



THE ROLE OF ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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Abstract

The function of English as a universal language in international travel is examined in this article. It talks about how English makes communication easier in places like restaurants, hotels, airports, travel offices, and online travel platforms. The significance of English proficiency for tourism professionals, customer service, cross-cultural communication, and access to international tourism information is also emphasized in this article. It also takes into account the linguistic and cultural difficulties brought on by English's predominance in the travel and tourist industry.

Keywords: English as a global language, international tourism, lingua franca, intercultural communication, tourism services, English for Specific purposes, professional communication, digital tourism, globalization, communicative competence.

Introduction

One of the global economy's fastest-growing industries in the age of globalization is tourism. Global mobility, economic collaboration, and intercultural communication are all facilitated by international tourism. In this regard, English has become a universal language and is crucial to global tourism communication.



Today, English is widely used in airports, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, museums, and digital tourism platforms. According to “*Crystal*” (2003), English has become a global language because it is used internationally in communication, business, education, media, and tourism. As a result, English functions as a lingua franca among people from different linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, tourism professionals are increasingly expected to possess strong English communication skills. “*Hutchinson and Waters*” (1987) emphasize that English for Specific Purposes should focus on learners’ professional needs and communicative competence. In the tourism industry, employees who can communicate effectively in English are generally more capable of providing high-quality services and ensuring customer satisfaction. Another important factor is the influence of digitalization on tourism. Most travel websites, booking systems, and tourism advertisements are designed primarily in English. “*Graddol*” (2006) notes that the spread of English is closely connected with globalization and technological development. Consequently, English proficiency allows tourists easier access to information and international tourism services.

However, despite its benefits, the predominance of English in travel may also led to language and cultural difficulties. As a result, research on the function of English in international travel is still very important in contemporary linguistics and tourism.

The objective of this article is to examine English’s function as a universal language in foreign travel and look at how it affects professional growth, intercultural contact, communication, and tourism services.

Materials and Methods

Both qualitative and descriptive research methodologies were used in this study. The study was carried out using an analysis of scholarly literature on globalization, intercultural communication, tourism communication, and English as a global language. The materials of the study included:

- 25 academic books and scientific articles published between 2003 and 2025;
- international tourism reports;
- tourism websites and booking platforms;



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- travel advertisements and tourism brochures;
 - examples of English usage in hotels, airports, restaurants, museums, and travel agencies.

A small-scale survey was carried out among 50 participants, including tourism professionals and university students with a focus on applied and tourism, in order to bolster the research's practical component. The importance of English communication skills in professional activities and tourism services was the main emphasis of the survey.

Several research methods were applied in the study, such as: **Literature Review Method** (was used to analyze theoretical approaches concerning English as a Global language and its role in tourism communication), **Descriptive Analysis** (Helped identify the communicative functions of English in tourism-related situations), **Comparative Analysis** (was applied to compare the usage of English in different tourism environments and countries), **Content Analysis** (was conducted to examine English usage in tourism advertisements, online tourism platforms, and digital travel services), **Survey Analysis** (responses were analyzed to evaluate attitudes toward English proficiency in tourism education and professional communication). The chosen techniques made it possible to conduct a thorough analysis of the importance of English in enhancing service quality and enabling communication in foreign travel.

Results

According to the study's results, English serves a number of crucial purposes in foreign travel.

First, visitors and tourism staff primarily communicate in English. English facilitates communication in hotels, airports, restaurants, and transit systems because foreign visitors frequently speak different native languages. "*Seidlhofer*" (2011) states that English as a lingua franca enables interaction among speakers who do not share the same first language.

Second, the findings demonstrate that English proficiently influences tourism service quality. In general, workers with strong communication skills in English are better equipped to help visitors, give information, resolve issues, and guarantee client happiness.



Third, communication in digital tourism is dominated by English. English is used by the majority of international travel websites, booking platforms, and tourist apps. This makes travel information and internet services more accessible to English-speaking travelers.

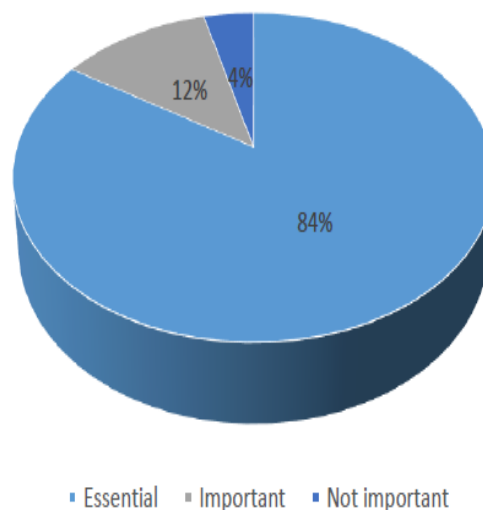
A survey and semi-structured interviews with tourist industry professionals and university students with a focus on tourism and Applied English were carried out to bolster the research's practical component.

1. Survey results

A total of 50 participants took part in the survey:

- 30 tourism employees (hotels, travel agencies, airports, restaurants)
- 20 university students (tourism and English Philology)

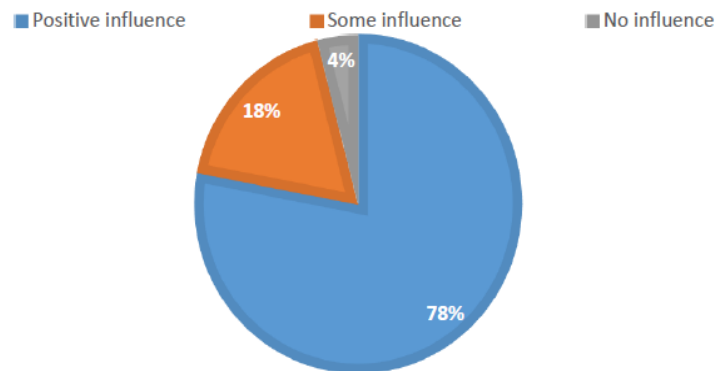
Figure 1. The importance of English Communication Skills in Tourism



84% of respondents stated that English communication skills are essential for success in the tourism industry.

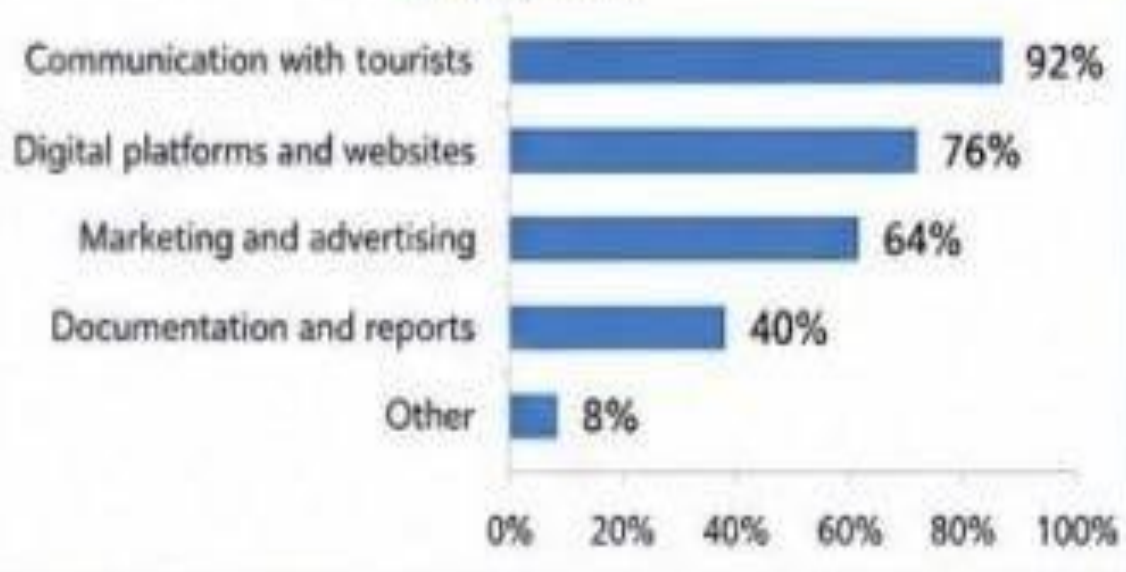


Figure 2. Influence of english on tourist satisfaction



78% of participants believe that tourists are more satisfied when employees can communicate effectively in English.

Figure 3. Areas Where English is Used Most in Tourism





2. Questionnaire for students (number = 20)

The questionnaire focused on the role of English in their future careers.

Question	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
English is necessary for my future career in tourism	90%	5%	5%
I feel confident using English in professional situations.	45%	30%	25%
I need more practice in speaking skills	80%	10%	10%
I think English helps improve the quality of tourism services	95%	0%	5%
I support learning other foreign languages in addition to English	85 %	10%	5%

Statistics: Growth of International Tourism

International tourist arrivals (world)

Year	2015	2017	2019	2021*	2023*
International tourist arrivals (million)	1,184	1,323	1,466	1,087	1,286

*2021 and 2023 include the impact of COVID-19 and global recovery.

Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2024.



Another important finding is that English contributes to intercultural communication moreover, cultural exchange. Through English, tourists and local communities can exchange ideas, traditions, and cultural values. According to “Hymes” (1972), communicative competence includes not only linguistic knowledge but also sociocultural understanding.

The research also revealed that many universities and educational institutions have integrated English for Tourism Purposes into their curricula. Tourism students are expected to develop speaking, listening, writing, and intercultural communication skills required for professional interaction. Nevertheless, the study identified certain challenges related to the dominance of English in tourism. In some regions, limited English proficiency among tourism workers causes communication difficulties and negatively affects tourists’ experiences.

Discussion

The findings confirm that English has become an essential component of international tourism. As “Crystal” (2003) explains, English functions as a global language because of its extensive international use in multiple domains, including tourism.

Globalization has significantly strengthened the importance of English in tourism communication. International travel requires effective interaction among individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. English minimizes communication barriers and facilitates cooperation within the tourism industry. The study also demonstrates the economic importance of English proficiency. Tourism destinations that invest in English language education and staff training often achieve higher tourist satisfaction and stronger international competitiveness. Therefore, tourism organizations should prioritize professional language training programs.

At the same time, the dominance of English raises several sociolinguistic concerns. Excessive dependence on English may contribute to the marginalization of local languages and cultural identities. Moreover, unequal access to English language education can create communication inequalities within the tourism sector.



Another important issue involves intercultural competence. “Canale and Swain” (1980) argue that communicative competence consists of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Therefore, tourism professionals require not only language proficiency but also intercultural awareness and communication strategies.

Overall, English continues to strengthen its role in international tourism due to technological advancement, globalization, and the expansion of international mobility. Nevertheless, multilingualism and cultural diversity should also be supported within the tourism industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, English plays a crucial role in international tourism as a global language of communication. It facilitates interaction between tourists and tourism professionals, improves tourism services, promotes intercultural communication, and supports the development of the global tourism industry. The study demonstrates that English proficiency positively influences tourist satisfaction, professional effectiveness, and access to digital tourism resources. In addition, English for Tourism Purposes has become an important area of professional education aimed at preparing specialists for international communication.

Despite its numerous advantages, the growing dominance of English may also create challenges related to linguistic inequality and cultural preservation. Therefore, educational institutions and tourism organizations should promote both English language competence and intercultural awareness while respecting local languages and cultures.

Future research may focus on empirical studies related to tourists’ perceptions of English communication quality, multilingualism in tourism, and the integration of digital technologies in tourism language education.

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