

Professional Reflection on Cultural Misunderstandings

Module Name

Foreign Languages and Cultural Awareness (BMIH5003)

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Reflection on cultural misunderstandings

The term "cultural misunderstandings" refers to the confusion that can arise between two or more people when they use the same words but understand them to mean something entirely different. The cause behind this difference is the cultural background and experience among people (Abramson and Moran, 2018). People do not often realize how their understanding of words can be shaped by their understanding. The following is a scenario between a front-of-house employee and a hotel guest regarding cultural misunderstandings.

An employee in the hotel industry of the UK can face problems while communicating with a guest from Iran. The UK people generally shake hands to greet each other but the people of Iran do not prefer this. The hand gesture also creates confusion among people (Deresky, 2017). For example, the thumbs up sign refers to "okay" in the UK. But in Iran, the meaning of this sign is completely opposite. It is considered as an insult. So, if a hotel employee wants to shake hands with a guest from Iran and shows him the sign of "okay", it will be extremely disrespectful from the guest's perspective that can be harmful to the hotel's reputation.

The language-based misunderstanding can be seen most in people that come from different cultures. When they disagree with an idea, the British typically say "very interesting," but the Dutch interpret this as a yes. This is where language-based misunderstanding can be seen. The people also confused themselves while communicating with each other due to behavioural changes. A person who is used to acting in a certain way can differ from another person who comes from a different culture (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2020). Another complex misunderstanding can be seen when two person understands the same language, but the behavioural act changes the meaning of it. In the hotel industry, people come as guests from different countries with different cultures (Torres et al., 2014). This is why understanding cultural differences is a must to reduce cultural misunderstandings.

Every person should be open to changes when it comes to reducing cultural misunderstandings. There are some skills and behavioural changes that I think are necessary in reducing cultural misunderstandings in future. These are:

- I have to value other cultures in order to reduce cultural barriers. As people comes from different culture and diversity, the major change in my behaviour is to value each and every one of them.
- Next is to conduct a self-assessment that will help me to understand my position in understanding cultural differences. This will help to understand what skills are necessary to develop (Fantini, 2009). As operating in the hotel industry needs to communicate with foreign guests, I must learn several languages such as French, German and so on.

- Understanding the dynamics of difference will help me to understand the language-based differences that can happen between me and my guests.
- I have to achieve cultural knowledge to understand the behavioural changes that come from people of different cultural backgrounds.
- Lastly, I must adapt to cultural changes and diversity that will help me to understand the needs of my guests and help me to serve them better.

Reference List

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