

# **Global Understanding as the Rosetta Stone of Global Education: GU fitting within the Spanish Educational System and Knowledge Brokering Initiatives from Vocational Training Programs.**

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## **Abstract**

F. Ribalta is taking part for the first time in the international Global Understanding program. In this presentation we would like to show the outcomes at an initial stage regarding its fitting within the Spanish education system. At this stage, students take part outside their formal curriculum, as they are involved in different forms of education: Upper secondary school (night school and distance learning Baccalaureate) and vocational training programs (blended and face-to-face tuition). The data compilation from students with different profiles show that the feasibility and advisability of including GU as part of the formal curriculum should be explored. Moreover, the two-way exchange of information and views from GU college students and our students from social work and community services programs is an added value for the quality, depth and frankness of discussion.

## **Introduction**

Over the years, the Spanish education system has progressively included foreign language courses in its multilingual plan, following the European Union's objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>1</sup>. Until the 90s, the first foreign language most taught was French, however, this changed with society and has moved to second place, English occupying the first place<sup>2</sup>. Throughout student's life up to university, they receive in

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<sup>1</sup> The study of a first foreign language and, at least, the knowledge of another one.

<sup>2</sup> The change was brought about by the Organic Law on Education (LOE) of 2006 and, subsequently, by the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE) in 2013. As Arroyo indicates, it is established the "key competences to be acquired by students in "linguistic communication" referring to official and foreign languages; they include as one of the principles of the educational system the promotion of plurilingualism, and as an objective of the same the training in at least one foreign language and its promotion from the second cycle of Infant Education» (Arroyo, 2013, p. 7).

each course a few predetermined hours of this language. This also happens in vocational training.

However, today's globalized and technological society requires going deeper into other languages in order to connect with people from other cultures. However, the students' understanding of them is often based on what the media, series or films transmit to them. On the other hand, despite the existence of this need, not everyone can travel to study abroad. For this reason, we believed that the *Global Understanding* international program was an ideal proposal to be able, not only to practice the language, but also to assimilate the cultural differences. Aligned perfectly with the commitment of our cultural and linguistic immersion school, this virtual mobility has been carried out during the current academic year with the expected success. However, this program was implemented on a voluntary basis. Thus, the participants (both teachers and students) came outside their academic schedule to carry out the experience. After an in-depth analysis, we concluded that inserting the program into the offered vocational training programs was possible and would give greater value to the results.

Thus, the thesis that we develop in this article and that we find is the following: The integration of Global Understanding in the VET Higher Technician in Sociocultural and Tourist Animation is possible and improves the communicative and linguistic competence in foreign languages of our students.

### Stages

The different phases of the investigation that we have carried out have been the following:

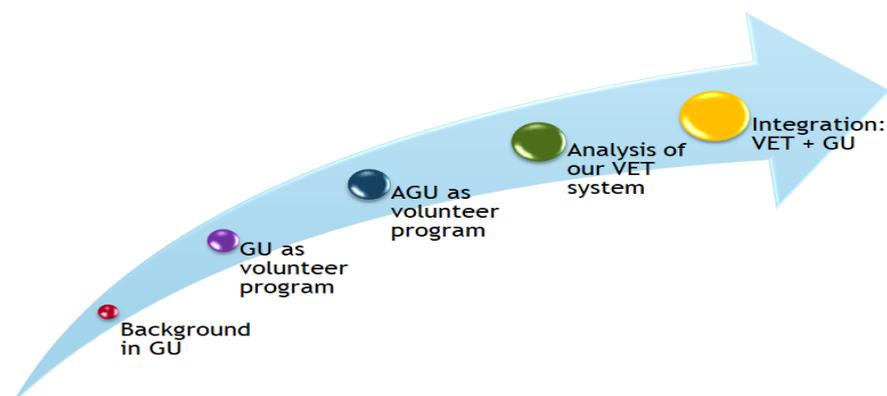


Figure 1. Research Stages

The initial phase from which we started was not barren. The project coordinator had previously participated in the program in another school. When she transferred it to the F. Ribalta, she had already made a previous analysis of the situation, with the aim of incorporating it into the VET studies -that is to say, the original thesis had already been put forward. Thus, in phase 0 we had the knowledge and firm approaches to verify with the initial proof of implementation of the program.

The next step would be to verify that the implementation of the program in our center was doable. For this purpose, we did not unite during this academic year in an experimental way. In order to do this, the participants were carefully chosen, and the work was organized into 3 committees:

- *Management Committee*: made up of the coordinator, the Head of Distance Learning Studies, and the Head of Vocational Training Studies. They would be in charge of everything related to the choice of students, the location of the program in the operation of the center, as well as its promotion both to distance education and vocational training.
- *Academic Committee*: made up of English teachers in VET studies. They would carry out the sessions with the students, both the initial training and the connections. In addition, they would help in the search for participating students.
- *Technical Committee*: made up of teachers from the IT department and the center's ICT coordinator. This team was responsible for the technical functioning of the connections, the good condition of the equipment and the quality of each link.

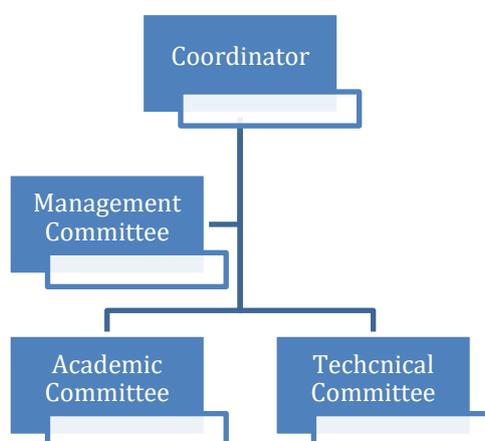


Figure 2. Work structure in research.

With this distribution, a strong and well-organized working structure was achieved. The collaboration of all the components has been fundamental, as well as a fluid communication based on coordination meetings and the use of emails and messaging.

The main feature is that it was offered voluntarily, i.e., outside of school hours. In this way, students who signed up had to make the effort to stay one more hour at the center or go to school earlier, in order to participate. The same happened with the participating teachers, that we have worked in a voluntary way outside our working hours and with no major objective than to offer an added value to our center and students. More specifically, they were summoned half an hour before the connections to be able to organize the session, review with them the different topics they had prepared to ask questions and resolve last-minute doubts. During the sessions, the teachers were simply moderators.

On the other hand, the students who signed up for each batch of connections were not always the same, although many wanted to repeat. This was also a difficulty, as the whole mechanics had to be explained again and they only benefited from the program once.

As indicated above, the target of this program was vet students. Thus, during the first two synchronous connections, they were offered only to them. However, because of the schedule, it was difficult for the students to participate, as most of them worked and did not fit in. Thus, it was decided to widen the range of participants in the third synchronous connection, and it was offered to older students who were studying high school, in its three modalities (day, night and distance). The participation, in this case, was overwhelming since the connections coincided when they finished their classes.

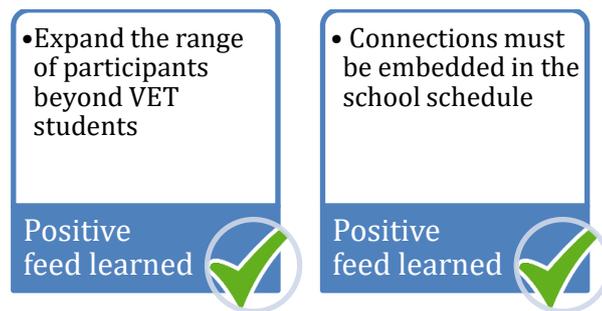


Figure 3. Positive feed learned.

We test below a set of asynchronous connections (AGU) to see if it might be of interest for our purpose of incorporating it into the VET educational system. The result was adequate, but we reserved it for distance learning. We believe that the experience of face-to-face debates is unique. Therefore, we discarded this option to include it in the VET.

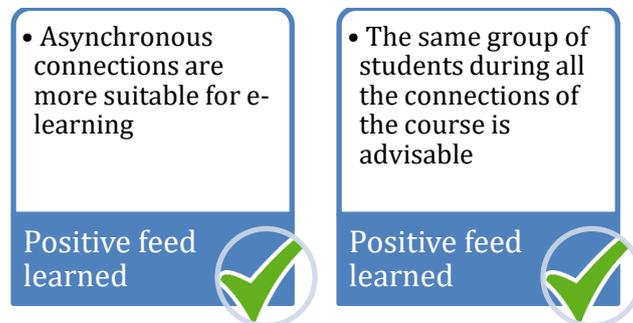


Figure 4. Positive feed learned II

With all this, the formula was sought to fit into the educational system of vocational training offered by the center

## Findings (VET System)

The following training cycles are taught in our training centre:

Higher level VET	Sociocultural Animation and Tourism (F)
	Social Integration (B) (F)
	Primary Education (B) (F)
	Promotion of Gender Equality (F)
Intermediate level VET	Attention to people in a situation of dependency (B) (F)
Methodology	(B) Blended-learning
	(F) Face-to-face learning

Figure 5. VET offer in IES F.Ribalta

The VET chosen was "Sociocultural and Tourist Animation", hereinafter known as "TASOC". There are several reasons for this:

- More hours of English than in the other courses
- Best adapted curriculum to GU program:
  - Needs in the tourism sector to improve language skills
  - Concordance with the cultural section of the studies and cultural immersion offered by the program
- Students of over 18 years of age, motivated and ready (if not already) to enter the labour market.
- Ad-hoc training of professionals in transversal skills
- Direct relationship with the labour market

TASOC belongs to the professional branch "Sociocultural and Community Services" (Royal Decree 1684/2011 of 18 November (BOE 27/12/11)). This is a higher vocational education program of 2000 hours in duration, distributed in 2 academic years. In both years some subjects are taught in English. Specifically, in the first year, the compulsory subjects are "Technical English I", with a total duration of 96 hours (3 hours per week) and "English" with the same duration<sup>3</sup>. In the second year, there is the continuation, "Technical English II", this time with 40 hours during the year (2h weekly)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> These are "hours reserved for teaching in English", which in some cycles are used to reinforce any other module you choose to teach in this language. This is not the case in this cycle, so they are used to reinforce the linguistic competences of the students.

<sup>4</sup>You can see the drilldown of hours in the following extract from the regulation:  
<http://www.ceice.gva.es/documents/161863064/162743699/anisoculturloe3h.pdf/d90ba6a2-c44d-4034-9e22-0117601e675c>

1st year	Hours /week	Hours /year	2nd year	Hours /week	Hours /year
<b>English</b>	3	96	<b>Technical English II</b>	2	40
<b>Technical English I</b>	3	96			

Figure 6. Table with the hourly distribution and by English modules in TASOC

As for the professional modules, it has the following structure:

1st year	2nd year
The Methodology of Social Intervention (128h)	Activities of Leisure and free time (120h)
Group dynamics (96h)	Tourist entertainment (140h)
Animation and Cultural Management (224h)	Youth information (100h)
Community development (96h)	The Socio-educational Intervention of Young People (100h)
The Context of Socio-cultural Animation (128h)	First aid (40h)
Training and Work Guidance (96h)	Company and Entrepreneurial Initiative (60h)
	Training in centers of work (400 h)
	Socio-cultural Animation Tourist Project (40 h)

Figure 7. Table with the professional modules of TASOC

Below is a possible relationship with the Global Understanding programme for those relevant components.

### GU fitting

GU is an English-language real-time video conferencing and chat programme involving 57 institutions from 27 countries around the world. It offers opportunities to interact and collaborate with students from Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. In this way, the students of our center could learn about other cultures without having to travel, through activities and a platform. The promotion and use of our co-official languages, Valencian and Spanish, would come from the knowledge of foreign languages (English). As indicated by the organizing institution, East Carolina University, “GU provides personal, global experiences that open student

perspectives about other cultures and build the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to thrive in a global multicultural society”<sup>5</sup>.

Real-time video conferencing and chat sessions are developed with students from foreign universities on pre-established topics, such as Life at the school or educational campus, cultural traditions and festivals, the family, the meaning of life, tourism and holidays, commemorations and major events in each country, helping to dispel stereotypes and prejudices. According to ECU, *after taking the course, students demonstrate increased perspective taking and decreased intercultural communication anxiety*.

The project promotes the acquisition of basic skills and the development of students as European citizens:

- *Linguistic and communicative competence*: improvement of communicative skills. Students must demonstrate that they can use linguistic conventions appropriate to each context or situation.
- *Competence in learning to learn*: students will become aware of their ability to learn a foreign language and will develop their own resources that promote and encourage learning (motivation and development of new skills).
- *Competence in social and citizenship learning*: through contact with new cultures and countries, students will understand that they are part of a global culture. The project develops skills directed towards the respect and acceptance of stereotypes and differences, the basis of a democratic coexistence.
- *Competence in information processes and ICT use*: the use of Communication and Information Technologies allows communication with people from all over the world. It is important for students and teachers to be exposed to new ICT tools and Moodle collaborative modules.
- *Personal autonomy competence and knowledge and interaction with the world around us*: learning a foreign language contributes to the acquisition of this competence because it promotes collaborative and cooperative learning.

As indicated, “Global Understanding is a course which fits into any academic program; it is taught in real time with multiple cultures”. However, never before had attempts been made to fit into the Spanish education system.

### **GU and the TASOC VET objectives**

Therefore, the Spanish education regulations on the TASOC course look for those elements that may be coincident. With regard to the curriculum (DOGV n<sup>o</sup>. 8129 of the 18/09/2017 (p. 32774-32808), Article 7 indicates this:

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see <http://www.ecu.edu/>

“In order for students to know the English language, both orally and in writing, which allows them to resolve situations involving the production and comprehension of texts related to the profession, to know the advances of other countries, to make proposals for innovation in their professional field and to facilitate their mobility to any European country, the curriculum of this training cycle incorporates the English language in an integrated way in two professional modules from among those that make up the entire training cycle.”

This fits in fully with the mechanics of the programme itself, where students must "face" a rigorous direct debate, dealing with issues relevant to the cycle, such as *College Life, Family and Cultural Traditions, The Meaning of Life & Religion, and Stereotypes*.

On the other hand, Article 8 (ibid) reads:

“The Regional Ministry with competences in these Vocational Training courses will favor the development of innovation projects, as well as teaching programming models and didactic materials, which will facilitate the development of the curriculum for the teaching staff.”

We have incorporated the Global Understanding programme into an *Educational Innovation Project for the Globalization of Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge, "Go CCL!"*, approved by the Conselleria d'Educació (Department of Education for the region) this academic year 2018/19.

### **GU and the English professional module**

As for the professional module "English", it is indicated that one of its contents is:

“e) Identification and interpretation of the most significant cultural elements of the foreign language countries (English):

- Assessment of socio-cultural and protocolary norms in international relations.
- Use of formal and functional resources in situations requiring socio-professional behaviour in order to project a good image of the company.
- Recognition of the foreign language in order to deepen knowledge that may be of interest throughout personal and professional life.
- Use of appropriate registers according to the context of the communication, the interlocutor and the intention of the interlocutors.” (ibid)

As well as, of course, the improvement of the communicative, linguistic and cultural capacity in the English language. Both are fully in line with the purpose of the programme.

### **GU and professional module of Group Dynamization**

The professional module "Group Dynamization" has:

“c) Selection of communication techniques:

- The communication process. Characteristics and functions: group interaction, feedback, interpersonal communication and communication in large groups.
- Elements in the communication process.
- Styles of communication. Assertiveness.
- Communication systems. Types of communication: verbal, non-verbal and written.
- Application of new communication technologies.
- Barriers in communication.
- Most common difficulties. Communication and disabled people. Location of the barriers: in the animator, in the user and in the environment.
- Strategies for overcoming barriers and strengthening communication.
- Basic social communication skills.
- General characteristics of basic communication skills.
- Behavioral guidelines in the attention to participants.
- Active listening.
- Types of strategies to evaluate the different communication systems.” (ibid)

Precisely the videoconference creates a barrier for the communication: the different accents of the participants, the added noises of environment, the failures of sound that can be for the use of environmental microphones, the variable registers that are found. All this means that the students must use active communication strategies. As well as to develop skills to maintain the protocols of a debate, with an active listening or respect for the shifts.

In addition, it is indicated that:

“d) Organization and generation of work teams:

- Coordination and dynamization of work teams within an organization.
- Teamwork.
- Horizontal and vertical communication in the work team.
- Strategies for the distribution of tasks and functions.
- Techniques of motivation and support in the development of the functions of the members of the work team.
- Conducting meetings. Types of meetings. Techniques.
- Techniques of information, motivation and orientation within the work team.
- Training of the people who are part of the team on the rules of the activities and facilities.
- Supervision and monitoring of tasks and functions.
- The work environment. Problems related to the work environment. Burning. Moobing.
- Assessment of the promotion of equality in the generation of work teams.
- Assessment of the importance of communication and coordination processes within a work team.” (ibid)

The collaborative work that students must present at the end of the round of connections is an added effort. They strengthen their cooperation and teamwork skills, with the added difficulty of collaborating with a colleague who has only been seen in videoconferences and who has a different culture and mother tongue. It thus fulfils several of the above points.

In this sense, they must be able to resolve conflicts during this teamwork, as well as throughout the communicative process (either by videoconference or chat) and, as mentioned above, be able to hold a debate on sensitive issues:

“e) Implementation of conflict resolution strategies:

- Individual and collective conflicts in the group. Causes and effects on group integration. The character of the conflict: functional and dysfunctional. Types of conflicts of tasks, relationships and processes.
- Decision making. Phases of the decision-making process.
- The attitudes of groups to conflicts.
- Techniques for conflict management and resolution.
- Negotiation and mediation.
- The debate, problem-solving and cognitive restructuring.
- Techniques and procedure.
- Importance of communication strategies in the solution of group problems.”  
(ibid)

### **GU and the Professional Module of Animation and Cultural Management**

The contribution that the programme would make to this module would be of great relevance, highlighting the following:

“a) Characterization of the cultural intervention:

- The concept of culture.
- Culture and society. Current situation.
- Globalization and its impact on culture [...].
- Cultural needs and demands. Cultural market. Indicators. Cultural habits. Sources of information on cultural habits.
- Segmentation of the cultural market. Typology of cultural users or consumers. Procedures for studying the preferences of cultural users or consumers.
- Importance of information and communication technologies in cultural management.” (ibid)

Precisely the culture is one of the strong points of the programme since immersion in it is made with the excuse of practicing the language.

### **GU and the professional module of Social Intervention Methodology**

In its contents it stands out:

“a) Determination of methods, techniques and tools for analysing reality:

- Methods and techniques of social research and social intervention.
- Analysis of the main sources and systems for recording information: Observation; The interview; The questionnaire and the survey; Sociometric techniques; Documentary compilation.
- Elaboration and application of information collection instruments.
- Possibilities and limitations of the different techniques and instruments.

- Sources of information.
- Reliability and validity of the information.
- Use of ICTs in social research.
- Data analysis and interpretation.
- Assessment of the ethical aspects of information collection.” (ibid)

In one of the programme discussion topics, "prejudices" should be analyzed if the information obtained is true or is modified by subjective criteria. Thus, they must apply certain aspects of the information record, such as observing non-verbal communication, analyzing the data obtained and being aware of the source of the information, both that the students receive and that which they themselves offer.

### **GU and the Professional Module of Context of Sociocultural Animation**

The most similar to the programme is the following content:

“a) Contextualization of socio-cultural animation:

- Characteristics of the current society.
- Models of social policies and the Welfare State. The current situation in Spain: the administrative, legislative and jurisdictional framework. Models of intervention in the European Union
- Analysis of models of sociocultural intervention in today's society.
- Non-formal education.
- Socio-cultural animation and non-formal education.
- Importance of the configuration of today's society in the development of socio-cultural animation.” (ibid)

It is precisely these topics that are discussed in the networking sessions, both in writing and orally.

### **Proposal**

After a detailed analysis, the key points of the proposal to frame the Global Understanding programme in the VET system of our centre are shown:

- Fit the Global Understanding programme into the first year CFGS TASOC "English" course
- Make a maximum of 3 connections per course (one per term)
- Make connections during school hours
- To have the whole group of 1st class of TASOC and to open the places that could be missing for students of baccalaureate. They would be out of school hours but it would allow a margin of voluntariness and freshness.
- Replace the half hour before preparation with the use of the previous module sessions, preparing and working on the contents of the Global connection.
- Compensate participation in the programme with part of the qualification of the English module. Specifically, it would mean the substitution of the oral exam of the subject.

### **Conclusions**

- The hypothesis put forward at the beginning is feasible.
- We will frame the Global Understanding programme in the professional module of the first course of the superior degree formative cycle of Sociocultural Animation and Tourism.
- Its viability has been empirically confirmed, with the selection of students from this cycle participating in the different connections carried out this academic year.
- Its viability has been verified theoretically, verifying the transfer of knowledge between the curriculum of the cycle and its contents and competences.

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