

# Ecotourism as a Factor of Ecological Oriented Civilization (A Case Study Based on French Tourist Discourse)

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**Abstract**— The article is devoted to the study of various interrelations generalized by ecotourism and linguistics in the ecological paradigm, and reflected in the French tourist discourse. We have pointed out and proved that the demand for tours to Russian ecoregions and all over the world is growing dynamically. At the same time, the *ecologization* of all tourism aspects should be strategic in the development of the industry as a whole. In language terms, we consider the differentiation of understanding multidimensional ecological discourse, its representative potential and correlation with ecolinguistics. Having based on the texts of French tourist brochures, prospects, posters and Internet sites, we analyze the priorities in the organization of tourist services that are increasingly associated with ecotourism. Its main tendencies are aimed at contributing to recreational activities and healthing measures for population and, as a consequence, to the progress of ecological-oriented human civilization.

**Keywords:** *ecotourism, ecological paradigm, French tourist discourse, promoting ecotourism, ecological-oriented civilization*

## I. INTRODUCTION

For recent decades, due to essential climate and environmental changes, the search for challenging alternatives in using natural resources is definitely of great necessity. Being rapidly developed ecotourism is one of such ways of rational nature-management and recreational activities. According to certain statistical data, the eco-travelling profit ranges from 10% to 20% of the income obtained from international tourism on a global scale [1].

The demand for ecotourism is noticed in North America and Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Ecotourists mostly visit areas in developing countries – Central and South America, South and East Africa, South-East Asia, Oceania, at the same time the popularity of the Arctic and Antarctic is growing [2]. Besides international tourism, plenty of countries distinguish domestic natural and eco-tourism. It is of good interest in the USA, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Australia, and Indonesia. The analysts predict the widespreading of eco-resorts and eco-hotels, the increase in consuming ecotourism products, as well as a boom in the natural tourism sector. For many countries, ecotourism is the main branch of the national economy [3]. Thailand, Nepal, Kenya, Costa Rica, Ecuador,

Madagascar [et al.] are the bright examples, their experience is presented in current and updated publications [4], [5], [6], [7].

In Russia, the theoretical and practical implementation of ecotourism was undertaken in 1997–1998, when the USAID started a program for the development of ecological and educational tourism in Far Eastern Primorsky Krai. Lots of international projects (TACIS, WWF, UNDP, and DANSI) with funding from the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Norway, Finland, and Germany for the development of ecotourism in specially protected natural territories of Russia – Primorye, reserves of the Khabarovsk province, the Amur region, the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, the Caucasus and Central Russia, have been launched. A noticeable interest of Russians to travel to the unique natural destinations of the country got its recognition. Kamchatka, Baikal, Altai and Karelia have become priority centers of ecotourism, including for foreign ecotourists travelling to Russia. In addition to the mentioned, the UNESCO world heritage list includes such natural sites as virgin forests of Komi, Lena pillars, Putorana plateau, Wrangle Island, Curonian spit, Uvs-Nuur basin, Central Sikhote-Alin. Here ecotourism can help to protect nature, provide employment and socio-economic development [8].

As an objective of the article, within the ecological paradigm and based on the French tourist discourse, we are considering distinction of the concepts *ecotourism*; *ecological discourse* and its correlation with *ecolinguistics*; *ecological-oriented civilization*. Their interdependent integration is also evident in the common root *-eco-*.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

It should be noted that one of the matters of *ecotourism* is the multidimensionality of its definitions. Several prerequisites contributed to the concept occurrence. Among the main trends are the following.

- First, being one of the most powerful global economic activities, mass tourism has become a serious hazard to the environment. At the same time, rational organization of tourism can provide financial support for nature protection and increase

the importance of natural areas that need to be preserved in their original form.

- Secondly, we realize that the success of environment protection measures is unthinkable only due to prohibitive rules, especially if they are directed against the interests of the original population. It is important that respect for nature would become economically beneficial for local residents.
- Thirdly, recently there has been a change in tourists' priorities. One man, experiencing a lack of contact with wild flora and fauna, tries to find some compensation for it by traveling into nature [9]. Here is a message to such an addressee: *Les vacances nature par excellence qui vous laisseront un goût de revenez-y* [10]. – *These great holidays on nature will make you want to come back here again.*

Just to describe nature-based tourism many definitions are used and widespread in the world: *le tourisme montagnard, alpin – mountain tourism, le tourisme bleu – aquatic tourism, le tourisme vert – green tourism, le tourisme d'aventure – adventurous tourism, le tourisme rural – rural or agricultural tourism, le tourisme actif, le tourisme participatif – active tourism, le tourisme responsable – responsible tourism* and, finally, *le tourisme écologique, l'écotourisme – ecotourism.*

We turn to the linguocultural comparative method and analyze the experience of ecotourism research in foreign and domestic scientific practice. Presenting ecotourism as an organizational form of the tourism industry is problematic. For example, the destructive function of ecotourism had also been proved. There is a discussion about the necessity, relevance, revising conceptual understanding of the *ecotourism* phenomenon, which should become the paradigm of the entire tourism sector, the basis for its further growth and development. And why the inhabitant of a megalopolis can give preference to ecological tour?

Hence, the connection of ecological tourism with ecological discourse is inevitable due to the implementation of strategic directions in the development of this type of tourism. Our appeal to ecological discourse is considered in essentially different and distinctive aspects, such as: 1) ecolinguistics and 2) communication on ecology topics. Let us single out each of them more detailed.

Scientists who develop a critical analysis of ecological discourse and *ecology of translation*, united under the general term *ecolinguistics*, became quite active. The study of environmental discourse, implemented in the light of linguosynergetic approach, allows distinguishing the *general ecological discourse*, which the main subject is the relationship between living organisms, the world around them, and *its abstract discourses* as constituents of the 'parent unit' [11].

As a branch of philology, ecolinguistics is studied in different guises: ecology in application to language; interaction of language and environment; content of ecological component in language; development of ecolinguistics terminology. Among the foreign researchers, there is an opinion that it is easy to observe the mentality of

the people through the words relating to nature. For example, in Russian there are phrases such as *to win a place under the sun, fully armed with knowledge, the war with weeds, the army of insects*, etc. – this, according to psychologists, indicates that native speakers are hostile to their environment [12].

Our research is devoted to the study of various interrelations, generalized by ecotourism and linguistics within the ecological paradigm and reflected in the French tourist discourse. Along with it, the modern understanding of ecotourism and the focus on achieving its sustainability force to reframe the traditional ideas about what types of travel should be considered *ecotourism*.

Apparently, the motivation of travelers and the volume of tourist flows are important. However, ecotourism is rather a property of certain tours organized on the principle of sparing attitude to the environment and following the general cultural norms of tourist behavior [8]. The principal question that tourism organizers should ask themselves is "what impact do travels have on the natural and cultural environment, and what consequences do they lead to?" It is obvious that the tourists' participation in environmental and nature-saving activities, including educational, methodologically corresponds to the ecological-oriented development of civilization.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nature and environmental protection are united with the thematic component of diverse and extensive representation in the ecological discourse, i.e. *discourse* as a set of oral and written texts; it indicates that ecology becomes more relevant than ever. The discourse of nature management and primitive ecology existed long before the term *ecology* emergence in 1866 (author Ernst Haeckel). Much later in the 90-s of the twentieth century in Western linguistics there appeared the concept of *ecolinguistics*, which includes two branches: eco-critical analysis of discourse and linguistic ecology [13], [14].

It is worth to note the research of E. Vavilova and Dang Thanh Huen on ecological discourse in social networks. According to their data obtained, thousands of communities in Vkontakte and Facebook use the ecological discourse in communication "to attract attention and promote business opportunities: 'environmental clothing' seems to be capable 'to dress' anything, any specific or abstract concept, while the value of ecology remains just a certain positive estimation" [15].

In 1983, the Mexican economist H. Ceballos-Lascuráin coined the term *ecotourism* to interpret a fundamentally different *eco-centric* value system based on the rational use of natural resources, the rejection of the comfort, mass communications, availability and consumption of numerous tourism benefits [16]. He emphasized sustainable ecotourism as a combination of travel with environmentally sensitive attitude to nature, enhancing the combination: the joy of acquaintance + study of flora/fauna + the ability to contribute to their protection.

Furthermore in 1990, the international ecotourism society (TIES) was founded and defined *ecotourism* as "purposeful travel with responsibility to natural areas, 'soft'

impact on the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of the natural resources beneficial to the local people” [9]. In 2005, the French Association of Ecotourism (AFE) was founded and it is successfully functioning nowadays, since, according to statistics, 90% of French travelers support the idea of ecotourism [3].

For a deeper understanding of ecotourism 10 commandments for ecotourists had been developed:

- 1) member the vulnerability of the earth;
- 2) leave only footprints, take only photos;
- 3) cognize the world in which you got (culture of peoples, geography);
- 4) respect the local inhabitants;
- 5) do not buy products of manufacturers that endanger the environment (products made of bird feathers, skins of rare animals);
- 6) follow only trodden paths;
- 7) use environmental conservation techniques;
- 8) support the environmental protection programs;
- 9) support the organizations promoting protection of nature;
- 10) travel with agencies supporting the principles of ecotourism [17].

The famous French tour operator specializing in ecotourism is “Terre d’aventure”. Since 1976, this company has been offering trips to unique, well-preserved natural areas, such as the North Pole, lake Baikal, Mongolia. While ecotourism is concerned about the environment, the organization of a trip with a limited number of travelers (from 5 to 15 persons) becomes one of the top priorities. The selection of participants is realized according to several criteria, among the most important – to involve sports tourists because of long way walks, riding bicycle or horse, etc., and their willingness to comply with the ethics of ecotourists. Also, “Terre d’aventure” works in close cooperation with environmental organizations, for example, “La Fondation d’entreprise Insolite Bâtitteur Philippe Romero” [18].

As it is mentioned above the main components of ecotourism: cognition of nature, preservation of ecosystems, respect of local residents’ interests. Another basic principle is to influence positively on the ecological culture reflected in the tourist discourse. In the following example, the visitors to the Botanical garden are invited to carry out scientific and cognitive observations in order to assess the ecological state of the tourist object:

*Ce jardin est devenu pour les visiteurs un véritable «laboratoire»: les différentes espèces d’animaux et de plantes présentés nous informent sur la qualité de l’eau et l’équilibre de ces zones humides [19]. – This garden has become a real ‘laboratory’ for visitors: the different species of animals and plants inform us about the water quality and the ecological balance of these wetlands.*

Lexemes (*eco-*)*balance, harmony* are often found in the tourist discourse.

*La Réserve Naturelle des Hauts Plateaux consacre un parcours au pays de l’harmonie et de la douceur de vivre*

[20]. – *The natural reserve, located on the Upper plateau makes the route to the country of harmony and pleasure of being.*

*Rares sont les provinces où l’eau est autant en harmonie avec la terre et les hommes [21]. – There are few provinces where water is in such a harmony with land and people.*

In the latter example, the sender develops the message idea by referring to the keyword *harmonie*. A word is considered a *keyword* if it has the ability to serve as a *key* for the selection and interpretation of a larger fragment in the corresponding conceptual field [22]. The concept of sustainable development of tourism in the XXI century, developed by the World Tourist Organization in 1996, is essentially about harmony with nature.

The authors’ intention to present information in an entertaining manner led to a “popular *synthetic* text of broad targeting” [23] or, in other words, to the so-called *scientific popularization* in the texts of tourist brochures [24].

Under ‘*scientific popularization*’ the French sociologist A. Mole understands a certain system of adult education that overlaps traditional education and continues it [25]. The peculiarity of the popular scientific style is that the main (accurate, hypothetical, estimated) information is reported to people who have little special knowledge or do not have it at all [26] that certainly contributes to a better perception of the information presented. We single out the example.

*Ici, aucun produit chimique n’est utilisé: l’entretien est assuré par les deux jardiniers du Pré Curieux. Les techniques douces sont testées: le désherbage thermique, le compostage et les engrais organiques [19]. – Here, no chemicals are used, maintenance is carried out by two gardeners. The well-proven soft techniques are tested: thermal weeding, composting and organic fertilizers.*

Despite peculiarity of the situation, which can hardly be attributed to ecotourism, but more to agriculture, the use of special scientific terms is reduced to a minimum – *le désherbage, le compostage et les engrais organiques*. The prevalence of common, widely comprehensible vocabulary of the type *jardinier – gardener* (not *dendrologue – dendrologist*) with a small fraction of using special terms, often semantically motivated, e.g., *le désherbage – weeding*, rather than getting rid of weeds in an environmentally friendly way, makes the message understandable to an addressee with medium level of education.

In tourist brochures, the style close to popular science is widely used with a particular didactic focus: *Alors, visitez, observez et respectez!* [19]. – *Visit, observe and respect!* Having been described the uniqueness of the garden Pré Curieux, and thus, justifying the importance of visiting the remarkable place by using estimation lexicon, the sender of tourist discourse encourages the recipient to get acquainted with the famous sight, reminding of careful attitude to nature.

Reducing categorical imperative referred to the “group of rigid addressing” [27] is achieved by compliance with the principle of Politeness formulated by G. Leech. The etiquette formula of politeness *Veillez* is used in the example given.

*Veillez déposer vos ordures ménagères dans les containers prévus à cet effet [28]. – Would you be courteous to place your household waste into the containers supplied for this purpose?*

To our mind, a soft non-authoritarian impulse to action is less critical, more respectful towards the addressee and quite effective. In the following case, referring to the strategies of expressing gratitude and trust being attributed to the emotional adjustment [29], the sender of tourist discourse thanks an addressee, i.e. a future tourist, for careful attitude to Corsica.

*Ami touriste, merci de nous aider à préserver la Corse telle que vous l'aimez! [30]. – Tourist-friend, thank you for helping us keep Corsica the way as you like it!*

In psychology, such behavior is called *laissez-faire attitude*, which can be characterized by a quote from Lao-Tzu's treatise "If I refrain from ordering people, they behave correctly. If I do not impose anything on people, they become themselves" [31].

The addresser of tourist discourse tends to interaction, facilitated with the creation of a psychological comfort factor "together" and intimidation; the neutral position of the addresser (achieved by using pronouns *nous* or *on* for self-designation); strategies of cooperation. As R. G. Piotrovskiy underlined, the use of the indefinite-personal verbal form which has ability to "veil", "dissolve" the personality of a speaker, can soften the rigidity of a statement [32] being noticed in the following example.

*Et si on adoptait un code de «Bonne conduite»? [10]. – Should we adopt a code of good conduct?*

In the quoted tourist brochure "Chamonix" there are some guidelines that should be followed in order not to harm fauna during the dormant winter period: not to use cell phones, not to allow pet dogs wandering, not to throw rubbish, etc. This set of rules is reflected in using *l'imparfait* – non-perfect indicative past tense, expressing proposals, pieces of advice; and creates an allusion to the famous "Tourist Codex". It is not an occasional emphasis on the fundamental difference between ecotourism and its other types; it is a matter of managing tourists' behavior in nature [1].

They distinguish two models of ecotourism [33]:

- 1) Australian – realized in the form of trips and traveling to predominantly virgin nature;
- 2) Western European – implemented into the cultural landscape and supports the same landscape.

It is obvious that the Western European model characterizes France, because there is not much wildlife, i.e. forests or shrubs, wheat fields or Alpine meadows are actually the result of human activity [34]. A certain confirmation of the *man-made nature* of France is found in the following text.

*Différents milieux aquatiques y ont été reconstitués afin de vous donner envie, plus tard, de découvrir et de protéger les marais, les ruisseaux qui existent près de chez vous [19]. – Various aquatic areas have been restored here in order to encourage you explore and protect the swamps, streams that are close to you.*

Not long time ago, ecotourism has focused on how to protect nature. Currently, tourists are reminded how they affect the environment, for example, the electronic ticket SNCF (National Company of French Railways) indicates that on official website or in the application for smart phones, you can track some data related to ecology.

*Pour calculer la quantité de gaz à effet de serre émise par votre voyage, rendez-vous sur [sncf.com](http://sncf.com) ou l'appli SNCF. – To find out the amount of greenhouse gases emitted during your trip, go to [sncf.com](http://sncf.com) or the SNCF app.*

We believe that this is done to ensure that a potential tourist who is not indifferent to environmental issues thinks about using less harmful means of transport and concerns for alternative ways of transportation that would be favourable for climate preservation on the planet.

*En vous informant des émissions de CO<sub>2</sub> de vos trajets, nous vous permettons de choisir le mode de transport le plus respectueux de l'environnement et ainsi contribuer à la lutte contre le changement climatique [35]. – By informing you of the CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) emissions during your journeys, we allow you to choose the most environmentally friendly transport and thus contribute to the fight against climate change.*

Many similar examples are reflected in tourist discourse of different linguocultures in line with the eco-oriented paradigm. Hence, summing up the study of the designated subject, we have obtained the following results to be highlighted, discussed and become a reserve for further investigations.

- A. Ecotourism is a dynamically developing, complex, interdisciplinary direction, providing interrelation of tourism interests, nature protection and culture. However, at the present stage, this form of activity in the world tourism industry is characterized by heterogeneity of approaches and principles of organization, outdated perception of the ecology-content and limited vision of the ecotourism concept.
- B. In a multilingual society or on the different language materials some trends in the development of ecological discourse can be traced. The connection of eco-discourse with ecolinguistics has its own aspects of additional researches. One of the ecological visions of a language involves the interpretation of the latter as an integral component of the whole chain existing between man, society and nature. A well-known cognitologist A. Kravchenko underlines that we need to talk about the language environment using the ecological concepts – *favourable/unfavourable, language environment pollution, experiments* on it [36], etc. A separate approach to ecolinguistics defines its purpose as the struggle for the conservation of language diversity.
- C. The ecological discourse as a present case study analyzed through the prism of French tourist discourse is a type of discourse conditioned by the communicative situations on ecological topics. Media discourse [37], textual fragments in tourist brochures, communication in social nets and on Internet platforms, using applications for smartphones – they all can act as components of ecological discourse. Within the environmental discourse, there appear specific genres, metaphorical

concepts, strategic potential, aimed at forming and increasing ecological awareness of modern tourists.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In implementing the concept of sustainable tourism and travel, great hopes are pinned on ecotourism, since it can contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the UN agenda on sustainable development for the period up to 2030: “end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all” [38].

The members at the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation state that along with projects such as Green Economy, Green Engineering (industry), Green Line (e.g. civil engineering project in Irkutsk), the development of ecotourism will contribute to the health improvement of the nation, so it should be paid significant attention [9].

A variety of demands in services, due to reducing mass (group) and expanding the segment of individual tourism, allows providing the market with fundamentally new tourist products that can and should be positioned as environmentally friendly.

In addition to the traditional types of travel services – accommodation at eco-hotels and excursions to conservation areas, the true environmental nature of which is controversial enough on the market there are offers beyond understanding definitions of ecotourism, e.g. tours in zones of ecological disasters, stalker tours, tours around the abandoned industrial zones and ghost-towns, *eco-volunteerism*. However, these activities have their consumers, and the volume of their realization is growing dynamically.

Hence, it is high time for a radical revision and conceptual understanding *ecotourism* phenomenon on a global scale. *Greening* (lit. ‘ecologization’) should become the paradigm of a whole tourism branch. Otherwise, tourism risks becoming a more harmful sphere of human activity than the common industrial complex of the twentieth century [8].

Thus, ecotourism is developing at a swift pace and becomes an integral part of education of ecological awareness and, therefore, the progress of ecological-oriented civilization.

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