

ENGLISH: THE LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM

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Abstract: Tourism has become a success story of modern times. In the past decades the number of people who travel abroad has grown rapidly. Tourism is a service - sector which has proved to be constant in times of economic crisis and will continue to grow at a rapid pace in the 21st century. But tourism is an extremely complex endeavour. Communication is vital to its success since it is only through the effective use of communication that tourism marketers can offer to customers cues about world wide experiences.. Unfortunately, with the emphasis on science and professional subjects, language studies are often neglected in universities. Consequently, English remains a difficult language to master in spite of the fact that the Tourism sector can benefit enormously from it and it can revive interest in learning languages .

Key words: language, tourism, communication, universities, learning, travelling

JEL:M40,M41

1.Introduction and context:

In dictionaries tourism is defined as 'travelling for pleasure'; and a tourist as one who travels for pleasure. According to other definitions tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in these destinations and the facilities created to cater to their needs. In its simplest form it is travel to new lands; the experience of the exotic in the unfamiliar; an attempt to educate ones' self or simply immerse ones' self in the joys of travel. The space of a hundred years between the twentieth century and the twenty-first has changed tourism from travel to a form of social activity..

Intellectual movements that developed in France in the 1950s and 1960s analysed human culture semiotically. They are concerned with the analysis of language, culture, and society. The structuralist mode of reasoning has been applied in a diverse range of fields including anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary-criticism and architecture. Social theorists such as anthropologist and ethnographer Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, James Boon and Pierre Bourdieu have analysed human culture and society as a system of structures that need to be studied and analysed. The Postmodern philosophy and other related philosophies such as a structural and scientific approach to all human activities like marriage, cultural values, religious beliefs, social conventions, art and traditions of peoples of the world is a movement away from the viewpoint of modernism. Thus in a cross-cultural, globalised scene, the concept of tourism has become a many-layered complex of meanings. Tourism has become the subject of much research. According to some researchers tourism is not an industry at all. Tourism should not be viewed as a product activity or product but as a social phenomenon, an experience or a process.

Recent research on tourism postulates that there are three approaches in defining Tourism—technical, economical and holistic. The first attempts to collect data by identifying tourists; the second treats Tourism as a business and industry. Holistic approach or definition attempts to include the entire essence of the subject. Graham M.S. in his book entitled *Global Tourism*. treats Tourism as a sociological process, an art of promotion, with a discourse of its own. The language of Tourism has its own essence.

Tourism and Communication

Every field has its language—the language of music, of art...so does Tourism. As Tourism is an industry that sells experiences, communication is vital to the success of tourism businesses since it is only through the effective use of communication that tourism marketers can offer to customers cues about those experiences. Also, while communication is an essential component in the conduct of any service business, it has got a major role in tourism.

Tourists are individuals who want to escape from routine. They want to experience ‘the other’ aspect of their selves not allowed to be expressed in their ordinary life. Such a conceptualization of the tourism phenomenon suggests the type of communication that will be appreciated by tourists. Leisure tourists, especially, would not want formalities of any sort. Hierarchically structured, grammatically proof, and elitist communication are not popular among tourists. While such features may be somewhat acceptable among business tourists, even they want a pleasant air of informality. So, the key to success in communication with tourists is to exhibit by means of verbal and non-verbal communication a relaxed attitude.

Traditionally accepted business communication formats reinforce hierarchy and structure. The unique instrument of modern day organizations is social media: thanks to the revolutionary advances in the social media and the popularity of mobile communication devices, business communication has acquired a social media friendly format. It is a truism to say that communication is a means to facilitate understanding. But, the current views on how to use communication for facilitating understanding are drastically different from what we used to believe. It is widely held now that the power of communication to facilitate understanding increases in direct proportion to the degree of live interaction in the communication. Communication styles that permit responses intermittently are considered more effective than those that permit responses only after the sender has completed transmitting his or her version in full. For instance, in a problem solving situation, a lengthy speech by the CEO of a firm highlighting the issues and his or her solutions do not do so much good as a semi-structured round table interaction among the concerned executives. Constant and live interaction helps to speed up the development of yet another important objective of communication: the development of shared meanings.

On the other hand, the social aspect of tourism enhances its value as a communicative process as there is an undeniable exchange between places and people. The interaction of the tourist with the places he visits and the people he meets is therefore, a form of communication in which both the visitor and the visited form a communication cycle. A considerable amount of weightage is given to the power of impressions on the mind of a person living in the twenty-first century. One of the most important aspects of Tourism is the communication of the impressions created in the minds of tourists. These include non-verbal aspects -- sights and sounds communicate a general impression-- and the verbal aspect of communication-- language plays an important role in creating impressions and in the field of Tourism, communication can play a vital role in the promotion and profitability of this socio-economic process.

Tourists go through various stages, each with different communication needs and a potential tourist is an information seeker. That means, they expect communication to be full of relevant information, say, on attractions, accessibility, and amenities available as part of a vacation. Thus it is crucial to offer all the relevant information but at the same time do not exaggerate with the amount of given information. Most tourists are busy individuals in their routine lives and do not have the time or resources to swim through an ocean of information. Given the international nature of the industry, especially if you are dealing with international tourists, it is imperative to employ foreign languages for communication.

But we must not forget that individuals are different and these differences are reflected in their preferences for acquiring information. Some are fans of the print media while some like visual presentations with interactive content. Some learn explicitly from information presented with bullet points while some others want to learn implicitly and experientially with information interspersed in realistic contexts. From a communication professional’s viewpoint, certain information can be transmitted more efficiently and effectively as a blend of audio-visual cues than either alone. Good listening skills are at least as important as good speaking skills: or, if you hold a broader definition for speaking, good speaking always has implied a good listening component.

Since communication for different purposes demand different skills, it is important for practitioners to have mastery over a comprehensive set of commonly used media and formats. Teachers of tourism should demonstrate how communication skills such as conveying information clearly in speech and writing, and listening carefully, contribute to the successful operation of a tourism business

The language of any country or region is an indicator of the nature and complexity of its culture. The official languages of the country as well as of the states must be communicated to the Tourist in a befitting manner.

This means that English must be promoted and encouraged which sounds simple but is a very tricky issue. With the emphasis on science and professional subjects, language studies are often neglected in universities. Consequently, English remains a difficult language to master in spite of the fact that the Tourism sector can benefit enormously from it and it can revive interest in learning languages. It can, and should work towards raising the standard of language in the Tourism sector. It can do this in two major ways. First, it must engage persons with good language ability in

English. Secondly, it must invest time and money in training. The language users—employees at information desks, reception centers, booking centres should have a high level of communication skills. The personnel working in the tourist areas must also be familiar with the historical, geographical, cultural and socio-economic significance of the area they operate from.

English for Tourism in Universities

As English is used as a lingua franca to communicate with international tourists visiting foreign countries, mastering foreign language skills is essential for people working in the tourism sector. It is the means for communicating with tourists and understanding cultural differences, and for increasing employees' job opportunities in this international. English for tourism is viewed as an area of business English, and integrates business English and English for academic purposes. That is, it deals with teaching the language needed for communication and interaction between people of different cultures in airports, tourism and travel firms, markets and hospitality. Knowledge of English is one of the major criteria in hiring people in the tourism field where poor English proficiency becomes a problem in attracting tourists and entertaining them. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that English is taught as a core subject at tourism higher education institutions all over the world.

English is taught to students to help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to qualify them for the tourism labor market. The English courses taught focus on: a tourism and hospitality background knowledge component in order to increase their awareness of the language which will be used in their future workplaces; a speaking component related to enhancing their English-speaking skills and oral fluency as being the major requirement for graduates to work in the field of tourism; a writing component targeting on developing the writing skills needed for tourism workplaces; and a translation component to help them know how to translate the language of tourists. In the vast world of English for Specific Purposes, that of the English of Tourism is one of the more attractive since all of us are tourists on countless occasions throughout our lives, and hence, as teachers, can bring our own real experience and opinions to the language classroom. However, teaching of the English of tourism is a complex endeavour.

If we examine the textbooks, learning tasks, and examinations used in the teaching of English to tourism undergraduates in our universities we will find that each faculty/higher institute uses a different textbook mainly including materials that the teachers collected from different sources, and having both English for tourism and English for general purposes materials. All the textbooks include English listening and speaking activities and writing, grammar, reading, and vocabulary activities are also emphasized. Teachers focus on reading skills, grammar structures and tourism and hospitality terminology and quite recently, there is interest in any forms of teaching that aim at improving their speaking or listening skills.

There is also a variety of English learning activities that can help students to develop their English skills and qualify them for their future careers, including: group discussion, role playing and letter writing. Unfortunately, in the past the tuition did not focus on the development of English oral communication skills and this is one of the shortcomings in the English language preparation of tourism undergraduates in our institutions. That is why nowadays, teaching English for tourism is probably better achieved through a topic-based focus which, if correctly handled, fulfils the double role of providing a meaningful framework within which students can improve their language knowledge and skills, while at the same time integrates language classes into the students' wider experience of tourism. It avoids the too-obvious repetition of language items they have already seen. Moreover, a topic-based approach helps guarantee that the language items covered are those genuinely needed within the field chosen.


Therefore, as all the studies show, English communication skills are most needed for tourism workplaces and thus listening and speaking skills should be emphasized in students' English courses. Besides, these courses need to make the most use of technology-based activities which can enhance students' oral communication skills. Laborda's two studies (2003, 2009), for example, showed that using computers promote foreign language learning through increasing students' language use, and that they can help tourism students to develop their English oral communication skills.

Conclusions:

Communication skills in English are an important element of tourism industry. Good oral and written communication skills are extremely important to any hospitality practitioners regardless their positions levels. In the tourism industry supply and demand side must communicate perfectly in order to ensure quality and needed performance standards. As a consequence, future research should be conducted in order to analyze the English language needs of tourism undergraduates as perceived by students, teachers, tourism employees and employers. These studies would further

enhance institutional perspectives on how the English language preparation of these students can be appropriately improved because as language clearly reflects the level of any civilization, the level of the proficiency in language highlights culture of the people.

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