

English for Tourism: Course Structure and Methodology

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Abstract:

This paper presents an English for Specific Purposes, namely English for Tourism course, giving details on the overall structure and teaching methodology suitable for both first-year and second-year intermediate to upper-intermediate students. The course aims at helping tourism students to develop reading, listening, writing and speaking skills in English. Therefore, this study is an overview of the topics, vocabulary areas, language skills and grammar aspects covered by the English for Tourism course.

Keywords: *develop reading, listening, writing and speaking skills*

1. Introduction

English for Tourism is a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses on teaching aspects of Tourism in English. Planning English for Tourism course can help teachers identify aims/targets and anticipate potential problems. As university teachers we need to consider a number of factors such as the language level of our group of learners „their educational and cultural background, their different learning styles”².

The main goal of the English for Tourism course is to be a right framework which permits the integration of the various aspects of learning.

According to Harmer³ „the language materials we expose students to should be a completely level too, not only in terms of complexity, but also in range of genre and length. We would not expect beginners to tackle national newspapers in English; we would not offer any advanced students a simplified dialogue”. Both fluency and accuracy are two important coordinates when teaching English for Special Purposes, namely English for Tourism. We need to decide whether a particular activity in the classroom is designed to expect the students’ complete accuracy- as in the study of a piece of grammar, a pronunciation exercise

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² Harmer- *The Practice of English Language teaching*, p. 315.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 45.



or some vocabulary work for example – or whether we are asking the students to use the language as fluently possible.

2. Course structure

Tourism students learn English for a variety of reasons, which range from reading tourism books and specialised literature, or leaflets, to speaking English more fluently both in travel-related situations and different aspects of tourism. Their interest may also be in writing forms (e0-mails, letters, etc.) or attending specialised courses abroad. There are also students who intend to complete their academic studies in English-speaking countries.

The English for Tourism course should help students to understand and use tourism terminology, to activate their general vocabulary, to learn English pronunciation of specialised terms / phrases, geographical names and to increase fluency in tourism-related situations.

Besides studying tourism terminology, attention should also be given to useful grammar structures, through a series of exercises that combine specialised terms and general English.

Having in mind all these aspects mentioned above we suggest the course-structure for tourism students should cover the following areas:

- Approaching English for Tourism
- Continents
- Europe
- Rivers&Seas- The Danue
- Who Uses English
- Flora&Fauna
- Weather

2.1. Tourism topics and vocabulary areas

1. Continents (geologic history, relief, interesting aspects)
2. Flora&Fauna
3. Rivers and Seas (physical features, economy, etc.)
4. Words /expressions related to weather
5. Idioms and fixed expressions used in different travelling-related situations
6. Projects / case studies: International Tourism
7. Writing a blog entry (a destination, a hotel, a country, a famous landmark etc.)

2.2 Grammar

- Pronunciation of specialized terms
- Word parts: prefixes, suffixes, roots



- The article
- The noun
- The Adjective (degree of comparison, adjectives used for denoting nationalities)
- The pronoun
- Numerals
- Tenses
- Active and Passive Voice
- Indirect Speech

3. Teaching methodology

The main objective is to actively engage learners in all language skills in Tourism terminology, and if possible at each and every class. A communicative approach can be also integrated, being essential to develop their communicative skills. They will need them working in this field.

In the following part we are going to give details on each language skill and the activities chosen for each part.

- **Reading**

Students read and understand different types of text on tourism or travelling-related situations.

- tourism literature
- books/ journal extracts
- blogs, sites
- case studies

- **Listening**

Students understand a range of tourism travelling situations (listening for gist)⁴

- youtube videos
- radio promotion
- dialogues
- explaining of some natural phenomena
- travelling-related activities (how to make a phone call, booking a hotel, selective different types of services on the phone etc)

- **Writing**

Students may need to write down documents specific to tourism activity:

⁴ **Listening for Gist** is when the learner tries to understand what is happening even if he or she can't understand every phrase or sentence. The learner is trying to pick up keywords, intonation, and other clues so as to make a guess at the meaning.



- exchanging e-mails
- blog entries
- filling in an online travel search form
- writing a review (a hotel, a restaurant, etc.)
- writing a travel itinerary.

- **Speaking**

Speaking tasks are very useful for integrating the communicative approach during classes.

- giving directions; location; offering descriptions (facilities, touristic attractions or landmarks)

- exchanging information (in a travel agency, in an airport, etc.)

- giving and asking advice

- planning itineraries or activities

- oral presentation on tourism topics

As the core language skills specific to reading, listening, writing and speaking activities students may read for gist, detailed comprehension or translation. To get maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both intensive and extensive reading. The former encourages students to read for themselves, either for pleasure or general language improvement. The latter is often chosen when teaching ESP because it enables students to develop specific receptive skills.

Students can improve their listening skills and gain valuable language input –through a combination of both extensive and intensive listening materials and procedures. They can be used to elicit main ideas, for pronunciation or translation purposes, to predict or to infer information. Having in mind the communicative approach we should be aware of the fact that if students are interested in the topics we are asking them to speak about they are very likely to invest their language and be actively engaged in. As a final part of a lesson speaking part may consist of discussions and debates, role-plays or identifying topics in a professional dialogue.

According to White and Arndt⁵ „writing is re-writing; that revision – seeing with new eyes”. A genre approach is especially appropriate for students of English for Specific Purposes, being highly useful as they can produce written work they can be proud of. There is always a danger that students may find both speaking and writing imaginatively difficult. „Having nothing to say or to write down” they may find creative tasks as being de-motivating.

To achieve the integrated skills approach we have set as an objective; a plethora of exercises can be used, including:

⁵ Ron White & Valerie Arndt, *Process Writing*, p. 212.



- Fill-in exercises
- Multiple choices exercises
- Matching exercises
- True or false exercises
- Ask and answer targeted questions
- Mind maps
- Crossword puzzles
- „Word-Dissections”
- Tourism anagrams
- Role-plays
- Translations

For instance a mind map⁶ is a way of organising vocabulary to show the connections between words. For example, students are asked to find words and expressions connected to the term „holiday” (to book a holiday, to be on holiday, to be holidaying, holiday time, budget –friendly holiday, etc.).

Conclusion

In conclusion this course is specifically designed for students who are studying for a career in the tourism industry. It introduces the vocabulary and the language sector, and includes practice exercises in all four skills. It can help students not only to expand their knowledge and acquire new skills but also to use tourism vocabulary to activate and consolidate their general vocabulary, though attention is also given to grammar structures as required. Students of English for Specific Purposes may have closely identified goals for their learning. The language of tourism has a specific vocabulary which has to be understood and used when working in the tourism industry, especially in all types of language interactions.

Bibliography

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⁶ A diagram in which information is represented visually, usually with a central idea placed in the middle and associated ideas arranged around it.