

English Language Use in Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

English language plays a vital role in learning and developing English for specific purposes curriculum mainly in the service sectors like tourism where in speaking and listening is of utmost significance. Nowadays, the role of English has attained a cogent importance for the tourism industry as an international means to communicate, negotiate, and execute transactions with tourists. Since tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the world today, it plays an important role in the world economy too. Despite the need for communicating effectively for the service persons engaged in jobs related to tourism industry, they still suffer from some incompetence while communicating in these contexts. Misunderstandings and communication breakdowns are said to mark many intercultural encounters as participants rely on the norms of their mother tongue and native culture to perceive meaning in a foreign language. This is equally valid in the field of tourism, where good command of this language, sometimes at a choice with another international language, represents a requirement in an important number of occupational standards in tourism jobs. However, whether English is part of occupational standards in tourism or not, it is certain that it represents a real asset both for employment and for career advancement in the field. Furthermore, it is a fact beyond doubt that good competences of this language represent the basis for achieving customer satisfaction, given that outbound tourist flows within the travel and tourism industry have constantly increased at global level lately. The three most relevant functions in using English language are giving information, providing services and products and offering help for a complete satisfaction of the visitors, tourists and information seekers. The study in hand reveals the needs and problems of English language use by the tourism people working directly and indirectly in tourism industry mainly in India. It explains that speaking is much more important, then listening, reading and writing.

Key Words : English language, Communication, Tourism, Uses of language

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an interface for knowledge, awareness and cultural exchange, facilitating the interaction between the involved communities and visitors from local and abroad levels. Economic benefits aside, outside contact and communications draws attention to the host communities. Humans have been always found curious to interact with others and their cultures, learn and understand their traditions and even confront themselves with new developments and perspectives on life and society. Thus tourism is taken largely an experience driven industry, and local culture is a unique experience – more

so local personality, hospitality and food than “built attractions.” The more one knows and learns about a destination, the more fulfilling and satisfying the experience will be. Tourism can be used as a tool for raising awareness specially to raise awareness of local issues and needs. There is a global trend towards investment in interpretation of natural and cultural resources. Attraction to natural and heritage icons often helps fund conservation efforts and provides opportunities for effective management of sensitive and significant areas. However, cultural attractions are not the sole draw card for visitation but provide one of many experiences.

For a common man, tourism looks easy going for

travellers but in fact is a complex industry for the stakeholders that involve a broad range of businesses, organisations and government agencies working in great coordination together at different levels to deliver a complete tourism experience. Each front in the chain contributes to the overall holiday experience of the customer in the name of visitors and tourists - from initial attractions marketing through to the ground level know-how. The very intentions of the Indian Government to protect and care tourism sector initiated in almost in the mid of fourth decade of the century and is still continuing with an objective to make India a world known destination.

Over the decades, tourism has experienced rapid and continued growth deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism has now become a thriving global industry with the power to shape the developing countries in both positive and negative ways. No doubt, it has today become the fourth largest industry in the global economy. Similarly, in developing countries like India, tourism has become one of the major sectors of the economy, contributing to a large proportion of the National Income and generating huge employment opportunities. It is the fastest growing service industry in the country declared with great potentials for its further expansion and diversification.

Great communication skills are among the most critical aspects of a job for anyone in the customer oriented industry like that of tourism and travel management, and business process management (BPM) industry as a whole. Often, large BPM companies are also global players, with employees spread in various locations, serving clients and customers from countries and cultures all over the world based on the communication skills one have to interact, understand and convince the other side. Customer service – helping millions of people meet their needs or get the most out of a product or service – is also delivered through various channels that customers use to get help for telecommunications, financial, technology or healthcare products or services they use as voice interaction through phone, or email, chat, SMS or social media. Those who provide customers excellent services are trained world-class professionals – and we have it right here that they have great communication skills. The skills they possess and continue to have in the job which also become of life - long career and personal value.

The ability to communicate accurately, clearly and courteously is vital for anyone who wants to have a successful career and more so when we talk of careers in tourism sector.

Objectives:

- 1) To learn and know the relation of English language in tourism sectors.
- 2) To study the needs of English language use in tourism and
- 3) To find out the ways for learning English language as per tourism requirements.

English language and tourism sectors:

English language plays a vital role in learning and developing English for specific purposes curriculum mainly in the service sectors like tourism where in speaking and listening is of utmost significance. Nowadays, the role of English has attained a cogent importance for the tourism industry as an international means to communicate, negotiate, and execute transactions with tourists. Since tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the world today, it plays an important role in the world economy too.

Most of these tourism working people live in countries where English is required for external purposes: to communicate and do business with people in other countries and to catch up with the advances in the field of tourism business. In addition, English is used as a means to share and transfer thoughts and cultures and to create good relationships between people in different countries. As a result, English has become an international language and is widely used as a medium for understanding and exchanging ideas among people all over the world.

As the tourism earnings stand much higher than the income compared to the other service industries and creating a variety and multi level of jobs in tourism and tourism related activities, many education institutions both government and private Indian Universities and colleges, offer undergraduate level English courses related to tourism business for students who intend to work in tourism or hospitality industry after graduation or even at under graduate levels. These English courses are involved with the language which is associated with host-guest interaction in the service business, should be termed as the language of interaction of tourism industry.

Due to great success of many nations in promoting tourism to increase the number of foreign tourist's inflow,

tourism needs to be further developed. Due to its promotion, the role of tourism industry in generating income and creating jobs had increased manifolds. To be good hosts therefore, the people who are directly involved in tourism business should improve their English especially in terms of the language used in hospitality industry. At present, tourism employees who work in international tour companies around the world especially in India have more chances to use English because of the number of foreigners who come to visit to this great land of unity in diversity and an attraction for all reasons and seasons. Although these tourism employees are tried best to be skillful and are trained to use English in real situations using the syllabus written by the experts of the field, a formal need analysis to help determine the requirements of the English course for tourism employees has never been conducted in the area and English has so far been taught without systematical survey of needs. Following communications skills can be summed up to grow and succeed in the customer management industry like that of travel and tourism specially as:

- 1) Active listening
- 2) Accent comprehension
- 3) Fluency
- 4) Clarity of Thought and Speech
- 5) Pronunciation
- 6) Tone
- 7) Rate of Speech
- 8) Presentation of Ideas / Introduction of Concepts
- 9) Cultural Sensitivity and Adeptness
- 10) Confidence
- 11) Appropriate Response
- 12) Open mindedness to adapt to global environment

The more of these skills an employee has and hones on the job, the better suited and successful he/she will be. If you are someone with great communication skills, wish to get trained and further master those skills to become a world-class professional, having a zeal to grow, the customer management industry specially the tourism industry is the perfect entry for you to grow!

Needs of english language use in tourism:

Despite the need for communicating effectively for the service persons engaged in jobs related to tourism industry, they still suffer from some incompetence while communicating in these contexts. Misunderstandings and communication breakdowns are said to mark many intercultural encounters as participants rely on the norms

of their mother tongue and native culture to perceive meaning in a foreign language. This is equally valid in the field of tourism, where good command of this language, sometimes at a choice with another international language, represents a requirement in an important number of occupational standards in tourism jobs. However, whether English is part of occupational standards in tourism or not, it is certain that it represents a real asset both for employment and for career advancement in the field. Furthermore, it is a fact beyond doubt that good competences of this language represent the basis for achieving customer satisfaction, given that outbound tourist flows within the travel and tourism industry have constantly increased at global level lately.

The needs for learning and application of the English language has been one of the key factors and an integral part of English for specific purpose (ESP) practitioners; i.e. researchers, course designers, material developers, testers, evaluators as well as classroom teachers for many years and it has now become need of the hour in trade and commerce sector too as globalization of the event specifically the tourism industry is taking place. It is the process of establishing what and how a course of learning English will run that could be helpful for the doer in his career and promotion. The word need have been defined many ways by various scholars like

– Firstly needs can be taken up as learners study or job requirements; that is, what they have to be able to demonstrate at the end of their language course. Widowson views this type of needs as a goal-oriented.

– Secondly, needs can be defined as what the learner has to actually do to acquire the language. According to Widowson, this is a process-oriented definition of needs and is related to transitional behaviour, the tool for learning.

– Thirdly, needs can refer to what the learners themselves would like to gain from the language course. This implies that learners may have personal aims, in addition, to the requirements of their study or job; in other words, wants or desires and

– Finally, needs may be interpreted as lacks, that is, what the learners do not know or cannot do in English.

The needs analysis involves seeking and interpreting information needs at the end of a language course and can be called a target situation analysis (TSA). This is the best known frame work for a TSA type of needs analysis which concentrates on communication purposes, communication settings and the means of communication,

language skills, functions, and structure. In addition, in terms of types of needs, Mackay divides the needs into two types - the former is academic needs where English is required for further academic study. For example, medical students requiring English in order to understand the lectures or read medical textbooks in English. The latter is job needs where English is required in order to perform a particular job, such as, technicians requiring English in order to work on a project in which English is used.

The various studies showed that the majority of the tourism employees rated all four skills as highly needed. This may be explained by the fact that since tourism industry has been promoted for many years, there are many foreigners who visit the lands out of their usual place of residence and as a result of this, tourism employees have had a great deal of opportunity to use English when guiding the foreign visitors and tourists at the tourist attractions existing in various forms like fairs & festivals and international events like sports all over world. Therefore, it could be said that they tend to use English more to communicate with the foreigners which indicates that English is highly important to travel agents, tour operators, hotel managers, guides and escorts and flight managers etc. It has also been observed that most tourism employees perceived speaking as the most important skill, followed by listening, writing and reading, respectively.

Speaking is needed for tourism employees to function in their routine work. It is perhaps explained by the fact that speaking is important because they need to guide, escort, interact or communicate with others, especially, with the visitors and tourists from abroad. This finding clearly supports claim stating that the respondents perceived face to face oral events mostly often required them to function in their routine work in which the learners believed that speaking was their greatest need.

Listening enquiries are the most important because it is the key factor that leads tourism employees to understand the things that the foreign tourists would need and want when they ask for tourism information.

With regard to reading skill, it is ranked as the third most used skill. This may be because tourism employees must look for and read the tourist information when foreign tourists ask for more in-depth information about the tourist attractions. Moreover, tourism employees must read information that is often requested by foreign tourists, such as, the price and characteristics of souvenirs, foods

and facilities. This finding supports which ranked reading as the third important skill.

Compared with the other three skills, writing was viewed as the least important by tourism employees. This is perhaps explained by the fact that writing is only used when tourist employees prepare and outline the information that they give to the foreign tourists. The result is consistent with several studies which are found that writing was ranked as less important than the other skills and lesser than oral communication.

With regard to the use of the main functions, the tourism employees employed English for information, followed by providing services, and offering help. This clearly explains that all three types of functions are crucial and requires specific language use in the tourism industry. Often this happens when tourism employees viewed as the hospitality language that is frequently used in the hospitality industries like the tourism industry. In addition, the shows that providing services, giving information and offering help are frequently used by the personnel in the tourist business.

English language use in tourism industry:

It is generally accepted that English is regarded as a foreign language in most of the countries especially of the Asian, African and European continents. Most of such people like we Indians, study English only at schools to communicate with speakers of the language or read texts using the target language. In fact, we rarely use English in our daily routine life. As a result, a common man faces problems when communicating with foreigners or the ones who speak English. Similar is the case with the tourism employees who face a major problem when they are in contact with foreign visitors and tourists. Their usual problems are using inappropriate words and expressions in speaking, being unable to understand foreign accents, having inadequate vocabulary in reading, and lacking grammar knowledge in writing.

This may be explained that not all tourist employees can speak English fluently. Some may use English like a native speaker while others may be able to use a little English or cannot communicate with the language at all. Therefore, it is possible that the tourism employees cannot comprehend and listen to a variety of English accents accurately, choose the appropriate words and expressions, use correct grammar when they speak, read and write about tourism.

The various English courses being run by the colleges

and universities are a summary of study materials; one can accommodate them to the situation and to the language knowledge of students. The courses should stimulate the students studying a foreign language and enable the check of study results. The aim of the subject should be to develop communicative skills on the basis of professional vocabulary of a certain field (e.g. interpreter, marketing, guiding, finance, informatics and tourism jobs) using the knowledge of general language. In this way preparation of the students is easier who cannot take part in the learning process. Tests and self-tests are the most important part of any course and are used for practicing the didactic material and as a sort of students' feedback. The tests practice technical and also general vocabulary, grammatical phenomena of language, its syntactical structure etc. Several different questions are used (short answer, multiple choices, matching questions, translation of complete sentences) for knowing the level of learning of the aspirants.

The emphasis is rather put on social character of teaching than on students as individuals and their needs. Learning is not directed anymore; it must be aimed at a student rather just teaching the group; students are actively involved in the decision-making process; learning is more and more based on cooperation. Attention is paid to student's specific needs; students are perceived as individuals with their specific needs and learning styles. It is the student's creative potential which is being considered. Language skills and knowledge are being integrated across curricula; pedagogy works together with other related sciences in order to help students in their learning. Teaching is enhanced by different teaching methods, strategies or techniques; teacher can also have in one class students of various cultural backgrounds. In addition, learning is perceived as a lifelong process than just preparation for an exam. Therefore the main factors of the learning process are autonomy, integration of knowledge and skills, continuity, creativity, multiculturalism and cooperation.

Conclusion:

The three most relevant functions in using English language are giving information, providing services and products and offering help for a complete satisfaction of the visitors, tourists and information seekers especially for those who are involved in sectors like tourism and hospitality. The study in hand reveals the needs, problems and solution of English language use by the tourism people

working directly and indirectly in tourism industry mainly in India. It explains that speaking is much more important, then listening, reading and writing.

It provides an insight into the needs, functions and problems of English use among tourism students, learners and workers engaged in the tour and travel companies located in the tourist attractions across international borders. It is hoped to provide a baseline for obtaining a wider range of input into content, design and implementation of an English programme by involving such people as learners, teachers, course developers and employees in the planning process.

English language use is being perceived a part of the professional and career development and is basically required before a syllabus development for English language teaching at school and college levels. The study can be used as guidelines for developing a tourism English syllabus that could lead to the improvement of the learning, understanding and use by the students, workers and organizers as well. It can be helpful if utilized by those who are responsible for policy and planning as well as the related organizations in order to have a clearer understanding of English needs for tourism students, employees and prospective job seekers who plan to work in the tourism and travel management sectors in the country and across the borders.

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