

## Language Learning for Specific Purposes: Teaching Business Spanish and Business German to Students of the Export Management Program at the Higher Vocational Level

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### Abstract

The students of the Export Management Program offered by the Folkuniversitetet in Stockholm have a choice of learning Business Spanish, Business German or Business French as a third language. The aims of learning any of these three languages at the higher vocational level are purely utilitarian: The program combines curricular subjects with two internships. The first of these internships is carried out in an enterprise in Sweden, and lasts 16 weeks. The second internship, which is carried out overseas, has duration of 19 weeks. The study program stresses the importance of good language skills and intercultural competence for the export sector.

Students need to master the business vocabulary and the syntax structures they will use during their internship. The approach of the program is purely acquisitive: The students are interested in obtaining language credentials that certify results to potential employers, and not in learning for the sake of personal development.

The task of the language instructor is challenging for a number of reasons: First, in contrast to Germany, there is no cooperative education in Sweden where schools and employers jointly prepare future employees; Second, credential inflation has become commonplace in Sweden, which means that in many cases high school graduates lack the basic language knowledge required for taking content and language integrated courses; Third, students' ages range from the early twenties to the late forties, and their cultural backgrounds are highly heterogeneous as well: From high school graduates who want to obtain the credentials that grant them swift entry as interns in an enterprise to older humanities graduates who aim to obtain practical skills in order to come into the employment market.

Teaching a third language for vocational purposes to such heterogeneous groups poses a challenge for the language instructor, since there is no time to go over grammatical structures the students might have problems understanding. The Business Spanish and Business German courses integrate business content and language parting from the assumption that students have at least a B1+ level in any of these languages. The use of English as a "bridging" language is a practical strategy since most of the students do have at least a B1+ level in English, and learn other curricular subjects in English.