



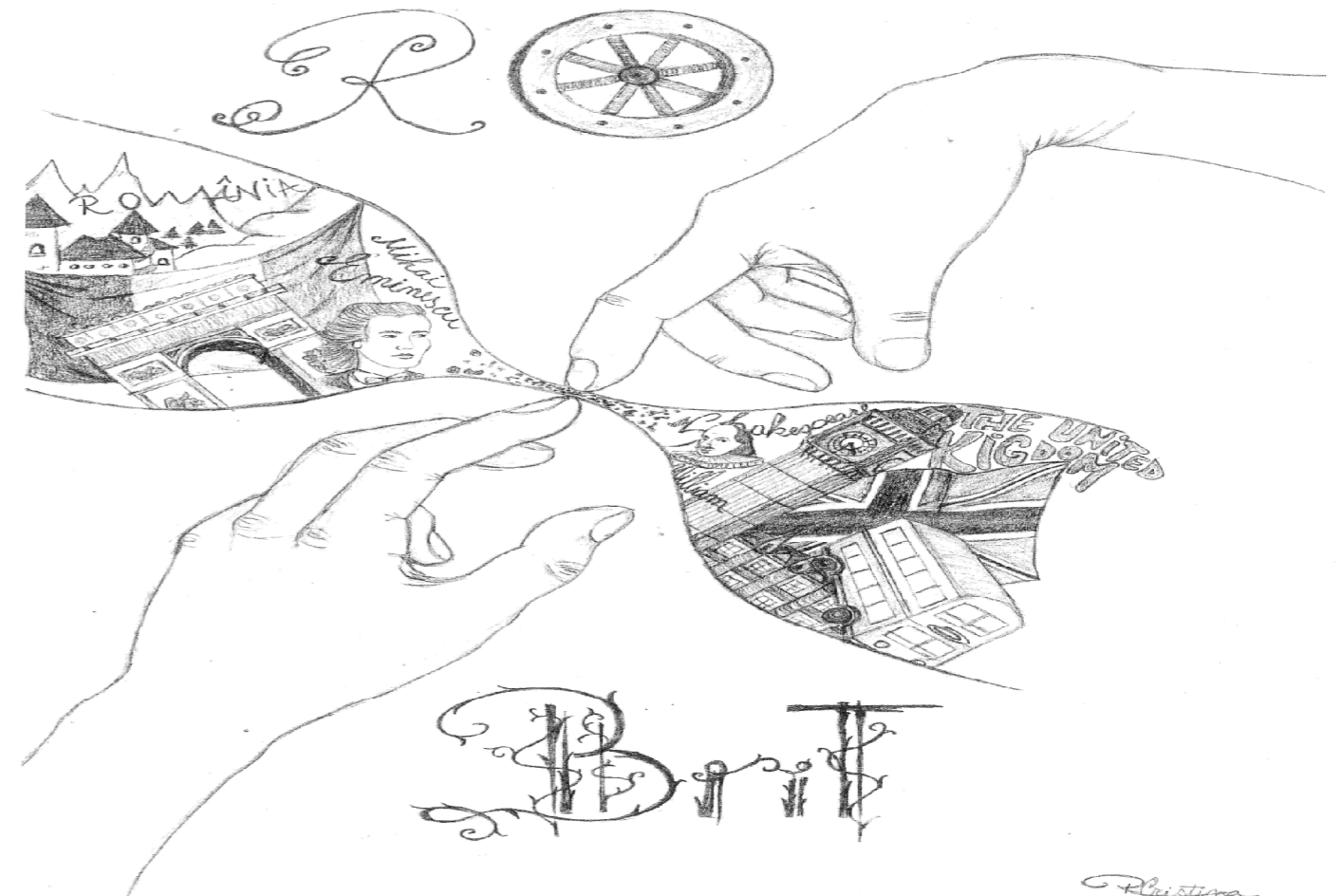
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RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL

English Annual Review
of the Romanian Students from
“Vasile Alecsandri” University
Bacău



ALMA MATER
BACAU

Christina

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(...)

The forest was scary at night, not like she had imagined it. Liddy did not want to be alone anymore. Her only option was to stick with him, however odd he might seem. At least for now...

- I got lost in the forest and couldn't find my way. She was afraid of saying that she actually ran away from home, especially to a stranger. He didn't say anything, just looked at her for a second. Even his smile was weird, looked more like a grin. My name is Liddy, what's your name?

- I don't have one.

- What do your parents call you then?

- They don't.

They walked in silence for a few more minutes before Liddy finally found the courage to ask him: What should I call you?

- I like Dorn.

They did not speak again for hours.

Dorn was black with white and sometimes white with black. An older quarrel had left one of his ears split almost in half. You could not really tell how old he was. He looked young but his demeanor, his way of speaking, the way he walked, everything seemed to belong to someone Purrina's age.

VIII

Dorn was not very fun. He did not like to run around and examine everything, he did not stand around and stare at trees or birds or flowers. He did teach her to hunt, which Liddy did not particularly like but hunger was stronger than amazement. He showed her how to get her bearings and where to find good places to sleep at night.

He still did not talk much but she became attached to him. She found that with little nudges, she could find little things about him. Dorn was only one year older than her at that time. He had been on his own for most of his life, no parents to tell him "no" or make him go to bed early. No boring servants to make him take baths. He was independent. He was different. He was actually nice.

She became his family. He became her friend.

(...)

When she saw the scratches in the bark she knew they were close to her home. Liddy stopped. She wanted to say something but the words stopped in the throat. She should be happy but a tense feeling came over all of the sudden. Like falling into freezing waters and being unable to scream.

- Can we stop here for the night?

- We could go a little further but ok, dear.

She still wanted to think that everything will be fine, that she wasn't going to hurt him but the plan was already there, at the back of her mind. She did not lack anything nor was she yearning for her family in particular. She had changed, he had changed her. She was stronger now and had experienced things that she had could only dream of when growing up. But...

Dorn brought her some food and cuddled around her like he did every night to keep her warm and safe. It helped her sleep even though it meant he could only doze off for short periods. He was still a bit wild, not used to sleeping next to someone else. He licked the top of her head to "put her thoughts at rest and help the dreams come quicker" and then closed his eyes. He was tired but he never admitted it to her, even when it was obvious.

The night was dark. The Moon was absent. The crickets would cover her sound.

She waited to hear him snore and wiggled herself out. Started walking towards her dream of home. She did not turn around once. Home was safe and nice and familiar. It was like she remembered it even though she wasn't the same. Some days she would just stand looking at something while her mind was flying miles away. What if...



The Cat Story

Tudor Ciupercă, II, LEPC

I

It started with a meow. Quite a screechy one, from a cat that did not know what meowing was. Everyone was gathered around her but she could not see. With the last drops of fluid she coughed from her small lungs she gave way to another meow, the last one before passing out.

- Oh, how little she is!
- But she looks so dear...
- Have you thought of a name for the little one?
- We... we weren't expecting a girl, this took us by surprise.
- Well, she's little and dear, how about Liddy?
- Princess Liddy... that sounds nice...

The parents would not see her for a while, they had done their job. It was time for the nurses to take care of her. There were usually two or three depending on how big the litter was. This time it was only her, cute, little Liddy. So Purrina decided it was best that she should take care of her personally. She was the oldest and most experienced of all the nurses though in later years she would mostly supervise and oversee everything. She had once been all black, only the eyes would give her away in the dark of night. Now her whiskers were almost all white and stray white hairs were sprinkled over her coat. Her eyes were gentle and filled with kindness. She had a feeling that Liddy would be something special. She brought the orange little fur ball close and covered her with her fluffy tail, just like with a blanket. "Goodnight, dear girl".

II

Purrina had a gift. She would cuddle the kittens near her heart, start telling them stories about the world in her smooth, soothing voice and they would sit there like pieces of candy in a box, like tiny presents, ready to be taken to a magical place. And then she would start purring. All cats purr... but not like her. You couldn't really tell what it was but the sound and the vibrations just hit a sort of unconscious note. It was like a song that opened the gates of imagination, freeing the mind to explore inward, forgetting the body.

Eating, sleeping, pooping. This is how Liddy spent her first days on this world. She would rarely cry. And why would she? She had everything she could ever want or need. Once every three naps though there was another voice. *It* had a familiar smell but a different touch, like a memory that's running and running and you just can't see clearly. She liked it. *It* made a distinct sound whenever it came close, like an old clock whose inner mechanism is set to measure a different time... tick... tock-tick... tock-tick... It would be a while before she could understand what *mother* or *heart-defect* meant.

III

It was for the first time that she saw light. Light and colours and shapes. Everything that she had felt, heard, smelled, now had an image. Everything was wondrous and exciting. Oh, the hues at sunset, the smell of wet grass, the taste of rain. So many questions: *what is that? why is it so? how does that work?* The joys of discovery, the excitement with everything new. And there was always something new. When she could not find it she would ask and it appeared. Something new, every day. A flower, a bug, a song, a tale, a mask... She had been born in a world of *Yes*, where *No* did not exist.

She was very inquisitive. She had a mind that never stopped turning, same as her tail, her closest friend. They went on great adventures together, through the garden, up the tree, round the little pond. Running, jumping, exploring, her paws had wondered everywhere.

EDITORIAL

RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL is an annual English journal dedicated to publishing papers written by students in the Faculty of Letters (and not only), under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures from "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău. This journal intends to encourage students to take more initiative in engaging in the English studies, providing at the same time the opportunity for them to have their research and creative writing published. Thus, RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL invites English-speaking students to contribute to the journal through submitting original articles. The journal welcomes submissions on English language, literature and culture, its purpose being to provide a channel for the publication of original work by Romanian students who love the English language. This is an excellent opportunity for students to allow their research to be seen by their colleagues and to participate in a promising endeavour.

RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL este o revistă anuală în limba engleză dedicată publicării lucrărilor scrise de către studenții din cadrul Facultății de Litere (și nu numai), sub auspiciile Departamentului de Limbi și Literaturi Străine de la Universitatea "Vasile Alecsandri" din Bacău. RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL intenționează să încurajeze studenții vorbitori de limba engleză să scrie și să publice în limba engleză articole cu privire la limbă, literatură și cultură, scopul principal al revistei fiind acela de a oferi un canal pentru publicarea de lucrări originale de către studenții români care iubesc limba engleză. Aceasta este o oportunitate excelentă pentru studenți de a permite ca cercetarea lor să fie văzută de colegii lor și de a participa la un efort promițător.

Gender & Race in One Word: IDENTITY Dictionary.com's 2015 Word of the Year

Iuliana-Alexandra Fleşcan-Lovin-Arseni, III, TI
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

1. Introduction and summary

Users of dictionary.com have already got used to the various strategies that the administrators of this website present to them in order to make language more appealing. This time, with the occasion of designating *identity* the word of the year 2015, an article was published to illustrate how important words are and the impact they may or do have on us. Firstly, the word *identity* is associated with the well-known topic of *gender* expression. The changes concerning the perception of sexuality in general have affected automatically the composition of words used to refer to these issues and their lexical family as such. To reflect new realities, some words were added new meanings (code-switching), some are neologisms formed by prefixation (agender, bigender) or introduced as compound nouns (gender-fluid).

These linguistic novelties are not only the result of their usage, but also of the new constitutional implementations as in the case of the US Supreme Court, which declared same-sex marriage as legal. These days, a great social and moral impact has been registered as it can be observed in the latest news about celebrities speaking publicly about their sexual orientation, or films that devote a great attention to this matter.



However, identity is not only about gender, but also about *racial issues*. In this case, there is a longer and more complex story, at least according to its more widespread history. Of course, the old problem of wars between races is not analysed and is perhaps a theme of old days, but the way in which people feel about the others as members of a different race is a topical matter. Social concerns are also oriented towards the less appropriate attitude that minorities may receive or towards matters of ethnic or racial conflict. Unicode Consortium made an important step in encouraging a non-racial approach for all generations by introducing a wide spectrum of skin and hair colour for emoji.

All in all, this dictionary article introduced the problem of identity (of what makes one the way he/she is) to its readers in an ingenious manner and with special focus on its latest facets. If at the beginning it seems to be just a simple and perhaps boring linguistic study of a boring linguistic phenomenon, at the end it is clear that it actually addresses important social issues that are present in our daily life throughout the world. It is not only about the words we use when speaking about those issues, but about our perception of them and how we can learn to be more open-minded so as to accept that being different is the main feature of any human being.

Upon waking, let your first thought be: Thank you!

Maria Bocicov, III, CRP
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

We are all human beings and in every moment of our life we think about what we lack, not about what we already have. Life would be so different if we just realised how healthy we are, how rich we are, how happy we are.

Yes, we are healthy. So many people are sick. Some of them maybe just found out that this month is the last month of their life. So why don't we just be thankful for our health and enjoy every second of our life?

Yes, we are rich. We are loved. We are not alone. So many people are poor because they do not have a family and friends, they do not have a home and they are so lonely. But we do: we have a home, we have a family and true friends by our side, so we are never alone. If you have a person to tell "good morning" and "good night", you are one of the luckiest people in the world.

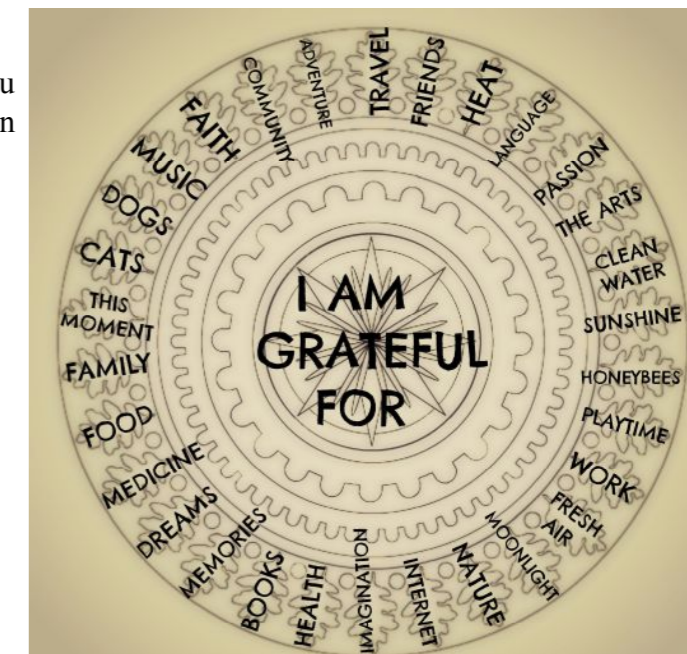
Also, God is always loving and protecting us.

Yes, we are happy. We are happier than we think we are. We just complain all the time about life. We cry we do not have shoes, but just think about someone who has no legs. We cry about being broken-hearted, just think about those who lost their loved person in a car accident. We cry when we miss our parents, but please, think about kids who do not have a family and have never met their parents. And when we cry about a sad life, we should open our eyes and see that life is beautiful, life is amazing, life is a special gift that was given to us once upon a time and our job is to make it valuable, to enjoy it, to be happy now and here.

I hope people will finally realise that sadness is not having a bad day or being hurt by someone or not having money to buy new pants. True sadness is when you lose important people in your life or when you miss someone you will never see again.

People, be happy and accept what you have, love what you have, appreciate every little thing in your life. Maybe you are not the only person in the world who's having a bad day. Maybe someone is having a worse day than yours.

And by the way, be thankful for what you have. You may be richer than you think you are. Upon waking, let your first thought be: *Thank you!*



Let us have a talk!

Silvia Prisecaru, II, CRP
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

*Life can only be understood backwards;
but it must be lived forwards.*
Soren Kierkegaard

Rarely a day goes by without even a small argument, no matter it is with parents, or younger or older siblings, or with your own child, with the lady at the grocery store, with a neighbour or even with your pet...there are so many options. So if I am in the period of exams and I have an argument, everybody will assume I'm picking reasons for a fight because I'm stressed (I'm sure that happened to you at least once). I'm feeling glorious now because I have found the answer... is because we lack empathy more and more, we don't walk that mile in other's shoes. No empathy, no understanding and there you go.

There is a trend among grown-ups to blame the social media for today's result, while they forget that they are parents. I'm not a parent, but I have a "baby", a 2 year old "puppy", a very spoiled one. So one day, I was looking at other dogs, same age and same breed as mine, doing all kind of tricks.



Suddenly, I'm thinking: oh no, I have got a broken one, mine doesn't do anything of all this (so the first idea was to blame the puppy, instead of assuming responsibility that I haven't taught my dog to do some tricks.)

Social media imitates reality, if you are a good, nice person in real life you won't be in a different way on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc, if you like reading the book instead of watching the movie, the internet won't change that. The internet only gives you more options, it doesn't really change you, but you are free to choose who you really are. Even Facebook can be a learning tool, it depends only how selective you are and who you follow.

Now back to empathy, how many parents/grown-ups can understand how it is to socialise over the new media if they didn't have that when they were young? How can youth empathise with parents, that didn't have all that? And the grown-ups will say: well that's easy. I'll just take all his/her gadgets, phone, tablet, laptop and he/she will enjoy life as I used to when I was his /her age, forgetting that it is not the same.. It's one thing to want something that doesn't exist and no one has it so you don't really know what you are missing, and there is something totally different to own something, use it day by day and suddenly not to have it, because you know exactly what you are missing. It's like taking a small reptile from the Sahara desert and put it in the ocean, saying: your ancestors were living in water, they were happy and healthy so you little buddy, you should be happy and healthy there too, but hey, little buddy, why are you drowning? Why don't you swim? Why don't you feed yourself? Why don't you find a life partner?

Dear grown-ups, please remember when you were young there was almost a stable ground, the same surroundings for years (except the political environment), things were built to last a lifetime, there were 2-3 options for bikes, for radios, for clothes, for jobs, for food...there was not much of a struggle to take decision. There was a "safety" in the way the jobs were given to the graduates. I'm sure life was very hard, but try to understand the new generations, that live almost like on quicksand, with things meant to last one season, with hundreds of options for anything and each one of us tries to take the best decisions, think of how we might go to 10-15 interviews and still not get a job and we still keep trying. We constantly try to adapt to something that is continuously changing, demands are changing. We are attacked by information. I don't want to say we live harder times, but different. So have empathy when you decide parameters and standards for us because after all, we are results of your hard work (up to 12-14 years old we are exactly what you created).

We are little mirrors of what we've lived, don't crack our future with high expectations!

2. A linguistic approach

It is clear that the word of the year was elected according to more than some random linguistic criteria. English speakers, native or not, started to need specialised words in order to be as specific and clear as possible when speaking about identity. Dictionary.com introduced, modified, and studied the usage of words from this sphere or added new meanings to words so as to help people have a better control of the meaning they deliver in their speech. Even more, new words were needed to reflect the new realities and ways of thinking or social behaviour people experience. Here are some interesting examples:

Code-switching n. the modifying of one's behaviour, appearance, etc., to adapt to different sociocultural norms;

Agender adj. noting or relating to a person who does not have a specific gender identity or recognizable gender expression;

Bigender adj. Also, bigendered. noting or relating to a person who has two gender identities or some combination of both;

Gender-fluid adj. noting or relating to a person whose gender identity or gender expression is not fixed and shifts over time or depending on the situation;

Mx. a title of respect prefixed to a person's surname; unlike Mr., Mrs., or Ms., it does not indicate gender and may be used by a person with any or no specific gender identity;

Marriage n. (broadly) any of the diverse forms of interpersonal union established in various parts of the world to form a familial bond that is recognized legally, religiously, or socially, granting the participating partners mutual conjugal rights and responsibilities and including, for example, opposite-sex marriage, same-sex marriage, plural marriage, and arranged marriage.

The most suggestive word that may be used as an example to illustrate the evolution of meanings is "marriage", as the majority of us grew up with old patterns such as: Barbie & Ken, Prince Charming & Cinderella or Brad Pitt & Angelina Jolie. Things have definitely changed since then, for better or for worse. No doubt some new fairy tales are to be written. If not, some of the old ones may experience some changes.

3. A literary approach

The matter of identity has definitely undergone various changes throughout history and the way it is reflected in literature does not make an exception. The question of who we are and what we need to be happy has been of great interest for writers all around the globe. Religion, culture and morality are some of the themes often discussed when referring to identity. However, sexuality was mostly related to sin or to immorality, so it became a taboo in certain periods of the past. For instance, great novels such as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy and many others provide readers with a unique view upon love, but only from the perspective of the union of the souls of a man and a woman.

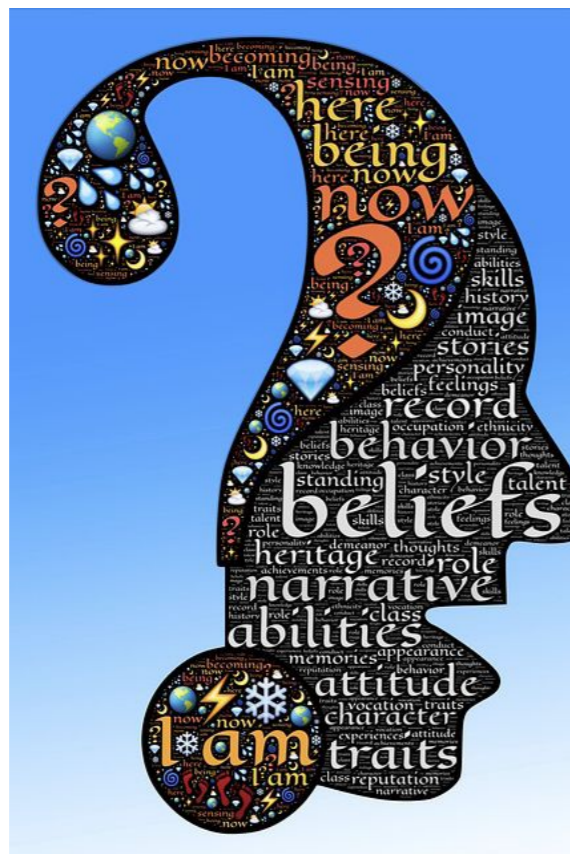
Of course, as our society has become more and more open to anything concerning human nature, literature started to adopt the same road. For instance, Virginia Woolf, a great name of both British and international modern literature thanks to the very well-known novel *To the Lighthouse*, had the courage to draw attention to one's sexual identity through her novel *Orlando: A Biography*, published in 1928.

The main character, Orlando, is a nobleman born during the reign of Queen Elisabeth I. He has a normal life, working firstly as the page of the Queen and then being named as the ambassador of Constantinople by King Charles II. From here on, his destiny completely changes as he experiences a mysterious change of sex. He becomes a woman physically speaking but bearing the same mind and conscience. S/he experiences love both as a man and as a woman and even marries a sea captain. What is important is the way in which Orlando succeeds to find her way no matter her gender.

The other problematic side of identity, the one related to race, also has its impact on the world of literature. Take, for instance, the famous novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) by Mark Twain. The relationships between characters, the vocabulary (nigger) used demonstrate how affected was the American society by racism during the 19th century. The main character is always torn between what the society asks him to believe and do (because of race) and what he actually feels as a human being.

Conclusion

It is clear that our identity cannot be shaped, judged, manipulated or criticised according to an ordinary mould. No one should be labelled according to factors such as gender, sexual orientation, or race. The focus should be placed on other criteria that may be used to understand and appreciate a person. Some of them would be: respect, general moral principles and values, tolerance etc. This article should represent a good reminder that words are not only combinations of sounds but also bearers of meaning. Each and every society influences and depends on words at the same time. All in all, Dictionary.com succeeded not only to choose a word of great importance for the human kind but, most important, to address a representative (and perhaps worrying) issue of our society.



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Volunteering – a way of living

Ioana Popescu, II, EF

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Andreia-Irina Suciuc



When we were little, our parents taught us to share our toys with others, play together and take care of each other without thinking about the differences between us. The same teachings can become, if adapted to today's life, the golden rules of volunteering. Sharing, caring and working together – these are the only three conditions of being a volunteer, and NGOs teach us just this – to share everything we have with others, whether we're talking about material things, knowledge or experience; to work together and take care of each other no matter what.

Volunteers are pure love in action, and their commitment and perseverance are their strong points. When you volunteer you leave all your stereotypes, prejudices, fears and delusive dreams at the door every time you leave home and go volunteering. For

us volunteers, the goal isn't arriving at the end of the road but taking each step at a time in order to get there. Just like farmers, if we want to have 100 acres of organic vegetables we have to care for each and every seedling as if the fate of humanity depends on it.

As a volunteer, you find joy in everything around you, no matter how small: a smile, a hug or a simple "Thank you!". All these give you the strength and hope to continue walking on that road with more confidence every day. Our biggest reward is a job well done and if we add some team-work to go with it we get the perfect recipe for satisfaction. Why am I talking about team-work? Well, because when you work with others you get your reward for all that you do and that is the experience coming from everywhere – from the work you do, from others people's knowledge, from the events that are happening around you, etc. – which contributes permanently to your personal development.

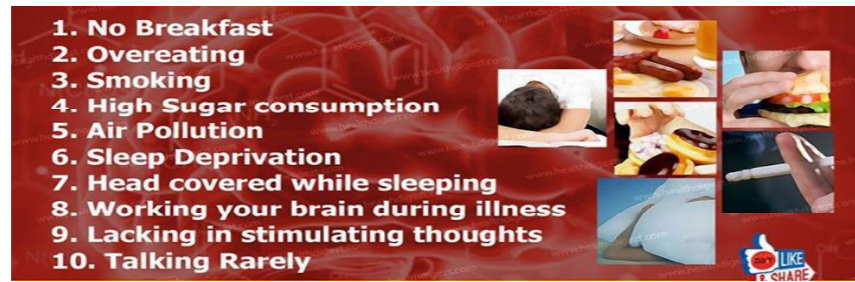
No matter what we choose to do as volunteers we always do it heart first. We care for others as if they were our brothers and sisters. We work day and night for a better world. Volunteering is not just a choice you make on the spur of the moment; it's a lifestyle that you decide to have from one moment onwards, because once you become a volunteer you can never back down; you will fall in love with everything that you do, see and feel deep inside you. No matter where and how you volunteer – child-care, teaching, planting trees, dog adoptions, keeping company to the elderly – you dedicate yourself and what you do becomes a part of your soul. Each smile you receive keeps you going, and encourages you to continue.

As I have been a volunteer myself for almost 6 years now, I must tell you that there is no better way to recharge your batteries than volunteering. I have been working with children for as long as I can remember and the love with which they surround me every time they see me convinced me to pursue the same path for the rest of my life, thus I am currently studying hard to become a teacher. I have learnt that children need love and support more than anything else and that no matter what may happen I am their bigger sister to whom they can come for advice and comfort. Why not give back some of the love we all receive daily? Why not do something that makes our hearts smile? Never have I thought that volunteering in a small forgotten village could make me feel accomplished both spiritually and professionally. Now I couldn't imagine my life without these children!

It may not seem much at first, but volunteering is one of the best ways through which you can grow as a person, no matter you age, gender or views. What can be better than doing what you love and believe in while helping the world around you? Don't waste your time, find your passion, go out in the world and fix it! Together we are strong!

we are in need of brain food we tend to look for sweets in the form of chocolate, candy, cakes, etc. But the disadvantage of using these kinds of sweets is the fast rising of the blood sugar and the fast drop after a short period of time that leaves the person tired and exhausted.

We are responsible for the way we treat our brains.
The best way to ruin our brains is the following:



A. Brain BEST FRIENDS are: - Carbohydrates

The brain uses them as food to nourish itself. The complex carbohydrates are the very best – they are found in wholegrain cereals, fruits and nuts. A hearty breakfast that includes whole grain cereals, fruits



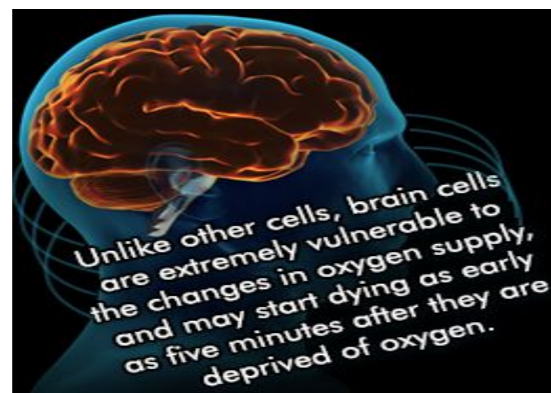
and nuts was proved by multiple studies to show that children get better grades in school; they are able to concentrate and to accomplish the tasks the teachers asked them much faster than their classmates. It was proved that the people who eat BREAKFAST as a King – are the winners! You can be one of them, too! A few other elements help the brain to work to its full capacity:

B. REST helps brain to process information stored! Get good rest prior to your exams and you will be sure of best performance!

C. Drinking water also helps a lot the brain. Did you know that about 78% of your brain is made of water? When we forget to drink the 7-8 glasses of water daily the first organ that suffers from thirst is the brain! Many times when we suffer from headaches it would be smart to check and see if we are not thirsty. I have tried both personally and with my patients several times and getting plenty of water helped a lot.

D. Plenty of oxygen brings a real benefit. Please remember to air out your room while studying hard, to step out and breathe deep and if possible to exercise daily.

One of the best recipes Doctor Neil Nedley shared with us was what he called the BRAIN



BOOSTER COOKIES:

- 2 1/2 cups grounded walnuts
- 2/3 of a cup of pastry flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup flaxseed flour
- 1 tablespoon of carob
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- Add ingredients to a bowl in the order given and mix them well. Preheat the oven 200 C and drop with spoon cookies on the baking paper, flatten them with a fork. Keep them in the oven 10-15 minutes, or until light brown.

Just as in the illustration about the car we had mentioned in the beginning, so will our brain bring us the best rewards by taking us to peak performance when we care for it. Take 5 minutes to think about your brain and feed it right and it will take care of you 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, year after year. Enjoy your life to the capacity it was meant for!!!

Forefathers, customs and traditions

Iulia-Daria Chiriluş, III, TI

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

The dances with masks from Moldavia are archaic, they enter the agrarian tradition, which are celebrated on the occasion of New Year. Such ceremonies are known to be still popular in the Balkans, particularly in Romania, during the 12 days of Christmas Eve to Epiphany (January 6th). Originally, they were ceremonies in connection with the periodic return of the dead and people wore all sorts of masks behaving animals – horse, goat, bear – with the purpose of banishing demons from houses. But the bear game is practised since ancient times by people and represents a winter ancestral folk custom that impresses everyone.

Strong, violent, unforeseeable and sometimes, savage, the bear is a revered animal from the oldest times, and researchers confirm the existence of this cult since the Palaeolithic. Various ethnographic studies have concluded that the bear is a sacred animal, a strong animal, considered spirit of the forest, and master of it.

In the city of Bacău, more accurately in Comăneşti, every year on December 31st the Bears' Festival called Ancestral Customs and Traditions is held as part of a long-lasting tradition. Some people dress in bear skins, others in national costumes and they dance the bear dance with joy and pride. Every bear band has a leader named “ursar”, a kind of a bear tamer who commands them, and the bears are listening carefully to his commands. Every command is a poem and every bear has his dance. Besides the bears there are man dressed as goats, horses, or wearing various masks of different characters; all of these have a strong visual impact. The dance, the game, the poems and the costumes are fascinating, but the tradition behind them are even more fascinating. The Bear' dance is held every year and it is intended to ward off evil spirits and to bring wealth and riches to every person who sees the dance.

Comăneşti city hosts folk customs festivals every year and thousands of tourists come to see the masks, the bands of bears, the horses, the goats or the deer dance. Carolers wear traditional masks, some of them are handmade by artisans who keep the manufacturing tradition of skins, masks and other costumes, some of which mock real characters: the policeman, the doctor, the hunter, etc..

The Bear Dance is the most popular in Trotuş Valley, a dance which reflects regeneration of the nature and transition of the winter and of the year. The dance is performed in the beating of the drums because the noise serves to awake the bear, to show the power of this animal and its capacity to pass over the cold winter. People dressed in bear skins stay in a row and dance on the rhythm of the drums and when the leader speaks the bears stop and listen to the orders. All bears have red tassels at their ears and hooks in their noses. The bears are tamed by the pack leader and controlled by means of a long carved rod given by the village elders. The orders of the bear tamer are:

“Don't give in and don't get wane,
That I'll lay my hands on t'cane,
And the cane is made of willow
C'mon my bruin to the ground
And listen to me while I sing.”



“Doctors are always working to preserve our health and cooks to destroy it. But the latter are often the more successful.”
Diderot



Some of us were born with an excellent mind that is working around the clock and we'd like to keep it up but how? Others have never been their best and yearn to reach the peak performance, what could they do?

Just take a good car, look up the user's manual and follow the instructions, it will run the way it was meant to. But do as my cousin did one day. He had a pretty good car running on diesel. Being in a hurry, he fueled it, by mistake at a gas station, with gasoline instead of diesel. After one or two miles, I am pretty sure you know what happened; the car came to a dead end with a massive shaking. The mechanics were busy trying to find out the broken part... but nothing was broken! The only "small" difference was made by the fuel... What a shame, the car wouldn't start "just" because of a slight change in the consistency and figures of the engine fuel.

Now take our *brain*. It is the most precious *treasure* a student's got. During the semester we all seem to have pretty good brains, but when the examination sessions come along, we need to gear it up, to put it under stress and pressure and then we expect it to work at maximum efficiency. At times we need our brains to function 24 out of 24. How can we be sure that it won't break down? What can a student do ahead of time, or even during the exams to ensure that his or her brain will not give in, but rather under full speed and pressure will yield the very best knowledge stored inside of it?

Not long ago I met two physicians who have made a huge difference in my life. The first was Doctor DeRose, who was working at the time in New York, both as a physician in the Living Springs Health Retreat and as a research scientist. He was coming up all the time with new data that proved of a real benefit to the patients. After some years, I personally encountered a difficult problem in balancing the Immune System. After years of research, he found out that the Flax Seed Oil was a perfect solution for the situation I was in. Flax Seed Oil is rich in Omega 3 fatty acids and using it on a daily basis for a while got me out of trouble both by balancing my immune system and also by bringing in the fatty acids needed restoring my brain beyond my wildest dreams.

1. BEST IN = BEST OUT!

The second doctor I met was Doctor Neil Nedley from Oklahoma, USA. He is now the Director of Weimar Institute of Health and Education, in California, a prolific author who wrote two very good books that I read, *Depression, the Way Out, and Proof Positive* plus many others. These books bring us the most important information obtained after years and years of research.

During his seminars, I learned that our body is not machinery that we can treat as we wish and still obtain the best out of it. Our body and especially our brain were granted to us as a gift and if treated well, they will ensure us long life and best performance. If it is maltreated, in time, it will give signs of exhaustion and later malfunction, break down and disease.

From Doctor Neil Nedley, whom I met personally and got extremely good counsel, I learned the best recipe for brain food I would like to share with all those who aim high for best grades and for peak performance later in life. (See recipe at the end of the article). During his seminars on how to increase your intelligence and memory, the doctor gave many clues. The brain cell feeds on carbohydrates. When



The most famous bands of bears are in: Asău, Dărmănești, Dofteana and Lăloaia.

The little horses' dance (a traditional version of the hobby horses) evokes youth and fertility because the horse was considered a protector against evil spirits and the cunning spirits and it was a protector of villages and churches. The horse is a beautiful and a strong animal which survives in winter at terribly low temperatures. The horses are dressed with wool carpets with traditional patterns on the back, and the harnesses are beautifully decorated.



The goat dance is pleasant and interesting because young men disguised in goats (under a costume usually made of paper or traditionally sewn carpets, very colourful and embellished with coloured yarn of different materials) perform a dance and a role after the lyrics of a leader. The herd of goats is led by a shepherd in the rhythm of the beating drums and the whistling of songs.



Even if these are pagan customs and even if they were repudiated by the Church in the past, games and dances with masks remain true traditions which arouse admiration and represent the most popular winter customs on the Trotuș Valley. Old customs define us because we are a nation with many fabulous traditions. Every nation has its tradition and culture, and they must be transmitted from generation to generation. Every Romanian person should be proud of Romanian culture and tradition and more important, he should know the tradition, because it must remain alive and known very well by everyone. It is a shame that young people today have forgotten a lot about real tradition and have never spread it, have not made it known. Traditions must not be lost, they must always be in our hearts and minds.

to use to reject/control/denounce a patriarchal dominant discourse. Women had been described, along the years, as hysteric, agoraphobic, anorectic, bulimic, and nowadays fibromyalgic. As you can see, women's bodies have always been constructed as pathological and I defend that this has to do with how they have been constructed as passive subjects.

Student: As I am thoroughly interested in becoming a teacher the next question derives from this eagerness: why teaching and why English? Is it an old passion or the result of the manner in which events happened to link together?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: I teach because I think I was born with the skill to communicate, to give and to learn. English because since I was little I spent long summers in Ireland where I learnt to love English language and its culture. When I began travelling, as this is my other passion, I realized that with English and Spanish I could embrace the world so I try to learn every day to be good at both.

Student: I am extremely glad that you visited my country and my University. Taking this into consideration, how did you find Romania, at least the part you have managed to visit?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: It was great to enjoy an Erasmus mobility again although this time it was shorter and I was older. I felt so welcomed at Bacău, where I realized that you do not need to do your mobility in an English speaking country but also in cities like Bacău, with an outstanding English Department. Hopefully, I will be able to go back again and enjoy Romania more. Meanwhile, I do hope to be able to tutor students like you from Bacău.

Student: Being a coordinator of the agreement between our Universities, would you like to transmit something to the future Romanian students who are to come to Oviedo?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: Both in Oviedo and Bacău, students will have an amazing experience. Academically speaking, here in Oviedo they will be able to learn Spanish if they want to do so. La Casa de las Lenguas <https://lacasadelaslenguas.uniovi.es/> offers intensive courses in Spanish to international students. We offer a four English Studies Degree where students can choose between doing the intensification in English or a major in English and minor in translation, communication, etc. Gender and Postcolonial studies are included in the syllabus and many times they are approached transversally. Plus, they can be sure that both Dr. Suciú and myself are tutors they can rely on.

Student: Thank you very much not only for accepting this interview, but also for being so truly supportive and helpful as Erasmus coordinator during my staying in Oviedo. It was a great honour to meet you!



Bill Gates, a success story

Codrin-Ovidiu Armeanu, I, AA
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea



1. Introduction

The rise of Bill Gates (born 1955), the father of Microsoft, was spontaneous and no one can say for sure if he was born to be a leader, but his work shows us how he became a business legend or icon together with Steve Jobs (Apple), Donald Trump, Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and other great minds of our century.

2. Do what you like or what you love

Bill Gates was fascinated by computers when he was young and worked very hard to learn programming. He was never a model student (he was no Albert Einstein), but he was passionate about what he wanted and what he wanted to achieve. He said that if you do not like the job you have, you should quit in order to pursue your dreams, but if you love what you do (take me for example, I like to discuss a problem with other people to solve it in a number of ways because you cannot go further in a career without a team; inevitably, you must first like what you do) then you will become great at your job.

Bill Gates never expected to work so hard for the job he desired. Out there, there are plenty of people who quit if the job is hard and demanding but if you pursue your goals with perseverance, then no matter how hard it is you can become a successful businessman or worker like him.



3. Learning from mistakes

In order to achieve your goals in life, some barriers and missteps can occur in your way or you will be blocked by some people or events but you will pass them eventually and you need to look forward not backward. Bill Gates never stopped evolving and learning from mistakes. I do the same and never stop until I learn every single detail about a thing, no matter how small it is, because it may turn out to be useful in the future. This way I constantly evolve and learn from past mistakes, trying not to repeat them in the future and that's what makes me better all the time.



4. Be different

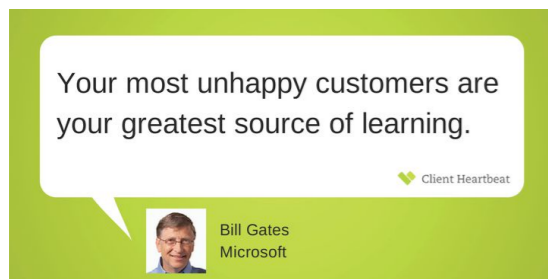
Business managers, leaders or the persons who run a business view themselves as different from other people (some people are successful, others are not). Many people who are smart, ambitious, extrovert are not necessarily successful businessmen because it just needs more than these three to be successful. I am ambitious, stubborn, determined, cautious, and I am also perceptive and nothing can stop me from achieving my goals, from not doing just like Bill Gates with his computer programming.

I find this quote interesting and terribly true.



5. Customer satisfaction

Bill Gates knew that in order to be successful you also need to satisfy your customers and respond to their complaints and resolve them quickly and effectively. Besides, you need a very good team, a “top-notch one” as he used to call it, in order to be successful, and no person can go higher in career without a strong team behind them. And in the center of the team stand the customers or the clients themselves. The quotation below confirms this idea and suggests that customer dissatisfaction is always something you can learn from.



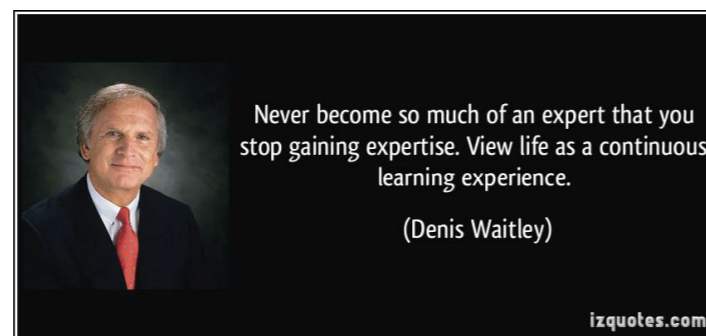
6. Become an expert

Bill gates became a self-taught expert because he was motivated by the idea that you do not need someone to solve a problem if you have one; instead, you fix it yourself or at least try to fix it. The more you become known for your expertise in the area or business you work, the more people will seek you or call you and that will open doors for you that were closed before. They will need you for the expertise you learned so hard

to master. On the other hand, Mr. Waitley below is also right.

7. Conclusion

To tell you the truth, I even became a student in business administration because Bill Gates influenced and inspired me to be better, to be different, and to pursue my dreams. He never quit his desire to become the best or his dreams, and my dreams, just like his, will become a reality some day. If you want to find out more about his life and career read his Forbes profile at <http://www.forbes.com/profile/bill-gates/>.



Alejandra Moreno Álvarez is a lecturer in the English Department at the University of Oviedo, Spain, with teaching and research interests centred on English literature and literatures in English language, feminist and postcolonial theory. She holds a PhD in Women’s Studies and she has been a research fellow at Rutgers University and Cornell University amongst other institutions. In addition, she was also president of the Association: Seminari Dones i Lletres. Universitat de les Illes Balears (2005-2008), and secretary of AUDEM-Asociación Universitaria de Estudios de la Mujer (AUDEM, 2009-2014). At present, Dr. Alejandra Moreno Álvarez, together with Dr. Andreia-Irina Suci, coordinates the new Erasmus Bilateral Agreement between the University of Bacău, Romania, and the University of Oviedo, Spain.

Student: Just like me, you have participated in an Erasmus Programme Mobility too, so would you be as kind as to describe your own experience from that period both academically and personally speaking? Has the manner in which you perceived the Erasmus experience changed over time?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: I had the opportunity to study my last year of my five English Studies Degree at the University of Leeds. The experience was such that I think an Erasmus mobility should be compulsory to all students since it broadens your experiences both academically and personally. Something has changed over time and it is that when I came back to Oviedo to do my Masters I thought that all I had learnt during my degree was just due to my last year in Leeds. Now, I do realize that it was thanks to the four years I studied in Oviedo, that I was able to get the best out of the year I spent in Leeds.

Student: What did the Erasmus Mobility Programme mean in your career as a university teacher?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: At Leeds they gave me the opportunity to teach Spanish to undergraduates. It was a lectureship but it made a great impact in my career since I realized that that was what I wanted to do in life. Since I began teaching at the University I try to do a research at other universities at least once every two years so I get familiarized with different methodologies and research.

Student: Gender Studies is a young field in education and, unfortunately, not sufficiently spread within the Romanian educational system. Which are the benefits or how did these studies change your perspective towards gender? Do you think that mentality has started to change in this context?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: Gender Studies is a must in all fields. In the case of English Studies, and during the 90s, the syllabus at the University of Oviedo comprehended canonical readings and analyses, and Gender and Postcolonial Studies were just beginning to appear. In Oviedo, we are very strong in Gender Studies. In fact, we do have a MA in Gender and Diversity Studies, an Erasmus Mundus MA in Women and Gender Studies GEMMA and a PhD Programme in Gender and Diversity. Including Gender and Diversity within the English Studies field means giving voice to the Others, that is, to those who are, were and had been silenced. I do think that there has been an evolution since the 70s but we still have a long way to go.

Student: One of your books, namely *Lenguajes comestibles: Anorexia, bulimia y su descodificación en la ficción de Margaret Atwood y Fay Weldon* suggests actual modern problems of health which affect women throughout the world. Would you like to share with us some of the factors that influence women to take such radical measures when it comes to their appearance?

Dr. Moreno Álvarez: In fact, I had the opportunity to give a talk at Bacău about Eating Disorders in Contemporary English Literature. There, I argued that some of the patients who suffer eating disorders do so not because they want to achieve the fashionable body image imposed by a dominant discourse, but because they lack the language to denounce how they are being constructed as passive subjects. The language is patriarchal and it does not have the tools to criticize that you have been trapped within a passive role. It is not possible to create a women’s own language as Luce Irigaray has suggested, but we can occupy new spaces to transform dominant discourses. I do consider anorexia and bulimia tools that women happen



Hadrian's Wall was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. Over the centuries, many sections of the wall have suffered damage caused by roads traversing it and by people's "intervention", who took the stones from the wall to build nearby houses and other structures. Fortunately, the remaining foundations and forts still attract tourists from throughout the world. If you want to find world class archaeology, spectacular landscapes, rare wildlife, vibrant cities and a population of friendly and welcoming people, you must visit Hadrian's Wall Country.² By the way, if the young generation finds Roman times as ancient and distant from their concerns, there's even a Hadrian's Wall Pocket Tours App, which might appeal to them/ you all!

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Dreams become reality when we put our mind to it.

8. More about the world of business¹. Did you know that...

1. "Yahoo" is an **acronym** for "Yet Another Hierarchical Official Oracle"?
2. The red and white Coca-Cola logo is recognized by 94% of the world's population?
3. Adding /4 to the end of Facebook's URL will take you to Mark Zuckerberg's profile?
4. Google was originally called BackRub?
5. Amazon.com employees **spend** two days every two years working at the customer service desk, even the CEO, in order to help all workers understand the customer service process?
6. Pepsi got its name from the digestive enzyme pepsin?
7. If Bill Gates were a country, he would be the 37th richest on earth?
8. McDonald's first menu items were hot dogs, not hamburgers?
9. Starbucks spends more on health care insurance for its employees (\$300 million) than on coffee beans?
10. Facebook is primarily blue because Mark Zuckerberg suffers from red-green colour blindness?

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² <http://www.visithadrianswall.co.uk/>.

Richard Branson – the power of believing in yourself and other business lessons for the budding entrepreneur

Carmen-Elena Stanciu (Borțun), I, AA
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

1. Introduction

When it comes to learning how to become a successful entrepreneur or business person, there is a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and tips to rely on. And while their value is undeniable, I believe that choosing a specific role model that you identify with can complement and even enhance the general knowledge you acquire. My interest in the business field started early on when, as a child, I was helping my parents run the little shop they owned in the town where I grew up. My tasks were small, but the exposure I gained to building and managing a business was invaluable. This keen enthusiasm for business has been carried over into adulthood, and has materialised into my decision to study Business Administration at an academic level. Looking to the future, my ambition is to apply all of my knowledge by setting up and growing successful businesses. However, I am aware of the challenges coming up ahead, including the necessity to start small for financial considerations, the issues imposed by the unstable economic climate of our country, and also the struggle to be taken seriously as a young, inexperienced new starter in the business field. Fortunately, I have found answers to my fears by reading about Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin brand of enterprises. Even though developing in different times, his journey to becoming one of the most successful businessmen in the world has also been paved with challenges, both personal and societal. I find his evolution and persona truly inspiring, which is why I have chosen him as my business role model. In the following paragraphs, I will describe his life, from childhood to present times, and highlight key moments and experiences that helped foster his keen entrepreneurial instinct. I believe these are valuable lessons, relevant not only to Branson himself, but also to any other budding business person such as myself.

2. Biographical milestones

Richard Branson is a household name in the business world. His eccentric personality, innovative leadership ideas and ground-breaking business ventures have earned him the title of the fifth richest man in the United Kingdom (with an estimated wealth of 5 billion dollars) and the admiration of the world. However, behind the glamour of his current lifestyle lies the story of a self-made man, who had to overcome his personal deficiencies and societal prejudice in order to succeed.

Richard Branson is a classic example of someone who started from the bottom, and tailored his own way up to the peak of success by believing in his innate business acumen and letting himself be guided by his intuition when it came to business decisions. In Branson's own words: "If I am starting up a new venture, I don't spend a lot of time researching the finances and working out all the figures in advance (...). I often go with my gut feeling and instinct and then delegate the work to someone who can do it better than me" (Branson, 2016).



If you want to explore this English-Welsh border, I assure you that this is worth the effort. You will be impressed by the beautiful and picturesque landscapes and maybe you will feel as if you are one of the Great Offa's heirs.

The site has also become a matter of touristic interest and there is an association, Offa's Dyke Association, which helps the promotion and visiting of the border. "We are an independent voluntary organization that provides information and other services to people who enjoy exploring the heritage and countryside of the England-Wales border. We seek to promote and protect the 1200-year-old Offa's Dyke and the Offa's Dyke Path, a National Trail 177 miles long. We manage

the Offa's Dyke Centre at Knighton and encourage archaeological and historical research relating to Offa's Dyke and the corridor along its length. Our invaluable Where To Stay guide is online, but the printed booklet is still available for you to take with you on your walks", its website writes.¹

2. Hadrian's Wall, or the border between England and Scotland

Now, I want to draw your attention to another geographical frontier, the one between England and Scotland, a frontier which is also known as Hadrian's Wall.



This wall ran for 73 miles – 118 kilometers – from the fortress of Wallsend (Segedunum) on the River Tyne (situated in North East England) to the Solway Firth (in the West). Maybe you ask yourself who was Hadrian. Well, he was a Roman Emperor who ruled between the years 117-138 A.D. In 122 he arrived in Britain and, as his biographer said, "He was the first to build a wall, 80 miles long, to separate Romans from the barbarians." The initial construction of the wall took about 6 years and was built mainly by soldiers of the three legions of Britain. Milecastles were placed at regular intervals and each pair of Milecastles had two Turrets between them. These small forts and towers could shield around 30-40 men.

After his death, his successor was Antonius Pius (138-161), who decided to expand the Roman territory northward, by building a new wall in Scotland – the Antonine Wall – stretching for 37 miles (59 kilometers) between the estuaries of the Rivers Forth and Clyde (as it can be seen on the map). Twenty years later, the Antonine Wall was abandoned in favour of Hadrian's Wall, which continued to be used until the end of the Roman rule in Britain around 410.

¹ <http://www.offasdyke.demon.co.uk>.

Have you ever thought about Great Britain's geographical frontiers? Do you know which these are? Which is their historical significance? To be sincere, I do not want your answer right now, because I will invite you to explore two historic places together with me in this article.

1. King Offa's Dyke or the border between England and Wales

Let's start with King Offa's Dyke. First of all I will tell you something about King Offa. King Offa of Mercia ruled between the years 757-796 A.D., and he was one of the most powerful Anglo-Saxon kings. A civil war helped him rise to power. He controlled Kent, East Anglia and Lindsay (now Lincoln), and he established alliances with Northumbria and Wessex by marrying two of his daughters with the kings of these territories. King Offa had an economic importance or contribution because he established the use of the penny as the monetary unit in England.

His most long-lasting achievement was the dyke that thereafter bore his name. Offa's Dyke, a huge earthwork, now follows approximately the border between England and Wales. Initially, the low wall or earthwork served as a boundary or defence. He battled several wars with the Welsh rulers and the dyke was a part of his defensive strategy. The dyke did not cover the entire border but extended for about 64 miles (103 kilometers). Although today's border between Wales and England does not exactly follow the line of the dyke, it became a physical and cultural marker of the borderline between the two mentioned regions and a historical reminder of past troubles.



The dyke's origins are not very clear; it is thought to have been started about 785 AD and to have taken several years to build. The history of the region (in the 9th century) indicates that the earthwork was abandoned after a very short period of importance. Much of the dyke is still noticeable and has its original impressive dimensions, while in some parts it has disappeared because of farming activity over the last 1200 years, and it can be found only by archaeological work. Two stretches of earthwork at each end of its length are considered to date from Offa's time, when this dyke was described as going from sea to sea.

In order to better grasp who present-day Richard Branson is and how he operates, it is imperative to analyse his roots and the environment in which he was brought up. Richard Charles Nicholas Branson was born on 18th July 1950, in Surrey, England. His father, Edward James Branson, was a barrister, and his mother, Eve Branson, worked as a flight attendant. Despite his middle-class background, his family was not wealthy and often struggled to make ends meet. In his memoir, Branson says: "my parents had very little money during our childhood", but "traditions were still upheld and we were not allowed to leave the table until we had finished all our food" (Branson, 2011). He describes how both his parents found ingenious ways to produce more money for the family. One of their joint projects aimed at producing wooden tissue boxes and wastepaper bins, which they would then sell on to shops. Their system proved to be so innovative, that Harrods, one of the most prestigious British department stores, took them on as suppliers, thus transforming a small business into an industry of their own. It could be argued that growing up in such an environment, filled with creativity and ambition, has had an influence on Branson's own entrepreneurial spirit, which would later inform his business decisions.

Nevertheless, his academic performance in his early years of school did not portray him favourably. Branson admits to having had trouble following what was being taught: "I remember sitting at the back of the class and not knowing what was going on. The blackboard was all a-jumble. I once had an IQ test where I sat looking at the paper and getting nowhere" (Branson, 2016). In modern terms, Branson's struggles with paying attention for long periods of time and getting easily distracted are consistent with the symptoms of dyslexia, a learning difficulty we knew little about during his school years in the 1960s. However, his poor schoolwork was blamed on a lack of willingness to learn, and consequently, he was deemed a hopeless case by the school staff and nearly failed out of the all-boys Scaitcliffe School, which he attended until the age of 13. He was then transferred to Stowe School, a boarding school in Buckinghamshire, England. Despite his new surroundings, his struggle to fit into the educational system continued to the point that, at 16, he decided to drop out and pursue his own ambitions. The reactions to his bold decision were mixed, ranging from his headmaster who predicted he would "either go to prison or be a millionaire" (Branson, 2011) to his father's more encouraging tone who told him to "give it a go and if it doesn't work out we will try to get you an education" (Branson, 2016).

Branson's confidence in his plan stemmed from his excitement for a new idea that would fill a gap he had noticed in the newspaper market. Before leaving school, Branson realised that there was no outlet for students to express their opinions about issues which affected them on a daily basis, but were deemed too controversial for the official school newspaper. As such, *Student* was born, a youth-culture magazine written for students and run by students. Using his creativity and entrepreneurial flair, Branson wrote his first business plan and managed to secure 8000 dollars worth of advertising to cover the first print of the magazine. Launched in 1966, Branson decided to distribute the first 50,000 copies for free in order to build up readership. From that point on, the magazine grew bigger and bigger and managed to attract enough advertising to cover all its costs, ultimately becoming profitable. This allowed Branson to expand the scope of the magazine by including interviews with some big names of the time, such as the American novelist James Baldwin or philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. The *Student* magazine was Richard Branson's first successful business venture, and a demonstration of his keen eye for business, his courage in trying new things and not being afraid to fail, a theme which runs throughout his entire life.

By 1969, Branson was well on his way to adulthood, trying to make ends meet for himself and for his beloved magazine. He was living in a London commune, surrounded by the growing British music and

drug scene. However, his ambition and the responsibility of keeping Student afloat made him grow up fast, stay out of trouble and remain focused on achieving his business goals. Branson drew inspiration from his modest living conditions and social circle, and soon enough he came up with another business idea, initially seen as a possible revenue stream for his Student magazine. He noticed that most of the people he came in contact with dedicated a big part of their lives to music. Branson says: "There was tremendous excitement about music: it was political; it was anarchic; it summed up the young generation's dream of saving the world" (Branson, 2011). Due to the importance of music, people also seemed prepared to pay for records, or as Branson put it: "I also noticed that people who would never dream of spending as much as 40 shillings on a meal wouldn't hesitate to spend 40 shillings buying the latest Bob Dylan album" (Branson, 2011). Branson identified this growing demand for records, and decided to set up a mail-order system through which he could supply cheap records to customers, thus being able to compete with the high street market. His new business venture was named Virgin, and developed into a successful endeavour, which allowed Branson to open a record shop in Oxford Street, London. Building on that success, he made a very important move in 1972 when he opened his first recording studio in Oxfordshire, England and established the Virgin Records brand, the first company in the Virgin Empire that dominates the business world today.

Virgin Records went on to become one of the top six record companies in the world, having managed



to sign some of the most highly acclaimed artists such as the Sex Pistols, the Culture Club, Genesis, Janet Jackson, the Spice Girls and the Rolling Stones. The success of his company made Richard Branson a millionaire at the mere age of 23, which allowed him to further explore and implement new business ideas. As such, he set up a travel company called the Voyager Group in 1980 and the airline Virgin Atlantic in 1984, as well as a series of Virgin Megastores. He also got involved with property ownership and real estate development. His most famous purchase was Necker Island, one of the British Virgin Islands put up for sale in the 1970s. He paid a mere 180,000 dollars for it and later converted it into one of

the most luxurious holiday resorts available, which still remains under his ownership today.

Nevertheless, success is not predictable or constant and in 1992 the Virgin name found itself threatened by financial instability. As a consequence, Branson was forced to sell Virgin Records to THORN EMI for 1 billion dollars. Despite the fortune he made from the sale, Branson felt the loss of his company on a personal level and reportedly cried when the contract was signed. In an interview with Reuters, he declared: "Of course, it was very hard – it's like selling your children. I mean, you build something from scratch, we had just signed Janet Jackson, we had just signed the Rolling Stones when we sold it, and I remember running down Ladbroke Grove, tears streaming down my face with the check for a billion dollars" (Branson, 2013). This speaks about Richard Branson's character and unique level of commitment and personal involvement into his business ventures, which is without a doubt, one of the reasons behind his continuing success.

Keeping true to his entrepreneurial spirit and ambitious nature, Branson used his new capital and started investing in new and diversified companies, adding to his Virgin Empire constantly, to the point where nowadays he holds more than 200 companies in more than 30 countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, Asia, Europe and South Africa. His businesses cover a variety of fields, ranging from a train company, and a luxury game preserve to a mobile phone company,

to reach otherwise. Now, being a third year student, I want to thank PhD. Lucia Otrisalová and to assure her that I will use all the pieces of information given during her course in writing my bachelor thesis and, also, after attending her course I will never plagiarize anything, because I know now how to avoid it and how to write a proper research paper. The study of the English language is not always as lively or entertaining as we, the students, would expect, but through her activities, PhD. Jolana Miškovičová managed to make from her lectures a good opportunity to speak freely and to make us understand how to adapt our speech in each situation. Last but not least, I want to give my special thanks to Associate Professor PhD. Ada Böhmerová, because she made me see the beauty of knowing how words were formed, when they appeared, how neologisms work and, mainly, for always having a smile on her face and a good word for the progress I made.



And ... one more thing. To all the students in Bratislava, let me give you some incentives and encouragement for you to come here and study as an Erasmus+ student:

1. Just do it! Realize that you are a strong, capable, independent adult, who can surpass all the difficulties while you are having an enormous amount of fun!
2. Come, travel and get acquainted with a new country and its culture, with different customs, people, and learn as much as you can, because you will never forget this period!
3. Make friends for life and put a smile on your face! It will last for at least 5 months, if not for a lifetime!

from all points of view. The welcome week organized for the Erasmus+ students was the perfect opportunity to get in contact with the locals and with your neighbours or fellow students (who were to become your future friends) following the same set of questions: “What’s your name?”, “Where are you from?”, “What are you studying?” The answers to the questions led to the conclusion that you had something in common with the person with whom you were speaking and in this manner you had one additional friend for the future activities. During those seven days I realised the beauty of being abroad, despite being all alone and, moreover, discovered a small part of Bratislava. “The Little-Big City” is famous for its architecture, for its beautiful town squares, castles, old churches and the Danube that creates a unique atmosphere. The excitement of discovering a new town all by myself seemed to overcome all my initial fears.



The main reason for which I went there was to improve my English and the fact that I had to use English daily, for different purposes, helped me most of all. Moreover, you learn new ways of studying and also you come across new ways of teaching. All these aspects are parts of your academic development, but what the Erasmus+ mobility triggers most is your self-development.

I have many beautiful memories and the importance of it all lies in small things, like sitting in the sun, on the balcony of my dormitory, speaking with my student fellow about where the society is heading for, or evenings when we were the witnesses of a live performance of some friends singing and playing the guitar, on the roof of the building, watching the sun going down. These small things make a difference in life and I could describe the educational system of the Slovakian universities in many pages but, in the end, apart from having a better English and more knowledge of the subjects I studied there, I will keep forever in my heart and mind only the perfect memories, the perfect moments, and the people I met there.

In this manner, I, as an Erasmus+ student, became a better person, because my mind was changed and sharpened by the information given to me by extraordinary teachers, and also because my soul will be forever stamped with beautiful places, memories, and people.

I lived in a dormitory called Atriarky, Building C, and before leaving back home, one of my friends told me that for her “C” comes from the Italian word “casa”, meaning “home”. For me, the “C” comes from the word “acasã” and, for each one of us, being in your home or at home gives you a feeling of fulfilment, of happiness. This is what Erasmus+ meant for me: joy, fulfilment, and a better me.

Last but not least, I would like to give my special thanks to my professors in Bratislava. It is said that each dream starts with a teacher who believes in you and I am thankful to all the professors I had for making me believe in and pursue my dream. I will always be grateful to PhDr. Mária Huttová, who facilitated the understanding of the English literature and made me realize that it is not a burden to read a book of 500 pages, but it is a pleasure, because with each paragraph you get acquainted with a world that is impossible



and more recently, a space-tourism company, Virgin Galactic. This latest venture has been the main point of focus in recent years for Branson because of its daring aim. He partnered up with Scaled Composites and formed The Spaceship Company, which is currently working on developing a suborbital spaceplane and making good progress in that direction. There have already been 500 tickets bought for the Virgin Galactic space voyages, a fact which acts as yet another stamp of approval for Branson’s continuous courage to push the boundaries, innovate and attempt to make the impossible, possible.

Branson once declared that his interest in life stems from setting himself huge, apparently unachievable challenges and then trying to rise above them. This philosophy transpires not only in his business ventures, but also in his personal life. His most famous sporting achievements include, for example, the first crossing by hot-air balloon of the Atlantic in 1987 and the Pacific in 1991. He also applied his big thinking to his charity work by setting up a separate organisation entitled Virgin Unite in 2004. The organisation has since partnered up with multiple NGOs and has got involved in hundreds of projects aiming to make sustainable change through economic development, focusing on social and environmental issues. Even more, in 2013, Branson followed in Bill Gates’s footsteps and pledged to donate half of his estimated fortune of 5 billion dollars to charity, with the aim of helping to create “a healthy, equitable and peaceful world for future generations to enjoy” (Branson, 2013). It is this sort of gesture that summarises the essence of Richard Branson, the man and the business person

All in all, despite all the challenges he faced starting from his childhood, Branson managed to become one of the biggest business moguls of the 20th and 21st centuries by trusting his instinct, taking brave risks and not being afraid to fail when trying new ideas. But perhaps the most important and defining aspect is the fact that his prime motivation was by no means the money. Rather, his drive stemmed from his innate curiosity and desire to create things that ultimately improve people’s lives. In his own words: “Above all, you want to create something you’re proud of. This has always been my philosophy of business. I can honestly say that I have never gone into any business purely to make money. If that is the sole motive, then I believe you are better off not doing it”.

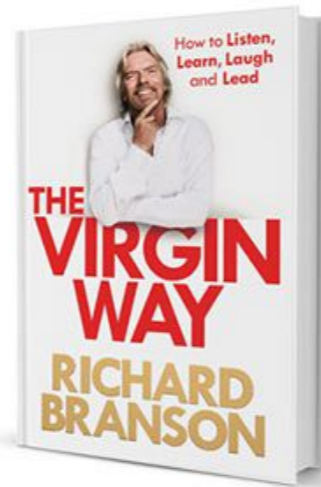
3. Conclusions

Richard Branson’s journey to success has been paved with challenges. In my opinion, the reasons why he is such an inspirational character stems from the fact that he managed to turn those challenges into lessons, which would later inform his business decisions. For myself, and any other young entrepreneur, these are the most important droplets of wisdom to bear in mind:

- Even though he started out as a dyslexic, unadapted student, he embraced his personal failings and societal judgement and made the most out of his positive qualities. As a general lesson, we need to accept we cannot be good at everything. As such, we should exploit our best qualities and learn to delegate the

tasks that lie beyond our skillset.

- Branson managed to be the first in his field in quite a few business ventures, such as his music record shop or his magazine. He developed a good eye at spotting market demand, and creating business solutions to fill that gap, which later on turned into profit. I believe the way to achieve that is by being aware of global and local trends, but also of your own lifestyle and social circle. The best business ideas can come from personal experiences.
- Much like Branson, trust your instinct, believe in your ideas, but at the same time be prepared to make mistakes or fail, and learn from those experiences. There is only so much certainty research and number crunching can give you.
- As mentioned above, one of the things that makes Richard Branson such a popular figure is the fact that he does business out of passion and an interest to solve problems, not solely out of the desire for big financial rewards. I believe the lesson driven out of this is to find a business area you are truly passionate about, which can impact society positively and do it well. Customers will recognise and appreciate that, and the financial gain will follow.



Webography:

Biography.com: <http://www.biography.com/people/richard-branson-9224520#personal-life>

Mirror newspaper article (2013): <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sir-richard-branson-give-away-1721394>

Reuters interview (2013): <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-richardbranson-virgin-idUSBRE99N01U20131024>

Richard Branson autobiography: *Losing my virginity* (2011). Preview available from: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NWxnDythozIC&oi=fnd&pg=PT1&dq=richard+branson&ots=MHg8-R5oyZ&sig=UGxDGe3UOCMJxxJn80Lbcavio0#v=onepage&q=richard%20branson&f=false>

Richard Branson chapter in book (2016): *Creative Successful Dyslexic: 23 High Achievers Share Their Story*

Virgin website: <http://www.virgin.com/entrepreneur/richard-bransons-top-20-virgin-inspirational-insights>

Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Branson

Before you leave in Erasmus+, during the meetings that try to show you what this study mobility means, you will be told that it is a life-changing experience, that it is an ideal time in order to grow as a human being, and you will think that everything is just a cliché, but until you arrive there you cannot understand that those words are the conclusions of many students who thought exactly the same as you at some point in the past. Also, in those meetings you will be shown a graph that reveals the variety of emotions a student goes through while dealing with this experience. The graph beautifully exposes the truth: the Erasmus+ student is really sad, almost depressed before his departure (and I remember how much I cried when I left behind a mother in tears, in the bus station), during his Erasmus+ mobility the student is euphoric (the same mother who was crying, is now smiling because she hears the excitement in your voice) and after the arrival back home the student is sad again (my mother was extremely happy, but I was now the



one in tears, because I was missing everything).

Even though each Erasmus+ mobility is unique in its own way, all the students experience the same difficulties and especially the beautiful parts of their search and struggle for a better self.

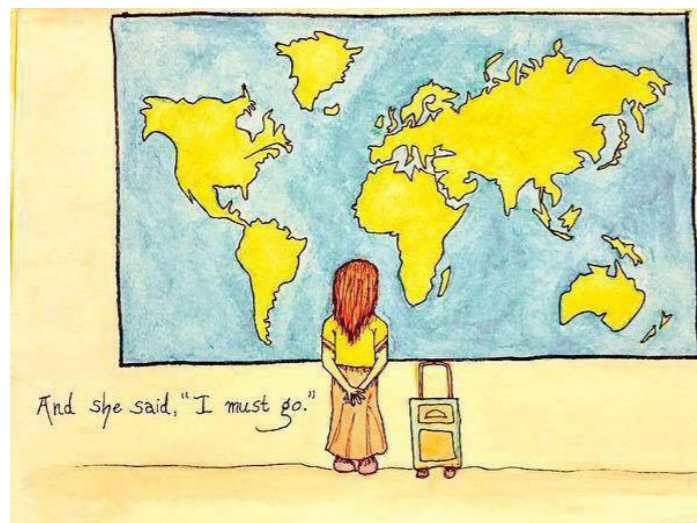
My experience, as I mentioned before, started in *Bratislava*, which is the capital of Slovakia, and I can assure you that since the beginning everything appeared to me as a struggle. Everything seemed scary in the beginning and I was terrified (maybe because it was 2 a.m. when I arrived there and I could not distinguish what can be beautiful in being far away from my beloved ones). The main reason was the unknown; I did not know what to expect from the “Little-Big City”, as they call Bratislava, I was not sure if I would be able to speak in English properly in order to make myself understood. I was not sure of anything, but this is the beauty of Erasmus: everything is a mystery.

Even though I had so many worries, I realized soon that I can be fearless with a little bit of help from the locals, because the first Slovakian face I saw was the one of my smiling ESN buddy (the person who was assigned to me, previously, in charge with providing me help, pieces of advice and information about Slovakia when needed) who was very excited to pick me up from the bus station (without taking into account that it was so late). Being an Erasmus+ student you have the opportunity to meet other cultures, to learn from what seems good to you in each person and I learned how to smile more, because the Slovaks are very kind and they try to help you all the time, when you need help and also when you do not.

From that moment onward, my journey in Bratislava and all my stay there turned out to be memorable

Destination: Bratislava, Slovakia
Mission: Study, Have Fun & Live

Adina-Ionela Toma, III, ER
Coordinator: PhD. Lecturer Mihaela Culea



My mission started on the 7th of February 2015 and ended in June after I successfully completed all the tasks mentioned in the title of the article, but it is noticeable that these tasks were not like the homework every student hates, but on the contrary, I performed them with great pleasure. And I must confess that I want another mission and many others to come.

I can firmly assure you that this is the main thought of every Erasmus student when he/she returns home. You become addicted! You become addicted of trying new things, of meeting and greeting somebody on the lobby on your way to the bathroom (somebody whom you do not know the name for sure, but you say "hi", anyway, and it makes you smile instantly); addicted of hearing and speaking English daily, of making friends so easily, friends with whom you share the tears when you miss home, but especially the happy moments; addicted of travelling, of eating and drinking with many people around you every time (you will hardly be alone).

Mainly, you become addicted to testing your limits. That's right! During the months you spend in Erasmus+ your limits will be tested many times, because you overcome all your fears step by step, in an unknown environment, without the help of your beloved ones, but the feeling you get when you realize that you have done everything on your own is so gratifying...



To Speak about my Erasmus Experience – Esto es la bomba!

Iuliana-Alexandra Fleşcan-Lovin-Arseni, III, TI
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Andreia-Irina Suciuc

Somebody stop me! You must know this sentence from *The Mask*. Nobody can say it better than Jim Carey. I started my so-called article with this sentence because I must confess that I find it quite difficult to describe my best experience without falling into describing silly/happy/boring happenings. Anyway, here I am, trying to make up my mind how to describe as authentically as possible my Erasmus experience. I know you're a lazy reader (you youngsters), so I decided to divide my little modest piece of writing into 7 clear sections. I'm watching you, so don't try to skip any of them.

My arrival in Oviedo

(As a matter of fact, University of Oviedo, Spain, was my Erasmus destination).

I have barely crossed the frontiers of Bacau, so travelling from Romania to Spain was quite a rapid change. Not to mention the fact that I'm a useless being when it comes to spatial orientation. However, I took the bull by the horns and I did it. Then the flight, the arrival in Madrid, foreign people and so on and so forth. That's the easy part and you realize that especially when you get home.

In Oviedo... Well, I travelled by bus from Madrid to Oviedo and I was on the verge of getting down in the wrong station, but my guardian angel stopped me at the right moment. Thanks to a program offered by the University of Oviedo, I had the opportunity to get in touch with a local student, so she was waiting for me there. Boring details...

Then I arrived to my temporary four months' home. A flat with three rooms, special for Erasmus students. I guessed this because the level of dirtiness was higher than I have ever thought. Do you know what I did? I simply got used to it. The landlord was very nice from the very beginning. However, he caused me a little (BIG) concern when he told me that I am supposed to share the flat with two male students from Portugal. Funny, isn't it? Happily, they stayed there only for a fortnight so... So I lived 4 months in a flat ALONE. What did that mean? Well, I don't have enough space to explain this.

First impressions

Anyone can imagine the feelings they might have when embracing the Erasmus experience. But to really live it... Well, that's another story. You're afraid, but you feel powerful at the same time. *I'm going to conquer this stupid world!* This is the first thing that crosses your mind. If you find yourself as a



shy/pessimistic person the Erasmus experience is the perfect cold shower that helps you change your attitude. I was really scared, I must confess that, that scared that when I got out the following day to do the shopping, I started to count how many times I crossed the streets, so as to make sure that I was able to get back. This was temporary, of course. At the end of May, I knew Oviedo better than Bacau. Actually I still do so. The foreign Spanish city became my city and those labyrinthine streets were not a mystery any longer.

Academic life

Do I really have to write about it? Well, I find it quite challenging to speak about it, taking into consideration the fact that the majority of my courses were in superior years of study, namely the third and the fourth ones. I was completely scared at the beginning. I had the feeling that I am not going to pass any of my exams, that everyone is bright but me. I had classes with students who spent a whole university year in the UK. And me? Just a student in the second year of study from Bacau. That was almost entirely my sick imagination of course, because we are all well prepared at our home university, so a little bit of extra determination was enough to keep pace with the Spanish students.

If I had not been that obsessed about having high grades, I suppose I would have been happier



she was my friend/mother/sister/guru. All my grief, despair, questions, doubts were sent to her via e-mail and then, with some magic spells she used to turn them into joy, courage, curiosity and determination. Gracias, Ms. S.!!!

Personal life: La Vida Loca

There is something that I like to call “the Erasmus thing” because I didn’t succeed in finding a proper word neither in English, nor in Romanian for the complex amalgam of feelings, emotional stages, joy, fear, carefulness, independence and dependence. It may sound romantic or simply stupid for others, but this is indeed a unique experience.

Students who intend to study abroad should be careful when speaking with those who had the same experience, because sharing your thoughts upon something means actually sharing your own personal perceptions, which are, obviously, highly subjective. I was one of those asking for opinions and everybody was telling me only how great it was. I believed them. That much that I set my expectations too high. So, when I arrived in Oviedo, I thought that everything must be perfect, breath-taking, unbelievable from the beginning to the end. Don’t do that! No matter where you go, there will be boring, sad, happy, fantastic days, because this is how things usually happen in normal life.

Unfortunately, I took my academic activities so seriously, that I forgot how important my personal life was. However, had the opportunity to make friends and to do something new (again) when I decided to go in a trip in Portugal, the other side of Europe. I am not allowed to use more space in this journal, so I won’t develop this subject (even though I would like to because it was great!!). Three days, I lived that “Erasmus thing” at the highest possible level: new wonderful places, amazing people and the joy of doing something memorable for myself.

After I finished with my exams, I remained with 10 days to end up my Erasmus experience. The bookworm decided to revenge so she went to parties, said good bye to all friends, met new people even at the end and tried her best to make the last of this experience unforgettable.

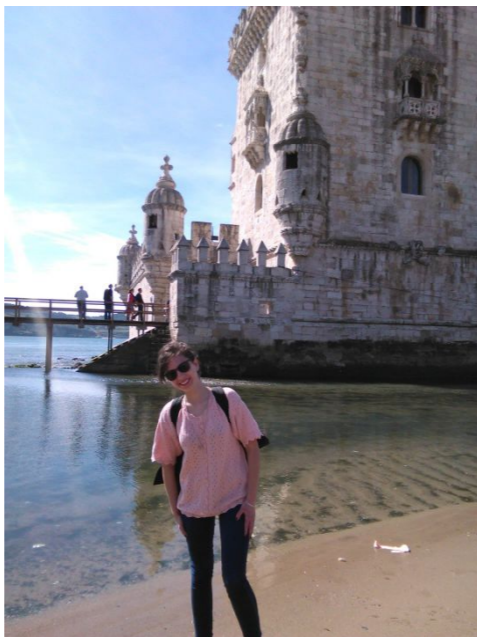
Deal with it, young lady!

I don’t want to scare anyone, but you should be aware about the fact that anyone found in the same situation is going to need time, patience and moral support to adapt to the new life. For me it proved to be quite easy because I had prepared a *battle technique*: SHUT UP AND FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCT! Very tangible, isn’t it? What I want to say is that I didn’t beg for mercy, I didn’t cry for my bed or for my mother’s terribly delicious food (well, I did it a little). I had to tell my parents and my friends so many times that everything is going to be fine that I started to believe that myself.

After all, I had two options, either to negate everything and to fight depression; or to accept new things, learn to love them and so to enjoy my *Erasmus thing*. I am lucky/unlucky because I am that kind of person that doesn’t think too much when it comes to making a decision. Nothing is perfect and the Erasmus experience doesn’t make an exception. But remember that imperfection is the feature that makes things appear more interesting to us.

and paid more attention to my personal and social life. I know I am half bookworm, half human being, but when you know that if you don’t pass your exams you’ll have to pay back a huge amount of money to the EU, you definitely forget about your humanity. In theory, keeping the balance seems to be piece of cake. It’s not.

Everything brings in our lives advantages and disadvantages. This was also the case of my exaggerated devotion to my study. In this way I got very close to my teachers there so I had the chance to have extremely interesting and useful conversations that still help me and guide me here, in Romania. Not to mention my Erasmus coordinator there who was more than friendly and kind with me as she offered both her academic and personal support. But, the best of the best was my coordinator from my home university. During four months and a half



I

up my sleeve. I started thinking, ok, they can cook or make the best video presentation, but no one did this before, so I sang! I sang from the bottom of my heart. My voice was heard somewhere in the dark... meanwhile, the slideshow depicting our beautiful country was running in the background and everyone was thrilled: *Who is singing? Is the music part of the background?* When the moment was over, and the sea of applause embraced me, that was the instant when I felt like being the proudest person on earth because I was Romanian.



Did you know that in Prague there is a festival especially created for the Romanian people? Well, now you know! And I am again more than proud to say that I had the amazing chance to sing not only for my people, but also for the Czech people; they seem to be very impressed by our way of being, they believe that we are really hardworking and, even more, very kind as people. What can I say, this is indeed the way we are... The story started when I found an Orthodox church in Prague and the priest there heard that I can sing, so, he asked me to join this activity by sharing my talent, so I did and you cannot imagine how good it felt to be next to the people who speak your language, it felt like home, a little bit different but, still, like home. I even invited some Turkish colleagues from university and they looked really funny dancing on our music.

Studying abroad, I also understood how different we are as human beings and what a difference your homeland can make, that place where you belong.

I enjoyed my stay in Pardubice, even if I had some moments when the only thing that could have cheered me up was to be back in Romania. It is just a normal feeling that each and every student abroad has, the culture shock, but I managed to get over it and enjoy every moment. Now, when I look back, I realize that maybe I did not ‘seize’ the best of my Erasmus, I look at those many photographs and I miss everything. The travelling by train, the beautiful lake with swans and ducks in front of the hall of residence, I miss the cold air and the coloured buildings, I miss the language that I could not understand and, most of all, I miss Prague.

When I am writing down all of these thoughts of mine, I wish I could turn the clock back and re-experience all those emotions from the moment I left my home. Trust me and become an Erasmus student!



To be or not to be an Erasmus student?

Nicoleta Paic, III, EF

Coordinator: PhD. Lecturer Mihaela Culea

At the beginning I had to answer this question myself too, and I have to admit that I took this experience as a challenge, a once-in-a-lifetime challenge. And why is that? Well, firstly I will give you a piece of advice: if you are in the position to choose between going and not going abroad as a part of the Erasmus exchange programme, my strong advice is **DO IT!**



Let me tell you my story. I was in my second year of studies when I heard about this opportunity of studying abroad. I never thought I could do it, but still, here I am, writing about it and thinking with so much nostalgia at my amazing experience. And it is an experience to live by yourself in a country you are not accustomed with, where you have to integrate and live among the people there or adapt to their society, and much more to their lifestyle. It is amazing how we, as foreigners and not only that, as students, have so many open gates, it is a personal chance you have to take and embrace.

My Erasmus stay took place in the Czech Republic, more precisely, in Pardubice, a small town somewhere at one hour travelling distance by train from the capital, Prague. It was the town where I lived for almost five months. Can you imagine yourself having your entire life for those five months in only one luggage and thinking about the fact that you will be all alone in a country about which you know nothing? I mean, of course, you will Google it, but still, the feeling you get when you explore it all by your-

self is beyond compare, the discovery of new historical and cultural places, the wandering on the streets, the meeting of new faces, new people, new nationalities, and oh, this is the best part of the Erasmus programme. I have met people from Portugal, Greece, France, Poland, Italy, Spain, Finland, Turkey, Russia ... it was this multicultural mixture that made me feel fantastic, and yet so small!

If you are asking me about how school was going on, I will tell you that having this opportunity to experience a new mentality and teaching manner concerning your studies, you will be amazed at how much you will improve your language and, furthermore, your way of thinking. For me, studying at the University of Pardubice made me feel more confident, I had the chance to actually say what was on my mind, I was able to finally share and communicate my thoughts in English and the fact that I had no other choice than speaking in English gave me the confidence that I needed.

Another episode to remember from my Erasmus stay was the one called The National Evening. On this event we were supposed to cook something traditional from our country and to try as much as possible to make the best presentation of the place we came from. The students from all the other countries came in groups of three to eight, so for them it was much easier to share their tasks (two cooked, other two students made the presentation and so on) and of course everything was amazing in the case of each country. But then it was my turn. The only Romanian student who had to prepare the presentation all alone plus the cooking; at the beginning, I felt a little bit overwhelmed, but then I tried to calm down and I used the ace

To be an Erasmus student, or not to be, that's the question

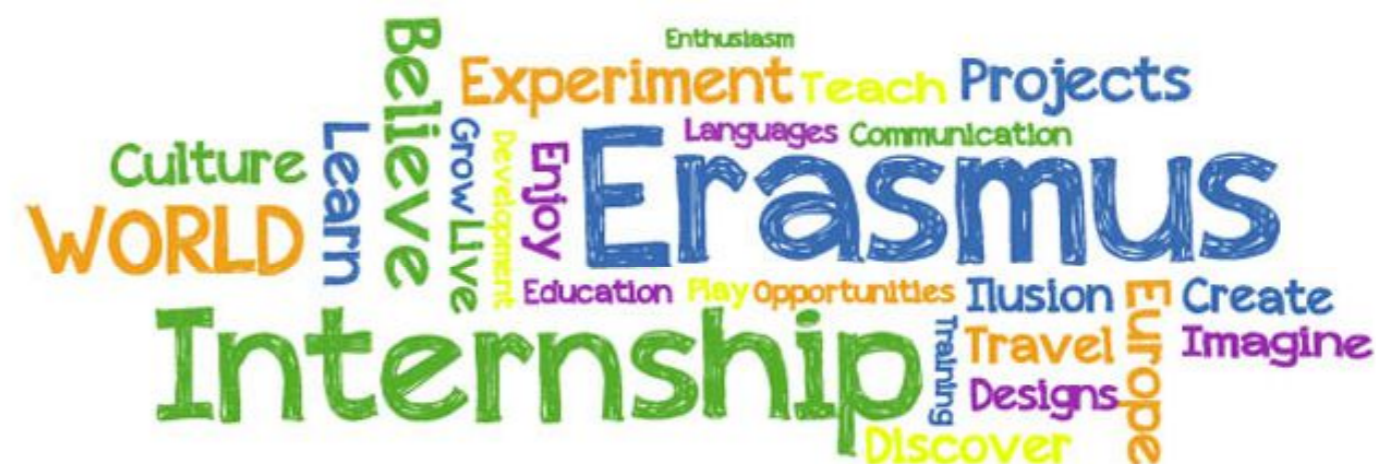
There is no such question actually. I didn't realise how important this scholarship is first time I heard about it, because I was too narrow-minded to accept that it would enlarge my view about the world. No, actually I needed it to know myself. But that's more related to my psychological/personal life and I don't want to feel guilty if you get bored because of me.

I think there is a general phenomenon among those who experience the "Erasmus" thing. When you are there, you may have the feeling that are not doing enough or right, you don't know if you are ready to leave that place. You feel bad that you didn't have enough time to say good bye to all the people you cared about and vice versa etc. But in the end, you get back home with confusing feelings: happy with your old life, unhappy because a tiny piece of your soul is out there, on the other side of Europe which is in my case, Oviedo (by the way, if you ever have the opportunity, go there!).

Four months? Time is definitely relative, especially when everything is so intense and valuable. No I do realise how many priceless things I've learned there: I've learned about the use of English in real life, about a wonderful Spanish city, and more important about myself! So, you'd better try it now, or you shall die in non-knowledge.

Now, if my silly story helped you in any way, please pray for me to get another Erasmus scholarship during my MA. I promised to an old friend of mine (the Atlantic Ocean) that I am going to pay a visit to him in the near future. I have to keep my word now ☺.

Buena suerte, chicos!



My Work & Travel experience in America

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My *Work & Travel* experience in the USA, last summer, was one of a kind. I had been dreaming about visiting America since I was a child and this programme gave me the opportunity to fulfil my desire. I left for this journey all by myself and honestly I was a little scared because I had no idea of what was expecting for me at my destination point. After a very long flight and several hours spent in Greyhound stations and buses, I finally reached to my final stop. I met my employers, my roommates and my co-workers. There were people of different nationalities, like Spanish, Czech, Mexican, Greek and of course Romanian but fortunately for me, everyone was friendly and open-minded and we all got along well.

I worked and lived on the North shore of the Lake Tahoe, California, the largest alpine lake of North America. It is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. The lake is surrounded by beaches, mountains and forests so you can imagine the landscape I lived in for almost 4 months.

As the days went by we started to bond with one another more and new beautiful friendships were born. It was a delight

to discover each and every single new person with his/her different accent, habits, ideas and food; yes, food especially, because every nation was eating differently from the other ones and I got to try some new types of food and borrow some recipes.

My employers were great people, they treated us like family and I never felt like I was under stress or pressure while working. They took us to a golf course where we raced with the golf carts, to baseball games



and a theatre festival on the beach where we had a lot of fun. We had lots of fun activities after work hours.

After my labour contract ended I planned a trip to the places I had forever dreamt of seeing in this lifetime. I packed my bags, said goodbye to my friends there and headed to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Hollywood, The Grand Canyon, Las Vegas and finally, The Big Apple. I visited some amazing places along this trip, walked lots of kilometres and met new wonderful people which made it the more incredible than it had already been.

This is a very short summary of my *Work & Travel* experience in America, but it would take me hundreds of pages to tell every story about the people I met, places I've seen, things that I've done and experiences I've lived there, throughout my journey. However, I will share with you one thing.

Our last destination, before heading back to Romania was New York. I loved each and every city



and place I visited, but New York is different from all of them. I've never seen a more different and exciting city. Day and night there's movement, there's something to do, to see, to discover. We stayed in a nice hostel in Times Square and after arriving we left our luggage there and began wandering around the streets near our place. Soon enough we got to the Red Stairs from Times Square and we were all fascinated. So many people, lights, shops and the biggest billboards in the world, literally. I think it was 10 or 11 pm but there, you get the feeling that time stops. It's hard not to get lost in that wilderness so we got up on the stairs and spent some time there while trying to decide what exactly we wanted to see the following days. We got to see some amazing places although it rained a lot. From the architecture of buildings to the lovely vintage or luxury shops and food places with dozens of different types of food, that city gives you a different vibe. The thing that struck me was the fact that no matter the time of the day, year or weather conditions that city is alive, non-stop, every day, one morning to the next, warm or cold, sunny or raining. New York is and will be one of my favourite places on earth and I really hope I get the chance to see it one more time, someday.

For me, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity and experience and I think it cannot be matched with anything else I've ever lived in my entire life. It was a great chance for me to grow as an individual, to broaden my horizon and learn new things about myself. It wasn't all fun and games but I rather learn from the bad times and remember the good ones.

I encourage each and every student to have this experience at least once while studying, it's definitely worth it!