TEACHING ENGLISH TOURISM TERMS IN ESP CLASSES

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Abstract. This article examines the importance of teaching English tourism terms in ESP classes. Teaching English tourism terms in ESP classes is a scientifically grounded endeavor that leverages principles from SLA, cognitive psychology, and educational technology. By adopting evidence-based practices and addressing existing gaps, educators can better prepare learners to meet the demands of the dynamic and ever-evolving tourism industry.

Key words. Tourism terms, cognitive psychology, tourism industry, international travel.

INTRODUCTION.

The global tourism industry, valued at over $9 trillion USD and accounting for approximately 10% of global GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022), is a cornerstone of economic development and cultural exchange. As international travel continues to expand, the demand for professionals proficient in English—the de facto lingua franca of global communication—has grown exponentially. According to Crystal (2003), English serves as the primary medium of interaction in cross-cultural settings, particularly in industries like tourism where effective communication is paramount. This linguistic requirement has led to the emergence of specialized English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs tailored to meet the needs of tourism professionals.

Tourism-specific English encompasses a vast lexicon of technical terms, idiomatic expressions, and situational language that differ significantly from general English. For example, phrases such as "all-inclusive package," "cultural immersion experience," and "sustainable ecotourism" are integral to the discourse of modern tourism but are rarely encountered in everyday conversation. Research by Hutchinson

and Waters (1987) highlights that ESP instruction must focus not only on vocabulary acquisition but also on the pragmatic use of language within specific professional contexts. In the case of tourism, this involves mastering terminology related to accommodation, transportation, cultural heritage, and customer service while developing the ability to apply these terms in real-world interactions.

The cognitive load associated with learning domain-specific vocabulary can be significant, especially for learners with intermediate proficiency levels. Nation (2001) emphasizes that vocabulary acquisition is most effective when it occurs through meaningful exposure and repeated use in context. Furthermore, studies have shown that ESP learners benefit from multimodal instructional approaches that integrate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements (Mayer, 2005). These findings underscore the need for innovative pedagogical strategies in teaching tourism-related English terms.

This article investigates the efficacy of various instructional methods used in teaching tourism-specific English terms within ESP classes. Specifically, we aim to address two research questions:

1. What are the most effective methods for teaching tourism-specific English terms?
2. How do students perceive the relevance and usefulness of these terms in real-world scenarios?

By integrating insights from applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and educational technology, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on ESP pedagogy and offers evidence-based recommendations for educators.

METHODS.

The study involved 40 participants enrolled in an ESP course at a vocational training institute specializing in tourism and hospitality. The participants were aged between 18 and 35, with varying levels of English proficiency (intermediate to upper-intermediate). All participants had prior experience working in or studying tourism-related fields, which provided them with a foundational understanding of industry concepts.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data. The intervention spanned eight weeks, during which participants attended weekly two-hour sessions focused on tourism terminology. Each session included explicit instruction of key terms, followed by interactive activities designed to reinforce learning.

The curriculum was developed based on authentic materials from the tourism industry, including brochures, websites, and video clips of hotel receptions and airport interactions. Key terms were categorized into thematic units, such as:

Accommodation : e.g., "suite," "concierge," "room service."

Transportation : e.g., "boarding pass," "layover," "transfer."

Cultural Sites : e.g., "heritage site," "guided tour," "UNESCO World Heritage."

Additionally, supplementary resources like flashcards, quizzes, and role-playing scripts were utilized to enhance engagement.

Each session followed a structured format:

Introduction of Terms: New vocabulary was introduced through visual aids and contextual examples.

Practice Activities: Participants engaged in pair work, group discussions, and simulated dialogues. For example, one activity involved creating a mock itinerary using newly learned terms.

Assessment: At the end of each session, participants completed a short quiz to assess retention.

After the intervention period, participants completed a survey rating the effectiveness of the teaching methods. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a subset of 10 participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences.

RESULTS.

Quantitative findings. Survey results indicated high satisfaction with the teaching methods employed. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being "very effective"), the average rating for the overall approach was 4.6. Role-playing exercises received the highest score (4.8), while traditional lectures scored lower (3.9).

Retention rates were also promising. Pre- and post-intervention tests showed a 75% improvement in participants' ability to recall and use tourism-specific terms correctly. For example, before the course, only 30% of participants could accurately define "visa waiver." After the course, this figure rose to 90%.

Qualitative insights. Interviews revealed that participants found the practical nature of the lessons particularly beneficial. One participant noted, "Role-playing helped me understand how to use words like 'itinerary' and 'transfer' in real conversations with clients." Another highlighted the importance of context: "Seeing terms in brochures and videos made them easier to remember because I could picture where they fit in."

However, some challenges were identified. A few participants expressed difficulty retaining less frequently used terms, such as "heritage corridor" or "ecotourism certification." Additionally, those with lower initial proficiency levels struggled to keep pace with advanced discussions.

Discussion. The findings underscore the value of integrating authentic materials and interactive activities into ESP classes focused on tourism terminology. By grounding lessons in real-world contexts, instructors can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in ESP settings (Ellis, 2003). Role-playing emerged as a particularly effective method, echoing studies that highlight its role in enhancing communicative competence (Liu & Littlewood, 1997). Simulated scenarios not only reinforced vocabulary but also built confidence in handling professional situations.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study highlights areas for improvement. For instance, differentiated instruction may be necessary to accommodate varying proficiency levels. Incorporating digital tools, such as gamified apps or virtual reality simulations, could further enhance engagement and retention.

Future research should explore long-term retention of tourism-specific terms and examine the impact of technology-enhanced learning environments. Additionally,

expanding the sample size and including participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds would provide broader generalizability.

CONCLUSION.

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of ESP instruction in equipping tourism professionals with the linguistic tools necessary to navigate the complexities of the global tourism industry. The integration of authentic materials, interactive activities, and contextualized instruction aligns with established theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and cognitive learning. For instance, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis posits that meaningful production of language enhances fluency and accuracy, a principle supported by the success of role-playing exercises observed in this study. Similarly, the dual-coding theory proposed by Paivio (1986) explains why multimodal approaches—such as combining visual aids with verbal explanations—facilitate deeper encoding and retention of vocabulary.

From a scientific perspective, the results underscore the importance of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in ESP contexts. Ellis (2003) argues that TBLT fosters both linguistic competence and communicative confidence by simulating real-world tasks. The high satisfaction ratings and improved retention rates reported in this study validate the effectiveness of TBLT in teaching tourism-specific terms. Moreover, the positive feedback regarding role-playing activities aligns with sociocultural theories of learning, which emphasize the role of social interaction in mediating cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Despite these promising outcomes, the study identifies several areas for further exploration. First, the variability in retention rates among less frequently used terms suggests the need for spaced repetition techniques, which have been shown to enhance long-term memory consolidation (Cepeda et al., 2006). Second, the challenges faced by lower-proficiency learners indicate the potential benefits of adaptive learning technologies, which can personalize instruction based on individual needs (Pane et al., 2014). Finally, the incorporation of immersive technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) simulations, could provide learners with opportunities to

practice tourism-related vocabulary in highly realistic environments, thereby bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

In conclusion, teaching English tourism terms in ESP classes is a scientifically grounded endeavor that leverages principles from SLA, cognitive psychology, and educational technology. By adopting evidence-based practices and addressing existing gaps, educators can better prepare learners to meet the demands of the dynamic and ever-evolving tourism industry. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the durability of vocabulary acquisition and explore the impact of emerging technologies on ESP pedagogy.

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