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THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN TOURISM

Abstract

Religion has played a useful role in developing English language. The purpose of this paper is to examine the close intertwining of religious heritage and tourism industry, by demonstrating the stakes of using religious background in developing the professional language competence in tourism. Some examples are given to illustrate the indispensable usage of theological knowledge as tool to motivate teachers and learners as well to travel away from home to new places.

Keywords: English language; History; Religion; Tourism employee; Tourism industry.

1. Introduction

Much has been said about English for tourism purposes. When you search for information on the specific language used in tourism (that is, the tourism discourse), you will find a large educational tourism literature available on the Web. In fact, if you google this phrase “English for tourism purposes”, for example, limitless links are proposed to you. In this literature, you will notice that all promotional guides specify the common English phrases that travellers need to know. The English vocabulary to acquire covers generally the same domains: airport, hotel, restaurant, transport, and sightseeing.

Here are some examples:

- At the airport: key words are customs, flight, check-in desk, shuttle bus, passenger, etc.
- At the hotel: key words are accommodation, room, twin and double room, half board, safe, call, comfortable, available, free, what is the price, etc.
- At the restaurant: key words are food, plate, meal, menu, etc.
- Transportation: key words are modes of transportation, train, plane, boat, tram, bus, bicycle, car, motorcycle, etc.
- Sightseeing Vocabulary: key words are zoo, bridge, castle, museum, amusement park, ruins, architecture, exhibition, artefact, cinema, etc.²

But another field, though much more important, seems to have been relatively neglected: the role of religious knowledge in the development of the professional language competence in tourism. Hence, the present paper attempts to study English for tourism purposes from a different perspective, a different angle by examining the close relationship between tourism and religion in the modern world, and underline the importance of exploiting or using through English language this religious heritage as tool in the professional context of the tourism industry.

Tourists are always concerned to discover some religious sites that function as tourism sight or attractions, such as mosques, temples, churches, cemeteries, etc. The mosques in Europe and Middle East are witnesses of the former grandiose Islamic civilization. The temples in Asia also show the impact of Buddhism and Hinduism on the region. In Europe, however, the civilization which most left its mark was Christian. Because of the predominance of Christianity as culture and religion over the old continent, so often called, most religious

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Notes

² For the English vocabulary and phrases in tourism industry see, for example, Robin Walker and Keith Harding. *Oxford English for Careers: Tourism 1: Student's Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; Ken McIntyre. *English for Tourism: Students' Workbook*. Centre for Language Studies, Dili Institute of Technology, 2013.

monuments are Christian. Accordingly, we will focus only on the Christian religion and examine its impact on tourism attraction.

Before discussing our topic (how can an educator exploit this Christian heritage to promote tourism through English language?) we think that it is pertinent to give some instances to illustrate the influence of religion, historically speaking, on tourism.

2. Religious Sites and Tourism

In the twenty-first century, churches, cathedrals, mosques, temples, and other religious sites are among the most popular leisure pursuits for visitors. A large amount of tourists claimed that they would visit religious monuments during their stay abroad. Many of these visitors declared being much more interested in architecture and the arts than in religious services. It is so, because these religious monuments were considered as places of cultural heritage, history, identity and memory.

As religious sites are key ingredients of tourism, many countries over the world exploit this domain in a real industry, by promoting in brochures, guidebooks, tourist offices. To publicise tourism in Turkey, for example, the Turkish government emphasises the abundance of religious sanctuaries in the country: “There is a myriad of important Islamic, Christian and Jewish sites scattered around Turkey, making the country an attractive for faith tourism” (Stausberg, 2011, p. 41). Indeed, many countries, particularly in Western Europe, invest large sum of money in the renovation of religious buildings in order to attract oversea visitors to their countries. Michael Stausberg gives us a good example:

One of the most spectacular instances of this development has been the reconstruction of Berlin Cathedral (destroyed by air raids during World War II). The government of the former German Democratic Republic did not have reputation for being sympathetic to religion... The Cathedral was restored in 1975 and was soon became an important tourist attraction. (51)

3. Religion in Curriculum for Tourism Purposes

Modern scholars come to recognize the role of religion to reach a better understanding of the world. Indeed, in every scientific field: literature, philosophy, psychology, linguistics ... the experts insist on the necessity to acquire maximum of religious knowledge to be able to grasp and answer many pertinent questions. Similarly, Teachers and lecturers of English language for tourism purposes need to include religious knowledge (background) in their programme. They are required to develop in their teaching an approach which could motivate their students, and should take into consideration the fact that these students will become professional guides, who will accompany groups and give them information about history, art, architecture. To exploit the religious heritage in educational tourism, the target should be history and religious terminology.

3.1. History

As far as history is concerned, some landmark events and periods are indispensable to be taught. We think especially of two periods which are crucial to promote cultural tourism: Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.

a) The Middle Ages stretches from the decline of the Roman Empire in fifth century into the Renaissance of the fifteenth century. It is called the Age of Faith, because most knowledge in that period consisted of God and the Church and personal salvation, and the European continent was governed by the Catholic Church, which used the Latin language Bible, St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate.

b) The Early Modern Period was present between 1450 and 1750. This period witnessed two major eras: the Reformation and the Renaissance. The former refers to the sixteenth-century Christian movement that came to be called Protestantism, which challenged the authority of the medieval Catholic Church, because regarded absolutely corrupt. The leader of Reformation was the German Augustinian monk Martin Luther (1483–1546). The Renaissance was that period following the Middle Ages during which Europeans began to look to the ideals of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Why studying medieval period and early modern period?

The Middle Ages is an important background in educational tourism, because most of the prestigious religious monuments were built in that period. Canterbury Cathedral, for example, built in sixth century, is one of the oldest and most famous Christian structures in England. And its connection with literature, thanks to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, attracts many visitors from around the world. Westminster Abbey is another example we can mention. This London church is one of the world's great churches, where kings and queens have been crowned since William the Conqueror in 1066, and "[p]art of the south transept is well known as Poets' Corner and includes the tombs of Geoffrey Chaucer, Ben Jonson [...] John Dryden, Robert Browning, and many others" ("Westminster Abbey," 2019). Westminster Abbey now draws thousands of visitors every year.

The Renaissance as a theme is of great importance in tourism because this "was the beginning of new styles of painting, sculpture and architecture," and "[t]he Roman Catholic Church [...] funded the building of cathedrals and churches, and commissioned statues and paintings for their interiors" (Easton, 2016, p. 476). Accordingly, outstanding artists, like Leonardo da Vinci, Giovanni Bellini, Tintoretto, Michelangelo and others produced masterpieces, which have motivated tourists to cross seas and oceans to come and visit them.

The Protestant Reformation has also effected art. While Catholic art subscribed in the High Renaissance art, like the glorious fresco paintings, the Protestant art was much plainer and more unvarnished. The artists like Emanuel de White (1615-1692) were interested in depicting some famous biblical scenes, which have fascinated many generation till now. But it is worth noting that many Protestant leaders, notably John Calvin (1509-1564) and Huldrych Zwingly (1484-1531), were against this religious art: they hated the elaborated and sophisticate presentations of Jesus, Virgin Mary, and the Saints. Hence, they commanded to destroy statues, paintings and stained glasses, as those believed to promote idolatry. This iconoclasm was reflected in painting and sculpture of the early modern century as well.

3.2. Religious Terminology

Another import area to explore is religious terminology. This deals with the technical or theological terms that an educator needs to include in his programme when teaching English for tourism purposes. Here are some examples: cathedral, relics, clergy, church, priest, pope, bishop, archbishop, priest, monk, nun, icon, cross, altar, Last Supper, Madonna, Apostle, etc.

Let us now give a specific example to illustrate how this terminology can contribute to tourism promotion: Notre-Dame Cathedral Paris is one of the most important monuments of France. It is the most visited free-entry visited monument of Paris. Tourists are rushing from remote countries to visit this Cathedral. The latter's Gothic architecture fascinates travellers all over the world. But what intrigues tourists most is, above all, the images that adorn the external building. According to some scholars in the field of art history, these various images, called icons, were sculptured for edification purposes: indeed, it was commonplace in the medieval Catholic tradition to utilize these icons in cathedrals, churches and monasteries as tool to instruct people. It is noteworthy that most of the medieval population was illiterate. Images were therefore thought to be the ideal instrument to educate them of their religion. They were to be sculptured to visualize the abstract biblical teachings. The icon of "The portal of the judgment" at the centre of the façade of Notre-Dame Cathedral Paris is a good example: it represents the final judgment as narrated in the Gospel Matthew.¹ The icon shows Christ in glory with the Virgin Mary and St John on either side of him.

Interestingly, a well-informed tourist, when he is before this cathedral, can easily guess that this edifice belongs to Catholic not to Protestant tradition. The reason is twofold: (a) the cathedral was built in the twelfth century, that is to say, in the late of the Middle Ages. And as stated above, Catholicism was the only Christian religion in Europe (Western Europe) in the medieval era. (b) The sculptured imagery (icons) on the façade of the building indicates that it

¹ "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31).

was Catholic Church, because Protestants were against these icons. The leaders of English Reformation, John Wycliffe (1331-1384) and William Tyndale (1494-1536), for examples, condemned them openly. The reason for this hostility was the prohibition of The Old Testament, particularly the second of the Ten Commandments, of such icons.¹ So revering images, especially of Virgin Mary and Saints, was considered as an act of idolatry, blasphemy:

Reformers' attacks on the cult of the Virgin were part of a wider campaign against the invocation of saints, a practice that, according to Martin Luther, offended God and undermined true Christian piety. Belief in saintly intercession lost its *raison d'être* when Luther argued that man was saved only by God's grace received through faith (Heal, 2007, p. 53).

For this reason, a large number of icons and stained glasses were destroyed in the reign of the Protestant King Edward VI. And when Puritans took power in England in the mid-seventeenth century (1640-1660), the Parliament, controlled by Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), ordered to destroy all sort of images (statues, drawing stained glasses, even crosses) in the churches. This is well illustrated in Canterbury Cathedral: 13 statues (Jesus and Apostle and saints) were removed from the gate.

It is worth noting how a simple term, namely icon, could be useful in cultural tourism: it informs us about Scriptures, history (Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation), adversity in the Christendom (disagreement between the Catholics and Protestants). The religious terminology is then an important tool for education. Each theological term bears profound and several meanings. Using them for tourism purposes is without doubt quite fruitful. Not only this specific English language will contribute to the education of professional guides, but also to persuade, attract and seduce people for cultural tourism. Indeed, religious knowledge is actually a richness that could be exploited in tourism industry. Besides the fact that people travel for enjoyment, they also leave their home for cultural purposes. By introducing religious vocabulary and phrases to tourism curriculum, the educator is able to meet the learners' needs. For instance, the words "Madonna", "Last Supper" and "Evangelist", which are the central themes of Christian literature, are worth teaching, because great artists in Europe have always presented them in their art: Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper, Raphael Sanzio da Urbino's The Sister Madonna and Donatello di Betto Bardi's St John the Evangelist are prime examples of the art of the Renaissance Italy, which tourist travel thousands miles to visit museums housing them. Explaining the biblical meanings of these recognizable works to those who are interested in cultural tourism is obviously indispensable.

Another example which stresses the importance of religious terminology in English for Tourism Purposes is the word "Puritan". According to the well-known expert on Puritanism, Francis Bremer, "puritans were those who sought to reform themselves and their society by purifying their churches of the remnants of Roman Catholic teachings and practice then found in post-Reformation England during the mid-sixteenth century" (Bremer, 2009, p. 2). These zealous Protestants who considered themselves "the children of light walking in the wilderness" (Coffey & Paul, 2008, p. 51), to paraphrase the Puritan theologian Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), denounced the luxurious medieval life of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, they advocated a simple and plain life which recalled the austere life led by Christ and his Apostles. This humble spirit is reflected at every level of their life. Their literature is famous for its simple style: to be more accessible to literate and illiterate people, Puritan writers avoided sophisticated, pompous, rhetorical words. Also, their architecture reflected their modest state of mind. The Harvard University, for example, may demonstrate this point of view. This university is well known all over the world. Tourists flock there not only

¹ "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4).

because it is one of the prestigious universities in the world, but it is also the oldest learning institution in US, founded in 1636. Interestingly, the building was no tall as it is now. In fact, its architecture stayed low. Harvard Yard remained a low-roofed structures until the 19th century.

Historians speculate that Peyntree House, the College's first home in 1638, was just 2½ stories high. Inside there was just one set of stairs. Outside was a steep roof more suited to thatch than to shingle (Ireland, 2014).

If the building was so low, this was not a lack of means, but a choice: the builders were Puritans who hated the "arrogant" tradition of the medieval Roman Church. So this low building reflects the Puritan's need to remain humble. Accordingly, it is essential to know the real meaning of the word "Puritan" to be able to fully enjoy going for tour to see this historical university.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, we can claim that at first sight religion and tourism are two separate things. While the former is spiritual, inviting individuals to devote themselves to God; the latter is temporal, aiming at entertaining people. But in reality, tourism is deeply linked with religion, as observed above. And English language, used by people all over the world, constitutes a bridge between these two different worlds. If an educator wants to develop an efficient approach to promote tourism (particularly cultural tourism), he has to seriously examine, in our view, the linguistic potential provided by religion and its connection with tourism. Doing so, he could likely find out the appropriate English in educational tourism.

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