

ENGLISH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CATALONIA: FROM THE CURRICULA TO THE CLASSROOMS

Maria Pascual Garcia

Regional Ministry of Education (Government of Catalonia)

Technical advisor

Spain

mpascu66@xtec.cat

Lidia Barreiro Taboada

Institut Provençana

Teacher and Erasmus coordinator

Spain

lbarreiro@proven.cat

Tertiary vocational education (short-cycle courses) in Catalonia has been renewed in recent years; all the official curricula have been adapted to the changing market demands and requirements. One of the main innovations added has been to include Professional English (ESP) in vocational courses. Apart from that, the law which comprises all these measures, also encourages content-teachers to teach part of their subjects in English. In order to implement these latest innovative practices in vocational schools all over the region, new teacher training programmes which include courses on the CLIL approach and other methodologies have been introduced in the yearly teacher training plan carried out by the Regional Ministry and the Teacher Training Institutes. Their main goal is to help vocational and EFL teachers design and plan tasks for both types of lessons: CLIL and ESP. These courses and seminars are also aimed at helping teachers and learners distinguish that although both types of courses serve to improve vocational students' foreign language skills to be used in a Professional context, both courses differ slightly in their form, goals and structure. ESP should have as one of its goals to improve students' CALP skills (Cummins 1979) and CLIL courses, despite bearing in mind students' language thresholds, should have as their core aim the teaching of content, taking care of the materials used, maybe some will have to be adapted in order to be understood by the learners, despite being authentic. The use of authentic material is obviously promoted. During this session the approaches taken into consideration when designing the syllabuses and tasks for both types of lessons will be exposed, as well as the basics to be considered which are the different job profiles and tasks.

Seminars and workshops are also regularly planned during the year in order to exchange teaching experiences. A network of teachers who create, design and exchange materials has also been set up, and obviously their linguistic needs have also been catered by a valuable offering of language courses. Teacher training is essential to achieve the aims previously mentioned, content-teachers cannot work alone without the advice and help of ESP teachers, and at the same time ESP teachers might need the help of content-teachers in order to contextualise their lessons. Some EFL teachers who have to teach ESP have never taught them before so they need to be trained in ESP, a new perspective in EFL.

In short, designing activities, lesson planning, and tapping into students' previous language knowledge might seem to be treacherous milestones when using the target language in class, but they have been surmounted by our vocational teachers and ESP teachers in Catalonia, as it will be shown in this session.

One of the main problems that VET teachers have is the lack of materials ready to use. This is a common problem for both ESP and content teachers. To illustrate the work that VET teachers are performing in Catalonia, materials elaborated for Chemistry Vocational Courses will be presented, for both ESP and content subjects. For the elaboration of these materials previous studies about CLIL in the classroom were assumed (Navés & Muñoz, 1999; Navés & Quincannon, 1998; Marsh and Langé, 1999). The methodology used was based on cooperative learning, task based learning, graphic organizers, tables etc. (Cummins & Swain, 1998; Halliwell, 1992; VVAA, 2002), and also the use of scientific language in the classroom. (Kasper, 1996; Parkinson, 2000; Swals, 2000; Tarantino 1991; Winstanley and Bjork, 2002). Some examples of student's work will be provided.

Keywords: CLIL, LSP, Vocational Education, Curricula.

Biographical Notes:

María Pascual García is an English teacher at different secondary schools and colleges for many years, but currently working as a Technical Advisor at the Regional Ministry of Education. Her work duties as a technical advisor consist in taking part in several multilateral European projects, designing material networks and organising teacher training programmes, seminars, talks and initiatives aimed at introducing VET teachers to CLIL approach, among others.

Lidia Barreiro Taboada holds a degree in Chemistry from the University of Barcelona. She has been teaching in Chemistry vocational courses since 1998. She has taken part in several Leonardo and ERASMUS projects. She took a year's leave to produce CLIL materials and spent a year in the USA as a visiting teacher. She is also a teacher trainer.

