

The Journey not the Arrival Matters: Developing Intercultural Awareness and Communication Skills in Tourism Education¹

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ABSTRACT

Tourism professionals' linguistic and intercultural skills have been identified as pivotal assets towards upgrading the quality of the service they provide and contributing to successful communication and intercultural dialogue. This paper aims to shed light on skills-based tourism education, centred in real-world problem-solving tasks, within the scope of teaching/learning English as a foreign language for tourism purposes. It will specifically focus on the methodologies adopted in the subject of English IV in the Tourism Management and Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment undergraduate degrees at the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies, in Portugal, whose syllabus introduces the relationship between tourism and culture, encourages the reflection on the concepts of cultural representations and stereotypes, and emphasises the need for tourism professionals to be aware of cultural differences, enabling them to relate with worldwide business partners and tourists in more respectful ways.

Keywords:

Tourism Education

Intercultural
Awareness and
Communication
Skills

English for
Tourism Purposes

Skills-based
Teaching/Learning

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Introduction

According to the seminal insight offered by Gavin Jack and Alison Phipps, “tourism matters because it provides both a lens onto and an energy for relationships with everyday life” (2005: 1). Hence the relevance of “tourism’s contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies” addressed in the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (UNWTO, 2001: 4). Indeed, the mundane practices promoted by tourism exchanges foster social interaction and may contribute to cultural diversity as an essential dimension of intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, 2009). On the other hand, these same practices may, to a certain extent, challenge commodification and cultural standardisation, frequently pointed out as predicaments of the activities conducted by tourism under the auspices of globalisation (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Therefore, it is mandatory that tourism stakeholders develop intercultural awareness and communication skills so that they can relate with, understand and respect other cultures and behaviors. Thus, this paper advocates that tourism education should be guided by more holistic, humanistic (Krippendorf, 1999) and engaging principles and practices. These should facilitate the development of specific skills that equip tourism professionals with the necessary knowledge and expertise to better interact with tourists, hosts and business partners from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The practice of empathy and respect, quintessential values in any (inter)cultural relationship, contributes to cultural and social sustainability – a buzzword in tourism activities nowadays, though more frequently endorsed with regard to environmental and economic issues – and enables individuals not to lose sight of what brings them together: their common humanity.

Following a brief overview on the development of tourism studies, an area that has been gathering momentum in higher education in the past decades, this paper focuses on the training and education of future tourism professionals, usually regarded as privileged mediators between tourists and host communities and those who play a major role in the promotion and preservation of tourism destinations’ cultural heritage and cultural diversity: the human capital that will make the difference in the future of tourism and hospitality (Bergsma, 2000). Apart from general content-based knowledge and specific

training in subjects related to the tourism context, the development and improvement of the linguistic and intercultural skills of professionals in the sector have been clearly identified as pivotal assets towards upgrading the quality of the service they provide and contributing to successful intercultural dialogue. Thus, stemming from the author’s experience as a lecturer at the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE), in Portugal, this paper aims to shed light on the teaching methodologies and practices adopted in the subject of English IV in the 3-year undergraduate degrees in Tourism Management and Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment. The English IV syllabus introduces the relationship between tourism and culture, encourages the reflection on the concepts of cultural representations

and stereotypes, and emphasises the need for tourism professionals to be aware of cultural differences (including customs, verbal and body language, religion and food habits), enabling them to relate with people from different parts of the world, in more respectful ways. In this context, this paper will draw on the findings of skills-based teaching/learning, centred in real-world problem-solving tasks, which contributes to examine the author’s teaching practices and students’ learning experiences that are developed in the scope of English as a foreign language for the specific purposes of tourism.

In a nutshell, this paper seeks to encourage food for thought on the development of intercultural awareness and communication skills in tourism education, especially since the education and training of future tourism professionals is perceived as a point of departure to “a hospitable welcome” (UNWTO, 2001: 4).

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Tourism Education

Tourism is “one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world”, corresponding to 9% of the world’s GDP, including its direct, indirect and induced impacts, and employing 1 out of 11 people worldwide (UNWTO, 2013: 2). Whereas there were 25 million international tourists in 1950, in 2012 there was slightly more than one billion (UNWTO, 2013: 2), and in 2030 this number is expected to rise up to 1.8 billion tourists (UNWTO, 2011: 5). This year, in particular, the United Nations World Tourism Organization expects world tourism to grown on average 3% to 4% which, in the case of Europe, will depend largely on the economic recovery of European countries, with tourism playing “a key role as a tool for

economic development and job creation within Europe and worldwide” (ETC, 2013).

In Portugal, the *National Strategic Plan for Tourism*, published in 2007 for the 2006-2015 period and later revised for the 2013-2015 period (Turismo de Portugal, 2013a), stresses the importance of the tourism sector as a wealth generator and job creator for the country, corresponding to 9,2% of the Portuguese GDP and 8% of the working population (Turismo de Portugal, 2007, 2013a, 2013b). Between 2010 and 2011, tourism experienced an 11.3% growth in Portugal and 9.4% between 2011 and 2012. In 2012 the country hosted almost 14 million tourists, out of which 56% were from international markets² (Turismo de Portugal, 2012, 2013b). This number has been influenced by the impacts of the Arab Spring manifestations, protests, and riots initiated in December 2010, as many international tourists that used to go to countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, or Turkey, for instance, are now choosing other Mediterranean countries like Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal for their holidays (Nunes, 2013). Indeed, Portugal has been distinguished with different awards by the World Travel Awards Europe in recent years, such as the best European golf destination in 2012 and 2013.³

The strategic vision for the country is that Portugal should become “one of the fastest-growing destinations in Europe, driven by a value proposal based on the country’s distinctive and innovative characteristics” (Turismo de Portugal, 2007: 5) and the qualification of human resources is a major concern in this context (Turismo de Portugal, 2007, 2013a). Human resources policy should focus on the improvement of professionals’ qualifications and competencies through on-job training, in order to contribute to enhancing the quality of the service they provide and the


competitiveness of the tourism offer (Turismo de Portugal, 2013a).

Tourism is a transdisciplinary area that brings together many different fields of expertise – economics, management, foreign languages and cultures, ICT, sociology, psychology, history, geography, among others. As a field of study, its origins date back to a technical/vocational interest in areas such as hotel operations and catering, leisure and recreation, experienced in the second half of the 20th century (Butler, 1999; Airey, 2005; Fidgeon, 2010), boosted

by increasingly service and knowledge-base economic restructuring (Fidgeon, 2010: 700) and the progressive awareness to cater for the demands of new consumerist profiles. As Amoah and Baum put it: “the tourism industry is a labour-intensive service industry, dependent for survival (and at best, competitive advantage) on the availability of good quality personnel to deliver, operate, and manage the tourist product. The interaction between the tourist and tourism industry personnel is an integral part of the total tourist experience” (1997: 5).

Higher education tourism programmes, which are characterised “by a focus on specific occupational skills” (Inui et al, 2006: 26), first appeared in the 1960s in Europe and rapidly developed to other parts of the world. These programmes are frequent. In Portugal, it was in the 1990s that undergraduate courses experienced an increase in higher education. Nowadays, different higher education institutions, both at the polytechnic and university levels, offer tourism-related degrees, namely general tourism degrees and degrees in hotel management, but few are those which offer courses in more specific areas of tourism, such as leisure management or tourism information, or that specialise only in tourism studies, exception

made to the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE) and the Higher Institute of

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² In 2012, the most significant tourist generating countries for Portugal were the UK (16,8%), Spain (15,8%), Germany (10,6%), France (9,6%), Brazil (6,5%) and others (40,7%) (Turismo de Portugal, 2013b).

³ Other awards include the Algarve as Europe’s leading beach destination (in 2012 and 2013) with different types of accommodation also being distinguished in this region (Villa Joya as Europe’s Leading Boutique Hotel in 2005 and 2006 and as Europe’s Leading Boutique Resort, from 2009 to 2013; Hotel Quinta do Lago as Europe’s Leading Golf Resort, in 2013; Conrad, Algarve as Europe’s Leading Luxury Resort, in 2013; Martinhal Beach Resort & Hotel as Europe’s Leading Villa Resort, in 2012 and 2013); Madeira as Europe’s leading island destination (in 2013), and Lisbon as Europe’s Leading Destination (in 2009), Europe’s Leading Cruise Destination (in 2009) and Europe’s leading city-break destination (in 2009, 2010 and 2013) (in *World Travel Awards* [Online]).

Tourism and Hospitality at Guarda's Polytechnic Institute.

There has been an increasing need to bridge the gap between higher education course providers and tourism stakeholders so as to understand the industry's requirements and demands and cater for these in course design. A more holistic and pragmatic education is privileged with greater focus on problem-solving and task-based learning, not only in on-site classes, but also in the need for students to contact with the sector's professionals and with tourists through internship periods. This also allows students to have a more realistic perception of how the market works and how they can apply the knowledge they acquire in their degree at the service of the industry and of tourists' preferences. Moreover, many subjects/classes are taught by individuals who work in the industry and have some expertise in a specific field/area, which also contributes to the development of closer links between tourism education and the market.

Employability is one of the reasons why tourism studies motivate students, especially when the number of tourists in the world has been experiencing steady growth. Besides, students can relate directly to the subjects of study since all individuals experience, at some point or another in their lives, the condition of tourists and this allows students to bring everyday life experiences into class, either their own or those of friends and relatives.

However, according to Airey, "tourism is a victim of its own success", because "the very things that have made it successful, particularly its vocationalism and multidisciplinary, are the very things that may stand in the way of its full development and recognition as a serious field of study" (2004: 14), since it may be considered a broad and all-encompassing activity. On the other hand, the fact that tourism is often considered as an "industry" or an "economic sector", rather than a group of activities, contributes to a rather myopic understanding of tourism as a source of income, revenue and profit. However, its human dimension and social and cultural turn should constitute an increasing focus of attention, both from researchers and practitioners, especially since tourism professionals are considered "philosophic practitioners" who need to acquire a broad range of knowledge to be able to see *the big picture* of the "complex world of tourism", at the same time that they have the ability to "recognise the partiality of the world of operations and technical problem solving" (Tribe, 2002).

Intercultural Awareness and Communication Skills in Tourism

As we have seen earlier, the number of people travelling worldwide has exponentially increased in the past decades, which has created more and diversified opportunities for cross-cultural verbal and non-verbal communication. However, not only tourism has contributed to increased mobility; these opportunities also stem from other types of movement, which include business workers, migrant workers, international students and teachers⁴, refugees and asylum seekers, immigrants, among many others (Graddol, 2006: 29).

For higher education students, in particular, the fact that student exchange programmes between institutions are growing and "students from many different cultures come together to live and learn" (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012: 707) or that they are often encouraged to take an internship abroad, not to mention that are likely to establish relationships with people from many different cultural backgrounds when they enter the labour market, creates the need for them to develop/improve their intercultural awareness and communication skills. Arguably, developed intercultural competence can "increase students' future employability on the labour market"⁵ (Stier, 2006: 9).

According to Spitzberg and Changnon, intercultural competence is "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world" (2009: 7). Intercultural competence includes attitude, knowledge, interpretation and relating skills, discovery and interaction, as well as critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1998). For Stier (2004, 2006), intercultural competence is divided into *content-competence*, meaning the knowledge about the history, language, customs, and traditions of a given place, and *process-competence*, that is, the dynamic character of intercultural competence that can be divided into intra- and interpersonal competences (Stier, 2006).

Intercultural competence is perceived as the ability to see and understand differences in one's own and other people's cultures and countries, accept them, and accordingly react in conversation and behavior. Intercultural

⁴ Especially due to the reinforcement of European mobility and cooperation programmes in the past few years, both for students and teachers – Comenius, ERASMUS, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci, Study Visits, among others.

⁵ The ICOPROMO – *Intercultural Competence for Professional Mobility* project focused precisely on contributing to the development of strategies that would promote young professionals' intercultural awareness in association with language learning [Online]. This project was managed by the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, in Portugal, and funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme between 2003 and 2006.

competence involves treating people in a way that is not offending, scornful, or insulting to the members of other cultures. At the same time, it includes the knowledge of one's own nation and culture, awareness of their value, their preservation, and development (Luka et al, 2013: 3).

More specifically, intercultural encounters bring to the fore differences not only with regard to verbal communication and paralanguage (intonation, pitch, rate, register, and fluency), which depend on the language of communication, but also in relation to non-verbal communication, including body language (facial expressions, different gestures – greeting, farewell, insulting, and beckoning gestures, for instance), movement, ways of dressing, and attitudes.

Since tourism is a “highly international and intercultural oriented business” (Sangpikul, 2009: 13), “tourism specialists must possess a high level of professional-language competence and intercultural-communication skills, which would allow them to operate in versatile sociocultural contexts, including a multicultural environment” (Luka et al, 2013: 2). The ability to communicate in foreign languages in the right register and the understanding of the cultural baggage languages carry will enhance the performance of those working in tourism. Indeed, one's *linguistic capital* (Bourdieu, 1992) engenders knowledge acquisition and cross-cultural understanding, fosters social integration and cohesion, and stimulates the symbolic empowerment of individuals. Moreover, the command of different foreign languages (plurilinguism) triggers economic benefits, employability and facilitates the mobility of people and businesses.

English Language Teaching/ Learning for Tourism Purposes in Higher Education

Foreign language learning is mandatory for any tourism professional, especially English, which is increasingly understood as *the* global language⁶ (Crystal, 2003) for communication among people from different countries, and in many cases, as second language rather than a foreign language. Hence Coleman's understanding of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as a misnomer, “whose acquisition is a social and economic necessity, akin to ICT skills and a driving licence” (in Coleman & Klapper, 2005: 5). In fact, from EFL teaching/learning we are increasingly moving to an ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) (Jenkins, 2007; Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; MacKenzie, 2013) reality.

Although learning English is important in any area of business, it is imperative in tourism activities which bring together many people from different countries – tourists, tourism professionals and local communities. In the Portuguese tourism context, learning the English language is even more relevant when the first generator of tourists for the country is the UK and there has also been a rise in the number of US tourists (Turismo de Portugal, 2013b).

One of the challenges of teaching/learning EFL for tourism purposes in higher education is the fact that students need to develop multiple skills, which include not only communicative ones in this foreign language, but also a more general understanding of areas that have a direct impact on their professional performance, that is, content-based knowledge about tourism activities, in addition to a more familiar understanding of specific tourism-related situations

with tourists from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Gonçalves in Hussin et al, 2010: 127).

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⁶ English is the second most spoken language in the world, when considering native speakers and second language speakers, after Standard Chinese (*Ethnologue*). These estimates do not include, however, speakers of English as a foreign language, whose number is more difficult to determine, although they may ascend to 1.5 billion speakers.

The Challenges of Foreign Language Teaching/Learning at ESHTE

The Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE) is a state polytechnic higher education institute in Portugal, founded in 1991, that trains future professionals in the areas of tourism and hospitality. It offers 1-year post-secondary Technological Specialisation Courses⁷, 3-year undergraduate degrees⁸ (1st Cycle), different Postgraduate and Advanced Training courses⁹, 2-year Masters degrees¹⁰ (2nd Cycle) and a 3-year PhD in Tourism, in association with the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, at the University of Lisbon. All courses have a significant practical component, not only in the way different subjects are taught, but also in the compulsory internship of four months for Technological Specialised Courses and of five to eight weeks at the end of the second and the third years of the undergraduate degrees (with the exception of Tourism Management, which only has an internship period at the end of the third year). What distinguishes tourism studies at ESHTE from other institutions in Portugal is the fact that ESHTE is the only tourism-dedicated higher education institution in the country and while most institutions offer general tourism degrees, ESHTE offers specific degrees in the areas of tourism and hospitality.

With regard to foreign language teaching in the 3-year undergraduate degrees, students can choose from five foreign languages to study: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. In Cookery and Food Production students must choose only one foreign language which they will study in the first year alone; in Tourism Management and Hotel Management students choose two foreign languages which they will study in the first two years of the course; and in Tourism Information and Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment students also choose two foreign languages, but they will study them all throughout the three years of their courses. While the first semester in most of these language classes corresponds to an A1 level (according to the 2001 *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*¹¹ [CEFR],

by the Council of Europe), English is the only foreign language whose first semester corresponds to a B1.1 level. There are, however, a number of challenges that both foreign languages teachers and students face at ESHTE. On one hand, some courses do not offer foreign language training in all semesters, only in the first two (as in the case of the degree in Cookery and Food Product) or in the first four (as the degrees in Tourism Management and Hotel Management), which is clearly insufficient for students to learn/improve their knowledge in a foreign language, in addition to the fact that the year in which they do not have foreign language classes is precisely the year that precedes their entrance in the labour market. On the other hand, and certainly the most unfavourable aspect in foreign language teaching at ESHTE is that, apart from the degree in Tourism Information, on-site classes take place only once a week for a period of two hours. This is particularly inexpedient when semesters are only fifteen weeks long (equivalent to a total of thirty hours in a language subject), and out of these some classes are engaged with oral and written assessment. Not to mention that each group has, in general, twenty to thirty students of mixed proficiency linguistic levels¹², which puts at stake the quality of teaching/learning and demands considerable effort to integrate all students in active class activities.

These have been the results of unsound adaptation and misinterpretation of the Bologna Declaration, which has sought to facilitate the readability, comparability, and mobility of/between degrees in the European Higher Education Area (European Ministers of Education, 1999). Pre-Bologna 4-year courses have been contracted into three years with different subjects being subjected to an altogether erosion from the curricula or to a significant reduction in the number of on-site learning hours per week, as it was the case of language classes, and academic years have been adapted to semesters guided by an assessment-oriented calendar, which reduces the opportunities of learning interaction with/among students. In addition, neither teachers, nor students have been trained/prepared to deal with these changes and to understand how they should adapt their practices to the principles introduced by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and by the *Common*

⁷ In the areas of Nature and Adventure Tourism, Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, F&B, Safety and Food Hygiene, Hotel Reception, and Nautical Tourism, the latter in association with the *Escola Superior Náutica Infante D. Henrique*, a higher education institute in Portugal that specialises in Nautical Studies.

⁸ *Licenciatura* in Portuguese. In Tourism Management; Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment; Tourism Information; Cookery and Food Production; and Hotel Management. All these courses are organised in 6 semesters.

⁹ In the areas of Spas and Wellness, Cultural Tourism Management, Tourism Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Geographic Information Systems applied to Tourism, and Commercial Aviation in partnership with Gestair Flying Academy, among others.

¹⁰ In Innovation in Culinary Arts; Food Quality and Safety in Catering; Tourism, with three branches: Events' Management, Strategic Management of Tourism Destinations, and Planning and Management of Nature and Adventure Tourism; and Tourism and Communication, in association with the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning and the Faculty of Letters, both at the University of Lisbon.

¹¹ The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* establishes a three-level global scale of language learning – Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User – corresponding to six levels of progression – A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage), B1 (Threshold), B2 (Vantage), C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency), and C2 (Mastery).

¹² Students are not subjected to an initial placement test that would determine their linguistic level and place them in a group accordingly. Instead, at the time of enrolment students are informed that they should choose English only if they have already completed five years of learning in the language.

English IV Syllabus
<p>1. Cultural Differences</p> <p>1.1. Intercultural Communication 1.2. Tourism and Culture 1.3. Awareness of Cultural Differences 1.4. Cultural Differences and Body Language</p> <p>2. Tourism and Creativity</p> <p>2.1. Alternative Forms of Tourism 2.2. Innovative Ideas in Tourism</p> <p>3. Future Trends in Tourism</p> <p>3.1. Changing Markets 3.2. Future Prospects</p>

FIGURE 1. ENGLISH IV SYLLABUS IN TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND LEISURE MANAGEMENT AND TOURIST ENTERTAINMENT DEGREES AT ESHTE

European Framework of Reference for Languages, in the case of language subjects, where the adaptation of curricula has been rather abrupt and not carefully reflected upon (Sarroeira, 2012: 84). Indeed, with regard to the reduction of the language offer in many higher education institutions in Portugal, there has been a complete subversion of the principles advanced by the Bologna Declaration. The Declaration states that mobility of students, teachers, researchers, and administrative staff should be promoted “by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement” (European Ministers of Education, 1999). However, if foreign language and cultural learning is not provided in correct and sufficient ways, how can these obstacles be overcome? Instead, more widespread foreign language learning opportunities, together with the intercultural awareness they entail, should have been promoted.

With the goal to minimise the impacts caused by this setback in foreign language offer and learning, the *CLiCESHTE*, ESHTe’s Foreign Languages and Cultures Centre, was created in 2007, following a recommendation provided by the European University Association (EUA). According to the EUA, ESHTe should “offer more foreign language quality training to staff and students and work on the projects for establishing a language and cultural centre to promote language learning within a well-defined language policy” and that the institution should, in general, “raise language and cultural awareness” (EUA, 2007: 16). The *CLiCESHTE* started offering foreign language courses to the general public and to companies in the areas of tourism and hospitality, as well as other language and cultural activities to its students (including literary and cinema sessions, seminars, and tours in foreign languages, among others). In 2009, *CLiCESHTE*

was one of the co-founders of *ReCLes.pt*¹³, the Association of Language Centres in Higher Education in Portugal. This Association, a member of the *Cercles (Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l’Enseignement Supérieur)*, aims to promote language learning/teaching in Portuguese higher education and contribute to lifelong plurilingual acquisition and competences.

English for Tourism Purposes: a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)?

This paper focuses on a reflection of strategies and practices in teaching/learning English as a foreign language for tourism purposes. However, at the threshold (B1) and vantage (B2) levels, this brings a difficult distinction to the fore: is it a form of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)?

“English for specific purposes is a term that refers to teaching or studying English for a particular career (like law, medicine) or for business in general” (International Teacher Training Organization, 2005), while CLIL “is a means of teaching curriculum subjects through the medium of a language still being learned, providing the necessary language support alongside the subject specialism. CLIL can also be regarded the other way around – as a means of teaching English through study of a specialist content” (Graddol, 2006: 86), which focuses on content and language learning through the 4Cs

¹³ *CLiCESHTE/ESHTe* has been reelected as a member of the Association’s Executive Committee until 2015.

framework: content, communication, cognition and culture (Coyle et al, 2010: 41). Therefore, CLIL is “neither language learning nor subject learning but an amalgam of both” (Coyle et al, 2010: 4). Therefore, although English for tourism purposes has to privilege the development of language skills when addressing topics within the scope of tourism (ESP), it is true that many times students feel that they are actually learning tourism-related subjects through the medium of English (CLIL). Moreover, an EFL teacher for tourism purposes “is increasingly seen as an octopus-like creature that must spread its tentacles over many different fields” (Gonçalves in Hussin et al, 2010: 127) and contribute to students’ development of skills in a wide range of areas of expertise, rather than just providing students with the necessary tools for the improvement of their linguistic skills in the English language, which blurs the ontological and epistemological differences between the two methods (ESP and CLIL).

English IV in the Tourism Management and Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment degrees

This paper seeks to focus specifically on the methodologies and practices adopted in teaching/learning English as a Foreign Language in the degrees in Tourism Management, which in the second year is divided into Management of Tourism Companies (Appendix 1), Management of Tourism Products (Appendix 2), and Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment (Appendix 3). While Tourism Management aims at preparing professionals to work in different tourism companies’ departments, in events’ management, and to create and develop new products in several companies and institutions within the tourism sector, the degree in Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment seeks to provide students with the necessary skills and competencies to coordinate and supervise various tourism entertainment activities at hotels, in small and medium-sized companies including nature and adventure tourism and events companies, in theme parks, and in other cultural venues.

The English IV syllabus¹⁴ (2nd year), addresses the relationship between tourism and culture,

encourages the reflection on the concepts of cultural representations and stereotypes, and emphasises the need for tourism professionals to be aware of cultural differences (including customs, verbal and body language, religion and food habits), enabling them to relate with people from different parts of the world in a more respectful way. It also analyses the relationship between tourism and creativity in the development of new ideas and alternative forms of tourism, namely through the analysis and reflection provided by Richards and Wilson’s text (2006), and concludes by considering the future of tourism and the different endogenous and exogenous factors that may contribute to the transformation of this sector in the future, by adopting a more ethical and humanistic approach to tourism activities and in their relationship with others (business partners, tourists and hosts). This is mainly achieved through the study of UNWTO’s *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* (2001) and Krippendorff’s “School for a More Human Tourism” (1999).

English IV seeks to grapple with the challenges of “languaging” in tourism-related contexts, that is, “the process of struggling to find a way of articulating the full, embodied and engaged interaction with the world that comes when we put the languages we are learning into action” (Phipps, 2007: 12). Therefore, the pedagogical methodologies endorsed in English IV are manifold, with the aim to motivate students and to adapt to their *multiple intelligences* (Gardner, 1983; Puchta & Rinvoluciri, 2007) and learning styles. These include diversified tools which promote collaborative learning¹⁵, such as: warming-up activities with various purposes; different types reading comprehension tasks; usage of ICT (video, audio, internet) in on-site, computer-mediated communication and virtual learning environments; short writing activities and peer editing exercises; contextual grammar exercises; oral communication/interaction tasks and activities; individual essay writing; group project development followed by students’ oral presentations; and tutorials (individually or in small groups), among others¹⁶. They all, however, stem from a bottom-up, student-centred and constructive approach in which students are empowered in their own learning, by bringing their own knowledge and experience to the fore, and “learn by doing” through task-based and real-life problem-solving activities, either individually, in pairs or in small groups. All these methodologies “require a learner to act primarily as a language user and give focal attention to message conveyance” (Ellis, 2003:

¹⁴ The previous semesters of English language learning in these courses focus on a general introduction to tourism and the tourism system, understanding tourists’ needs, wants and motivations (English I), to a progressive specialisation of studies related to the degrees’ specificities – either a focus on tourism management or leisure management and entertainment activities (English II). English III focuses on the understanding of tourism marketing, tourism promotional strategies and destination image and management.

¹⁵ Collaborative learning “promotes critical thinking, fosters socialization, improves attitudes towards learning, and develops a better understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds” (Hassanien, 2006: 19).

¹⁶ The subject’s assessment is divided in the following items: written test (45%), two group oral presentations (15% each = 30%) and active oral and written participation in class, homework, and attendance (25%). Students are required to achieve a B2 level (CEFR) at the end of this semester.

“THE SEMESTER’S MAIN PROJECT CONSISTS IN EXAMINING AND REFLECTING ON HOW CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES ARE SHAPED AND NEGOTIATED IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURES AND SOCIETIES AND HOW THESE CAN INFLUENCE TOURISM PROFESSIONALS’ PERFORMANCE WHEN DEALING WITH CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS OF TOURISTS.

4-5). These tasks and activities¹⁷ also contribute to develop and improve knowledge acquisition, develop critical thinking, promote interaction and creativity, and trigger motivation; some of the skills Morgan (2004) suggests future tourism professionals should develop. Indeed, as suggested by Hollyforde and Whiddett (2002), the ways in which students perceive the complexity of a subject will have a direct impact on their motivation and how they engage with that subject, and Penny Ur adds that it is evident that “motivation makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier and more pleasant, as well as more productive” (1996: 274).

The semester’s main project consists in examining and reflecting on how cultural representations and stereotypes are shaped and negotiated in contemporary cultures and societies and how these can influence tourism professionals’ performance when dealing with certain individuals or groups of tourists. Students choose a cultural representation or stereotype using specific examples from the media, advertising, film, music, literature, etc., and question it, deconstruct it, and provide new understandings and interpretations that help avoiding the danger that representing an individual or a group in a particular way may carry, that is, “that dialogue may stop short at difference and that difference may engender intolerance” (UNESCO, 2009: 41). Some of the cultural representations and stereotypes analysed in the 2012/2013 academic year included, for instance, the concept of beauty, representations/ stereotypes of certain nationalities (the Americans, British, Canadians, German, Mexicans, Italians, and Portuguese) and religions (Jews, Muslims), the reification of women in advertising, how certain age groups (teenagers and the elderly, in particular) are subjected to oversimplified interpretations, and how people with tattoos can be discriminated against by other individuals.

The end goal of this project is that of promoting critical (inter)cultural awareness and understanding about cultural differences, together with the improvement of students’ communication skills in the English language. The fact that the topics of study and research are chosen by students and that they address everyday life issue and aspects with which they feel a personal link, allows students to relate to the project and the classes in more motivating ways. Therefore, students’ feedback on the strategies adopted in English IV and the subjects that compose its syllabus is generally positive.¹⁸

It [English IV] showed me some interesting details about certain cultures.

(Duarte Antão, 22 years old, Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment student).

I think that in English IV we practice a lot and we learn significant issues for work and for life.

(Ana Canadas, 19 years old, Tourism Management, Management of Tourism Companies student).

The subject of English IV helped me to get new ideas of how I should act in relation to other cultures. One example was a lesson about the behavior of different nationalities face similar situations, as for example punctuality and gestures that are misinterpreted in other cultures, etc. This information is very relevant for me since it can avoid

¹⁷ Due to the diversity of tasks and activities undertaken in this subject, the specific topics studied in the semester, and students’ different learning styles, no specific coursebook has been adopted. Moreover, there is in the market an insufficient provision of coursebooks for specific areas of tourism such as leisure management and tourism information. But even when these are provided, in the areas of hospitality and catering, for instance, their target level is usually that of the basic user.

¹⁸ The following statements were written by students in English and they are included in this paper in their original form, without any language corrections, not only to avoid any manipulation of their statements, but also to show the English language writing skills they have acquired and the improvements they still need to make. Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment students still have two semesters of English language learning in the 3rd year, but not Tourism Management students, for whom English IV is the last semester of English language learning in their degree.

some misunderstandings when in contact with different cultural realities.

(Jael Cohen, 20 years old, Tourism Management, Management of Tourism Companies student).

The subject of English IV was very important for our improvement. We developed some skills in these areas; I think that now we are prepared to lead with special needs and different cultures. I remember for example those situations where people come to Portugal in vacations and they need special meals, different moments to eat, days to avoid some kind of food, occasions to pray, different meeting and convention, etc. We know now that what is polite in Portugal could be rude in other countries, and we need to take care.

(Marta Entrudo, 21 years old, Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment student).

Moreover, students are aware of the importance of developing intercultural competences in tourism activities, whose social, cultural, and human dimensions are reinforced in English IV. When asked about the importance of intercultural competences/ awareness and communication skills for tourism professionals, students replied:

It's very important that tourism professionals develop the skills to create a dialogue with other cultures, and be aware of the costumes and preferences of each culture. To be more competent we need to have a good communication, and a quicker response to different situations of our daily-life.

(Jéssica Serra, 19 years old, Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment student).

I think that it is quite important for tourism professionals to have a bigger knowledge about other cultures. If they develop intercultural competences/ awareness and communication skills, they would avoid some kind of constraint or restraint. The understanding of some habits and traditions will also avoid misunderstandings and troubles. If tourism professionals are aware of the contrasts between cultures, they can clarify the tourists, avoiding uncomfortable situations.

(Ana Canadas, 19 years old, Tourism Management, Management of Tourism Companies student).

As tourism professionals the development of intercultural competences are extremely relevant, because it's crucial to know the differences between the different societies or cultures to know how to work with them and to be able to respect, understand and communicate with them. In that way tourists will be plenty satisfied because the professional was aware of the cultural or communication differences and customs.

(Rafaela Melo, 22 years old, Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment student).

It's my belief, as a tourism student, that having a wider sense of interculturality makes a better tourism professional. I consider that developing these skills it's essential to provide a better service to future clients. Tourists come from very different places with many different cultures, by acknowledging these differences tourism professionals must set new and higher standards in the service they're providing.

(André Calisto, 25 years old, Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment student).

This shows that "individuals – through critical cultural awareness and reflection in action, and through relational communication with the Other – come to recognize their own identity and its boundaries, and thus, to appraise their intercultural competence" (Holmes & O'Neill, 2012: 716), but also how "the use of English as a common language, but not as a lingua franca, can provide us with opportunities for acting as responsible cosmopolitan citizens, without implying the loss of our cultural and ideological roots or the transformation of the English language into a neutral, disengaged or unaffiliated medium" (Guilherme, 2007: 72). English should not be seen as the enemy next door, but as a language that can facilitate individuals' understanding of their common humanity.

Conclusion

Inui et al (2006) have suggested that tourism educators need to revisit the focus of the education they provide and to reconsider their role as educators:

Taking the natural stance, our role as educators should be in preparing students to be employable, while the theoretic stance would require educators to facilitate critical thinking and moral decision making in our students.

Educators are more than skilled experts in classrooms; they are “social leaders, cultural advocates, and moral visionaries, spiritual directors who choose to do their leading, advocating, visioning and directing” (Inui et al, 2006: 34).

Therefore, those teaching in tourism education should offer more humanistic, engaging, and holistic learning experiences to their students that emphasise the social and cultural dimensions of tourism, their future relationship with tourists coming from different cultural backgrounds, and a clearer link between their learning practices and their future professional contexts. In this respect, foreign language subjects play a significant role in tourism education. In foreign language learning, *the journey not the arrival matters*.¹⁹ This means that it is the learning process itself, with all its challenges, victories, complexities, and discoveries that matters the most, together with the development of individuals’ intercultural competence, which is also a dynamic process, rather than a given. Both involve self-reflection of one’s own culture and cultural habits, critical thinking, interacting with others from different cultures, and respecting other people’s differences and dignity (Boni & Lozano, 2007; Singh & Rampersad, 2010).

However, given the challenges and pitfalls that foreign language learning has been subjected to in higher education studies, it is mandatory that, both at the national and institutional levels, a foreign language policy is adopted that sets the short and long-term objectives of foreign language teaching/learning, promotes language and cultural diversity, and establishes clear guidelines and goals for education providers, teaching staff and students. This foreign language policy should contribute to enhance communication and intercultural skills in different languages, in articulation with the needs and demands of the labour market, so that foreign language acquisition/development can also foster employability, making individuals better prepared to perform successfully on the global stage.

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¹⁹ Quote attributed to the Nobel Prize-winning poet T. S. Eliot.

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APPENDICES

1st Semester	Total No. Hours	Contact Hours	ECTS
Foreign Language I	84	59	3
Foreign Language I	84	59	3
Introduction to Tourism	112	55	4
Tourism Businesses	140	74	5
Economics	112	70	4
Technology and Information Systems I	112	79	4
Quantitative Methods	140	74	5
Methodology Seminar	28	28	1
2nd Semester			
Foreign Language II	84	59	3
Foreign Language II	84	59	3
Law and Tourism Legislation	140	92	5
Market Studies	168	92	6
Technology and Information Systems II	112	79	4
Portuguese Culture	112	68	4
Tourism System	168	76	6
3rd Semester			
Foreign Language III	84	54	3
Foreign Language III	84	54	3
Geography and Tourism Markets	140	80	5
Business Management	140	80	5
General Accountancy	112	73	4
Business Behaviour	140	76	5
Transports	168	114	6
4th Semester			
Foreign Language IV	84	48	3
Foreign Language IV	84	48	3
Sociology of Tourism	112	55	4
Human Resources' Management	140	74	5
Management Accountancy	112	73	4
Financial Techniques	140	92	5
Natural and Cultural Resources	140	98	5
5th Semester			
Tourism Itineraries	112	78	4
Reservation Systems and Information Fluxes	84	47	3
Tourism Marketing I	140	83	4
Events' Management	84	51	3
Tourism Economics	84	51	3
Knowledge Management	84	54	3
6th Semester			
Financial Management	112	55	4
Business Strategy	140	83	5
Tourism Marketing II	140	83	5
Management of Tourism Businesses	140	72	5
Quality Management	140	92	5
Ethics and Social Responsibility	84	51	3
Internship	336	6	12

APPENDIX 1. TOURISM MANAGEMENT – MANAGEMENT
OF TOURISM COMPANIES CURRICULUM

1st Semester	Total No. Hours	Contact Hours	ECTS
Foreign Language I	84	59	3
Foreign Language I	84	59	3
Introduction to Tourism	112	55	4
Tourism Businesses	140	74	5
Economics	112	70	4
Technology and Information Systems I	112	79	4
Quantitative Methods	140	74	5
Methodology Seminar	28	28	1
2nd Semester			
Foreign Language II	84	59	3
Foreign Language II	84	59	3
Law and Tourism Legislation	140	92	5
Market Studies	168	92	6
Technology and Information Systems II	112	79	4
Portuguese Culture	112	68	4
Tourism System	168	76	6
3rd Semester			
Foreign Language III	84	59	3
Foreign Language III	84	59	3
Tourism Geography I	140	92	5
Business Management	140	72	5
Sociology of Tourism	112	55	4
Geographic Information Systems	112	71	4
Transports	168	114	6
4th Semester			
Foreign Language IV	84	49	3
Foreign Language IV	84	49	3
Tourism and Development	168	94	6
Tourism Geography II	140	92	5
Tourism Planning I	140	96	5
Tourism Entertainment	84	51	3
Natural and Cultural Resources	140	98	5
5th Semester			
Tourism Planning II	140	96	5
Tourism Itineraries	112	78	4
Tourism Economics	84	51	3
Tourism Marketing I	140	47	5
Knowledge Management	84	47	3
Reservation Systems and Information Fluxes	84	47	3
6th Semester			
Tourism and the Environment	84	51	3
Innovation and Development of Tourism Products	168	105	6
Management of Tourism Businesses	140	72	5
Ethics and Social Responsibility	84	51	3
Tourism Marketing II	140	83	5
Events' Management	84	51	3
Internship	336	6	12

APPENDIX 2. TOURISM MANAGEMENT – MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM PRODUCTS CURRICULUM

1st Semester	Total No. Hours	Contact Hours	ECTS
Foreign Language I	84	53	3
Foreign Language I	84	53	3
Introduction to Tourism	112	55	4
Portuguese Culture	112	68	4
Technology and Information Systems I	112	79	4
Business Management	140	80	5
Tourism Entertainment Methodology and Practice	168	92	6
Methodology Seminar	28	28	1
2nd Semester			
Foreign Language II	84	53	3
Foreign Language II	84	53	3
Technology and Information Systems II	112	79	4
Anatomophysiology	112	74	4
Business Management	112	72	4
Cultural Entertainment	168	92	6
Sports Animation I	168	110	6
3rd Semester			
Foreign Language III	84	54	3
Foreign Language III	84	54	3
Kinesiology	84	51	3
Leisure Spaces I	112	71	4
Leisure Psychology	112	55	4
Sports Animation II	112	88	4
Arts and Shows	140	92	5
4th Semester			
Foreign Language IV	84	49	3
Foreign Language IV	84	49	3
Geographic Information Systems	112	71	4
Risk Management	112	71	4
Leisure Spaces II	112	71	4
Exercise Physiology	84	51	3
Adventure Tourism and Sports	140	92	5
Internship I	224	6	8
5th Semester			
Foreign Language V	56	42	2
Foreign Language V	56	42	2
Entertainment in Tourism Facilities	168	92	6
Tourism Entertainment and Local Development	112	73	4
Marketing	140	83	5
Interpersonal Relationships	112	55	4
Cultural Planning and Management	112	58	4
6th Semester			
Foreign Language VI	56	42	2
Foreign Language VI	56	42	2
Planning and Management in Tourism Entertainment	168	92	6
Events' Management	84	51	3
Management of Leisure Facilities	140	94	5
Ethics and Social Responsibility	112	51	3
Planning and Management of Activities with Special Populations	112	56	4
Internship II	224	6	8

APPENDIX 3. LEISURE MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM ENTERTAINMENT CURRICULUM