Developing Students’ Creativity and Collaboration Skills in Learning English: a Case Study of an International Online Project

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Abstract. The growing demands for international cooperation in the EU labour market have raised a special challenge to language teachers at technical universities: to organise authentic communication environments in addition to the usual classroom activities, to develop students’ collaboration and creative thinking skills. The paper contains an overview of studies carried out by leading experts in foreign language learning/teaching, confirming the fact that creativity and collaboration are significant aspects of the learning process. Theoretical considerations are supported by the analysis of a case study: an online collaboration project between the University of Angers Institute of Technology (France) and Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) (Lithuania), which took place in 2011. Six bi-national students teams were asked to design a product or service that would meet the needs of other first-year university students. The participants worked together on the Moodle virtual learning platform to evaluate target needs, brainstorm for possible solutions, negotiate a common plan, create attractive and convincing promotional materials, and present their work to peers for approval by videoconference. The paper includes the description of the process and the products/services created by the international students’ teams, and their comments that prove the positive added value of the project which can help to implement principles of cultural interaction and creative thinking more effectively. The project experience has shown that there is room for improvement, therefore the authors discuss the possibilities of facilitating the students’ interaction and involvement. Recommendations regarding creative communication online are presented.

Key words: Online project, creativity, collaboration, virtual learning platform, cultural interaction, videoconference.