

PERSONAL REFLECIION ON CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING

Foreign Languages and Cultural Awareness BMIH5003

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Thinking back on my very own personal experience when I travelled to France on my own for the first time, I was overly concern about the French people and how will they perceive myself as a visitor in their country who does not speak or understand French. Prior to my visit I tried to find basic information about the culture, food, good manners to be able to feel good during my vacation.

I rented the apartment from a French family. I felt anxious right away when I first arrived and spoke to the host in English. Upon getting to know the flat, I felt rather uncomfortable because the owner came across as harsh and gave me the impression that he had no desire to talk to me at all. Despite to common and very popular opinion, French people appear to be joyless and not very friendly according to the (Hofstede, 2023). Based on my first interaction with French host I was negatively affected by that interaction and lack of interest, but it also motivated me to find out more about the society.

Being empathetic to each other is a skill that helps create interactions with individuals who might not speak the same language, having different appearance or behaviour. Being aware of differences is an opportunity for a personal development, innovate thinking and educational opportunities (Moran et al., 2010, p.9). One of my personal weaknesses is being shy and I struggle to start conversation with a stranger, especially as a visitor in a foreign country. This was the reason I began conversation in English assuming it will be easier to communicate for us both. During research for my presentation about France I discovered interesting facts that I should not assume that everyone in France speaks English, and I should learn a few key phases prior my visit. I found interesting information that French people are going to genuinely appreciate trying to communicate in their language. I believe my communication abilities can be strengthened based on my experience by keeping applying the knowledge I have gained during the research for the presentation and implement the knowledge I am gaining from this degree. During recording myself I found it challenging as I do not like to speak to public. Considering that, I believe that improving this skill will help me lead the team in the future.

Another important aspect that came to my attention was getting to know that diversity stimulates creative thinking and diverse culture draw inspirations (Peart, 2021). This matter is relevant to my workplace – hospitality industry. My workplace has a diverse workforce, it helps me as an assistant manager to learn about the viewpoints shared by the employees and to create an environment where they are encouraged to express their opinions and we can learn from each other. I realised that different nationalities require different approach. Cultural awareness empowers me to develop interactions and make unique contributions to my employees.

Final stage of the ERA cycle (Jasper, 2013), as defined by the action to summarise, working on professional reflection and presentation based on cultural misunderstandings and language awareness I understood the importance of personal development. I was not aware how important is to learn, understand and respect somebody's values. This experience has made me more aware of other cultural backgrounds going forward, in my profession and in life.

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