

BMIH5003

**Foreign Languages & Cultural
Awareness**

Portfolio

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Component 1: Professional Reflection

Culture plays a vital role in shaping a person's thoughts and conduct (Testa, 2007). This environment exposed me to a scenario demonstrating the necessity of culturally oriented and effective communication. During the night service, when my colleague and teammate were assigned to the prestigious hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant, I noticed a cultural conflict between the French guest and the server.

The French guest, who could improve his command of English, requests a particular wine to have with their main course. Despite the language barrier and the waiter being new to the guest's accent, the communication regarding the wine choice was misunderstood. So, the waiter provided the guest with a different wine from the guest's choice. Still, despite the activeness and the server's best efforts to clarify, the dispute turned out to be worse, leaving both parties visibly upset and frustrated.

When I see this dialogue between me and the other party, a series of thoughts arise in me about related effects. In the hospitality industry, where the best 'guest experience' is a keyword, the breakdown of communication between the guest and the place's employees can hurt the overall perception of the services the organisation provides (Çetin & Dinçer, 2013). The guests may not be satisfied with the experience and leave negative reviews.

Through this experience, a new resolution was made to query me about my ability to handle cross-cultural affairs well; I always had the challenge of the abovementioned type. First, active listening and practical verbal communication skills are vital. The importance of appropriate and effective communication in the hospitality industry can be emphasised by active listening, clarification of ambiguities, and a clear and respectful way of communication, which will, in turn, reduce misunderstandings and better suit the guests' needs (Shen et al., 2020).

Apart from this, cultural understanding and appreciation are of enormous significance. Becoming knowledgeable of and accommodating to the cultural values of our guests and co-workers can lead to alternative communication styles, eye contact, and general behavioural choices, which are more in sync with their expectations. Thus, a range of views will be expressed, allowing many other people to learn and feel comfortable (Marek, 2019).

Furthermore, through my personal experience, I learnt how important it is to be multilingual, as now, in the modern world, knowing a second or third language gives me an advantage career-wise (Boliqulov, 2024). Also, my industry, being a worldwide-targeted business, has led me to comprehend how vital language expertise is. Although the ability to speak multiple languages is an advantage, the knowledge of common expressions like thanking in different languages and simple courtesies can bear more fruits of facilitating the tourists positively and fostering cultural and knowledge exchange.

To address these weaknesses, I will cultivate cultural awareness by enrolling in the available training programs, participating in workshops focusing on active listening and effective communication, and exploring helpful language learning materials. Through continually building these competencies, I will better tackle cross-cultural situations, prioritise the comfort of people from every part of the globe and fulfil the requirements expected of me as a hospitality professional (Baltes et al., 2015).

Component 2: Training Plan

Training Program for Developing Cultural Competence and Communication Skills

Objective

The training program is designed to provide thorough training to all staff at The Ritz Hotel. This training will help employees understand and communicate effectively in cross-cultural interactions and provide excellent service to guests from different backgrounds. This training is one of the best ways to invest in employees, their personal growth, professional development, and their future.

Duration

4 weeks (2 hours per week)

Training Program Planning

Objective	Task	Learning Outcome	Time Frame	Resources
Preparation Phase	Review learning objectives, content, and activities for each session	Ensure a thorough understanding of the topics	Before the training program	Session materials

Task 1 Cultural Diversity: An Introduction	Facilitate Session 1 on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, cultural influence on communication and behaviours,	• Will gain an understanding of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Manrai & Manrai, 2011) • Will learn how different	Week 1 (2 hours)	Session materials
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	and developing cultural sensitivity and empathy	cultures influence communication and behaviours • Will develop cultural sensitivity and empathy		
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Task 2 Active Listening and Effective Communication	Conduct Session 2 on active listening principles, minimizing distractions, demonstrating attentiveness, and asking clarifying questions	• Will learn the principles of active listening (Friston et al., 2021) • Will practice techniques for minimizing distractions and demonstrating attentiveness • Will learn to ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding (Giles et al., 2023)	Week 2	• Role-playing exercises • Case studies
Task 3 Language and Cultural Etiquette	Lead Session 3 on common greetings in languages spoken by guests, cultural	• Will learn common greetings in languages spoken by our guests (e.g.,	Week 3	• Session materials • Guest speakers

	etiquette, greetings, gestures, norms, and high and low-context cultures	French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese) • Will study cultural etiquette, including greetings, gestures, and norms • I will explore the concepts of high and low-context cultures (Kasper, 2017)		• Cultural experts
Task 4 Continuous Learning and Feedback	• Facilitate Session 4 on mentorship program, knowledge sharing, and methods for providing feedback • Collect feedback from participants • Identify opportunities for	• Will participate in a mentorship program for knowledge sharing • Will be encouraged to discuss and share cross-cultural experiences (Murray & Bollinger, 2001) • Will learn methods for providing	Week 4	• Session materials • Feedback forms

	continuous learning and knowledge sharing	feedback on the training programs		
Follow-up Phase	Analyse feedback and make adjustments to the training program	• Improve the training program based on participant feedback	Week 5	

How this will Benefit

Cultural diversity is crucial for employees to interact with guests from diverse backgrounds, preventing miscommunication and improving the overall guest experience. Active listening and communication skills can engage guests, understand needs more accurately, and communicate clearly, reducing misunderstandings. Learning a primary language and cultural etiquette prepares employees to entertain guests from all linguistic and cultural backgrounds, creating a warm and inclusive environment. A culture of continuous learning and feedback ensures training remains relevant and effective, allowing employees to enhance their skills and adapt to the evolving needs of the diverse guest population (Murray & Bollinger, 2001). The training program includes interactive activities, case studies, and role-playing scenarios, with guest speakers, cultural experts, and experienced staff sharing insights and real-life examples.

Component 3: Self-reflection

I adopt Gibbs' Reflective Cycle for self-reflection because it provides a systematic framework for critical appraisal of my learning experience and personal growth (Adeani et al., 2020).

Description

The situation of The Ritz Hotel, which I already know from my experience in London, where I have seen the cultural conflict between the French customer and the waiter in the hotel's highly respected restaurant. This case displays the hospitality industry's dependency on cultural sensitivity and communication abilities (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2017). Previously, the customer, conversing in better English, asked for a wine-tasting recommendation to accompany their main course. Nevertheless, there was a language barrier, and the server needed help understanding the accent of the guest while choosing the wine, which, in turn, led to the wrong choice of wine. The server tried to reassure me and explained a few things to the customers, but the situation aggravated, and both of them became angry.

Feelings

At the beginning, I was completely confused and puzzled when I witnessed the scenes unfolding before my eyes. I noticed people around me and the server's face and experienced physical and emotional frustration. Although I have had some trouble with it, at the end of this period, I have adopted the desire to work on my cross-cultural competence to avoid misunderstandings.

Evaluation

Before the event, I felt that cross-cultural communication would be more accessible, but I realised it was more difficult. To my surprise, the intuition and skills I had been trained were of no help in managing the problem. As a result, I realised how language barriers, cultural differences, and communication problems can occur.

Analysis

After that, I learned that communication is not merely a matter of language but also involves cultural signs, body language, and nonverbal signals (Warren, 2017). Staff in the hospitality

sector should be able to notice verbal and non-verbal communication, be sensitive and adjust their communication style to the culture's context. Moreover, I thought that cultural knowledge

and sensitivity are essential in producing an environment that can accommodate and welcome visitors from different cultural backgrounds (Tabari et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This experience has significantly changed my understanding of the importance of cultural awareness in hospitality. I understand that successful intercultural engagement is achieved through knowledge, skills, and proper dealing with diversity. Through cultural awareness, listening carefully, and fluency in language, I will deliver customer satisfaction to clients of varied backgrounds.

Action Plan

Therefore, I shall learn and seek personal growth towards this. Concretely, I plan to participate in cultural awareness training programs that will help me understand other people's cultures and how they communicate (Baltes et al., 2015). Lastly, I will polish my active listening skills by listening to my mentors and colleagues and seeking their feedback and guidance to improve my communication skills. Furthermore, I will study the language learning resources and attend the language courses provided by this university to improve my language skills. Finally, I will evaluate myself after each cultural experience, pointing out my weak areas and noting my strong sides. In this action plan, I will find out some tactics to work with people of different cultures, which will, consequently, help me to meet the expectations of my job as a member of the hospitality industry.

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Appendix: Training Presentation

Slide 1



Slide 2

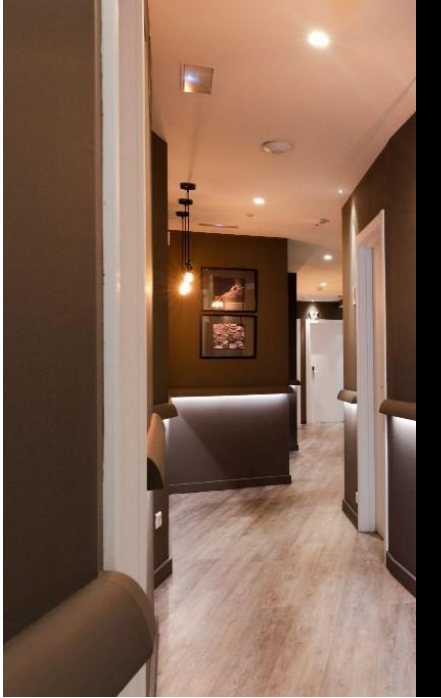
Introduction

- The ability of the hospitality staff to communicate with guests who belong to different linguistic and cultural groups becomes a critical skill" (Blue & Harun, 2003).
- Highlight the numerous benefits of being multilingual, among them developing language awareness skills in a foreign language



In the present world, where countries are more and more connected, the ability of the hospitality staff to communicate with guests who belong to different linguistic and cultural groups becomes a critical skill (Blue & Harun, 2003). The workshops will highlight the numerous benefits of being multilingual, among them developing language awareness skills in a foreign language such as French, the most widely spoken modern European language. This session will master the essentials of language command and cultural awareness to ensure exceptional service to international guests.

Slide 3



Benefits of Multilingualism and Language Awareness Skills

- Enhanced Guest Communication
- Improved Cultural Understanding
- Career Advancement
- Personal Growth

Being multilingual and developing strong language awareness skills offer numerous advantages for hotel staff in today's globalised industry:

Enhanced Guest Communication: The fact that employees can communicate with foreign guests in their mother languages makes them trust you more, feel at home, and guarantee a clear understanding of their needs (Rossanty et al., 2019).

Improved Cultural Understanding: Language is a crucial instrument that conveys and transmits culture. The ability to appreciate cultural differences, norms, and nuances is developed among the staff proficient in multiple languages, making the service more culturally competent and considerate (Sucher & Cheung, 2015).

Career Advancement: Employees with multiple languages are the desirable commodity; they are the way to advancement, promotion, and leadership positions in the hospitality industry (international).

Personal Growth: Additionally, grasping new languages and appreciating different cultures contributes immensely to cognitive flexibility, empathy, and a global mindset.

The Global Presence and Accessibility of the French Language



Where is French Spoken?

- Official language in 29 countries
- Spoken by over 300 million people globally (Wood, 2023)
- National language in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, many African and Caribbean nations



Is French Hard to Learn?

- Requires dedication and practice
- Shares Latin roots and grammar structures with English
- English speakers can acquire basic skills relatively quickly



French is a popular language spoken by nearly 300 million people worldwide, with its official language in 29 countries and its national language in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and many African and Caribbean countries (Wood, 2023). Hotel staff with a good command of French can effectively communicate and influence guests from diverse French-speaking regions. Learning French requires persistent practice but shares similarities with English, such as native vocabulary and grammatical structures. English speakers can learn basic French language skills more quickly than those who do not speak the same root language. Hotel staff can quickly achieve conversational French proficiency by using resources, engaging activities, and dedication.

Slide 5

Politeness and Cultural Etiquette in French

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- "In French culture, correct manners and politeness are highly rated" (Allami & Boustani, 2017)
 - Using formal greetings like "Bonjour, Monsieur/Madame"
 - Avoiding direct confrontation
 - Maintaining composure



In French culture, correct manners and politeness are highly rated, particularly in business and social environments (Allami & Boustani, 2017). A small act of polite greetings like "Bonjour, Monsieur /Madame" and calling the guests by the right courtesy titles is enough to show respect. Moreover, French culture highly regards the art of non-confrontation and staying composed and calm as other important points of communication in French etiquette.

Slide 6



Examples from the Hotel Industry?

- "Applying French language skills and cultural awareness can significantly improve guests' experience" (Hu et al., 2022)
- Greeting guests in French creates welcoming atmosphere
- Knowing basic phrases for check -in, room service, requests
- Respecting cultural norms like personal space and dining etiquette

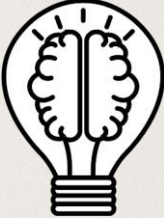
Applying French language skills and cultural awareness in a daily hotel operation can significantly improve guests' experience (Hu et al., 2022). As soon as I greet the French customers in their national language with a cordial "Bonjour", the atmosphere immediately becomes friendly and warm. Knowing some basic phrases like checking in, room service, and basic requests such as showing the guest the way to a particular place can help the communication flow and solve the guest's problems quicker. Moreover, French cultural norms like personal space or dining etiquette will be respected to create ties and leave impressions.

Slide 7

Key Takeaways



- "Languages are crucial...being multilingual and developing language awareness skills are essential assets" (Zhumbei, 2019)
- Bridges communication gaps with international guests
- Fosters culturally-sensitive environment
- Continuous language and culture learning is crucial





Languages are crucial in the competitive hospitality industry because being multilingual and developing language awareness skills are essential assets for hotel staff (Zhumbei, 2019). The ability to speak at least two languages, for example, French, allows for establishing contact and provides a more homely and culture-friendly environment for guests. Improving language skills and cultural knowledge is one of the key factors ensuring continuous superiority in the travel industry and a perfect experience for foreign travelers.

Conclusion



In short, multilingualism and language awareness are irreplaceable values that all hotel staff have to acquire in the age of the globalised hotel industry. Through language studies and cultural empathy, hotels can say goodbye to communication barriers, offer better guest services, exceed the expectations of international guests, and have an edge that will drive guest satisfaction and business success.



In short, multilingualism and language awareness are irreplaceable values that all hotel staff have to acquire in the age of the globalised hotel industry. Through language studies and cultural empathy, hotels can say goodbye to communication barriers, offer better guest services, exceed the expectations of international guests, and have an edge that will drive guest satisfaction and business success.

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