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Linguistic And Cultural Features Of Tourism Terminology: An Analysis In A Cross-Cultural Context

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has evolved into a global, multimodal communication ecosystem in which specialized terminology indexes experiences, spaces, and identities while mediating encounters among cultures. This article examines the linguistic and cultural features of tourism terminology through a cross-cultural lens. Drawing on discourse and translation studies, intercultural pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics, the study analyzes a 1.2-million-word multilingual corpus of tourism texts (destination marketing materials, museum and tour scripts, guidebooks, and travel advisories) in English, Russian, and Uzbek compiled from 2015–2024. The research explores how culture-bound concepts, metaphors, evaluative lexis, and genre-specific conventions shape terminological formation and usage; how institutional actors attempt to stabilize terms through standardization; and how translators negotiate between communicative transparency and cultural authenticity. Methods include concordance analysis, collocational profiling, componential and frame-semantic analysis of key terms, and targeted interviews with professional tour guides and guide-interpreters. Results show that tourism terminology functions as a hybrid between technical nomenclature and persuasive discourse: a high proportion of terms are evaluatively charged and metaphorically extended, while culture-specific lexemes frequently remain partially untranslated or are adapted through loanwords and explicitation. Cross-linguistic comparison reveals asymmetric conceptual mappings in heritage, hospitality, and eco-tourism domains; these asymmetries correlate with culturally salient scripts and state branding strategies. The discussion proposes a functional typology of tourism terms—regulatory, infrastructural, experiential, and identity-performative—and outlines pedagogical implications for training guide-interpreters, including scenario-based instruction, corpus-informed glossaries, and graded translation tasks that foreground intercultural pragmatics. The article concludes with recommendations for terminological standardization that respect local cultural semantics while maintaining international intelligibility.

Keywords: Tourism terminology; cross-cultural communication; discourse analysis; translation studies; metaphor; standardization; guide-interpreters; evaluative lexis; intercultural pragmatics; corpus linguistics.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most linguistically saturated sectors of the global economy, relying on carefully crafted language to shape expectations and choreograph experiences. Unlike purely technical domains, tourism depends on discourse that is simultaneously descriptive, regulatory, and promotional. The lexical resources that enable this work—terms such as "heritage site," "community-based tourism," "carrying capacity," or "homestay"—operate at the nexus of institutional standardization and cultural imagination. They circulate through international organizations, government agencies, private tour operators, cultural institutions, and, crucially, the speech of guides and interpreters who perform tourism in person. This ecology makes tourism terminology an ideal window onto cross-cultural meaning-making [1; 2; 3].

Existing scholarship treats tourism language as a genre cluster characterized by recurrent rhetorical moves—

authentication, romanticization, and commodification of cultural difference—and by an evaluative style that promises discovery and comfort in the same breath [1; 4; 5]. Translation studies highlights the tension between domesticating and foreignizing strategies when rendering culture-specific items for visitors whose frames of reference may differ profoundly from those of hosts [6; 7; 8; 9]. Intercultural pragmatics adds a further dimension by analyzing how politeness, honorifics, and stance markers encode local norms of hospitality and authority [10]. Yet while the "language of tourism" has been described at a macro level, the fine-grained terminological layer—where lexis hovers between technical precision and experiential marketing—has received comparatively less cross-linguistic and cross-cultural attention.

The article addresses this gap by focusing on the linguistic and cultural features of tourism terminology as it is used and translated across English, Russian, and Uzbek. These languages occupy different positions in global and regional tourism networks, and they encode distinct cultural scripts governing historicity, hospitality, and environmental stewardship. By comparing terminological behavior in this triad, we show how tourism lexis indexes socio-cultural values and how terminological choices affect visitor understanding, destination branding, and the professional practice of guide-interpreters.

The contribution is threefold. First, we present a corpus-based account of the distributional and semantic properties of key tourism terms, highlighting patterns of evaluative and metaphorical loading. Second, we theorize a functional typology that distinguishes regulatory, infrastructural, experiential, and identity-performative terms and demonstrates how each class interfaces with culture-specific semantics. Third, we derive implications for pedagogy and standardization, proposing training designs and glossary practices that are sensitive to both international intelligibility and local authenticity.

The study aims to analyze how linguistic form and cultural content interact in tourism terminology across English, Russian, and Uzbek, and to propose pedagogically actionable principles for the training of guide-interpreters who must deploy and translate such terminology in real time.

The analysis is based on a purpose-built, 1.2-million-word corpus assembled from publicly available tourism materials issued between 2015 and 2024. The English subcorpus (≈550,000 words) consists of national tourism board sites, UNESCO and ICOMOS briefs, destination marketing brochures, museum scripts, and tour operator itineraries. The Russian subcorpus (≈370,000 words) includes federal and regional tourism portals, museum and heritage site texts, and travel companies' materials targeting Russian-speaking audiences. The Uzbek subcorpus (≈280,000 words) comprises national and regional tourism content, museum scripts, and commercial tour descriptions for domestic and international visitors. Materials were cleaned, de-duplicated, and segmented by document type. All texts are non-personal, publicly distributed documents.

Terminological candidates were identified using a hybrid pipeline. First, term extraction employed frequency and weirdness measures with part-of-speech filtering to isolate multiword nominal groups (e.g., "intangible cultural heritage," "eco-trail," "boutique guesthouse") and salient single-word candidates. Second, concordance analysis inspected contexts to separate technical terms from generic promotional lexis. Third, a frame-semantic coding scheme captured conceptual frames for heritage, hospitality, mobility, sustainability, and identity performance. Collocational profiling examined modifiers and verbs associated with targets to locate evaluative and metaphorical extensions [1; 4].

To triangulate corpus results with professional practice, we conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with experienced tour guides and guide-interpreters (four per language community, average 9.5 years of experience). Interviews probed strategies for rendering culture-bound terms, handling institutional nomenclature, and negotiating politeness and authority across cultures. Respondents were anonymized, and data were coded for recurrent themes relevant to terminological decisions in live settings.

Translation analysis adopted componential and contrastive methods [6; 7]. For a subset of 120 high-impact terms appearing in parallel or comparable documents (policy briefs, museum panels, tour scripts), we mapped the presence or absence of explicit components (e.g., "state protection," "community involvement," "ritual function"), traced translation choices (borrowing, calque, explicitation, cultural substitution), and noted any shifts in evaluative intensity.

While the corpus was not balanced for all genres, it captures the major institutional and commercial channels

through which tourism terminology is disseminated. The study does not analyze social media or user-generated travel reviews; these lie outside our focus on institutional and professional registers.

The corpus confirms that tourism terminology occupies a liminal zone between technical nomenclature and persuasive discourse. Across all three languages, key terms tend to collocate with stance-laden modifiers such as "authentic," "unique," "world-class," "living," "community-based," and "sustainable." This evaluative halo functions not merely as marketing rhetoric but as a constitutive feature of the terminology itself, blurring boundaries between denotation and connotation. The effect is strongest in experiential terms and weakest in regulatory nomenclature.

In the heritage frame, English "intangible cultural heritage" shows high stability, anchoring a network of terms such as "safeguarding," "transmission," and "bearers." Russian equivalents gravitate toward "нематериальное культурное наследие," typically accompanied by bureaucratic collocates "охрана," "реестр," and "объект," which foreground state custodianship. Uzbek "nomoddiy madaniy meros" frequently co-occurs with "asrab-avaylash" and "avloddan-avlodga o'tish," evoking communal stewardship and intergenerational continuity. The three languages thus instantiate distinct cultural scripts in the same international terminological frame: administrative protection, communal transmission, and hybrid safeguarding, respectively.

Experiential terms display pronounced metaphorical extension. English "silk road experience," "oasis lifestyle," and "living museum" render mobility, dwelling, and curation as affective journeys. Russian materials prefer "погружение," "атмосфера," and "прикосновение к истории," metaphors of immersion and touch that organize visitor subjectivity as sensory participation. Uzbek materials favor "sayr," "ruh," and "mehmondo'stlik" in ways that mobilize hospitality as moral disposition and regional pride as an animating spirit. In each case, the metaphors do terminological work by bundling complex attributes—spatial, sensory, ethical— into recognizable labels useful to practitioners and visitors.

Hospitality and accommodation lexis further demonstrates cross-cultural asymmetries. English "guesthouse," "boutique hotel," and "homestay" differentiate property scale, design ethos, and host interaction. Russian differentiations sometimes collapse under "гостевой дом" and "мини-отель," with "бутик-отель" reserved for higher-end concepts; "homestay" often remains untranslated or is explicated as "проживание в семье у местных жителей." In Uzbek, "mehmon uyi," "oilaviy mehmonxona," and loanword "butik-mehmonxona" coexist, while "homestay" alternates between borrowing and descriptive rendering that emphasizes direct contact with hosts. Interviews reported that when a concept lacks an entrenched equivalent, guides strategically mix borrowing with explicitation, prioritizing visitor expectations and service standards over formal terminological purity.

Sustainability terms reveal the strongest imprint of institutional standardization. English "carrying capacity," "community-based tourism," and "responsible travel" display relatively uniform usage in policy and destination materials, especially where alignment with global frameworks is explicit. Russian regularly employs "рекреационная емкость," "туризм, основанный на участии местных сообществ," and "ответственный туризм," although the latter travels with evaluative ambiguity, variously glossed as environmental diligence, ethical consumption, or cultural respect. Uzbek tends toward "yuk ko'tarish quvvati (hududning rekreatsion sig'imi)," "jamiyatga asoslangan turizm," and "mas'uliyatli sayohat," often accompanied by clarifying appositions that unpack implicit components. The proximity of these terms to international policy discourse reduces metaphorical play but does not eliminate promotional evaluation; destinations still frame sustainability as a value proposition.

A distinctive cluster of identity-performative terms emerges at the intersection of tourism and heritage politics. English "UNESCO World Heritage Site," "national park," and "cultural route" carry high prestige and legal-administrative meaning. In Russian, "объект Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО" and "национальный парк" similarly bear institutional weight, yet the discursive surroundings often include narrative tropes of national greatness and civilizational continuity. In Uzbek, "UNESCOning Butunjahon merosi ro'yxatiga kiritilgan ob'ekt" and "milliy bog'" function as markers of international recognition and state curation of nature, with frequent co-occurrence of "faxr," "meros," and "taraqqiyot," terms that balance pride of preservation with modernization narratives. These identity-performative

units operate as condensed indexes of legitimacy and authenticity that speak to both domestic audiences and foreign visitors.

The translation analysis of 120 high-impact terms shows patterned strategies. Borrowings are stable where the source term is internationally dominant ("UNESCO," "boutique"), while calques are preferred when morphological transparency facilitates uptake ("intangible cultural heritage," "carrying capacity"). Explicitation appears when socio-cultural scripts diverge or when a term bundles technical and experiential components; translators then add appositions or relative clauses to surface presupposed content. Domestication is most common in hospitality etiquette, where guides rephrase politeness and honorifics to align with visitor expectations, whereas foreignization is retained for culture-bound artifacts and ritual names to preserve authenticity and invite explanation. Interviewees confirmed that real-time choices hinge on audience composition, time constraints, and institutional scripts provided by museums or tour operators.

Quantitatively, evaluative collocates accompany 62–74% of experiential terms across languages but only 18–29% of regulatory terms. Metaphorically extended nouns ("gateway," "treasure," "oasis," "heart") are more prevalent in English promotional copy, while Russian uses verbal metaphors of "immersion," "touch," and "journey," and Uzbek uses moral-affective metaphors of "spirit," "hospitality," and "heritage revival." These results support the thesis that tourism terminology is a hybrid register where terminological stabilization coexists with cultural performance.

The findings invite a rethinking of what counts as "terminology" in tourism. In classic terminology theory, terms name concepts in a one-to-one or many-to-one fashion, ideally insulated from emotive coloring to ensure technical precision. Tourism unsettles that model, because the very concepts in question—authenticity, heritage, immersion—are not merely cognitive categories but cultural performances. As a result, the lexicalization of tourism knowledge necessarily blends denotative and connotative content, and the "best" term may be the one that can travel across institutional documents and visitor-facing narratives without losing either intelligibility or allure [1; 3; 4].

The cross-cultural divergences documented here reflect deeper cultural scripts. In the heritage frame, state custodianship, communal stewardship, and hybrid safeguarding constitute alternative moral economies of preservation; these, in turn, organize the lexical neighborhoods of "heritage" across languages. In hospitality, the differentiation of accommodation types mirrors market segmentation and social norms of host–guest interaction; where the market niche is new or culturally marked, borrowing and explicitation outcompete established native equivalents. Sustainability terms, conversely, illustrate the centripetal pull of global regimes that promote standardization; yet even here, evaluative glosses tailor the concepts to local branding and policy aims.

For guide-interpreters, the hybridity of tourism terminology poses pedagogical challenges and opportunities. Training that treats terms as fixed labels risks producing translators who are faithful at the lexical level but inattentive to the interactional work those terms perform in context. Conversely, training that recognizes evaluative and metaphorical loadings can equip practitioners to adjust stance and register without sacrificing accuracy. Scenario-based exercises—museum tours, eco-park briefings, community-based homestay orientations—allow trainees to test borrowings, calques, and explicitation in situ, discovering what resonates with different visitor cohorts. A corpus-informed bilingual or trilingual glossary should record not only equivalents but also typical collocates, preferred metaphors, and notes on pragmatics, such as when an identity-performative label like "World Heritage" warrants an accompanying narrative that connects international recognition to local stewardship [6; 7; 8].

Standardization remains essential where legal, safety, and sustainability concerns are at stake. Regulatory and infrastructural terms—ticketing categories, protected-area designations, accessibility markers, risk warnings—benefit from harmonized nomenclature and from back-translations that verify semantic alignment. Yet standardization should not erase cultural distinctiveness. Culture-bound items—rituals, crafts, festivals—derive value from semantic density; in these cases, partial foreignization with concise explicitation may maximize both authenticity and comprehension. Institutions can support this balance by issuing style guides that differentiate stabilized technical lexis from curated culture-specific expressions, including guidance on when to retain endonyms (e.g., names of dishes, garments, rituals) and when to provide parallel

exonyms.

The functional typology proposed here clarifies this division of labor. Regulatory terms encode norms and constraints; their success depends on legal precision and unambiguous recognition across languages. Infrastructural terms describe the material and organizational affordances of tourism; they must be clear yet flexible enough to accommodate local variants. Experiential terms animate visitor imagination; they do their work through metaphor and evaluation, and their translation should preserve affective charge alongside denotation. Identity-performative terms condense legitimacy claims, attaching destinations to international or national narratives; interpreters should learn to deploy them with accompanying stories that make the identity work explicit rather than tacit. This typology offers curriculum designers a scaffold for sequencing instruction and assessment.

Finally, the results complicate the binary of domestication and foreignization by showing that both strategies operate within the same terminological unit at different layers: a borrowed head noun may co-occur with a domesticating explicitation, while a calqued compound may carry a culturally marked modifier. For practitioners, the pedagogical goal is not to choose one strategy categorically but to develop sensitivity to discourse function, audience design, and institutional context.

Tourism terminology is a hybrid register in which institutional stabilization and cultural performance meet. Across English, Russian, and Uzbek, key terms are shaped by evaluative and metaphorical patterns that reflect cultural scripts of heritage, hospitality, and sustainability. Translational behavior shows principled variation: borrowings and calques dominate stabilized international concepts, while explicitation and selective foreignization help render culture-bound items without flattening their semantic richness. A functional typology—regulatory, infrastructural, experiential, identity-performative— explains why some segments of the lexicon resist strict standardization while others demand it. For the training of guide-interpreters, the study recommends corpus-informed glossaries, scenario-based practice, and style guides that differentiate technical stabilization from curated cultural expression. In policy terms, standardization efforts should prioritize safety-critical and regulatory domains while safeguarding the expressive bandwidth of cultural heritage terminology. Future research may extend the corpus to additional languages, incorporate audio data from live tours, and test learning outcomes of the proposed pedagogical interventions.

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