

# English language needs for tour guides



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This chapter describes the methods of research and explains the methods used in the present study. This chapter is divided into five parts: objectives of the study and the research questions; description of the research types; data sampling and collection procedures; data analysis of the data collected; reliability, validity, and generalizability of the research methods and findings.

For the purposes of this study, I will classify the English language skills and functions for tour guides into four main categories. The language skills and elements are composed of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Translation, and vocabulary in tourism including grammar and some useful English expressions will be discussed and included into those four main categories.

### Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

This study aims to investigate present English language needs and benefits of learning English for Vietnamese tour guides. This studies' data also hopes to reveal some of the problems foreign tourists face when dealing with Vietnamese tour guides, and the language skills and functions that are useful for tour guides to help overcome them. This research tries to answer two of the four main research questions:

2. What are the English language needs required for Vietnamese tour guides?

3. What are the benefits for English speaking Vietnamese tour guides, when compared to those with only their native language?

The design of research methods for the present study was based on the most effective and efficient way to answer these two research questions.

## Research Types

### Overview of Research Types and Their Characteristics

There two main types of research: qualitative research and quantitative research.

Qualitative research is a research type that is concerned with the study of what goes on in natural settings. The process of this research deals with an inquiry and understanding based on distinct methodologies within the tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher is the main instrument of data collection to build a complex and holistic picture, to collect words and to analyze this information inductively, and to report detailed views of informants. In designing a study, one works with philosophical assumptions, possible frameworks, problems, and questions; and data collection through techniques such as interviews, observation, documents, and audio-visual materials (Cresswell, 1998). Some examples of qualitative research are: biography, which is a study on a single individual when material is available and accessible; phenomenology, which examines a phenomenon and the meaning it holds for individuals; a grounded theory, which is a study to generate or develop a theory; an ethnography, which studies the behavior of a culture-sharing group; and a case study, which examines a case bound in time and place and looks for contextual material about the setting of the case. To sum up, it can be seen that qualitative research and quantitative research differ in terms of their key concepts,

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goals, approaches to design, and the types of problems that researchers have. Therefore, the selection of which research approach is appropriate in a given study depends on the problem of interest, available resources, the skills and training of the researcher, and the audience for the research (ibid).

Quantitative research is a type of research that is concerned with an inquiry into an identified problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measuring with numbers, and analyzing data using statistical techniques. Reichardt and Cook 1979 cited in Nunan, 1992 suggest that quantitative research is “obtrusive, controlled, generalizable, outcome oriented, and assumes the existence of ‘facts’ which are somehow external to and independent of the observer or researcher”. The main characteristics of quantitative research are the following beliefs: reality is something that can be studied objectively; the researcher should remain distant and independent from what is being researched; research is value-free and is based primarily on deductive forms of logic and theories; hypotheses are tested in a cause-effect order; and the research goals are to develop generalizations that contribute to theory and to enable the researcher to predict, explain, and understand some phenomena Bogdan and Bilken (1982 cited in Maurice et al, 1987).

There are considered to be three general types of quantitative methods:

1. Experiments, which are characterized by random assignment of subjects to experimental conditions and the use of experimental controls;

2. Quasi-experiments, by which studies share almost all the features of experimental designs except that they involve non-randomized assignment of subjects to experimental conditions; and

3. Surveys, which include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or interviews for data collection with the intent of estimating the characteristics of a large population based on a smaller sample from that population (Maurice et al, 1987).

Research may sometimes incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methodologies as will this study in order to get the reliability and trustworthiness of the research from results obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews carried out.

Type of research in this study

This study employed a qualitative approach utilizing some quantitative techniques in a needs analysis for the study of tour guides in Vietnam. The main method of the study was a survey conducted to explore the use of English of tour guides in Vietnam in order to analyze the present needs of using the target language in their workplace. The participants of the study were selected on a basis of convenience and availability.

A questionnaire, with of a rating scale, was used for data collection. The data was then analyzed based on simple statistics, looking for averages and simple groupings to identify the needs and problems in order to find answers to the research questions.

Sampling procedures in the present study

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The participants in this study were tour guides who work in the areas of Central, North and South Vietnam including 50 from areas in and surrounding Hue, Da Nang and Hoi An, 25 from the HCM City and surrounding area and 25 from the Hanoi region. The details of the travel agencies were found from the internet websites and from local knowledge. The method to assess the English language needs and problems of Vietnamese tour guides was a questionnaire.

Several methods were used to make the questionnaire in order to maintain its reliability and validity. The benefits for the tour guides and the tourism industry were assessed from the interviews conducted. The interviews conducted were mostly limited to the local area with 20 participants from Hue, Da Nang and Hoi An although there were 5 interviews done in HCM City.

#### The Construction of the questionnaire

To create the questionnaire used in this study, I reviewed a number of research studies relating to the needs analysis and English for Specific Purposes (ESP discussed in the literature review Chapter 2), and then I reviewed some examples of questionnaires from similar research to find their outlines. Moreover, a wide range of textbooks about English for tourism were studied to find relevant information to use as content in the questionnaire. The first draft of the questionnaire was written in English and created with the objectives of the study and the research questions. The questionnaire was used in this study to obtain information from the tour guides in Vietnam. The questionnaire, given to the tour guides, had five main parts: General information; general opinions; needs of the English language

for tour guides; Problems/difficulties faced with English language; and opinions about the benefits of learning English for Vietnamese tour guides.

## 1. General Information

The general information was made up of three sections. The first asked the participants some personal information about their age, gender, education, and the amount of time they had worked as a tour guide. The second section asked about the importance of English, the amount of English they needed to use when they guide international tourists and who they use English language with in their daily tasks. The last part was about their English proficiency. The participants were also asked to rank language skills and elements that they used regularly, and problems with English language they had most. The language skills and elements in this questionnaire were composed of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Translation, and vocabulary in tourism including grammar and some useful English expressions will be discussed and included into those four main categories.

## 2. General Opinions

The second part consisted of two items. Item 1 asked the participants to indicate their feelings about the necessity of English language elements. They were to rank the elements on a scale of 1 to 5 in their opinions:

5= Essential

4= Very necessary

3= Necessary

2= Fairly necessary

1= Unnecessary.

Item 2 was about the difficulty of English language elements. The participants were asked to rate their difficulties of English skills again using a rating of 1 to 5.

5= Very difficult

4= Difficult

3= Fairly difficult

2= Not very difficult

1= Not difficult

### 3. Needs of the English Language for Tour Guides

The third part was about the needs of tour guides for the use of English skills or elements in the job. The questions covered information with various English language functions for tour guides. The questions were divided into four main domains of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Questions about translation, pronunciation, vocabulary in tourism, grammar and expressions were also included. Within each skill, the questions were divided into sub items asking about various roles and the functions for the tour guides. The participants had to rate those answers on a 1 to 5 scale as follows:

5 = Most

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4 = A lot

3 = Moderate

2 = A little

1 = Least

#### 4. Problems and Difficulties Faced with English Language

For this part the questionnaire was again used, as it was in part three, to discover and confirm problems and difficulties encountered by the tour guides in the daily activities. These questions aimed to point out common issues resulting from miscommunication or lack of understanding when using the English language. Again the participants had to rate those answers on a 1 to 5 scale as follows:

5 = Most

4 = A lot

3 = Moderate

2 = A little

1 = Least

#### 5. The benefits of learning English for Vietnamese tour guides

The questionnaire ended with an opened item, allowing the participants to fill in either their comments or suggestions. Some expected benefits were suggested and offered as choices to agree or disagree with. The participants

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were also asked to rank those benefits in order of importance to them personally and professionally. This was followed up, where possible, with interviews requesting further clarification of their suggested benefits and those that were suggested to them in the questionnaire.

Putting ticks in boxes and crossing numbers were ways of answering all the parts of the questionnaire. There were yes/no answers, multiple choice questions and ranked questions. The questionnaire used in the present study was written in English and then translated into Vietnamese to avoid any ambiguity, misinterpretation or problems for the participants.

### Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the effectiveness of the questionnaire and to identify and eliminate ambiguity in the questions before it was used in the main study. Five people in different areas of the tourism and hospitality industry from the local area in Hue City were the participants in the pilot study, carried out at the beginning of March 2015. Just over one week was allocated for the collection and review of the pilot questionnaire, but due to conflicting schedules it took just over two weeks to get the results. The return rate and the completed questionnaires was 100%.

In the pilot questionnaire, an item of 'others and please specify' was included at the end of every section, where participants could propose any additional questions or English language expressions and functions they thought should have been asked (see Appendix 2). To administer the questionnaire, the researcher firstly handed out the covering letter to the manager of the chosen people where needed to ask for their permission. The

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cover letter consisted of an introduction of the research study and the university, the aim of the study, the importance of the study, general instructions and words of thanks to the participants and their management. Then, the questionnaires they could complete were given to the participants. This was then followed by arranging a time and date that the questionnaires could be collected and interviews with the participants could be given. The participants in the pilot study were 4 male participants and 1 female participant. The results of the survey showed that the participants were concerned about the importance of English in their tour guide occupations. They all suggested that speaking was the most important skill they needed in their jobs, followed closely by listening. Writing, reading, vocabulary in tourism, translation, grammar and expressions were the least important. However, concerning their difficulties of using English elements in their jobs, the majority of the participants found listening caused the most issues, followed by speaking (including pronunciation errors). Translation, writing, grammar, language expressions and reading were all considered to have fewer problems for them. Vocabulary for Vietnamese tour guides was generally found to be the least problematic and the easiest to overcome.

### Main Study

After the questionnaire was revised and created based on suggestions and improvements to the pilot study, it was given to, or sent to, the participants selected for the main study: 100 tour guides from different companies and individuals during the first week of April 2015. They were then returned over the following weeks with the last of them received in late April 2015. Similar steps to the pilot study were taken for the collection of data. Firstly a

covering letter was submitted, introducing the study, with reference to the Hue University College of Foreign Languages, to the managers and/or owners of the tour companies to get permission. The return rate within this time was 60% and any that were returned later than April 2015 were left out of the study; only 50% of these were completed correctly and used for the data analysis.

## Data Analysis

The analysis of data in the present study

The questionnaires were checked and analyzed using basic statistics. The procedures in the present study looked for specific repeated trends and used, percentages (%), averages (X), and standard deviation (S. D.). The data was analyzed using the following statistical procedures. First, the percentages were used in the analysis of answers, concerning the general background of participants (Part I). Second, a five-point scale was used to score the levels of necessity, difficulty, needs and problems of English language for tour guides in Vietnam (Part II, III, and IV). Third, the information about the central tendency of the scores and Standard Deviation (S. D.) showing a measurement of the dispersion, giving information on the extent to which a set of scores varies in relation to the average score.

Averages were used to calculate the level of necessity, difficulty, needs and problems of English language skills for tour guides in Vietnam. Fourth, scores were weighted to rank the needs and problems of English language elements for tour guides in Vietnam. A specific weight, as illustrated below, was assigned for each specific rank:

## RankWeighted Scores

18

27

36

45

54

63

72

81

Finally, the reliability of the responses for those items, which used a five-point scale was tested.

Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability.

### Definitions of Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

Reliability is the extent to which an independent researcher, on analyzing one's data, would reach the same conclusions and, a replication of one's study would yield similar results. There are two types of reliability: internal reliability, which refers to the consistency of the results obtained from a piece of research; and external reliability, which refers to the extent to which independent researchers can reproduce a study and obtain results similar to those obtained in the original study (Nunan, 1992).

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Validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure. Researchers and experts in the field are persons who decide that an instrument is observing what it is set out to observe. Two approaches of establishing the validity of a research instrument are logic and statistical evidence. There are three types of validity: face and content validity (the judgment based upon the logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study); concurrent and predictive validity (the judgment based on the degree to which an instrument can forecast an outcome and how well an instrument compares with a second assessment done concurrently); and construct validity (the judgment based upon statistical procedures) (Kumar, 1996).

Generalizability is the way of drawing logical conclusion, or making an inference from certain results which explains some important implications of the results or is related to the research questions.

### Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability in the Present Study

#### Reliability

To check the reliability of the questionnaire, I used an internal reliability check for consistency of the results obtained from the study. The questionnaire used in the pilot study was considered to be more than satisfactory for the purpose of this study.

#### Validity

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the first draft of the questionnaire was constructed and revised based on recommendations from <https://assignbuster.com/english-language-needs-for-tour-guides/>

the participants and other people in the field. In the present study, the researcher used face to face interviews about the questionnaire to determine opinions on the validity. I then constructed the questions in the questionnaire based on the objectives of the study and the research question being asked. By checking the validity, each question or item on the scales and the questionnaire content must have a logical link with the objectives. The judgment that the questionnaire and interviews was measuring what it was supposed to, was based upon the relevant inferences the findings had to the study. Moreover, the validity of the questions was also checked by the participants in the pilot study.

### Generalizability

This study used a mostly quantitative approach with three established needs including sampling, reliability and validity checking. Therefore, the results obtained could be generalized to the target population, the tour guides in Vietnam. This chapter has dealt with the research methodology and the design of the present study. The objectives of the study and research questions; research types; data sampling and collection procedures; data analysis of the data collected; reliability, validity, and generalizability of the research methods and findings were also discussed. The results of the present study will be presented in the following chapter.