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## **Index**

Introduction	2
1. Nijmegen, The Netherlands	3
1.1 Cultural Differences	3
2. The Radboud University, Nijmegen	6
2.1 The University	6
2.1.2 Educational Complexes	8
2.2 Faculty of Arts	9
2.3 Studying in Radboud University	9
2.3.1 English as a World Language	10
2.3.2 English for Specific Business Purposes 1	12
2.3.3 Intercultural Communication for Erasmus	14
3. Conclusion	17
4. References	19

## **Introduction**

The main purpose of this report is to describe and mention the experience I lived in The Netherlands last year from September to January 2014.

Further I am going to talk about cultural differences, Radboud University Nijmegen and its infrastructure, some tradition I lived there, educational complexes, how to study there, the courses I took, lifestyle and some works I did in that University.

Finally, I will give my opinion about the whole experience, before and after studying in the Netherlands and finally, conclude with how this experience will help me in my future as a Teacher of English and in my life too.

## **1. Nijmegen, The Netherlands**

### **1.1 Cultural Differences**

In the Netherlands, Nijmegen, people ride bikes to get to their jobs, universities or just to visit each other, no matter how far they are from each other, they just ride their bikes. Also, people who drive cars are very careful, respectful and conscious drivers, for instance, when you are riding your bike in the street and you are riding near of a roundabout, you will always have the preference and the pedestrians too. Although drivers could drive fast because the street is not crowded with other drivers, they drive slowly and with caution even they are less than those who ride bikes. Another thing in relation with bikes is that per each corner you can find bicycle parking racks and it is very weird that your bike can be stolen. Otherwise, riding a bike here in Santiago it could be so difficult and dangerous, drivers are unconscious, drive fast all the time. Consequently, bicycle riders must ride very carefully and also pedestrian have to look everywhere before cross the streets because drivers will not have preference for none of them. On the other hand, parking a bike anywhere here in Santiago, would be a bad decision because thieves are all around and bikes are easy to be stolen by them.

People in Nijmegen, Dutch people in general, are very easy going, open minded, charming, helpful, honest, friendly and hard working. So, people from the Netherlands, make you feel as one of them, for instance, people who work at supermarkets as a cashiers, they are always smiling although we do not speak the same language they will be glad to help you if you need something, because in Nijmegen most of people can speak English but there are a few of them that they just speak Dutch or some words in English.

Another thing that surprised me was the meals there, for example, having breakfast, they usually have a cup of coffee and some fruits at seven am, at lunch, something that really amazed me was that they do not have lunch like ours, I mean, not so overwhelming. At midday, Dutch people have lunch with a cup of tea, or coffee with some cookies or also with a piece of toast bread with cheese and ham, that is all. Around three pm, they have a kind of snack, so they eat and drink something light. Finally, around six pm they have dinner which consist of everything we know about lunch, an overwhelming dinner. In general, Dutch people are well-known because of their taste for cheese, they have a huge variety of them, and so cheese is eaten everyday by Dutch.

In relation of the hours of working, people are so punctual, if they have a contract which says they work from nine o'clock to five pm, they are working at nine o'clock, they are not arriving at nine as here, Dutch work every time, they do their work, they do not go for a cup coffee or something to eat or drink in their working hours, they just go for lunch when they have their time for lunch, they respect the hours of working. So, if they finish their work at five o'clock, they are starting to prepare to go home at that hour and not before. However, here in Chile being punctual for work it is difficult, because most of people get late for work, so they do not start their working at time, and then they go for a coffee and something else like a breakfast and after that they are beginning with their work, sometimes an hour late, and when the workday is finishing, they are preparing themselves before specified by their contracts. This, make me think that is one of the reasons why most European people enter and finish to their work early because they really work or do their work at the time specified in their contracts. They produce and work in their day time unlike here in Chile as I mentioned before.

Another thing that astonished me were shops, they are opened every week from nine in the morning to five pm, except Mondays, which are opened at eleven o'clock to five pm too, and Sundays every shop is closed, so it was weird for me not to have a supermarket or some shops to go for buying something, or just like here, to go window shopping with some friends just for fun.

Nightlife in Nijmegen does not last as here, but you can find pubs or discotheques opened until four in the morning, but they are really small places so every time they are crowded of people. There are also the famous 'coffee shops', places where you can get and buy weed and smoke it with a coffee. Also, educational complexes make parties. These educational complexes allow to do parties but with caution, usually every international student go to these parties to meet new people and make friends too or just to meet each other.

Finally, in relation to some traditions, I had the experience to spend the 'Sinterklaas Day' or 'Saint Nicholas' in English. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Dutch families get together and exchange gifts. If the family has young children, Sinterklaas brings the presents to the door or through the chimney, usually in secrecy or it is done by one or more of his helpers. Those helpers are called 'Zwarte Pieten', they paint their faces with black colour, the mouth red and also they dress up to entertain children. Black Petes (the helpers), have different functions such as sing songs, do poems, do rhymes and other wraps the presents to children. There are some opinions from people who do not know much about this tradition, some remember the slavery time and also as a racism's tradition, because helpers are behind the old man (Sinterklaas) and they are painted in black but in the Netherlands is not consider like that for none of them.

During this day, everyone works until three in the afternoon and then go home to spend their time in family. Sinterklaas Day is like a Christmas for us, families are together, have dinner and then spend time with their children, however, on December 24<sup>th</sup> at midnight is not celebrated there, just on December 25<sup>th</sup>, they are together to have lunch, but still is not look like a Christmas Day like here in Chile.

## **2. The Radboud University Nijmegen**

### **2.1 The University**

Radboud University Nijmegen is one of the leading academic communities in the Netherlands. Established in 1923 and situated in the oldest city of The Netherlands, it has seven faculties, those faculties are: faculty of law, faculty of Arts, faculty Medical Science, faculty of Philology, faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, faculty of Science and the faculty of Social Sciences. It enrolls over 18.000 students. Their personal style of teaching, offering plenty of opportunity to work closely with instructors and fellow students in small seminars, makes that the university does not just become like a 'degree factory'.

The University creates all the necessary preconditions for a stimulating educational experience. In its programmes, Radboud University strives for a combination of scientific training and a broad ethical, cultural, and social education. (Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2014)

Moreover, the university has a tremendous library, where you can find newspapers, books, researches, magazines, papers and so on. It also has three floors, the first one is for those who want an specific information, so you can find it by your own in the computer or just asking for a librarian. The second floor just has the librarian's desk for information, the machines where you can charge with money your id student card, and also

has a big room with computers for studying and a room with a lot of bookshelves. Finally, the third floor consist of few computers to get the location for what are you looking for, also has bookshelves with study group tables. The id student card also serves to print or photocopy something but these things you must be done by yourself at the photocopy shop in the university, if you need help with printing something you will always find people working there who will help you and teach you how to use these multifuncional machine.

There is also a library shop in the univesity, where you can buy the books requiered by teachers, but you can buy any book you want there. There are religious books, english books, literature books, math books, dictionaries in different languages, and so on.

Something else that keep my attention a lot, it is the campus cafe, called 'The Cultural Cafe', it is located in the middle of the university, in summer there are tables outside and it is normal to see students drinking beer, have fun at the end of classes or even at the time lunch and then, they have to go back to the lectures but they do not get drunk.

'The Refter', the restaurant of the university is big, with two floors, the first one has the kitchen, the cashiers, before choose your meal, you can always see what are the meals for the day. The restaurant prepares different meals from everywhere, so everyone can choose one of the three meals for having lunch. There, you can also choose some sandwiches, desserts, what you want to drink, pick up your utensils and choose what you want for dress your salad, also you have many big and small tables to share your lunch with your friends or classmates to have your lunch. The second floor has just the furniture which are very comfortable such as



sofas with tables, there is also heating, so it is difficult to feel cold even if is winter.

Finally, all the structure of the University is modern, the classrooms are big, bright, the tables are large and the chairs are very comfortable, every student sit next to other student in the same table. So, the University has everything that every student need to study and do some works by themselves or in groups, because each floor has computers to be used by students, coffee machines, tables with chairs, multifunctional machines, staplers, punchers and papper-cutter.

### **2.1.2 Educational Complexes**

Educational complexes are different from others, I visited the other two educational complexes that Radboud University has an agreement, but in my opinion I lived in the best complex, Vossenveld. One of the other two complexes were cottages with four rooms, which have to be share with other three people, share the kitchen, the toilets and the two showers, but I must say that place were not good at all, because the cottages were so cold, when it rained the water passed through the roof and the heating did not work well, something I knew from a friend who lived there. The other one is a complex with twelve rooms per 5 floors, there you have to share the kitchen which is big, share two toilets and its showers too, that complex is as big as the complex I lived, there are around six buildings with five or six floors with twelve rooms, this complex is the nearest to the University. The complex I lived is called Vossenveld, this is as far as the cottages I mentioned before from the University, there are around five buildings, some of them with 4, other with five and six floors with three different corridors with eight rooms two toilets a big kitchen, the difference of this complex is that in your room you have your own shower, so the only things to be share are the kitchen and the toilets. Each

complex has a caretaker who is in charge of the appliances of the rooms and corridors, if you have something to be arranged the caretaker goes to arrange it, everything must be request by e-mail to the caretaker. Also, each educational complexes have various bicycle parking lots.

## **2.2 Faculty of Arts**

I studied at the faculty of Arts, this faculty offer many different courses, such as american art, Intercultural Communication for Erasmus, English for Specific Business Purposes 1, English as a World Language, Topics in English Acquisition, Second Language Acquisition, English from old to new, English grammars: structure and use, and so on.

Some of these courses are at the beginning of each semester, others start in the middle of the semester but each course or lecture, in general, are taught once a week, each lecture just has one examination, or others have during all semester different cumulative works to finally average them to a final grade.

## **2.3 Studying in Radboud University**

After choose what courses or lectures you want to have during the semester, you have to apply the 'learning agreement' which it must be signed by the coordinator of the faculty of arts and by you.

Once you have been approved to take the courses, you will find the schedule in the blackboard which is similar to our 'campus virtual'. If you decide that a lecture is not interesting or it does not have relation in what are you studying, you can drop off the lecture anytime you want, but you have to do an a new learning agreement which has to demonstrate the courses you are attending.

### **2.3.1 English as a World Language (for exchange students)**

EWoL (English as a World Language), was one of the three courses I took. This course discusses how English developed to become a world language during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Topics include the status of world languages in general, the historical background to the development of English as a world language, the many different "Englishes" and the role of English in multilingual societies. (Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2014)

This course taught me about the 'history of English', how English widespread around the world by the British Empire. Also I learnt that Standard English itself in some ways is a mixed language, of Germanic origins but with strong contact influences from French, Latin, Scandinavian and loan words from many other languages. (Schneider, 2012)

There are many countries that are part to the inner circle; people whose mother language is English, Outer circle; people whose language is not English but it has been strongly rooted for historical reasons and assumes important internal functions, sometimes as an official or a co-official language in education, businesses life, the legal system or just learning English in a place where everybody speaks English, Expanding Circle; in which English is widely taught in the education system, and people strive to acquire it for its international usefulness but it does not have any internal functions.

There are called 'New Englishes', which are countries that adopted English as a second language or they created their own English

after colonization, such as Jamaica. Jamaica had slavery and settle men went there, they brought an end to slavery, so settlers and aboriginals or slaves kept contact and learn to speak English, but through the time they created a ‘new English’ called ‘Patwa’. Another country is South Africa and their English Language is called ‘Black South African English’, which was formed by contact and transfer, and in poor teaching conditions of English. Singapore, after its independence, English started to become a predominant language in the public domain and nowadays ‘Singlish’ the name of Singaporean English, gain rapid importance because English has become a kind of and indicator of social proximity to know how well educated you are. Finally, China, surprisingly has lost the dominance of their mother tongue, nowadays, Chinese people prefer to learn and speak English instead of speaking their mother language, because they see English opens doors for their children and prefer to send their children abroad to a country in which English is the official language and compulsory too.

On the other hand, these ‘New Englishes’ have some problems with the pronunciation, for example, most of them in syllables ending in vowels, they omitted: *Tha* (t), *abou* (t). Diphthongs are reduce to one vowel, the copula ‘to be’ is generally left out: ‘*He ....poor*’, or duplication to express something: ‘*Look at that short short man*’ instead of saying ‘*Look at that very short man*’.

It is incredible how English has increase and spread around the world since the lately eighteen century, but also, English for those countries with English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language is being as a ‘killer language’, because, most of

the 'New Englishes' have lost their mother language, because old people from those countries who grew up with their mother tongue see that young people are speaking English instead of their mother language. So, it could be said that English opens doors for the future for many people who do not have English as native language, losing their culture, their roots and old people with young people have problems in their communication, because old people do not know how to speak English and young people is not interested in learning their mother tongue and also schools teach only English.

### **2.3.2 English for Specific Business Purposes 1 (for Erasmus Only)**

The course is divided into two parts. In the first part students acquire knowledge of, and insight into aspects of contemporary culture and society. While working on projects, students develop their oral and written skills. The second part of the course focuses on students' language skills. (Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2014)

During this course, I did different works, group works, every work must be in a portfolio, the original version and also with the corrected version too. Most of the works must be presented in front of the class, the teacher evaluated the written task and the oral presentation. If someone is failing in some of these tasks, oral or written, the teacher will say you that you are failing and will give you another chance to improve your performance.

Some works I did in group were to investigate the educational system of any country of United Kingdom or some topic in relation about countries in which English is spoken. Other work

was about to plan a trip to a city from England, so we have to do a research about important places in the chosen city for young people, or students, place that should be visited by them, the trip was for one week and we had to make a brochure with many pictures offering this trip, because the main idea was to sell this trip to students, so the most amazing trip will have the highest grade. The third work was about organising how to introduce a brand into United Kingdom, the first part was to organise a meeting (role play) to discuss who is going to do for introducing the chilean brand to UK market (investigate the cross cultural differences, competitors, and so on). The second and final part was to do an oral presentation about the whole investigation to introduce the chilean brand into the UK market. The last work was divided in two parts too, the first one is to write about the experience live in the Netherland and do some recommendations to someone else who wants to study abroad, write what things you have to do before , while and after studying abroad and give personal opinions about your own experience. The second part consisted of doing a pitch, I mean, in one minute make a speech about the whole experience in front of the class.

Finally, during this course I learnt how to face new challenges such as being in front of the class with new people who are from different countries, getting the experience to do many oral presentations and how to carry out a meeting and then how to try to introduce a brand in any country throughtout what aspects need to be investigated to get into a new market in other country.

### **2.3.3 Intercultural Communication for Erasmus**

In this course you will carry out a small-scaled research project into the cultural and the linguistic aspects of intercultural communication. This research project can, for example be related to multilingualism on the workflow, the effectiveness of the use of English as a Lingua Franca in multinationals, language policy in business and /or academia, the effectiveness of subtitling and dubbing in international advertising or effects of adjusting text characteristics to cultural preferences. You are expected to formulate a research question that is firmly grounded in recent academic theories, select an adequate and valid research methodology, collect data and report about the study in an academic paper. The course will be based on data sets that are reported on in the literature as well as data sets that are familiar to students from their own experience. (Nijmegen, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2014)

This course was the shortest I had at Radboud University, it started around the beginning of november, it lasted 8 classes. Each class had a quizz about readings about themes like linguistics, or how mother tongue influences the secong language acquisiton (English). Finally, the research (in groups) was only how we will do a research in relation with a theme about linguistic. My topic was 'interjections'.

The aim of that proposal research was to underline the differences among interjections across languages. Starting with the opening question: "Are interjections universal?" it was explained what interjections are according to different viewpoints. After a literature review, it was discovered that they are different because

of the distinctive linguistic systems of every languages. On the base of these results, examples of different interjections are collected and compared. Yet, there is one exception that disagrees with this theory and it is the case of '*Huh?*'.

Further, this proposal research was to verify whether interjections are universal or not. It is relevant to know whether interjections are used in the same way and meaning all around the world, since they play an important role in organization and comprehension of conversational performance.

After doing some readings and researching, we found that the interjection '*Huh*' is used in several contexts all over the world with a near-identical sound and function. This represents an exception to the normal situation since the interjection has the same meaning in different languages, but with a similar sound depending on each linguistic system. Moreover, it is an indispensable tool in human communication which is articulated when people need to signal they have problems with hearing or understanding what previously was said. Linguists achieved this result after having sampled thirty-one languages across different language families around the world.

This proposal research was interesting for me, because it taught me that there are many interjections for many different expressions all around the world but it was amazing that there is one that is used for many of us in the world when something that was said need to be repeated. Also, the oral presentation of this proposal to the students was interesting for them, because we are many students from different parts of the world in the same class, and when we



showed the interjections more than one said that they also say something similar from other country to express, for example, when ;you agree with something or someone you say: in Spanish ‘Aha!’ and Italian also say ‘Aha!’.

### **3. Conclusion**

It is not easy to decide to study abroad. Probably, it is one of the most important decisions in someone's life. One of the main reasons why I chose this challenge was to acquire and to develop problem-solving skills, gain analytical capability, tolerance and cross-cultural competence.

First, it was essential to set aims at the beginning of this process. I had to find my own objectives to start this experience, in order to motivate myself when things start to get a bit complicated or tiring. So, I can say that my objectives through this experience were: gain more experience living on my own, knowing another country, knowing a foreign university, develop skill needed to succeed in my studies, enhance my linguistics abilities to communicate and finally I knew that I can have more and better options at the moment of job applications.

Moreover, I faced my limits and I improved myself in many ways, such as: in tolerance, sense of humour, adaptation, orientation, independence, self-esteem and the most important, communicative skills, for instance, improvement of my listening skills (understanding), improvement of my non-verbal communication (body language) and also, management of stress (perform under pressure). In the academic framework, I grew as student and as a future professional, so now I feel more self-confident in my abilities and knowledge than before.

All this experience will serve me to encourage my future students to know the importance of English nowadays, push them to take new challenges in their life, teach that throughout life they will probably meet people from different culture and customs, so through my own experience I could be more just a simply Teacher of English, I will be a proficient. Hence, I will put in practice everything I learnt there in Nijmegen, in Radboud University as a student and

also what I learnt watching how teachers do their classes, and finally, put in practise everything I learnt during these last five years here, in this University (UCSH), to be a competitive, pro-active and a very good one Teacher of English.

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