

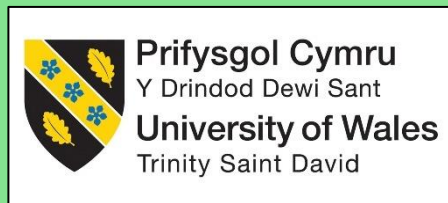
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Module Title: Foreign Languages And Cultural Awareness

Module Code : BMIH5003

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ASSIGNMENT 1: PORTFOLIO

(4 Components)

Component 1: *Professional Reflection*(500 words +/- 10%)

Weighting: 25%

As an employee of Marriott Hotel County Hall London in the food and beverage sector, I have faced a cultural misunderstanding with the hotel guests during the dinner service at the hotel restaurant. The guest from Japan named Mr Tanaka ordered a beef steak and requested that I cook it as "Well Done". While serving the steak, I saw that there was slightly pink in the middle, which is the standard way to serve steak in Western countries. In Japan, it is seen that they usually eat beef without any hint of pink.

I placed the steak in front of Mr Tanaka. He slightly got angry but politely asked for it to be "Well Done". As there was a misunderstanding of the cultural significance, I apologised to him and offered to take it back to the kitchen to be cooked further. Tanaka agreed to it, but I could see a slight discomfort in his acceptance.

There can be cultural misunderstandings like this one due to the difference in cultural norms, customs and communication styles(Gordon, Grimes and Institute, 2015). In this scenario, a misunderstanding arises because of the different culinary preferences between Japanese and Western cuisine. In Japan, well-done steak means there cannot be any hint of pink, whereas,

in Western countries, the doneness is different for different stakes, and even Western countries may prefer their steak to be rare or medium rare (Hofstede Insights, 2024).

To avoid misunderstanding in the future, I can develop several essential skills. I must be mindful of cultural awareness, especially in a diverse hospitality setting where guests from different backgrounds are served (Hammer, 2014). I can give respectful service if I understand the cultural differences in dining etiquette, communication styles and food preferences. It is necessary to have clear and precise communication to ensure that the guest's request is accurately understood. In this scenario, I should have asked Mr Tanaka about his preference for the beef steak and confirmed his expectation regarding its doneness before serving. The key to exceptional service is providing eligible and adaptable accommodation to the guests' preferences (Kusluvan, 2013). I should have been open to adjusting the preparation based on the guests' preference rather than assuming the standard way of serving steak, even if it differs from the culinary practices.

By applying and focusing on this skill, I can better understand cultural differences and prevent misunderstandings in the future. Additionally, ongoing education and training in cultural competency within the hospitality industry can help me enhance my ability to provide inclusive and culturally sensitive service to guests from diverse backgrounds (Kádár and Haugh, 2013).

References:

Gordon, R.G., Grimes, B.F. and Institute, S. (2015). *Ethnologue: languages of the world*. Dallas, Tex.: Sil International.

Hammer, M.R. (2014). Intercultural communication competence (international and intercultural communication annual, volume 17). *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18(1), pp.152–155. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(94\)90012-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(94)90012-4).

Hofstede Insights (2024). *Country Comparison Tool*. [online] Hofstede Insights. Available at: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool>.

Kádár, D.Z. and Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding Politeness*. Cambridge University Press.

Kusluvan, S. (2013). *Managing employee attitudes and behaviours in the tourism and hospitality industry*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Component 2: Training Plan (500 words +/- 10%)

Weighting: 25%

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 as "well done", highlighting the significance of culinary customs and expectations varying across cultures. 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 program's 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.

References:

Ember, C.R. (2014). Improvements in Cross-Cultural Research Methods. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 28(4), pp.364–370. doi <https://doi.org/10.1177/106939719402800407>.

Gudykunst, W.B. and Ting-Toomey, S. (2018). *Culture and interpersonal communication*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Jandt, F.E. (2020). *INTRODUCTION TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: identities in a global community*. 10th ed. S.L.: Sage Publications.

Component 3: Student Self-Reflection (500 words +/- 10%)

Weighting: 25%

Understand the importance of cultural awareness in the hospitality industry using a self-reflection model called "Gibb's Reflective Cycle" (Barron and Maxwell, 2013).

Description: I initially had a limited understanding of the importance of cultural awareness within the hospitality industry. I had little knowledge about cultural practices and cuisines to enhance the guest experience. As I gained more experience working in the food and beverage section at Marriott County Hall London, I encountered various cultural interactions that challenged my assumptions.

Feelings: I felt uncertain and overwhelmed when I first faced unfamiliar cultural customs and communication styles. I was worried about unintentionally causing misunderstanding or offence regarding guest needs. However, I also felt motivated and curious to learn more about improving my guest interactions.

Evolution: Cultural awareness has immense importance in the hospitality industry. While working as an employee in the hotel, I faced a similar incident with a Japanese customer regarding the steak's doneness. I understood that a small mistake could become more critical if there is a lack of knowledge regarding cultural differences (Ting-Toomey 2021).

Action Plan: Cultural awareness can be increased if a person knows customs, food, and preferences. I learned that some cultures prefer indirect communication, and others prefer direct communication. As different cultural backgrounds have different preferences and communication skills, this incident helped me to overcome them (Lustig and Koester, 2020).

Conclusion: The importance of cultural awareness within the hospitality industry is increasing rapidly. I now recognise the fundamental aspect of delivering exceptional service and fostering inclusivity. I can meet guests' diverse needs and contribute to a more

welcoming and respectful hospitality environment by continuously seeking to expand my knowledge regarding culture and adapt my behaviour accordingly.

Action plan: I am committed to ongoing self-development in cultural awareness. This includes actively seeking opportunities for learning and exposure to different cultures through formal training programs, interactions or cultural events with colleagues and guests from diverse backgrounds (Busse, 2014). Additionally, I am always open-minded and empathetic in my interactions, recognising cultural sensitivities in an ongoing journey rather than a destination.

References:

Barron, P. and Maxwell, G. (2013). Hospitality Management Students' Image of the Hospitality Industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 5(5). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/09596119310046961>.

Busse, V. (2014). Intercultural competence. Interpersonal communication across culture (7th edition). *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(2), pp.262–264. doi <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.856575>.

Lustig, M.W. and Koester, J. (2020). *Intercultural competence interpersonal communication across cultures*. Ny, Ny Pearson.

Ting-Toomey, S. and Oetzel, J.G. (2021). *Managing intercultural conflict effectively*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publ.

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.

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.



Language awareness is of vast importance in the Marriott Hotel County Hall London. All the staff must be skillful 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.



- Approximately 83 million people worldwide speak German (Landis, Janet and Bennett, 2014). For this reason, it is a widely spoken language. German is the official language of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It is also commonly spoken in parts of Belgium, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.



German grammar becomes complex for its genders and cases. It is considered one of the easiest languages for English speakers to learn as it has many similarities with English (Schaetti, 2022).

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."



5

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, while calling a person, they use the title and last name like "Guten Tag, Herr/Frau. 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".

References (no screenshots):

Deardorff, D.K. (2019). *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (2015). A Dialogue: Culture, Language, and Race. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(3), pp.377–403. doi <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.65.3.12g1923330p1xhj8>.

Landis, D., Janet Marie Bennett and Bennett, M.J. (2014). *Handbook of intercultural training*. Thousand Oaks (Calif.): Sage, Cop.

Schaetti, B.F. (2022). Becoming intercultural: an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(1), pp.113–117. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767\(01\)00042-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767(01)00042-6).

Scollon, R. and Suzanne Wong Scollon (2015). *Intercultural communication: a discourse approach*. Malden: Blackwell.