

A TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TEXTBOOKS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

In general, ESP textbooks tend to reflect methodological trends, educational fashions and changing contents. Undeniably, their quality has increased in the last 15 years and they tend to cater for most students' needs regardless of the pupils' field of study. However, those related to English teaching and learning for tourism studies do not clearly reflect some of the latest advances in teaching methodology (Morrow and Schoker 1987) in the way teachers may hope. This article addresses the issue of Travel & Tourism textbooks from the students' attitudes towards English Language Learning. The study intends to see if there is any correspondence (or up to what degree) between some current Travel & Tourism textbooks and what students consider the most important parts of instructional elements and skills. After summarizing the students' beliefs obtained by García Laborda (2002), there is a short analysis of 10 textbooks according to the students' beliefs perspective. The study concludes that most textbooks address the students' beliefs only partially, and that most textbooks do show a high degree of professionalism and continuous methodological improvements. A comparative study with relevant features is included. As a whole, the paper recommends to account for the students' beliefs if ESP books are intended to be effective in the English for Tourism classes.

Keywords: textbooks, ESP, Tourism, Beliefs.

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**AN ANALYSIS OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM TEXTBOOKS FROM
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In general, ESP textbooks tend to reflect methodological trends, educational fashions and changing contents. Undeniably, their quality has increased in the last 15 years and they tend to cater for most students' needs regardless of the pupils' field of study. However, those related to English teaching and learning for tourism studies do not clearly reflect some of the latest advances in teaching methodology (Morrow and Schoker 1987) in the

way teachers may hope. This study intends to make a comparative study of some of the most relevant textbooks currently used in ESP for Tourism. The paper also points out their strengths and weaknesses, and shows that despite an improvement in quality, most textbooks evolve more in their topics than in the methodological aspects.

Through this study, the researcher observed that the regular university students' main goal in their English language classes is to acquire enough competence to express themselves clearly and fluently in their professional world. Thus, Travel and Tourism language instructors need to promote those communicative skills that students demand according to their current realities of a changing and international world. That is the main reason why external assessment tests such as those offered by the *Cambridge International Board Examination in Travel & Tourism* (www.cie.org.uk) are a valuable tool to evaluate students and guide instructors and, indirectly, to promote the production of better teaching and learning materials.

However, despite a large number of language teachers who accuse the publishers of little interest in creating more and better materials, we should fully understand the daily realities that surround ESP authors and publishers. Also, publishers should try to help users (teachers) who not only use the book, but who also have to fulfil institutional and college requirements and contents. This is especially true for Travel and Tourism because only a few years ago this activity was considered as being like any other commercial activity and thus approached as ESP for business (rather than a unique commercial activity), and publishers did not really address the needs of this field specifically. One more reason to be especially flexible is the publishers' limitations when producing this type of material due to the low profitability of ESP materials. In fact, this is even worse in Spain because class absenteeism, drop out and photocopying books are three unfortunate common realities in the Spanish university and so students use fewer books than publishers would like. Indeed many professionals feel that there is little or nothing they can do to solve these problems. As a consequence, while most authors consider that the usability period can be about 4 years, an ESP book is expected to be good for, at least, 6. Besides, if the reader considers that textbooks are the most useful teaching tool (and the only one in not few cases) for many teachers without which their life and class preparation would be endless and class management extremely difficult (Finocchiaro, 1983). Researchers, practitioners, and publishers do have the responsibility of assessing and evaluating textbooks as often as possible (Carreon & Balarbar 1997; McDonough 1998). Despite all these considerations no study has been done up to now comparing university students' needs and wants and what textbooks offer. Thus, it is necessary to address this issue by trying to find out their opinions of what the most important aspects of their teaching are, and whether textbooks really fulfil their expectations in relation to these important elements (Reedy 1999).

Previous works have studied the students' attitudes towards the methodological elements that they consider important and necessary in their learning (García Laborda 2001; García Laborda 2002). Based on these findings, this paper analyses 10 current textbooks from two points of view: on one hand, the students' expectations, likes and attitudes and, on the other, their format, contents and components. Despite the fact that the researcher considers the importance and positive value of this study in the field of materials analysis for Travel and Tourism, this issue, as any other related to materials, tends to change continually. Therefore this paper only intends to be a tentative first approach of an area that will always be open to further research.

Method

The 10 books were analysed from two different points of view: first, by their components (Appendix I) and second, by how much they coincided with the students' attitudes obtained through a survey of 70 university students of different fields from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Appendix II). The main goal of this paper is not to criticize textbooks but, on the contrary, to show their current quality and richness both in contents and methodological implications.

Although this paper has been centred in Spain, most of these books can be found almost everywhere because their publishers are international, and therefore, the researcher feels that the results can be valuable for all Travel & Tourism teachers.

The study began by obtaining the students' opinions through questionnaires trying to obtain their preferences and the elements they considered that were best in their learning. In the second stage, the 10 textbooks were compared according to their components and the results obtained in the first stage.

Results

The 71 students were asked to answer to a 66-item questionnaire about language learning. From that questionnaire, it was concluded that:

- 1) Students consider that Listening, speaking, reading and writing should always be included in their instruction:
 - Free speaking and writing should be the final goal of their instruction
 - Work-related and authentic materials need to be included in their learning materials
 - Spoken language should prevail over written
- 2) Tasks should be geared to the students' professional needs,
- 3) There should be intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (and feeling of achievement) towards the goals and tasks performed through the course,
- 4) Relevant (to professional interests) cultural activities should have their place in their learning
- 5) Learners prefer the existence of the following elements:
 - Grammar, especially through an inductive approach
 - Vocabulary, adapted to their more immediate needs
 - A certain degree of anxiety towards the tasks should be considered a positive thing, however too much anxiety is not
 - Integrated pronunciation work

- Conscious and subconscious vocabulary learning, especially receptive acquisition
- Use of written and oral translation
- Use of L1 in the classroom, and
- Use of video and other games.
- Sociolinguistic uses which address their professional needs.

García Laborda (2001b) contrasted these results with a larger study involving high school students and 70 teachers. The results with university students, and high school students and their teachers are consistent, and presented similar characteristics. Additionally, teachers asserted that Spanish students understand that the teacher is still the central axis of the educational process, and that they observed that short, controllable, easy-to-correct and graded exercises worked best. According to these results, two taxonomies were established (Appendix I):

- Table 1: Presents the type of short information that can be found in any publisher's catalogue related to the textbooks' components and publication data. This category includes the following: Publisher, level, publication year, Teacher's Book (TB), Workbook (Wb), songs included, Teacher's CD (Tea CD), Cassette, Teacher's pack with additional resources, video, workbook with video (Video Wb) and exams for teachers and / or students.
- Tables 2 and 3: Present the book's features adherence to the results obtained through the students' questionnaire above. The comparative table 2 presents the following characteristics: Use of free writing, short readings embedded in each lesson, long readings in lessons (especially in the introduction), whether spoken language comes before written, whether task based learning is used, extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, if interculturality is addressed, if different sources of input are used, grammar teaching approach, use of vocabulary, fun activities (songs, games) are used, if grammar is an isolated item or is contextualized in other activities, and if there is a use of conscious or subconscious learning¹. Table 3 addresses the use of pre-fixed patterns, group work, use of music to learn, use of translation, reinforcement activities, self-progress exercises (different from those in the workbook) and the integration of video in the lessons.

Analysis and conclusions

The undergone analysis shows that there are many differences between the compared books (as opposed to the current state of secondary school textbooks). The study also shows that quality is remarkable in most of these 10 textbooks. The most significant differences can be found in relation to two key issues: the expected user (according to age and proficiency level) and expected studies (some of these books are used for vocational training while others seem aimed at university students). Overall, all these books focus on international students who need to know about different realities in a variety of English ,

¹ As Ellis (1982, 2003) in other publications, this study does not intend to make a clear distinction between (conscious) learning and (subconscious) acquisition because both seem to be different parts of the same process.

both in English speaking countries and international contexts. Most of them do not specifically address any particular culture, and when they do it is to show the cultural clash expected between the Western Tourism professional and some local traditions (for example the study of Japanese traditions in English for International Tourism).

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Analysed Books

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- Jones, J. (1998) *Welcome. English for the Travel and Tourism Industry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keith Harding (1999) *Going International*. London: Oxford University Press.
- O'Hara, F. (2002) *Be My Guest. English for the Hotel Industry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Revell, R. & Scott, T. (1998) *Highly Recommended: English for the Hotel and Catering Industry*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Stott, T. (1999) *First Class*. London: Oxford University Press.

Stott, T. (1995) *At Your Service*. London: Oxford University Press.

Strutt, P. (2003) *English for International Tourism Pre and Intermediate* (Series). Harlow: Longman

Viney, P. & Curtin, J. (1994) *Survival English*. Oxford: Heinemann

Appendix I: Materials Analysis

Table 1: Component distribution

Series	Publisher	Level	Year of publication	IB	WB	TeaB	Songs	Tea CD	Cass	Tea Pack	Video	Video WB	Exams
Highly Recommended	OUP	Starter	1998	X	X	X		X	X				
First Class	OUP	Pre-Intermediate	1999	X	X	X			X				
High Season Going International	OUP	Higher Intermediate	1999	X	X	X			X	X			
At Your Service	OUP	Starter	1995	X	X	X			X				
Survival English	Heinemann	Intermediate and Higher Intermediate	1994	X	X	X			X	X (From Reward)		X	
English for International Tourism	Longman	Intermediate	1997	X	X	X	X		X				
Welcome	CUP	Pre-Intermediate	1998	X	X	X			X				
Be my guest	CUP	Starter	2002	X	X	X		X					
First Class	Tomson	Starter	1999	X	X	X			X				

Table 2: Distribution by students' choice elements (1)

Series	Free Writing	Long reading lessons	Spoken language in written	Grade and tests	External and internal motivation	Cross-cultural	Variety of sources or input	Deductive Grammar	Professional vocabulary	Fun activities	Contextual Phonetics	Conscious and subconscious learning
Highly Recommended	Little	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
First Class	Little	X			Useful	International culture	X	X	X		X	?
High Season	Documents	X	X		Useful	International culture	X	X	X			
Going International	Little or Documents	X	X		Useful	International culture	X	X	X			X
At Your Service	Little	X	Listening but does not pronounce speaking		X		X		X			
Survival English	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
English for International Tourism	X	X	X		Useful		X	X	X	X	X	X
Welcome	Little or Documents	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Be my guest		X	Listening but does not pronounce speaking		Useful		X	X	X	X	X	X
First Class			Listening but does not pronounce speaking				X		X		?	

Table 3: *Distribution by students' choice elements (2)*

Series	Pre-fixed patterns	Uses L1	Group work	Uses music for learning	Uses Translation	Self-learning and reinforcement activities	Self-learning (apart from Wb)	Uses Video
Highly Recommended	X		X			X	X	
First Class	X		Mostly pairs					
High Season	X		Pairs					
Going International	X		X					
At Your Service	X		Mostly Pairs					
Survival English	X		Mostly Pairs				X	X (from the Reward series)
English for International Tourism	X		X	X				
Welcome	X		X					
Be my guest	X		X					
First Class	X		X					