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A CASE STUDY ON TEACHING ESP VOCABULARY TO TOURISM STUDENTS

Abstract. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly English for Tourism (EFT), is crucial for effective communication in the global tourism industry. This is especially pertinent in Transcarpathia experiencing growing tourism, where proficient English skills are vital for professionals interacting with international visitors. This necessitates equipping tourism workers with specialized linguistic and communicative competencies to enhance tourist experiences, foster cultural exchange, and drive regional economic growth. The purpose of this article is to explore effective teaching methodologies and material selection for EFT. It addresses the challenges students face when acquiring specialized tourism vocabulary, the importance of choosing relevant teaching materials, and the various classroom activities (warming-up, receptive, productive, and follow-up) that can be employed in EFT instruction. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate how a dual-focus approach, combining general and specific vocabulary, alongside real-world simulations, can better prepare students for the demands of the tourism sector.

Based on the results of a case study involving interviews with two experienced English language teachers, several key findings are indicated. Effective EFT instruction relies on carefully selected, authentic, and multimedia-rich materials that bridge existing knowledge with new information. A multi-phased pedagogical approach, incorporating varied and differentiated teaching methods, is essential for maintaining student motivation and addressing diverse language proficiencies. The study confirms that a balanced approach to vocabulary instruction, integrating both general and tourism-specific terms through practical scenarios and role-playing, significantly enhances language proficiency, boosts student confidence, and improves their ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. Further research prospects lie in conducting empirical investigations into the overall effectiveness of existing ESP courses for tourism in Transcarpathia. Such research could provide valuable data to further optimize language education strategies for tourism professionals in the region.



Keywords: English for specific purposes (ESP), English for tourism (EFT), teaching tourism vocabulary, students majoring in tourism, tourism industry.

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КЕЙС СТАДІ З НАВЧАННЯ ЛЕКСИКИ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ З ПРОФЕСІЙНИМ СПРЯМУВАННЯМ СТУДЕНТАМ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ «ТУРИЗМ»

Анотація. Англійська мова за професійним спрямуванням (ESP), зокрема англійська мова для туризму (EFT), має ключове значення для ефективної комунікації у світовій туристичній індустрії. Це особливо актуально для Закарпаття, регіону, що переживає зростання туризму, де володіння англійською мовою є життєво важливим для фахівців, які взаємодіють з іноземними відвідувачами. Це зумовлює необхідність оснащення працівників туристичної галузі спеціалізованими лінгвістичними та комунікативними компетенціями для покращення туристичного досвіду, сприяння культурному обміну та стимулювання регіонального економічного зростання. Метою статті є вивчення ефективних методик викладання та відбору матеріалів для EFT. У ній розглядаються виклики, з якими стикаються студенти при засвоєнні спеціалізованої туристичної лексики, важливість вибору відповідних навчальних матеріалів, а також різні види аудиторної роботи (підготовчі, рецептивні, продуктивні та підсумкові), які можуть бути використані у викладанні EFT. Зрештою, дослідження має на меті продемонструвати, як підхід з подвійним фокусом, що поєднує загальну та спеціальну лексику, поряд із симуляціями реального світу, може краще підготувати студентів до вимог туристичного сектору.

На основі результатів кейс-дослідження, що включало інтерв'ю з двома досвідченими викладачами англійської мови, виявлено кілька ключових висновків. Ефективне викладання EFT базується на ретельно відібраних, автентичних та мультимедійних матеріалах, які пов'язують існуючі знання з новою інформацією. Багатофазовий педагогічний підхід, що включає різноманітні та диференційовані методи навчання, є важливим для підтримки мотивації студентів та врахування різних рівнів володіння мовою. Дослідження підтверджує, що збалансований підхід до вивчення лексики, що інтегрує як загальні, так і туристично-специфічні терміни через практичні сценарії та



рольові ігри, суттєво покращує мовну компетенцію, підвищує впевненість студентів та їхню здатність застосовувати знання в реальних умовах. Перспективи подальших досліджень полягають у проведенні емпіричних досліджень загальної ефективності існуючих курсів ESP для туризму на Закарпатті. Такі дослідження можуть надати цінні дані для подальшої оптимізації стратегій мовної освіти для фахівців туристичної галузі в регіоні.

Ключові слова: англійська мова за професійним спрямуванням (ESP), англійська мова для туризму (EFT), навчання туристичної лексики, студенти спеціальності "Туризм", туристична галузь.

Problem statement. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a key part of English language education, focusing on the English skills needed for particular jobs or studies. Within ESP, English for Tourism (EFT) is especially important. It teaches people the language skills necessary to work in the tourism sector. The tourism industry is global and depends heavily on good communication, with English being the main language used between those offering services and international visitors.

For professionals in areas like hospitality, travel agencies, tour guiding, and customer service, strong English skills are not just helpful, but often essential. Because the industry is constantly changing and involves many different cultures, mastering the specific language and communication techniques used in tourism is crucial for providing excellent service and ensuring customers have a good experience.

Transcarpathia, where the case study described in this article was carried out, is a region in western Ukraine whose growing tourism relies heavily on effective communication with international visitors, making English proficiency crucial. It is greatly emphasized how vital ESP is for equipping tourism professionals with the necessary language skills, including industry-specific vocabulary, practical communication, and cultural awareness.

Implementing ESP programs through various channels and promoting an "English-friendly" environment will enhance tourist experiences, foster cultural exchange, and drive economic growth in the region [1].

Analysis of recent research and publications. As Hutchinson and Waters [2] point out, it is up to teachers to ensure the teaching materials are not just right for the subject and course goals, but also for the students and even the teachers themselves. Essentially, good materials bridge the gap between what students already know and new information. Therefore, picking the right materials, based on key criteria, is crucial for any English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. A poor choice in materials can easily lead to unmet expectations and student disengagement. Hutchinson and Waters [2] emphasize that materials should spark learning. The best ones do not just deliver information; they inspire students to learn more actively.

Texts are incredibly versatile learning tools in ESP, serving for both study and practice. They are a valuable source for reading comprehension, building communication skills, and expanding vocabulary. When teaching ESP, it is crucial that





activities directly relate to the subject matter. These activities can be broken down into different phases: warming-up, receptive, productive, and follow-up.

Warming-up activities get students ready to learn. This involves pre-teaching, discussing relevant questions, and introducing new vocabulary or grammar. The goal is to grab their attention and lead them into a deeper exploration of the topic. Techniques like games, collocation grids, puzzles, and questionnaires can be used. As Waker and Harding [3] highlight, these warm-ups are fundamental to the entire process of working with a text.

Receptive activities focus on understanding, such as reading, listening, and direct text interaction. Various reading strategies, including skimming, scanning, translation-based reading, and informative reading, help students engage with the material. Language-focused approaches like gap-filling and jigsaw reading are also vital, ensuring students remain actively involved and reflective.

Productive activities involve practising acquired knowledge through group work, pair work, or individual tasks with teacher assistance. Learners should be encouraged to summarize lessons to demonstrate their understanding of the topic. These activities ensure that students can apply what they have learned in practical scenarios.

Follow-up activities focus on reinforcing and further developing acquired knowledge. They can take the form of exercises, creative homework, discussions, and dramatic activities [3].

Research supports the dual-focus approach, showing that combining general and specific vocabulary instruction helps students retain and use language more effectively in professional settings. A great strategy is to immerse students in real-world simulations, where they can practise both general and specialized terms in hands-on scenarios. This boosts their fluency and confidence in communicating within the tourism sector [4].

To tackle the difficulties, it is essential to strike a balance between teaching general English vocabulary and specific tourism-related terms. Integrating both helps students build a strong foundation while acquiring the specialized language skills needed for their field. This approach not only improves their language proficiency but also boosts their confidence, allowing them to complete projects and engage in practical tasks more easily [5]. Incorporating real-life scenarios and role-playing exercises further reinforces learning. When simulating situations they might encounter in the tourism industry, students can practise using both general and specific vocabulary in context, leading to a more comprehensive understanding and better retention of the language.

The purpose of the article is to explore and analyse effective teaching methods and material selection for English for Tourism (EFT) within the broader field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It aims to discuss the challenges students face when learning specialized tourism vocabulary, particularly the overlap between general and specific English terms; the importance of selecting appropriate teaching materials that



are relevant, engaging, and bridge the gap between students' existing knowledge and new information. In addition, the article is aimed at describing various classroom activities (warming-up, receptive, productive, and follow-up) that can be used to teach EFT.

Ultimately, the article aims to demonstrate how a dual-focus approach (combining general and specific vocabulary) and real-world simulations can better prepare students for the demands of the tourism industry, as supported by insights from experienced English language and EFT teachers.

Presentation of the main material. Within the framework of a case study, two interviews were conducted with two English language teachers. To preserve their anonymity, they are referred to as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 throughout this paper. Both participants were female educators between the ages of 35 and 45, having 15 and 23 years of teaching experience. They contributed greatly to the success of the present study with their valuable insights and expertise on the subject matter. In what follows, the interview data are presented and discussed. (See the English version of the interview protocol in Table 1.)

When students encounter specialized topics in English, particularly in fields like tourism, they often feel overwhelmed if they do not have the specific vocabulary needed. Teacher 1 pointed out that even those with strong general English skills can struggle with content such as travel finance or restaurant profit calculations. While they might handle general English tasks easily, new, specialized assignments, like creating a presentation on financial planning for trips, present a significant hurdle.

Teacher 2 added that these specialized terms are rarely covered in general English courses. This means students have to learn and often memorize a lot of new vocabulary. This need for specific, industry-related language is a key characteristic of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially in tourism, where precise communication is vital for professional success.

Both teachers observed that students studying English for tourism already have a solid base of vocabulary for common topics like famous travel destinations, visiting Ukraine, and tourist spots in Transcarpathia. Teacher 2 indicated that students are already familiar with these subjects from their previous studies.

Teacher 1 further explains that students are not encountering this language for the very first time; their textbooks help reinforce what they already know. This means they come with a specialized vocabulary and do not need to start learning from scratch. This synergy between ongoing communication and students' existing vocabulary is a hallmark of English for Tourism, which focuses on clear, engaging, and expressive language for effective real-world communication in the industry.

High-quality textbooks, like "English for International Tourism" at B2 and C1 levels, are great because they organize topics around real-world situations, such as trip planning, handling receptionist duties, and leading meetings. Teacher 2 noted that students often already understand these concepts in their native language, and the textbook helps them grasp the English terminology.



Teacher 1 claimed that while textbooks and the curriculum complement each other well, extra materials like PowerPoint presentations and videos really boost learning. Many textbooks also come with audio exercises that improve both specific language skills and overall competence in the tourism field.

Teacher 2 also suggested using authentic materials, such as travel guides and online content. These resources simulate real-life scenarios, making lessons more practical. For example, students might plan a Caribbean trip for a middle-aged couple, taking into account their specific needs and preferences. Ultimately, both teachers agreed that incorporating these diverse materials makes learning much more engaging and true-to-life.

Students studying ESP in tourism often know the subject matter in their native language; the main hurdle is transferring that knowledge into English.

Teacher 2 emphasized that ESP helps students acquire the precise vocabulary and language structures for the tourism industry, bridging the gap between their first language and English. She also highlighted the benefit of audio materials in textbooks, which are crucial for improving listening comprehension and vocabulary in tourism. Additionally, encouraging students to use dictionaries and search engines fosters independent learning and problem-solving skills with online tools.

Teacher 1 stressed the importance of varied teaching methods to keep students motivated, especially when tackling grammar during writing tasks. This supports the need for differentiated instruction in ESP, allowing teachers to tailor approaches to individual student proficiencies and paces.

Both teachers' methods showcased how combining technology and differentiated instruction helps students gain the linguistic skills needed for tourism careers. Exposure to authentic materials and practical language use better prepares students for the demands of the industry and future success.

Tourism students often face vocabulary challenges where general English terms overlap with specialized tourism language.

Teacher 2 noted that some curriculum areas require less focus on vocabulary, while Teacher 1 pointed out that students frequently struggle with words they have seen in general English but have not applied in a tourism context.

This gap means students need to develop their general vocabulary to use it effectively in specific tourism situations.

Teacher 2 suggested that the proportion of general versus tourism-specific vocabulary can vary by topic, with some subjects being more difficult.

To balance teaching both types of vocabulary, she highlighted that students are naturally motivated because they understand the career importance of language skills [6].

This intrinsic motivation stems from knowing that language mastery directly impacts their ability to succeed and complete projects.

Teacher 2 observed that once students master the lesson material and vocabulary, their practical skills and confidence in real-world scenarios significantly improve.



Table 1

Interview questions

1. How extensive is the students' vocabulary in the field of English for specific purposes (ESP), particularly in tourism?
2. How motivated are the students during classes?
3. What are the main challenges in teaching English for tourism?
4. Does media influence students' attitudes toward learning ESP?
5. What is the most effective method you use in teaching tourism related English? (e.g., videos, PowerPoint presentations, textbooks, interactive tasks)
6. What role do brochures, travel guides, or online content play in vocabulary teaching?
7. How do you incorporate technology or digital resources into ESP teaching?
8. How do you adapt your teaching methods to students with varying language levels?
- Do you use differentiated instruction?
9. Have you noticed any specific vocabulary areas in tourism where students struggle more? How do you address and solve these challenges?
10. How do you balance teaching general English vocabulary with specific tourism-related vocabulary?

Conclusions. The study underscores the critical role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly English for Tourism (EFT), in fostering effective communication within the global tourism industry, with a specific focus on the burgeoning tourism sector in Transcarpathia, Ukraine.

The analysis of existing research and insights from experienced teachers reveals several key conclusions:

1. Strong English language skills are not merely beneficial but essential for tourism professionals to provide excellent service, manage diverse cultural interactions, and ensure positive customer experiences in an ever-evolving global industry.

2. Effective EFT instruction hinges on the careful selection of teaching materials that are relevant, engaging, and capable of bridging the gap between students' existing knowledge and new, specialized information. High-quality textbooks, complemented by authentic materials (e.g., travel guides, online content), multimedia resources (PowerPoint presentations, videos, audio exercises), and real-life simulations, are crucial for practical language acquisition.

3. A multi-phased approach incorporating warming-up, receptive, productive, and follow-up activities is vital for comprehensive language development. Teachers must employ varied and differentiated teaching methods to maintain student motivation, address diverse language levels, and tackle specific challenges, such as grammar during writing tasks.

4. Students often struggle with specialized tourism vocabulary, even if they possess strong general English skills. The study confirms that a balanced, dual-focus approach, integrating both general English vocabulary and specific tourism-related terms, is most effective. This strategy, reinforced through real-world scenarios and



role-playing, enhances language proficiency, boosts confidence, and improves students' ability to apply knowledge in practical settings.

5. Students pursuing EFT are often intrinsically motivated by the clear career relevance of language skills. This motivation, combined with effective teaching methodologies, significantly improves their practical communication skills and confidence, directly impacting their ability to succeed in the tourism sector.

6. By equipping tourism professionals with precise linguistic and communicative competencies, ESP programs directly enhance the tourist experience, foster cultural exchange, and contribute to the economic growth of regions like Transcarpathia by attracting more international visitors and creating job opportunities.

In conclusion, the successful development of Transcarpathia's tourism industry is intrinsically linked to the strategic implementation of well-designed and effectively delivered English for Tourism programs. Future research should empirically investigate the availability, significance, and effectiveness of such ESP courses in the region to further optimize language education for tourism professionals.

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