

Graphic Organizers in Teaching Tourism Terms

Mukaddam Kurbanova

KSU

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Annotation: This article explores the use of graphic organizers—such as concept maps, flowcharts, and Venn diagrams—in teaching tourism-related vocabulary within ESP and CLIL contexts. The study highlights how these visual tools aid learners in understanding, retaining, and applying complex terms through structured input and interactive tasks. Examples demonstrate their role in improving vocabulary acquisition, discourse development, and learner motivation. The findings suggest that graphic organizers significantly enhance language instruction in tourism education, offering inclusive strategies for different proficiency levels.

Keys words: graphic organizers, tourism terminology, ESP, CLIL, vocabulary instruction, visual learning, language acquisition, concept maps, student engagement

Introduction

The tourism industry, being highly communicative and multilingual, relies heavily on accurate and situation-specific vocabulary. Students of tourism-related fields are expected to master a wide range of terminologies including services, occupations, destinations, and experiences. This vocabulary often includes abstract, compound, and idiomatic expressions which can be difficult for learners to internalize through traditional methods. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, particularly those focusing on tourism and hospitality, graphic organizers serve as visual bridges between language and content. These tools help learners organize information, visualize relationships between concepts, and actively engage with the material (Hyerle, 2009). Research in cognitive science has shown that visual processing enhances comprehension and retention of information.

As tourism becomes a vital global industry, the effective teaching of its language elements is crucial. Various types of graphic organizers, such as concept maps (Novak & Cañas, 2008), Venn diagrams, and flowcharts, are tools that enhance vocabulary retention, semantic understanding, and learner engagement. The integration of these visual aids into CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms is also analyzed (Coyle et al., 2010). Classroom-based examples and student feedback demonstrate that graphic organizers improve both motivation and performance when learning complex tourism vocabulary. Findings support the incorporation of these tools as effective scaffolding strategies in tourism English instruction.

The Role of Graphic Organizers in Vocabulary Instruction

Graphic organizers include tools like concept maps, mind maps, flowcharts, word webs, and T-charts. Each has a specific function in supporting language learning. For tourism students, who must categorize and recall hundreds of terms related to accommodation, destinations, services, events, and customer interactions, these tools can simplify and structure input meaningfully. According to Novak and Cañas (2008), concept maps allow learners to visually build connections among terms. In tourism, this might

mean linking 'sustainable tourism,' 'eco-tourism,' 'local culture,' and 'environmental impact.' Students begin to see not only definitions, but how ideas influence each other in real-world contexts.

Developing Critical Thinking and Discourse Awareness

Tourism education is not only about remembering vocabulary, but also about analyzing and applying knowledge. Graphic organizers, especially Venn diagrams, cause-effect charts, and sequencing diagrams, develop students' analytical thinking. Hyerle (2009) explains that visual tools promote reflection, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas, which are essential for discourse development. These strategies help learners connect tourism concepts to broader social, economic, and environmental frameworks. When students can map ideas visually, their writing and speaking become clearer and more structured.

Graphic Organizers as Vocabulary Scaffolding Tools

Nation (2001) argues that the best vocabulary learning occurs through repetition in meaningful contexts. Graphic organizers serve as scaffolds, making complex vocabulary digestible through structure and associations. For example, when teaching the vocabulary related to 'accommodation,' a word web centered on the term 'hotel' can branch out into subtopics such as room types, services, facilities, and staff roles. This helps students visualize how terms are used in real-world tourism settings and enhances contextual learning.

Integrating Graphic Organizers in CLIL-Based Tourism English

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an instructional approach where subject matter and language are taught together. In tourism education, this means students simultaneously learn tourism-specific concepts while also developing their English proficiency. While CLIL offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges—especially cognitive overload, terminology confusion, and limited output fluency. Graphic organizers provide structure, support, and visual clarity to address these challenges effectively (Coyle et al., 2010).

Coyle et al. (2010) emphasize that CLIL requires balancing four components: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Graphic organizers support content by organizing complex ideas visually; aid communication by structuring vocabulary and grammar; stimulate cognition by encouraging higher-order thinking; and reflect culture by presenting intercultural perspectives clearly.

Several types of graphic organizers serve different learning objectives: flowcharts for sequencing (e.g., hotel check-in), cause-effect charts for environmental impact, Venn diagrams for comparing tourism types, and timelines for tourism history. These tools not only improve comprehension but also serve as frameworks for writing, speaking, and problem-solving activities.

Coyle et al. (2010) emphasize that CLIL requires balancing four components: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Graphic organizers:

Support content by organizing complex ideas visually.

Aid communication by structuring the vocabulary and grammar students need.

Stimulate cognition by encouraging higher-order thinking (e.g., comparing, classifying, analyzing).

Reflect culture by presenting intercultural perspectives clearly (e.g., comparing tourism practices in different countries).

Let's give some examples for using graphic organizers in teaching tourism terms.

Example 1. Flowchart – Hotel Booking Process

Topic: Booking a hotel online

Language Focus: Imperatives, sequencing words (first, then, next), functional language

Procedure:

Students read a short passage on how to book a hotel.

They extract steps and build a **flowchart**:

Visit hotel website

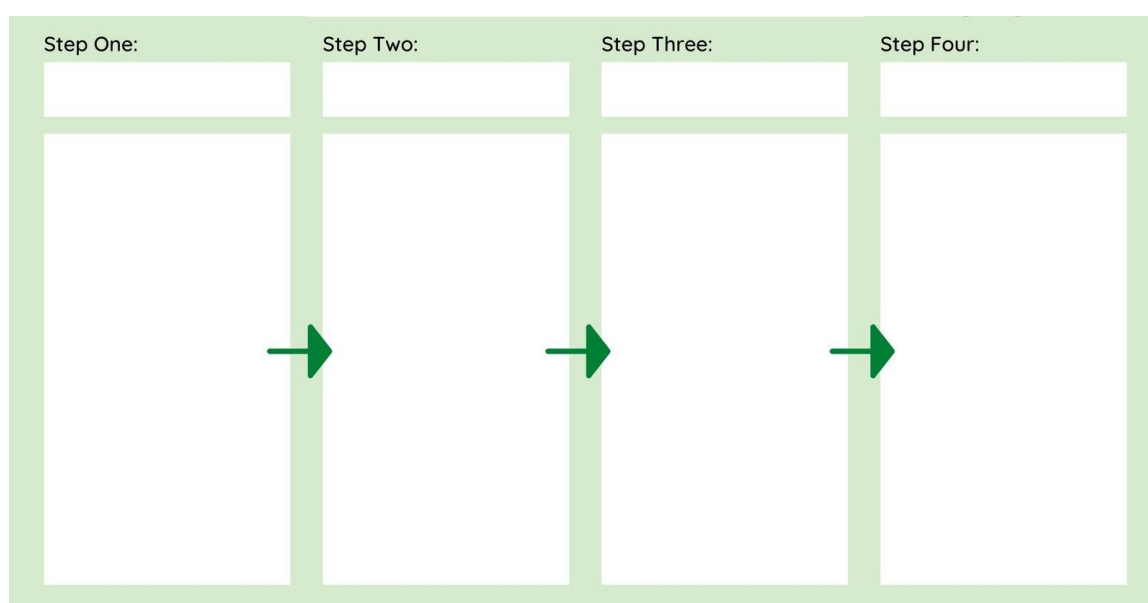
Choose check-in/out dates

Select room type

Enter guest information

Confirm payment

Follow-up task: In pairs, they role-play a phone conversation between a guest and a hotel receptionist, using the steps from the chart as a speaking guide.



Example 2. Cause-Effect Organizer – Tourism and Environment

Topic: Impact of mass tourism on the environment

Language Focus: Cause-effect connectors (due to, because of, as a result)

Activity:

Students create a **cause-effect graphic**:

Cause: Overcrowded beaches

➤ **Effect:** Pollution, ecosystem disruption

Cause: Excessive water usage in resorts

➤ **Effect:** Water shortages in local communities

Follow-up discussion: Students propose eco-friendly tourism solutions using modal verbs: Tourists should avoid littering, Hotels must save water.

CAUSE	EFFECT
Because of this ...	This resulted ...
CAUSE	EFFECT
Because of this ...	This resulted ...

Example 3. Venn Diagram – Cultural Tourism vs. Adventure Tourism

Topic: Comparing tourism types

Language Focus: Comparative adjectives, present simple

Task:

In groups, students brainstorm differences and similarities:

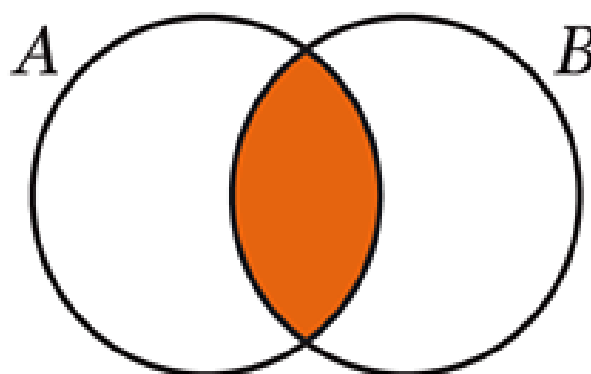
Cultural Tourism: museums, traditions, historical sites

Adventure Tourism: hiking, extreme sports, remote locations

Shared: guided tours, travel insurance, trip planning

Speaking task: Each group presents their findings, explaining their diagram with comparative structures:

"Adventure tourism is usually more physically challenging than cultural tourism."



Example 4. Timeline – Evolution of Tourism

Topic: History of tourism development

Language Focus: Past tenses, passive voice

Instructions:

Students read about tourism from ancient times to the present and build a **timeline** with key events:

3000 BC – Trade-based travel in Mesopotamia

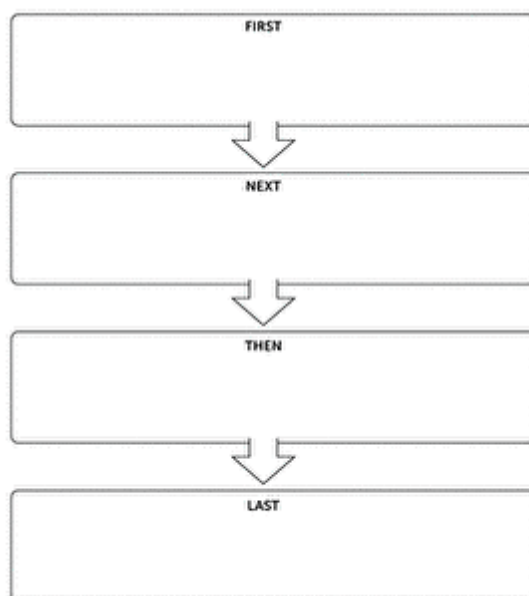
19th century – Railways boost domestic tourism

1950s – Mass air travel begins

Today – Rise of digital nomad tourism

Writing task: Using the timeline, students write a short historical report using the passive voice:

"Rail travel was introduced in the 19th century, making tourism more accessible to the middle class."



The following learning outcomes and pedagogical benefits are observed:

Improved content retention: Visual tools support long-term memory by showing patterns and relationships.

Greater language accuracy: Organizers give learners “language frames” to guide grammar and vocabulary.

Higher engagement: Students are more motivated to complete tasks when ideas are clear and structured.

Better collaboration: Many organizer-based tasks are suited to group work, encouraging peer learning.

Let us have a look at the help of graphic organizers in common student challenges.

Challenge	Graphic Organizer Solution
Too much unfamiliar vocabulary	Word webs group and explain related terms
Difficulty writing reports or summaries	Sequencing charts outline ideas in logical order
Confusion with similar concepts	Venn diagrams and tables help compare and contrast
Low speaking confidence	Flowcharts provide step-by-step speaking support

Teachers can adapt tasks for **different proficiency levels:**

Beginner CLIL learners → Use labeled pictures or simple timelines

Intermediate learner's → Use guided organizers with sentence stems

Advanced learners → Let them build their own organizers from texts or lectures

This approach ensures inclusion and success for all learners.

Conclusion

Graphic organizers are essential tools in the teaching of tourism terminology, especially in ESP and CLIL contexts. They support vocabulary acquisition, reinforce semantic relationships, and foster analytical thinking. By transforming abstract content into visual, structured formats, these tools enhance learner motivation and achievement. Educators are encouraged to incorporate graphic organizers into lesson plans regularly, using them not only for vocabulary development but also for writing tasks, reading comprehension, and speaking activities. As tourism education continues to grow, such innovative and student-centered approaches will play a key role in preparing learners for global professional success.

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