
SPECIFICITY OF TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE FOR STUDENTS.

¹Qudratov G`Ayratjon Suyunovich, ²Alaudinova Dilnoza Rustamovna, ³Bekmirzaev Eshquvvat Ro`Ziboyevich

CHAIR Of Interfaculty Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Foreign Philology, Termiz State University¹, TEACHER, Termez state university², TEACHER, Termez branch of Tashkent Medical Academy³

ABSTRACT

As English is considered the lingua franca of the twenty-first century, everyone needs to have a good command of English today and the importance of teaching English for professional uses and particularly in the field of tourism is undeniable. English proficiency is required in all professional areas but it becomes essential in the tourist industry because of its specific characteristics.. English Language has played an important role in the development of tourism and in this field, English is used widely for travel as well as in client contact and is of outmost interest at the tertiary level. But its interest should not be restricted to tourism students: English for tourism is one of the most attractive areas of English for Specific Purposes(ESP) because, after all, all of us are tourists on various occasions nowadays. For tourism university students, mastering English is a prerequisite for getting a job related to their major after graduation. The study reported in this paper examined the English language preparation of tourism and hospitality undergraduates in Egypt and its adequacy as perceived by teachers and students. The interview data showed that the students' views on their English language preparation and on their perceived English language needs differed from those of their teachers. Highlighting some shortcomings of the English language instruction provided to these students, the study suggests reshaping it in a way that could optimally help them be well-prepared for meeting their future workplace requirements.

Key words: *tourism, belong to, special, shape, future*

English is the fourth most widely spoken native language in the world, and in terms of sheer number of speakers, it is the most spoken official language. It is the primary language used in international affairs having official status even in nations where it is not the primary spoken language. English is indisputably the primary language of global trade and commerce and tourism since in many countries, most tourism authorities and other officials in contact with the public speak English to interact and engage with tourists and immigrants. Mastering foreign language skills is essential for people working in the tourism sector as it is the means for communicating with tourists and understanding cultural differences, and for increasing employees' job opportunities in this international industry (Leslie & Russell, 2006). English for tourism is viewed as an area of business English (Cho, 2005), and integrates business English and English for academic purposes by bridging workplace communication and classroom use (Fuentes, 2004). 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 (Afzali & Fakharzadeh, 2009; Jacob & Strutt, 1997; Seong, 2005). According to Hijirida (1980), 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 keeping them happy. Tourism is one of the largest national income sources. It provides jobs to two million in the world, represents 11% of the world's economy (Jones, 2011). Since a tremendous number of antiquities and many beach resorts, it attracts millions of tourists from all parts of the world annually. According to RNCOS (2011) research report, received 14.7 million international tourists in 2010, with an increase of about 17.6% over the previous year. Although the current political instability in a tremendous negative influence on its inbound tourism, the report expects that tourism will bounce back again and regain its lost momentum. As in many other countries, English is used as a

lingua franca to communicate with international tourists visiting. It is not surprising, therefore, to find English is taught as a core subject at tourism and hospitality higher education. Among the many vocational areas that make the world of English for specific purposes, that of English for tourism is one of the most attractive because all of us are tourists on countless occasions, bringing our own real experiences to the classrooms. Such a program, might, for example, emphasize the development of reading skills in students who are preparing for graduate work in business administration; or it might promote the development of spoken skills in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides. The focal point of teaching English for tourism is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world ; instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners. In the field of English for tourism students most of the studies have focused on the analysis of the required skills and needs in work place, adequacy and appropriateness of instructional materials and strategies. Al-Khatib (2007) examined the communicative needs of tourism and banking personnel by shedding lights on their perceptions of needs, wants, lacks, and attitudes toward English in order to include what is needed and exclude what deemed less important to them. It has been observed that the type of work plays a significant role in evaluating and using of English. The most common reasons for communicating as a travel agency worker were found to be offering destination guides, writing and sending email and faxes, making on-line ticketing, browsing the internet, making online hotel booking, etc. Travel agency users were found to be heavier users of English than their banking counterparts. The results of the study indicated that the most important skill for tourism personnel is writing. When instructing an EOP course an issue to take into consideration is that using adequate language learning and professional strategies are required in tourism field). In designing a course for students of culture and tourism, Barancic (1998) used an integrated approach to get the students involved in the syllabus he wanted to teach. Hutchinson and Waters too draw the attention to a “learning –centered approach” “in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learnig. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required . The aim of ESP courses is to equip the learners with a certain English proficiency level for a situation where the language is going to be used, i.e., target needs (Sujana, 2005) . A number of ESP researchers have argued that as language in different context varies, methods and contents of second language teaching should vary to meet the needs of learners in specific situations(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). According to the same authors, three terms can be used to explain “needs”: ”necessities”, “wants” and “lacks”. They define “necessities” as the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner should know in order to work effectively and efficiently in the target situation. ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The approach he invented consisted of 8 components: knowing the class and their knowledge, determining the goals to achieve, the way we measure the success, making decisions with students involved, creating syllabus, deciding on the real teaching techniques and method and getting feedback during the course. The application of the approach indicated that the teachers are faced with needs which are of a less academic and more realistic nature. Students of tourism should be aware of the enormous importance of English in their education because it is an essential tool in any field of their future activity: management, tourist information, promotion of tourist destinations, intermediary companies, hospitality and transportation, etc. Consequently, students of tourism should be highly motivated to learn English and although more often they will probably focus on oral rather than written skills, in their career they must be able to elaborate written documents such as letters or budgets, they should keep telephone

conversations, make presentations to audiences, attend fairs and conferences and understand all types of written information on tourist destinations. For example, students of tourism can be taught practical English conversation used in hotel and catering industry, various issues concerning tourism industry , tips on job interviews and writing resumes , reading and understanding articles concerning such issues of tourism. This is due to the students' desire to improve speaking English and their need to learn English for future jobs rather than using it in everyday life. Good material should be based on various interesting texts and activities providing a range of skills, one piece of material serving for developing more than one skill, e.g. reading, listening, speaking, writing. Texts as learning materials can be used for learning and practicing a wide range of skills. In ESP course, they can be sources for new vocabulary, communicative or reading skills. They can trigger various activities: warming –up activities(pre-teaching and activation of new vocabulary or grammar structures, discussing questions concerning the topic);receptive activities-work with the text itself, reading, listening(various reading strategies e.g. aloud, quiet, skimming, scanning, with or without translation, informative; productive activities-practising of acquired knowledge, follow-up activities-next improving, developing, using of acquired knowledge. In conclusion, carefully identified needs and appropriate teaching materials for tourism students will produce not only satisfied customers but also plenty of professional fulfillment in their future career.

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