



<sup>4</sup> University of Havana. Cuba



[duchess2266@gmail.com](mailto:duchess2266@gmail.com)

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Original article

## English training needs for specific purposes for tourist worker taxi drivers

**Necesidades de capacitación en inglés, con fines específicos, para los taxistas trabajadores de turismo**

**Necessidades de formação em inglês, para fins específicos, para taxistas de turismo**

Jessica Elizabeth Asqui Luna <sup>1</sup>



<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9876-2836>

Tannia Alexandra Casanova-Zamora <sup>2</sup>



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6005-2414>

Giacomo Geovanny Vásquez Falquez <sup>3</sup>



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4339-2919>

Teresa Torres Miranda <sup>4</sup>



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0660-7009>

<sup>1</sup> "Manuel Cisneros" Higher Technological Institute. Language Center. Ecuador



[eessyita@yahoo.es](mailto:eessyita@yahoo.es)

<sup>2</sup> National University of Chimborazo, Riobamba, Ecuador



[tcasanova@unach.edu.ec](mailto:tcasanova@unach.edu.ec)

<sup>3</sup> University of Guayaquil, Guayaquil, Ecuador.



[giacomo@gmail.com](mailto:giacomo@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Education is a complex, continuous and permanent social process that takes place throughout life, and as such, universities in their relationship with society must pay attention to the needs that arise from it, based on collective improvement. The objective of the work was aimed at determining the training needs in English for specific purposes in taxi drivers as tour operators in Riobamba. Based on a mixed methodology, which combines quantitative and qualitative research, in correspondence with the complexity of the object of study. Methods were combined that favor quantitative methodology, which allowed obtaining the necessary information from the selected information sources, through quantitative methods and techniques (questionnaires, interviews, observation, document analysis). The methods cover the entire investigative process, which confer validity and scientificity to the results achieved, the survey to determine the training needs of taxi drivers as tourism operators, interviews to explore the previous experiences of this investigation. As a result, the training needs of taxi drivers as tourism operators were determined and it was evidenced that there is low knowledge of the travel information provided by taxi service personnel, in addition to the fact that there are few training plans imparted from level institutes higher.

**Keywords:** diagnosis; English for specific purposes; continuous training.

### RESUMEN

La educación es un proceso social complejo, continuo y permanente que se realiza durante toda la vida y, como tal, las universidades en su vínculo con la

sociedad, deben prestar atención a las necesidades que de ella surjan, en función del mejoramiento colectivo. El objetivo del trabajo se encaminó a determinar las necesidades de capacitación en inglés con fines específicos en los taxistas como operadores de turismo de Riobamba; a partir de una metodología mixta, que combina la investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa, en correspondencia a la complejidad del objeto de estudio. Se combinaron métodos que privilegian la metodología cuantitativa, que permitieron obtener las informaciones necesarias de las fuentes de información seleccionadas, a través de métodos y técnicas cuantitativas (cuestionarios, entrevistas, observación, análisis de documentos). Los métodos recorren todo el proceso investigativo y confieren validez y cientificidad a los resultados alcanzados: la encuesta, para la determinación de las necesidades de capacitación en los taxistas como operadores del turismo; entrevistas, para explorar las experiencias precedentes de esta investigación. Como resultado, se determinaron las necesidades de capacitación en los taxistas como operadores del turismo y se evidenció que existe un bajo conocimiento de la información de viaje que entrega el personal de servicios de taxis; además, existen pocos planes de capacitación impartidos desde los institutos de nivel superior.

**Palabras clave:** diagnóstico; inglés con fines específicos; formación continua.

## RESUMO

A educação é um processo social complexo, contínuo e permanente que se desenvolve ao longo da vida e, como tal, as universidades, na sua relação com a sociedade, devem estar atentas às necessidades que dela decorrem, baseadas na melhoria colectiva. O objetivo do trabalho foi determinar as necessidades de formação em inglês para fins específicos em taxistas como operadores turísticos em Riobamba; baseia-se numa metodologia mista, que combina pesquisas quantitativas e qualitativas, de acordo com

a complexidade do objeto de estudo. Combinaram-se métodos que privilegiam a metodologia quantitativa, o que permitiu obter a informação necessária junto das fontes de informação selecionadas, através de métodos e técnicas quantitativas (questionários, entrevistas, observação, análise documental). Os métodos perpassam todo o processo de investigação e conferem validade e cientificidade aos resultados alcançados: o inquérito, para determinar as necessidades de formação dos taxistas como operadores turísticos; entrevistas, para explorar as experiências anteriores desta pesquisa. Como resultado, foram determinadas as necessidades de formação dos motoristas de táxi como operadores turísticos e ficou evidente que há um baixo conhecimento da informação de viagem fornecida pelo pessoal do serviço de táxi; Além disso, existem poucos planos de formação ministrados por institutos de nível superior.

**Palavras-chave:** diagnóstico; Inglês para Fins Específicos; formação contínua.

## INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the Incheon Declaration-Education 2030, proposed by UNESCO (2016), "it is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role that education plays as the main driver of development" (p. 1).

Many authors approach this process from the terms education/continuing/permanent training, but based on the same objective: the constant elevation of professionalism to improve performance (Sánchez *et al.*, 2018).

The specific historical conditions in which the world currently lives demand reforms in educational policies and, therefore, it is up to educators to transform the direction of educational work, to be able to coordinate and integrate psychopedagogical and sociological knowledge,

among others, in accordance with the demands and demands of society (Hernández *et al.*, 2012).

In this regard, the university has the responsibility of strengthening the capabilities and potential of citizens, hence the training of professionals demands a change that adjusts to the requirements of the 21st century, scientific advances, universal thinking, with approaches and perspectives. renewed that articulate what is new and the context in which the university is located (Martínez Molina *et al.*, 2018).

The incessant scientific-technical development, the advances that occur every day in the labor market, as well as the impact of Information and Communications Technologies in the various spheres of life, require adequate professional training of capable citizens. to assume the changes imposed by the sociohistorical moment in which they live and respond to the challenges that the accelerated sociopolitical and economic transformations generate (Santana *et al.*, 2018). In Ecuador, the National Development Plan 2021-2025, in its latest resolution, creates and establishes priorities in the sectors: economic, social and institutional focused on goals and sixteen objectives, among which it establishes enhancing the capabilities of the population to promote inclusive, innovative, and quality education.

Education is a social, cultural and heritage process of a complex nature, which has evolved and influenced civilizations of all times, in accordance with the changes and conditions of the environment and the time. It is also a key point to reduce the poverty rates of a country (Señalín *et al.*, 2017); and fundamental pillar for the development and progress of nations; Therefore, it constitutes one of the main sources of knowledge creation and development of quality and competitive human talent.

Education will always be one of the fundamental pillars for the development of society, thus continuing education or training is a necessity that every professional must access in order to improve their skills in what they already have knowledge, or on topics that are linked to their profession.

In this context, given the dynamism of scientific-technical advances, the development of Information and Communications Technologies, the increase in international relations and the need for access to updated bibliography, English as a language of international communication excellence, universal language, and lingua franca, acquires special significance; For this reason, its learning is of imperative necessity, considering the direct contribution it provides to the development of the new society, as it enables communication in various fields, whether professional, social, cultural, sports, educational and recreational, among others. others (Bravo *et al.*, 2017).

English for specific purposes is one of the courses that many professionals, from different areas, are currently looking for to enrich their resume and obtain a competitive job position.

Mastery of the English language, as a language of exchange worldwide, is becoming increasingly relevant in all professional and occupational fields, specifically in the tourism industry, due to the nature of its activities and the specific language of exchange. It is necessary that the personnel involved in the tourism sector have adequate use of the English language, based on the management of the communication skills necessary to meet the requirements of the sector, which will generate an excellent service and increase long-term benefits. (Baralo, 2015).

The teaching of English as a foreign language in the Ecuadorian public educational system begins in higher basic education and extends until the first,

second and third year of high school. At the end of the baccalaureate, students are expected to have reached an intermediate level of communication (B1), in accordance with what is established in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which means that they must be able to use, independently, the four communication skills: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression and reading comprehension (Yáñez *et al.*, 2019).

However, as recognized by the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador (MINTUR), the lack of preparation, training and training of tourism sector personnel in the command of English influences the poor quality of their performance, which shows a poor culture of service. by those who work in this sector. These gaps cause weakness in the cohesion and competitiveness of the entire system in terms of strategies, levels and decisions about the quality of the sector.

The above, on many occasions, is associated with weak management and coordination of actions to promote and implement the culture of tourism excellence at the national and territorial level. The actions undertaken to raise the quality of tourism services have been carried out in isolation and, generally, at the initiative of private entrepreneurs. Additionally, institutions linked to the tourism sector do not always implement culture of excellence policies in their respective organizations, nor do they establish among their priorities the articulation of initiatives with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to generate a culture of excellence, through permanent education. of tourism personnel; which requires greater involvement of HEIs in solving the problems in their environment, through different proposals, including training.

The Riobamba canton, considered the City of Firsts, for being a pioneer in several aspects, is located in the center of the country. He has experienced commercial and tourist phenomena in all areas of

Ecuador and internationally. There, traffic is a crucial factor, the relationship between the travel culture of taxi tourism operators and the tourism industry is considered a fundamental binomial.

Learning English for specific purposes for taxi drivers as tourism operators is characterized by being a continuous teaching-learning training process, based on the communicative approach, in which the principles declared by Martínez *et al.*, (2018) and in which it is proposed to achieve the basic level of knowledge of the English language, and develop communication skills: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression and reading comprehension in the English language, which contributes to a better quality of service. to the client.

According to Salas, Herrera and LLamuca (2022), there are 67 taxi cooperatives in Riobamba, of which six constitute the sample, since they are those companies located at strategic points serving tourism. Thus, applying intentional non-probabilistic sampling, we worked with 150 taxi drivers surveyed, who met the established selection criteria.

This is how, through the study of needs, an essential diagnosis can be made to generate teaching programs on new and reinforcing topics, in order to determine the training needs in English for specific purposes for taxi drivers as tourism operators. from Riobamba. Ecuador.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive research was carried out, in which the characteristics of the population that was analyzed were specified. In this type of research, which aims to describe some fundamental characteristics of homogeneous sets of phenomena, systematic criteria were used that allowed establishing the structure or behavior of the object of analysis.

The diagnosis study carried out in the research started from a mixed approach, which allowed obtaining the necessary information from the selected information sources through data collection techniques such as: interview, survey questionnaire and documentary analysis; This allowed the description of each element and established the relationship with the phenomenon of continuing training in English for specific purposes.

The contextualization of the local tourism sector from the social and economic point of view, future projections, the general characterization of taxi drivers as tourism operators, the requirements of the work environment and the perceived perceptions of *stakeholders* (tour operators) were carried out. to culminate with the identification of continuous training needs in the English language, based on the synthesis of previous analyses.

Certain methods were applied, such as documentary analysis, with the aim of verifying the current state of the problem; The following documents were reviewed: National Program for Tourism Excellence, Regulation of Tourist Activities, Reports of the Tourism Department of the Decentralized Government of the Riobamba Canton, evaluation report of the Director of Tourism, Statute of the IST Carlos Cisneros, Internal Regulations of the IST Carlos Cisneros, Internal Regulations of the Language Center, Linkage Development Program of the IST "Carlos Cisneros". An interview was conducted with the president of the National Taxi Federation, in which he mentioned that periodic training is carried out but that it does not focus on the tourism sector, much less on the English language. A survey questionnaire was also applied to know the training needs of taxi drivers belonging to the taxi companies in the city of Riobamba; Finally, triangulation was applied to interweave data and information resulting from the sources of information consulted, methods and techniques used, to conclude a comprehensive vision. Finally, elements of descriptive statistics were used for the processing and analysis of the results

obtained in the application of the instruments.

## RESULTS

Learning English for specific purposes for taxi drivers as tourism operators is characterized by being a continuous teaching-learning training process, based on the communicative approach, in which it is proposed to achieve the basic level of knowledge of the English language, and develop the aforementioned communication skills in the English language, which contribute to a better quality of customer service.

The diagnosis carried out aims to describe the training needs associated with the skills already declared, to the 150 taxi drivers belonging to the six taxi companies in the city of Riobamba associated with tourism. The result was that 143 (95.3%) of the respondents have passed through high school and seven (4.6%) have managed to reach a higher level in their studies; However, 130 (87.3%) declare that they do not have knowledge of the English language; while 19 (12.7%) admit they do have it. When specifying the level of language proficiency, it was found that 89 (59.3%) of the people surveyed did not have any level of English at all; 54 (36%) declare that they have a basic level, while seven (4.6%) of the people mentioned that they have a medium level of knowledge in English.

A total of 76 taxi drivers, 76% of the sample, have used the Spanish language to exchange with the English-speaking foreigner, while only 36 (24%) have used the English language; 118 (79.3%) have not been able to engage in conversations with people who speak English. On the other hand, 30 (20%) have been able to start conversations with people who speak English.

In relation to the oral expression factor, 115 taxi drivers of the total sample, which



represents 76.7%, declare that they have poor communication skills, while 35 (23.3%) say that they have regular communication skills in relation to the language. English. In relation to the listening comprehension and written expression factor, the same results were obtained: 131 (87.3%) declared having poor communication skills and written expression; 19 (12.7%) understand that they have communication skills and regular written expression in relation to the English language. In relation to the reading comprehension factor, the 150 taxi drivers consider themselves to have poor communication skills.

It was shown that 46 (30.7%) have difficulty understanding the essential points of a conversation; 45 (30%) find it difficult to interact in conversations using appropriate vocabulary, intonation and pronunciation; 36 (24%) do not have the ability to introduce and greet people in different types of situations; 14 (9.3%) find it difficult to explain and/or describe a tourist product or service and, finally, 6% find it difficult to start a conversation and maintain it.

It was evident that 129 (86%) consider it necessary to train in the English language to improve the quality of customer service; while 2 (1.4%) do not understand it is necessary to train in the English language to improve the quality of customer service. This question represents an important point in the research, since training will be carried out to strengthen the English language for taxi drivers, tourism operators in the Riobamba Canton; The interest and motivation of the participants is considered essential.

The study identified that 96 of the totals of 150 taxi drivers in the sample, which represents 64.3%, prefer to take the in-person course. For their part, 22 (14.7%) prefer that the training be in blended courses, 20 (13.2%) prefer that the training be in *online courses* and, finally, 12 (7.8%) prefer to learn self-taught English. In the same direction, 134 (91.3%) consider it very important that higher level

institutions offer free English language courses for their performance in the tourist server; nine (6%) consider that it is not important that higher level institutes offer free English language courses for their performance on the tourist server and, finally, four (2.7%) understand that it is somewhat important that higher level institutes offer free English language courses for your performance on the tourist server.

From the interview conducted with the president of the National Taxi Federation, it was obtained that there is low knowledge focused on the service provided by taxi service personnel; There are few education, training and training plans provided by higher level institutes and there is no budget to support their implementation. However, it is considered important to implement this type of training for cooperatives, due to the direct contact they maintain with users and visitors and for its possible positive impact on the development of the tourism sector. The interviewee considers that the perception of users in relation to taxi services is good and is based on the criterion that each semester drivers have the obligation to train to improve the service; However, it does not consider the study of the foreign language as part of that preparation for a better service. It recognizes the need to have resources for training, an aspect that it understands is covered with financial resources from the staff, which confirms that the FNT does not support as an institution the improvement needs of its employees. It was also noted that, although training related to tourism has been carried out, the need to master any foreign language has not been addressed. In relation to the possible topics to be discussed in training in English for specific purposes, he declared the following: tourist places, gastronomy, history and culture of the city.

## DISCUSSION

The learning of English cannot be subordinated to the needs of the market, but must be part of the educational intentions of the university itself. If English does not make sense in the educational process of university students, future professionals and the central engine of the country's socioeconomic development, then in this particular case it may be an attack on the internationalization process that the institute intends to address (Spain, 2010, p. 62).

Learning English for specific purposes for taxi drivers as tourism operators is characterized by being a continuous teaching-learning training process based on the communicative approach, in which the principles declared by García *et al.* (2019) and in which it is proposed to achieve the basic level of knowledge of the English language, and develop communication skills in support of greater quality in services.

The study carried out details the needs for continuous training in English for specific purposes for taxi drivers as tourism operators in Riobamba. The results analyzed using descriptive statistics showed that the majority have dealt with foreign people but that their communication is scarce due to the lack of learning the English language. It is evident that reading comprehension is a fundamental problem and, finally, it can be inferred that a large percentage of English-speaking tourists have been affected by lack of communication conditioned by language barriers. Motivation for learning English for specific purposes was identified as an opportunity to influence a change in favor of the quality of service to tourists by taxi drivers.

In the analysis of the interview, it was evident that there is low knowledge of the travel information provided by taxi service personnel; Furthermore, there are few education, training and training plans provided by higher level institutes. It must

be considered that there is no budget to comply with them and that training focused on the English language for taxi drivers is almost non-existent.

Obviously, there is a social need to carry out training focused on taxi services that must go hand in hand with tourism, to enter the economy, create links between businesses, tourism operators and accommodation, food and beverages, etc.

For this reason, it is important to emphasize the importance of this training to taxi tourism operators, since they are the first to contact them; They must be trained about tourist attractions and use appropriate technologies to communicate with tourists.

Thus, especially in this social and economic context of revitalization of tourism, this study not only justifies its social relevance, but also suggests that strategies for Higher Education aimed at English in tourism, which contribute to the line of training, they also justify its practical importance.

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**Conflict of interests:**

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

**Authors' contribution:**

*Jessica Elizabeth Asqui Luna.* Coordinated the implementation and processing of the diagnostic instruments, as well as the final preparation of the article.

*Tannia Alexandra Casanova-Zamora.* Collaborated in the development of instruments and information processing

*Giacomo Geovanny Vásquez Falquez.* The author participated in the implementation of the instruments and analysis of the results.

*Teresa Torres Miranda.* He directed the research, in the implementation and processing of the diagnostic instruments, as well as in the final review of the article.

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