

Interpretation strategies of cultural specific ite

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a wide interest in studying the role of tour guides in translating and interpreting specific cultural items, particularly the language and its nonverbal aspects of action and interaction. This has a crucial impact on how a country is perceived in terms of culture and tourist destination. The tourist destination must be relevant and of significance for tourists and this is the service providers' role to bring about this relevance. Therefore, the role of host and local tour guides is undeniable in using the language and its cultural specific items correctly as well as other important matters such as actions or gestures which leave critical impression on tourists' experience about that certain culture and destination.

According to European Federation of Guides Associations (2009), a tour guide is defined as a mediator and an active role player in tourism who

guides tourists and visitors in the language familiar to them and interprets the cultural specific items of a particular area. In fact, tourist guides are front-line staff who are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with tour services offered by a destination.

This chapter provides a general overview to the study which is comprised of seven parts. The first part is the gap which stimulated the researcher to do the present research. Then, the objectives of the study are presented. In the next part, research questions are stated. Practical application of the findings of the study are presented under 'Significance of the Study'. After describing the scope of the study, the key terms are defined. The overall organization of the study is presented in the last section.

During the past few decades, particularly, the post-sanction era, the tourist industry in Iran has witnessed a rapid and apparent growth in both supply and demand. The continuous increase in the number of tourist arrivals and the resulting growth in the number of tourist activities and facilities necessitate fostering solid education and training policies to cater for the current and potential needs and expectations of

this ever growing sector (Magablih, 2008).

To achieve a reasonable quality of education for tour guides, there has to be a focus on the necessary knowledge and skills. Knowledge make guides to become an up-to-date encyclopedia that provides tourists with crucial information about cultural, social, political, economic, environmental, and any other aspects regarding the host country. Communication, personal, professional and language skills are also of great significance to advance the destination in a competitive manner by developing a constructive relationship between the host country and guests.

It has been generally acknowledged that obtaining useful knowledge about the tour guiding communication by conducting a research would largely contribute to the development of this sector in different ways. On the one hand, tourism represents a significantly high degree of culturally and linguistically diversified participants, namely, foreign tourists and local tour guides. Therefore, the communication in the sector would be demonstrated with numerous communication acts which would clearly be a source of communication challenges.

Identifying the communication challenges, and investigating the way tour guides use language to deal with the problems, would also contribute to take appropriate measures, such as providing the tour guides with adequate and proper information, and knowledge about the historical importance of the tourists attractions and area, as well as language related trainings in order to improve their communication skills. On the other hand, as tourism has become more important in Iran, research-based knowledge with regard to the discourse of tour guiding communication can help to maximize the contribution of the sector to the economy and the betterment of general image of Iran.

There have been numerous investigations into tourism industry and its relation to language in different parts of the world. However, less work has been done in Iranian settings regarding this phenomenon. Thus the purpose of this study was to investigate the interpretation strategies adopted by tour guides and the characteristics of tour guide communications.

Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis was to examine and assess the current state of tour guiding in

Iran and the interpretation strategies adopted by tour guides in explaining the country's cultural aspects.

The main objective of this study, was to investigate the discourse of tour guiding communication that takes place in interpreting the cultural items. In this study the local tour guides' views and beliefs about tour guiding discourses were discussed. More specifically, this study investigated the major discourse themes of tour guiding practices and explained the ways of interpreting and communicating Iranian and foreign cultural items to foreign tourists. The challenges that local tour guides of Isfahan experience in interpreting and communicating Iranian culture to foreign tourists were also analyzed. At the end, the strategies being used by local tour guides of Isfahan to overcome the challenges they experience in interacting and presenting the CNI items to foreign tourists were examined.

More specifically, the objectives of this study were the following: (a) To examine the current state of tour guiding practices in Iran; (b) To comprehend the main interpretation strategies of cultural specific items; and (c) To recommend strategies to raise the

standard, recognition, and quality of services provided by tour guides.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following specific research questions were proposed:

1. How do Iranian tour guides view the required tour guiding services (tour guiding discourse) for presenting and communicating the CSI items to foreign tourists?

2. What challenges do local tour guides of Isfahan experience in presenting and communicating the CSI items to foreign tourists?

3. What strategies do local tour guides of Isfahan use to overcome the challenges they experience in presenting and communicating the CSI items to foreign tourists?

As mentioned before, because research in this area is scant, this study is hoped to contribute to fill the knowledge gap in the sector. This, in turn, could contribute to the understanding of the existing reality that could be used as an input for other researchers in the area. This is to say that, the study could indicate issues that need further investigation, so that it would draw the attention of other researchers.