



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Catalan
Author: Margaret Craveiro

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)

The Catalan Language

By Margaret Craveiro

TESL 539

Spring 2010

Where Catalan is Spoken

- Catalan is spoken in several parts of Spain.
 - Catalonia
 - Balearic Islands
 - Valencia
 - Alicante
- France (eastern Pyrenees)
- Andorra
Catalan is the official language



Dialects

- Catalan does differ from area to area.
- It mostly differs in pronunciation and vocabulary.
- Most people who speak Catalan also speak Spanish or French.
- Two dialects: Oriental (Balearic Islands) and Occidental (mainland).

The Origin of Catalan

- Developed from Vulgar Latin, and by the end of the 10th Century it was a language.
- Writings in Catalan started to appear in the 12th Century. The first writing was called *A Charter and Six Sermons*.
- After the Spanish War of Succession (1705-1715), Catalan went through many periods of prohibition and repression.
- It was re-established after the Catalan Renaissance during the 19th Century.

Culture

- Speakers of Catalan are very religious. They are predominately Roman Catholic.
- Family is very important to them.
- They are very patriotic.

A Church in Barcelona, Spain



(www.tripadvisor.com, 2009)

Culture

- When greeting also shake hands.
- Once a relationship has been made men will embrace each other with a pat on the shoulder and women will kiss you on both cheeks.
- They prefer face to face contact over written and telephone communication.
- Speaking can be formal and informal depending on the situation. Informal speaking is very loud and very animated.

This is a picture of people performing Contrapás.



(www.firesifestes.com, 2006)

Phonology

- The Catalan alphabet is made up of 27 letters.
- Just like the English alphabet, only differences is Çç (c with a cedilla).
- The Çç is a sibilant sound and it is used before e and i.
- The letters K, W and Y are used in peoples names and words of foreign origin only.

The Catalan Alphabet

Aa	Bb	Cc	Çç ce	Dd	Ee
a	be	ce	trencada	de	efa
Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll
ge	hac	i	jota	ke	ela
Mm	Nn	Oo	Pp	Qq	Rr
ema	ena	o	pe	cu	erre
Ss	Tt	Uu	Vv ve	Ww ve	Xx ics
esse	te	u	baixa	doble	xeix
Yy	Zz				
i grega	zeta				

Phonetics

VOWELS

- A,E,I,O and U
- Catalan vowels when pronounced are more stressed than in English.
- There vowels are labeled strong vowels (a, e and o) and weak vowels (i and u).
- Catalan speakers of English will have trouble with recognizing and using English vowels. This is because in English two vowels share the same space as opposed to Catalan where each vowel has it own space.
- Catalan speakers of English will confuse: seat and sit, cat and cut, caught and cot and pool and pull.

Phonetics

CONSONANTS

- Consonants can be unvoiced or voiced.
- In Catalan unvoiced consonants are c, p, t, f, s and x. All the remaining consonants are considered voiced.
- The letters /p/, /t/, and /k/ are not aspirated like in English therefore, when speaking English they sound like /b/, /d/ and /g/ (i.e. pit will sound like bit).
- In Catalan, final voiced plosives are uncommon, so they will use /t/ for /d/, /k/ for /g/ and /p/ for /b/. (i.e. sink will be pronounced sing).
- In Catalan the sound for /b/ and /v/ are the same so they get those letter sounds confused when speaking and writing English.
- /w/ will be pronounced like a /b/ between vowels.
- /w/ may sound like /gw/ or /g/ before a vowel.
- /s/ and another consonant does not happen in beginning of words. For that reason, stop will be pronounced as estop.

Orthography

SPELLING

- Catalan speakers when writing English words that have double letters, they will cut one of the letters (i.e. appear becomes apear).

CONTRACTIONS

- Do not exist in Catalan so they have trouble with this in English.
- When first learning to speak, they are hesitant to use contractions. They rather say *I will not come* to *I won't come*.

CAPITAL LETTERS

- In Catalan, they do not capitalize the days of the week and the months of the year.

Grammar

- In Catalan indirect objects has to have a preposition and the two objects can go in either order. Instead of writing *They gave Sam the book* they will write *They gave to Sam the book*.
- English phrases that have 'be + adjective' is confusing for them because it's expressed in Catalan as 'have + noun' (i.e. have reason for be right).
- The Catalan language has more than one form of the past progressive in English (*used to...*) so they will write *When we were young, we were playing a lot of tennis*. Instead of *When we were young, we use to play tennis*.
- English *ing* is a problem because we use it as a subject. For example, they will say *To smoke is bad for you*. instead of *Smoking is bad for you*.

Bibliography

BOOKS & INTERNET SITES

Batzarov, Z. (n.d.). Catalan Language. *Orbis Latinus: Language studio*. Retrieved April 1, 2010 from: <http://www.orbilat.com/Languages/Catalan/Catalan.html>

Gili, J. (1967). *Catalan Grammar*. Oxford: The Dolphin Book Co. LTD

Kwintessential Ltd. (2010). Spain: Spanish language, culture, customs and etiquette. Retrieved April 3, 2010 from: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/spain-country-profile.html>

Swan, M., & Smith, B. (2001). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems. Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

IMAGES

Ager, S. (2011). Catalan. *Omniglot: Writing systems & languages of the world*. Retrieved from: <http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/catalan.php>

Reixach, R. (Photographer). (2006). *Festes de Sant Joan i Els Elois* [Photograph], Retrieved from: <http://www.firesifestes.com/Fires/F-St-Joan-Elois-Prats-Llusanes.htm>

Tourizm Maps. (2006). Map of Spain, [Map], Retrieved from: www.map-of-spain.co.uk

TripAdvisor. (2009). Images of Tibidabo Funfair, Barcelona, Retrieved from: http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g187497-d244867-Tibidabo_Funfair-Barcelona_Catalonia.html

M.Ed. in TESL Program
Nancy Cloud, Director
Educational Studies Department
Rhode Island College, HBS 206 #5
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
Phone (401) 456-8789
Fax (401) 456-8284
ncloud@ric.edu

The M.Ed. in TESL Program at Rhode Island College
is Nationally Recognized by TESOL and NCATE



REACH
INSPIRE
CONNECT