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ENGLISH AS A KEY COMPETENCE FOR FUTURE TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

Responsive in the twenty-first century, tourism has become one of the fastest-growing industries in the world, contributing significantly to global GDP and employment. In such a dynamic and international sector, the ability to communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural borders has become a decisive factor of professional success. English, as the world's lingua franca, functions not merely as a means of communication but as a core professional competence that determines the quality of service, career advancement, and the competitiveness of tourism enterprises. For future tourism professionals, mastering English is no longer optional – it is a fundamental requirement that integrates linguistic, intercultural, and professional dimensions of competence [3, p. 209].

The role of English in the tourism industry can be best understood through its multifaceted application in professional contexts. Front-desk managers, tour guides, travel agents, and event coordinators use English daily to interact with clients, negotiate with partners, and manage international

operations. For instance, a hotel receptionist in Prague may welcome guests from Japan, Canada, and Brazil within a single day; English becomes the shared medium that enables efficient communication, ensures customer satisfaction, and prevents misunderstandings [2, p. 410]. Similarly, a tour guide in Italy who conducts excursions for multinational groups must not only speak fluent English but also know how to adapt tone, vocabulary, and cultural references to diverse audiences. In both examples, English operates as a bridge connecting cultures and facilitating smooth professional interaction.

Beyond basic communication, English in tourism encompasses specialized vocabulary and discourse practices that reflect the industry's professional norms. Future specialists must learn to use English terminology specific to hospitality management, travel operations, event planning, and marketing. Expressions such as «all-inclusive package», «sustainable tourism», «check-in policy», or «destination branding» are not mere lexical items; they encode professional knowledge and reflect current trends in the global tourism market [1, p. 60]. For example, the term «sustainable tourism» is used not only to describe environmentally responsible practices but also to signal a company's ethical stance and compliance with international standards. Understanding and correctly using such terminology demonstrates a professional's competence, credibility, and awareness of contemporary global issues.

Moreover, the mastery of English in tourism involves pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence – the ability to choose appropriate linguistic strategies depending on the context. A polite apology to a dissatisfied guest («We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and will do our best to resolve the issue immediately») differs significantly from the informal tone used in a friendly conversation with repeat customers («We're so glad to see you again! Hope you enjoyed your last stay»). Effective professionals intuitively shift registers, tone, and style, using English not as a rigid code but as a flexible tool for building trust and rapport. Misusing politeness formulas or idioms may lead to communication breakdowns and damage a company's reputation. Thus, pragmatic competence in English is essential for maintaining the image of professionalism and hospitality.

The integration of English-language competence into tourism education has become a strategic priority in many countries. Universities and vocational institutions emphasize English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses tailored to tourism, hospitality, and event management. Such programs focus on communicative tasks typical of real professional situations: role-playing hotel check-ins, simulating travel agency negotiations, preparing guided tour commentaries, or responding to online reviews. For example, during a

classroom simulation, students may play the roles of hotel staff and international guests, practicing dialogues like:

- Guest: «Excuse me, could you recommend a local restaurant that serves traditional cuisine?»

- Receptionist: «Certainly, sir. I suggest trying ‘The Old Town Tavern’; it’s only a five-minute walk from here and is very popular for its authentic dishes».

Such exercises develop both linguistic fluency and cultural sensitivity, preparing students for authentic interactions in their future careers.

Another vital component of English competence is intercultural communication. Tourism professionals operate in a multicultural environment where understanding cultural differences is as important as language accuracy. Knowing that British guests value privacy, Japanese guests appreciate politeness and group harmony, while American tourists expect efficiency and friendliness, allows service providers to adjust their behavior accordingly. Language and culture are inseparable; thus, English competence also entails the ability to interpret and respect cultural norms embedded in speech acts. For instance, when a British visitor says «It’s a bit chilly in here», the implicit request is often for the room temperature to be raised. A professional with high intercultural competence will interpret this indirect comment correctly and act upon it, while a literal-minded employee may miss the request entirely. Such nuances demonstrate how linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and emotional intelligence intertwine in professional practice.

Digital transformation has further expanded the significance of English in the tourism industry. With the rise of online booking systems, social media marketing, and global customer review platforms, written English communication has gained unprecedented importance. Tourism professionals must compose clear and appealing website content, respond to customer feedback, and engage audiences through digital storytelling. Consider the difference between two online descriptions of the same hotel:

(1) «We offer rooms and breakfast».

(2) «Experience comfort and warmth in our stylish rooms and start your day with a delicious buffet breakfast served in a cozy atmosphere».

The second version demonstrates not only language proficiency but also marketing competence and emotional appeal. It illustrates how English skills contribute directly to a company’s market visibility and customer engagement. Poorly written English on websites or brochures, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings, lower credibility, and loss of clients.

In the context of global mobility, English also serves as a gateway to professional development and international cooperation. Tourism students

who master English can participate in exchange programs, international internships, and cross-border projects. They gain access to global academic resources, professional conferences, and online training platforms. For example, organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) publish most of their materials in English, including sustainability guidelines, policy reports, and best-practice case studies. A future tourism manager proficient in English can thus keep abreast of global trends and apply innovative practices in local contexts. Language proficiency, in this sense, empowers professionals to become agents of innovation and cultural exchange.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that English competence in tourism is not limited to speaking and writing skills. Listening and reading comprehension play equally vital roles. Understanding guests' accents, grasping the implicit meaning of feedback, or interpreting international regulations requires active listening and reading strategies. For instance, deciphering an email complaint such as "Our expectations were not fully met during our stay" demands more than linguistic knowledge – it requires inferential reasoning and professional tact. The employee must identify the problem, empathize with the guest, and respond diplomatically: «We are sorry to hear that your experience did not meet expectations. Please let us know how we can improve your next visit». Thus, English competence involves cognitive flexibility, empathy, and problem-solving skills.

The pedagogical approaches to developing English competence among tourism students have evolved significantly. Traditional grammar-based instruction is increasingly replaced by task-based and communicative methods that emphasize interaction, authenticity, and creativity. For example, students may be asked to design a virtual tour in English, create promotional videos for local destinations, or conduct interviews with international travelers. These projects not only enhance language proficiency but also foster teamwork, digital literacy, and intercultural understanding. In addition, integrating Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) into tourism curricula – where professional subjects such as «Tourism Economics» or «Event Management» are taught in English – helps students acquire both domain-specific knowledge and linguistic competence simultaneously. This dual-focus approach mirrors real-world professional demands, where English functions as both the medium and the message.

Another dimension of English competence is ethical communication. In tourism, honesty, inclusivity, and respect are essential principles that must be reflected in language use. Advertising slogans, tour descriptions, or public announcements should avoid stereotypes and culturally insensitive

expressions. For example, instead of describing a destination as «exotic» – a term that may imply otherness – professionals are encouraged to use more neutral and respectful phrasing such as «unique cultural heritage» or «distinct local traditions». Ethical English communication enhances the reputation of tourism organizations and contributes to a more responsible and sustainable industry.

From a broader socio-economic perspective, English competence supports national competitiveness in the global tourism market. Countries where service providers demonstrate high levels of English proficiency tend to attract more international visitors and investment. According to studies by the Education First English Proficiency Index, nations with better English skills often report higher tourism revenues and customer satisfaction rates. This correlation underscores the strategic value of English not only for individual career growth but also for the development of the tourism sector as a whole. In this sense, investing in English-language education is an investment in economic prosperity and cultural diplomacy.

In conclusion, English serves as a cornerstone of professional identity and competence for future tourism specialists. It enables effective communication, supports intercultural understanding, enhances digital and marketing skills, and opens pathways to international collaboration. More than just a language, English is a medium of professionalism, innovation, and hospitality – values that define the modern tourism industry. Therefore, educational institutions, employers, and policymakers must continue to integrate English-language development into every stage of professional training. The ultimate goal is not only to produce linguistically competent employees but to cultivate globally minded professionals capable of representing their countries with excellence, empathy, and respect in the global tourism community.

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