

Foreign Languages & Cultural Awareness

BMIH5005

Foreign Languages & Cultural Awareness

LEVEL 5

Module Lead:

Antoinette Milne

Stefan-Berthland Tudor

2240407

During my shift as a server at Leonardo Hotel Cardiff's restaurant, I encountered a notable cultural misunderstanding with a guest during dinner service. The guest, Mr. Nakamura, a Japanese businessman, seemed unhappy with my service. Initially, I couldn't figure out what went wrong, as I was following our standard service protocols.

The misunderstanding began with a simple gesture. In my culture, maintaining eye contact and smiling broadly is seen as a sign of attentiveness and friendliness. However, Mr. Nakamura appeared uncomfortable whenever I made direct eye contact. Additionally, I promptly cleared his plate when he finished his meal, thinking it showed efficient service. To my surprise, he seemed upset by this action.

Reflecting later, I realized Mr. Nakamura's discomfort likely stemmed from cultural differences. In Japanese culture, prolonged direct eye contact can be seen as intrusive and aggressive, especially in formal settings. Moreover, removing a guest's plate before everyone at the table has finished eating is considered rude, as it suggests rushing the guest.

This experience highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in our hospitality industry. To prevent such misunderstandings in the future, I need to develop several key skills and make specific behavioral changes.

Understanding the cultural norms and etiquette of guests from different backgrounds is crucial. I plan to learn more about the customs and expectations of our diverse clientele. Studies suggest that cultural competence can significantly improve service quality in hospitality (Hofstede, 2011).

Language barriers can exacerbate misunderstandings. I aim to improve my basic proficiency in languages commonly spoken by our guests and use visual aids or translation apps to bridge communication gaps. Research highlights that understanding non-verbal cues and context is vital in cross-cultural communication (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988).

Being observant and adaptable is essential. Paying close attention to guests' reactions and adjusting my behavior accordingly can help mitigate potential issues. Adapting communication styles to align with the cultural context of the interlocutor is key for effective intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Developing empathy and patience is necessary when interacting with guests from different cultures. This involves being open-minded and respectful towards different cultural practices and showing genuine concern for guests' comfort.

In summary, my encounter with Mr. Nakamura during dinner service at Leonardo Hotel Cardiff underscored the potential for cultural misunderstandings in a hotel restaurant setting. By enhancing my cultural awareness, improving communication skills, being adaptable, and showing empathy, I can better serve our diverse guests and ensure a more pleasant dining experience for everyone. These adjustments not only improve guest satisfaction but also contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in our hotel.

After experiencing a cultural misunderstanding with a guest at Leonardo Hotel Cardiff's restaurant, it's clear we need to boost our cultural sensitivity. To ensure we continue delivering top-notch service, we need a comprehensive staff training plan that equips everyone with the skills and knowledge to handle similar situations effectively.

Training Objectives

Our main goals with this training are:

Increase Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity: Understand and respect cultural differences.

Improve Communication Skills: Both verbal and non-verbal, to interact effectively with guests from various backgrounds.

Enhance Adaptability and Observational Skills: Recognize and respond to guests' needs.

Foster Empathy and Patience: Cultivate an inclusive environment.

Training Modules

1. Cultural Awareness and Knowledge

Objective: Equip staff with knowledge about different cultures and their customs.

Content:

Learn about cultural norms and etiquette (e.g., eye contact, gestures, dining customs).

Discover common practices of our most frequent international guests.

Participate in interactive sessions with cultural representatives or videos showcasing various cultural scenarios.

Activities:

Workshops led by cultural experts.

Role-playing exercises simulating different cultural interactions.

Group discussions and Q&A sessions to address specific concerns and experiences.

2. Effective Communication

Objective: Enhance communication skills to overcome language barriers and understand non-verbal cues.

Content:

Basic language training for languages commonly spoken by our guests.

Use of translation tools and apps for effective communication.

Understanding and interpreting non-verbal communication.

Activities:

Language workshops focusing on hospitality-specific phrases.

Demonstrations of translation apps and tools.

Practice sessions with non-verbal communication scenarios.

3. Adaptability and Observation

Objective: Develop adaptability and keen observation skills to recognize and respond to guests' needs.

Content:

Techniques for observing and interpreting guests' body language and behavior.

Strategies for adapting service styles to meet diverse cultural expectations.

Case studies of successful adaptability in hospitality.

Activities:

Simulation exercises where staff adjust their service based on guest behavior.

Analysis of case studies and group discussions on best practices.

Feedback sessions to share experiences and improvement tips.

4. Empathy and Patience

Objective: Foster a culture of empathy and patience in dealing with guests from diverse backgrounds.

Content:

Understanding the importance of empathy in customer service.

Techniques for managing stress and maintaining patience in challenging situations.

Stories and testimonials highlighting the impact of empathetic service.

Activities:

Storytelling sessions where staff share their experiences of empathy in service.

Stress management workshops and relaxation techniques.

Role-playing scenarios focused on patient and empathetic responses.

Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Needs Assessment

Conduct surveys and interviews with staff to identify specific training needs and areas of concern.

Analyze feedback from guests to highlight common cultural misunderstandings.

Phase 2: Development and Planning

Collaborate with cultural experts and trainers to develop detailed training materials and sessions.

Schedule training sessions to ensure all staff members can participate without disrupting operations.

Phase 3: Training Delivery

Conduct initial workshops and training sessions over three months.

Use a mix of in-person workshops, online modules, and practical exercises.

Phase 4: Evaluation and Feedback

Collect feedback from participants after each session.

Monitor guest satisfaction and staff performance through surveys and direct observation.

Adjust the training program based on feedback and performance data.

By implementing this comprehensive cultural sensitivity training plan, Leonardo Hotel Cardiff aims to create a more inclusive and respectful environment for all guests. Equipping our staff with the necessary skills and knowledge will not only enhance guest satisfaction but also foster a more harmonious and understanding workplace. Continuous learning and adaptation will ensure our service remains exemplary and culturally attuned.

Critical Self-Reflection on Cultural Awareness in the Hospitality Industry

Using the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, I'll reflect on my understanding of the importance of cultural awareness in the hospitality industry, particularly at Leonardo Hotel Cardiff.

During my time as a server at Leonardo Hotel Cardiff's restaurant, I faced several situations highlighting the importance of cultural awareness. One notable incident involved a Japanese guest, Mr. Nakamura, during dinner service. My usual approach, which included maintaining direct eye contact and promptly clearing plates, made Mr. Nakamura uncomfortable. Initially, I was puzzled, but upon reflection, I recognized the cultural differences at play.

Initially, I felt confused and slightly frustrated. I believed I was providing excellent service, but Mr. Nakamura's discomfort suggested otherwise. This experience made me feel uncertain about my service skills. However, as I reflected on the incident, I began to feel more curious and motivated to understand the cultural nuances that might have influenced his reactions.

Evaluating the situation, I realized my lack of cultural awareness negatively impacted Mr. Nakamura's experience. While I followed general service protocols, I failed to consider the cultural context of my actions. This realization was a turning point in my understanding of cultural sensitivity. On the positive side, this experience highlighted a crucial area for personal and professional growth.

Analyzing this experience, I learned several important lessons. First, cultural norms significantly influence guests' expectations and perceptions of service. As Hofstede (2011) explains, cultural

dimensions like power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance shape behavior and communication styles. Understanding these dimensions can enhance service interactions.

Moreover, effective communication involves both verbal and non-verbal cues. Kim and Gudykunst (1988) emphasize that intercultural communication requires language skills and an understanding of non-verbal cues and contextual meanings. In Mr. Nakamura's case, avoiding direct eye contact and not rushing to clear plates would have aligned better with his cultural expectations.

Reflecting on my journey, I realize my understanding of cultural awareness has evolved significantly. Initially, I saw cultural differences as minor details, but now I recognize them as critical factors in delivering exceptional hospitality. The experience with Mr. Nakamura taught me the importance of adapting my service approach to meet diverse cultural expectations. This adaptability is essential in creating a welcoming and respectful environment for all guests.

Moving forward, I plan to enhance my cultural competence through several strategies. First, I will actively seek resources and training on cultural awareness, similar to the staff training plan proposed earlier. This includes attending workshops, engaging with cultural experts, and utilizing online courses. Additionally, I will make a conscious effort to observe and learn from interactions with guests from different backgrounds.

I also aim to develop better communication skills by learning key phrases in the languages spoken by our guests and using translation tools effectively. Practicing empathy and patience will be a continuous effort, ensuring I remain open-minded and respectful towards cultural differences.

This experience is crucial because it highlights the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, where cultural diversity is the norm rather than the exception. By becoming culturally aware, I can contribute to a more inclusive and positive guest experience, which is fundamental to the success of any hospitality business. As Ting-Toomey (1999) asserts, intercultural competence enhances interpersonal relationships and fosters a more harmonious service environment.

References

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 2307-0919.

Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). Theories in intercultural communication. Sage Publications.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). Communicating across cultures. Guilford Press.

Dewaele, J. M. (2010). Emotions in multiple languages. Palgrave Macmillan.

Crystal, D. (2003). English as a global language. Cambridge University Press.



Enhancing Guest Experience through Multilingualism and Language Awareness

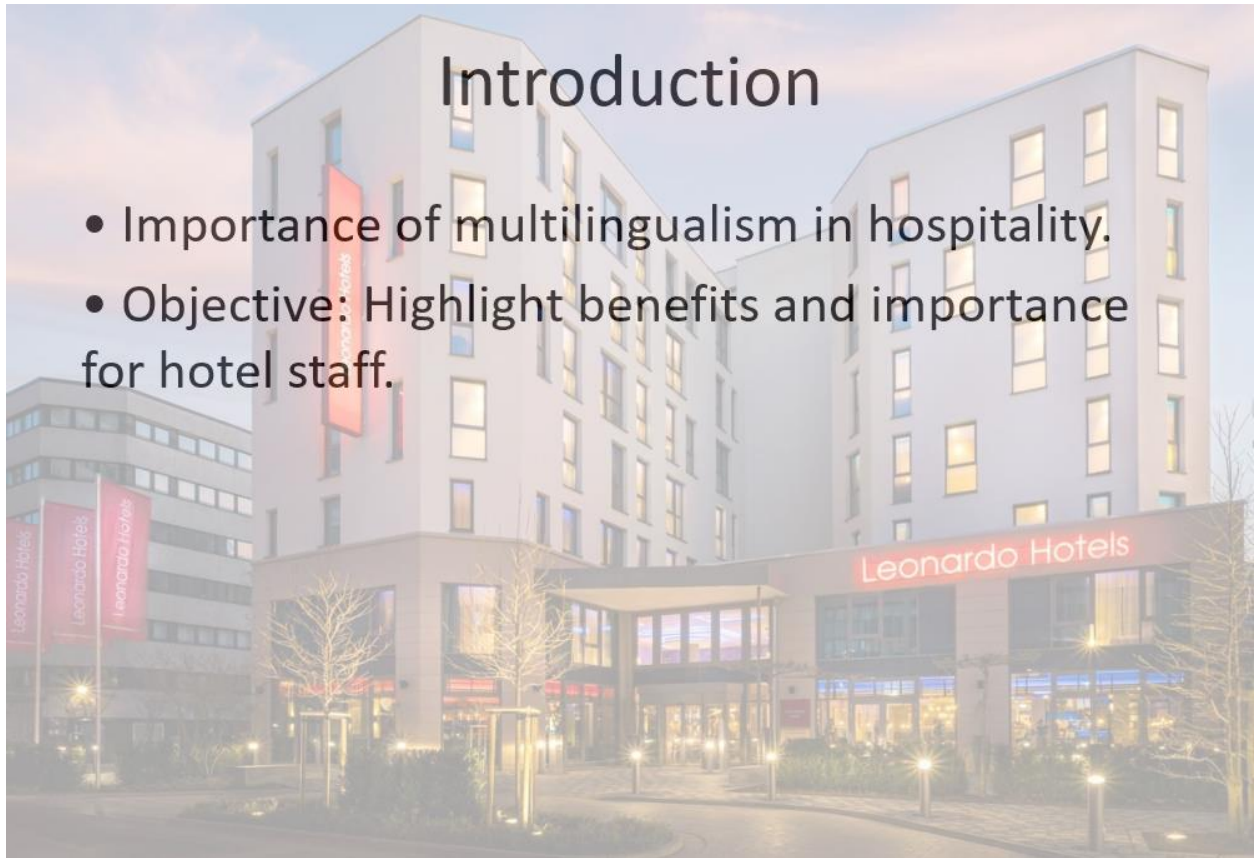
Click to add subtitle

Stefan-Berthland Tudor

Leonardo Hotel

Introduction

- Importance of multilingualism in hospitality.
- Objective: Highlight benefits and importance for hotel staff.



Benefits of Multilingualism

- Guests feel more welcomed and valued.
- Stand out among competitors.
- Clearer interactions, fewer misunderstandings.
- Better understanding of diverse cultures.
- Guests more likely to return and recommend the hotel.
- Attracting international guests who feel comfortable.
- Smooth check-in/check-out processes.
- Handling special requests and resolving issues effectively.



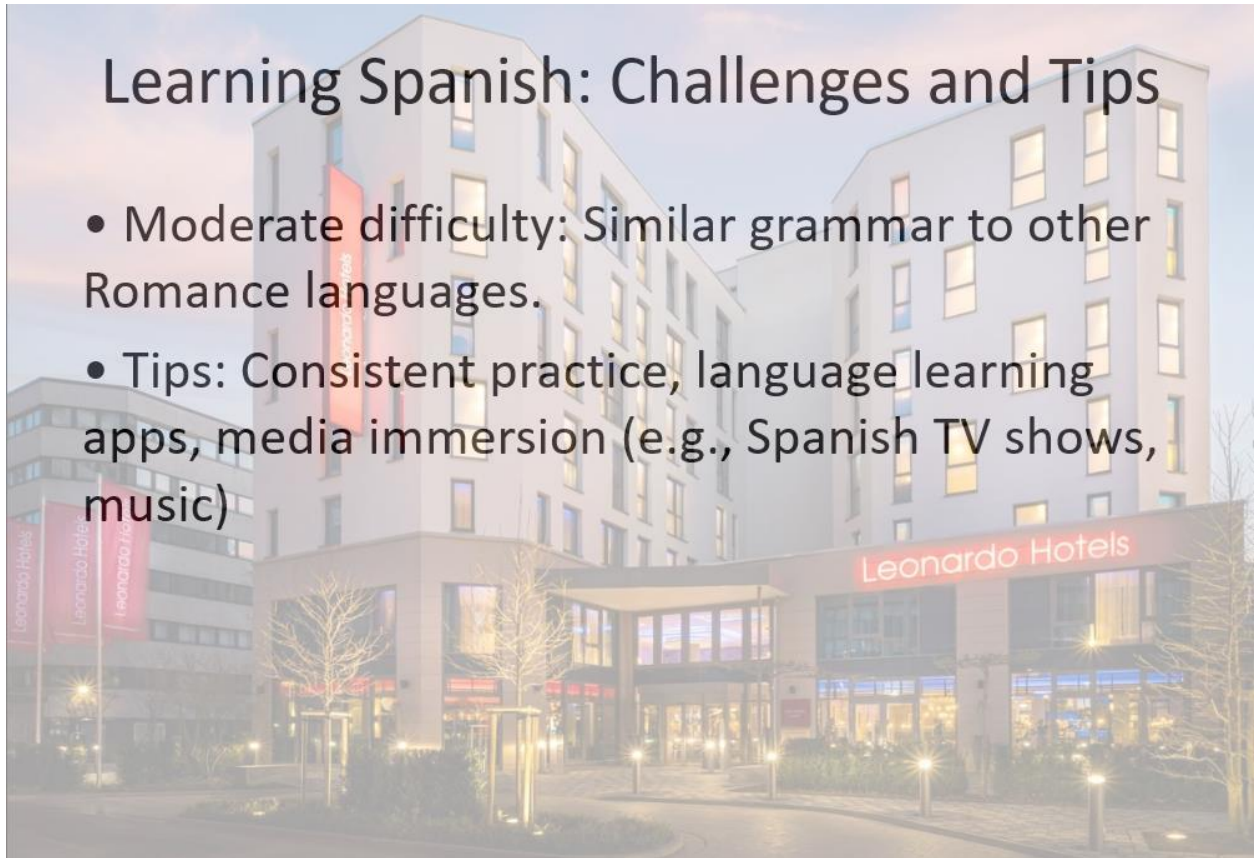
Focus Language: Spanish

- Spoken in Spain, Latin America, parts of the United States.
- Over 460 million native speakers.
- Common among tourists and business travelers.



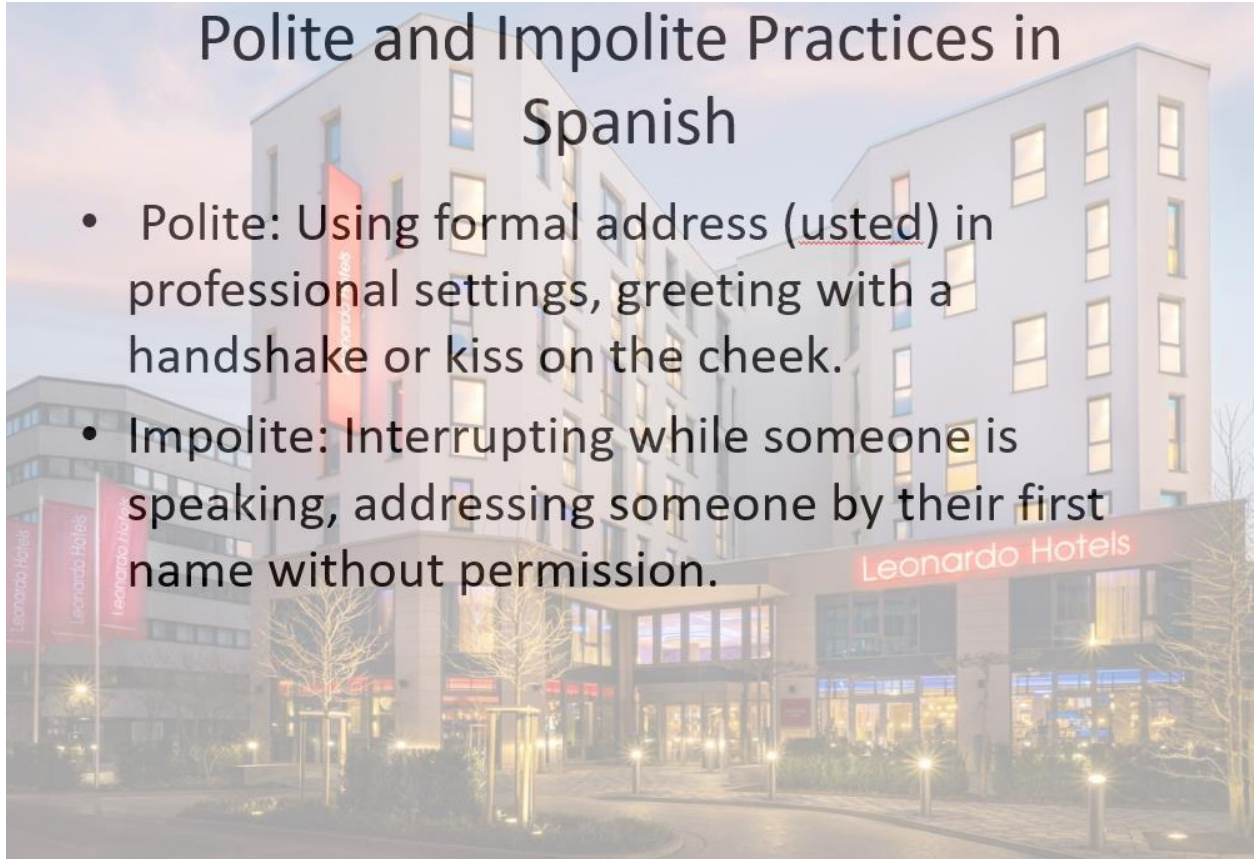
Learning Spanish: Challenges and Tips

- Moderate difficulty: Similar grammar to other Romance languages.
- Tips: Consistent practice, language learning apps, media immersion (e.g., Spanish TV shows, music)



Polite and Impolite Practices in Spanish

- Polite: Using formal address (usted) in professional settings, greeting with a handshake or kiss on the cheek.
- Impolite: Interrupting while someone is speaking, addressing someone by their first name without permission.



Direct Examples from the Hotel Industry

- Scenario 1: Handling reservations and inquiries from Spanish-speaking guests.
- Scenario 2: Assisting Spanish-speaking guests with check-in and concierge services.
- Scenario 3: Resolving issues and complaints effectively in Spanish.



Training and Development

- Language classes and workshops: Regular training sessions for staff.
- Use of language learning software and apps: Tools for self-paced learning.
- Encouraging practice through role-playing and real-life interactions.



Conclusion

- Recap of benefits: Enhanced guest satisfaction, competitive advantage, improved communication, increased cultural competence.
- Importance of ongoing training and development.
- Encouragement to embrace cultural diversity and enhance guest experiences.



References

- • Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture.
- • Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). Theories in intercultural communication. Sage Publications.
- • Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). Communicating across cultures. Guilford Press.
- • Dewaele, J. M. (2010). Emotions in multiple languages. Palgrave Macmillan.
- • Crystal, D. (2003). English as a global language. Cambridge University Press.