

1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

CLOSING REMARKS

(I) Dr Evi Soteriou Director of Higher Hotel Institute Cyprus: Tourism Perspectives

On behalf of the Conference Steering Committee we would like to warmly thank our distinguished keynote speakers for their most stimulating presentations at the plenary and the parallel workshops, and of course all of you for your participation and valuable contributions to the conference deliberations.

With the Associate Professor Fryni Kakogianni Doa we shall try to sum up the main conclusions drawn from the conference. Firstly, I will concentrate on the main conclusions from the tourism perspective and then Dr Kakogianni Doa will present the main conclusions from the language development perspective (didactics).

i. The importance of communication and language learning to tourism

- The nature of tourism experience dictates a “dependency of tourists on locals”, which is particularly important in the framework of sustainable tourism.
- Tourism communication is mainly verbal and non-verbal. There are also cultural meanings in tourism communication that need to be transmitted and understood.
- Communication is important to tourists for meeting all their levels of needs (Maslow need hierarchy), enhancing the quality of their tourism experience and their feeling of hospitality but at the same time covering vital safety/security needs (facing risks).
- Communication is important to the tourism industry as it enables the successful targeting of tourism markets and segments.
- Communication is important to tourism to allow for the bridging of cultures and to derive the tourism benefits of intercultural exchange and understanding, cultural enhancement and open-mindedness, thus contributing to world peace.
- Communication is important to tourism employees. It enhances their employability and career advancement/professional development and contributes to the meeting of the various levels of employee needs (Maslow need hierarchy).
- Language learning facilitates communication with tourists as well as with fellow employees in an increasingly multilingual/multicultural labor force in a globalized planet/industry.

ii. **The importance of tourism to linguists – language learning for tourism**

- Tourism is a dynamic, buoyant sector (UNWTO estimates an increase to 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 worldwide) which requires special attention.
- The users of languages bring about the need for investment in language learning. Tourism has traditionally been a very important user and can become even more so, in the framework of sustainable tourism development.
- In the relevant UNWTO survey, the majority (almost 79%) of participating educational and training institutions in hospitality and tourism offer language courses. Those that don't, they either offer multilingual programmes or have language level requirements. All found it imperative for students to know foreign languages.
- Continuous, life-long language learning is needed to foster the employability and career advancement of students and graduates, as well as to match the tourism sector needs.
- Different programmes need to be developed for different life-long learning needs (professional courses, short courses, targeted programmes to varied hospitality and tourism needs – different professions need different approaches, need to specifically analyse and address them (contexts/circumstances, actions, people- learner, message sender, message receiver etc.).
- Language learning is needed for adequate preparation of different tourism professionals (front and back of the house), but not only. The role of the local community in tourism as hosts/volunteers needs to be acknowledged and thus investment in language learning needs to have a wider scope.
- The investment of a tourism destination in language learning should relate to its tourism needs (international language, languages of current and emerging markets, language of neighbouring countries, own language/s).
- There is a need to professionalise languages through academic and professional cooperation for programme development and implementation.
- Technological advancements can prove very useful in life-long language learning for tourism, given the industry's decentralized and seasonal nature. Special caution is needed, however, to facilitate effective communication in tourism, including the transmission and understanding of cultural messages.
- Different types of language learning methods are available and employed by institutions, yet one parameter needs to be common. Clear emphasis should be placed in verbal and non-verbal communication for language learning in hospitality and tourism. Once the learner is able to communicate at a basic level in the tourism environment, he/she gets motivated for the required investment in language learning.

iii. Repercussions on Tourism Strategy

Tourism Strategy needs to encompass strategies for language learning as part of its Human Resource Development section.

Language learning needs to form part of the tourism strategy in order to:

- target markets and segments
- cover tourism needs and add value to the tourism experience
- effectively deal with risks/health and safety issues
- promote sustainable development: boost employment and local growth as monitored by the tourism satellite accounts, avoid overdependence on specific tourism markets, profit from growing tourism markets, attract different market segments, deal with seasonality issues, position the country as a high-quality, sustainable destination etc.)
- undertake the necessary long-term investment and encourage the development of public and private partnerships, which are necessary for effective language development.

(II) Associate Professor Fryni Kakogianni Doa, Department of French and European Studies, University of Cyprus: Language development perspectives (Didactics)

i. The importance of communication in terms of didactics

In terms of language didactics, a major feeling was shared during this conference, namely the importance of communication with people in their respective languages. This is particularly important in order to understand each other in a world where global languages tend to overpower native languages. To do so, it is necessary to start from a Needs Analysis, develop and create teaching materials based on targeted fieldwork. As language learning takes time, various teaching methods based on the communicative approach can help such as:

- interactive lectures
- collaborative methods
- problem-solving
- project-based
- laboratory-based
- subjects or extracurricular activities in a foreign language
- interaction with foreign students in their language
- Interactive and authentic learning exposure to tourism business field
- pedagogy in context, experience, reflection, action, evaluation

Recommendations have been made regarding training teachers. As already mentioned, globalization through the English language seems to be practical for users but has to remain a tool and not a systematic option. The current numerical world is paradoxical, both so fast and stagnant, communicative but virtual, with so many possibilities. Teachers need to be aware of the existing practices in order to raise interest with language learning. While they are teaching, new generation 2.1 is born to become the next learners who will grow with so many different ways of education: it is important to fulfill the digital gap by connecting the class with the Internet. If well used, technology-mediated tasks can be a great success for language learners as much as mobile devices or other resources integrated into the curriculum. The potential is huge and a trained teacher can make the difference with others, not just because he uses Technology Information Communication (TIC) but because he is convinced of its usefulness. A hybrid language class proposing both online and face-to-face teaching, can be a good alternative for a communicative lesson.

Dictionaries and gamified tutorial apps are still the main tools for students but new trends are increasingly used such as podcasts, vocabulary tools and so on. We all know Babbel, Wordreference or Thesaurus for instance that are very convenient, even though more or less commercial. As we saw with the storytelling, a project-based approach is an inspiring way to communicate, collaborate and outshine by creating something new, unique and motivating.

Furthermore, another big part of communicative method applied in didactics for more than four decades now is the pedagogy in context. The most common and pointed out motivation to learn a language is to be able to speak with autochthones when travelling. Here is our focus in this conference: language learning as a human experience. First of all, learners (for professional purposes or not) meet a foreign language in an actual context: an airport, a resort, a restaurant. That is why the class should offer as much as possible, an authentic support based on real-life situations. Action methods could enhance so many teaching habits with an objective-specific syllabus but it requires a lot of investment from the institutions in general. Scalability can arise only if institutions allow it; that is to say by researching it, listening to it, promoting it, informing about it and investing time, energy and tools.

Teaching languages for general or specific purposes have a lot in common. For both it is necessary to consider linguistic development and teaching theories, to have insights in contemporary ideas regarding the teacher's position and role as well as the position and role of foreign language learners in education and to face new technologies offered as an aid to improve their methodology. Finally, researchers and participants need to collaborate closely for the achievement of the necessary results.

Challenges are big in language learning but gains are bigger considering globalization, the increasing intercultural exchange, open-mindedness and learner autonomy. We hope that these findings will inspire new researches and creative experimentation.