

# DEVELOPING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES IN AN INTERACTIVE BLENDED-LEARNING LANGUAGE COURSE



**Dr.paed., Prof. Ineta Luka  
Turiba University, Latvia**

**Turiba University Conference  
19 April 2018**

# Unity in Diversity

AGREEMENT n° 2016-1-HR01-KA202-022160



**Dr.paed., Prof. Ineta Luka  
Turiba University, Latvia**

**Turiba University Conference  
19 April 2018**



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



# The Context

- ▶ Changes in employability patterns and skills needed in the future
- ▶ Communication in many languages as a tool for participating in socially meaningful activities in everyday and professional setting
- ▶ ‘A European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity: Towards a new approach on languages as part of the European Agenda 2020’ (2015)
- ▶ The new priorities for European cooperation in ET - ‘more active use of innovative pedagogies and digital skills and tools’ for VET learners



# The Project Objectives (I)

- ▶ 1) to improve the level of key competences and skills (namely, employability skills, language competencies and intercultural competences), with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market (namely, tourism and hospitality industry) and their contribution to a cohesive society (namely, providing better cultural awareness and increased language competence, including in remote areas);



## The Project Objectives (II)

- ▶ 2) improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the EU's broad linguistic diversity (namely, 15 EU languages are targeted, plus Russian as one of the most widespread languages in Europe and the world) and intercultural awareness (language teaching/learning materials integrating culture of European countries, including minority groups (ethnic Hungarian region of Romania) and creativity in language learning.



# The Project Outputs

- ▶ **Interactive A1 language course in 16 languages** (videos, audios, games, on-line, face-to-face tasks; 4 modules)
- ▶ **Interactive A2/B1 blended-learning course in 16 languages** (on-line and face-to-face tasks, interactive maps, mobile apps; 6 modules)
- ▶ **B2/C1 blended-learning English language course** (problem solving and creativity, case studies, webquests; 6 modules)
- ▶ **Intercultural C1 English language course** (on-line, face-to-face, case studies, videos; 2 modules)
- ▶ <http://esolams.eu/unity/>



# Methods and Methodology (I)

- ▶ **Aim:** to evaluate the efficiency of the methods and methodologies applied in the courses designed and single out the improvements required
- ▶ **Research type:** summative/outcome evaluation research
- ▶ **Research question:** Has the pedagogy-based approach selected for the course creation been efficient and what are the main strengths and challenges of the created courses?
- ▶ **Research period:** September - December 2017.



## Methods and Methodology (II)

- ▶ **Sample:** 97 first and second year fulltime students of Turiba University studying English and Spanish
- ▶ **Tools:** a face-to-face feedback questionnaire and students' essays
- ▶ **Data processing:** Excel and SPSS software
- ▶ **Quantitative data analysis:** Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics
- ▶ **Qualitative data analysis:** Discourse analysis





Unity in Diversity

AGREEMENT n° 2016-1-HR01-KA202-022160

# Theoretical Framework

- ▶ Languages for Specific Purposes
- ▶ Blended-learning approach
- ▶ Case studies
- ▶ Interactivity

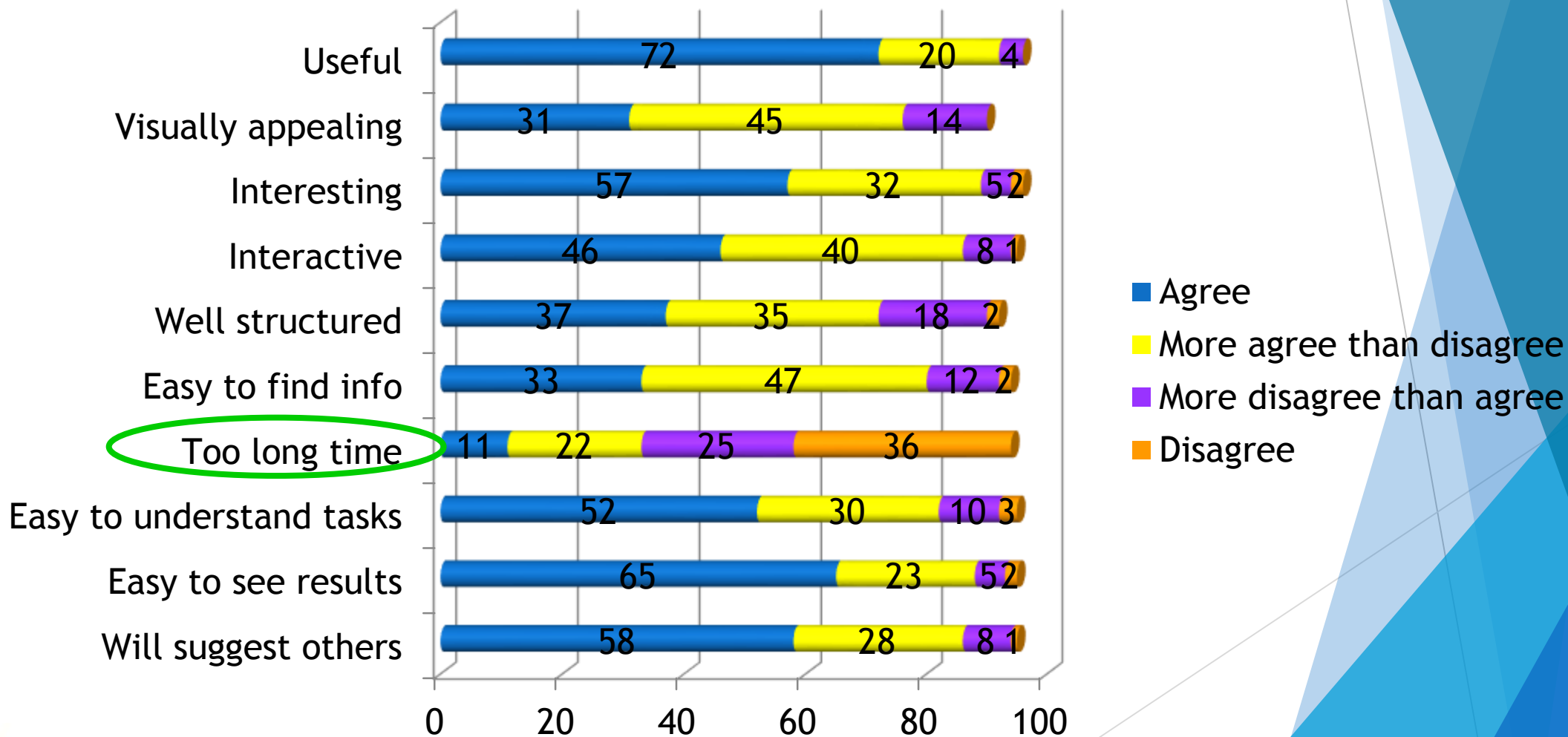


## The Sample Profile (n=97)

- ▶ **Students' specialization:** 73 *Tourism Management*, 8 *Events Management*, 7 *Business Administration* and 9 *International Communication*
- ▶ **Students' shift:** 37 local students, 60 international students
- ▶ **The course piloted:** A2/B1 English course (59 students), A2/B1 Spanish course (13 students) and B2/C1 English course (62 students)
- ▶ **Students' English language competence:** C2 level (4 students), C1 level (19 students), B2 level (51 student), B1 level (15 students) and A2 level (8 students).



# Evaluation of the Interactive Learning Platform: descriptive statistics (n=97)





# Evaluation of the Interactive Learning Platform: the main significant differences

- ▶ **Local and international students:** ‘found the platform interesting’ (p-value=0.028), international students (Mean Rank=53.29) vs. the local students (Mean Rank=42.04).
- ▶ **By the students’ field:** ‘found the platform useful’ (p-value=0.038), a lower Mean Rank=31.25 for *Events Management* students.
- ▶ **By the language course:** ‘found the platform less useful’ - Mean Rank for Spanish=37.31 vs. Mean Rank for English=50.81 (p-value=0.035).



# Evaluation of the Interactive Learning Platform: expressions from the essays

- ▶ The keywords: *useful, good, liked, learnt.*
- ▶ “This platform is structured very good and useful for the students in this field”.
- ▶ “I liked an interface of this quiz”.
- ▶ “I liked the creativity of the tasks. But there are no pictures”.
- ▶ “I liked it so much. The activities are very useful. It improves vocabulary. As I opened the ‘Management Offices’ the audio automatically started playing - I disliked it”.



# Evaluation of the Intercultural B2/C1 English Course: **students liked**

- ▶ Usefulness and creativity of the tasks: *interesting, creative, useful*
- ▶ “I think that these on-line tasks were really interesting and useful. I liked them and I suggest to everyone to do them. I developed my reading and listening skills as well as my grammar”.
- ▶ “I liked video in topics about different cultures. It was not only funny but also useful. I improved my vocabulary not only in English but also in other languages”.



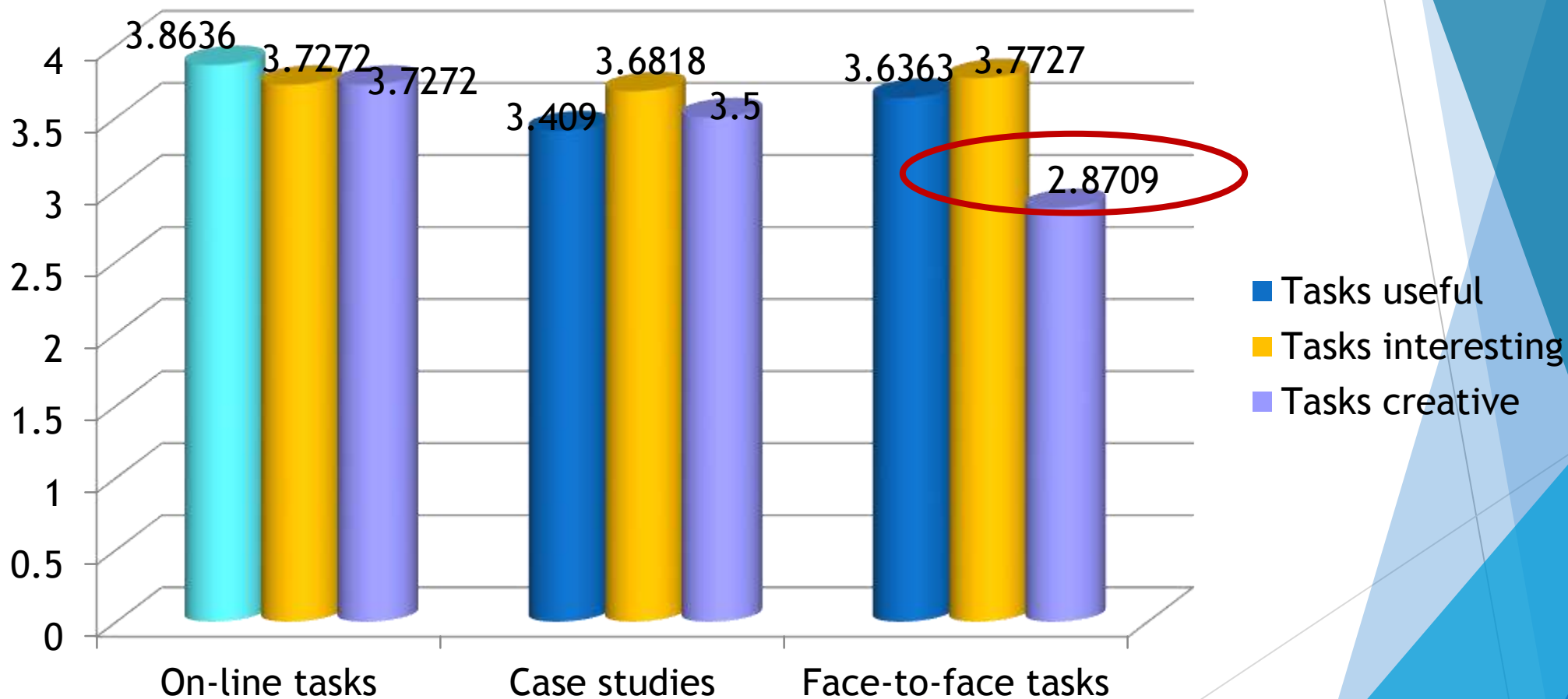
# Evaluation of the Intercultural B2/C1 English Course: **students disliked**

- ▶ Some technical problems, such as, problems with videos, audio tasks
- ▶ “Some answers are too long and difficult to understand”
- ▶ The course is useful but not interesting enough
- ▶ “I found the on-line tasks useful, but not enough interesting”
- ▶ “Simple questions but sometimes there are some mistakes”





# Evaluation of the Intercultural B2/C1 English Course: comparison (max=4.0000)





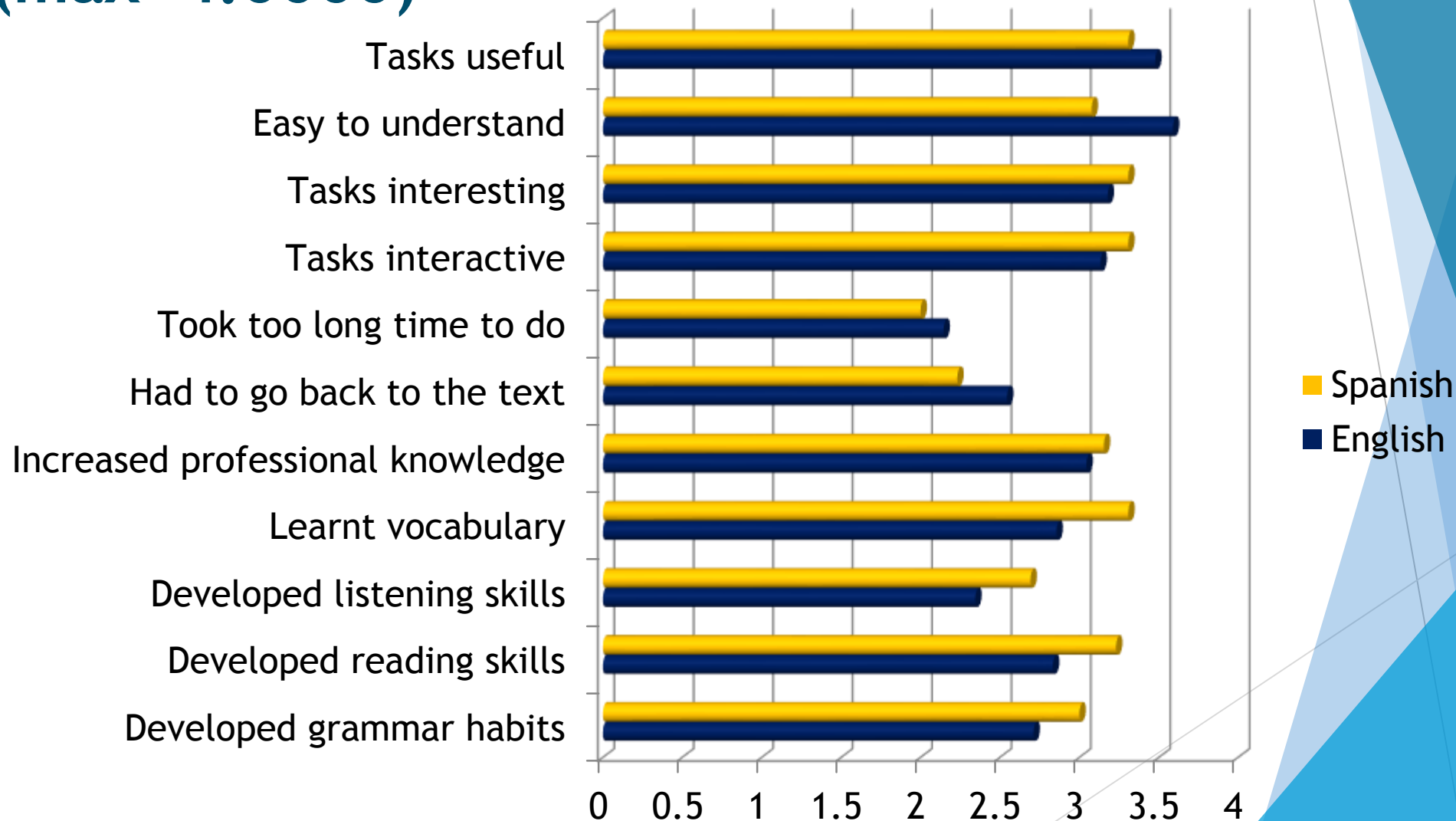


# Evaluation of the Intercultural B2/C1 English Course: the main significant differences

- ▶ **By the students' field:** for developing listening skills (p-value=0.008), reading skills (p-value=0.010), grammar habits (p-value=0.022); the Mean Ranks higher for the students of *Business Administration* and *International Communication*
- ▶ **By the English language level:** the higher the students' English language level, the less useful (p-value=0.006), the less interesting (p-value=0.008), the less interactive and creative (p-value=0.004) they found the tasks; and the less they developed their language skills (p-value=0.001-0.016).



# Evaluation of the A2/B1 Language Courses (max=4.0000)





# Evaluation of the A2/B1 Language Courses: the main significant differences

- ▶ For all 11 variables evaluating A2/B1 language courses in terms of the students' field of studies (p-value=0.001-0.008); Mean Ranks for *International Communication* 2-3 times lower than for others.



## The Strengths Identified (I)

- ▶ The curriculum created is flexible for implementation, as the course consists of a certain number of modules which may be acquired separately or even focussing on some of the tasks within a module only, thus the course may be adapted for using not only for Tourism and Hospitality industry students but also for the students of other fields.
- ▶ The Moodle learning platform, having received a high evaluation from the students, is attractive, modern and flexible, and can easily be adapted for different target groups and various needs.



## The Strengths Identified (II)

- ▶ **The multilingual character of the course** (similar A2/B1 course developed in 16 languages) enables learning the same phrases in several languages and, if needed, finding an adequate phrase in another language which is especially useful for the future Tourism and Hospitality industry employees as well as for anyone who is in direct contact with foreigners at work or when travelling.



## The Strengths Identified (III)

- ▶ The **case studies** created for the B2/C1 English course and for C1 country modules enable students preparing for specific problem situations in their field and, as admitted by the students in feedback essays, the case studies help understanding different cultures and **increase their cultural awareness** consequently **preparing them for** their **future professional career**.
- ▶ The same concerns the ‘Intercultural module’ which the students highly evaluated both in the questionnaire and essays.



## The Challenges Identified (I)

- ▶ **Certain technical problems were discovered** with audio tasks and gap-fill tasks which have to be eliminated, although it has to be added that this is one of the drawbacks of on-line learning tasks as it is not possible to predict all the options of providing the correct answer to the task. Therefore, it is essential to provide students with an opportunity of receiving a language teacher's consultancy during all the learning period as well as select appropriate pedagogic approach in developing on-line learning materials.





## The Challenges Identified (II)

- ▶ According to the students' survey and essays, it is evident that **creativity and originality of the B2/C1 tasks is still a question under debate**. Although certain improvements have been done in this respect, not all the students find this course creative enough. This is a further challenge to decide what kind of learning material shall be included to convert the B2/C1 course more creative and up-to-date.





## Conclusion

- ▶ As the research shows, **implementing the pedagogy-based approach** (Colpaert, 2006) which postulates the necessity of creating a course based on the results of a detailed needs analysis of language teaching/learning goal in the specific context, selecting the most suitable methods and then defining the technological requirements for the on-line learning platform to be created, **has been successful** in the case under the investigation.



Unity in Diversity

AGREEMENT n° 2016-1-HR01-KA202-022160

**Thank you for your attention!**

[Ineta@turiba.lv](mailto:Ineta@turiba.lv)



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.