THE EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL IN Tbilisi –
A PROJECT DEVELOPING TOURISTIC POTENTIAL
AND EDUCATING YOUTH OF GEORGIA
(IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING ENGLISH
FOR TOURISM PURPOSES –
ETP AT HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS)

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Introduction

“Youth is the most important resource of the country, without development of which
the existence of strong and prosperous country is impossible”

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia

In recent years the involvement of youth gaining high education in current events
and the increase of their role in social and political life have become rather significant
in Georgia. Today young people are involved in decision making processes, which is
clearly visible in various areas of social life. One of the best examples is active school
and student self governance for what the background was prepared from the state (crea-
tion of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, making Georgia a member of European
Youth Parliament, etc). It should be noted that many young people are various public
service employees (Universities have official memorandums of cooperation with public
and private sectors in order to implement some internship programs, integrated academic
international programs, etc). The function of the undertakings is to determine major
directions of youth policy, to take care of youth as the most important part of the soci-
ety; to create government programs and to coordinate youth sector effective manage-
ment. Involvement of youth in sport events and activities internationally fosters physical and mental development and academic advancement of young generations. Georgia as a reform-maker focuses on different priorities of making the country a worthy member of developed communities of the West and tourism is among them. And yet, what tourism comprises of itself remains to be identified and explained.

McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) define tourism as “a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and the hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home”. Cambridge English dictionary suggests tourism is “the business of providing services such as transport, places to stay, or entertainment for people who are on holiday” [Cambridge English Dictionary]. And yet there is no distinct and precise definition that everyone would accept since the perception of the concept varies from source to source and from individual to individual. Personally, I associate tourism with the sense of safety, free access (borders to be crossed with less complications), comfortable infrastructure and environment, as well as efficiently managed services to get meaningful experience and motivation to visit a certain place or places over and over again, and finally, possession of the language that will assist me to communicate and interact with people. Sport or sport events tourism is a fast-growing sector of the global travel industry with host cities receiving an immense amount of tourism. This year, Georgia, has had an honored opportunity to host the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) – a biennial multi-sport event for youth athletes between the ages 14-18 from the 49 member countries of the association of European Olympic Committees. The festival has a summer edition, held for the first time in Brussels in 1991, and a winter edition, which began two years later in Aosta. Both of them take place in two-year cycles, in odd years. The European Youth Olympic Festival belongs to the European Olympic Committees (EOC), and is organized on behalf of the EOC, which has the exclusive rights to the event [EYOF].

Undertaking

November 27th, 2010 was a special day in Georgian sports and Olympic movement history in Belgrade where Georgian National Olympic Committee (NOC) participated in the 39th General Assembly along with 49 European National Olympic Committees. The assembly had to decide which of the two candidate cities (Tbilisi or Brno) would host the 13th European Youth Olympic Festival in 2015. As a result of secret voting, Tbilisi won with the advantage of 5 votes (26-21), which indisputably manifested as a beginning of a new era in countries sporting development. The program of EYOF includes 9 sports: judo, tennis, artistic gymnastics, cycling, athletics, swimming, volleyball, handball and basketball. Over 3800 athletes from 49 European countries arrived in Tbilisi to participate in the Youth Olympic Festival.

China’s Xinjiang Hualing Industry and Trade (Group) won the bid and was contracted to construct the Olympic Village investing no less than 150 million U.S. dollars, employing as many as 3,000 local people in the construction of the Olympic Vil-
The European Youth Olympic Festival in Tbilisi – a project developing…

lage which has been designed to house up to 4,000 guests and complete with a media center and a medical center. Recently officials have informed “It will cost $46 million USD to run the event and by our calculations, we are expecting a return of $212 million USD” [agenda.ge].

Organization

The Olympic Torch, decorated with the Georgian elements – vine leaves and grape seeds, was lit in Athens – the oldest city of Greece and the home of the Olympic Games – on May 26 to mark the beginning of the EYOF 2015, as well symbolically recognizing Georgia’s Independence Day. During the consecutive months, the Olympic torch was transported across Georgia’s 67 municipalities before arriving in Tbilisi on July 14.

The Accreditation Department provided the following: EYOF Tbilisi 2015 participants’ management, alleviation of flexible and safe movement; identification of Festival participants and their roles; definition of a category by function of each participant to determine the access zones; restriction of access for unauthorized individuals to safe zones.

Sport Venues were the Mziuri Tennis courts, a new swimming pool, gymnastics palace, sports palace, new handball stadium, new volleyball stadium, judo academy, new athletics stadium, 4 training halls, Vere park, Athlete’s village (AVL) [EYOF].

The EYOF Tbilisi 2015 Security Department cooperated closely with the state and municipal police to ensure a safe and secure Festival for all participants. Security officials adhered in their work to detailed operation manuals and regulations at all the venues and areas. The Security Department provided: 24/7 security for all accredited participants and Festival guests, protection of the equipment and vehicles, entrance checks of Accreditation Cards and access permission to particular areas and zones; checking observance of the regulations at all the venues [EYOF].

The 5 Star Hotel Radisson Blu Iveria and 5 star Tbilisi Marriott Hotel, both located in the city centre, were official hotels for the European Olympic Family throughout the Festival offering an accommodation [The European Olympic Committees] for the members of the EOC, NOC Family, IOC, EFs with their accompanying persons and other VIP guests. The main Media Centre was located at the Holiday Inn Hotel in the central part of Tbilisi. The Centre served both international and local journalists.

The EYOF Tbilisi 2015 Organizing Committee Transportation Team provided effective and timely transportation services to all accredited participants covering all key locations including AVL, EYOF Training and Competition venues, EOC Family Hotel, VIP and Media Hotels and other locations. Medical centers with highly qualified medical teams operated at the Athletes’ Village and at each sports venue to provide first aid assistance for accredited persons in emergencies related to illnesses and injuries. Designated partner hospitals and their emergency units were equipped with the latest medical technologies to ensure safe and high quality medical services for all athletes and officials. (Additional information on accreditation, sport venues, accommodation, security, media, transportation and medical services with all the details is provided on the EYOF website).
Benefits

Organizing and hosting the Youth Olympic Games in Tbilisi provided a great opportunity for Georgia to gain experience in bringing the 49 European National Olympic Committees to the city and becoming the European Capital of sport for the duration of the event, thus having attracted attention. Economic benefits were received from direct and indirect event-related expenditure in the region and from the expansion of the country’s image, which encouraged the general public to visit the area before, during and after the event. The festival led to social benefits such as: the acquisition of organizational skills and the enlargement of inter regional cooperation, the reinforcement of local identity and community pride, work experience and expertise, improvement and progress of sport in the region; exploitation of the existing sports facilities and infrastructure with the consequences of enhancing the potential for tourism in the region/city fostering Olympic values and raising awareness of the significance of sport, physical education and a healthy life style. For students of general and higher education settings it was a great means to practice their intellectual (mainly language) skills and finally, the event enabled scholarly cohort to perform some research [Cambridge English Dictionary] and attain material to design an English for Specific (Tourism) Purposes class curriculum and activities according to students’ academic and professional needs (alongside providing venues for field trips/site visits to ensure acquisition of practical skills).

Teaching ETP

Teachers of English, regardless of what levels they are teaching, need to create teaching and learning activities coming down to creative, innovative, effective and joyful learning. Currently, they integrate instruction of content concepts with academic language in order to develop student skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The concepts and language skills are aligned to state proficiency standards and teachers use techniques designed to make specific topics accessible to students and to enable them to practice the use of specific language as it is employed in each subject area [Paltridge 2009]. Thus in ESP classes, students have more opportunities to use the content knowledge and expertise they bring to class (they activate their prior knowledge, which leads to increased learning of language and content material) [Belcher 2006].

Even though English at higher education institutions in Georgia is placed as a compulsory subject with various course credits (ranging from 3-6) and some universities even require certain scores of TOEFL or IELTS tests as a pre-requisite for graduation, the results of Teaching English at non-English Department at most universities in Georgia are still lacking appropriateness (students are capable of reading textbooks, journals, manuals, etc. in their own field, but still incapable of speaking English although they have passed English subjects with excellent results). In other words, in some cases their receptive skills tend to be more improved than productive ones. These are caused by the conflicts among the target needs (necessities), levels of English (lacks) and the gap between the necessities and the starting point. Therefore, or-
organizing the ESP course with more emphasis on practicing productive skills could be an efficient solution contributing to the achievement of a satisfying goal in the end.

Many factors play a crucial role in organizing ESP course in tourism: selecting material from various topics (describing hotel facilities, making and confirming reservations, dealing with the business traveler, dealing with complaints, organizing tours or trips, researching jobs, intercultural communications, arrivals and departures, meeting and greeting, writing a professional CV, describing tourism in one’s country, tour leading and describing attractions, planning a tourism project, handling customers, job interviews, telephoning in English, etc) and choosing activities (warming-up, receptive, productive, follow up) are among those factors.

Learners who seek employment in the tourism and service industries need to remain highly motivated to become truly fluent in a high level of professional service language and master ETP. Various factors must be considered by educators in designing ETP curriculums, individual courses, and classroom materials which will benefit students by increasing motivation and improving language skills. EYOF itself creates a learning environment and motivation that ETP teachers need to have.

EYOF offers a great opportunity to English teachers in Georgia to design courses so that General English (for general communication skills and fluency development) is integrated with ETP tutorials and workshops covering a range of topics like: **customer services** – providing information on and effectively describing tourist sites and visits, as well as entertaining visitors, presenting your study or workplace/university/company, socializing and negotiating; **eco and sustainable tourism** – presenting projects, explaining aims and results and benefits, **hospitality English** – functional English required in a variety of hospitality departments: reception, reservations, bars, restaurants, housekeeping; **upselling** – professionally and effectively achieving extra sales by using soft selling approach, marketing and promotion, managing customers and staff; **jobs** – researching, interview skills, writing a professional CV, applying for a job; **customer relations** – identify and practice effective ways of handling customer complaints and problems, as well as preparing, booking, and describing and appealing itinerary on different types of holiday; etc. All this is possible through Group projects, role plays and case studies to simulate real-life situations and practically no simulations during EYOF (which is a real-life event), guest speakers, site visits to practice English skills as much as possible. EYOF has less academic and more realistic nature which is a need most ETP teachers face.

The following activities will help learners broaden their vocabulary and knowledge related to tourism and will facilitate ELT teachers to create an appropriate and enjoyable environment for the learners when teaching English for tourism: **posters and fly swatter** – by using these activities students learn the vocabulary that has to do with planning and managing accommodation. The appropriate materials for this activity are booking forms. **Video clips** – by watching video clips that have to do with meeting and greeting customers, the learners get to know how to behave with customers. **Role play** – learners practice conversations by playing the role of a hotel manager and of a customer, practice different ways for introducing products to customers, by making them offers. In this activity the learners can use **objects**. **Teacher presentation** – by using the computer, the teacher presents to the students how to plan work schedules.
for the employee. **Interview** – one student takes the role as the hotel manager and the other one as the candidate that needs to be employed in the hotel, and the hotel manager interviews the candidate to see his/her skills. This activity helps the learners how to communicate best face-to-face. **Group work** – the learners will be able to organize and conduct tours, by practicing in the classroom. For example, from each group of the class, a volunteer would be the tourist guide and give information to visitors (students) for different places. **Magazines and pictures** are used as materials for this activity. **Debate** – by using debates the learners of tourism will be able to communicate with diverse groups of people. **Corpora** – students need to search materials and be prepared, because they have to give information to visitors about history, art, architecture, etc. The students work in pairs, because they learn from one another. Corpora also help learners for organizing and managing different activities. It is appropriate to use **authentic materials and the internet.** **Giving advice** – by using this activity the learners become responsible for solving problems. They work in pairs. One student has the problem card and the other one need to find a solution about the particular problem. The materials used for this activity are **problem cards.** **Dialogues** – help the learner practice of how to welcome customers, how to behave with them and what to offer them. **Handouts** are useful for this activity [Miftari].

Students can also challenge and handle various activities like warming – up activities (pre-teaching and activation of new vocabulary or grammar structures, discussing questions concerning the topic), receptive activities – working with the text itself, reading, listening (various reading strategies e.g. aloud, quiet, skimming, scanning, with or without translation), informative, productive activities – practicing of acquired knowledge, follow-up activities – improving, developing, using of acquired knowledge.

In conclusion, carefully identified needs and appropriate teaching materials for tourism students will produce not only satisfied customers but also plenty of professional fulfillment in their future career. Moreover, work-integrated learning experience drawing heavily upon interactions with industry also seems significant for the forging of future employment prospects in tourism industry.

**Conclusion**

As the EYOF 2015 slogan says, the Festival is a “Step to the Future”, not only for Georgia and Tbilisi but also for the EOC and the many successful EYOFs to come. The event is seen as a great opportunity for Georgia to show the rest of Europe its capabilities as a developed, European country. It also presents the next generation of Georgian athletes with a chance to perform in front of their home fans in a major youth sporting event. Many of the competing athletes went on to take part in the Olympic Games granting the Tbilisi sports fans (most probably Georgian students were among those) a glimpse of the European sport stars of the present and future. Based on the presented topic, preferably selected according to the study of learner needs, the article asserts that curriculum in ETP should contain some basic topics and texts for all students and abundant materials for student selection according to their narrow specialization and interests to increase learner motivation. Vocabulary lists should be carefully selected ac-
according to the branches of the sphere of tourism and a firm link with potential employers should be established in order to meet academic and occupational requirements.

Notes:

1. For the first time in the history of EYOFs all European NOCs participating in the Tbilisi 2015 European Youth Olympic Festival will not pay any participation fee, i.e. the athletes and officials staying at the Athletes’ Village will receive free accommodation and full board at the dining hall. Judges and Referees nominated for EYOF Tbilisi 2015 will be also released from paying a participation fee.

2. Goglidze, Zintz, (2011) claim that Olympic education is not systematically promoted at all levels of educational activities. The other problem is that Olympic education is not easily accessible for the entire Georgian population. Few organizations involved in spreading Olympism are functioning without a real coordination; there are a number of programs, projects and activities promoting Olympic values in Georgia with time and topic duplicity. Through literature review, document analysis, case studies, interviews and questionnaires the researchers were able to confirm considerations (opinions) to answer the research questions. They presented a Strategic Educational Plan for participation in and preparing for Youth Olympic Games to GEONOC, European Youth Olympic Festivals and Olympic Education (the challenge of EYOF 2015 Tbilisi), which they built up in five steps, in accordance with the reported results. The first activity within the proposed project was to work out an exemplary action plan for the strategy of resources' management, focused on the education of human resources who provide or influence Olympic education in Georgia. With this action plan they proposed a target group, name of the educational activity, a responsible person and timeline. Finally, they proposed seven recommendations in order to help those who may be interested in elaborating of a strategic plan for the management of Olympic education in the respective country based on their opinion.

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**Summary**

The European Youth Olympic Festival in Tbilisi – a project developing touristic potential and educating youth of Georgia (in the context of teaching English for Tourism Purposes – ETP at higher education settings)

Georgia – a small country in the post Soviet space, striving to become the agent of change through having carried out a considerable amount of reforms in education, international security, economic, juridical, health and social, penitentiary systems in order to integrate with Europe and European values hosted the European Youth Festival (EYOF) 2015. As the European Olympic Committee claims EYOF is not just a sport event, it is “a pride of the European Olympic Committee with 23 years of tradition, a first Olympic experience for young athletes; a take-off platform for future sports stars; a great opportunity for European cities; an important means of promoting sport and Olympic values; a European get-together; a meeting point for young athletes from 49 National Olympic Committees; an opportunity to educate and motivate youth and the general public to do sport and adopt a healthy life style” [The European Olympic Committees]. In order to organize the event on an international level, host it properly, attract contacts and ensure everything runs smoothly to make the project successful and create a platform for other tourism-related ones that Georgia aims to implement in the future (such as a new city Lazika, Kars Highway, Batumi Highway, Poti Airport, etc.), along with other skills our youth (graduates of tourism departments in particular) need to know English for Specific (Tourism) Purposes. English proficiency is required in all professional areas but it becomes essential in the tourist industry because of its specific characteristics. The main objective of the English departments at higher education settings/universities in Georgia that teach English for Tourism is to ensure that ETP courses impart the key communicative skills that are most useful to graduates in their chosen careers. Tourism projects, research and teaching relies on strong links with the sphere of tourism due to the applied nature of the discipline. The presented paper, alongside highlighting a large scale EYOF project thoroughly, performs specificities that include identification of the knowledge and technical skill competencies ELT teachers need to develop in order to successfully teach tourism-related ESP and specific curriculum recommendations for the education program.

Key words: *Georgia, EYOF, youth, education, ETP*