

**English and the Language of Hostelry:
Between the Common and the Uncommon**

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Abstract:

Tourism needs professional competence, which is associated with a specific activity and a particular mode of industry. **ESP** has become a must for students whose vocations are professional. They must develop their competence, mainly in tourism, which needs professional basics in *hospitality*. By learning such basics and their different processes, students gain quality of experience in reception, behaviour, and mainly in language specific to hostelry. **ESP** competence in hostelry provides the students with some basics which enable them to communicate and interact with guests professionally. It equips them with good commands in language and supplies them with certain professional conventions and manners. But the pertinent question that must be raised is: Is it a must to translate English (the global) into Arabic (the local), knowing that tourism is universal, and universality imposes English?

Keys Words: Language; Hostelry; English for Specific Purposes; Tourism; Professional; Competence

Language is supposed to be a means of communication between human beings. Different environments have made different modes and levels of communication. Being spread, language has become more common, less restrictive and very open between communities. But, changes have begotten a new language

derived from the same language; yet, it becomes different from it. The more we progress, the more we specify, the more we specify, the more we fall in typicality. And so, such change has split language into different layers specific to the new imposing mode of communication. In other words, the common language has become uncommon due to the faster and faster process of change.

The domain of specialities has made English shift from the common to the uncommon. That is, we get English for specific purposes. Yi-Hsuan Gloria Lo maintains that: “From the early 1960’s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of language education today. [...] The interest in ESP is also seen worldwide in the establishment of ESP Special Interest Groups (SIGs) under professional associations (e.g., IATEFL and TESOL).”(72)The purpose of learning is the reason for learning in ESP. The latter joins the fault that exists between common English and basic English proficiency, which skills are appropriate to particular discipline and profession. And so, progressively, disparity between the common and uncommon languages has become very clear. The former is a general-learning process, and the latter is centred-learning process.

Language for Specific Purposes is defined by Ruiz-Garrido, and Palmer-Silveira, (2010) et al. as:

Specialised languages usually refer to the specific discourse used by professionals and specialists to communicate and transfer information and knowledge. There are as many specialised languages as there are professions. This what has usually been

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known as Language for Specific Purposes or, when applied to English, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), i.e., the special discourse used in specific settings by people sharing common purposes.(01)

English language is, *per force*, a language that satisfies, supplies and interconnects commercially, and even culturally, between all nations of the world. ESP makes language investigate domains that are uncommon and impose itself by coining new expressions and terminology specific to the investigated domains. So, ESP enables us to be competent in a field which is uncommon, and its language is different from the general language we use. In the terms of Ineta Luka:

ESP competence is an individual combination of gained experience, attitude and abilities developed on the basis of learning, which allows a specialist, observing different cultural traditions and peculiarities, to creatively implement the English language both receptively and productively in communication and professional work, responsibly develop tourism industry and offer the client a product in an understandable and acceptable way. (Developing the Student's ESP120).

Luka maintains that no real competence in ESP is ever possible if the coming prerequisites are not taken into consideration: effective communication, good cultural background / knowledge, and adequate professional activity. She writes: “ESP competence consists of communicative competence [...], intercultural competence [...] and professional activity competence [...], which are interacting. Its development takes place in action (process), and it is based on students’

experiences, and, consequently, students form new experiences” (135/136).

Specific purpose needs specific skills in knowledge and communication. So, language is constrained to adapt new methods and ways for each new purpose. Its on-going existence and continuity are based on such skills and impositions. Jeremy Day and Mark Kizanowski point out:

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) involves teaching and learning the specific skills and language needed by particular learners for a particular purpose. The P in ESP is always a professional purpose – a set of skills that learners currently need in their work or will need in their professional careers.[...] ESP contrasts with General English, which is aimed at a very wide range of learners. It also contrasts with Business English, although there is considerable overlap between the two branches. A lawyer and a marketing executive might both benefit from attending the same Business English course, focusing on the generic skills they both need at work (such as writing an e-mail or participating in a meeting), but they might get more from attending an ESP course in legal or marketing English respectively as this will focus more precisely on their needs. (05)

These needs are essentially lexical, formulaic and stylistic. In his article “Revisiting Materials for Teaching Languages for Specific Purposes,” published in **The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies** (2011), Jesus Garcia Laborda points out that: “The most relevant linguistic aspects to LSP are lexical items, language forms[...] The challenge resides in accounting

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for these aspects while making materials appropriate for communication, adequate to the students, and, whenever possible, include tasks that can be useful for the students' professional careers." ("Revisiting Materials"104).

Tourism needs professional competence that is different from everyday common mode of behaviour. This profession is associated with a specific skill that needs, from the individual, a specific activity and know-how. Ineta Luka points out that: "Professional competence is an individual combination of gained experience, attitude and abilities developed on the basis of learning, which allows a specialist to think strategically, untraditionally implement knowledge, responsibly develop their industry, and creatively work in the chosen profession observing traditions and peculiarities of different cultures." (**Developing the Student's ESP** 117).

Tourism is an activity, which is characterized by a specific knowledge and specific cognitive competence, which contain theory, knowledge and practicality. Professional competence is dialogically related to communicative competence, which is the "ability to use language both on receptive and productive level."(**Developing the Student's ESP** 118). Even the term linguistic competence of Noam Chomsky has changed in interpretation, according to Luka. It is not only Knowledge about language, but further, the knowledge about social rules that determine the use of appropriate linguistic elements (118). Luka develops further his point claiming that:

Tourism specialist's communicative competence includes grammatical competence (lexis, semantics, morphology, syntax, phonology and orthography), pragmatic competence (contextual lexis, language functionality, unity and constructions for turning and continuity of communication), discourse competence (language exposure and the unity of text and situation), sociolinguistic competence (understanding of other cultures, register, accent, dialects and interaction skills) and strategic competence (verbal and nonverbal communication strategies and compensation strategies). All these sub-competences are important for language learning and they are interconnected as a result forming a communicative competence, which is a component of ESP competence. (118).

So, communicative competence of English is basic for the employability in tourism. Being international in this world of globalisation, English language has become a must in tourism management. Hospitality, which is the legacy of tourism, mainly hostelry, is determinant in services. And so, the presence of ESP is here to serve this industry.

But what is hospitality? Is it common or professional? Can it be with a language other than that of the mother tongue? Why is it particularly English?

Hospitality is an activity of competence, which gives necessary and better services for travellers/guests. In his article, "Current and Future Trends in Tourism and Hospitality. The Case of Greece," Sultana T. Kapiki defines hospitality as, "[a] means providing service to others, as well as demonstrating consistent excellence

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and quality. It should also mean profitably providing value at any price level, while demonstrating your own unique points of distinction. Most of all, hospitality should be a ‘place’, where people can still be exceptional individuals and they can extend their own personality and style.” (01) In other words, hospitality is “the orientation towards guest satisfaction at ultimate level [and makes] continuous efforts for maintaining a positive image along with great guest service.”(Kapiki 02).

It is important for the staff of hotels to get acquainted with other cultures and traditions in order to better interact with guests of different races, ethnics, beliefs and even political orientations. Appreciation saves accommodation. And having a substantial rich background of other people makes the personnel get easy interaction and, subsequently, attracts the guests, who only need good hospitality, regardless to money. Demis Harington maintains that: “Management implies skills for practice in activity. And the activity that hostelry needs is tightly related to the policy tourism/hostelry adopts for the good services inside and outside the hotel for the customer. (296).

The occurrence of hospitality happens daily, between the common and the uncommon, in different conditions and positions. Its language use and usage are related to such conditions and positions. In the words of Gatterer Manuel: “The notion ‘hospitality’ implies a wide range of language uses for various aims in many different settings. A shared characteristic of all acts of hospitality, including a possible use of English for hospitality purposes, is the distribution of two basic roles: guest and

host.” (41) George M. Blue and Mina Harun differentiate between traditional hospitality, that human being lives with and through, and the other type of hospitality, which is paying and commercial. They write: “Hospitality here refers to the cluster of activities oriented towards satisfying guests. To hoteliers, it simply means looking after the guest well; hence, ‘hospitality language’ refers to all linguistic expressions which relate to and represent hospitality concerns.”(74) They further suggest that even the body gesture is a language, mainly the eyes: “In the hospitality industry, eye contact means being attentive and thus caring for the customers. It also indicates politeness. Verbal and non-verbal messages are conveyed and exchanged, and both host and guest conform to certain predictable behaviour when addressing each other.”(76) On the other hand, Heidrum Friese states that: “Hospitable gestures create a doubled time, they give time and aspire to a clearly unenforceable possibility of a return, the experience of an open possibility, they aim at reliability, durability and continuity to assign host and guest reciprocally to one another and yet they are renewed and reaffirmed at every instant.”(70).

Hostelry is an industry, whose raw is the host and the guest and whose procedure is language. The latter joins and constructs diverse and distinct communities into harmonious atmosphere through interaction. The staff members of the hotel must interact and meet the expectations of the guest through their services. So, they need language for more specific purposes. The language repertoire (ESP) particular to tourism is supposed to be learned, acquired and practiced in front of these guests, who are, subsequently, supposed to know and learn for

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the sake of communication, some key basic terms and idiomatic expressions in English of hostelry and tourism.

Having known English language (L2), besides their own, impresses more the guests and gives more possibility and disposal to interact with them. George Blue and Minah Harum maintain that:

There can be little doubt that English is the most commonly used language of hospitality and the lingua franca of tourists and travellers worldwide. Thus, in many parts of the world, the art of greeting, soliciting information, thanking and bidding farewell requires some measure of familiarisation with the relevant English expressions before a person can serve effectively as a receptionist, telephonist or in other guest-contact capacities.(77).

Blue and Harum give us some specific words in hotel operations as in a conversation with guests:

'Sir,' or 'Mr,' followed by the surname is mostly used to address male guests, while female guests are referred to as 'Madam'. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of the latter, as most guests encountered were either unaccompanied businessmen or tourists with partners. In the case of the tourists, it is generally the male partners, who initiate the exchange. Surnames are normally used to address guests rather than forenames, showing "formal respect" and "certain genteel politeness conventions. Polite phrases such as "Would you", "Can I", "Could you", are ways of asking guests to carry out a particular task, for instance, to sign forms, check bills, fill in registration cards and so on. "Please" and

“Thank you” are frequently uttered when action is required of and performed by guests. (81)

It is noticeable that these expressions are very formal, professional and related to conditions and situations. “The communication is normally quite brief and balanced in terms of turn-taking. Yet, even rehearsed, polite utterances can be spoken in a friendly, helpful and welcoming manner.”(Blue and Harum 86).

So, ESP for tourism is necessary for specialist of this industry. It enables them to have/get competence in their field and improve their learning in some skills that fit their domain and profession. Ineta Luka points out:

In learning ESP the necessity to develop students’ communicative competence coincides with the necessity to create authentic language learning contexts thus forming the students’ experience. [...] An analysis of competence theories enables the researcher to create a definition of ESP competence for tourism specialists: ESP competence is the quality of experience gained during the learning process, which allows a specialist, observing different cultural traditions and peculiarities, to creatively implement the English language both receptively and productively in business communication, interaction, and professional work; to responsibly develop their industry and offer the client a product in an understandable and acceptable way.(07)

ESP competence comes to booster further students’ knowledge, through theories and practices, about the profession. English, as a common general process, is supposed to be acquired before hand at intermediate and secondary levels (schools). In terms of

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Luka, the course has to provide “information about the country, its inhabitants, values and attitudes, and [enables them] to promote students’ wishes to change and accept other cultures.” (14) In the words of H.I.Hou, “English for specific purposes (ESP) was designed to teach English for academic or occupational purposes, focusing on language in context rather than grammar or language structures.[...] ESP addresses various subjects by integrating it with subject matter that is relevant to students rather than teaching it as a subject separated from student experiences.” (76)

For an effective course competence, Hou suggests four major elements:

- “1. ESP perspective: subject areas demonstrate distinct specialized languages or registers. Therefore, learning specific subjects and registers is essential for mastering specific content.
2. Motivational and cognitive perspective: the model linking content with language is thought to promote effective learning outcomes because language is learned using the informational content, which motivates learners.
3. Pedagogical perspective: teaching is built on the prior experience of a learner based on the subject matter and academic environment.
4. Learner perspective: this model focuses on effective language use, where language learning is focused on contextualized and social functions.” (76)

Ya-fen Lo and Chuen-Maan Sheu emphasize the word contextualization, which is the tie that connects the student to language, meaning and practice. They write:

Language lessons should be contextualized to connect students' language learning with meaningful content, and thus fulfill their practical needs. The theme-based instruction model puts particular emphasis on contextualization, in which authentic materials and tasks are often adopted to maximize the teaching of function areas in order to attain real-life goals. From this perspective, it is a pivotal task to provide authentic vocabulary, forms, and registers for the students. The main strategy for teaching is to employ a variety of tasks, in order to help students in the acquisition of words and forms by calling on their prior knowledge and scheme. (Par. 9)

Here are some idiomatic expressions and terms that are particular and specific to ESP competence of tourism, and where translation seems to lose its path. They are selected from 'Hotel Industry terms' (<http://www.ahlei.org/chia/>):

Alternative accommodations: Accommodations other than hotels such as: vacation home rentals, cruise ships, home-sharing rentals, timeshares, hostels and serviced apartments.

Capitalization rate: The capitalization rate (or cap rate) for a hotel is used as a way to compare potential returns on various real estate investments. Different operating metrics can be used; however, net operating income is most frequently cited. To determine a hotel's cap rate, divide the NOI (or other metric selected) by the hotel's total value.

Cash-on-cash return: Ratio of annual NOI after debt service to the total cash invested in the hotel. The cash

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investment includes the equity investment in the hotel plus any additional cash invested in capital improvements by the owner; = (NOI – debt service) + cash investment.

Census: The total number of hotels and rooms in STR's database in a particular segment.

Competitive set: It consists of a group of hotels by which a property can compare itself to the group's aggregate performance.

Deferred maintenance: Refers to the practice of delaying maintenance on a property.

Lose-it rate: The rate of which a hotel would be better off leaving a room unsold than to sell at that particular rate. For transient individual reservations, it is usually called a "hurdle" rate in an automated revenue management system. In non-automated revenue management, it is usually termed the "Group lose-it rate" because the complex calculation is only done for groups, where the revenue result can have a major impact on the hotel revenue.

Occupancy: It is the percentage of available rooms that were sold during a specified period of time.

Rate parity: A situation in which a travel supplier, such as a hotel, maintains the same price across all its various distribution channels.

Segmentation: Rooms sold and revenue data broken down by source of business (transient, group, contract) and source of revenue.

Tranches: A piece, portion or slice of a deal or structured financing. This portion is one of several related securities that are offered at the same time but have different risks, rewards and/or maturities.

Other terms are specific to restoration and seem difficult to translate because they notify a specific code in food terminology. Here are some compiled hostelry terms and their professional meanings, which are very particular and uncommon. “Vocabulary
<https://www.englishclub.com/about/support/contact.htm>

Vocabulary part of speech Meaning

À la carte (adjective): Without a side dish

À la mode (adjective): With ice cream

All you can eat (adjective): Customers pay one fee and can eat as much as they wish

Rare (adjective): Cooked meat that is pink inside

Book off (verb): Mark a day that you cannot work

Check on (verb): Make sure the guests are satisfied

Punch in, out (verb): Put a card in the punch clock to mark the time you start and end a shift

Bread basket (noun): Slices of bread and butter served before and with meal

Buspan (noun): Rubber tub used for collecting dirty dishes

Busboy/busser (noun): A person who helps out in a restaurant (especially clearing and setting tables)

Condiments (noun): Types of sauces that are added for flavouring (i.e. mustard)

Debit (noun): Use bank card to pay directly from bank account

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Doggie bag (noun): Unfinished food that is packed up for the customer to take home

Dressing (noun): Liquid topping for salads

On the side (preposition + noun): Not spicy

Bellboy (noun): A staff member who helps guests with their luggage

King-size bed (noun): Extra large bed

Queen size bed (room): Bed with plenty of space for two people (bigger than a double)

So as pointed out in discussion, we encounter many specific terms and expressions that are impossible to be translated. These terms are coined to mean something particular and uncommon even in the language they are derived from. Also, using common terms in hotel industry becomes unfit and ineffective because they are not related to the basics of hostelry.

Traditional hospitality is not enough in professional industry as that of hostelry. Students must learn hospitality conventions and procedures, which go in pace with the nature of guests they receive in hotels.

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