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THE INTEGRATION OF LINGUISTIC AND DISCOURSE COMPETENCE IN PROFESSIONAL TOURISM COMMUNICATION

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Abstract. The international nature of tourism creates a growing need for professionals who can communicate accurately, coherently, and appropriately in intercultural situations. This paper examines the relationship between linguistic competence and discourse competence as complementary dimensions of professional communication in tourism. Drawing on theories of communicative competence and research on hospitality language, the study explores how grammatical knowledge, specialized vocabulary, cohesion, coherence, and pragmatic appropriateness contribute to successful interactions between tourism professionals and international visitors. The paper concludes that integrated competence should be considered a central objective of professional language education in tourism.

Keywords: linguistic competence, discourse competence, tourism communication, communicative competence, intercultural communication, professional English.

Introduction. Tourism is a service-oriented industry in which the quality of communication directly affects the interaction between professionals and visitors. Tourists require clear information about accommodation, transportation, cultural attractions, travel arrangements, and local customs. Consequently, tourism professionals must possess not only general foreign language proficiency but also the ability to communicate effectively in specific occupational contexts.

Traditional approaches to language learning frequently emphasize grammatical structures and vocabulary acquisition. Although these elements are essential, they do not independently guarantee successful communication. Hymes [1] introduced the concept of communicative competence to emphasize that language use must be understood in relation to social conventions and situational appropriateness. Canale and Swain [2] subsequently developed a framework for communicative competence, while Canale [3] highlighted the role of discourse competence in the production and interpretation of connected language.

These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for examining professional communication in tourism. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the relationship between linguistic and discourse competence and to explain why their integration is important in tourism-related professional interactions.

Linguistic Competence as the Foundation of Tourism Communication. Linguistic competence refers to the knowledge and use of a language's grammatical, lexical, and phonological resources. In tourism, it includes the ability to use specialized terminology, construct accurate sentences, pronounce important information intelligibly, and understand visitors' questions.

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Tourism professionals regularly employ expressions associated with accommodation, reservations, hospitality, transport, catering, and sightseeing. Terms such as booking confirmation, guided excursion, room availability, and cancellation policy represent examples of occupational vocabulary. Appropriate grammatical structures are equally important when employees explain service conditions, describe historical events, or provide travel instructions.

For instance, a hotel receptionist must communicate the conditions of a reservation accurately, while a tour guide needs suitable past-tense structures to describe historical developments. In both cases, incorrect word choice or grammatical ambiguity may lead to misunderstanding.

However, knowledge of language forms does not necessarily enable a professional to organize an entire conversation effectively. A speaker may produce grammatically correct sentences but still fail to provide information in a logical order or respond appropriately to the visitor's needs. Linguistic competence therefore represents a necessary foundation rather than a complete model of professional communication.

Discourse Competence and Its Professional Functions. Discourse competence concerns the ability to organize individual sentences into meaningful, coherent, and purpose-oriented communication. According to Canale [3], discourse competence is associated with the interpretation and production of connected texts, particularly through cohesion and coherence.

Cohesion refers to linguistic connections between sentences and clauses, including conjunctions, reference, and lexical relationships. Coherence refers to the logical development of ideas and the overall unity of a communicative message.

These characteristics are particularly significant in tourism because many occupational activities require more than short exchanges. Tour guides deliver extended explanations, travel consultants compare different itineraries, hotel employees explain procedures, and destination marketers create texts intended to inform or persuade visitors.

A successful tour guide, for example, does not simply list facts about a historical monument. The guide introduces the site, establishes its historical context, explains important features, connects individual details, and concludes with a meaningful summary. Such an explanation requires both linguistic resources and discourse-level organization.

The sociolinguistic dimension of tourism communication is also important. Blue and Harun [4] examine hospitality language as a professional skill and identify recognizable communicative practices associated with interactions between guests and service providers. Their discussion supports the view that language in hospitality is closely connected to professional procedures and situational expectations.

Integrating Linguistic and Discourse Competence. The integration of linguistic and discourse competence can be understood as the coordinated use of accurate language forms and effective communicative organization. The two competencies are interdependent: linguistic knowledge supplies the resources for expressing meaning, while discourse competence helps determine how those resources are selected and connected.

This relationship can be illustrated through three professional situations.

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First, in hotel reception, employees require accurate expressions for greeting guests, confirming reservations, explaining prices, and resolving problems. Discourse competence allows them to structure these exchanges logically, ask relevant follow-up questions, and maintain an appropriate conversational sequence.

Second, in tour guiding, linguistic competence supports the accurate description of monuments, traditions, and historical events. Discourse competence enables the guide to create a coherent narrative, use transitions, emphasize significant details, and respond to audience questions. Third, in tourism marketing, language proficiency supports the description of destinations and services, whereas discourse competence contributes to the organization of promotional texts and the development of a consistent message for a specific audience. These examples demonstrate that professional effectiveness depends on the combined application of linguistic accuracy, textual coherence, pragmatic appropriateness, and awareness of communicative purpose.

Conclusion. Linguistic and discourse competence constitute complementary dimensions of professional communication in tourism. Linguistic competence provides the grammatical, lexical, and phonological resources required for accurate expression, while discourse competence enables professionals to organize these resources into coherent and contextually appropriate communication.

Their integration is essential in hospitality services, guided tours, travel consultation, and destination promotion. Tourism education should therefore develop not only the ability to construct correct sentences but also the ability to use language effectively in complete professional interactions. This perspective provides a theoretical basis for designing occupationally relevant language programmes and developing the communicative performance of future tourism specialists.

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