

**English Language Learning and Usage of the Students of Tourism  
and Hospitality Industry: Expectations and Reality**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English.

Department of English and Humanities

Brac University

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**Declaration**

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published by third parties, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been submitted, for any other degree at university or other diploma.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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**Approval**

The thesis titled “English Language Learning and Usage of the Students of Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Expectations and Reality” submitted by Prapti Ahmed has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on August 25th 2023.

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### **Abstract**

English language skill has become a basic need for all types of sectors but in the tourism and hospitality industry, it is crucial for socio- economic development. The purpose of this study was to explore how the students are preparing themselves for their career and to examine the true scenario of a manager's expectation from an employee in terms of English language proficiency. This research is interpretive and descriptive in nature. I also investigated the challenges students face while learning and using English. The research design for this study is qualitative in nature. The data were collected by taking semi-structured interviews of four managers from international hotels of Bangladesh and four students of Tourism and Hospitality Management of a renowned public university, Dhaka. I obtained data from deductive and inductive data analysis. Then the transcriptions were coded and categorized according to qualitative data analysis. The prominent categories were sorted out to find major themes from the data and are arranged by me. It has been found that the English language is being used to do any type of work in the tourism industry like listening to customers' questions, delivering information, reading several documents, and writing emails etc. The findings reflect that there is a mismatch between the English education which is being delivered to the tourism and hospitality students and the needed practical English knowledge for the industry. Only English writing skill is being delivered to the hospitality students whereas they need to have the practical knowledge of using all English language skills. It sheds light on the gap between the managers' expectations and students' preparation in terms of English language. The study highlights the attempts need to be taken by the Education analysts to make the hospitality students better prepared in terms of English language learning to pursue their dream career in this industry. The study concluded with some recommendations that will help the students to achieve their desired English communication skills.

**Keywords:** English Language Proficiency, Needs Analysis, Communication Skills, Tourism and Hospitality Management.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents for their endless love, support, encouragement throughout my pursuit for education.

### **Acknowledgement**

First of all, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Almighty Allah, for keeping me healthy and fit and giving me the patience and strength throughout this journey. I was able to continue my studies and use my real potential to use in my studies. Next, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my parents, without whom I would not be able to pursue my academic goals and aspirations. My parents supported me unconditionally on this crucial journey.

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Prapti Ahmed

August 2023

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In this modern era, English is considered as the Lingua Franca of the world. It is a universal basic skill which is considered as a growing worldwide need (Blue & Harun, 2003). Millions of people in countries all over the world learn English as it is an international language. “It is estimated that about a third of the world’s population, some two billion people, now use English” (Crystal & Potter, 2023). It has had a tremendous impact on the tourism and hospitality industry that in 2014, the Ministry of Tourism, Brazil offered free massive English language crash courses in preparation for the World Cup and encouraged its hospitality and tourism employees to join (Langlois, 2014). Tourism is a rapidly growing industry which is “created by, for and through tourists” (Munar 2007, 69). In recent years, both directly and indirectly, the rapidly growing tourism and hospitality industry has been a significant economic contributor in Bangladesh. According to the state minister for civil aviation and tourism, M Mahbub Ali, approximately 19.10 lakh tourists visited Bangladesh between 2017 and 2021, which generated government revenue of roughly Taka 12,788 crore (Halder & Hossain, 2023). This industry plays a significant role in developing financial and socio- cultural aspects. Due to the rapid expansion, a large number of hotel chains has increased in Bangladesh. Every day these hotel chains deal with thousands of clientele from all over the world and the one and only way to communicate with these foreigners is English as the mother tongue of Bangladeshi people is Bengali. As a result, while providing services to a global clientele, language can be the biggest barrier.

Although numerous employment opportunities have been created due to the development of the tourism and hospitality industry, there is a huge lack of competent employees due to the considerable gap of their English language learning and overall education. In Bangladesh, a little research has been conducted to address this gap. As a result, I became interested in conducting

this research to find out the gap between the students' preparation in terms of English language learning and managers' expectations in context to English language knowledge of the employees. Employees in the hotel industry need to be highly proficient in English; unfortunately, many of them still have poor English proficiency and low English confidence (Fujita et al., 2017). And, the recent trend highlights that the hospitality students believe to get a good job particularly in international hotels after completing the degree in theoretical knowledge, whereas practical knowledge is more crucial in this sector. In fact in Bangladesh, the scope of joining several training programs and getting enough industrial experience are very tough for the current students. As a result, a gap has emerged between the expectations of Tourism and Hospitality managers and the students of Tourism and hospitality management.

So, this research will explore students' preparation, challenges and managers' expectations from students during the time of employment at the hotel which will be very important information for the students' future working career in the hotel industry and education providers of hotel management courses to make the students proficient enough to utilize of the English language properly and competent enough to be able to work in the growing expansions of the hotel chains in Bangladesh. Moreover, the findings of this research will be beneficial for the curriculum designers, syllabus designers and education providers to revise, modify and adapt the curriculum, syllabus and overall education. The findings shed light on the existing English language knowledge among the tourism and hospitality students and the required English language knowledge in the tourism and hospitality industry according to the managers. The findings suggest that students cannot take preparation fully due to several reasons including old teaching method, out- dated curriculum, exam driven education etc. As a result, this study concluded by suggesting some steps to be taken by the education providers, curriculum and

syllabus designers to support the students to fulfill the managers' expectation and to be better prepared for their career in the context of English.

### **Background of the Study**

Bangladesh is a developing country in Asia and the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka city embraces numerous foreign tourists every year. The number of visitors are increasing day by day in proportion to the number of attractions. According to Halder & Hossain (2023), in 2021, the number of foreign visitors was roughly 1.35 lakh, whereas in 2022, Bangladesh saw the arrival of about 5.29 lakh foreign tourists. Every day, many foreign bloggers come to Bangladesh to explore the city and to review different sites. There are many hotels in Bangladesh where thousands of employees work. Due to several reasons, many employees are not competent enough to communicate in English. Though there are numerous universities in Bangladesh, only a few universities offer Tourism and Hospitality management programs. In this study, the university I selected to research is the oldest and highest ranked public university in Bangladesh which offers a Tourism and Hospitality Management program. After finishing their degree program, many undergraduate students believe that they will find a good job in a big hotel chain (Brien, 2004; Jenkins, 2001). But there is a considerable gap between the learning of theoretical knowledge and practical or industrial knowledge.

As I am a travel enthusiastic person, I travel to different places. When I visited several hotels and restaurants, I noticed some employees do not understand the words of others and even sometimes they misinterpret. Then I became curious to know about how the employees prepared themselves in their student life for their career in the tourism sector. Also, I became interested to find out how the students of the tourism and hospitality management are learning English to communicate with the global guests. Although one can argue that technical or soft skills are

enough for the career in these industries, without the capability of sharing the knowledge and skills clearly and convincingly with others, no skill would be sufficient to justify the competency. So, a blend of proper English language skill along with soft skills can help the tourism and hospitality management students to achieve the business goals and will help in improving communication between service providers and clients. However, the educational institutions need to produce more effective hospitality graduates for their future careers in the hotel industry. Several Bangladeshi universities have been offering hospitality and management programs to prepare the students for the jobs in the hospitality sector. As a novice researcher, I felt the need to investigate how students of these tourism and hospitality management programs prepare themselves for the job market to explore the reasons behind the poor competency in English of the employees which does not help to fulfill managers' expectations in terms of English language proficiency.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Bangladesh, there is a significant gap in education which directly and indirectly impacts the managers and the employees. Most of the cases, the educational institutions do not focus on the needs of the students which are necessary to build their career in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. As a researcher, I believe the universities and the institutions which offer Tourism and Hospitality programs need to identify the gap and challenges of students' English language learning to meet the needs of the Tourism and Hospitality industry and to cut down the gaps. So, in this research, exploration of the true scenario of a manager's expectation from an employee and a student's preparation in terms of English language proficiency will be carried out. This study will explore the students' learning and usage of English language in Tourism and Hospitality management. Moreover, this is the first step for the students who are planning and

preparing to work in the tourism industry to know what the expectations of the managers are and what are the challenges employees are facing in their career. By knowing that they would be able to prepare themselves by learning English professionally. It also examines students' needs in developing the four English Language skills. The findings of the study are expected to equip the students of tourism and hospitality management to be better prepared with their English communication skills before entering the job market in the field of tourism and hospitality management. Therefore, my study investigated the following research questions:

1. What kind of English communication skills are required in the tourism and hospitality industry?
2. How are the students preparing themselves for the job market in terms of their English communication skills? What kind of challenges are they facing while learning English for their career?
3. How can the students be better prepared with their English communication skills to pursue their dream career in the tourism and hospitality industry?

### **Significance of the Study**

Many people from all over the world visit Bangladesh for work, business and tourism purposes - for its tea gardens, archaeological sites, architectural buildings, islands and hill forests, historical mosques and monuments, longest sea beach in the world, wildlife including Bengal tigers in the Sundarbans. As every year a lot of people gather here, many hotels are established in Bangladesh. However, Bengali is the mother tongue of the people here. As a result, when serving international clients, language can be a big barrier to communication. This barrier can be reduced by preparing students with excellent English language instruction as English is an international language. Though some research on the needs and usage of English

language in the tourism and hospitality industry were conducted all over the world, very limited research was conducted in Bangladesh. Also, my study is important because it reveals the true scenario of a manager's expectation from a student who wants to work in this field and a student's preparation in terms of English language proficiency. This study explores the students' learning and usage of English language. It will help the students of hospitality study programs to be prepared to work in these hotels of Bangladesh by exploring the gap in their preparation. Also, by knowing the wants or expectations of the managers, the educators can revise, change or modify their curriculum to support the hospitality industry's needs. From the findings, the author can help students themselves professionally by improving the quality of student learning and recommending some suggestions for the education analysts and education institutions.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Through this research I attempted to-

1. Analyze the required English communication skill in the tourism and hospitality industry.
2. Investigate how the students are preparing themselves for the job market in terms of their English communication skills and the challenges they face while learning English for their career.
3. Suggest some steps through which students will be better prepared with their English communication skills to pursue their dream career in the tourism and hospitality industry.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter aims to provide an in-depth overview of the existing research on this topic. In this chapter, I have highlighted the key findings and gaps of the scholarly literature. Though very little research has been conducted in Bangladesh on this topic, globally a wide range of scholarly studies have been done by mostly focusing on the importance of English language in the tourism and hospitality industry and the needs analysis of English in this field which provided a foundation of my research. Besides, the other existing literature related to this topic helped me to structure my analysis and overall, all these scholarly works provided a framework for my review.

### **Importance of English Language Competence in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

The importance of the use of the English language in the tourism and hospitality industry cannot be ignored. Much research have been conducted to find out English language needs and the proficiency of the employees in the tourism and hospitality industry. In India, V Jayakumar et. al, (2014) investigated managers' perspective of managerial competency among the students of hotel management programs. In this study the authors identified industry perception, managerial employment competency components and managerial employability opportunities. The authors examined expectations of hotel managers in general as graduate hotel management students during their time of employment at the hotel. My research partly focuses on expectations of hotel managers from hotel management students in terms of English language proficiency during their time of employment at the hotel. The research by V. Jayakumar et. al. found that hotel managers expect that hotel management graduates need to be willing to perform, good general knowledge, effective teamwork, organizational commitment, personality and using initiative skills during working at the hotel. The authors expressed that, "qualifications were not



rated as an important characteristic for an employee, or an important factor to possess as an employee in the hotel industry” (p. 335).

Chumphong (2020) reported that employees use listening skills mostly in their workplaces and they need to improve the terminology related to hospitality and tourism. But the English language skills are interconnected with each other. Different studies have found different skills as mostly needed for this sector. For instance, Prihandoko et al., (2019) interviewed five stakeholders of the tourism sector yielding writing as mostly needed for employees. In this study, he agreed that all four English language skills must be learned in order to succeed in the tourism industry. It is quite surprising that he finds “the ability to write is a top priority and puts the ability to speak in the last position” (p. 5). In contrast, Kacet (2018) claims that “speaking and listening are vital for face to face communication and reading is used because a lot of information sources are in English, writing is viewed as the least important skill by tourism employees” (p, 2). However, this study explores that for delivering services and information, English is considered as a top priority.

### **English as a Core Criteria for a Career in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

Majority of the jobs in the hotel sector revolve around servicing the foreign visitors. As a result of that, English has become a crucial skill for the employees. Many researchers evaluated the English communication skills of the employees at the tourism and hospitality industry. To find out the importance of English language skills in the Indian hospitality industry, Prabhu (2015) studied English language proficiency of hoteliers, teachers and students of the college in India. She strongly advocated that “English language proficiency is a prerequisite for a career in hospitality” (p. 62). She explored students’ confidence level and ended with a note that if their confidence level increases, there is scope to improve the language. Chumphong (2020) finds that

English language is a crucial part of an employee's job. In 2021, a research titled, "Foreign language ability in hospitality business" was done in Southern and Eastern Europe. This research has the almost same type of participant like my research. But that research intended to find out the attitudes towards the role of foreign language ability and the influence of formal education on execution of the service. Petre et al., (2021) reveal that to achieve career advancement and a higher professional position, communication skills in English language is crucial. I believe so because it makes sense that having the widely spoken language across the world can achieve the goals. In Croatia, a study was conducted to examine how perceptions of the value of knowing different foreign languages vary by gender. This study by Bozinovic (2018) reveals that the female students value foreign language proficiency more than the male students as women are potentially more demanding tourists. To develop the tourism industry, it is essential to establish effective communication that will allow people to express their thoughts and opinions.

### **The Perceptions Regarding a Career in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

Only a few studies have been undertaken to explore employers and employees perceptions regarding the career in hospitality and tourism industry. In 2011, V et al., studied final year hospitality students' perception towards hotel career by using the survey questionnaire in India. Though, the researchers found that after graduation students' willingness to work in the hotel industry was high in India, a bachelor's degree is not the most important factor to start a career in the tourism industry. Rather, industrial knowledge and experience along with communication skills are the most important factors for employment in the hotel industry. Another study has been conducted on Cyprus by Zopiatis and Constanti (2007) to find out the connection between Cyprus's hospitality industry and education, as it relates to the internship practices of students. By using quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interview data,

they revealed some gaps and proposed the development of a model. One of the major findings is to apply practical knowledge to the classroom theory so that the positive perceptions occur among students. In 2019, Horaira did a case study in Bangladesh regarding employees' view on tourism and hospitality education. He mainly focused on the employee view on career expectations of tourism and hospitality management. In his study, he found that, though there is a significant demand among the employees for the jobs related to Tourism and Hospitality field, Bangladeshi employers do not have enough knowledge about international service standards of tourism and hospitality. He further explored that, a considerable gap has been found in terms of the impact of education and employee attainment within the industry (Horaira, 2019).

### **English Language Teaching**

The research title, “English language teaching for students of management of travel and tourism. (2018)” closely relates to one of my research questions though this research was done in the Czech Republic. This research is also a qualitative study which tends to approach how English is taught to students of Management of Travel and Tourism, University of Hradec Kralove. Kacet (2018) argues that “the whole curriculum of Management of Travel and Tourism has to be revised” (p. 1). He recommends adding commonly and frequently used vocabulary, suitable and up-to-date material from the Internet, e-learning courses need to be adapted along with all courses.

### **Needs Analysis**

It is known to us that ESP stands for English for Specific Purposes. Need assessment or need analysis is very important for ESP. By the need assessment, one can know a student's preferred learning style, what they want to learn/ what their expectation from the course is, what is their strength and weakness and also how they would like to learn. It plays a crucial role in

developing the curriculum, syllabus and any English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Needs analysis is defined in several ways by numerous researchers. For instance, Menggo et al., (2019) believe that the main purpose of needs analysis is to aid the instructors by helping them choose the best and appropriate curriculum and material. It helps the teachers to identify learners' interests, target to achieve goals. Therefore, it's crucial to analyze the need for ESP instruction for the hospitality and tourism sector. In 2016, Brown defined that NA is the systematic definition of a curriculum objectives that meet students' needs for language acquisition that have an impact on the learning and teaching environment. Still now most of the hotel employees face barriers in English language. So, by analyzing their needs it can be lessened. Datu (2019) confirms that English language barriers still exist among hotel's front desk staff. Not only the hotel's staff but also the students face challenges in learning English. By interviewing tourism and hospitality management students, Lertchalermtipakoon et al., (2021) revealed that listening and speaking skills are the areas where students lack in learning English. English is vast and that's why its learning needs and lacking also vary from person to person. Chumphong (2020) also finds among the three most popular areas that need improvement, vocabulary relating to hospitality and tourism is first. Moreover, Prabhu (2015) explored students' actively investing time and effort in improving English. She revealed, "Though students deem English communication as a very vital attribute, most are unable to constructively spend time and effort in improving it" (p. 59). To me, practice is an integral part to mastering something. If one cannot practice, they can never expect to learn anything. Therefore, those who lack English proficiency should actively invest time on improving it.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter I present the research design, research site, participants' information, data collection procedures and techniques as well as trustworthiness and credibility to address the research objectives.

#### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is qualitative in nature. I have chosen a qualitative method because to answer my research questions effectively, I needed to explore subjective experience and gain in-depth understanding. The data I analyzed in this paper was non-numerical. I interviewed four students and four managers. This is a qualitative study that focuses on interview questions and answers. In my interviews, I used a combination of both open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Appendix B). This study was conducted with the intention to explore the true scenario of managers' expectations from an employee and students' preparation in terms of English language proficiency. This research is interpretive and naturalistic and descriptive in nature. I obtained data from deductive and inductive data analysis. Participants were informed that the research study is concerned with English language learning and usage. The interview questions were developed by me. To analyze my qualitative data, I have used thematic analysis. Then the data is coded based on emerging themes to analyze systematically, like emphasis on writing skill, challenges employees and students face, factors hindering the mastery of English, required English communication skills, English language use in tourism and hospitality industry and the supports needed to improve their English.

#### **Research Site**

Setting is the location, place or time frame, where the action takes place. This study focused on two groups of people, they are students and managers. As all the students are from

the same university, their interviews were taken at their campus. On the other hand, four managers were from four different areas of Dhaka city. They are respectively from Gulshan, Airport area, Old Dhaka and from Shahbagh area. All these areas are located in Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

### **Participants**

To recruit participants I have used a simple random sample for the students and purposive sampling for the managers. Each student of the management program had an exactly equal chance of being selected which ensured high internal and external validity. At first, I randomly selected a student and told him about my research. He agreed to participate in my study and then he introduced me with other students. After knowing the details, some of them were voluntary participated in my study. As I needed to find rich information from a limited number of managers, I used purposive sampling to recruit the managers. I went to several well-known hotels to recruit them. Only a few of them were agreed to participate in my study after verifying their confidentiality by the consent form (see Appendix A). A total of eight participants participated in my study, four of them were students and four were managers from Dhaka city.

I chose the students from the Tourism and Hospitality Management program of a renowned highest ranked public university in Bangladesh. The average age of the students are 22- 24 years. The students are Sneha, Pranto, Rozen, Julie who are 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year students. The names I have used for both the managers and the students, all are pseudonyms.

### ***Background Information of Students***

Pseudonyms	Age	Semester/ year	Medium of education	Department
Sneha	22 years	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Bengali	Tourism and Hospitality Management

Pranto	24 years	Graduate	Bengali	Tourism and Hospitality Management
Rozen	24 years	4 <sup>th</sup> year	Bengali	Tourism and Hospitality Management
Julie	23 years	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Bengali	Tourism and Hospitality Management

The reason behind choosing the managers of four luxurious hotels in Bangladesh for the study is that they have Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). It is a well-defined set of rules which is reliable. For smooth and standardized functioning of each and every department of the hotel including Human Resource for staff training and development, these luxurious hotels have SOPs. I believe, managers are the right personnel for the study as they hire the employees for their respective hotels and they are highly experienced in this field. As this study explores the real scenario of a manager's expectation from a student who tries to work in his hotel and the gap of a student's preparation in terms of language proficiency, managers and students are the right participants for this study.

#### ***Background Information of Managers***

Pseudonyms	Designation	Age	Educational Qualification	Training Received	Work experience
Mr. Farhan	Manager	30 years	ESS and MSS from International Relations.	No	5 years
Mr. Uzayir	HR Manager	41 years	BBA and MBA in Marketing.	10 training sessions on HR positions.	10 years
Ms. Amayra	Manager	33 years	BBA and MBA in Marketing from Dhaka University.	Marinate training.	6 years
Mr. Hasan	HR Manager	36 years	BBA in Tourism and Hospitality management	No	8 years

			and MBA in Marketing from IUBAT.		
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All of the participating managers hold a Bachelor's and Master's degree, with a minimum of 5 years of working experience at hotels.

### **Instrument**

Self-developed open ended questions were constructed for the study. To meet the needs of the research, the questions are used as a research instrument for the collection of data. There were two sets of interview questions for two types of participants. One set was for the managers and another one was for the students. The interview questions are simple and precise, so that each member of the population can understand easily. I had modified and revised the draft version of questions to ensure the validity of the interview schedule. As a researcher I will play as a key instrument because I will add my interpretation, my observation. Later on, if it is necessary I may change the research question or direction of my research or the number of participants because my research is flexible.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

To study participants' meanings, expectations, experience, challenges and lacking, the data are collected by taking semi- structured, in- depth interviews. All the interviews were recorded on my mobile phone with their permission. I had collected the primary data from taking interviews of four students and four managers. No numerals are used. There are ten- twelve open-ended and closed-ended questions for managers and students. I had visited the university campus almost five times in a month to take the interviews of the students as though initially they fixed the time, when I reached and called them, they rejected. Also, I had to travel to different areas of Dhaka city to visit the hotels and to take the interviews of the managers. The



manager of the Airport area hotel fixed a date with me to take the interview. When I went there, they told me that the manager I contacted cannot give the interview due to some rules and regulations and for that they will recommend me to their HR for the interview. So, I came back to my home and waited for their response. After 7 days, they notified me that the HR is ready to sit for the interview. So, again I went there and took his interview. Collecting the data was not easy for me but still I tried my best to collect the authentic data. However, my research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach because I collected the data from a naturalistic setting. For secondary resources, I used some scholarly articles from JSTOR, Google Scholar, ResearchGate and different books to fill the gap of my research paper and to prove my points strongly.

### **Data Analysis**

The length of the interviews was around 25-30 minutes and the language of the interviews were both in Bengali and English. All the interviews were held face to face. By taking the participants' permission, I audio-recorded all the interviews through my mobile phone. After taking the first interview, I had reviewed the interview questions so that they addressed my research questions fully and where it was necessary, I revised some questions and finalized those. While conducting the interviews, I noticed that all my primary data were a mix of Bengali and English language. As a result, for analyzing my data, firstly I transcribed the audio of each interview verbatim on a table of MSWord files respectively to carefully reproduce the original message of each participant. Whatever they said in the interview, I wrote them verbatim. Secondly, I read and reviewed all the transcripts and matched with the recordings again to find out if there was any mismatch. The transcribed interviews were matched with the interview recordings. For formal member check, I shared their transcripts in advance with each participant

immediately after the data collection. I requested my participants to review their transcripts and to verify the accuracy of the data. Participants were invited to add their comments and feedback on the transcripts and were allowed to modify, revise, add or clarify their statements. All of the participants agreed that the transcripts I had written accurately reflected their statements and points of view and also none of them wanted to change anything.

Then the transcriptions were openly coded for everything that stands out as relevant and significant. In addition, I have conducted the second coding based on predetermined categories by using attribute coding and descriptive coding. Next, I categorized all the coding according to the groups/ common meanings determined by the coding. Based on the coding I created two tables for the managers and students respectively by using categories related to their background information. The prominent categories are sorted out to find major themes from the data and were arranged by me. Through observation and interview analysis, the data were analyzed. When formulating my analysis, to avoid confirmation bias, I have used a six-step process followed by “familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up” (Caulfield, 2022, n. p.). Afterwards, the data were used to identify quotes to illustrate participants’ English language use and learning at the tourism and hospitality industry and to write the first draft of the finding. In this step, I analyzed the relevant and significant themes which were most relevant to my study. Moreover, I analyzed the managers’ expectations in terms of English language, and the challenges students face while preparing themselves for their career. Lastly, I analyzed the support students’ need to be better prepared for their career.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

I removed any kind of identity markers such as name, phone number and used pseudonyms for the participants. I triangulated the data by using multiple codes, sources of data

and multiple approaches to analyze the data. I enhanced the trustworthiness by member check interview. After transcribing the data, I have shared the transcripts in advance with each participant immediately after the data collection to check the interpretation, confirmation, and verification. By the consent form (see Appendix A), I ensured their voluntary participants in the study. Also, I used rich and thick descriptions and focused a definitive sense of reality to make the data results clear and more intelligible. I used extensive quotations to foreground each of my participants' perspectives. In that way, "The results of each study are uniquely influenced by its context and interviews" (Schofield, 1993).

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

In this part I am going to analyze the data which I have found from taking interviews by thematic analysis. I choose thematic analysis as it is highly flexible and it allows me to refine and revise themes. Also, it allows to produce interpretable results of the complex phenomena by in-depth analysis of the participants' experience

### **Emphasis on Writing Skill**

In the Department of Tourism and Hospitality management, only one English course titled "Basic English" is offered. When I asked my participants about the content of the course, Rozen stated, "To me, the course was not average, rather, it seemed to me below the average starting from the study process to everything." Other participants also expressed that the course content is not sufficient for them to learn English. In that course, stories, the format of a CV writing, the difference between a CV writing and bio data, essay and paragraph writing, few grammar items like tenses, right forms of verbs, and presentation skills are taught. Sometimes, the teacher asked the students to write on a random topic chosen by him. There was no listening practice for that course. Another participant, Sneha said that, "The teacher taught us mostly in the same way as our high school and college teachers taught us." In the Bangladeshi education system, in most of the schools and colleges the teacher teaches in GTM method where the focus is on learning the structure of the language not the language itself. It focuses on learning the grammatical rules and speaking and listening are ignored in this method. According to the participants, the teachers taught the only Basic English course in GTM method even at the university level. Besides, all the participants agreed that in their career in the tourism and hospitality sector they need speaking and listening skills most and they also confirmed that in the

English course of their department, teachers mostly focused on writing. Julie said, “In this course, the teacher especially taught us how to write well.”

### **Challenges Employees and Students Face while Communicating in English**

My study suggests that the students and employees face several challenges in communicating in English. In this section, I will first discuss the challenges faced by students and subsequently challenges encountered by the employees.

#### ***Challenges Faced by the Students***

All my study participants are from Bengali medium institutions and their mother tongue is Bengali. All the participants agreed that they are pretty good at English reading and writing. As from their childhood, they were taught by the GTM method which focuses more on reading and writing than listening and speaking. The first challenge they face while communicating in English is anxiety and fear. Pranto says, “English is a fear for me and for the students who came from Bengali medium.” It is because from their childhood they remained too careful about the grammar and they could not practice on a daily basis with others. Sneha said, “As I am a student of Bengali medium school and college, English is the thing which I am always scared of.” The second challenge all the student participants face is understanding different accents in English. Starting from the primary education up to the university level, students cannot practice listening. Rozen expressed that he finds the American accent as most challenging to understand.” Julie too said the same thing, “I do not understand the foreign accents.” It is frustrating to them that, even at the English Basic course of their university, the teachers did not teach them the listening strategies. The third challenge students’ face while communicating in English is expressing themselves. Most of them understand others words, but they cannot express their words correctly. One participant was saying that she has to make up her mind before she wants to

express anything in English correctly. Another participant, Julie was commenting that her limited vocabulary and lack of confidence do not allow her to express her thoughts in English in public. Again Rozen stated that, “The traditional English courses we take from our nursery education to university level, all were mostly focused on English writing. Due to lack of practice, sometimes I cannot communicate in English.” I do agree with his point because without practice, no one will be able to express his/ her thoughts in English clearly and properly.

### ***Challenges Faced by New Recruits and Employees of Tourism and Hospitality Industry***

According to the managers, English is their primary requirement for building a career in the five star hotels. The new recruits are mostly the students who have completed their graduation or masters recently or who are trainees or doing internships at the hotels. They also face several types of challenges while working on hotels in terms of English language proficiency. A manager of a Gulshan area hotel connected his employees' English proficiency skill with the Bangladeshi educational system. According to him, as the Bangladeshi educational system is not up to the mark for English communication, his associates' verbal English is not up to the mark. All the managers proclaim that 90% of their guests are foreigners. As a result, most of the time employees face challenges to understand the words from guests. Though they face challenges, most of the time they can understand but the new recruits cannot present themselves in English. Mr. Farhan asserted that, “When they try to tell something in English, we see that they can deliver only half information and they cannot deliver the other half information due to grammatical mistakes.” Another manager, Mr. Hasan expressed that although all the staff of his employees find it difficult to understand the foreign English language. Later, Mr. Uzayir also stated that so far he saw his employees find listening and speaking as very challenging. Ms. Amayra mentioned that sometimes new recruits cannot write well in English and she has seen

many waiters make mistakes in spelling when guests asked to write something. Mr. Hasan also asserted that “They face problems in writing, speaking, spelling or to express themselves when speaking with guests. Sometimes they do not understand the accent of others.” So, it can be said that overall employees and new recruits face challenges in speaking, like expressing themselves, listening, understanding accents and sometimes spelling while writing anything.

### **Factors Hindering the Mastery of English**

Managers have discussed lots of important factors which affect students’ learning. The first thing they mentioned is about the education system. Mr. Farhan stated, “Our education system is not developed. It does not build up a student fully in master’s or graduation for their future career or professional career.” According to him, as the education system of our country is not developed, students cannot be prepared for their career. The managers differentiated between the student life and professional life. Mr. Farhan later mentioned that, “In our education system, students are only being taught theoretical knowledge. But in a professional career they need practical knowledge most.” As a result, students cannot complete their tasks fully. The second factor they have mentioned is the curriculum system of our country. Mr. Uzayir mentioned, “The curriculum needs to be revised as industry level so that people may directly work just after finishing their degrees.” Next they talked about teachers and the limited access to quality education. Ms. Amayra said, “In our schools and colleges we have a lack of qualified teachers who can teach very well.” Students also expressed their grief to have the unqualified teachers. Sneha expressed that some older teachers of her department have some issues in speaking and pronouncing correctly in English. Most of the teachers speak in both Bengali and English. I’m going to graduate very soon, still I did not find any of my teachers who speak in English strictly. Rozen said, “I got inspiration from social media to speak in English outside the classroom rather

than from my teachers.” Motivation is the biggest factor which inspires people to acquire something.

### **Students’ Preparation**

In terms of preparation, the first and foremost issue students are facing is lack of proper English courses. Julie expressed that in their tourism and hospitality management program, they should have an English practical course and more than one specific English course related to their field of education. Secondly, when I asked the students about their motivation to learn English to be prepared for their career, they stated several reasons. One student stated that he has no motivation, rather as English has become a basic need, he needs to know English. Another participant commented that she needs to know English to do anything. Sneha said that she learns English as it brings her social status. In Bangladeshi society, a person who knows English more, people assume it as a social status. For other participants, communication, a high profile career and higher studies are the main motivation to learn English. Three students agreed on the point that they are learning English as it’s mandatory. Rozen shared that, “Genuinely, I am learning English as I have to learn English to make a good result. There is no other option to choose.” So, to be well prepared for the career, the motivation for learning English varies from person to person.

All the participants stated that they do not actively invest a lot of time improving English in particular. At their university level, their books and other study material is in English. Rozen said, “As our medium of education is English, automatically I can practice through it. Sneha also mentioned,

I don't invest much time for English in particular. As I said, our education is mostly in English. So, as much time as I give for studying, I give as much time for English.



Besides, I don't do anything extra for English. As I said I read books and watch movies, these are also for entertainment. I don't do anything specifically to learn English.

So, it can be said that the students do not invest time to prepare themselves for the job market by enhancing their English language proficiency.

To know how students are preparing for their career, it is necessary to know how they are overcoming the challenges they face in English. Most of the participants shared that they were not so concerned about English till their university level. After entering university, everything has to be done in English. So, by reading books in English, watching English movies, they try to overcome their challenges. They have notified me that each course has one presentation. That presentation helps them to improve their speaking. Rozen said that, "From my childhood I was not exposed to correct pronunciation. That's why, still I am facing such issues. I watch You Tube videos and BBC News. Other than that, I am doing nothing to improve my English." It is quite frustrating that students know their problems, but they do not take the necessary steps to improve their English.

### ***Students Lacking in English***

Most of the managers found that students' basics are very poor. Mr. Uzayir said, "In Bangladesh students study English for almost 16 years up to their masters. Till we find they have serious issues with their grammar, speaking and listening skills which are really important for anyone." According to the managers, students are lacking a lot of things. For example- they are very weak in grammar, they face anxiety while talking to others, they cannot understand the accent of foreigners, they cannot express themselves, they make pronunciation mistakes etc. They also mentioned the reason behind it. Ms. Amayra said, "They are encouraged to memorize things rather than understand and they only focus on their grades and result...Even sometimes

they learn only for passing the exam.” They have shown me a scenario where the new recruits face several issues and have lots of lacking, but the employees who have worked for 2- 3 months have become masters in English in just a few months. Due to lack of practice, they cannot complete their tasks fully. Mr. Farhan mentioned,

When they try to communicate in English or when we take their interviews to hire them, in most of the cases they become nervous. They cannot even understand the interview questions. Even if they understand the questions, they cannot express or answer fully.

### **The Required English Communication Skills**

#### ***What Kind of English Students Need?***

To be able to work in the tourism industry, a candidate's English communication skills, writing skill, verbal skill, like all skills of English proficiency needed. Different hotels have different categories or departments. As a result, according to the category, the required communication skills vary. The Gulshan area hotel has four categories of employees. The categories are internship, trainee, casual, and permanent. Mr. Farhan declared,

For the internship, yes, obviously, we ask for the basic English that means they understand the English, they understand the guests language, they understand the management teams' language and their work. The other categories are trainee, casual, and permanent. For the casual and trainee we also ask basic English. But for the permanent we ask for the advanced English as they have to communicate directly with the guests or management team.

Ms. Amayra stated that, “Professionally he needs to know English, he is not required to give a speech in English. Knowing English according to his position/profession is enough.” All the managers agreed that, for some positions, they do not even look for their qualification, rather

they look for experience and English language skill. In this sector, students need to know complete English so that they can express themselves in English whatever the position they are going to take. Mr. Uzayir declared, “If that boy passes his degree but does not know English, we will not hire him.”

### ***Managers’ Expectation from the Students***

As the students have studied almost 16-18 years before entering the job market, the managers expect them to be proficient in English. Mr. Farhan said that,

If we want to hire for the position of the front office like guest service agent, waitress, or even the administration rule, then we look for the English communication skills as well as the educational qualification like BBA or MBA from reputed university or direct subjects related to these jobs.

They expect from a student to be proficient in English, educated in subject related departments, and skilled. Mr. Uzayir thinks, “Definitely, students need to have proper knowledge of English and good pronunciation, understand others, communicate well, express themselves, and answer guests properly.”

When I asked the managers whether students’ English proficiency level met their expectations or not, I received mixed opinions from them. They replied that for the entry level jobs like housekeeping and service their expectations meet. But when they try to hire the administrative or front desk officer, then their English language proficiency does not fulfill their expectation. Mr. Farhan said, “In general our expectation does not meet.” On the contrary, Ms. Amayra said, “Sometimes we find our expected proficiency, sometimes we do not.” But all the manager concluded by saying that it depends on case to case. Mr. Hasan replied, “It also varies according to their position.”

## **English Language Use in Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

### ***Students' Perspective***

Students discussed that English is a basic skill to be able to work in the hospitality and tourism industry. They stated English will be needed while talking to guests, doing the internal work of the hotel, while communicating with someone, writing reports in English, booking hotel rooms, taking orders online or offline, analyzing and interpreting tourism policies of other countries and overall in each and every sector they will need English. Pranto stated, "I will use my knowledge of English in my profession through communicating with all types of stakeholders, my colleagues and concerned authorities as well as my clients effectively." While discussing the importance, all the participants mentioned communication frequently. Sneha mentioned, "In the tourism and hospitality management sector, dealing with foreign tourists is a mandatory factor and communicating in English is the only way as we do not know the guests' native language." Again, to talk about the importance of English, Rozen interconnected business with English. He mentioned, "Business skill is also important. But if you cannot pass your ideas or intellectual skill with others, then your skill will be useless. So, English is mandatory." Yes, if anyone is expert in anything, but cannot share it with others, his/ her quality/ skill would be hidden and will have no value.

### ***Managers' Perspective***

Managers discussed that English is a core criteria to work in the hotel and tourism industry. Mr. Farhan discussed their reporting office is in India and their expert team, general manager, hotel manager, even few other associates are foreigners. As a result, every day they have to communicate with them in English. Mr. Uzayir stated, "Almost 90% of my time, I have to communicate in English." Apart from communication, giving instruction, circulation, any

warning letter, any marketing AD, taking interviews, daily meetings, briefing, morning meeting, department meeting, filling up lots of things, starting from their attendance, their daily activities, reports, taking notes in their training, or booking or taking order, writing kitchen order everything is in English. Ms. Amayra mentioned,

Everything is in English in a five star hotel. We are very much strict with the English language use of each and every one. In our hotel, every employee have to receive a training at least 1.5 hours on every month. Sometimes it extends up to 2.5 hours to 3 hours in each and every month. All these trainings are in English.

She further stated that in her hotel, even the cleaner, sweeper and the room boy also need to know English to understand the instructions and foreign guests. She said, when the foreign guest asks the room boy to give an extra pillow in English and the boy does not understand English, then how can he provide the service?

### **The Supports Students Need to Improve their English**

#### ***Students' Opinion***

Students seek support from their teachers, educational institutions and respective authority. The first and foremost need every student asked for is to create a practice zone where students will be able to practice English. Sneha mentioned, "If English is to be used practically in schools and colleges, then it would be a great benefit for us." Similarly, Pranto also stated, "They can play a great role in establishing a favorable and comfortable English practice zone for me and other students who are highly interested in developing their English learning." If there are practical zones in schools and colleges, students will be able to practice English which will enrich their English language proficiency. Secondly, students expressed that they need some professional guidelines along with additional activities like various types of seminar,

motivational speech etc. with their presentation through which they can learn English better. Sneha further mentioned that, “If we have separate marks for all four skills of English in our exams, then the students would not be so afraid of English.” Though now the Bangladesh Education Ministry is trying to revise the National curriculum, still there are some issues. As they have only one English basic course, Julie commented that “The authority can also add another non-credit English course, practical course for English and special English course for hospitality and tourism management.”

### ***Managers’ Recommendations***

As a manager, they have recommended important steps to be taken by the higher authorities. The first thing they all talked about was the Bangladeshi curriculum. Mr. Uzayir mentioned, “Lots of improvements needed to improve the curriculum so that students can learn properly and to get them to industry level”. They suggested to justify the curriculum by comparing it with other reputable curriculums. Mr. Farhan observed that, “In the Indian curriculum, the teachers take mock interviews, mock practical, mock classes which are extremely useful for their professional life. If we could combine all those in our sector or education system, it would be best.” Mr. Uzayir also commented, “I would recommend the authorities of higher education institutions in Bangladesh to develop, revise or maybe change the curriculum for specially the higher studies.” To them, bookish knowledge is not enough or it is not the limitation. Mr. Hasan mentioned, “From my experience I can say that they should emphasize more on practical knowledge.” Due to the marks distribution of the examinations, most of the teachers and students only depend on books to pass the exam. To them, bookish knowledge is not enough or it is not the limitation. Ms. Amayra also emphasized on this. She said, “And I think educational institutions should give more emphasis on practical knowledge.”

She further explained it like, the practical knowledge will help the students to be prepared to communicate in English fluently in every situation and whatever they learn, will learn very well.

Lastly, all the managers recommended the educational institutions to arrange additional educational and training opportunities where one will be able to learn English professionally.

## **Discussion**

In this discussion, I will explore how students in the tourism and hospitality field learn and use English and what are the challenges students experience while learning English. I will delve into what managers expect from students when it comes to English language skills, and what kind of English language skills the students or prospective employees really bring in and the support that can make a real difference in preparing them for their careers.

### **Managers' Expectation in Terms of English Language Learning and Use**

First and foremost, I asked my participants to discuss the English language usage in their workplaces. So far, they all agreed that English is a core criteria to be able to work in the hospitality and tourism industry. Both the managers and students stated that English is needed while communicating with the guests, doing any kind of internal work, analyzing and interpreting tourism policies, writing reports, notes, instructions or circulation or any kind of warning letter, any marketing AD, daily meetings and briefing, overall starting from their attendance to writing kitchen order everything is in English. However, the frequency of English communication skills was high among both the managers and the students. The hospitality and tourism management students justified that English is mandatory to pass the ideas or intellectual skill with others. According to V et al., (2011) "The communication skills were the most important skills for a career development" (p. 407). Similarly, the managers stated that they have to communicate in English almost 90% of their time. So, English is an integral part of being able to work in the hotel and tourism industry. And indeed it is very crucial for the students to know English. According to the managers the required English proficiency level of students depends on different categories of a hotel like internship, trainee, casual, and permanent. But to be able to work in this industry students need at least Basic English communication skills. All the managers



affirmed that they ask for Basic English language skill which means they understand the English. Unfortunately, students do not have the basic knowledge of English. As a researcher, I have come across that almost all the students faced difficulties understanding the interview questions. Even when they tried to answer in English, they could not answer the questions in full sentences. Also, the managers have claimed that the new recruits face a lot of difficulties to understand English, to express themselves, and to communicate with the guests. Also, students are not being taught how to communicate in their Basic English language course. As a result, though managers expect the students to have basic English knowledge, they cannot learn it in their course.

Furthermore, all the managers have assured me that having English language proficiency is far more important than a degree in the related field. A manager declared that they will not hire anyone who passes the degree but does not know English. HR managers or the employers in the hospitality and tourism business prefer industry experience over a degree in tourism and hospitality management. According to Tapan (2010), as the school tests require students to memorize and recall information from textbooks, teachers frequently advise students to practice memorization techniques and rote learning for the exams. It is found from both the managers and students that they are being encouraged to memorize rather than understanding the language and they learn only for passing the exam and to ensure good grades and results to complete their degree. For the hospitality students, a degree is a must to be able to work in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, V et al., (2011) found “A bachelor’s qualification is not the most important factor for employment in the hotel industry” (p. 407). Also the managers discussed that one needs to know English professionally but he is not required to give a speech in English and for some positions, English language skill is far more important than their degrees. This is undoubtedly a surprising finding. But the findings of this study are consistent with those of

several earlier investigations. V et al., (2014) assured “The value of a degree of hotel management was identified as being very low” (p. 338).

Another most important thing managers expect to have among students is practical knowledge. According to them, in professional careers students need practical knowledge most. Equally, Connolly and McGing found, “... [Industry] has a strong preference to hire people with strong practical skills and “soft” people management skills ...” (2006, p. 56). The university students are not being prepared with practical knowledge of English in their course. They could not learn how to use English in a practical context. It is obvious that in a career in the tourism and hospitality industry the employees need to have the people management skills but the need for English practical skill is an unexpected finding for the researcher. As the Bangladeshi students have studied almost 16-18 years before entering the job market, the managers expect them to be proficient in English. Managers expect from students to have proper knowledge of English so that they have fluency and accuracy in English but it is indeed melancholic that sometimes the manager's expectations meet with students' English language proficiency level, sometimes does not. It varies case to case. Moreover, the managers pointed out several reasons behind it. According to them, though students should have at least basic English knowledge, their basic English is very poor. It is found from the HR managers that whenever they try to hire the graduates from any reputed university for trainee or internship category, they find their weakness in grammar, issues while understanding the foreign accent, delivering their answer etc. Further, they discussed a possible reason behind students' weakness in English and they noted that the teachers do not pay attention to the student's needs. In Bangladesh most of the teachers decide what students need to learn based on their prior experience. As a result, this causes a mismatch between students' actual need after their graduation and teacher's objectives, which is

in most cases passing the exam. Douglas (2013) argues, “This problem originates from the lack of specification and analysis of the students’ needs” (p. 06). I strongly agree with his argument as needs analysis can meet the learners’ needs. Besides, as a researcher I have come across that all my student participants are not self- motivated. All of them said that their teachers do not motivate them to learn English outside the classroom. Most importantly, if a student is not motivated enough to learn anything, he/ she would never be able to learn that fully. Zopiatis (2007) discussed, “The fundamental principle of motivation suggests that educators, educational institutions, or even the industry cannot motivate students unless they want to be motivated” (p. 399). I do completely agree with this claim.

### **The English Language Skills Students Acquire and the Challenges They Face While Learning English**

My findings suggest that English writing skill is emphasized more in the one and only Basic English course in tourism and hospitality program. All the students’ participants agreed that their teachers mainly focus on writing skill whereas according to the managers, in the career of tourism and hospitality industry, they need speaking and listening skills most. Alarmingly, in this course the students cannot even practice speaking and listening skills. By interviewing tourism students, Lertchalermtipakoon et al., (2021) revealed that “listening and speaking skills are defined as students lack in learning English” (p. 65). As the students are not exposed to English speaking and listening skills, they face anxiety and fear while communicating in English. If the students at the university level cannot learn how to communicate in a particular situation, how will they be able to fit themselves into the job market? In 2009, Beer also commented, “Hospitality management students must be able to efficiently communicate and interact in an environment with individuals from multicultural or cross-cultural backgrounds” (n. p.). The

students' participants have expressed that their teachers teach them English in an old method which does not focus on all four skills. It is very frustrating that in a university where there is only one Basic English course in the tourism and hospitality program, teachers teach English in GTM method rather than CLT method. In addition, the communicative language teaching method (CLT) addresses all the strategies of communicative competences by focusing on all four skills of the English language. While discussing the limited access to quality education, Ms. Amayra mentioned, "In our schools and colleges we have a lack of qualified teachers who can teach very well." In many schools and colleges in Bangladesh, the teachers are not well educated and trained enough to teach English in a communicative way. Equally, Chowdhury and Sarkar (2018) found that teacher training is largely absent at the higher education level, although this has been acknowledged as a barrier to ensure quality education (p. 8). As a result, though from Grades 1 to 12, English is taught as a fundamental core subject, "lack of English communication skills continue to challenge Bangladesh's industrial workforce to compete in the global market" (Roshid and Webb, 2013). Nevertheless, English proficiency is frequently seen as a prerequisite for the possibilities in the economic, social, and educational spheres. Alarming, less than one in four disagreed with the statement that they are learning English as it's mandatory. Though the participants gave several reasons for learning English, genuinely they are learning it as they have no other option but to pass the exam. Sadly, all the participants disclosed that they do not actively invest their time to improve English in particular. Although all the students know their challenges and are lacking in English, they do not do anything specifically to prepare themselves for the job market by enhancing their English language proficiency.

Furthermore, most of the managers have blamed the Bangladeshi education system for students' poor preparation for the job market. According to them, the Bangladeshi education

system is not developed enough to build up a student fully in graduation or post-graduation for the professional career. Numerous components of Bangladesh's educational system are outdated. Rahman (2010) in his extensive study on the importance of humanities education identified the following characteristics of the educational system as being present in Bangladesh 'internal and external inefficiency', devoid of 'productivity...and clear-cut objectives...and policy directions', 'stagnant', 'inadequate', 'out- dated', 'limited', and one that 'produces graduates with no productive skills' (p. 5). Truly it is frustrating that our curriculum and syllabus both are very confined in some traditional classroom activities which do not allow the students to be productive enough to work efficiently. Where English education is most important for any program of education, the Bangladeshi nation is still struggling with the question of whether to use the native tongue or English as the primary language of education. In 2005, a report in The New Nation claimed that Bangladesh's education system is 'still sunk in theoretical or textbook education' (The New Nation 2005, as cited in Rahman 2010, p. 5). A manager who has completed one of his degrees from India compared the Bangladeshi curriculum with the Indian curriculum. He mentioned that the Indian curriculum focuses more on practical knowledge and prepares the students for the job market by taking several mock interviews, mock tests and classes.

All the managers suggested revising the curriculum according to the industry level so that students can directly start working just after finishing their degrees. One of the reasons for this is that over the past two decades, Bangladesh's educational standard has fallen dangerously which according to Ali (2004) is "characterized by a mismatch of the objectives and the curriculum" (n. p.) Also, the students expressed that their teachers do not care much about the course objectives.

Even most of them speak in Bengali most of the time in English class. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) argued that, “a discontinuity marked most conspicuously in English education” (p. 2).

Another major finding is that the university students are not being prepared with practical knowledge, rather with theoretical knowledge. It is found from the students that, as there is no language club, listening club or speaking club in their university, they cannot practice English enough. As a result, though they know the rules of grammar, they cannot use it properly while communicating in English. Appropriately, without knowing the practical use of English, no one will be able to express his/ her thoughts in English clearly and properly. Zopiatis claimed (2007), “Hospitality students are unable to apply theoretical concepts taught in their classroom environment to the actual hospitality establishment” (p. 400). All the managers and students in my study said the same thing. According to Holbrook (2005), Bangladeshi education is exam-driven as exams play a major role in education because they are the primary way that students, instructors, and institutions are evaluated. As a result, still in our universities the major focus is on theoretical knowledge or bookish knowledge. Roshid and Webb (2013) have argued that business workers have not been able to completely benefit from the advantages of the lingua franca due to the gap between bookish knowledge of English and genuine communication skills. According to Chowdhury and Sarkar (2018) “...university graduates were often not trained to be competent enough in English communication to confidently invest in graduate opportunities in international businesses” (p. 9). This is indeed one of the biggest challenges for the hospitality and tourism management students.

### **Supports Students Need to be Better Prepared for their Career**

To be better prepared with their English communication skills, students need complete support from their teachers, educators, higher authority, educational institutions and NCTB. The

first and foremost need every student and manager asked for is to create a practice zone where students will be able to learn English practically. Horaira in 2019 commented, “Hospitality graduates need to have both theoretical and practical knowledge to manage the service quality activity properly” (p. 186). Equally, the students expressed that a favorable and comfortable English practicing zone will develop their English learning. Zopiatis claimed (2007), “The key to this relationship is for the industry to acknowledge the “learning” status of the students and provide them with a positive environment in which they could develop themselves both personally and professionally” (p. 401). Specifically, this practice zone is more like a practical lab where English speaking and listening skills will be equally emphasized as English reading and writing skills. All the managers believe that educational institutions should give more emphasis on practical knowledge. Harkison also believes that in the hospitality industry, practical experience is more valuable than a degree qualification (2004a). Knowing English practically can provide several advantages for the students, educational institutions as well as tourism and hospitality industries. Secondly, teachers can also support students to be better prepared with their English communication skills by taking a few steps. Alarmingly, most of the teachers and students depend on only reading and writing skill due to the marks distribution of the exams. By bearing in mind the necessity of English communication skills in students’ career, the teachers should emphasize on all four skills of English language and make the students communicatively competent. Also, it is equally important for the English course teachers of tourism and hospitality management and for the students of this departments to know that “...multi-technical skills, good communication skills, leadership skills and financial skills are necessary to operate effectively in the hospitality industry” (Horaira, 2019, p. 186). In addition, as we have come across that our students have a lot of lacking in terms of English language, the

education providers should identify students' needs. The researchers, McDonough (1984) and MacKay (1978) describe that, in some occupations, knowing certain language abilities and objectives regarding operational skills by needs analysis is very crucial. Douglas declared "English language programmers need to conduct needs analysis as part of routine review of their curriculum (2013, p. 9). The hospitality and tourism students who are committed to do a great job, identifying their needs and teaching them with appropriate teaching materials will ensure customer satisfaction and professional fulfilments. Most importantly, the higher authorities should include a non- credit English Language course, Practical English Language course and an ESP course for tourism career along with the Basic English Language course. According to Guntoro (2021), "ESP is expected to engage English speaking and listening skills" (p. 59). Knowing English for specifically tourism purposes has become a compulsory skill. The students also requested the authorities for adding another non-credit English course, practical course for English and special English course especially for tourism and hospitality management. The fact that ESP or English for a specific purpose does not mean that it is different from English language. Panagiotopoulos et al., (2018) believe that using ESP can provide English language skills to the students and employees. Lacks Kacet (2018) notes "...the compulsory subject called Practical English Language 1 – 4 should be taught in the coming years." (p. 02).

Additionally, all the managers believe that students will be better prepared with their English communication skills if the curriculum is developed. They also recommended the authorities of higher educational institutions in Bangladesh to develop and revise the curriculum especially for higher studies. To meet the needs of tourism stakeholders, English language curriculum and learning materials should be developed (Puspitasari, 2018). The curriculum which was originally created for a program might not appropriately address the changes that have



happened over time. As a result, the curriculum needs to be reviewed, revised, modified, adapted and developed. Douglas (2013) finds, “On-going needs analysis allows the revision of objectives and modification of teaching techniques and materials which in turn lead to the design of a more comprehensive and inclusive course” (p. 9).

Lastly, all the students seek support for additional activities like training, debate and seminar. The managers also recommended the educational institutions to arrange additional training opportunities which will help the students to be proficient in English. Panagiotopoulos et al., (2018) find that training for the employee affects their productivity. In line with that, Zopiatis (2007) remarked “Students’ assimilation in the actual workplace will be smoother if they receive guidance and support from their educators” (p. 401). So, the industry should consider arranging several training programs for the employees and staff as well.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

In recent years, the tourism and hospitality industry is not only an industry but also it has become an important field of study. English is very crucial for the development of the tourism industry. In this field, English is not only a core criteria to excel in work, but also a key selection criteria. As a result, English language proficiency or mastery of English becomes the compulsory skill to build up a professional career in this industry. Moreover, in Bangladesh, only a limited research has been conducted about the managers' expectations and students' preparation in terms of English. The initial objective of this research was to find the required English communication skills in the tourism and hospitality industry, and the study concluded that Basic English language skills is the required communication skill to be able to work in this industry. It means students need to have the English language competency so that they can communicate fluently and accurately but in reality, it has been noticed that the basic English knowledge of the hospitality students is very poor which is a considerable mismatch between the expectation and reality. Moreover, managers expect students to have practical knowledge along with theoretical knowledge which is largely absent in the Bangladeshi educational system.

Unfortunately, students of tourism and hospitality management programs in Bangladesh are preparing themselves only with theoretical knowledge which indeed shows a considerable gap between the managers' expectation and students' preparation. Surprisingly, the findings of the study proved that knowing English is far more important in this field than a degree completion. The other research goal was to identify the challenges students face while learning English. Nevertheless, the findings show that they face several challenges while learning English including old teaching methods, lack of qualified teachers, lack of self- motivation, lack of practice and many more. Moreover, the flaws in the current curriculum and Bangladeshi

education system, exam driven education, traditional classroom activities, lack of training and practical knowledge etc. are the reasons behind students' poor preparation for the job market in terms of their English communication skills.

The final research objective was to identify how the students can be better prepared with their English communication skills to pursue their dream career. To meet the industries' and students' needs, the curriculum evaluation and redesign is necessary. Similarly, to be better prepared with the English communication skills, students need ESP courses for tourism and hospitality management, Practical English language course or lab (practice zone), better-qualified teachers, on-going needs analysis, adaptation of Communicative Language Teaching, mastering in all English language skills, adjusting up-to-date material, arranging several training programs, proper guideline, self- motivation etc. So, the findings of the study clearly addressed all the research objectives.

The findings of my research bear national importance. At the national level, this industry plays a vital role in economic growth and development. With the increasing number of tourists and foreign workers, English language proficiency among the employees have become crucial. The employees' ability to communicate in English effectively will enhance Bangladesh's image internationally and ultimately benefit the economy by increasing GDP and revenue. The findings of my research are expected to benefit the program and curriculum designers and course designers of Tourism and Hospitality Management programs to design and offer better courses for their students. Thus the students who take those courses will be competent in English communication skills to be better prepared to pursue their dream careers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of my study, I would like to make the following recommendations to better design programs and courses for the students of Tourism and Hospitality Management programs and thus help prepare competent employees for this industry in the future.

1. It is found from the students that the English course they are offered is a general English course, taught using Grammar Translation Method and the focus is on writing mostly. I would like to recommend that they should be offered an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course especially designed for the Tourism and Hospitality industry.
2. The students should be taught various English accents so that they can communicate with international visitors more efficiently. This should be included in their curriculum.
3. The teachers should teach the students using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method and they should emphasize more on listening and speaking skills.
4. The students should have more opportunities to communicate with people in English. Courses should focus on student interactions more, use authentic materials, and institutions should provide additional support in the forms of language centers and language labs.
5. There should be collaboration between the Tourism and Hospitality industry and the institutions offering programs and courses in Tourism and Hospitality Management so that the students get to learn what they actually need in their jobs and can be prepared accordingly.

## **Limitations of the Study**

There are a few limitations of this research. Firstly, the participants of this study are students of a particular university and the managers of international hotels. The teachers were not

included in this study due to my lack of access. Conducting this study among more students, managers and course teachers would yield better results. Secondly, only the five star hotels were chosen. But there are numerous three star and four star hotels in Dhaka. The findings may vary according to the standard of the hotels. Thirdly, this study is purely based on the information of the interviews by the students and managers. This research could not test or assess the English proficiency of the employees and students of the tourism and hospitality industry for better verification. As a result, participants' opinions, thoughts and expectations may vary with time.

### **Scope for Future Research**

The Tourism and Hospitality industry continues to expand on a global scale and English has become a key to success. As there is a limited number of research studies available on English language learning and usage in the context of expectation and reality, my study tries to fill that gap. In this research, the identified gaps highlight the importance of ongoing research. For future study, it is recommended to incorporate more students and teachers from several institutions to have a much more clear understanding. Also, in future one can assess and test the employees and students' English language competency. In future, a further collaborative study between the hospitality industry and the educators can also be done by including sample material. To sum up, the interconnection between English and Tourism and Hospitality industry holds abundant possibilities for future research. Through future research, new ideas, questions, exciting discoveries can uncover different strategies to enhance English language learning and can help to learn English even more in the upcoming years.

In this paper I investigated what kind of English communication skills are required in the tourism and hospitality industry in Bangladesh and what kind of English skills the students acquire in their educational institutions. I also focused on the challenges the students face while

learning English. My findings from interviewing both the students and the hotel managers suggest that the students are taught only a Basic English course and they lack oral communication skills, they also face difficulties with listening. The students are quite frustrated about how they are taught using the Grammar Translation Method. I believe my findings will help the program and curriculum designers, syllabus designers, educators and ultimately the students of tourism and hospitality management programs by better preparing them for the job market. This will in the end support our tourism and hospitality industry tremendously since they often struggle to recruit qualified graduates from Bangladesh.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent Form

#### English Language Learning and Usage of the Students of Tourism and Hospitality

#### Industry: Expectations and Reality

Principal Investigator: Prapti Ahmed

Undergraduate student, English Linguistics and ELT

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Syeda Farzana Sultana

**This form describes a research study that is being conducted by Prapti Ahmed from BRAC University.**

Greetings!

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project titled "**English Language Learning and Usage of the Students of Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Expectations and Reality**". The research on English language use in the tourism and hospitality industry is still very limited in Bangladesh. To address the gap, this project will examine the true scenario of a manager's expectation from an employee and a student's preparation in terms of English language proficiency. This study explores the students' learning and usage of English language. The findings of the study is expected to help the students of tourism and hospitality study programs to be better prepared with their English communication skills to work in the industry.

If you kindly agree to take part in this study, I will invite you to one semi-structured interview of approximately 25 minutes of duration to hear about your opinions and views on English language learning and usage. The interview will be held face to face and with your permission it will be audio-recorded for the purposes of analysis. You may skip any questions if you do not

want to answer. There are no other expected risks to you for participating in this study. I estimate that approximately 8 people will take part in this qualitative study.

Please note that **your participation in this study is completely voluntary**. You may withdraw your participation at any time, for any reason. Your name and position will NOT be revealed anywhere in my paper. Moreover, if you have any questions, you may direct your queries to [prapti.ahmed@g.bracu.ac.bd](mailto:prapti.ahmed@g.bracu.ac.bd)

I remain grateful for your assistance in this exploratory study.

Thank you very much in advance.

Kind regards,

Prapti Ahmed, Student

Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Consent Given by:

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions for Students

1. Please tell me about yourself – your age, your educational qualifications etc.
2. Did you take any English course in your tourism and hospitality management program? If yes, can you please tell me about those courses?
3. Which skills were emphasized on those courses?
4. Tell me about the content of those courses as much as you remember. How were those courses taught?
5. While learning English, what kind of challenges do you/ did you face?
6. How did you overcome those challenges to learn English?
7. How do you use your knowledge of English in your profession?/ How will you use your knowledge of English in your profession?
8. What kind of motivation did you have to learn English? How did the teachers motivate you to learn English in and outside the classes?
9. What kind of challenges do you face in communicating in English? Apart from the communication difficulties, what are the biggest challenges you face in English? What kinds of strategies do you use to overcome the challenges you face?
10. How much time do you actively invest in improving your English? What kind of efforts are you making to improve your English?
11. Why do you think the English language is important for the tourism and hospitality sector?
12. What kind of support do you need to improve your overall English? What can the teachers, the industry people, the policy makers do to support you better?

### **Interview Questions for Managers**

1. Please tell me about yourself, your age, educational qualifications, the kind of training you received, your work experience etc.
2. How do you use English at your workplace?
3. What kind of challenges do your employees face in communicating in English?
4. Who are the people you hire? What kind of communication skills do you look for when recruiting employees under your supervision?
5. In terms of English language proficiency, what are your expectations from the students who apply for a job?
6. What kind of English do students need to know? How much are they learning and what are they lacking in English?
7. Does their English proficiency level meet your expectations?
8. What kind of challenges do your new recruits face while communicating in English?
9. In your opinion, what are the factors that often hinder their mastery of English which are necessary to build a career in this sector?
10. What kind of suggestions do you have for the educational institutions that train your employees to support their students to be prepared for workplace communication skills in English?