

# Hampi Speaks English

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*Abstract:* This study has been undertaken to investigate the existence of English Language on the tongues of Hampi dwellers. While an exhaustive study is conducted on English language acquisition for academic and professional purpose, there are no traces on how English language is picked by laymen in a natural setup. Hampi is one such place for study because Hampi speaks English. From vendors to the home stays every local man manages to communicate in English. As the proverb goes 'Necessity is the mother of invention' Hampi people for their livelihood, in order to sell their goods and services to the tourists, local Hampi dwellers picked English in spoken terms.

**Key words – English language, Hampi, learning a language, spoken English, tourists**

## INTRODUCTION

No institution, no teacher or no book can teach English. English language has to be picked and not taught. Hampi breathes English. Yes, you read it right. Hampi is a microcosm of India and an archaeological wonder. Here every vendor, every hawker, every porter, every auto/taxi driver and even beggar converses in English language. It's just an international hub of tourism in Karnataka. Hampi is a World Heritage Site since 1986. Most of the people in Hampi not only speak English but also speak fluent English in different accents. They may be illiterate but they speak adorable English. What made them do so? To earn their bread and butter they had to sell their goods and services to the tourist of different nationalities, hence, learnt English. Did they go to some coaching institute? No, neither they could afford time and money nor was any coaching institute available there. Then how did they learn? They picked the language from their surroundings. Imitated the verbal gestures, practiced and learnt phoneme by phoneme.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The author has been working as a Lecturer in English in a government polytechnic for the last 12 years. Majority of the students who take admission in government polytechnics are from rural background, non-English medium and mostly first generation learners in their family. These students aspire to take up a job immediately after their Diploma studies. The author came across a lot of students who performed well in academics but due to lack of effective communication skills in English failed to procure a job. When most of such students asked the author to recommend a spoken English institute, author gave those students the example of Hampi where every layman manages to speak in English. They may or may not be literate but can speak English. While motivating the students to start speaking in English like Hampi dwellers, the author felt the need of investigating into how Hampi breathes English. The outcome of this article will substantiate the author's stance that, no institute, no teacher or a book or an app can teach you speaking English. Like tourism paved way for effective spoken English even for a layman. English has to be picked that is all!

## NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Proliferation of English language coaching centers and spoken English institutes inspired the author to investigate into the present article. Does learning of English happen only in formal setting? or even in informal setting. Can only a literate individual (Indian context) speak English? Here comes to focus tourist spots like Goa, Pondicherry and Hampi. These are bustling with international tourists. Tourism sector creates employment to the locals. When locals get to promote their goods and services they need to communicate with the tourists (of different nationalities) in a common language. There comes English language that serves to bridge the gap. Do these locals go for a crash course to speak English? No, their livelihood makes them pick English. Listening, imitating, non-verbal cues and finally speaking English happens around the corner.

An exhaustive research is conducted on English Language acquisition as second language in a formal setting (eg. School). But English language acquisition is also happening in informal settings like tourist places. Natural learning happens in informal setting. How does it happen? That's how there came up a need for this study.

## LOCATION AND IMPORTANCE OF HAMPPI

Hampi is located in Vijayanagar District (earlier Ballari District) in North Eastern part of Karnataka in South India. Located on the bank of the river Tungabhadra Hampi is the city of ruins, but a UNESCO World Heritage Site. "Hampi shares multiple themes in the same space. To the Hindu pilgrims it's a sacred landscape with holy shrines. To a backpacker it's a fairyland like exotic tourist spot. To the authorities it's a vulnerable open treasure of history and heritage. And most importantly, to the local population it is their home." No doubt it is a historical treasure for travelers, which serves numerous ancient monuments, beautiful temples, bustling street markets, bastions, treasury building and captivating remains of Vijayanagara Empire situated in the shadowed depth of hills and valleys in the state of Karnataka.

## HISTORY OF HAMPI

Tourists from all parts of the world visit this place throughout the year. Hampi was the capital of the Vijayanagar Empire from 1336 to 1565. It was ruled by totally 7 dynasties but the golden period of Vijayanagar Empire is considered to be during the reign of Krishnadevaraya.

## WHAT LANGUAGES DO THEY SPEAK IN HAMPI?

It is located in newly formed Vijayanagara District (earlier in Ballari District). Agriculture was the major occupation of the native Hampi dwellers but over the decades, tourism has picked up pace feeding locals from Guides, local vendors to small scale industries. Though Kannada is the state language, majority of the population in this region speaks not less than 5 languages; Kannada, Urdu, Telugu, Hindi and English. The multilingual local enterprises manage to get their tourist-driven compliance, may not be fluent though. English is on the tip of the tongue of every literate and illiterate of Hampi. English serves as a communicative language when tourists fail to interact in local languages. When national and international tourists visit Hampi, one may find registered and unregistered guides trying to make their livelihood. Most of the guides are local villagers and they manage to speak in English. Knowledge and authenticity of the subject matter may differ from guide to guide with their varying levels. Somehow, guides succeed to satisfy a typical serious visitor. Now that resorts, restaurants, hotels and travel agencies have proliferated here, they have put their boards, menus in English language. The signposts and narrations boards at the sites installed by the Archaeological department of India typically use three languages – English, Kannada and Hindi. Those who do not know local languages may manage to communicate in English language verbally or even non-verbal cues may do.

## LSRW AND 5 STAGES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills in English language are to be learnt. In Hampi, there are a lot of opportunities for the locals for listening to English. Listening and speaking has majorly taken place in Hampi, reading and writing is not much happening there. In a formal setup students learn a second language in a particular way and the stages of their learning are mostly predictable.

“Students learning a second language move through five predictable stages: Preproduction, Early Production, Speech Emergence, Intermediate Fluency and Advanced Fluency (Krashen & Terrell, 1983)”.

If we compare this with the informal learning of Hampi dwellers, listening in the first stage of language acquisition preproduction stage of language acquisition is quite active. Active listening leads to early production stage where the locals try to speak in terms of words and non-verbal cues. The next stage of language acquisition is speech emergence. In this stage they try to put words into small sentences but code switching and translation comes to action. And rest next two stages are subjective in nature. It depends on the individual's receptivity, interest and to the areas he is exposed to.

## CAN A LANGUAGE BE SPOKEN WITHOUT LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE IT?

The answer is YES. To justify this lets answer another question. How did we learn to speak our mother tongue? obviously without reading and writing, we just imitated the sounds spoken, babbling, nonsense words, small meaningful words, words put in sentences... and there you go. This is due to the cognitive process which leads to learning of speaking, listening, reading/writing. To speak in a language it takes primarily oral and auditory skills. To read and write it takes visual and cognitive processing. Similarly people in Hampi have picked spoken English through oral communication and daily interactions without any formal training in reading and writing. This has led them to communicate effectively in spoken terms yet may not be literate in reading and writing.

Hampi is filled with a lot of people who can speak English but can't read or write it. When the author interacted with the random sample population, it was found that they learnt to speak in English by sounds and actions. For example, 'clean the table' along with the spoken sentence cleaning the table is demonstrated. Hence there is no need to read and write it when they imitate and enact it. Many illiterate and uneducated people in India speak English. English can be picked from various means such as exposure to Social Media, Listening to English news and commentaries, conversing and interacting with people who speak considerable good English. Any layman can speak English. We find a lot of viral videos of illiterate people, people in rural area, laborers, beggars and vendors speaking fluent English.

## WHAT PURPOSES DOES SPEAKING ENGLISH SERVE IN HAMPI?

In a tourist spot like Hampi, English language serves as a bridge and connects people from different countries and linguistic backgrounds for the following purposes.

**Communication:** English is a medium of communication in Hampi. From airports and resorts to restaurants and tourist attractions, you are likely to encounter people in Hampi who can communicate with you in English. This facilitates asking for directions, ordering food, seeking assistance, and engaging in conversations with locals.

**Navigation:** In Hampi English language is commonly used in signage, maps and tours and travels outlets. Tourists of different nationalities and ethnic groups can read and understand English text that helps them to navigate through unfamiliar places with greater ease, ensuring you don't get lost and can make the most of your travel itinerary.

**Cultural Exchange:** In Hampi, locals engage in conversations in English with people from different cultures. Though locals converse for their livelihood, they also gain invaluable insights into local traditions, customs, and ways of life. English allows them to connect with fellow travelers and locals alike, fostering cross-cultural interactions that enriches their experience.

**Seeking Direction:** In Hampi, tourists seek directions from the locals in order to visit tourist sites. Be it literate or illiterate, the locals have eventually championed the art of speaking fluent English.

**Safety and Emergencies:** If you are a tourist, in Hampi, and in case of emergencies or urgent situations, English language plays an important role in communication. Locals are able to understand your concerns in English and you can receive the help you require in time, promptly and accurately.

**Access to Information:** With the advancement of science and technology, in terms of smart phones and other portable gadgets, whole world is accessible on our finger tips. English language helps tourists and travel agencies for researching destinations, finding accommodations, reading reviews, and planning your activities in advance.

**Business and Professional opportunities:** Every year, Hampi Utsav is celebrated with great pomp and glory. This opens up ample of opportunities for business and professional purposes. International delegates, trade shows, networking events are conducted here, and English enables you to connect with professionals from around the world.

**Confidence and Empowerment:** Being able to communicate effectively in English boosts your confidence as a traveler or a service provider. It empowers you to engage with locals, negotiate deals, and immerse yourself in the cross cultural endeavors more deeply.

**Food and Accommodation:** English serves as a universal language of communication in a travel destination like Hampi. Decades of interactions of the locals with the tourists of different nationalities speaking different languages have enhanced their communications skills. Whether one is exploring historic sites, savoring exotic cuisines, or forming connections with people from diverse backgrounds, English proficiency opens doors and enriches sales and services, travel journey in ways that extend beyond the boundaries of language.

## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and Qualitative Methods of research were used for the purpose of this article.

## POPULATION SAMPLING

Random Sample population of local Hampi dwellers was chosen for the purpose of the research. Variants were; male, female, literate, illiterate, different occupations and trades providing goods and services to the tourists.

## DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using Questionnaires, Opinionnaire and Observation. The author visited Hampi and spoke to the locals and the tourists and collected the information. Later the data was consolidated into 2 categories as follows:

**DATA COLLECTION ON HAMPI LOCALS**

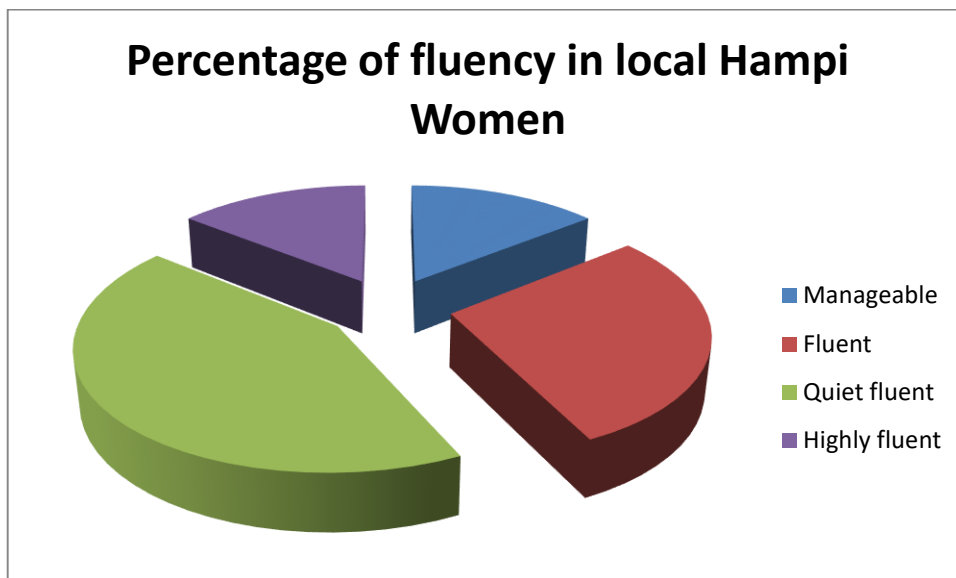
Number of Locals	gender	Literate/ Illiterate	Occupation/Trade	Fluency level
1	F	N	Flowers seller	Manageable
1	M	N	Auto driver	Manageable
1	M	Y	Artifacts Shop keeper	Quiet fluent
1	F	N	Artifacts Shop keeper	Quiet fluent
1	F	Y	Guide	Quiet fluent
3	M	Y	Guide	Quiet fluent
1	M	N	Porter	Manageable
1	M	N	Ice cream vendor	Manageable
1	F	N	Coins vendor	Quiet fluent
1	M	Y	Taxi driver	Quiet fluent
1	M	N	Restaurant Waiter	Quiet fluent
1	M	Y	Bakery owner	Quiet fluent
1	M	Y	Lodge Receptionist	Highly fluent
1	F	Y	Travel Agency	Highly fluent
1	M	N	Resort staff	Quiet fluent
1	M	Y	Museum Staff	Fluent
1	F	Y	Museum Staff	Fluent
2	M	Y	Chemist	Fluent
2	M	N	Grocery shopkeeper	Fluent
1	F	Y	Boutique owner	Fluent

Referring to the above table on data collection on Hampi locals in terms of their fluency, it can be analysed that, when the author spoke to 7 local women, 4 were literate but all could communicate in English with different fluency levels. 1 woman had manageable, 2 women had fluent, 3women were quiet fluent and 1was highly fluent. When the author spoke to 17 local men

working in different occupations and trades, it was found that 7 were literate and 10 were illiterate but all could communicate in English with different fluency levels; 4 men had manageable communication skills, 3 men were fluent, 6 men were quiet fluent and 1 was highly fluent.

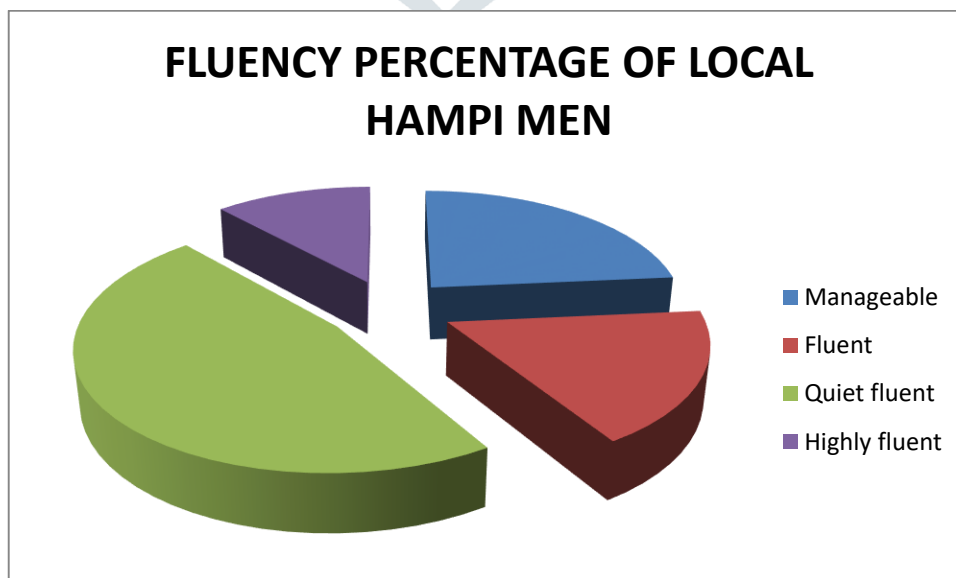
**FLUENCY OF LOCAL HAMPI WOMEN**

Sl. No.	No. of Female locals interacted with	Level of fluency	Fluency Percentage
1.	1	Manageable	14.28
2.	2	Fluent	28.57
3.	3	Quiet fluent	42.85
4.	1	Highly fluent	14.28



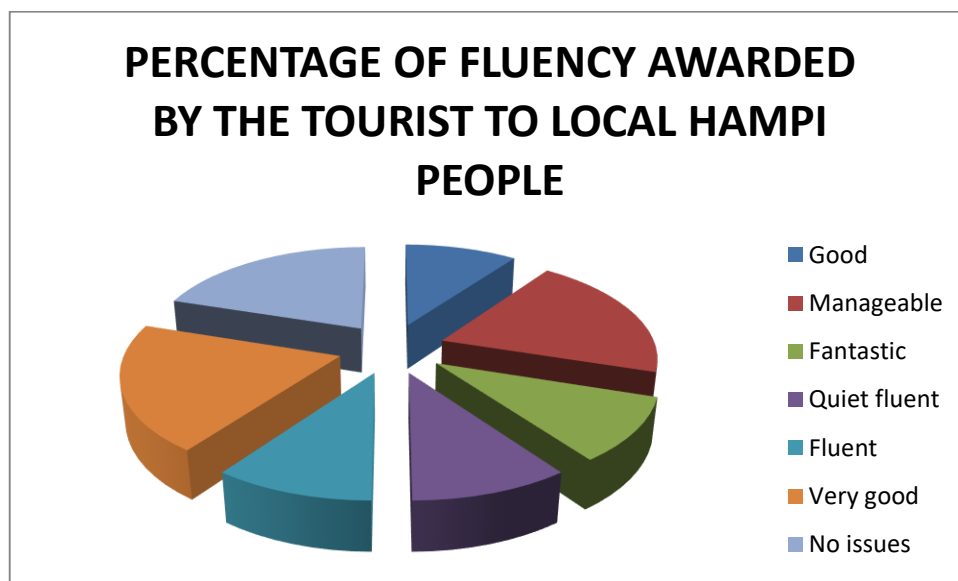
**FLUENCY OF LOCAL HAMPI MEN**

Sl. No.	No. of Female locals interacted with	Level of fluency	Fluency Percentage
1.	4	Manageable	14.28
2.	3	Fluent	28.57
3.	8	Quiet fluent	42.85
4.	2	Highly fluent	14.28



**DATA COLLECTION FROM THE TOURISTS**

No. of Tourists	Male/female	Nationality	Opinion on locals' spoken English	PERCENTAGE OF FLUENCY AWARDED BY THE TOURIST TO LOCAL HAMPI PEOPLE
2	1M, 1F	UK	Good	1%
4	2 M, 2F	North Indian	Manageable	2%
2	1 M, 1 F	French	Fantastic	1%
2	1M, 1F	Denmark	Quiet fluent	1%
2	1M, 1F	Australian	Fluent	1%
4	2M, 2F	American	Very good	2%
4	2M, 2F	South Indians other than kannadigas	No issues	2%



## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

When the collected data was analysed it was found that either literate or illiterate, either male or female, all Hampi dwellers could communicate in English with the tourists. Tourists of various nationalities and tourists from other parts of India used English language as a common means to communicate for their tourism purpose. They gave satisfactory feedback about the locals spoken English.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Children of Hampi were not included in the research because most of them were school going kids and wouldn't fit into our research parameter. There were children working in some places but as it would call for child labour impediments, the author didn't include them in the study.

It can be further suggested that further research may be conducted on the common accent picked by the Hampi people.

## CONCLUSION

It's not just Hampi but as Gandhiji rightly opined, India lives in villages. Let's analyze if English language is used in rural India. For instance, let's take an example of a situation of travelling in a local bus in rural India in general and in rural Karnataka (Ballari) in particular. Say we are travelling in a bus, on certain rural stop a village man boards our bus, an illiterate farmer. Will he use any English words? What English words he may use perhaps? Let us enlist the words; bus, driver, conductor, ticket, stop, right, fast, slow, time, seat, and the list goes on. In fact, he may not know the exact translation of these words in his vernacular language but he has been using English words indifferently. It's in usage. Irrespective of what language they belong, they are amalgamated in the blood and veins of every Hampi dweller, every Kannadiga and every Indian.

There may not be proper civic amenities in rural India but mobile phones have reached every nook and corner of India. Even a shepherd uses cell phone to take his sheep and cattle from one place to the other. From basic to the most advanced smart phones, all the handsets by default have English language in its very functioning. To use and operate a cell phone one doesn't require



sophisticated English knowledge learnt through an academic degree. They are smartly maintained and managed from a layman to an executive. Educated or uneducated, literate or an illiterate, everyone in India has been using the cell phones with English as its default language of functioning. How is this happening? How is English language on every Indian's tongue and fingertips? It's not less than a miracle! This is the charisma of English language in India.

English language is rising to prominence in this era of globalization, liberalization and urbanization. English has emerged to be a communicative language and has dominated over regional and local languages of even remote India. English dominates multilingual Hampi.

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