Tourism English: Is there a need for it in India?

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Abstract—*This study has been done to explore if there is a need for Tourism English as an ESP course in the context of rising Tourism and Hospitality industry in India. The objective of this paper is to highlight the need of Tourism English as an ESP course to fulfil student needs in shaping them as professionals in this sector. Tourism English integrates various disciplines to equip the students to start working professionally from the beginning rather than depending on internet-based time-consuming self-study to fit themselves into this growing sector.*

Keywords*: Tourism English, ESP, General English, Social Media, blogs.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is understood and spoken by many people in India and is used in schools, government offices and in communication with people from other states and nations. The global importance of English, jobs in MNCs and courses being primarily taught in English at higher levels across India have led to the demand and supply of English medium schools, and coaching institutions.

With technological development and modern applications in use, it is important for students to be equipped with the knowledge and skills from the courses they take. Abundant travel material and information are available on the internet and the interchangeable roles of consumer-supplier-mediator make this Tourism and Hospitality industry more complex.

The question is, "When General English or Business English forms a part of degree courses, is there a need for Tourism English to be taught as a course or specialization"? However, the existence of conference papers from various researchers in countries where tourism is growing are quite an evidence that Tourism English has emerged as an area of study.

Tourism and Hospitality industry is no more an unorganized sector in India. With various websites such asmakemytrip, yatra, cleartrip, ixigo, goibibo and so on, we can see these websites not only offer flight booking options, but also hotels, trains, cabs and so on. And there is clearly a need for writers and salespeople to draw the attention of the customers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism English is an academic term while Travel English primarily stands for English for tourists.

According to Maria Crina Herteg (2018), there are many categories of English, such as English for Accounting, English for Finances, English for Advertising, English for Marketing, and English for Tourism. Then, there are also courses in English for Medicine, English for Nursing, English for Computer Science and so on and since all these courses fall under different sectors they can be clubbed under the umbrella of English as Specific Purpose.

Herteg (2018) also writes that in a business-related environment "Business English has the advantage of promoting the shift from general to specific knowledge, from general skills to professional ones by exposing the learners to genuine material, real language and real situations".

In India, the picture of Tourism English is not clear because there are lakhs of English medium schools and students already have an exposure to English. So, the need for Tourism English must have been overlooked and the job sector must have picked up human resources from the English-medium educated talent pool. As Tourism and Hospitality makes a popular category in India, and is taught under Management studies, the students are taught Business English rather than Tourism English.

In Qin's Paper titled, *Strategies for teaching Tourism English Teaching* (2013), similar thoughts related to multidisciplinary approach is suggested; for example Qin (2013) writes that Tourism English should involve selection of textbooks that satisfy students' need for knowledge on art, culture, history, people, languages of world nations and so on and also teachers should update the course based on student feedback. Besides, "The advent of mobile technology has provided alternatives for people to learn and teach without the limits of time and space" (Hsu, Liwei and Lee, San-Nan., Oct 2011).

3. METHODOLOGY

Since the purpose behind the study is to explore if there is a need for Tourism English in India, I focused primarily on internet and used various keywords to look for materials related to Tourism English in India. But the scarcity of research materials in Tourism English in India tells us that this area is not a popular area of research yet.

So, with the keywords, Tourism English, only academic papers showed up and courses taught in foreign countries. India is still focused on teaching Business English in the Tourism and Hospitality industry.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

There are palm sized books; videos; and schools promising to teach people English in a magically short period of time. This need has led to a steady supply of materials related to high frequency words through mobile technology.

During the search, the difference between Tourism English and Travel English became clear .'Tourism English' involves use of knowledge from various disciplines to integrate English with the 'Tourism and Hospitality' industry, whereas 'Travel English' isabout high frequency words, phrases and sentences required for communication for a short time or to carry out certain interactions in a limited way.

For example, a ground duty employee may complete a task without the knowledge of complex grammar rules and wide vocabulary. Simple words and sentences are sufficient to carry out duties of the gatekeeper or housekeeping staff in hotels; security-check point officials at airports; and ward-boys, receptionists at hospitals and hotels in medical tourism; hair-dressers in saloons; salespersons in showrooms; bearers in restaurants and so on. Following are some of the top websites that come up during a search on the internet with the keywords 'travel English'.

https://www.talkenglish.com/speaking/listtravel.aspx

https://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/travelenglish/

https://www.fluentu.com/blog/english/english-travel-phrases/

https://englishlive.ef.com/en-gb/online-english-courses/travel-english/

https://www.rong-chang.com/travel/

https://www.espressoenglish.net/travel-english-conversations-in-the-airport/

https://www.thoughtco.com/travel-vocabulary-esl-4176622

https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/word-street/transport-and-travel

To build such skills, use of ICT becomes inevitable because there are websites which require certain softwares to present materials faster and clearer. For finding and storing relevant information one needs to use different kinds of devices such as computers, mobile phones, hard disks, routers/modems and so on.

Tourism English can emerge as a

discipline and can tap the Tourism and Hospitality industry better for both inbound and outbound tourists. According to a recent report published by IBEF:

Tourism in India has significant potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains and places of natural beauty spread across the country. Tourism is also a potentially large employment generator besides being a significant source of foreign exchange for the country. During January-October 2018 FEEs from tourism increased 8.30 per cent year-on-year to US$ 23.54 billion.

Figure 1: A snapshot of Tourism and Hospitality industry

Source: IBEF

Figure 1 shows that tourism sector has the potential to generate income and jobs and as English teachers we can find how ESP can play a major role here by equipping students with the right linguistic and cultural skills to expedite and streamline business in a professional manner. Today's tourism is a blend of technology, finance, photography, languages, history, culture, goods and services, so Tourism English should incorporate materials from diverse disciplines to enrich the students' knowledge.

5. LIMITATIONS OF GENERAL ENGLISH

To write blogs there is a need for general English but the search engines being very sophisticated; one needs to be skillful in the use of travel/tourism/hospitality vocabulary apart from the software support. In such situation Tourism English can be very useful.

General English does not go down well usually with students in majors like Business, Medicine, Sciences, and Computers because students do not see any relevance in it. The failure rate is very high in such courses because teachers give more importance to areas that are not required. For example, when we simplify certain things too much, it fails to catch the adult learners' attention. The materials should be suitable for their age group and interest.

For example, while teaching prepositions, instead of teaching students "the ball is in the bag", the cat is on the wall", there is a greater response to the pictures that show:

a) "The pliers is in the tool box/ The battery is inside the device/ The socket is on the wall" (in Computer class)

b) "There is a cavity in the tooth/ The nails are on the fingers/ There is a cut mark above the eye" (in Medicine/ Nursing class)

c) "Place the seeds under the soil/ Pour water on the plant/ Pollens fly in the air" (in Biology class)

d) "Place an order for 100 laptops/ Cancel the order from My Page/ Write your complaint in the complaint box" (in Business class)

In real life, everyday conversations do not require accuracy in grammar and among street vendors, in a majority of the cases, interactions are carried out in broken English phrases such as the following conversation as Schneider presents in her paper entitled *Grassroots Englishes in tourism interactions* (2016):

'Mango good!'

> *'You pay ten, Mama M. not happy. You pay fifteen,*
> *Mama M. happy!'*

In Schneider's words, in spite of her limitations, Mama M. is able to drive home her thoughts. "Her English is sufficient for her purposes, and in some ways quite versatile."

Though businesses continue well on the streets, inspite of the limitations of the sellers, who often express their desire to speak better English for better business, websites on the other hand should be dense with positive adjectives to arouse interest in customers. In their content analysis,

Kang and Yu found that a higher percentage of adjectives, such as beautiful, spectacular, famous, grand, great, popular, natural etc. These adjectives are descriptive and agreeable, possessing commendatory meaning with positive emotion instead of derogatory meaning with negative emotion. Texts targeting tourists "aims not only to highlight the distinguishing features of attractions but also to arouse the aesthetic interest of tourists."Fascinating photographs of places, food, street, and clothes tend to attract more tourists to visit. As pictures speak more than words, use of adjectives add positive feelings and emotions.

6. CONCLUSION

A lot of adjectives can come from general English but not everyone is disposed to learn a language painfully. Without tears, students can be introduced to travel literature, blogs, videos, and social media like Facebook, Instagram for reference. Though this makes the course interesting, it may leave the student confused as to what is required in the course. So skillful choice of materials will be a challenging task for the Tourism English teachers but once done it can be a very useful course.

Today, tourism means a lot of things: medical tourism, vacation packages, travelling for work or education and so on. Hence, there is a need for quick preparation to meet the needs of a situation which automatically leads to cutting out lengthy and demanding general language skills practice.

There are innumerable websites which gives us easy ways to learn English but ultimately the student user gets lost in the deluge of materials on the internet and becomes frustrated in moving from site to site without successfully acquiring the language skills they were looking for. Amidst this plethora of information, students need guidance and job-oriented courses like Tourism English can help them.

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