



**HAL**  
open science

## The positioning of English as a key skill in the labour market of Marseille's Tourist Office

Adam Wilson

► **To cite this version:**

Adam Wilson. The positioning of English as a key skill in the labour market of Marseille's Tourist Office. *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 2018, 7, pp.21 - 32. 10.12681/ijltic.16164 . hal-01766646

**HAL Id: hal-01766646**

**<https://amu.hal.science/hal-01766646v1>**

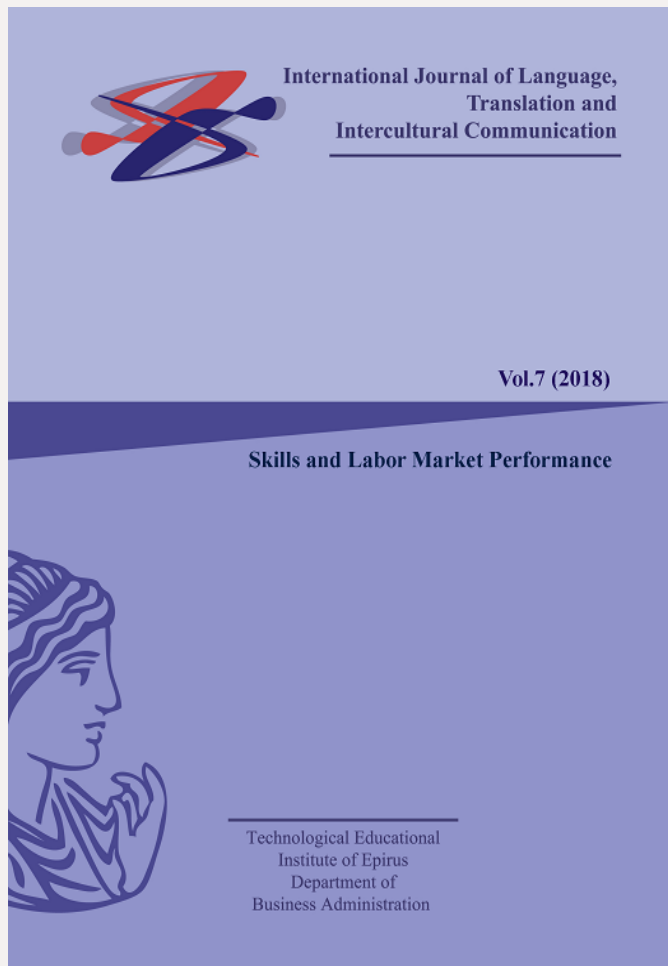
Submitted on 13 Apr 2018

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication

Vol. 7, 2018



## The positioning of English as a key skill in the labour market of Marseille's Tourist Office

WILSON ADAM

Aix Marseille Université,  
CNRS, LPL, Aix-en-  
Provence, France

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/ijltic.16164>

Copyright © 2018 ADAM WILSON



### To cite this article:

WILSON, A. (2018). The positioning of English as a key skill in the labour market of Marseille's Tourist Office. *International Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication*, 7, 21-32.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/ijltic.16164>

## The positioning of English as a key skill in the labour market of Marseille's Tourist Office

Adam Wilson

(Aix Marseille Université, CNRS, LPL, Aix-en-Provence, France)

[adam.wilson@lpl-aix.fr](mailto:adam.wilson@lpl-aix.fr)

### Abstract

*Marseille is reinventing itself as an urban tourist destination. The aim of this paper is to explore the effects that the resulting intensification of international tourism may have on the city, its population and its labour market. Drawing on previous research, language is shown to be a powerful lens through which to explore such phenomena. Therefore, an ethnographic research project was undertaken in Marseille's Tourist Office, focussing on language use in encounters between international tourists and tourist advisers. The analyses of these data presented here show that English facilitates communication between these parties and thus becomes an indispensable resource for those working at the Tourist Office. It is thus shown how the English language is a key skill in the Tourist Office's labour market and acts as a discriminatory factor in the recruitment of tourism professionals. In conclusion, some of the potential wider social repercussions are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, language, English, labour market, Marseille*

### 1 Introduction

Marseille is reinventing itself as an urban tourist destination. Despite being the second largest city in France – consistently the most visited country in the world by international tourists – and being surrounded by illustrious touristic regions, Marseille has never enjoyed a similar reputation. This may be linked to the city's reputation as dangerous, dirty and poverty stricken, a reputation which is itself no doubt linked to recent economic, demographic and social crises (Peraldi, Dupont and Samson, 2015). In an effort to address these crises, city authorities have been investing heavily in redevelopment projects aimed at renovating and regenerating Marseille. Increasing international tourism has been at the core of these initiatives and is seen, and promoted, as a potential saviour of the city, key to regeneration for businesses, current inhabitants and future generations (Peraldi et al., 2015).

Recently, these initiatives have begun to bear fruit. According to the City of Marseille Tourism Observatory (City of Marseille, 2016), the past 15 years have seen steady tourism arrivals across every point of entry. This is especially true for passengers arriving on cruise ships and those choosing low cost "budget" transport options which have developed considerably over the last 10 years, pointing not only to an increase in tourists visiting the city but also to a diversification of tourist profiles. This intensification of activity has led to the tourism industry becoming more and more important for the city and authorities suggest that just over 14,000 jobs in the city – where the population numbers just under 1 million – are directly or indirectly linked to tourism.

The rapid development of tourism in Marseille will clearly have important repercussions for the city and its population. However, up to present, there has been little to no research that has looked in detail at the potential impact of growth in this sector. How will the intensification of international tourism affect the city? How will it transform Marseille's labour market? What

effects will it have for the local population? This paper aims to address these questions by looking specifically at the role of language in Marseille's tourism labour market.

## 2 Tourism, labour and language

International tourism is one of the biggest industries in the world. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, there were 1,235 million international tourist arrivals in 2016, contributing to an industry worth \$1,220 billion (€1,102 billion) and indirectly responsible for 10% of the world's GDP (UNWTO, 2017). Tourism continues to grow and diversify the world over and has even been described as a "hallmark of globalisation" (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010a: 256) as it both reflects and contributes to global flows of people, capital, products and culture whilst also being a clear example of the global spread of neoliberalism.

It is not surprising then that tourism is one of the main sources of employment around the world with the UNWTO estimating that 1 in 10 jobs is in some way linked to tourism. As in any service industry, the workforce is central to the success of any tourist destination. As the intensification and diversification of tourism have brought increased competitiveness for market share and productivity growth, certain skill sets have become especially important for those wishing to enter the tourism labour market. Specialised qualifications in tourism are becoming increasingly *de rigueur* in order to gain employment and employers often look for other, less academic, skills such as previous experience, local knowledge and interpersonal communication skills.

Language is a key element of these communication skills. Tourism is an ever-diversifying international service industry that places huge importance on intercultural communication skills. What is more, much of the tourist experience itself is elaborated through language. It is a key tool in marketing the products, services and experiences offered by a tourist destination, contributing significantly to the positioning of destinations on the tourist market and, thus, to their image and identity (see Heller, Pulolar and Duchêne, 2014, among others). In this way, language is fundamental in elaborating the "tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990) – that is, the visual and sensory experiences tourists encounter through the "mise-en-scène" organised by destinations.

In short, language is crucial for the elaboration, promotion, delivery and consumption of tourist products, services and experiences. For this reason, linguistic skills are highly sought after in the tourism industry and constitute an indispensable resource for those working, or wishing to work, in the sector. It is difficult to mention language skills in a globalised industry such as tourism without evoking the use of English. Tourism can be considered as an international or intercultural situation *par excellence* and many studies have shown how English plays a dominant role in similar contexts (see House, 2003 or Phipps, 2006 on this point), often taking on the role of a *lingua franca* (ELF) to allow communication between diverse linguistic groups (see Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey, 2011). As a similarly global industry, one would expect to see English adopting a similar role in contexts of international tourism.

Despite the central role of language in tourism and the importance of language skills to employment in tourism, there has so far been very little work focussing on how language resources are deployed *in situ* by tourists and/or tourism professionals. While tourism has become a fervent field of research activity in sociolinguistics and the social sciences more widely, work has tended to focus on textual or other mediated forms of communication (see Dann, 1996; Jaworski and Thurlow 2010b, for example). While there have been some notable exceptions

focussing on language use in hotel reception interactions (Cheng 2004; Yuen 2009) and in guided tours (De Stefani & Mondada 2014; Vitorio 2014), analyses of the contextualised linguistic practices of social actors participating in the tourism industry have been relatively few and far between. Furthermore, despite the evident importance of English being used as a global lingua franca in such international situations, there has been very little work focussing on English use in face-to-face encounters in this sector. Blue & Harun's (2003) paper exploring patterns of English "hospitality language" use in hotel reception encounters constitutes perhaps the only major exception. Phipps (2006) touches on the use of English but focuses mainly on other languages when presenting tourism as a context for language learning.

This relative lack of research on language use in face-to-face tourist encounters is surprising given the importance of language in this sector. Added to this, research has shown how language skills can have an impact on employability and thus be linked to wider social dynamics. For example, Duchêne (2008; 2011) showed how skills in certain languages can improve employment prospects for individuals in the tourism sector as well as how language resources are often exploited without individuals necessarily receiving additional remuneration. These conclusions suggest that further research on the sociolinguistic dynamics of the tourism industry and their effects on those that work within it would be of both social and scientific importance.

This paper aims to address the issues raised above and contribute to existing scientific research on language and tourism by focussing on *in situ* language use in Marseille's tourist sector. In order to do so, the next section sets out the exact research questions, methodology and data of the study. Section 4 focusses on English and provides a detailed examination of its role in ensuring smooth communication between ever-diversifying international tourists and tourism professionals, showing how it constitutes an extremely important resource for participants in this context. Following this, in section 5, it will be shown how this situation leads to English becoming an indispensable skill for those wishing to enter into work in this industry. Two major repercussions of this will be discussed: firstly, how English – as a linguistic resource – becomes a discriminatory factor in the recruitment of tourist professionals and, secondly, the far-reaching social impact of this situation. Finally, a brief conclusion will be drawn.

### **3 Research questions, methodology and data**

This article aims to explore language use in spontaneous, naturally-occurring face-to-face encounters in Marseille's tourism sector. In order to achieve this, a long-term ethnographic fieldwork project was undertaken between 2014-2016 in one of the central institutions of Marseille's tourism industry: Marseille Tourist Office and Convention Bureau (TO). The TO forms the centre point for many tourists' visits to the city: 353,144 visitors in 2016, 56% of whom were international visitors (City of Marseille, 2016). Aside from this, it also acts as the institution in which the city's strategy for developing tourism is elaborated and put into action. The fieldwork comprised of undertaking observations, conducting interviews with tourists and various tourism professionals, collecting and analysing the different documents available at the TO (both public and internal) and recording interactions between tourists and the tourist advisers working on the TO's main information desk. This latter method produced a corpus of 93 transcribed and annotated audio recordings of interactions between international tourists and tourist advisers: the Marseille Interaction in Tourism corpus, or MITo (see Wilson, 2016).

The data collected will be used to examine how language is used in interaction at the TO in order to show how this leads to linguistic resources – and especially English given its apparent importance in such an intercultural situation – becoming a skill central to this profession. It will also allow insight into the wider repercussions of these dynamics. The following research questions form the backbone of the study:

1. How is English used as a linguistic resource in interactions between international tourists and tourism professionals in face-to-face encounters in the Marseille Tourist Office and Convention Bureau?
2. How does English use in the Marseille Tourist Office and Convention Bureau contribute to the English language becoming a necessary skill in the labour market in this context? What are the effects and repercussions?

The mixed-method protocol adopted here, which combines ethnographic and interactional data, is particularly well adapted to answering these questions as it provides an opportunity to cross and combine fine-grained linguistic data with data obtained through observation and interviews. This provides a unique perspective as it allows language practices to be closely analysed in their context while also giving some insight into the rationale behind them. This approach will be used in the next section to explore how English is used as a linguistic resource in interaction before going on to discuss its role as a resource, or skill, relevant to the tourism labour market in Marseille.

#### **4 English as a key resource in face-to-face interactions at the Tourist Office**

The main objective of this section is to explore how English is used as a linguistic resource in interaction at the TO. In order to do so, the age-old question raised by Fishman (1965) must be addressed: “Who speaks what language to whom and when?” Data issued from the interactional analyses presented above allow a detailed exploration of this question at the TO and focussing on English in this context should shed light on how, why and to what ends this particular resource is used. As will be shown, when combined with elements from the ethnographic data, such a description provides a basis for discussing how English use in this context leads to it becoming a skill necessary for employment in Marseille’s tourism sector.

##### **4.1 Linguistic resource deployment at the Tourist Office**

The large quantity of interactional data – 93 interactions – collected for this study allows trends in language use to be identified across many different encounters involving many different participants. This gives some access to the “objective norms” (see Moreau, 1997: 218) – that is, observable, habitual and recurring patterns of language use – of the TO and allows us to see which languages are used in encounters between international tourists and tourist advisers. The following table shows the languages employed in the 93 interactions that make up the MITo corpus. For each language observed, the table specifies whether this was as a “primary resource”, in which the language in question was the principal language of interaction or as a “secondary resource”, that is, a language which was not the main language of the encounter but which was used sporadically, usually as a strategy to resolve problems in understanding.

Table 1. Linguistic resources used in the Marseille Tourist Office and Convention Bureau

Language	Primary Resource	Secondary Resource	TOTAL
----------	------------------	--------------------	-------

	(n° interactions)	(n° interactions)	(n° interactions)
French	57	24	81
English	26	13	39
German	4	7	11
Italian	3	5	8
Spanish	3	2	5

(Source: MITo Corpus (Wilson, 2016))

These (admittedly simplistic) data reveal a number of important points. Firstly, despite the MITo corpus being made up of 138 participants coming from at least 18 different countries (and no doubt a larger number of linguistic groups), only five different languages were observed in use in encounters between tourists and advisers. Secondly, of these five languages, there are clearly two that stand out as playing a more dominant role. In purely quantitative terms, French and English dominate the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu 1982) of the TO.

It is important to note that French is by far the most prevalent language used in this context. This is interesting as none of the tourists participating in the corpus use French as a first language (as is also the case for some of the advisers). This suggests that French seemingly still has value as a lingua franca in such an international situation (notwithstanding the fact that the corpus was collected in a French institution in metropolitan France). While not the focus here, this role of French is noteworthy and will be explored in a future study.

Of more interest to this paper is the position of English in the above table. Aside from French, English is the language that stands out above the others, used in 28% of interactions as a primary resource and present in any form in 42% of the encounters observed in the TO. This establishes English as a key linguistic resource mobilised in interactions between tourists and advisers. Exploring in more detail when participants deploy English as a linguistic resource will shed light on exactly which participants use it, when and why.

#### 4.2 The key role of English

In order to explore the mobilisation of English at the TO in more detail, it would seem important to focus on the tourists. Tourists are the *raison d'être* for the TO and, as such, everything in this situation is geared towards them. If a tourist wishes to speak a certain language, the onus is on the advisers to accommodate them (or on the TO to provide someone who can). It must then be revealed which international tourists speak English in order to explore how English is used as a linguistic resource at the TO.

These tourists can be split into two groups: those who speak English as a first language (L1) and those who speak another L1 but who use English in their encounters with TO advisers. The easiest group of tourists to identify who employ English at the TO are those who come from predominantly English-speaking countries or, at least, those who use English as an L1. Over the past five years, the predominantly English-speaking countries of the UK, the USA and Canada have been high on the lists compiled by the TO that give a breakdown of the number of tourists visiting Marseille per country of origin. There has also been a consistently high number of visitors from Australia and Ireland. This linguistic group thus makes up one of the most important demographics for Marseille's tourism sector and, together, these tourists are responsible for a large part of tourist activity in the city and are seen as a key target both for maintaining and increasing this activity. The use of English in interactions between advisers and international tourist allows advisers to accommodate these tourists linguistically (Giles, Coupland and

Coupland, 1991). This ensures the smooth running of interaction between these participants and thus, in part, the smooth running of the tourists' experience in Marseille.

While taking L1 English speakers into account is clearly important, they are not the majority group of English users in the TO. Of the 26 interactions in which English was used as a primary resource, only 7 (or 27%) included an L1 English-speaking tourist from the countries mentioned above. The remaining 19 (73%) encounters in which English is used as a primary resource involve speakers of an L1 other than English (or French). These speakers constitute then the majority group of English users at the TO and are also highly heterogeneous in nature: in the corpus, English is used by and with tourists from countries as varied as Brazil, China, Japan and Portugal.

The situation of this second, majority, group is a little more complex than that of advisers converging to the L1 of L1 English speakers. In this case, participants converge towards a common language when French or the tourist's L1 are not available (or the participants do not want to use them). It is clear then that English is often called upon to play the role of a vehicular language or lingua franca in the context of the TO. When neither tourist nor adviser are able (or willing) to converge to the other's language, English is clearly the language of choice for the participants. In the MITo corpus, no other language plays such a role and English is never rejected when proposed in such a situation. Simply put, English allows international tourists and tourist advisers from different linguistic groups to communicate when, without this resource, communication may otherwise be extremely difficult (or impossible).

The data discussed above allows us to clarify how English is used as a linguistic resource in interactions between international tourists and tourist advisers in the TO. English is used in communication with two main groups of tourists: L1 English speakers from predominantly English-speaking countries and as a lingua franca with tourists who do not speak French but whose L1 is not English. English thus ensures communication between advisers and a large number of international tourists. In this way, it allows much of the business of the TO to be undertaken as it allows communication between a key customer demographic and the service providers.

These findings are not particularly revolutionary; many studies have shown how English adopts a lingua franca role in similarly globalised situations (see Jenkins et al., 2011). While this is much less well explored in touristic contexts, making similar findings is perhaps not surprising. However, the research approach adopted in this paper allows us to go beyond these findings and explore how the situation described above leads to English proficiency becoming considered as a key skill in the labour market in Marseille's tourism sector.

## **5 English as a key skill on the Tourist Office labour market**

The previous section explored how English functions as a linguistic resource in face-to-face encounters at the TO. It was shown how English is often deployed in this context in order to facilitate, or even allow, communication between advisers and a large range of international tourists. This leads to English becoming a key resource necessary for carrying out the business of the TO. This section explores how this status as a key resource results in English becoming a necessary skill for those navigating the labour market of Marseille's tourism sector. Certain wider consequences of this situation will then be discussed.



## 5.1 English as a professional skill

As in any professional sphere, those wishing to work at the TO, or in tourism more widely, must meet certain criteria in order to gain employment. As mentioned above, this can include certain formal qualifications but great importance is also accorded to more other criteria such as local knowledge or interpersonal skills. As noted, language skills are an example of such criteria. In fact, linguistic proficiency is at the forefront of what is sought by those responsible for human resources at the TO, as evidenced by the extract below taken from an interview with one of the TO managers (DO).

DO: “ouh alors il y pas un parcours type, en général, quand je recrute, moi je prends des gens qui ont des BTS tourisme, parce que c'est ce qui se rapproche le plus de ce qu'on va leur demander sur le terrain, voilà. Donc ce qui veut dire, c'est des gens qui parlent des langues étrangères, et c'est des gens qui ont une très très bonne connaissance du territoire, et de plus en plus, de la vente”

DO: “*there's no typical route, in general, when I recruit, I take people who have a BTS Tourisme [the French national secondary-level tourism qualification] because it's the closest to what they're going to be doing working here. So what that means is, people who speak foreign languages, people who know the area very very well, and more and more, people who know how to sell*”

In this extract, DO clearly gives language skills an important position in the list of factors used when recruiting tourist advisers. In fact, DO seems to suggest that the ability to speak foreign languages is perhaps the most important outcome of people following BTS Tourisme training, even if this is not the main focus of this particular qualification. This highlights the central importance of language not only to the activity of advising tourists at the TO but also to the recruitment process. In other words, skills in foreign languages are explicitly noted as being one of the most important criteria when hiring new tourist advisers. The reasoning behind this promotion of foreign language skills is explored by DO in the following extract.

DO: “le langage chez nous c'est important parce que si on s'exprime mal forcément les gens ils comprendront mal, d'autant qu'on a souvent affaire à des étrangers, d'où l'intérêt de leur parler de la meilleur façon possible [...] oui il faut s'adapter au client quoi [...] les étrangers, faut arriver à parler de façon à ce qu'il nous comprennent”

DO: “*language is very important here [at the TO] because if we express ourselves badly, people won't understand, especially seeing as we're often dealing with foreigners, so we have to speak with them as best we can [...] yes we have to adapt to the customer [...] foreigners, we have to speak to them in such a way that they understand*”

Here, DO shows the key role that language plays in both ensuring understanding between adviser and tourist and adapting to the “customer” as much as possible. This underlines just how important language skills are for conducting the day-to-day business of the TO and ensuring the TO, as a business, succeeds.

At this point, it is useful to once again make reference to the interactional data studied in the previous section. While none of the managers of the TO explicitly mention English when talking about the importance of language skills, it is clear from the data discussed previously that English is one of the main ways (along with French) in which advisers can “adapt to the customer” when dealing with international tourists by speaking “in such a way that they understand”. So, while never explicitly discussing the importance of English, the TO management nevertheless show an acute understanding of its significance. Indeed, they know that English is the only language that students are guaranteed to study in the BTS Tourisme course (instruction in another language

does take place but this language varies from institution to institution). Therefore, a BTS Tourisme qualification should equate to a certain (fairly advanced) level of English proficiency.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the TO management's understanding of the importance of English can be found in the observations made in the field regarding the employment of advisers. Every single adviser hired by the TO has the necessary linguistic skills and proficiency in order to conduct their day-to-day tasks in English (and in French) and all of the advisers were witnessed doing this on a regular basis. Clearly, English skills are a central concern in the hiring process at the TO.

In sum, the ethnographic data explored above can be combined with the main findings of the interactional data analysis presented in the previous section to conclude that English constitutes a key skill required by TO advisers. It is a skill necessary both in the context of face-to-face encounters at the TO, as shown by the interactional data, and in the context of the labour market, as shown in this section. Advisers are key to the performance of the TO and English constitutes a key resource in allowing them to improve and maintain this performance. The management shows a clear understanding of this situation as they treat English proficiency as a necessary skill required by their employees. Therefore, in much the same way as more formal qualifications, English skills become necessary for those wishing to obtain, or, indeed, retain, employment at the TO.

The elevation of English to the level of a necessary skill for access to employment accords huge value to English in Bourdieusian terms – that is, as a resource on the linguistic marketplace of the TO. As has previously been shown in myriad sociolinguistic work (see Heller, 2003; Blommaert, 2010 or Duchêne 2011, for example), any such reconfiguration of a linguistic marketplace has repercussions that go far beyond the marketplace itself. The final section discusses these implications.

## 5.2 English as a discriminatory factor in employment

English has accrued such value on the linguistic marketplace of the TO that proficiency in the language constitutes a key skill required for access to, and maintenance of, employment in this context. Clearly then, it is not only English as a linguistic resource on a linguistic marketplace to which value is given but also, and especially, to individuals with this resource in their repertoire on the labour market. Simply put, potential TO employees who speak English are favoured over those who do not. This leads to a situation in which a linguistic skill – itself given value due to its (perceived and real) capacity to facilitate the business of the TO and thus boost economic success – becomes central to the career success of those wishing to work in this institution.

Human resource management at the TO is thus based, at least in part, on linguistic factors (see Duchêne 2008 for another example). Advisers are selected and managed based, partly, on their language skills and English (and French) function somewhat as “golden tickets” in this situation. Lack of these skills could be a deal-breaker for otherwise promising candidates and high proficiency in these languages could result in certain candidates being considered where otherwise they may not have been. In this way, the TO provides an excellent example of the Bourdieusian idea of the “exchangeability” of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1982). English proficiency, as symbolic capital, can be “exchanged” for economic capital through contributing to the chances of being employed, and thus paid, in this supposedly lucrative sector.

The wider repercussions of the above situation are clear to see for those wishing to be employed at the TO. Those who do not have the required linguistic skills are, by and large, excluded from employment in this sector. In other words, the configuration of the linguistic marketplace that gives huge value to English has the potential to seriously disadvantage a large group of candidates who do not have proficiency in the language, even though they may otherwise be highly qualified and competent. In this way, linguistic skills become a barrier to employment, creating forms of segregation, exclusion and inequality in the labour market.

English thus becomes a discriminatory factor in access to the labour market of the TO. It is very important to contextualise this point as English is not necessarily perceived to be one of the most widespread resources among the population local to the TO or Marseille more generally. Although forming part of both the obligatory French school system and the majority of tourism training institutions, English proficiency does not seem to be seen as highly prevalent among candidates for employment at the TO who come from the local area. This is highlighted by DO when answering a question regarding the challenges of employing good tourist advisers.

DO: le problème des français c'est qu'ils parlent pas de langues étrangères à part le français [...] c'est très difficile de trouver des gens qui parlent correctement des langues étrangères, c'est pour ça que souvent on fait appel à des étrangers

DO: *the problem with french people is that they don't speak any foreign languages except french [...] it's very difficult to find people who speak foreign languages well, that's why we often call upon foreigners*

This extract shows how there is a clear effort to recruit advisers who speak foreign languages. This desire is such that DO explains how the TO is willing to bring in employees from elsewhere to make up for what is perceived as a lack of these linguistic skills locally. What's more, this often involves employing individuals without the French diplomas that are supposedly paramount when recruiting advisers. This suggests that language skills – and especially English skills given its importance as a linguistic resource – can even take precedent over other, more “quantifiable” and supposedly more important essential skills or qualifications.

In the above extract, DO also seems to suggest that the linguistic resources sought by the TO are difficult to find in Marseille. This is hugely important when assessing the impact of these dynamics on the local population. As mentioned in the introduction to this article, international tourism has been heralded by the city authorities as something that will benefit Marseille and all its inhabitants by provoking regeneration and redevelopment, providing a solution to the crises endured by the city and subsequent problems of inequality. In short, the local population is supposed to benefit from the growing presence of international tourists and the effects this will have. While it could be argued that increasing tourism has delivered on certain promises – by inciting a gradual increase in the population and improving the city's financial situation (Peraldi et al., 2015), for example – the current research suggests that it also brings new forms of social exclusion, segregation and inequality.

The promotion, or adding of value, to one specific linguistic resource (or one small group of linguistic resources) in a given marketplace necessarily leads to the depreciation in value of other linguistic resources. In the case of the TO, there are a huge amount of linguistic resources that have little or no value in this marketplace, some of which are highly present in the local linguistic marketplace. Research projects have shown large communities of speakers of languages such as Arabic, Comorian, Turkish or Armenian (AGAM, 2015), to name but a few, and some suggest that the resulting plurilingualism could even be considered as a defining characteristic of

Marseille (see Gasquet-Cyrus, 2000 on this point). However, seeing as these languages are not perceived to be of economic interest to the tourism industry, skills in these languages have no “exchangeability” in the TO’s linguistic marketplace. Moreover, as identified by one of the TO managers above, English proficiency in this local population is not perceived as being high.

The TO thus values a very specific type of plurilingualism which only involves a small number of very specific languages (identified in section 4). Other types of plurilingualism, involving other, more “local”, language practices and not involving English or other languages perceived as economically important, have little or no currency on the TO’s labour market. In theory, this leads to the exclusion of a large part of the local urban population from employment in this sector. This creates real forms of segregation despite the fact that the development of the tourism sector in Marseille has overtly been promised to do the opposite. While this segregation may be of linguistic origin, it clearly leads to, and mirrors, other phenomena of segregation and exclusion observed with the arrival of international tourism in Marseille, whether they be geographical, social or economic (Peraldi et al., 2015).

In conclusion, the status of English as a necessary skill for access to the labour market of the TO gives value to those who dispose of this linguistic resource in their repertoire and puts them in a privileged position on the labour market. Conversely, those with little English proficiency see themselves excluded. In short then, linguistic repertoire plays a key role in the labour market performance of individuals in this sector in Marseille. It has been shown how the sought after linguistic skill of English is not necessarily perceived to be the most common among the local population, leading to the exclusion of large swathes of Marseille’s inhabitants from employment in this sector. This has serious potential consequences and could ultimately lead to social segregation, exclusion and inequality among the local population despite the fact that Marseille has put its faith in tourism to rectify its existing problems of this nature. The TO of Marseille thus provides another example as to how tourism promises an answer to social division and inequality yet also produces new forms of privilege and handicap which are sometimes difficult to spot but nevertheless lead to inequality.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to determine how the intensification of international tourism in Marseille might affect the city, its local population and its labour market. Language use at the city’s tourist office was chosen as a prism through which to explore these questions. More specifically, this paper set out to show, firstly, how English is used as a linguistic resource in encounters between international tourists and tourist advisers, secondly, how English becomes a necessary skill in the labour market and, thirdly, the wider impact of these phenomena.

It has been shown how English facilitates communication between TO advisers and ever-diversifying international tourists, whether they be L1 English speakers or not and thus constitutes a key resource for the functioning, success and growth of the TO. Following this, it was shown how this situation leads to English becoming an indispensable skill for those wishing to work at the TO. Then, it was shown how this leads to English acting as a discriminatory factor in the recruitment of tourism professionals, which favours those with English proficiency and disadvantages those without. Finally, some of the potential social repercussions were highlighted. More specifically, it was shown that the sought-after nature of English at the TO seems to benefit non-locals due to the fact that English proficiency is not perceived as being particularly prevalent among the local population. As such, it was argued that the TO provides an example of how

tourism is a situation in which social segregation and inequality are created through language in an industry which is supposed to benefit all.

This paper consolidates the findings of some of the past research mentioned previously. At the TO, the linguistic marketplace is inherently shaped along economic lines: linguistic resources are given (or not given) value according to how they are perceived to facilitate (or not facilitate) the business of the TO. This leads to a corresponding shaping of the labour market along linguistic lines, which has a direct effect on individuals' professional trajectories. In this way, the TO constitutes an example of a situation in which language practices in ultimately fleeting interactions can be linked to much larger social dynamics, concerning both individuals' lives and social life more generally. Given this, it would seem of paramount importance to continue research on the role of language in the tourism labour market, not only for the scientific study of language and society but also in exposing, and combatting, social inequalities.

## References

- AGAM. (2015). Qui sont les Marseillais ? Radioscopie des habitants. *Regards de l'AGAM*, 28. Retrieved 30/09/2017 from <http://www.agam.org/fr/publications/regards-de-lagam/regards-de-lagam-n28.html>
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blue, G.M. & Harun, M. (2003). Hospitality language as a professional skill. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22, 73–91.
- Bourdieu, P. (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire: L'économie des échanges linguistiques*. Paris: Fayard.
- Cheng, W. (2004). // did you [TOOK] // from the miniBAR //: what is the practical relevance of a corpus-driven language study to practitioners in Hong Kong's hotel industry?. In U. Connor & T. Upton (eds). *Discourse in the Professions: Perspectives from corpus linguistics* (pp.146-166). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- City of Marseille. (2016). Marseille Tourism Observatory: Key Figures 2016. Marseille: City of Marseille. Retrieved 30/09/2017 from <http://fr.calameo.com/read/002243401dbcd0c813eeb>
- Dann, G. (1996). *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Wallingford: CAB International.
- De Stefani, E. & Mondada, L. (2014). Reorganizing Mobile Formations: When “Guided” Participants Initiate Reorientations in Guided Tours. *Space and Culture* 17, 157–175.
- Duchêne, A. (2008). Marketing, management and performance: multilingualism as commodity in a tourism call centre. *Language Policy* 8, 27–50.
- Duchêne, A. (2011). Néolibéralisme, inégalités sociales et plurilinguisme : l'exploitation des ressources langagières et des locuteurs. *Langage et société*, 136(2), 81–108.
- Fishman, J.A. (1965). Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When? *La Linguistique* 1(2), 67–88.
- Gasquet-Cyrus, M. (2000). Villes plurilingues et imaginaire linguistique—Le cas de Marseille. In L.-J. Calvet & A. Moussirou-Mouyama (eds.), *Actes du colloque international sur les villes plurilingues, Libreville* (pp. 369–386). Paris: Didier.
- Giles, H., Coupland, J. & Coupland, N. (eds.) (1991). *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heller, M. (2003). *Éléments d'une sociolinguistique critique*. Paris: Didier France.

- Heller, M., Pujolar, J. & Duchêne, A. (2014). Linguistic commodification in tourism. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 18, 539–566.
- House, J. (2003). English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 556–578.
- Jaworski, A. & Thurlow, C. (2010a). Language and the Globalizing Habitus of Tourism: Toward A Sociolinguistics of Fleeting Relationships. In N. Coupland (ed.), *The Handbook of Language and Globalization* (pp. 255–286). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell,.
- Jaworski, A. & Thurlow, C. (2010b). *Tourism Discourse. Language and Global Mobility*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, J., Cogo, A. & Dewey, M. (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching* 44, 281–315.
- Moreau, M.-L. (1997). *Sociolinguistique: les concepts de base*. Paris: Editions Mardaga.
- Peraldi, M., Dupont, C. & Samson, M. (2015). *Sociologie de Marseille*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Phipps, A.M. (2006). *Learning the Arts of Linguistic Survival: Languaging, Tourism, Life*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- UNWTO. (2017). UNWTO Tourism Highlights. 2017 Edition. United Nations World Tourism Organisation. Retrieved 30/09/2017 from <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284419029>
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze*. London: SAGE.
- Vitorio, R.V.M. (2014). Inequality, mobility, and super-diversity: Linguistic ideologies and performances in the Philippine tourism industry. Unpublished Master's degree thesis, National University of Singapore, Singapore.
- Wilson, A. (2016). Dynamiques sociolinguistiques de la globalisation : l'exemple de l'Office du Tourisme de Marseille. Unpublished PhD thesis, Aix Marseille University, Aix-en-Provence, France.
- Yuen, W.L. (2009). An investigation of the politeness phenomena in hotel service encounters. Unpublished PhD thesis, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR.

### About the Author

**Adam WILSON** is currently “maître de langue étrangère” in the Département d'études du monde anglophone (DEMA) at Aix Marseille Université and affiliated with the Laboratoire Parole et Langue (LPL). He defended his PhD thesis, dealing with the sociolinguistic dynamics of globalisation, in 2016. His on-going research continues his work on this theme by focussing especially on language use in tourism