

**Foreign Languages & Cultural  
Awareness:**

BMIH5003

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I work as a Front of House Employee at a luxury hotel in a popular tourist destination, the hotel name is **Four Seasons Hotel London, Ten Trinity Square**. One day, a guest from Japan checked into our hotel. As I greeted the guest, I noticed that he seemed somewhat reserved and was not making much eye contact. This immediately struck me as odd, as I was used to guests being more outgoing and friendly. I assumed that he was just tired from his long journey, so I proceeded to check him in.

Misunderstandings can occur in such scenarios due to various cultural differences. In this case, the guest's reserved behaviour could be attributed to cultural norms in Japan. In Japanese culture, it is considered polite and respectful to maintain a certain level of modesty and not draw too much attention to oneself, especially in public settings. Making prolonged eye contact with strangers, especially in formal situations, can be seen as intrusive or even impolite.

Furthermore, I failed to acknowledge the guest's nationality or make any effort to address him in a culturally sensitive manner. This oversight on my part may have made the guest feel uncomfortable or even unwelcome. It is crucial to recognize and respect the cultural backgrounds of our guests to ensure they have a positive and comfortable experience during their stay.

To prevent such cultural misunderstandings from happening in the future, I need to develop the following skills and make behavioural changes:

#### Cultural Sensitivity:

I need to educate myself about the cultural norms and customs of the guests we frequently host. Understanding these cultural differences will help me interact with guests in a more culturally sensitive way. In this case, I should have been aware of the Japanese preference for modesty and respect for personal space.

#### Effective Communication:

It's essential to communicate clearly and respectfully with all guests, taking into consideration their cultural backgrounds. Learning a few basic greetings or phrases in the guest's language can go a long way in making them feel welcome and appreciated.

### Active Listening:

When a guest exhibits behaviour that seems unusual or reserved, I should practice active listening. Instead of making assumptions, I could have politely asked the guest if there was anything specific he needed or if there were any preferences he had during his stay. This would have allowed me to address his concerns and make him feel valued.

### Cultural Training:

Hotel management should provide cultural training to frontline staff to help them better understand and interact with guests from diverse backgrounds. This training should include information about cultural norms, gestures, and customs that may differ from the staff's own cultural background.

### Empathy:

Developing empathy for guests from various cultures is crucial. By putting myself in their shoes and considering how different cultural norms may affect their behaviour and expectations, I can provide a more personalized and welcoming experience. (Black and Mendenhall, 1990).

Cultural misunderstandings can easily occur in the hospitality industry. In this scenario, my failure to recognize and respect the guest's cultural norms led to a potential misunderstanding. To prevent such incidents in the future, I need to cultivate cultural sensitivity, improve communication skills, practice active listening, and engage in cultural training, Richard W. Brislin (1993). By making these changes, I can ensure that all guests feel comfortable and valued during their stay at our hotel, regardless of their cultural background.

### References:

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