

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Tourism industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing industries contributing significantly to a country's socio-economic growth and development. Tourism sector benefits the economy of the country by providing employment, generating income, supplying a rich source of foreign exchange, developing or expanding other industries such as transport, agriculture, construction, handicraft etc. Human resource development is a very important factor for the growth of tourism sector. Tourists who play a pivotal role in the promotion of tourism choose a destination depending on facilities, attractions and most importantly positive treatment. One of the most vital aspects of tourism sector is the communication between the people associated with this business and the tourists. A good command over the English language is regarded as an asset for a person associated with the tourism industry. The present study is an attempt to find out the role of English language in the tourism sector. The focus is mainly on the tourism of Assam and Meghalaya. Both the states are endowed with diverse tourist attractions and have immense tourism potential. In spite of possessing all factors to attract high tourist-inflow, the number of both domestic and foreign tourists is rather low in these two states compared to the other states of India. Ironically, it is found that most of the tour operators of both Assam and Meghalaya are professionally untrained and are not much confident to communicate in English with the tourists. The present study investigates whether the inadequate training has led to the shortage of professionally skilled manpower in the tourism industry.

1.1 The Research Questions

The research questions are given below:

1. In what ways does the English language play an important role in strengthening tourism industry?
2. How have the inadequate training and the absence of infrastructure for skill development led to the shortage of professionally skilled manpower in the tourism industry?

3. Is there any co-relation between the tourism learners' specific needs and the course content of the English paper in the tourism courses of the two states, i.e. Assam and Meghalaya?
4. To what extent does the Manual designed by the researcher meet the specific needs of the pupils who are interested in developing the English language skills for a career in the tourism?

1.2 Design of the Research

The research attempts to find out the role of the English language in tourism sector with a special focus on Assam and Meghalaya. To accomplish the task, three sets of questionnaires are prepared to collect the opinions of the tour operators, the learners pursuing tourism courses and the teachers teaching English in both the states. Besides, a Manual on 'English for Specific Purposes in Travel and Tourism' is designed by the researcher for the pupils who are interested in developing proficiency in English for a career in the tourism industry. The manual includes four modules. All the four modules focuses on developing the communicative skills in English through the themes related specifically to the tourism industry. Each module has two exercises: Exercise-1 and Exercise-2. Through the responses on the exercises, the researcher tries to assess the performance of the learners conducting a pre-test and a post-test. With the help of the pre-test an attempt is made to check the learners' communicative skills in English with reference to the domain of tourism, without giving the learners any prior training. The post-test attempts to check the learners' communicative skills in English with reference to the domain of tourism, after they are given training for one week on the modules. Checklists are prepared to facilitate the analysis of the learners' responses. The answers to the pre-test and post-test are compared. In addition, a comparative study of the learners' performance is conducted with respect to the learners of Assam and Meghalaya. Finally, two sets of feedback questionnaires are prepared to collect opinions on the manual from the learners and the teachers of English teaching in the tourism course in both the states.

1.3 Sampling of the Study

The sampling of the study includes 119 tour operators (74 from Assam and 45 from Meghalaya), 324 learners pursuing tourism course (217 learners in six representative

colleges in Assam and 107 learners in three representative colleges in Meghalaya), and 40 teachers teaching English paper in the tourism course (27 teachers in six representative colleges in Assam and 13 teachers in three representative colleges in Meghalaya).

The sample for the pre-test and the post-test includes 101 learners which are randomly selected from one representative college each from Assam and Meghalaya. 58 learners are from Assam. Out of 58 learners, 32 learners appear in the pre-test and only 26 learners appear in the post-test. In Meghalaya, 43 learners have attempted the test, out of which 23 learners appear in the pre-test and only 20 appear in the post-test.

The sampling for the feedback based on the manual includes 54 learners (30 from Assam and 24 from Meghalaya) and 21 teachers (12 from Assam and 9 from Meghalaya).

Their opinions, beliefs and classroom experiences constitute the data for the study.

1.4 Tools

The following tools are used for data collection:

- Questionnaires

Three sets of questionnaires are prepared for three categories of respondents of Assam and Meghalaya: (a) questionnaire for the tour operators (b) questionnaire for the learners pursuing tourism courses and (c) questionnaire for the teachers teaching English in the tourism programme. Each questionnaire contains 15 questions, with a combination of yes/no and multiple choice ones. These questions are described thoroughly later in chapter IV.

- Manual

A Manual on 'English for Specific Purposes in Travel and Tourism' is designed by the researcher for the pupils who are interested in developing English language skills for a career in tourism. Through the manual, the researcher tries to improve the performance of the learners. Two tests are conducted on the learners' performance. (a) The pre-test attempts to check the learners' communicative skills in English with reference to the domain of tourism, without giving the learners any prior training (b) A

post-test attempts to check the learners' communicative skills in English with reference to the domain of tourism, after the learners are given training for one week on the manual.

- Feedback Questionnaire

One set of feedback questionnaire based on the manual is prepared for two categories of respondents: (a) the learners of Assam and Meghalaya pursuing tourism courses and (b) the teachers teaching English paper in the tourism programmes.

1.5 Methodology

The present research follows both qualitative and quantitative methodology and APA style sheet. The study is conducted with a survey research technique. The collected data is tabulated, statistically analysed, and interpreted. Based on the findings, necessary suggestions are offered in the concluding chapter.

1.6 Chapterization

The first chapter includes a brief background of the study, the research questions, the research design, the sampling of the study, the tools used for data collection, methodology and the chapterization of the dissertation. Each chapter ends with a summary.

The second chapter presents an in-depth discussion on various aspects of English for Specific Purpose (ESP). Prior to a detailed description of ESP, it has presented a wide range of experts' definitions on ESP. Subsequently, there is a discussion on the evolution of ESP, classification of ESP, and the advantages of ESP. The later sections deal with the ESP practitioners, ESP course design and materials design. The final sections highlight ESP practice within the classroom and beyond and the assessment in ESP.

The third chapter reviews the selected studies on the role of the English language in the tourism sector. It begins with a sketch on the concept of tourism. Subsequently, problems and prospects of Assam and Meghalaya tourism along with the role of the English language in the development of the tourism industry of these two north-eastern states have been discussed. Finally, a comparative study of the course content of the English paper in the tourism courses of the two states, i.e. Assam and Meghalaya is

made in order to see whether the English course is ESP (English for Specific Purpose) oriented.

The fourth chapter makes an analytical study of the responses of the tour operators, the learners pursuing tourism courses and the teachers teaching English paper in the tourism programmes in the two states of Assam and Meghalaya along with its interpretations. It makes an analytical study of the responses on three sets of questionnaires (questionnaire for tour operators, questionnaire for learners and questionnaire for teachers), along with their description and administration.

The fifth chapter makes an analytical study of the responses of the learners and the teachers based on the manual designed by the researcher. It examines the responses based on two tests, i.e. pre-test and post-test. A comparative study of the responses to both the tests is also conducted, using statistical tools. In addition, a comparative study of the performance of the learners of Assam and Meghalaya is conducted. Finally, one set of feedback questionnaire based on the manual is prepared to collect the opinions from the learners and the teachers of both the states.

The sixth chapter makes a conclusive review of the research. It offers some remedial measures for developing learners' proficiency in English for tourism. It also points out some of the limitations of the study and proposes some related areas for further research.

1.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter gives a comprehensive introduction to the study. It briefly describes various structural components of the thesis such as background of the study, the research questions, the research design, the sampling of the study, the tools used for data collection, methodology and chapterization. The following chapter will focus on English for specific purpose (ESP).