

CIE in Turkish Textbook Project



Marjon's Centre for International Education recently won a tender to provide consultancy services to the Turkish Ministry of National Education – through the auspices of the British Council in Ankara – to help make rapid and dramatic improvements in the standards of English of pupils in in Hotel and Tourism Management Vocational Schools.

The Turkish tourism industry has reported remarkable growth over the past few years, the country receiving more than 26 million international tourists during 2008. These numbers are expected to grow despite the current economic crisis.

The many vocational schools in Tourism and Hotel Management in Turkey are expected to play a vital role in contributing to the success and growth of the tourism sector. However, standards of teaching and learning in these schools fall well below the Ministry of National Education's expectations. English is often regarded by vocational schools' administrators as just another one of 14-17 subjects in the curriculum, rather than a crucial and indispensable life skill for international communication.



Mike Scholey carried out a baseline study (visiting vocational schools and hotels throughout Turkey) in 2006, before the project protocol was signed in December 2007.

At present, classroom teaching and learning materials are essentially testing students' knowledge of grammar, rather than facilitating the acquisition of communication skills. One vocational school head teacher reported to the Marjon consultant, Mike Scholey, that many hotels are complaining about the standards of English of the students they employ on a permanent basis. According to one HR manager, schools should be doing much more to prepare the students in English language communication in Grades 9 to 12 in order for them to at least understand what a customer says.



“English does not seem to have been prioritised as there is no feedback between the hotel industry and the vocational schools so nothing is being done to match the ‘performance needs’ of the hotels with the language

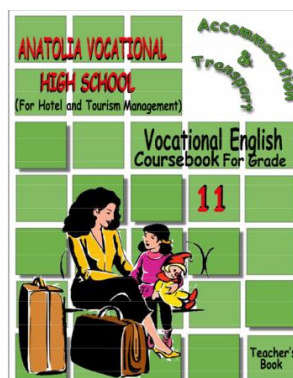
teaching taking place in the schools. HR, communication skills, and English in practical situations is what the schools need to do.” The urgent need is for the students to be able to communicate effectively in English at a minimum B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) – a set of guidelines used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and put together by the Council of Europe as part of the project “Language Learning for European Citizenship”.



The approach to change recommended by the Marjon consultant was to train selected vocational teachers of English in materials writing. Participants selected would be ‘good’ teachers or HoDs, selected from different schools country-wide. The consensus among head teachers is that if change is materials-driven, then the methodology would largely take care of itself and lead to minimum systemic disruption in the schools involved. The selected teachers would therefore be trained in the principles and process of materials writing and produce three textbooks (one for each field) for piloting. These materials would then be edited by the Marjon consultant, piloted, re-edited and later published. The three areas of study in English in these vocational schools are: Accommodation and Transport; Food & Beverage; and Entertainment.



A team of ten teacher-writers was selected after tests and interviews in Istanbul and Ankara. Mike then worked with this new writing team for six weeks in June 2008 in a Ministry of National Education-owned hotel in Kusadasi, followed by two more weeks in Ankara (November 2008) and another three weeks (February 2009) to prepare the three textbooks for final approval and publication by the Ministry. Three specialist vocational subject teachers acted as content advisers to the team. The first two units of each of the three books had been piloted between October- December.



The books follow a multi-layered, vocational, topic-based syllabus and aim to motivate students with units on the different vocational departments’ needs. In this way they are more likely to achieve realistic and practical vocational learning objectives. The new vocational English course should thus capitalize on the students’ motivation by providing the students with communication skills closely related to the work they will do in their specific jobs in the Hotel and Tourism industry in Turkey.



It is hoped that the new materials will have a strong impact on the teaching and learning in these three vocational subject areas in schools countrywide between 2010-11.