

Tourist Confronters' Status of Communicative English Skills: The Case of Tourist Frequenting Areas In Hawassa City And Its Suberbs

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ABSTRACT: In the effort to scale up the tourist sector to its pinnacle in the contemporary global world, a large number of countries have been working diligently to develop the communicative English skills of their tourist confronters having the view that it is only through effective ability in communication that tourism marketers can offer bonafide services to customers. To achieve this, several countries prefer the English language since it is globally gaining its impetus in communicating, negotiating, and executing transactions with tourists. To this effect, the major objective of this research, which took one year, was to investigate the tourist confronters' English communicative skills in tourist frequenting areas in Hawassa City and its suburbs. The study was largely designed in conformity with the principles of quantitative approach. For the purpose of triangulation, however, semi-structured interviews were conducted qualitatively. The major data gathering instruments were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, 90% of the tourist confronters rated the status of their communicative English macro and micro language skills in their descending order as: speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar respectively. Furthermore, their difficulties were according to the order arranged above ($P < 0.01$). For successful communication, listening, speaking, writing and reading, grammar and vocabulary were significant respectively. To improve their English Language skills, the majority of the tourist confronters did not utilize modern self-learning, peer-learning and result-oriented strategies. Regarding the teaching materials with which the tourist-confronters had learned while they were on training in various institutions, majority of them confirmed that they were dissatisfied with the contents and their practicability. The vast majority of tourists (90%) evaluated the status of the English language skill of their confronters as "good" and "fair" respectively. In conclusion, the English Language communicative skills of the tourist confronters in the zone were found below the required standard.

Keywords: communication, English communicative skills, English for specific purposes, tourist- confronters

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In the contemporary world, has English been serving not only as a medium of instruction in many countries but also it has been gaining its impetus in such areas as business, diplomacy, medicine, sport, and internet. Especially, for tourism industry that sells experiences, communication in English is extremely essential to provide relevant information to customers about the culture, attractions or heritages that tourists need to know or appreciate. Tourists are individuals who want to escape from routine activities in life. They want to experience the other aspect of themselves which is absolutely different from their ordinary life that they have been engaged in before. To provide them with adequate and clear information, thus, the confronting employees need to have very good communicative English skills. In brief, the key to success in communication with tourists is to exhibit free and intelligible verbal and non-verbal communicative English skills with relaxed attitude.

Successful interpersonal communication in the tourism industry calls for a variety of macro and micro English Language skills. To properly listen to the tourists' oral request, for example, a tourist confronter must have sub-listening skills such as understanding accents, tones, intonations, modulations of voice and the like. To speak fluently and provide the tourists with accurate and clear information, the confronters need to have very good pronunciation skills, dependable store of vocabulary, reasonable diction, very good grammar and

summarization skills. To express themselves in good writing, they need to have such sub- skills as idea generation, idea organization, reasonable grammar and mechanics which enable them produce ideal brochures, memos, letters, leaf-lets, instructions, descriptions, narrations and notices and so on. To read and comprehend the messages of a written text, a very good skill of vocabulary, strategies like skimming and scanning and skills of analyzing, critical thinking are very essential. In addition, a positive professional attitude coupled with warm welcoming and courtesy is the other parallel prerequisite for the effectiveness of the market. In sum, as a person working in the tourism industry, improving and updating one's communicative English language skill is unquestionably one of the most crucial requirements for its lucrativity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a growing conviction that economies of the 21st century need to be knowledge-based driven by scientific innovations and discoveries. When we connect the case with tourism economy, potential tourists are information seekers and eager to know as many things as possible. As a result, they need a very good communicator who can provide them with authentic and relevant information about attractions, accessibilities and amenities without exaggeration and deficiency.

Most tourists are busy individuals in their routine lives and do not have the time or resources to receive and conceptualize an ocean of information. Of course, like any individual they can have different interest and attitude and these differences are reflected in their preferences for acquiring information. Some are adherent to the print media while others like visual presentations with interactive content. Some learn explicitly from information presented with bullet points while others want to learn implicitly and experientially with information interspersed in realistic contexts. These variations in attitude and interest, thus, give us an implication that communication for different purposes demand different types of language. In its nutshell, it is mandatory for tourism practitioners to have mastery over essential set of specific language components that would make their communication with tourists as effective as possible.

Under most circumstances, where English is taught and learnt as a foreign language, the emphasis is on science and professional subjects. English Language use for specific purposes is often neglected in various curricula (Dulley and John, 1998). Consequently, English for tourism remains a difficult language to master in spite of the fact that the sector is enormously beneficiary from it. To change the trend, the recommendations from several researchers is that tourist training institutes should work first towards raising the skills of tourist confronters in English for General purposes and then their training needs to focus on English for Specific Purposes.

Teachers of English for tourism, therefore, should provide their students with practicable and enormous practice tasks that enable them convey and receive information successfully when they serve the tourism sector. In the same way, the students who are recruited for such training should develop a habit of self-learning and peer-learning contextually and authentically. The other basic worth considering issue is the development of teaching materials which are feasible for successful implementation of English for specific purposes. Such approach to English Language teaching/learning requires a carefully designed topic-based syllabus, which emphasizes practical English Language use in specific situations. The topics often include: hotels, air travel, cruises, travel agencies, tour operations, types of holiday, the organization and structure of tourism, guiding, and future developments in tourism Rață, and Petroman (2012). The main reason is that in today's tourism world, only those institutions which are providing a platform for developing and producing the newly emerging globalized skills management and specific language use could generate income, expand employment opportunities, mobilize foreign exchange, create social integration, cultural transformation and enhance business as a result of their progress in the tourism industry.

The deriving motive in conducting this study is the present researcher's experience while he was travelling to various places in the zone for research purposes. When he met some tourists and discussed their level of satisfaction with the English communicative skills of their confronters, their opinions were different. For example, there are tourists who expressed their satisfaction with English language skills of their guides and hospitality workers. Contrarily, there were other groups of tourists who witnessed that the language deficiency of the confronting employees was more severe when compared with others who were working in the same area in other countries. This research, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the status of the tourist personnels' communicative English skills in various tourist frequenting accommodation and attraction sites in Sidama Zone.

Before going into the deep inside of this work, the present researcher attempted to explore other local research studies conducted with specific reference to the tourism sector. Ultimately, he found out Eleni Petros's (2010) MA Thesis entitled, "An Assessment of the English Language Needs of Tourist Guide Students and the Language Course Materials at Catering Tourism Training Institute (CTTI) and Lion Ethiopia Tourism and Hotel College". In her finding, she came up with a conclusion that even though all the language skills were found important for the students, speaking and listening skills were the most important language skills that the students needed in order to be successful in their future occupation. In the same way, the materials that were being used

for the teaching/learning purposes were not as efficient as required. This research, however, differs from her that its main attention is to investigate the status of the communicative English Language skills of tourism practitioners in tourist frequenting areas in Sidama Zone. Therefore, the researcher believes that this study is original in its own right. This research, therefore, attempts to answer the following basic research questions:

1. How do tourist confronters in Sidama Zone rate their communicative English Language skills?
2. How do the confronters in the zone endeavor to improve their English Language skills?
3. How much the pre-service training materials with which they had been taught when they were in various institutes were adequate and practicable in communicating successfully with tourists in the zone?
4. How do tourists rate the overall communicative English Language skills of the confronting employees based on their observation in various circumstances?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have benefit to the organizations and individuals mentioned here below: The first beneficiary will be the Sidama Zone Culture and Tourism Office which is responsible to facilitate, supervise and decide on the overall tourism activities in the zone. It may look at the major findings and take remedial solutions which will enable its tourist confronters improve their communicative English Language skill specifically those skills which are essential in providing relevant information to tourists. The other body which may benefit from this research finding is the School of Language and Communication Studies at Hawassa University. As we know, the school has shouldered several responsibilities. Among these, one of them is solving language related constraints in the region generally and in the zone specifically. Hence, it can ponder through the findings and give professional support to tourist confronters who are working in the zone. Moreover, it may use the finding as a kick start in developing better teaching materials that meet the specific needs of the students in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at Hawassa University. Lastly, other researchers who have interest to conduct their study in the same area can use it as reference or stepping stone.

1.4 objectives

1.3.1. general objective

to investigate the tourist confronters' English Language communicative skills in tourist frequenting areas in Hawassa City and its suburbs

1.3.2. specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine how tourist confronters rate their own English Language skills in the light of the macro and micro skills
2. check the mnemonics/strategies tourist confronters in the zone employ to improve their English Language skills
3. look into how much the pre-service training materials with which they had been taught when they were in various institutes were adequate and practicable in communicating successfully with tourists in the zone
4. investigate how tourists rate the overall communicative English Language skills of the confronting employees based on their observation in various circumstances

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Description of the Study Area

Sidama zone is one of the 14 administrative zones found in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The zone covers a total area of 72000 square kilometers and is located in southern hemisphere around equator in Horn of Africa at 6°14'N and 7°18'N latitude and 37°92'E and 39°19'E. To the north and east, it borders with Oromia Regional State and in the south it borders with Gedeo zone. River Bilate separates it from Wolaita Zone in the west. (SNNPRS Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2015).

2.2. Study Subjects

The subjects of the study were tourist confronters who were working at different accommodation and attraction sites in Sidama Zone Culture and Tourism Office and tourists who came to the zone for visiting purposes in 2017.

2.3. Study Design

2.3.1 study type

The current study was designed largely in line with the principle of quantitative approach. For the purpose of triangulation, however, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews.

2.3.2 sample size and sampling procedure

According to the information received from Sidama zone Culture and Tourism Office, there are 30 standard hotels which are capable of accommodating tourists. Moreover, there are 7 tourist attraction sites which are frequented by tourists. In these organizations, there are 120 employees who use the English language as a tool of communication with tourists. Among these employees 30 of them were randomly selected based on sampling size determining model developed by Gomm (2008) $n = N/1 + N(\alpha^2)$, where, n = expected sample size, N = population size, α = level of confidence interval (0.05) to respond to the questionnaires.

In determining the sample size of the tourists who responded to the questionnaire, availability sampling technique was used. Accordingly, among 42 tourists who came to visit the heritages and attraction sites in the zone in 2017, the questionnaires were distributed to all of them, however only 32 of them filled in and gave back to the researcher.

The major goal of the questionnaire was to investigate how tourist confronters rate their English Language skills, rank their difficulties in English Language skills, examine the strategies that tourist confronters employ to improve their English Language skills in the future, identify the frequency of activities that needed communication in English in the tourism sector, check the adequacy and practicability of the teaching materials with which they had been taught during their in-service training and finally to evaluate the extent to which tourists are satisfied in the communication that took place with confronters at different sites in the zone.

The other research tool used for this study was semi-structured interview conducted with tourist confronters who were working in the zone in 2017. The contents of the semi-structured interview were mainly the same as the issues incorporated within the questionnaire items of this study. The major purpose was to answer particularly research number 2, 3 and 4. To this effect, among all the tourist confronters who filled in the questionnaire items, 12 of them were selected through data saturation method and a semi-structured interview was conducted with each of them.

2.4. Study Methodology

The researcher answered the research questions by analyzing the data that he collected through questionnaires and semi-structure interviews. To achieve this, the data from the questionnaire had first been entered into SPSS software and then a descriptive statistical approach was used to interpret and discuss each implication in line with the particular research question that it profoundly targeted at to answer. The data from the semi-structured interview, however, were analyzed qualitatively using thematic approach in line with the research question that each datum aimed at to answer.

Regarding the procedures followed, first the researcher submitted the official letter which was written for him by College of Social Sciences and Humanities whose main content was to request permission and cooperation to gather the data that the study required. After the researcher had submitted the letter to the official concerned and got permission, he identified 40 respondents randomly among those who were capable of understanding English Language and gave them a thirty-minute orientation about the questionnaire and how to respond to the items. He, then, distributed the printed questionnaires to the target subjects. Finally, only 30 of them were filled in and returned.

In conducting the semi-structured interviews, first, a short orientation was given to them about the interview and the way they respond to the items. The researcher, then, carried on the interview by deriving a number of questions from the guide that he had set out earlier. The responses of each interviewee were video-tape-recorded to make the data transcription more reliable.

2.5 Data Management and Analysis

First, the statistician and the present researcher looked into the results secured from the SPSS programme and interpreted what they were meant to. Having done this, the researcher discussed the implication of the responses categorized under the same likert scale in connection with the research question that they addressed. In discussing the semi-structured interview data, first the data were transcribed from the tape-recorder onto blank sheets of paper. Secondly, the transcribed data were coded to identify the emerging major and sub-themes. Finally, the implication of each theme was lucidly explained in conformity with the research question it addressed.

III. RESULT

The following are the major results found out from the study:

The tourist confronters in the zone ordered their English language status in descending order as: speaking, reading, writing, listening and in micro-skills vocabulary and grammar. This finding is similar with a studies conducted by Rata and Petroman (2012 in Croatia and Eleni Petros (2010) in Ethiopia.

In examining the mnemonics the tourist confronters used to improve their English Language skills, the following were dominant findings: To improve their listening skill, they did not frequently listen to various

English media. To improve their speaking skill, the majority of them did not have opportunity to practise the skill purposefully and continuously with colleagues during their spare-time and check up their progress. To improve their reading skill, almost all of them hardly read books, analyzed and personalized the contents. To improve their writing, similarly, the confronters did not attempt to produce different texts which emanated from their own personal inspiration. In enhancing their grammar skills, only half of the respondents read grammar books sometimes to learn the correct rules of English sentences or discourses. In connection to vocabulary improvement, majority of them were dependent on English-Amharic dictionaries.

The tourist confronters in the zone used the English language most frequently to give information about attraction sites and heritages, to order meals and drinks, to give information about accommodations and to chat about personal affairs. This finding is the same as a study conducted by Prachat (2012) in Thailand.

The vast majority of the respondents, 28 (93.3%) ordered the English language skills, according to their degree of significance as: listening, speaking, writing and reading. This finding is the same as Prachat, Petroman and Rata 2012.

In investigating the teaching materials with which the tourist-confronters had learned when they were on training in various training institutions, majority of them were dissatisfied with the content of the subject matter, satisfied with the reading materials, not satisfied with the writing materials, many more satisfied with speaking materials, not satisfied with listening and pronunciation materials, dissatisfied with grammar and majority of them were satisfied with the vocabulary materials.

The majority of the respondents had serious difficulties to express themselves in correct grammar both in speaking and written communications.

6 (60%) of the respondents agreed that using correct grammar, organizing ideas into their logical order, choosing appropriate words and idea generation were the constraints which frequently made written communications very painful respectively.

Tourist confronters most frequently used British English variety and occasionally American variety.

Regarding difficulties encountered during communication in English Language, tourists had a number of memories which resulted from incapability of their confronters to understand the English language. Almost all tourists evaluated the status of the English language skill of their confronters as good” and “fair” respectively.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 discussions of the data from questionnaires administered to tourist-confronters

Table 1: Self-rating of English Language Skills in Descending Order

Key: (85%_100%) = Excellent level of understanding=5, (75 %__84%) =Very good level of understanding =4, (60%__74%) _Good level of understanding=3, (50%__59%) Satisfactory level of understanding =2 and (≤ 49%) =Poor level of understanding=1

Skills	Responses									
	Excellent		Very good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%
Reading	0	0	5	16.6	14	46.6	11	36.6	0	0
Writing	0	0	4	13.3	8	26.6	18	60	0	0
Speaking	2	6	6	20	20	66.6	2	6.6	0	0
Listening	0	0	3	10	5	16.6	22	73.3	0	0
Grammar	1	3.3	3	10	14	46.6	7	23.3	5	16.6
Vocabulary	4	13.3	6	20	15	50	5	16.6	0	0

In examining the above data we observe that the tourist confronters' difficulties in English macro and micro language skills can be ordered in their descending order as: speaking, reading, writing listening, vocabulary and grammar respectively. As the above data further reveal, the vast majority of the respondents' communicative English skills was good and fair. This implicitly informs us that the confronters' communicative in English Language was not up to the required standard. Consequently, it is possible to suggest that the tourists might have faced problems in getting the real information that they required. This dissatisfaction, in turn, can erode their positive impressions which inspire them to come back and revisit the heritages and attractions of the zone or their promotion role in motivating others to come and visit the zone.

When the second category of the data was analyzed, it revealed that the tourist confronters used the English language most frequently to give information about attraction sites and heritages, to serve meals and drinks, to give information about accommodation procedures and to chat about personal affairs respectively. Depending on the above data we can conclude that the tourist confronters need further and intensive training which targets at enhancing their skills of expressions which are particularly helpful to communicate with tourists successfully. This, however, does not mean that improving other language skills is not significant. The center of the argument is that due attention needs to be given to those expressions which are being used most frequently.

Table 2: English Language Skills Difficulty

Key: 4- no difficulty, 3- less difficulty, 2-average difficulty, 1-High difficulty

Skills	Level of Difficulty							
	4		3		2		1	
Skills	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%
Listening	0	0	3	10	5	16.6	22	73.3
speaking	1	3.3	23	76.6	3	10	3	10
Reading	0	0	17	90	5	16.6	8	26.6
Writing	0	0	4	13.3	15	30	11	33.3
Grammar	2	6.6	4	13.3	16	53.3	8	26.6
Vocabulary	4	13.3	8	26.6	17	56.6	1	3.3

Based on the data given above, the tourist confronters' difficulties in both macro and micro skills in their descending order were: listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar and vocabulary respectively. This implied that listening was the most difficult language skill which was most challenging for most tourist confronters during their communication with tourists. Similarly, the respondents had confirmed that they wanted to improve their English Language skills based on the above order.

Table 3: Level of satisfaction with the Teaching Materials Used during Pre-service Training

Key: This item of the questionnaire was filled in only by those respondents who graduated after the new curriculum had been introduced

Items	Responses							
	Highly satisfied		Very satisfied		satisfied		Not satisfied	
	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%
subject matter relevance of the whole course materials	0	0	0	0	11	36.6	19	63.3
Emphasis given to reading skills	4	13.3	3	10	13	43.3	10	33.3
Emphasis given to writing skills	3	10	2	6.6	12	40	13	43.3
Emphasis given to speaking skills	3	10	11	36.6	10	33.3	6	20
Emphasis given to listening skills	2	6.6	2	6.6	9	30	17	56.6
Emphasis given to	2	6.6	3	10	5	16.6	20	66.6

pronunciation skill									
Emphasis given to grammar skills	3	10	8	26.6	5	16.6	14	46.6	
The content and significance of the Vocabulary lessons	2	6.6	9	30	19	63.3	0	0	

As the data in above table reveal, (63.3%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the subject matter relevance of the teaching materials, (43.3%) satisfied with the reading materials, 43.3% not satisfied with the writing materials, 11(36.6% very satisfied and 33.3% satisfied with speaking materials,56.6% not satisfied with listening and pronunciation materials, 46.6 % dissatisfied with grammar and 63.3% satisfied with the vocabulary materials. When we further examine the data in the same table with some details, we learn that the teaching materials gave most focus to speaking, vocabulary and grammar skills respectively.

We know that communication in the tourism industry requires good and above competency especially in oral language skills. Of course, as studies show, tourists mostly do not need accurate grammar skills: their main interest is to get information that enable them relax and forget the routine and boring activities that they were engaged in when they had been on their work. Nevertheless, unless the grammar of the tourist confronters is intelligible, communication can suffer from various setbacks.

In their attempt to improve their various language skills, tourist confronters made the efforts described here below: to improve their listening skills, 63.3% of them sometimes listened to tourists' conversations, to improve their speaking skills,56.6% conversed sometimes with tourists, to improve their reading skills, 70% always read internet sources, to improve their writing skills, 63.3% have never produced any literature with the aim of educating or sharing information to the international community, to improve their grammar skill, 56.6% sometimes read books which helped them learn the correct grammatical rules, to improve their vocabulary skill, 60% always looked up meanings from bilingual (English-Amharic) dictionaries.

In inspecting the data given above we visualize that a large number of tourist confronters did not make a variety of efforts purposefully and intensively which could help them improve each English Language skill. Modern foreign language teaching experts often suggest that improving each language skill is always prone to the effort of the person in utilizing various strategies and assessing one's development relentlessly. As we can see in the above data, however, the confronters did not use various self-learning and peer-learning strategies which are believed to be most appropriate for most learners and contexts.

4.2 discussions of the data from tourists' questionnaires

Table 4: Status of English Language Skills of Tourist-confronters

Key: (85%_100%) = Excellent level of understanding=5, (75 %__84%) =Very good level of understanding =4, (60%__74%) _Good level of understanding=3, (50%__59%) Satisfactory level of understanding =2 and (≤ 49%) =Poor level of understanding=1

Skills	Responses									
	Excellent		Very good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	No of Res	%	No of Res	%	No of Res	%	No of Res	%	No of Res	%
Reading	0	0	5	15.62	14	43.75	12	37.5	1	3.12
Writing	0	0	3	9.37	12	37.5	11	34.37	6	18.75
Speaking	0	0	7	21.87	16	50	6	18.75	3	9.37
Listening	0	0	2	6.25	8	25	17	53.12	5	15.62
Grammar	2	6.25	2	6.25	11	34.37	12	37.5	5	15.62
Vocabulary	2	6.25	4	12.5	12	37.5	13	40.62	1	3.12

As we can observe in the above data, the tourists rated the status of their confronters' communicative macro and micro English Language skills in their descending order as: speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar respectively which is the same as the rating of the tourist confronters themselves. In further examining the above data, we see that the vast majority of the tourists determined the status of the English language skills of their confronters as: "good" and "fair". This implied that the tourists were not, by and

large, satisfied with the English language proficiency of the confronters who communicated with them in English language.

The other focus of the questionnaire was to identify the frequency of activities that required the use of the English Language as a tool of communication. In like manner, the finding revealed: providing them with information about attraction sites and heritages, ordering meals and drinks and describing rooms/hotels and reservation procedures for them were the most frequent activities that called for communication in English Language respectively.

Table 5: English Language Skills Difficulty

Key: 4- no difficulty, 3- less difficulty, 2-average difficulty, 1-High difficulty

Skills	Level of Difficulty							
	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%	No of Resp	%
	4		3		2		1	
Listening	0	0	4		8		20	
speaking	2	6.25	11	34.37	11	34.37	8	25
Reading	0	0	9	28.12	9	28.12	14	43.75
Writing	0	0	6	18.75	7	21.87	19	53.12
Grammar	3	9.37	2	6.25	13	40.62	14	43.75
Vocabulary	5	15.65	12	37.5	6	18.75	9	28.12

According to the data given in the above table, the macro and micro English language skills difficulty level of the tourist confronters can be sequentially placed in their descending order as: speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary respectively. This finding is the same as the finding from the tourist confronters themselves. Hence, listening is the most attention seeking language skill which needs intensive and successive effort in the course of developing the English language skills of the employees working in the tourism sector of the zone.

All the tourists witnessed that the tourist confronters most frequently used British English variety and rarely American variety.

In responding to the open-ended item of the questionnaire presented to tourists with specific reference to communication problems they encountered owing to the deficiency of their confronters in understanding English, they had a great many experiences that they never forget in their life. Among several episodes, two of them are presented as follows:

Episode1: It was in the Northern Ethiopia. I went to the hotel that had already been reserved for me. As soon as I arrived at the hotel, I talked to the manager of the hotel to show me the room booked for me. He took me to room and gave me its key. After taking cold shower, I took a nap. At about 7:30 pm, I went to the dining room for dinner. After I had eaten my dinner, I gave a signal to the manager and told him in simple English, tomorrow before checkout and breakfast, I want you help me get someone who can drive me to the nearby flight office. In the morning, sitting in the dinning hole, I was waiting for him until he comes with a taxi-driver. After half an hour, he signaled me that my breakfast was ready. I asked him about the driver, he was shocked and asked me he did not understand the information that I gave him last night. I then talked to another person and solved my problem.

Episode 2: It was in the Sothern Ethiopia. We said to our guide: "Please would you look for someone for us who can let us a vehicle with good stand for a month?" His answer was no one can let you take a vehicle but I can find someone who can rent you.

As the above data and others showed, tourists faced several problems in communicating with tourist confronters due to difficulty of the English language including those who have been working in modern and advanced hotels. Hence, upgrading the English language skills of the tourist confronters serving at different hierarchy of the industry is an urgent issue.

4.3 discussion of the interview conducted with tourist-confronters

4.3.1 self-rating of the status of English Language skills

On the basis of the data, the tourist confronters had varied perceptions about their status of English language skills. For example, 40% of the respondents ordered their English language skills status in their descending order as: speaking, listening, writing and reading. The other 30% ordered them as: listening, writing, speaking and reading and the last 20% very differently categorized their English language skills status as: reading, Writing, listening and speaking.

A thorough investigation of the above data reveals that the vast majority of the respondents' most challenging language skill is listening as has been repeatedly discussed in this paper. In the in-depth interview, they put forward their reasons as follows: Firstly, listening requires discriminating each accent that the speaker produces. Secondly, native speakers often speak too fast to get prompt response. Thirdly, their poor vocabulary skill was the other stumbling-block which could make listening most cumbersome in the course of communication with tourists. Furthermore, within the same story line, the respondents viewed that, in most of their trainings, listening was not a skill in focus. In this regard, one of the respondents complained: "The level of attention given to listening skill when I was on training was by far less than its present crucial contribution on the actual work world." This implied that the issue of improving listening skill needs an overall remedial solution.

4.3.2 micro-English Language skills difficulty

In responding to the item which requested them to choose the more challengeability between grammar and vocabulary skills, most respondents ascertained that grammar was more difficult than vocabulary. In their detailed explanations they disclosed that they had limitations in explaining their ideas in grammatically correct sentences during both spoken and written communications. When they pinpointed the reality in detail, the most severe grammatical difficulty areas were: using correct tenses, voices, prepositions, idioms, articles, consistencies and diction. In the same data, we see that generating or producing relevant ideas under circumstances where spontaneous responses were required and using appropriate punctuation marks, capitalization and spelling were the recurrent difficulties for a large number of respondents. These data, thus, take us to the conclusion that searching for mechanisms through which tourist confronters improve their grammar skill should be the other top most agenda of the tourism management of the zone.

4.3.3 degree of relevance of the English Language skills in tourist-related communication

The vast majority of the respondents, (93.3%), ordered their macro English language skills according to their degree of significance as: listening, speaking, writing and reading. When they explained their views further, they remarked that any person who is engaged in hospitality services must be able to listen to what the tourist speaks to him/her. In connection to this, one respondent put his opinion like this: "First and for most, if I am not able to listen to the person talking to me and figure out the message, I am not a relevant person in that particular chain of communication." This view reminds us that listening is a language skill which has its own crucial contribution in the process of communicating with tourists. The implication is that the more they are efficient listeners, the more they become resourceful and logical in providing information to the tourists and gain respect. In the same data, we see that speaking was the second significant language skill for successful communication in tourist catering contexts. One of the major reasons that they forwarded was that unless a listener is able to clearly respond to what he/she listened, communication in other media, for example, in writing, will be time-consuming and costly.

From the above data, we recognize that listening and speaking are the most significant English language skills that tourist confronters were frequently using. This result may suggest that any tourist training materials or programme has to give more emphasis to the enhancement of the tourist-confronting employees listening and spoken English skills. This, however, does not mean that writing and reading could be relegated to lower rank. As the respondents explained and the present researcher himself observed, there are many occasions where reading and writing abilities were decisively required. Under some circumstances, for instance, tourists need written information, which confirms whom their confronters are, about the places or heritages they need to observe, the type of transportation they want to use, inter-alia. By the same token, a tourist confronter is expected to read and understand various documents that tourists submit to him/her in English.

4.3.4 remedial solutions suggested to improve listening and speaking skills

When we investigate the data, we observe that all respondents were of the opinion that there are very rare circumstances to speak English in most Ethiopians' everyday life. Consequently, not only in the tourism sector, but also in other work environments, including academic institutions, no Ethiopian has ever had opportunity to speak the English language outside the classrooms. As a result, improving, especially oral skills become a herculean task. Hence, though a number of remedial solutions had been suggested as means of improving each English language skill, the remedial solutions specifically proposed to improve speaking and listening skills are presented as follows: making individual effort to learn from audio lessons through peer-

learning, getting a short-term exposure to learn English being in the speaking community and getting further intensive in-service trainings accompanied by continuous assessments were among others.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

On the bases of the data analyzed in this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

- The tourist confronters' difficulties in macro and micro English language skills were identified in their descending order as: speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar respectively. Moreover, most confronters' communicative English skills were found at good and fair level.
 - The circumstances required the use of the English language based on their frequency were listed as follows respectively: to give information about attraction sites and heritages, to order meals and drinks, to give information about accommodations and to chat about personal affairs.
 - In their response to their level of satisfaction with the teaching materials with which they had been taught when they were in training institutions, the majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the subject matter relevance of the teaching materials, satisfied with the reading materials, not satisfied with the writing materials, many more satisfied with speaking materials, not satisfied with listening and pronunciation materials, not satisfied with grammar and many more satisfied with the vocabulary materials.
 - As the findings revealed, the majority of the tourist confronters, by and large, did not utilize modern self-learning, peer-learning and result-oriented strategies which would have been effective to improve their English language skills.
 - Tourist confronters most frequently used British English variety and occasionally used American variety while catering tourists.
 - The majority of the respondents were mostly in difficulties to express themselves in correct grammar both in speaking and written communications.
 - The vast majority of the respondents, (93.3%), ordered the English language skills according to their degree of significance as: listening, speaking, writing and reading to get across with tourists.
 - 6 (60%) of the respondents confirmed that using correct grammar, organizing ideas into their logical order, choosing appropriate words and idea generation were the constraints which frequently had made written communications very terrible respectively.
 - With regard to the frequency of activities that needed communication in the English language, the majority of the tourists ordered them sequentially as follows: ordering meals in the restaurant, getting information about accommodations and heritage sites, describing rooms/hotels and requests for reservation.
 - All the tourists had the belief that listening, speaking, reading and writing were respectively significant in successfully communicating in the tourist industry.
 - Regarding difficulties encountered during communication in English Language, tourists had a number of memories which resulted from incapability of their confronters to understand the English language.
- Generally, based on the findings in this study, the communicative English skills of the tourist confronters in the zone were found below the required standard.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. As experiences in many countries show us, those employees who work in the tourism industry need high level of English language proficiency. To this effect, the tourism sector management of the zone should create a link with Hawassa University, School of Language and Communication Studies and look for mechanisms through which its employees update and upgrade their English language status as regularly as possible.
2. As the study showed, listening and writing are the most difficult language skills for most tourist employees. Hence, the tourism office of the zone needs to help its employees to improve their listening skills by providing them with various video cassettes in which various exercises are designed and encourage them to meaningfully practise the above skills through autonomous and peer learning strategies. To improve their writing skills, the tourism office of the zone in cooperation with School of Language and Communication Studies at Hawassa University, needs to arrange intensive short term practical trainings which are supported by materials which are mainly developed in harmony with English for specific purposes.
3. The tourism office of the zone needs to provide English language proficiency test to the newly employed personnel in consultation with the School of Language and Communication Studies at Hawassa University.
4. The tourism office of the zone has to collect comments and suggestions from the tourists about the English language skills of its tourist confronting employees and take various remedial solutions.

5. Tourism training institutions in the country should revise their teaching materials and methodologies largely in harmony with the theoretical framework of English for Specific Purposes so that tourist confronters can well familiarize themselves with frequently used expressions in the industry.
6. The tourism office of the zone must have its own full-fledged library which is rich in its both reading and audio materials.

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