

SUSTAINABILITY AWARENESS IN ESP

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is applied in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms to develop students' linguistic competence. The core of CLIL lessons is a selected topic from several sources (websites, magazines, video materials). While learning about something new, ESP students also acquire language skills. Sustainable tourism education (STE) with its focus on social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism has been part of the curriculum at the College of Tourism in Belgrade. This paper will analyse the effectiveness of CLIL methods incorporating STE texts in teaching ESP and verify the results in students based on their answers written in the questionnaire. The main goal of the authors is to demonstrate that this approach to STE and ESP teaching can be used to raise ecological awareness in students and promote sustainability during English language courses, the extent of which is presented in the paper's results and conclusions.

Key Words: *ESP, content-based instruction, sustainability awareness*

JEL classification: *Z0*

Introduction

Education has a crucial role in forming attitudes in learners and given that sustainability has become one of the key matters in the development of our world today, this paper examines how English courses taught at higher education institutions for tourism can promote sustainability. The United Nations defined sustainability as meeting the needs of the present

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without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN, 2015), which was followed by setting the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2012). According to Jeronen (2022), education for sustainable development is an educational vision to balance human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and reverence for the Earth's natural resources. As tourism continues to grow and number of tourists are constantly on the rise, application of sustainable principles in tourism is the significant factor in ensuring proper sustainable development through placing sustainability at the front of the management of tourist destination and using tourist experiences as an opportunity to spread sustainability principles. Therefore, sustainability in tourism has gained importance to be included in tourism courses taught in higher education institutions. The College of Tourism Belgrade has integrated sustainable development in its courses and the teachers of English for Specific Purposes have dedicated part of the syllabus to topics related to sustainability.

Theoretical Overview

In academic theories, CLIL and ESP are often regarded as opposing since CLIL is focused on the content and ESP on linguistic acquisition. However, syllabus and courses are following current trends. Since ESP is focused on developing communication skills needed in a work-related context, learners today are required to be aware of different environmental factors influencing professional situations.

The term CLIL was coined by David Marsh in the 1990s to denote a new approach to acquiring language competences for the needs of mobility participants (Marsh, 2003). The same author has defined CLIL approach as „multi-faceted [...] used for achieving differing tangible outcomes” (Marsh, 2012: 229), such as internationalisation, interculturality and other skills.

Our stance is that CLIL and ESP notions are not mutually exclusive but are considered compatible in line with authors identifying common features in these approaches (Yang, 2016). In the academic context, where ESP courses at colleges and universities require more formal modes of expression, ESP course books, especially those intended for students at tertiary level, and particularly the ones in tourism and hospitality industry, insist on the project-based learning rather than putting linguistic structures into focus.

Paris (2016) indicated that the past two decades have seen an expansion of education for sustainability in tourism curriculum. In addition, Chen et al. (2022) consider that „the concept of Sustainable Tourism Education (STE) is founded on a transformative approach to teaching and learning that underlines critical reflection on values and actively empowers learners to affect change”.

According to the Next Tourism Generation Alliance’s (NTGA) research results from 2020, green (environmental) skills and social (soft) skills are considered key sustainable development skills that must be taken into account in Tourism Education (NTGA, 2020). Green skills include the strategies to manage waste, water, and energy efficiency, by adopting practices like renewable resources, recycling and composting. Social skills entail behavioural and practical competence in interpersonal communication, gender equality, intercultural understanding, and etiquette.

In this paper, we used CLIL methodology and analysed different teaching techniques with the selection of content materials in ESP classroom related to sustainable tourism and its principles.

Teaching Techniques for ESP in STE

Sustainability topics are introduced and elaborated not only in the modules aiming at students' descriptions and identification of negative or positive impact of tourism industry on the environment in ESP classes at colleges and universities, but also in relation to other numerous ESP travel and tourism industry units and sections.

These segments entail explanations on growing trends and modern-day phenomena such as overtourism, forest therapy, slow food and slow trekking, independent tourists, ‘green transportation’, pursuit of authenticity, preserving lifestyles and customs of local communities. In addition, special interest or niche tourism being the key component of CLIL and subject-specific terminology acquisition in ESP for tourism, tackles 'sustainability' in order to familiarize learners with defining specific holiday types. For instance, wildlife and safari topics shed light on endangered ecosystems and disturbance of rare species, unethical aspects of slum and dark tourism, damaging effects of cruise ship industry as well as contamination of trekking trails. Furthermore, the focus can be on the specific market segment of nature-lovers, ecology enthusiasts and

responsible travellers exploring and conserving endangered flora and fauna. Different sectors and professions of tourism industry are also described in this light, e.g. eco-friendly accommodation types and sustainable hotel practices offering natural resources saving solutions. Students focus on expressing contrasting and comparative ideas on the benefits of hotel chains as opposed to smaller independent hotels, benefits of low rise versus high-rise hotels.

ESP course units dedicated to tourist guiding aim at raising environmental awareness on poor or proper tourist etiquette, i.e. desirable patterns of behaviour at local sites and valorisation of cultural heritage (Harding, 1998). Presentation on cultural and natural aspects of specific destinations is inevitably intertwined: diversity and fragility of species, understanding of indigenous communities and varied ecosystems. Original and historical textbook examples of good practice of urban development in harmony with nature such as Cezar Manrique's Jardin de Cactus in Lanzarote who „pioneered sustainable tourism development” (Richards, 2007, p. 61) or The Hundertwasserhaus in Vienna who „set about developing ecological housing projects and beautifying factories” (Smith, 2007, p. 100) can be used as prompts for creative teamwork projects.

Accordingly, teaching and learning on sustainability in ESP courses implies another, more complex level of engagement, since the project-based learning tasks of tailoring ‘ordinary’ business plans or ‘conventional’ package tours are upgraded to sustainable business proposals and strategies. For instance, students are prompted to present ideas on how to run an establishment by implementing sustainable modes of business operation.

The main goal of this methodological approach is directed at students' comprehension of sustainable processes and novel trends in order to facilitate acquisition of the related phraseology and tech word. Furthermore, the ‘content’ in this case represents the starting point for the soft skills development through reports, debates, meetings and discussions, task and project-based learning, teamwork and case studies, presentations and statistical display of research findings. As a rule, these more complex methodological tasks are met following the visual and auditory input in combination with the extensive vocabulary in use and reading comprehension exercises.

Selected and Applied CLIL Material and Methodology

For the purpose of this study, sustainable tourism was the topic of ESP classroom for the duration of six lectures and six exercises over the course of three weeks in the beginning of the second semester of 2023/24 with the students in the second year of undergraduate studies. The students were divided into teams so as to make outline on eco-resort development in national parks (Strutt, 2013) and give a proposal on how to make use of disused mines and industrial heritage site for tourism (Strutt, 2006). Students were taught to think outside the box through teamwork collaboration.

Extensive visual and auditory input is necessary to prepare ESP students for more engaging tasks in the following stages of mastering vocational knowledge in environmental issues. PowerPoint presentations, videos, interviews with explorers and experts in environmental issues were used as introductory materials to deepen understanding of social, economic, environmental impacts of human activity on the environment. A short film about tourism in Costa Rica and creating sustainable farms was shown to the students (How to Create a Completely Sustainable Farm + Tour | Costa Rica, 2021). After the film, the students were asked to brainstorm how ideas implemented in the video material could be applied in Serbia. Based on that, the students were given a task to draft a proposal for development of sustainable tourism in an area in Serbia of their choice. The students presented their ideas to the others in the next class.

Debates were organized in the form of a meeting or pros and cons public forums. Independently or as case-study follow-up activities, debates develop organization and problem-solving skills and train students on the ability for interaction with people in formal context. Students assumed roles of anti-tourism residents, tourist information officers, stakeholders; coordinators or investors, in order to assess to what extent destination development and creation of new jobs would be detrimental for the environment. It was a simulated situation that allowed change of perspectives. For instance, the Stratford-upon-Avon TIC meeting organized to discuss introduction of suggested policies to local authorities in order to regulate great influx of tourists (Harding, 1998). Comparatively, students used their research results from the previous week to offer proposals on sustainable destinations in Serbia, e.g. *Stara planina, Deliblatska peščara*.

Results and Conclusions

The main aim of the authors of this paper was to demonstrate that incorporating content related to sustainable tourism in the English classroom can lead to raising awareness in students. At the end of the last class in this study, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire in order to self-evaluate to what extent they had learnt about sustainability during the ESP course, in what ways their attitudes had changed and how likely they were to apply some sustainability principles in their future life but also in their career in tourism.

Majority of students (86%) estimated these purposefully set English classes dedicated to sustainability in tourism to have contributed to their raised awareness of the importance of eco-friendly principles. A considerable number of them (53%) expressed their willingness to continue exploring the subject and possibilities of its application in their future careers. Another significant portion of the surveyed students (62%) thought that they would continue to follow sustainable practices in their everyday life. The obtained results reinstated the ethical dimension of SET and how it can be successfully integrated in the ESP syllabus. These findings offer possibilities for further research and studies related to linguistic analyses, in the fields of morphology, phraseology, and socio-linguistics. In addition, analogous methodology could be applied in other domains with selected content relevant for raising awareness among students.

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