

English for e-Tourism: Language, Technology, and Tourism

Fitrotul Maulidiyah

*English Department, Politeknik Negeri Malang
Email: fitrotulmaulidiyah@polinema.ac.id*

Abstract— English is the most widespread and dominant business language and it has become compulsory for people to speak English if they wish to join a global workforce. A number of research show that business communication is most often conducted in English. Due to its skyrocketing use, a tendency for designing specialized courses which focus more on specific outcomes and industries is observed, especially for English department students. By addressing specific audiences and catering for specific needs, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is the example of this category. This paper focuses on English for e-Tourism and the teaching strategies which are implemented in order to adjust the course to students' needs. The emphasis is taken into consideration because the relationship between technology and tourism has become delicate and challenging. Observations on this inseparable relationship assume a great importance when considering the varied world of tourism activities, where the strict dependence on technology for the efficient and effective management of information has caused a real revolution due to the diffusion of online applications. The most recent developments of the web and social networks have then further accentuated the influence of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) on the sector of education. Moreover, the important aspects of English for e-Tourism will be highlighted since the adoption of new technologies has reshaped the entire process of tourism service development as well as the entire tourism industry as a whole. Finally, reference will be made to the responsibilities that both teachers and students have in the ESP framework.

Keywords— English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English for e-Tourism; Information and Communication Technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is the most widely used language around the world. This phenomenon triggers the development of various English courses whose main purpose is to understand a particular subject with the implementation of English language as the medium of instruction. One of the examples is the practices of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). English for Specific Course (ESP) is a course held for a specific purpose which ranges from business English to English for Tourism and anything in between. This course does not address students in a conventional way. It rather integrates all aspects of the English languages such as grammar, vocabulary, syntax, language skills into the teaching and learning process of a particular subject. Reference [1] stated that ESP should be regarded as a method which is not based on

concrete tasks and materials, but rather on teaching a language, in which the learner has the first word, concerning the content and the strategies used during the lesson.

As it has been mentioned above, ESP courses include a number of various subjects namely technical English, medical English, business English, English for Tourism and so forth. Each course is designed to address learners according to their interests and their field of study. Nowadays, one sector which exhibits particular interest is that of English for Tourism. The fact that English holds such an esteemed position in the world and has become one of the most widespread languages utilized in order to negotiate in jobs related to “trade”, “tourism”, “technology”, and “business” makes its knowledge on a sufficient level a prerequisite [2]. Based on its status in such a globalized era, English is most commonly the first foreign language to be taught to non-native

speakers and it is also the one employed mostly by people traveling and, thus, a key element in the tourism sector.

Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. The fast-worldwide progression of tourism management has been a significant advance within a tourism industry over the latest decades. Communication is essential to the management. English language will be an important means to communicate within tourism organizations and for tourism management. Language also activates the tourism organization to drive forward [3].

Ignoring the important roles of English language may loss of resources and limitations to tourism organizational and managerial development due to the lack of communication and knowledge sharing. To carry out the task, development of tourism sector needs to communicate across linguistic. Therefore, in tourism, English language can be described as a required communication means. As Lauring said successful development of tourism relates to the ability to manage the communication crossing English language. It is claimed that tourism organizational management required a process and supporting practices.

Therefore, it is of great importance to put emphasis on the specific tasks and strategies used while teaching ESP in a classroom; strategies that are dissimilar to the ones used in a traditional classroom especially when teaching content related to tourism. The activities used should focus especially on the aim of the course and the knowledge that learners need in order to be efficiently prepared for the tourism domain. More specifically, ESP courses are addressed only to “professionals” who are going to use a foreign language to their careers [4]. For this reason, usually all learners are adults who already know English and they learn it in order to adjust it in their work [5].

Tourism is known to be one of the sectors that may take benefits of the development in the information and communication technology. The sector is rich with information that can be distributed to a large audience easily using ICT.

The technology has a huge role to the success of the e-commerce of the tourism industry.

Indonesia has 55 Million Internet users with the penetration rate of 22.1%. This number is huge and offers a great opportunity to the e-commerce of the tourism industry. The Internet has become a main distribution channel in e-tourism. It has the industry to eliminate so-called booking agents, which often have negative images. It is an effective media to attract tourists. Therefore, ICT has closed the gap between the customers and service providers and should be strategically included with tourism information package [3].

This paper intends to understand and to propose one simple and effective way which can accommodate those needs related to tourism namely an ESP course of English for e-Tourism. This course is given to students in English for Translation and Hospitality Industry at Politeknik Negeri Malang. This is a new course in the English Department at Politeknik Negeri Malang which is expected to collaborate three important aspects namely language, technology, and tourism. This is because English Department at Politeknik Negeri Malang tries to utilize ICT in almost all courses, including in English for e-Tourism. If this course is successfully developed, it is expected that the course could be adopted by other universities which also major in hospitality industry and tourism. This paper will try to highlight some points related to the course.

II. STRATEGIES USED IN ENGLISH FOR E-TOURISM

Although it is taken for granted that learners who deal with tourism should have an excellent command of the English language, [6] points out that “ESL students engaged in jobs related to tourism industry, [...] do not perform efficiently while communicating with their customers in these contexts”. Therefore, in order to learn English for Tourism, the implementation of specific tasks that focus especially on the aim of the course and the knowledge that learners need in order to be efficiently prepared for the tourism domain are necessary. Some of the strategies used in English for Tourism are the following.

As [7] notes, one of the strategies used in order to promote learners’ knowledge is based on projects. More specifically, they refer to digital storytelling which “helps to improve traditional skills development, mainly speaking and writing

along with researching and collaborative tasks and working with computers". It means that students express their ideas not only through written forms but also more widely through audiovisual forms. They are going to record all of their ideas, transform them into creative projects, and to get to those creative projects, they are going to use technology in the form of computers. Through this, learners get accustomed to technology and they are trained on how to interview people, conduct research and apply several strategies to solve their problems.

Webquests comprise another effective strategy in the process of teaching English for e-Tourism. As [8] claims, "web-quests are a very common way of using Web resources to research a variety of topics". Through these resources, learners are able to construct their own projects which are based on real tasks. In particular, the projects are based on real tasks such as interaction with customers, organization of journeys so that learners will be better adjusted to their work and a variety of other tasks that reflect the duties of a professional in the specific field. Although the tasks on webquests do not reflect authentic situations in their full scope and everything is based on projects that learners have to perform within the classroom environment through the particular communication tasks, they still address the needs of the students and allow them to get a step closer to real-life professional goals and activities. In such a way, learners come across terms and problems that they will most likely face in the field of tourism either if they are beginners and about to enter the field or they are professionals with a number of years of experience who would wish to brush up on their knowledge of English and do so by practicing their English skills in correlation to technological advancement.

As internet cannot be separated from everyday's life, students are suggested to be encouraged to do as real work as possible during the teaching and learning processes. One of the obvious examples is that the use of the internet for communicating and transacting with customers has been growing rapidly in the worldwide tourism and hotel industry. There has been rapid increase in the online booking in the hospitality & tourism industry e.g., e-booking of hotel/motel rooms, airline tickets, travel packages etc. due to the fact that the industry is one of several services – which

can be checked, inquired, and ordered online easily, and conveniently communicated and delivered electronically via the Internet. Based on these usual and common online activities, students are urged to utilize the technology in their hands to the correct use. They will be asked to implement their knowledge on the internet as thorough as possible. In order to make them realize the importance of the course, any projects given to them have got to be submitted through the learning management system (LMS).

Regarding the difficulties that ESP students may face in English for e-Tourism classroom, vocabulary tends to be more one of the most common. Therefore, explicit strategies should be implemented for its teaching and learning. However, learning and practicing of vocabulary is a shared responsibility of both the teachers and the students. In order to help students learn the vocabulary more easily, it is important to put emphasis on "learning concrete words as it is easier than abstract words" [9]. Finally, another technique is that instead of teaching vocabulary, teachers should check whether students understand the words used in the context [9].

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ESP TEACHERS

Another element that should be highlighted is the teachers' role. As it is well known apart from the efforts on the learners' side, teachers play an important role as they are the ones who teach them the necessary material. However, their qualifications do not differ greatly from a regular teacher of English [1]. For example, ESP teachers should be positive to the "ESP content" and have a good command at the particular subject that they teach. More specifically, teachers should be pleasant to learners while teaching, and also well prepared in order to solve any questions and difficulties the students may have.

Apart from that, their duty is not only teaching [10]. More specifically, they are responsible for the administration and the organization of the "ESP course". Furthermore, their role is to investigate "analytic" methods in order to collect all the material that they need to teach and adjust it to the needs of the particular course, but also to the needs and learning styles of the students they have in front of them. Teachers are also the ones who evaluate students' exercises and provide them with feedback.

On the other hand, students in an ESP course have another perspective for the role of the teachers. As they admit the teaching techniques changed and this brought also changes to the learners' behaviour and teachers' role as well [11]. From their point of view, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the learners and at the same time make them feel free and responsible for themselves.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ESP LEARNERS

Another aspect that should be highlighted is the responsibilities that ESP students have. Students should be interested in the particular course as it is related to their future work [5]. In such a way, when they enjoy the course, they will be more motivated to continue their effort and improve not only their English but also their skills concerning their future work. Students should also be encouraged to expand their horizon to learn not only English but also other subjects related to tourism and technology in order to develop their background knowledge. It is because background knowledge is one important aspect to improve students' ability in learning ESP especially in the aspect of tourism.

Apart from that, learners have awareness of the reasons they learn English and that makes them more concentrated on their own goals. What makes things easier is the fact that they can learn English in "authentic context" and not as "a mechanical skill" that they are not going to use and forget immediately after the lesson [12].

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the above, the ESP course is an approach that contains many different subjects that aim at preparing learners efficiently for their work. The greater dissimilarities between ESP and EFL are the age of the learners and the purpose for which they enroll in either class along with the way the English language is approached and

taught in each of the cases, meaning that in the former case there is more emphasis on the context and content of the subject taught through English, while in the latter the English language is taught more structured covering all its aspects and forms. In addition, ESP courses do not solely utilize the textbook, unlike more traditional courses, but learning also takes place through web quests and a lot of technology integration that simulates real life tasks for the professionals. Lastly, both teachers and students have equal responsibilities for the techniques employed in teaching and learning, respectively.

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