

Teaching English for Tourism: A Case Study in Kosovo

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Abstract—This paper analyzes the necessity of teaching English for tourism in Kosovo. This study falls within the realm of applied linguistics, specifically in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Tourism undoubtedly stands as a vital pillar for a country's economy. The aim of this paper is to underscore the significance of teaching the English language to students specializing in Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment. English is widely recognized among scholars focusing on tourism as a facilitative tool that enhances the quality of services provided to foreign tourists. Individuals working in national, municipal tourism offices, or private business facilities involved in tourism activities are obligated, as per their job descriptions, to communicate effectively with guests—foreign tourists who come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Hence, mastery of the English language and proficient communication in English are essential factors in the field of tourism and hospitality. This paper aims to address the challenges of mastering English language skills and the importance of teaching English in the context of tourism and hospitality in Kosovo. The paper includes a research study conducted among students of the Department of Management in Tourism, Hospitality, and Environment (MTHE), emphasizing the relevance of the English language in this domain. The research methodology utilized in this study is both quantitative and qualitative, involving data collection through a questionnaire. The questionnaire results underscore the necessity of teaching English for tourism and the pivotal role of the English language in the entire industry.

Index Terms—English for specific purpose, English, Albanian, language teaching, tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will focus on the significance of English as a "lingua franca" in both the global and local contexts, particularly its importance for tourism in Kosovo. It will encompass an analysis of the necessity of teaching English within Kosovo's tourism sector. This analysis will draw upon data collected from questionnaires distributed to employees in this sector and students from the Department of Tourism and Hospitality at the Public University "Haxhi Zeka" in Peja, Kosovo. The focus of analyzing the data collected from students will center on their expectations regarding the importance of English, as well as its professional application.

In today's modern world, tourism stands as one of the most developed and frequently engaged activities. It plays a pivotal role in a country's economic development. Professionals in the field of economics assert that globally, tourism ranks as the third-largest contributor to the economy after the oil and chemical industries. The industry's contribution is multifaceted. In developed countries, tourism significantly promotes the cultural diversity characteristic of the country and its people. In transitioning economies, it creates numerous job opportunities and business prospects.

Tourism has evolved into a global phenomenon, involving millions worldwide. Its growth and development necessitate heightened communication skills as a fundamental requirement for improving global interconnectedness. Communication serves as a fundamental pillar in the tourism and hospitality industry. Its importance stems from the significant role the service sector plays in this industry. As English has solidified its position as an international language, its proficiency has become indispensable for professionals in tourism and hospitality. Thus, mastering English has become a mandatory prerequisite in this field, with effective communication in English constituting a vital part of delivering efficient service.

Kosovo, as a transitioning country, has witnessed tourism emerge as a crucial sector, significantly contributing to its economy over the last decade. Despite its small geographical size, Kosovo possesses remarkable natural and human characteristics, showcasing extraordinary tourist potential. It offers ideal prospects for domestic, regional, and international tourism development. Although tourism plays a pivotal role in Kosovo's economy and holds substantial development prospects, it's fair to say that its full potential remains untapped. Consequently, from the standpoint of tourism and hospitality, Kosovo is still in a developmental phase.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section constitutes the theoretical framework of this paper. Here, the focus lies on reviewing opinions that present English as a “lingua franca,” followed by an exploration of scholarly work discussing the importance of teaching English for Specific Purposes, particularly in the context of teaching English for Tourism. Primarily, this literature review aims to define language as both a phenomenon and a field of study, while also elucidating tourism as a social phenomenon and an area of academic inquiry.

Definitions of language abound due to their multifaceted functions. However, the most widespread definition conceives of language primarily as a tool for communication. It serves as the medium through which we both receive and convey information, shaping our thoughts in the process. Language enables the expression of thoughts, ideas, and attitudes to others, facilitating communication. While the ability to communicate through language is universal, the languages individuals possess vary. Each group forms a language community that employs a specific language for communication.

From earlier authors, Sapir defines that language is a purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols (Sapir, 1921). Sapir's contemporary, Bloomfield, defines language as the totality of utterances that can be made in a speech community (Bloomfield, 1926). Furthermore, Richards and Platt (1992) define language as the system of human communication which consists of structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units. Also, other authors, Saussure, Block and Trager, von Humboldt, Chomsky, have given their definitions on language, definitions which are given below. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), defines that a language is a system of signs expressing ideas, and hence comparable to writing, the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, symbolic rites, forms of politeness, military signals, and so on. It is simply the most important of such systems.

On the other hand, one problem in defining tourism lies in the fact that many scholars have opposing views about the fact that tourism is not an object of study, not a field of study. This is due to the fact that some researchers see tourism only as a human activity. Tourism as a phenomenon is difficult to define because different scholars give different definitions and such scholars are usually professionals in other fields than tourism. Such variations in definitions are present because, as Lundberg, Krishnamoorthy and Stavenga (1995) state, tourism is “an umbrella concept” in which multiple disciplines are linked. Being professional in a different field can unconsciously force these researchers to provide definitions related to the impact of tourism on the field in which they graduated or vice versa. This makes defining tourism to have different approaches. The large number of definitions of tourism as a phenomenon is also due to the fact that today tourism is associated with almost all sectors of social activity.

There is a definition given by the World Tourism Organization which states that tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business / professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure. (<https://www.unwto.org>) Despite the fact that such a definition is given by the World Tourism Organization, many scholars and many professionals do not see this definition as unanimous. This is due to the fact that tourism, according to them, is a more complex phenomenon.

A. *English as Lingua Franca*

Today, English is the most widely learned language worldwide. It serves as the language of political discourse, international business, air transport, science, and global medicine. Furthermore, it dominates the spheres of world media, film, television, culture, and information technology. Professionals, specialists, and educated individuals across the globe understand English. Many English words have become universally familiar and comprehensible, contributing to the label of English as a universal or global language. The necessity for such a lingua franca has never been more pronounced than in this era of globalization. The emergence of a global language was a logical consequence, and two pivotal factors in establishing the global status of English are the 19th-century British Industrial Revolution and the substantial growth of the American economy, propelling it to an economic superpower throughout the 20th century.

But beyond that, many scholars and professionals refer to the English language as “lingua franca”. “Lingua franca” as a term has been used continuously in linguistic and sociological literature. The term lingua franca is used to refer to a contact language, that is, a language between speakers who do not share the same first language. Today, this term is inextricably linked only to the English language. Since the beginning of this century, there is an extremely voluminous number of monographs, works, researches on the distribution and influence of the English language and its undeniable role as “lingua franca”. As Jenkins (2009) puts it, “The phenomenon of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become the subject of considerable debate during the past few years.” This has created the basis for creating a perspective of English Lingua Franca and for the English language to be studied as a phenomenon of intercultural communication. The role of English as a lingua franca has contributed to the creation of a new phenomenon called World Standard English.

Mauranen (2018) states that “the two remarkable things about English today are that it has spread around the globe like no other language before, and that it is spoken by people for whom it is a second or additional language more than by those for whom it is a first language.” The widespread dissemination of English worldwide and its extensive utilization across various domains undeniably consolidates its role as a “lingua franca.” There's no denying that its

influence steadily amplifies day by day, driven by emerging global trends that increasingly engage diverse populations with the English language.

B. English for Specific Purposes

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged in the latter half of the 20th century due to two significant factors: the post-Second World War global landscape and what Swales (1992) referred to as the linguistic revolution. This shift arose from the diverse needs and interests of learners, prompting course designers to create tailored programs for specific contexts. As Swales presented, learners had different needs and interests, and as a result, course designers had to develop courses to fit factors in particular contexts. Various definitions of ESP emerged among different authors. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) described ESP as "an approach to language teaching where all decisions regarding content and method are based on the learner's purpose for learning." According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), ESP is defined as "the role of English in a language course or program determined by the specific needs of a particular group of learners." The definition by Richards and Schmidt best encapsulates the actual purpose behind the emergence of ESP as a phenomenon and academic field. ESP's focus on meeting the specific needs of various groups elevates its significance considerably. Its capacity to cater to diverse scientific fields within its domain further strengthens its standing within the academic sphere.

In this discussion, it is very important to analyze English for Tourism as a subfield of a wider discipline known as English for Specific Purpose. The term "specific" refers to the very narrow purpose for learning English. In such cases, students approach the acquisition of English through a field that is already known and relevant. As such, ESP combines English language teaching and subject matter. It is pointed out that a combination such as the aforementioned is of great motivation for students. This is due to the fact that ESP enables them to learn and use English in their field of study. In our case, ESP approach is highly motivating for Tourism and Hospitality students. And one simple reason for this is that ESP is more concentrated in pragmatics than in morphology or syntax. English for Tourism is one of the many fields constituting the wider discipline of English for Specific Purposes. In the field of English for Tourism, students' focus falls in analyzing the required skills and needs for adequacy in their job position which is necessarily related to communicating with tourists who have a different cultural background compared to that of the employee. This makes English a prerequisite for all employees of this sector. As Otilia Simion (2012) states "English proficiency is required in all professional areas but it becomes essential in the tourist industry because of its specific characteristics".

C. Importance of English for Tourism

Contemporary services hold a pivotal role in fulfilling diverse human needs, and within this spectrum, tourism stands intimately connected to the service sector. In an industry where the primary focus revolves around the dynamic interaction between service seekers and providers, the possession of a shared language becomes an indispensable asset. A common language serves as the cornerstone for fostering effective, coherent, and comprehensive communication among all involved parties. Proficiency in a foreign language undoubtedly stands as an invaluable skill, significantly enhancing the ability to deliver high-quality services in the dynamic realm of the tourism and hospitality industry.

Nevertheless, acquiring English stands as the foremost tool in delivering quality services to tourists. This is primarily due to its status as the "lingua franca," rendering the importance of mastering this language incomparable to any other. Yet, mastering English remains the paramount tool for providing top-notch tourist services, given its "lingua franca" status, incomparable to other languages' significance. The status of "lingua franca" in the field of tourism has an inalienable impact. We see that many of the road signs today are offered in English, announcements at bus stations, train stations and airports are given in English, restaurants offer menus in English. Almost any type of tourist information is provided in English. This is why communication in English in the tourism and hospitality industry is of particular importance. Fatos Gjata (2017) defines some advantages of using English. These advantages are as it follows:

1. It provides advantages in making reservations. In this regard, English knowledge as an international language helps to accomplish some goals before and during a trip including ticket purchase, hotel reservation, food ordering, accommodation etc.
2. It provides communication opportunities. If you speak and communicate in this international language you can better explain your preferences during a trip.
3. It enables cooperation with locals. English acquisition enables you to interact with locals, to get acquainted with their lives and culture.
4. It provides the opportunity to communicate with other travelers. English is an international language that facilitates communication between people of different nationalities; it also allows different travelers to share their experiences.
5. It gives you the opportunity to be independent during your trip. As the knowledge of different tourists for the places they visit is insufficient, it is necessary for them to have a tour guide. But English enables travelers to explore these foreign countries even without the help of a tour guide.

D. Analysis of English Use in the Kosovo Tourism Sector

We have chosen the city of Peja as a major tourism destination in Kosovo. Peja is the westernmost city of Kosovo with about 100 thousand inhabitants. It is surrounded by mountain ranges. The Lumbardhi river that springs through the Rugova Canyon separates the city in half. History, culture, tradition, natural resources, location, are some of the features

that distinguish Peja as a tourist destination attract visitors from various countries throughout the year. The city has a rich ancient history. The greatest wealth is the mountainous region of Rugova where Rugova Canyon, Lumbardhi, lakes at an altitude of 1860m, caves, as well as waterfalls along the canyon, mountain peaks over 2000m, are offered for use to visitors. One of the main attractions of the city of Peja is the Waterfall of Drini with a length of 30m, which is visited throughout the year by many local and foreign visitors, which is part of the system of mountain ranges of the Cursed Mountains.

The city of Peja in 2019, the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic, had a number of hotels stays of around 150 thousand. With the impact of the pandemic, this number has dropped to about 56 thousand in the last year. If we see visitors from their country of origin, most visitors are from Albania, Switzerland and Germany. In this case, we can say that most of the visitors are Albanian speakers as a large number of visitors from Switzerland and Germany are immigrants who spend the holiday period in Kosovo. Therefore, knowledge of English is not necessary for effective communication with these tourists. The rest of the visitors are mostly from Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy and France. With this part of tourists, the need of knowing English is evident.

We compared questionnaire findings of the study conducted among students in tourism at the Haxhi Zeka University. The results of this questionnaire and its findings will be discussed henceforth.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Sample / Participants

The participants of this research are the students of the first and second group of the first year of studies in the Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment. Also, the population of this paper consists of second year students of the same faculty, 8 participants for each group. The number of questionnaires completed is a total of 24, all the Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment at Haxhi Zeka University in the city of Peja. At the "Haxhi Zeka" University, students of the Faculty of Management in Tourism and Hospitality, study English as a mandatory subject, divided into two modules that are taught in the first and second year of bachelor studies. The aim of English subject in this Faculty is to acquire a richer vocabulary and language skills ranging from level A1 to B2. From the experience at this university, we can say that the inclusion of another elective subject - English for Professional Communication - would be more than necessary and welcomed by the students of this department. Of course, such a course would be offered in the third or fourth year of study in other departments besides the Faculty of Management in Tourism and Hospitality.

B. Instrument(s)

The questionnaire was applied as a very successful research tool. The other reason for using the questionnaire in this research is because it collects data on our points of interest, which are structured in advance. The questionnaire used contained a total of 12 questions, where some of the questions were with alternatives, in other questions we used the Likert scale and in one of the questions we left the opportunity to add comments if they have any thoughts or ideas which were not mentioned in the alternatives mentioned by our side.

C. Data Collection Procedures

Before the respondents were recruited in this research, the purpose of the research was explained to them and they were informed that their answers will remain completely anonymous. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire which contained points on the importance of the English language in the tourism sector, points related to their experience in communicating with foreign tourists and about the importance of the English language in the Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A questionnaire was distributed to 24 responders. Out of the 24 total responders, the percentage of female responders (41.7%) was lower than male (58.3). All of the responders (100%) have Albanian language as their first language or native language. The results obtained from the questionnaire show that there were 14 responders (58.3) with upper level of English proficiency.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF MTHE STUDENTS

		Frequency (n=24)	%
<i>Gender</i>	Female	10	41.7
	Male	14	58.3
<i>Level of English proficiency</i>	Beginner	3	12.5
	Elementary	4	16.7
	Pre-intermediate	3	12.5
	Upper-intermediate	6	25
	Advanced	8	33.3

In questioning responders “Do you find English as necessary in the tourism sector?” the following data were collected.

TABLE 2
NECESSITY OF ENGLISH IN THE SECTOR OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

		Frequency (n=24)		%
<i>Gender</i>	Female	Necessary	3	12.5
		Essential	7	29.2
	Male	Necessary	3	12.5
		Essential	11	45.8

As shown in Table 2, most students emphasize the necessity of English in the tourism section, which suggests higher inclusion of English courses in their studies. Only two English courses are taught to tourism and hospitality students. English language I and English language II constitute the totality of what is taught in English. Such two courses are mainly concerned with general skills in English and not with the specific purpose of using English for Tourism. The results indicate that 58.3% of responders (n=14) believe that English is very useful for employees of the tourism and hospitality sector. 41.7% (n=10) believe that English is advantageous and none of the responders believe that English is useless or not useful at all. Results show the positive attitude of responders towards the importance of English in this sector.

Additionally, responders were asked “How necessary do you find English for tourism and hospitality students?”. The results from data collected show that that 75% of responders (n=18) believe that English is essential for students of tourism and hospitality. On the other hand, 25% (n=6) believe that English is necessary and none of the responders believe that English is needless or not necessary at all.

Table 3 shows the results from data collected related to the importance of four main skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) in the sector of tourism and hospitality.

TABLE 3
IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>
1	14 (58.3%)	11 (45.8%)	6 (25%)	9 (37.5%)
2	3 (12.5%)	2 (8.3%)	8 (33.3%)	7 (29.2%)
3	1 (4.2%)	6 (25%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25%)
4	0 (0.00%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (8.3%)	1 (4.2%)
5	6 (25%)	3 (12.5%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (4.2%)

Note: 1 – very important, 5 – less important

When asked “In what skill do you think you have the most stagnation in English?”, the following data were collected.

TABLE 4
STAGNATION BASED ON SKILL

	<i>Speaking</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>
Frequency (n=24)	8 (33.3%)	6 (25%)	1 (4.2%)	9 (37.5%)

The results from this research show that students from MTHE claims English in the tourism sector as essential and necessary. Based on these results, the issue of greater inclusion of the English language throughout the studies arises. At present, English Language 1 at MTHE Faculty is taught as mandatory in the first year, second semester. English Language 2 on the other hand is taught as mandatory in the second year, the fourth semester. Both of these courses are taught in 15 weeks, with 2 hours of lectures per week and 2 hours of tutorials per week. Undoubtedly, with the importance of English language, during the studies, offering English Language 3 and 4 as elective courses would be welcomed by students. Another option would be to include English for Specific Purposes, English for Tourism, as an elective course. This is also supported by the data collected, presented above, that 75% of respondents believe that English is essential for tourism and hospitality students.

The results from this research show that among the four (4) English language skills, the most important skill is the speaking skill, followed by the skill of listening. In terms of importance, according to the collected results, the skill of writing is ranked before that of reading. Such results show that in the sector of tourism and hospitality, the most needed skill is that of speaking since the contact with foreign tourists is in most cases physical and requires verbal communication. Meanwhile, students of MTHE claim that in English they face the greatest difficulties in the writing skills. Contrary, according to the collected results, they claim that the English skill with least stagnation is that of reading. Based on this, they do not consider reading skills as a problem in their flow of acquiring English.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In the modern world, the phenomenon of tourism is among the most frequented phenomena in terms of frequency of activity. Tourism as such represents an industry that stands on its own as an influential factor in the economy of a country. We state that the contribution of tourism as an industry is multidimensional. In some countries, we state, that this industry aims to promote the culture and history of the country, while in some other countries this industry has a

specific contribution in creating jobs and generating new businesses. Specifically, we state that in Kosovo, as a country in transition, tourism is a growing sector. The touristic potential that Kosovo has for the development of domestic, regional, or international tourism businesses is not met. Based on this, in terms of tourism, Kosovo is still under development. This brings us to the conclusion that the importance of tourism in Kosovo is still assessed according to the contribution that tourism is bringing to the opening of new businesses and the opening of new jobs. So, Kosovo, as a country with still unfulfilled tourism potential, cannot be considered alongside countries that initially assess tourism as an opportunity for promotion. In principle, we can conclude that the institutional goal is to promote the country and culture but the goal of entrepreneurs in the field of tourism is the development and fulfillment of tourism potential.

The tourism and hospitality sector involves millions of people. The inclusion of people from different origins, different cultural backgrounds, different languages, makes communication an essential element in this sector. Based on this, we conclude that English has managed to stabilize its role as an international (global) language and as such becomes mandatory for effective communication in the field of tourism and hospitality. Also, we conclude that good English skills result in more efficient service to tourists. In this paper, we have defined language as a field of study and as a phenomenon, saying that language is a means through which we transmit and receive information, communicate our ideas and thoughts to others. Also, we defined tourism as a field of study and as a phenomenon, saying that tourism is a phenomenon that has its main aim to travel from one country to another, for the purpose of entertainment and recreation without excluding the business purpose.

A. Findings

In our paper, we elaborated on the role of English in today's world. We stated that the existence of English is a logical need that responds to the need of states and peoples to communicate. From the review of the literature on the importance of the English language, we came to the conclusion that the reference to English as "lingua franca" is more than reasonable because today English is present in every area of life and its absence as a global language would affect the degradation of many fields. Given the role of English as a global language, we discussed the importance of English in the field of tourism and hospitality. We mention the fact that the phenomenon of tourism is inextricably linked to the services sector. In a sector where the epicenter is the applicant, the service of the provider must be effective. In an industry where the epicenter is the tourist, the service to him must be efficient. The necessity to understand the request of the applicant makes the acquisition of English vital in the provision of the service. This was also our conclusion that possessing good English skills is the best tool to understand and offer quality service to tourists.

From the research conducted at Haxhi Zeka University in Peja, we came to the conclusion that English is essential in the tourism sector. From the research, we understand that none of the respondents consider English unnecessary or not needed at all. Most of the data that was collected indicated that English is essential and only a minority of respondents think that English is only necessary. From the same research, we found that most respondents believe that English is very useful for employees in the tourism and hotel sector. From this, we can conclude that there should be an institutional approach to the training of employees in English. This would include a course with a curriculum developed specifically for developing the ability to communicate with tourists.

B. Implications

From this research, we have obtained results that show that English is essential for tourism and hospitality students. Based on our discussion of these results, we conclude that the two mandatory courses, English Language 1 and 2, are insufficient in developing the necessary skills for specializing in English for tourism. Based on this study, the inclusion of one of the options: English Language 3 and English Language 4, English for Tourism, or English for Professional Communication, as elective courses, would have a positive effect on strengthening English language skills in order to use the language in the specific field of tourism and hospitality. Students are aware of the importance of English in tourism and hospitality and are aware of the role of English as a means of communication in this sector.

C. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research endeavors should consider conducting a comparative analysis of language curricula in countries with growing tourism sectors to distinguish best practices that can inform the development of more effective language programs in Kosovo. Longitudinal studies assessing the enduring impact of English language courses on students' proficiency and communication skills within the tourism and hospitality sector would offer valuable insights into the sustainability of language. Exploring business perspectives within the tourism industry in Kosovo and understanding how businesses perceive the importance of English language skills could contribute to adapting language teaching programs to meet industry demands. Additionally, further research could delve into the efficacy of alternative language courses, such as English Language 3 and 4, English for Tourism, or English for Professional Communication, as elective options to supplement the current mandatory courses (English Language 1 and 2) in enhancing English language skills for students specializing in tourism and hospitality.

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