results of a university teaching innovation project on intercultural competence in hotel management

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One of the main tenets of language for specific purposes is that the classroom setting becomes the meeting point for the students' academic and occupational spheres. In addition, its success is generally measured by the usefulness of the students' linguistic competence once they gain access to a job in their field. Therefore, the "action-oriented approach" and the "task-based approach" emerge as adequate methods to reach such a goal and have been indeed used in the teaching innovation project that this study presents. The project is based on the development of intercultural competence and mediation skills in two compulsory courses of the degree in Hotel Management at the University of the Balearic Islands, namely "English for Executives" and "Labour Relations in the Hotel Sector". This interdisciplinary project intends to respond to the high demand for professionals in the tourism industry with solid cross-cultural communication skills and high levels of intercultural competence by focusing on real-world tasks that contribute to a more meaningful learning.

This study explored students' perceptions on the innovation project by means of a survey that was distributed among students the last day of the term. Data analysis revealed that even if students acknowledged the project's usefulness for the development of their communicative competence, their involvement and level of satisfaction differed significantly. These results reveal a mismatch between what the students perceive as their needs and their commitment to fulfill them, which ultimately challenges the effectiveness of the "action-oriented approach". The results of this study based on students' reflections may be used to foster scholarly debate and the design and implementation of new approaches.

strong text

Biographical note(s) of the author(s)

Miquel Pomar-Amer holds a B.A. in English Studies from the University of the Balearic Islands, M.A. in Comparative Literature from Autonomous University of Barcelona, and a PhD in Spanish Studies from the University of Manchester. He has taught ESP courses at the University of the Balearic Islands since 2015 and his research interests include the representation of identity in literature, especially in postcolonial contexts of migration and diaspora, the ethical and political relations between text and context, and the representation of the encounter between locals and tourists in works set in the Mediterranean.

Recommendation (for student section)

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