

# A genre-based study of tourism language in English textbooks

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## Abstract

*English language textbooks often include the topic of travel and tourism and are the first encounter with tourism language for many English language learners. A clear understanding of the tourism language that is currently presented and taught in general English textbooks would allow better preparation for the increasing importance of tourism language in English. In the present study, an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) genre-based perspective was employed to analyze tourism language in textbooks: their rhetorical structures, called moves, as well as their linguistic features. We surveyed 42 textbooks, or course books, with different skill focuses for a range of learner proficiency levels. To code moves, reference was made to the frameworks provided in the previous tourism genre studies. The research revealed the tourism genres included in the textbooks, and the move structure and linguistic features of frequently observed tourism genres (i.e., tourism brochures and guided tours). The study found moves and linguistic features across different tourism genres and suggests relationships among genres, associated tasks, and the target learner proficiency. Based on characteristics of the tourism English that students learn through their textbooks, pedagogical implications for tourism English are also discussed.*

## Keywords

*tourism genre, English for Specific Purposes, English textbooks, rhetorical moves, linguistic features*

## 1. Introduction

As a result of advancing globalization and preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, there is a growing emphasis on the tourism industry in Japan, as well as a growing need for English in tourism. It is, however, unclear whether general English education would meet these needs. One way to investigate this issue is to look at travel and tourism terminology used in general English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, or course books, which for many learners is the first tourism language they encounter. The topic of travel and tourism can be found in almost any general course book nowadays, as this topic is neutral and can appeal to learners of any cultural and linguistic background. Firstly, it is necessary to be able to understand the language of tourism represented in course books to prepare learners well for further tourism language. In fact, while many studies on English textbooks are available [e.g., Chujo, 2004; Römer, 2004; Williams, 1983; Wong, 2002], little attention has been specifically paid to tourism terminology in these books. The language of tourism can be regarded as different from general English, as it “gives detail portrayal of the potential tourism destination in which [sic] attempts to persuade, attract, encourage and seduce the potential tourists to be actual tourists” [Salim et al., 2012].

To explore the language of tourism in English textbooks, in the present study we employed an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) genre-based perspective often used to investigate the language of tourism [e.g., Henry and Roseberry, 1996, 1998; Suau-Jiménez and Dolón-Herrero, 2007]. The term genre

is originally a French word meaning “a kind.” It is also defined in ESP as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” [Swales, 1990]. More specifically, we examined tourism genres with a focus on their rhetorical units, called “moves” [Swales, 1990], in relation to associated tasks and the target learner proficiency. Each move has a specific communicative purpose that serves to achieve the purpose of the genre text as a whole with a specific combination of moves.

While a number of genre studies have examined moves and their linguistic features, studies applying genre analysis in textbooks are scarce, not to mention move analysis with consideration of textbook tasks, involved skills, and target learners’ proficiency. This lack of research could be because the content of textbooks is diverse and depends on the levels and goals of target learners. The few available studies include a study on the prefaces of applied linguistics textbooks [Kuhi, 2008] as a genre of textbook, a genre analysis of Japanese junior high school English textbooks [Sakai and Wada, 2012], and move analysis applied to the rhetorical structures of a whole discipline-specific textbook in Spanish at the university level [Parodi, 2014]. However, because tourism and travel are essential topics in many language classrooms, it is important to identify and analyze their genres in textbooks—their rhetorical structures as well as their linguistic features. The results of the analysis would enable an understanding of what tourism language currently represented and taught in general English textbooks, which would help prepare learners linguistically to engage in tourism in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context such as Japan, where tourism has become an important industry.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Materials

We surveyed 42 textbooks that serve as course books for general English courses with different skill focuses and include approximately 1.8 million words for learners ranging from basic to independent to proficient users on the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. The textbook titles are *Real Reading 1-4*, *Real Writing 1-4*, and *Real Listening & Speaking 1-4* (2008) published by Cambridge University Press; *World English Intro-3* (2010), *Go for it! 1-4* (2005), *Listen in 1-3* (2003, 2009), *World Link 1-3* (2011), *Communication Strategies 1-4* (2008), and *Active Skill for Reading 1-4* (2008) published by Cengage Learning; and *English in Common 1-6* (2012) and *World Class 1-2* (2013) published by Pearson. It is important to note that the textbooks used in the study are designed for the global market, not only for Japanese learners of English. In Japan, where the current research took place, these textbooks are not necessarily mainstream textbooks. However, these textbooks are increasingly used in university settings or referred to for developing materials to meet the global standard of English proficiency. Controlling a certain type of textbook was necessary to best compare and analyze the results for different target learner proficiency levels. All textbooks included the topic related to travel and tourism.

### 2.2 Analysis procedure

First, we created a corpus of all textbooks, identified tourism genres in the textbooks, and then made a separate corpus of tourism genre texts found in the textbooks. For the preliminary corpus compilation of ELT textbooks, reference was made to the procedure described in Tono [2016]. Using the corpus of tourism genres and a close reading of the texts, this study identified and coded the moves in each genre text as well as their linguistic features. When applicable, we referred to the frameworks provided in the previous studies for each tourism genre to code the text into moves; Bhatia [2004], for example, made a good reference point for the coding for the genre of tourism brochures, and Henry and Roseberry [1996] aided the coding for the genre of hotel information. We then examined the results of the move analysis in relation to associated tasks and the target learner proficiency.

## 3. Results

The study revealed findings in four main areas: (a) tourism genres in textbooks, (b) move structure and linguistic features of frequently observed tourism genres, (c) moves and linguistic features across tourism genres, and (d) genre and associated tasks.

### 3.1 Tourism genres in textbooks

Different tourism genres were used for specific skills and levels, although fewer tourism genres were found in the text-

Table 1: The most frequently observed tourism genres

Genre	Skill	Level	<i>N</i>
Tourism brochure	Reading (Writing)	A2-C1	11
Guided tour	Listening (Speaking)	A2-C1	9
Hotel information	Reading (Writing)	A2-C1	8
Hotel reception conversation	Listening	A1-C2	7
Information center conversation	Listening	A1-B1	5
Inquiry mail	Reading	B1-C1	5

Notes: *N* indicates the number of textbooks that included the genre. The number includes textbooks with the genre only as a topic as well as textbooks with more than one text of the same genre and only part of the genre text.

books for advanced levels. In addition, while all textbooks included the topic of travel and tourism, there were textbooks that did not have any tourism genre text. The five most frequently observed tourism genres are reported in Table 1. In this study, we considered a group of texts that had a specific communicative purpose as a genre, considering the target texts were found in general English textbooks.

Other genres include travel blogs, immigration control, and flight check-in, although these occurred more rarely. This paper focuses on the most frequent genres for reading and listening—tourism brochures and guided tours—as representing the tourism genre in textbooks.

### 3.2 Move structure and linguistic features of frequently observed tourism genres

#### 3.2.1 Tourism brochure

Tourism brochures were the most frequently observed tourism genre in the textbooks, mainly used for improving reading skills. In this study, close examination was given to this genre's move structures by using the framework suggested by Bhatia [2004]. In addition to modifying some of the moves' original names, the moves *endorsement* and *using pressure tactics*

Table 2: Brochure move structures

	Move	Range
1	Headline	100 %
2	Targeting the audience	21 %
3	Describing features	63 %
4	Providing details (description)	68 %
5	Providing details (information)	53 %
6	Establishing credentials	11 %
7	Offering incentives	5 %
8	Soliciting response	26 %

Notes: Range indicates the percentage of the tourism brochure texts with the move among all tourism brochure texts (*N* = 19). Because this study was exploratory in nature and the sample size was limited, statistical tests were not performed.

were removed because there were no texts that included them. The results of move analysis are shown in Table 2. The move number in the table indicates the likely order in the rhetorical structure.

Based on the minimum standard of 50 % coverage set by Nwogu (1997), the results show that the moves *headline*, *describing features*, and *providing details* are typically included in tourism brochures. These moves are less promotional in nature compared with the other moves. The inclusion of these moves in the texts or the selection of authentic texts that are comprised of these moves can be considered intentional for educational purposes. Below are the moves and the example texts taken from the corpus.

#### Move 1: Headline

- (1) Highlights of New York City (Ref. #1)

#### Move 2: Targeting the audience

- (2) Cableway catering self-service restaurant (Ref. #2)

#### Move 3: Describing features/highlights (“Justifying the product or service” in Bhatia [2004])

- (3) The water is warm, clean, and safe, and the roof of the Dome opens when it’s sunny but closes in bad weather. But Seagaia isn’t only the Ocean Dome. There’s a lot more here: (Ref. #3)

#### Move 4: Providing details (description)

- (4) The Picasso Museum of Málaga is currently displaying more than three hundred works which range through the painter’s artistic career, as well as different techniques and styles, which enable the visitor to gain a great insight into his work. The Picasso Museum is located in the Palacio de Buenavista, a building of great beauty featuring Andalucian Renaissance architecture... (Ref. #4)

#### Move 5: Providing details (information)

- (5) Palacio de Buenavista. San Agustín, 8 (Tues-Thurs 10 am-8 pm, Fri & Sat 10 am-9 pm, Sun 10 am-8 pm; permanent collection €6, temporary collection € 4.50, combined ticket for both €8...) (Ref. #4)

#### Move 6: Establishing credentials

- (6) Founded in 1843 Tivoli Gardens has been in the amusement business for 163 years and draws around four million visitors a year making it *Denmark’s number one tourist attraction - and one of Europe’s most popular amusement parks* after EuroDisney Paris and Blackpool Pleasure Beach. (Ref. #2, italics added)

#### Move 7: Offering incentives

- (7) A return ticket on M/F Vagen gives you a 25 % discount on your entry ticket to the Bergen Aquarium. (Ref. #5)

#### Move 8: Soliciting response

- (8) For the vacation of a lifetime, *choose* Phoenix Seagaia. (Ref. #3, italics added)

The move *detailing the product or service* was divided into two moves; one is narrative description, and the other is number-based information such as price and time.

As for linguistic features, the extensive use of descriptive adjectives was observed across moves as reported in Ip [2008], but particularly in Move 3: *describing features/highlights*. It was pointed out that the language of tourism tends to exaggerate services or destinations with positive descriptions, and this seems to be confirmed by the data in the study. Examples are as follows.

- (9) Designed by *renowned* U.S. architect Frank Lloyd Wright, this *remarkable* building houses one of *the world’s great* collections of modern art and sculpture. (Ref. #1, italics added)

- (10) This *spectacular* round trip takes you from the harbour, through the historic town centre, and up to Bergen’s *finest* panorama. (Ref. #5, italics added)

#### 3.2.2 Guided tour

The guided tour is the most frequently observed tourism genre targeted for listening skills. Because studies on the move structure of the genre guided tour are particularly scarce, moves were identified based solely on close reading of the texts. The move structure for this genre is provided in Table 3. The number in the table indicates the probable order of the structure.

Table 3: Guided tour move structures

	Move	Range
1	Greeting	57 %
2	Describing features	57 %
3	Describing location	57 %
4	Providing details	71 %
5	Asking a question	14 %
6	Answering a question	14 %
7	Responding	14 %

Notes: Range indicates the percentage of the guided tour texts with the move among all guided tour texts ( $N = 7$ ). Because the study was exploratory in nature and the sample size was limited, statistical tests were not performed.

The table shows that the first four moves are typically found in the surveyed textbooks. These four moves do not require much interaction between a guide and tourists. Examples of each move are as follows.

## Move 1: Greeting

- (11) Welcome to Hong Kong and thank you for choosing Beacon Tours. I'm your tour guide, Samantha Lin. (Ref. #6)

## Move 2: Describing features

- (12) As we make our way to Kowloon, here's a brief overview of some of the local tourist sites you may wish to visit. As most of you know, we've arranged for you to stay at the Peninsula Hotel, which is... (Ref. #6)

## Move 3: Describing location

- (13) Coming up on our left is St. Patrick's Cathedral. (Ref. #1)

## Move 4: Providing details

- (14) Looks like a European cathedral from the Middle Ages, actually, but it was only built in 1879. (Ref. #1)

## Move 5: Asking a question

- (15) Tourist: What about the Incas? They were here before the Spanish, weren't they? Could you tell us a bit more about them? (Ref. #7)

## Move 6: Answering a question

- (16) Guide: Yes. In fact, there were many Inca towns here when the Spanish arrived, and over 400 temples and palaces, but it was the Spanish who actually founded the city of Lima, right here, in this square, on the site of an existing palace. (Ref. #7)

## Move 7: Responding

- (17) Tourist: That's amazing! (Ref. #8)

It should be noted that Moves 5 and 7 were only observed for the tasks in which students are specifically assigned to learn how to interrupt to ask questions and how to react to surprises. In addition, the repetition of Move 3: *describing location* and Move 4: *providing details* was observed as follows.

- (18) <Move 3> Coming up on our left is St. Patrick's Cathedral.  
<Move 4> Looks like a European cathedral from the Middle Ages, actually, but it was only built in 1879.  
<Move 3> Across the street you can see Rockefeller Center, the entertainment center of New York ...  
<Move 4> Oh, it was started in 1931, and finished just before the war. OK, well, we have thirty minutes here...  
<Move 3> Here we are now at the world-famous Empire State Building, which... (Ref. #1)

It was observed that specific suggestions for sightseeing are included in the moves *describing location* and *providing details* as follows.

- (19) You *should walk down* Las Ramblas while you are in Barcelona. (Ref. #9, italics added)

- (20) This pedestrian plaza features a diverse display of Chinese food from all corners of the country. The busy atmosphere and experience of eating here are unbeatable. *Sit down for some noodles*—they're tasty. (Ref. #10, italics added)

As for the linguistic feature of the guided tour, the use of the phrase "You can" instead of the imperative form was used, as the examples show.

- (21) ...to see all the animals, but *you can* walk around and get an idea of what a great place it is. (Ref. #1)  
(22) *You can* see the Government Palace, where the President lives... (Ref. #7)

In addition, in all moves and particularly in the move *providing details*, descriptive adjectives are extensively used. See the example below.

- (23) It is an *excellent* example of modernist art. Antoni Gaudi designed the building, and everything inside, even the furniture... (Ref. #9)

Although there are vague and sometimes hyperbolic adjectives in the guided tour, specific facts are cited in the move *providing details* more than in other moves.

- (24) An earthquake in 1746 destroyed almost all of the city. Only 20 buildings were left. (Ref. #7)

### 3.3 Moves and linguistic features across tourism genres in textbooks

We have seen diverse tourism genres presented in the textbooks, and there are similar moves, like *promotion of the service and/or destination* and *guiding tourism to make it more personal*, which were commonly observed across different tourism genres.

## Move for promotion

- (25) You don't need to go into Oxford for your shopping *as you will find everything you need here in Summertown*. (Ref. #2, italics added)

## Move for guiding tourism to make it more personal

- (26) *Choose the most convenient for you*, park your car and hop on the frequent buses that ferry you quickly into the city centre. (Ref. #5, italics added)

Similarly, there are commonly observed linguistic features across tourism genres. The first example is the use of

imperatives found in 74 % of the tourism brochures and in 40 % of the hotel information in the surveyed textbooks. The imperative is used to urge the reader/listener to take advantage of the service and experience the exciting tourism being offered.

- (27) *Join* one of our weekly expeditions to some of the most treacherous icefalls in Italy and France. (Ref. #11, italics added)

The use of the term “you” in reference to the audience was also found across tourism genres, for example, in 63 % of the tourist brochures and 50 % of the hotel information in the textbooks. The second-person “you” is employed to get closer to the audience and treat the audience as an individual rather than a group of people [Labrador et al., 2014].

- (28) *You* can play tennis and volleyball. (Ref. #12, italics added)

- (29) *You* can drop your car off at the airport and fly back at ten in the evening. (Ref. #7, italics added)

### 3.4 Genre and associated tasks

This study examined the relationship between genres, tasks, and learner proficiency and found that the text length and difficulty of the tasks were the main differences among proficiency levels for the same genre. In the case of tourism brochures, the textbooks at the A2 level had on average 169 words per brochure text, and the tasks accompanying the text centered on reading and understanding it. On the other hand, the textbooks at the C level had 515 words per tourism brochure, and accompanying tasks included understanding and discussing the tourist destination described in the brochure as well as creating a brochure for a sustainable resort. Another example of a task at these levels was to act as the hotel reception clerk dealing with customer complaints. An A2 textbook had a conversation of 35 words as follows.

- (30) Reception: Reception. Can I help you?  
 Woman: Yes, I ordered tea with my breakfast.  
 Reception: Yes?  
 Woman: And they’ve given me coffee.  
 Reception: I’m so sorry. I’ll call the kitchen and get you some tea right away.  
 Woman: OK. Thank you. (Ref. #3)

The task accompanying this conversation is a listening comprehension task in which students must try to understand the guest’s request and answer what would happen next in that situation. On the other hand, a C2 textbook had a 326-word hotel reception conversation for the same genre as follows (only the first few exchanges are quoted).

- (31) Ethan: I don’t like to complain, but we are very unhappy.  
 Front Desk Clerk: Oh, I am sorry to hear that, Sir. How can I help?  
 Ethan: The main problem is that the room is nothing like the one shown in the brochure. We booked a luxury room and we’ve found ourselves in tiny box with no view. Plus, the standard of cleanliness is poor and the service so far has been appalling. (Ref. #13)

The task accompanying this conversation involves listening comprehension, not only to understand the situation but also to examine the manner of making the complaint and whether it is justifiable.

## 4. Discussion

The present study is unique in that it examined general textbooks from the point of view of tourism genre, move, task, and learner proficiency and found characteristics of the tourism English that students learn. From the analysis of moves, it was found that the rhetorical structure of the tourism genre seemed to be simplified in the textbooks, as reflected in the frequent omission of moves *offering incentives* and *soliciting responses* in tourism brochures and hotel reception conversations. However, across the tourism genres found in the survey, moves and linguistic features—such as moves of promotion and guidance to make tourism more personal, and the use of the imperative and the second-person pronoun “you”—are in fact specific features of the tourism genres. Tourism genre can be considered a branch of the promotional genre, which is said to have two main parts: descriptions of products or services and uses of positive evaluations to persuade the audience to buy the products or services [Labrador et al., 2014]. These two parts were well-represented in the surveyed textbooks through the above-mentioned genre features.

Many texts in course books are not usually authentic for educational purposes and copyright considerations. Although there were authentic tourism texts in the surveyed textbooks, it seemed as though they had been selected as representatives of the genre, sometimes with only part of the original text. Textbook authors choose what is appropriate for the target learners to learn, often by simplifying the language, thus creating an inauthentic kind of English [Römer, 2004]. This study found the tourism genres represented in the textbooks to be simplified and rather stereotypical, probably because they are intended for general courses and thus should contain genre texts readily understandable to learners without requiring genre-specific knowledge. The presentation of tourism genres for learners of general purpose English is possible because the language of tourism (as part of English for Occupational Purposes) in fact largely overlaps with English for General Purposes [Blue and Harun, 2003], and it may also reflect widespread standardization of the tourism language, even at the daily-life level.

The findings imply that the tasks that encourage learners



to pay more attention to the genre features present in the textbooks (i.e., rhetorical structure and lexico-grammatical features) are useful for teaching tourism language using the general textbooks. To improve English for tourism at a nationwide level, this approach is an efficient way to reach a wide cross-section of learners in limited time and resources. However, it should be noted that, as we can see from the selection of genres and moves in the textbooks, tourism language in textbooks is mostly from the tourists' perspective—engaging students as travelers—rather than from the perspective of the people who work in the tourism industry. When teaching English for tourism, it is necessary to include the tourism service providers' perspective. Possible tasks could include asking learners to determine how to express politeness in terms of formal or informal language and having learners actually act to make customers feel welcome in different situations.

Another finding involves the relationships between genre, task, and proficiency. Although the number of surveyed textbooks was relatively small, it can be assumed that English required for basic travel and tourism genres as a tourist is covered in general textbooks. In this section, we make use of the idea from Terauchi *et al.*'s [2015] business meeting process to organize the obtained data based on the processes involved in travel and tourism, as shown in Table 4. Blue and Harun [2003] employed the idea of the guest's arrival-departure cycle, which is considered to be a process of hospitality. This paper extends this idea's context to the travel and tourism in general and incorporates the concept of genres in the process.

As the table shows, travel processes involve a range of genres and tasks. The basic processes involved in travel and tourism are covered in the textbooks for learners at levels A1 to B1. For more advanced levels, processes involved are intended to make a trip better, but they are not necessary processes. The same genre could be learned at different proficiency levels but with differences in text length and accompanying tasks. The results shown in Table 4 are in ac-

cordance with the study on tourism vocabulary [Fujita and Tsushima, 2010], which suggests that a general level of vocabulary suffices for most of essential tourism English. For more advanced tourism processes, not only would the genre and task differ, but the required vocabulary would also be of a much higher level.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study have suggested some pedagogical implications by helping to understand the tourism language currently represented and taught in general English textbooks. First, it would be more useful for learners in an EFL context such as Japan if explicit tourism genre instructions were introduced in materials and teaching. In this case, teachers need to carefully choose materials that include the target tourism genre texts. The findings indicated that through studying general course books aimed for A1 to B1 levels, including vocabulary, learners gain the skills necessary to travel without difficulty. However, the presentation of tourism genres seemed implicit, and learners might not be able to apply general English learned in textbooks to tourism settings. Tasks to raise awareness of genre features will be helpful to bridge the gap between general English and tourism English. This approach of paying attention to genre features would also be useful for learning other genres, particularly those related to business topics covered in general ELT textbooks. Needless to say, to become ESP professionals in any domain, it would be inefficient to acquire only what is presented in general English course books in terms of genres, language use, and a set variety of tasks. Additional and separate materials for ESP professionals would be required.

This research has limitations that should be considered in future studies. Although analysis in this study was conducted on both written and spoken tourism genres (i.e., the brochure and the guided tour), it will be necessary to make an analysis of more tourism genres in a quantitative manner by adding textbook samples. In addition, another perspective like comparative analysis with genres in different fields

Table 4: Genres and tasks involved in travel and tourism

Necessary processes	Genres and tasks	Main Level
Planning	choosing destination, hotel and flight reservation	A2-B1
Transportation	checking in for a flight, renting a car	A2-B1
Accommodations	checking in at a hotel	A1-B1
Recommendations	asking for recommendations at the hotel reception/information center	A2-B1
Directions	asking for directions to destinations	A1-B1
Sightseeing	joining a guided tour, visiting a museum	A2-B1
Additional processes	Genres and tasks	Main Level
Requesting	making special requests	B2
Interrupting	asking questions during a guided tour	B2
Complaining	complaining about services/flight delays	B2-C1
Negotiating	asking for compensation	C1-C2

might be explored further such as borrowing a management advertisement framework for the tourism brochure. Closer attention to the use of language such as the notion of “language,” which refers to the use of foreign words in tourism discourse [Dann, 1996], might be an interesting avenue for future study of the tourism genre in textbooks, as well. With a clearer understanding of the tourism language currently represented in general English textbooks, we would be better able to meet the needs of students studying tourism English in the future.

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### Appendix

The list of references quoted in the examples is as follows.

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