



B.A. International Hotel Management

Module- Foreign Languages & Cultural Awareness

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Component 01

Scenario: When the Saudi Arabian guest arrived at Marriott Hotel County Hall London, Mr Al-Farsi came across checking in at the hotel as the Front Office; I had a cultural bug. When Mr. Al-Farsi arrived, he seemed more reserved and kept looking down, where I presumed he might have felt dissatisfied or uncomfortable. While checking in, I asked if he needed help with his bags or any special arrangements. Al-Farsi politely turned down the offer in a quiet and somewhat rather indirect way. I got the message that he was not into it, and I didn't take it any further.

Reflective Analysis:

- **Cultural Misunderstanding and Theories:** People in hospitality will encounter many cultural misunderstandings, as communication styles and codes, social norms, and expectations can and do widely vary. The misunderstanding in this case occurred due to the use of non-verbal and indirect communication styles common in many Middle Eastern cultures (Gordon, Grimes and Institute, 2015).
- **Non-verbal Communication:** In the Arab culture, for instance, avoidance of direct eye contact often signifies respect, especially when interacting with strangers or those in positions of authority (Hofstede Insights, 2024). I realised that my interpretation of the lack of eye contact by Mr Al-Farsi was again a misunderstanding, owing to a cultural bias that assumed lack of eye contact usually implies dissatisfaction.
- **Indirect Communication:** Similarly, in Saudi culture, people do not speak clearly, but they use hints, context, and non-verbal expressions to address issues (Hammer, 2014). By asking to be left in the cinema and gently refusing his help, Mr. Al-Farsi may have been trying to be polite and not too pushy. Failure to understand this led to a communication breakdown.

Affected social skills and habits: To avoid these cultural faux pas in the future with my colleague from the Master class or anyone elsewhere in the world, I need to learn some skills and specify some behaviours:

- **Enhanced Cultural Awareness:** Understanding cultural differences in communication style is essential. This can be further reinforced by appeals to Hofstede, whose cultural dimensions help me understand the challenges of power distance, individualism vs.

collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance influencing how the guests interact with me. This awareness will enable me to understand non-verbal cues and indirect communication better.

- **Listening to the live session and Observing:** Actively listen to the words and tone of the guest. Reading verbal and non-verbal cues and considering the context in which a relationship occurs (Kusluvan, 2013). One of the only benefits of active listening in guest study is that I get a sneak preview into each guest's mind, leaving me wise to their latent desires when they do not expressly state them.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Adaptability to me means I recognise and operate my positioning relative to the cultural background of the guest in my guest room. For example, I should be more guarded around guests from high-context cultures who communicate indirectly and take more time to understand their needs through patience and respect (Kádár and Haugh, 2013).
- **Lifelong Learning and Development:** All hotel employees should receive ongoing training in this area. Attending forums and training workshops on intercultural communication would provide me with the necessary information and techniques to deal with different types of guest interaction.
- **Guest feedback:** Asking for feedback from guests after the visit is another way to find out if culture axes had places or misunderstandings. Such feedback may support the process of continuous service improvement.

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Component 02

Identified cultural misunderstanding (in a few words): The importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences is identified through cultural misunderstanding (Ember, 2014). In this case, the guest prefers to have a steak, highlighting the significance of culinary customs and varying cultural expectations. To ensure that every guest feels valued and understood, it is necessary to recognise and accommodate these differences, which will eventually enhance the overall experience at the hotel.

Training plan (Why/What//Who/Where/When): Based on the above reflections in the Marriott Hotel County Hall London staff training plan, it needs to be issued to all the employees to deal with similar situations in the future. The staff training plan will include cultural competency among the employees to ensure effective communication and service delivery, especially when diverse cultural backgrounds are involved (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 2018). Interactive workshops and educational sessions can be included in the training program series, designed to develop employees; knowledge, awareness, and skills in understanding cultural differences within the hospitality context. The objective of this training plan will include improving communication strategies, promoting adaptability in accommodating guests and fostering cultural sensitivity, especially in terms of preferences for their diverse needs. The first component of the training plan focuses on cultural awareness and understanding. The fundamental concept of cultural dimensions will be discussed during the training program. This concept will include culturalism and tackling the uncertain situation. Participants can explore the cultural differences that impact the service expectations and direction through different interactive discussions and case studies (Jandt, 2020). Effective formation strategies from the training programs component can be built across cultural contexts. Through this, employees can learn different techniques that will help them meet expectations and learn language barriers. Role-playing exercises and senior base simulation will help the employees to gain more practical experiences. Their communication abilities will improve in practical situations as a result. They will efficiently address cultural obstacles. Finally, the training component is about how to deliver services in a flexible and adaptable way. Employees in the hospitality sector will benefit from this component as they learn to appreciate and identify various cultural preferences. Workers can investigate ways to support guests' preferences while upholding

personalised service requirements. It will benefit the group by highlighting the culture of inclusivity and respect by considering analysis from previous experiences and case studies. A more welcoming and approaching hospital environment should be created for all the guests of different backgrounds and perspectives. There should be regular feedback tactics, which will help to know how effective this program is for the employees. This will also help gather employees' suggestions and insights for future improvement. Additionally, resources and support should be provided to the employees, including exceptional language service and cultural competency, to have fruitful communication with the guests.

It is essential to invest in cultural competency training for the staff to maintain the hotel's reputation for excellent customer service and hospitality. Providing employees with the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes is necessary to navigate cultural differences sensitively and effectively. It will also enhance the overall guest experience and strengthen the competitive advantage in the global hospitality industry.

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Component 03

Gibb's Model of Reflection

- **Description:** While working in the Front Office of the Marriott Hotel County Hall London, I experienced this in connection with guests from different backgrounds. During the check-in, one guest was Mr. Al Farsi from Saudi Arabia. Initially, his needs and preferences were misinterpreted by misunderstanding his indirect communication style and introverted nature. This demonstrated that cultural awareness is a core component of hospitality and was subsequently a stepping stone in helping me understand hospitality personally and professionally.
- **Feelings:** At first, I genuinely believed I could provide exceptional service to everyone who walked through the doors, regardless of race. But after that encounter with Mr. Al-Farsi, I slightly doubted myself. So, to learn that my ignorance led the guest to have a bad feeling about the experience made me feel embarrassed and annoyed. It led me to realise the need to understand different cultures and how it affects the people you interact with.
- **Evaluation:** Before him, my comprehension of cultural awareness was clarified. In one sense, yes, because it highlighted an area of my lacking knowledge and expertise. On the flip side, it was beneficial as it was a learning experience. I quickly learned that the service necessary to excel in our hospitality industry is more than a smile with a professional demeanour. I need cultural insights and the capacity to adjust myself.
- **Analysis:** The specificity of the cultural nuances decides how vital cultural awareness is in hospitality. For starters, it improves guest satisfaction.

Culture Sensitivity: Enlightened staff can foresee and supply to the distinctive needs & expectations of guests. For instance, Japanese visitors are known for their innovative technological advancements ahead of the rest of the world. At the same time, an Indian guest would demand mouth-watering Indian chat or Bollywood songs. From a business perspective, business hospitality should consider a mixture that results in a more tailored service and, hence, more respect for the guest, resulting in higher satisfaction and making their return (Barron and Maxwell, 2013). Also, it makes the team better acquainted with different insights, which helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. I might, for instance, have prevented my confusion at the indirect communication style Mr. Al-Farsi wished to employ in our arranged meeting had I possessed greater cultural understanding. This would have helped me realise that in high-context cultures, people generally do not communicate as directly as in low-context languages such as English (Ting-Toomey 2021), which would have helped me address his needs more effectively.

Finally, cultural awareness leads to a more welcoming environment for visitors and employees. Suppose staff learns how to be culturally competent. In that case, they will have a better sense of respect and professionalism in life and work, which will inevitably implicate a higher level of team performance and wellness (Lustig and Koester, 2020).

- **Conclusion:** Mr. Al-Farsi reminded me that understanding cultural differences is a never-ending journey. Over time, my perspective on the matter has changed a lot. To begin with, I was naive and did not realise how deeply culturally we interact with our guests. Yet, over time and some introspection, I have found that cultural awareness is essential for delivering exceptional service in hospitality.
- **Action Plan:** I plan to take these measures to aid in my growth in cultural competence: Learn about the cultures & practices of the most frequent nationalities visiting our hotel. Attend the hotel's cultural competency training sessions. Maintain a level of active listening and observation to identify the needs of your guests and then be prepared to respond accurately. I need feedback from coworkers and guests on improving my conversations with them (Busse, 2014).

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Component 04



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BA International Hotel Management

**Module- Foreign Languages &
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Module Code- BMIH5003

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MARRIOTT
LONDON COUNTY HALL

The ability to speak more than one language fluently is multilingualism (Deardorff, 2019). There are numerous benefits of multilingualism. If a person is multilingual, it will be able to improve communication, enhancing the interaction with guests from diverse linguistic backgrounds. By enhancing customer service, personalised service can be provided to the guest. If native languages are used to them, then it will create a welcoming environment and improve this experience. Enforcing cultural understanding will also attract and retain international guests through the language barrier.

Benefits of Multilingualism for the Marriott Hotel County Hall London

- **Fluency in more than one language is referred to as multilingualism.**
- **Improved Communication**
- **Enhanced Guest Experience**
- **Increased Revenue**
- **Cultural Understanding**



Language awareness is of vast importance in the Marriott Hotel County Hall London. All the staff must be skilful in language awareness (Freire and Macedo, 2015). The front desk staff must greet guests, handle reservations and provide concrete services. The food and beverage sector staff must take orders, explain items, and accommodate dietary preferences. Lastly, the housekeeping people communicate with guests about their room preferences and address concerns. For example, if a guest from Germany requests a staff member who is proficient in German can ensure that the request is understood and accurately conveyed to the kitchen.

Importance of language awareness skills for hotel staff

- ▶ **Front Desk:** Greeting visitors, managing reservations, and offering concierge services are all done at the front desk.
- ▶ **Food and Drink:** taking orders, outlining menu items, and making sure special dietary requirements are met.
- ▶ **Housekeeping:** Asking visitors about their preferences for rooms and responding to any issues.





German Language

- Approximately 83 million people speak German which makes it popular in the European countries.
- Nations, including Germany, Austria and Switzerland made it their official language.

[illegible]

In German-speaking cultures, especially in business interactions, politeness is highly valued (Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon, 2015). If I give one example of polite behaviour, formal greetings are essential for courteous behaviour. Usually, when calling a person, they use the title and last name, such as Guten Tag or Herr/Frau [Last Name]. It is also necessary to shake hands while greeting or leaving. They value punctuality a lot; being late is considered to be a disrespectful act. Even they also use words like vegetarisch (vegetarian) or vegan.

Politeness in German Business Context

- German-speaking societies place a great importance on politeness, particularly in professional settings.
- When addressing guests, use formal titles and last name with a handshake like “Guten Tag, Herr/Frau.



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