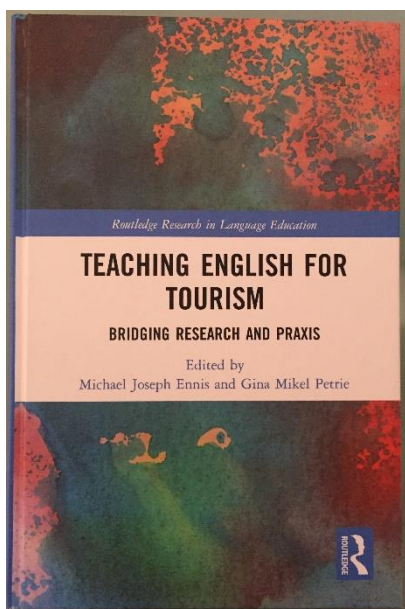




Teaching English For Tourism: Bridging Research and Praxis

Edited by Michael Joseph Ennis and Gina Mikel Petrie

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Review by Sharon Hartle*

English for Tourism (EfT) is a specialized language which comes under the umbrella term of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Teaching languages for specific purposes, to use in specific contexts is a well established practice which can be traced back to the Greek and Roman empires (Dudley-Evans and St. Johns 1998,1). How ESP should be taught, however, is a topic of hot debate, as it is a field which has evolved over the years rather than being developed with a specific goal in mind. In fact, in the words of Dudley Evans and St. John, ESP “was not a planned and coherent movement, but rather a phenomenon that grew out of a number of converging trends” (1987, 6). It is, as a result, applied in widely differing ways but tends to be learner-centred, often focusing on teaching specific language for specific language use based on an initial needs analysis of learner aims and requirements (Hutchinson and Waters 1987), aspects which emerge clearly in the accounts provided in this volume. Although the field arguably grew considerably in the 1960s, it was not, in fact, until later that frameworks and definitions were delineated. Strevens, (1977) was one of the first to underline the fact that ESP referred to the specialized language in a range of disciplines and that a theoretical framework to interpret all these variations was called for was called for (Strevens 1977, 113).

In the introduction to Teaching English for Tourism, however, the editors point out that Strevens’ list of the most prevalent disciplines in which ESP coursework was being offered did not include the teaching of English for tourism (3). This was perhaps due to an oversight as English for Tourism, in fact, as Ennis and Petrie state, is possibly one of the oldest and largest branches of ESP (2) appearing together with the rise of

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middle class tourism in the mid twentieth century and expanding to cater for the needs of this fast-growing economic sector.

This book focuses on two separate aspects of the field: the English of Tourism (EoT) which is related to research into language use in tourism and English for Tourism (EfT) which deals with the teaching of this language. Although much has been written on EoT, which is considered to be a 'specialized language' related to a 'specialized discourse', the research on the teaching of EfT seems to have been conducted mainly informally as individual educators create ad hoc courses for their own purposes, and has, therefore, not been disseminated systematically.

One of the strengths of the book is this focus both on theoretical and practical issues including accounts presented from a pan European perspective with a range of contributors, both researchers and practitioners, who work in Italy, Portugal, Ecuador, The USA and Poland, although most of them are involved in higher education, which may be seen to be a limitation.

The Introduction to the volume outlines the rise of EfT describing the importance of the sector and attempts to disseminate the findings of research and the experiences of practitioners in one place. This volume, in fact seeks to address the gap in the research mentioned above, by bringing together the perspectives of both researchers and practitioners, working in the English for Tourism field. The book is divided into two sections, firstly, theories and concepts and, secondly, teaching English for tourism: from theory to praxis. Part One gives an overview of issues in EfT research and teaching, with a view to considering the existing research traditions, the role of the needs analysis and the status of English(es) in the world. Part Two of the volume takes the reader into EfT classrooms introducing some of the specific approaches and methods used to provide learners with the English language skills they need to enter the world of tourism.

The first part of the book contains three contributions, beginning with the chapter by Michael Ennis: "*What is 'English for tourism'? A grounded review of textbooks and secondary literature.*" This study grew out of the author's individual need to design a course to teach English for specific academic purposes to undergraduate students of tourism, sport and events management at the Free University of Bolzano, Italy. This initial literature review was then expanded to become an exploratory study in which he aimed to 'define "English for tourism" at the semantic, conceptual, theoretical and methodological levels' (30). One issue, that he highlights, is the fact that EfT is not universally recognized as "an academic pursuit in its own right," which was mentioned in the introduction to the volume (11), but seems rather to be seen as a 'remedial service' offered to students of tourism and tourism professionals. His aim is to provide a bibliography (included in the volume) in the shape of a body of work that may form the basis for a framework both for teaching and studying EfT.

In Chapter Two, "*Exploring stakeholders' language desires in English for Tourism: An argument for uniqueness*" Gina Mikel Petrie focuses on the role of 'desire' and the language desires that emerge from EfT needs analysis and programme evaluation. Petrie studies the needs of EfT learners working in hotels and restaurants in Nicaragua and on the language desires of stakeholders in a hotel management college in Jordan. She focuses on the long-term desires and aims of such learners to extend the notion of the learner-centred needs analysis which is the cornerstone of many ESP approaches. Her findings show that professional programmes designed to prepare students are often driven by external factors such as assessment or employer ratings whereas when asked about their desires the stakeholders discuss aspects of their inner worlds. Petrie sees the study as a rights analysis in that it "reconsiders whose internal states and matter and redistributes value to the lived experience of those responding to the desires of tourists" (62). These concerns may not be the primary focus of traditional needs analyses but Petrie suggests ways in which they can be included if carried out as accompanying work when conducting the needs analysis itself.

In Chapter Three, Tracey McHenry, in "*The politics of Englishes for tourism: A world Englishes perspective,*" considers the question of World Englishes and how and awareness of existing varieties may challenge the assumptions of EfT professionals as to which aspects of language proficiency could be considered and taught and how this could be done, highlighting the problems many learners face when working with speakers of differing Englishes. She points out that "several seminal EoT studies introduce the concept of language for tourism but few examine the functions of English varieties in this discourse" (69). McHenry concludes that EfT teachers, in fact, may benefit from a World-Englishes informed perspective addressing such concepts as the native speaker, standard English and speaker autonomy. This perspective would mean truly focusing on the learners and their real-life needs when working in tourism.



Part Two of the volume takes us into the classroom, exploring pedagogies for the preparation of learners intending to enter the tourism industry. The contributors focus, in particular, on the roles of emerging new technologies, fostering cultural understanding and supporting writing development. This section contains six contributions of which Chapter Four, by Suzanna Miles, “*The changing nature of tourism discourse: Practical applications for the classroom*,” studies the available information about tourist destinations and how shifts in the way such information is presented both visually and technologically, as well as linguistically, impacts the discourse which learners need to master. She examines a range of examples of this discourse, describing work done by learners at the University of Cà Foscari, Venice, and concludes that the shift in power resulting from social sharing platforms and disruptive technology has led to a shift in power relationships between consumers and the industry with the former developing their own powerful voices. However, behind these shifts learners are still likely to encounter traditional language choices associated with the promotion of tourist destinations. In Chapter Five, “*English for tourism in the non-native classroom*,” Dominic Stewart also focuses on technology with an eye to the translation of tourism texts by students into a language which is not their own. Stewart writes about ways in which such translation can benefit from the assistance of machine translation (MT) but also, as MT technologies can produce results which at times prove to be erratic, and one area to focus on is collocation, which he describes as being a ‘mercurial phenomenon’ (114) which may be problematic for even the most advanced learners. Learners can be assisted when exploring collocation, by traditional resources such as dictionaries but also by the increasingly effective new technologies available for concordancing. One caveat here, however, is that these technologies, whilst they have made enormous progress, cannot be relied on blindly and must be considered as an aid to human translators, as tools to be used but not as a replacement for human expert translators, who need to develop their own very necessary expertise.

Ana Gonçalves, in Chapter Six, “*‘Cultural languaging’ in English for tourism: Integrated learning of language and intercultural skills in tourism education*” echoes McHenry’s concerns in Chapter Three, focusing, however, on intercultural competence. She underlines the potential of exploiting the cultural language already present in classrooms, concluding that in order to cater for the real needs of learners ‘the teaching/learning of linguistic skills and intercultural competence should go hand in hand. Chapter Seven, “*The international nonwork experience and the development of students’ language skills and cultural intelligence in an English for tourism purpose course*,” by Jeannette Valencia Robles, continues the focus on the cultural, but studies learner experiences beyond the traditional classroom. She describes the international nonwork experience (INWE) of 30 Spanish undergraduates learning Eft, who had travelled abroad for leisure, work or study, investigating the cross-cultural communicative strategies that they developed on their INWE. She concludes that INWEs are optimal for cultural intelligence development, but admits the limitations of this small, qualitative study, saying that further investigation is required.

Chapters Eight and Nine both deal with writing. In Chapter Eight “*A telecollaboration project on writing for tourism: Exploring thematic patterns in feedback exchanged by Italian, Polish and Ukrainian students with US peer reviewers*,” Massmo Verzella and Agnieszka M. Sendur describe this international telecollaboration project between two English as a Foreign Language classes in Italy and Poland with an English composition class in the United States. It is a case study where a combination of product and process writing strategies were applied in class in order to aid learners production of written tourist brochures. The final product was then sent to US college educated travellers who provided feedback. They conclude that, despite some disappointing results in the feedback, the study shows that collaborative writing activities help students ‘move from a study of language as a monolithic system and a fixed code to an exploration of how speakers use mobile linguistic resources to interact in a variety of contexts’ (189). In the final chapter of the book we come full circle and return to the Free University of Bolzano Michael Ennis, in “*Teaching and assessing academic writing for tourism studies: An example of reflective practice from the field*,” recounts his own pursuit of best practice in teaching writing skills as an exploration of reflective practice. This arose from his work on a 30-hour specialized English course for BA students of tourism, sport and events management at the Free University of Bolzano, in South Tyrol, Italy. He describes the process of developing an Eft course based on his own reflections and the needs of the students in his particular context, concluding that this is a ‘perpetual work in progress’ (214). His experiences, however, and the course elements he describes provide food for thought for other practitioners.



To conclude, the book makes for an interesting read that will be of particular interest to both researchers and practitioners in the related fields of English of Tourism and English for Tourism. The experiences recounted provide considerable food for thought particularly for Eft practitioners and the selected bibliography provided at the end of the volume will also be of interest to many. It is divided both geographically and thematically providing a wealth of reading both for EoT and Eft. This may, in fact, be referred to as a basis for an updated framework for Eft curriculum design.

Works cited

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