

English for Specific Purposes in the Industry of Tourism

Erion SHEHU^{1*}, Enkeleda JATA², Arjan SHUMELI³

^{1*}Agricultural University of Tirana erion.shehu@ubt.edu.al

²Agricultural University of Tirana ejata@ubt.edu.al

³Agricultural University of Tirana ashumeli@ubt.edu.al

Abstract

This article delves into the different elements with regards to the use of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the field of Tourism and Hospitality, its history in Albania and its practical application by its users today working in tourism. The speedy growth of tourism has had a direct sway in the English language which is the prevailing language on the international stage in the 21st century and a vital buttress to the tourism industry. The employees working in the field of tourism are cognizant of its magnitude and the importance of mastering this *lingua franca* in further forging ahead in their careers and ameliorating the reverberating impact of tourism in all the other sectors of the economy. As a consequence, English has become the bloodstream not just for the industry of tourism but also for the other languages by furnishing them with new terminology. This article aims to justify the need to learn English in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry as it is increasingly acting as a catalyst for economic development and job creation in Albania and around the world. The objective is to identify the need for learning ETP and implementing it in universities' curricula. The result of the paper is to show that communication skills in ETP can greatly affect and shape the tourism sector.

Keywords Tourism, English for specific Purposes, ESP, ETP, *lingua franca*, hospitality

JEL Codes: Z32

Introduction

Not in any other recent memory in the past has the need arisen as nowadays for the communication between people for business, travel, entertainment etc. The aftermath of WW2 and the new global order that emerged after it, demanded the

*Corresponding Author

Accepted for publication December 2021

need for a *lingua franca* and English, being the official language of the new muscle-flexing superpower in the shape of America, which gladly took over that role for the second half of the twentieth century. A language cannot survive on its own without its users.

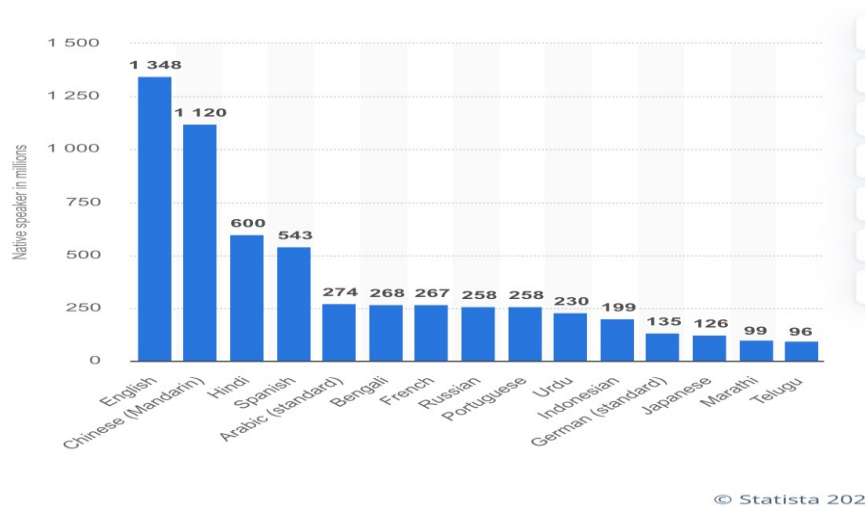


Figure 1. Native speakers in millions

Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/26344/english-proficiency-levels-by-nation-according-to-ef-epi/>

Many factors are needed to build and develop a language: military power, economic growth, and the development of science and technology. The current language behind all this is English, now not a privilege of its countries of origin (*e.g.* United Kingdom, America, Ireland) but globally "mastered" by communities across continents. This has affected not only the economic aspect and politics of human society, but also its formative one. Scholar and linguist, David Gradol, has positioned this formative aspect of English as "the transition from a foreign language to basic human skills (Gradol, 2006).

It is a well known fact that for a *lingua franca* to reach that status, its usage must be embraced from nearly all around the world. According to the scholar, David Crystal, these countries must specifically "allocate a 'slot' to this language among their native languages as a means of incorporating it" (Crystal, 2003). In 2021, around 25% of the world population speak English, an impressive feat for a language spoken by only 360 million inhabitants as their first language. As a consequence, the mastery of this language has become a vital necessity in the business world and the plethora of its users are increasing daily worldwide. The highest profile organizations such as the UN, IMF, WHO etc, use English as the only official language.

As English has been become an established language on the international scene, it is unsurprising that this influence sifts through all the global sectors, including tourism and international travel. Road signs, airport notices, brochures, restaurant menus, in-

store advertisements, various security instructions, or even credit card facilities, all of which often use English or have an equivalent version from their native language to English language. The tourism sector represents one of a country's economy and employees in tourism (tourism organizations, travel agencies, hotels and various hotel structures) must be fully prepared to meet customer requirements. This is the main reason why communication in the tourism sector according to Croatian researcher Nevanka Blažević: “is more sensitive than in other sectors and mastering other languages is a hard feat and cannot not replace English in this regard” (Blazevic and Blazevic, 2007).

Over the past 20 years, innovations in business and communication technology have revolutionized English language learning and significantly shifted the focus of English language learning curricula from academic learning to specific English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In recent years, research into the acquisition of first and second foreign languages, according to researchers Kate Mead and Florenc Li Somui, “has brought forth findings of more effective methods for improving the ability of workers to use English for specific purposes in the workplace” (Mead and Somui, 2000).

The researchers Cohen and Cooper examined tourist–host interactions and classified them into two different situations: language in situations of institutional and non-institutional tourism (Cohen and Cooper, 1986). Institutional tourism occurs in situations where tourists are protected by an environmental bubble, for example, a packaged tour. Within the environmental bubble of standard tourist facilities, the personnel tend to be highly competent and polite when interacting in English. Such discourse requires a fairly good command of English. Examples include the use of English at high-end hotels, busy international airports and international airlines where tourists generally expect a high level of English competence. On the other hand, with more people recently choosing to travel independently and not in the environmental bubble, there is an increasing need for English to be used in many new destinations. People in this discourse community were not, until recently, expected to use English. Because their English is limited, they face many communication problems. The focus of this study is on the second discourse community, which is rapidly growing. Identifying needs in such an area may be beneficial for preparing ETP educational programmes.

Language and communication skills shape the tourism sector

Tourism is an immensely global and multilingual phenomenon, and brimming with opportunities to engage with others in different contexts and different languages. The researcher Michael Cronin corroborates persuasively that among other faculties that come into play in tourism, language and its imaginative potential hold a special place in the annals of human traveling experience (Cronin, 2000). Another researcher, Alison Phipps calls the learning of languages and their actual use in tourism, “the languaging” practices of tourists (Phipps, 2006). It is important to study this phenomenon to understand the wider social and cultural factors at play in

tourism experiences whereby tourists make sense of, and make an effort to get somewhere, by using the language of a place to talk to locals.

A language is "languaged" when it is learned, possessed, inhabited, and performed. It involves stepping outside one's comfort zone, letting go of one's inhibitions, and taking chances. The author contends that languages enable skillful interaction and efficacy in human activity, providing them with the right tools to immerse themselves and flow in human interaction.

It is of immense importance that the employees working in the tourism sector are fully trained in a language and communication skills. In a property such as hotel or resort, there are many departments such as housekeeping, food, beverages and front office with which the customer might level a question and needs to be both understood and answered to their satisfaction as this can make or break their experience. Thus said, the language choice and proficiency provide confidence to the staff member bearing a lot of impact on guest satisfaction.

Historical Hindsight of Albanian Tourism

Albania has been always being visited by foreigners in the course of the bygone century, including during its monarchy in the 20s and 30s and in its five decades of communist regime. During the monarchy, tourism was widely regarded as one of the cornerstones to spur on the economy and various agreements were made with foreign agencies to bring their flocks of tourists to Albania.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, tourism in itself was not seen as a vital sector of the economy worthy to revitalize and empower after the unprecedented havoc and devastation caused by WW2. Tourism was frowned upon and was mainly seen as a means to propaganda by the upper echelons of the ruling communist party. It served as an ideological buttress by the regime and was extensively utilized the maintenance of relations with the communist bloc of Eastern Europe. During this period, Albania is visited by German, Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Russian tourists. Suitable accommodation infrastructure was set up with the construction of the first hotels in Dures, respectively, with the best known hotel of the time, Hotel "Adriatik", as well as other hotels resemblant of Bolshevik architectural style.

The development of tourism in the country in the post-war years, coincided with a new trend in learning foreign languages, where the main trend was Russian, taking into account the close relations between Albania and the Soviet Union. The Russian language continued to be taught with priority until the fall of communism in Albania, followed by French which dominated as a second foreign language.

The year 1961 dictated the change of the course of tourism in the country right after the breakdown of Albania's relations with the Soviet bloc and its leader, Nikita Khrushchev, including the countries of Eastern Europe. This change in the course of the regime was also reflected in the teaching of foreign languages, which has already begun to experiment with the opening of new branches at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Tirana, as well as with the teaching of foreign

languages in the Albanian schools of the time, giving an incentive also to the proliferation of bilingual dictionaries.

Thus said, the learning of foreign languages was now oriented more towards the future and economic interests, dictated now under the wind of change that was soon to sweep across Eastern Europe and the communist countries. During the the '70s and '80s, new foreign languages were added into the fold with opening of the English department and other foreign language department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Tirana.

In the second half of the 1980s, the Albanian press reported in the form of advocacy on the trend that was spreading in the teaching of foreign languages in the Albanian schools of the time. According to the newspaper of the time, *Zëri i Popullit*, it is estimated that during these period, a total of 25 bilingual dictionaries with 50,000 words each were published (Zëri i Popullit, 1988).

Furthermore, the aforementioned newspaper cites that 15,000 copies of the Italian-Albanian dictionary were recently published at the time and a German-Albanian dictionary was also published and distributed in 15,000 copies. Interestingly, the emphasis now shifted increasingly on Western languages, despite Russian still being the number one language taught in the Albanian education system (the last unabridged Russian-Albanian dictionary had been published in 1954 with 25,000 words) – a presentiment which augured the dawn of democracy in Albania in the 90s.

After the cloud of communism, no longer cast its shadow on tourism, the Albanian tourism took its place as on of the pillars of the economy and although the political scene in Albania was fraught with unrest and riots, especially the Albanian civil war in 1997, its tourism needed another decade to jumpstart and resurface from the oblivion of the communist era.

Objective and method analysis of ETP

In ESP course design, according to the researcher Helen Basturkmen, “it is imperative to identify needs in ESP” (Basturkmen, 2014), but it is also equally important to understand according to the researchers Hutchinson and Waters to identify “lacks” and “wants” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

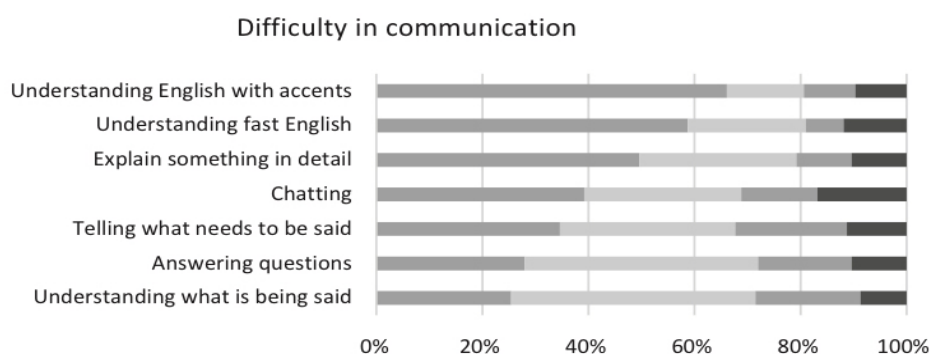


Figure 2. Communication difficulties according to tourists

Source: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(98\)00102-00102](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(98)00102-00102)

The current survey was conducted to determine the communication problems at six sampled local tourist destinations and identify the “lacks” and “wants” among the target populations. The target participants included those engaged in tourism-related businesses such as hotels, local shops and information centres. Although these local destinations had been dominated by domestic tourists, in recent years they have begun to attract many international tourists. This small-scaled survey included a questionnaire and interviews to understand what exactly the participants found difficult in tourism interaction situations. After the data analysis of the questionnaire survey, interviews were conducted to verify the reliability and validity of the analysis results.

From the results of the questionnaire above, of the respondents, 25% were in their 40s and a further 25% older than 50. Females accounted for 60% of the respondents. When asked what difficulties they experienced when interacting with international tourists, most of the respondents perceived “understanding English with accents”, “understanding fast English” and “explaining something in detail” as the most challenging. The follow-up interviews revealed that people experienced difficulties primarily when speaking and listening. They shared that they “can’t understand questions”, “can’t make themselves understood” and in particular, experienced difficulties understanding English that was different from the standard school English with which they were familiar. The tourist levels of English often varied because many were non-native speakers and communicated in ELF.

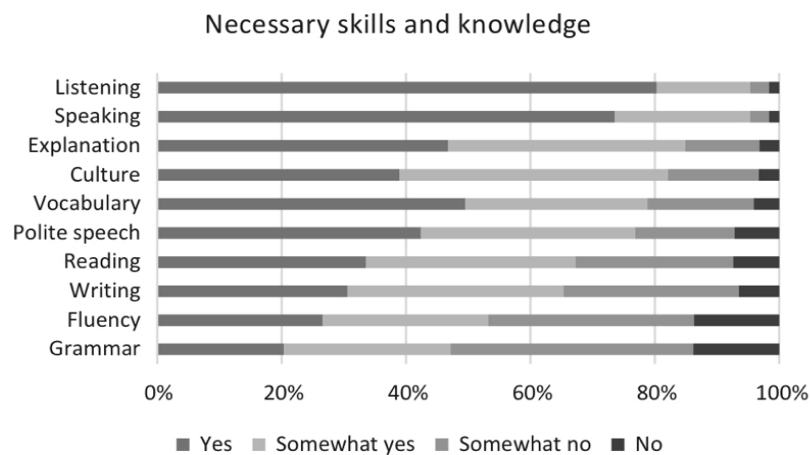


Figure 3. Necessary skills and knowledge in English according to tourists

Source: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(86\)90002-90002](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(86)90002-90002)

In another survey conducted to determine the vital skills in ETP, the results of the analysis revealed a number of key issues. Firstly, even though speaking and listening are important skills in the tourism industry, many people at local destinations have

very limited English and thus experience difficulty when interacting with tourists. In particular, they experience difficulties “speaking about something in detail” and “listening to English that is spoken with an accent” or “at a natural speed”. Secondly, they have encountered problems arising from cultural differences. Tourists from overseas tend to behave in accordance with their own cultural norms. Generally, the people have not had exposure to different cultures and thus do not know how to deal with those who exhibit different manners and behaviors. Thirdly, most of the situations they encounter may be regarded as routine such as giving directions and explanations.

Thus said and taking into account the above problems, the ESP approach may provide an efficient way to overcome the deficiencies of the people who work in the industry. According to the researcher John Swales, these problems in ETP communication can be ironed out “by identifying genres with which they encounter difficulties” (Swales, 1990), thus, enabling proper materials preparation.

Below, a modest word bank comprising of some important terms in ETP is offered as an appendix to this paper.

Table 1. Some important ETP terms

Establishment - A business organization, public institution, or household. <i>Shqip: establishment</i>
Fixed rent - any rent to the extent its amount and the time at which it is required to be paid are fixed and determinable under the terms. <i>Shqip: qera fikse</i>
Maitre d’hotel – the manager of the hotel. <i>Shqip: menaxheri I hotelit</i>
To be leased - A contract by which one party conveys land, property, services, etc, to another for a specified time. <i>Shqip: leshim me qira</i>
Bottled or draught beer - Beer that is served from a cask or keg rather than from a bottle or can. <i>Shqip: birre ne shishe ose kriko</i>
Brew - Make beer by soaking, boiling, and fermentation. <i>Shqip: përgatis majen per birren</i>
Pantry - A small room or cupboard in which food, crockery, and cutlery are kept. <i>Shqip: qilar.</i>
Busboy - A young man who clears tables in a restaurant or café. <i>Shqip: sherbyes tavoline</i>
Rostrum - A raised platform on which a person stands to make a public speech, receive an award or medal or conduct an orchestra. <i>Shqip: podium</i>
Press booth - a special section of a sports stadium or arena that is set up for the media to report about a given event. <i>Shqip: kabine per median</i>
Occupancy rate - the ratio of rented or used space to the total amount of available space. <i>Shqip: norma e okupimit</i>

Deluxe category – superior category, including rooms, lodgings, etc. <i>Shqip – kategoria luks</i>
Ignition - The mechanism for bringing about ignition in an internal combustion engine. <i>Shqip: sistemi i ndezjes</i>
Luggage compartment - compartment in an automobile that carries luggage or shopping or tools. <i>Shqip – kofano e bagazheve</i>
Mileage - A number of miles travelled or covered. <i>Shqip: kilometrazhi</i>
Bow - The front end of a ship. <i>Shqip: pjesa ballore e anije</i>
Stern -The rearmost part of a ship or boat. <i>Shqip: pjesa fundore e anijes.</i>
A freighter - A large ship or aircraft designed to carry goods in bulk. <i>Shqip: anije mallrash</i>
To skirt smth. - To go round or past the edge of. <i>Shqip: te ecesh buze dickaje.</i>
Vessel - A hollow container, especially one used to hold liquid, such as a bowl or cask. <i>Shqip: ene ose lunder</i>
To embark - Go on board a ship or aircraft. <i>Shqip: te hipesh ne anije ose avion.</i>
To go ashore - to move from water to land. <i>Shqip – te zbarkosh ne toke.</i>
Shuttle flight - a scheduled airline service on short routes with a simplified fare and class structure. <i>Shqip: udhetim i shkurter ajror</i>
Aisle - a passage between rows of seats in a building such as a church or theatre, an aircraft, or train. <i>Shqip: shteg, udhez</i>
Ticket conductor - the person whose job is to help passengers and check tickets. <i>Shqip: kontrollori i biletave</i>
Junction - A point where two or more things are joined. <i>Shqip: kryqezim</i>
Economy class - The cheapest class of air or rail travel. <i>Shqip: klasi ekonomik</i>
A ship's alloyed place at a wharf or dock. <i>Shqip: shtrat ankorimi</i>
To ramble – to walk for pleasure in the countryside. <i>Shqip: te bredhesh per qejf</i>
Bulk purchase – the purchase of a large quantity of a particular product. : <i>Blerje me shumice</i>
Subsidiary – a company controlled by a holding company. <i>shqip: filial</i>
Joint venture - a commercial enterprise undertaken jointly by two or more parties which otherwise retain their distinct identities. <i>Shqip: sipermarrje e perbashket</i>
Bellman - an intermediate support for the adjacent ends of two bridge spans; <i>shqip:</i>
A rack with pigeonholes - one of a series of small, open compartments, as in a desk, cabinet, or the like, used for filing or sorting papers, letters, etc. <i>Shqip: raft dosjesh</i>

Pier - an intermediate support for the adjacent ends of two bridge spans; <i>alb:</i> <i>Skele, mol</i>
--

Bulk fare - A fare only available when buying blocks of airline seats. <i>Shqip:</i> <i>tarife shumice</i>

Conclusion and results

This paper contends that the learning process of ETP must be enhanced with communication skills that involve verbal and non-verbal expressions. One suggested way of teaching ETP is by role playing, a technique which is effectively used worldwide as part of a continuous training tool. In this case scenario, employees are presented with real life situations that can occur on the job and observe how they handle and resolve them. For example, dealing with an infuriated customer who may be upset about the room condition, bad food, overcharge or security may be challenging at first, especially if the employee lacks the necessary terminology in expressing himself.

ETP English has experienced a resurgence in academia during the last 15 years with the sprawling of numerous monographies and articles being published each year to accentuate the need for learning and teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and ETP (English for Tourism Purposes) to the big rostrum of its users angling to advance their career prospects. In an interconnected world in which all sectors of the global economy are interweaved like a spider's cobweb, tourism is the one which reverberates the most globally with its cascade of tourists and English is its agent and instrumental in tourism's success. Under the aegis of ESP English, ETP English will further gain in stature and diversify its curricula to meet the ever changing demands of global tourism.

Literature

- Basturkmen, H. (2014). *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes*. New York: Routledge. Blue, G. M.
- Blažević N, Blažević M, *The Present Position and Future Prospects of the German Language in Croatian Tourism*. *Tourism and Hospitality Management* 13 (3): 693-700. 2007.
- Gradol D. (2006) *English Next*. The British Council, UK.
- Cohen, E., & Cooper, R. L. (1986). *Language and tourism*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13(4), 533–563. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(86\)90002-90002](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(86)90002-90002)
- Crystal D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cronin, M. (2000). *Across the lines: Travel, language, translation*. Cork Cork University Press.
- So-Mui L, F and Mead, K (2000). An Analysis of English in the Workplace: The Communication Needs of Textile and Clothing Merchandisers. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19, 351-368.

- Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes. A Learner-Centered Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Newspaper article from *Zëri i Popullit*, 31 July edition, 1988.
- Phipps, A (2006). *Learning the arts of linguistic survival: Languaging, tourism, life*. Clevedon: Channelview Publications.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English for Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>