INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MODERN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Since there is hardly an industry as international as the hotel industry, hotel managers must have not only professional knowledge, but also intercultural skills and foreign language skills. Working in international teams and also communicating across cultural differences must not cause them problems in this profession and today it is a requirement for successful future careers and good opportunities in the labor market. Therefore, this paper aims to show the growing importance of intercultural management including knowledge and usage of foreign languages in the field of modern hotel business. It combines the basics of business management with the teaching of intercultural competencies. This will enable the participants to develop a management strategy that overcomes national and cultural differences. Consequently, it will make it possible for the company to achieve economic success in foreign countries as well.

Key Words: intercultural management, languages, hotel industry, teaching, cultural difference
JEL classification: I23

Introduction

Globalization has greatly affected tourism and hotel industry, since people from newly developed countries now travel in large numbers. It has resulted in an increase in the number of multinational corporations, thus increasing intercultural interactions within companies, because diverse customers have different cultures and traditions that have to be dealt with.

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The hospitality and tourism industry is known for its culturally diverse workplaces and companies. Unfortunately, research has shown a lack of proper training for industry managers to overcome the many challenges of communication in intercultural settings (Dewald & Self, 2008). The need for understanding intercultural workplaces, notably in hospitality and tourism industry, is critical. Therefore, cross-cultural training is not only useful for employees from different cultures and ethnicities to work together but it is also necessary for employees to learn how to handle certain situations that are raised by customers from diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities. The fundamental differences between societies proposed by cross-cultural studies provide the framework of understanding intercultural relationships. Nevertheless, there is limited scholarship dedicated to improving intercultural workplace interactions in this industry (Shore et al., 2009). Further research could provide information about training programs and preparation of employees, mitigating difficulties experienced in intercultural workplaces in hospitality.

**Intercultural encounters in modern tourism**

Intercultural communication plays an important role in tourism and associated intercultural encounters. The origins of intercultural communication as a scientific discipline date back to 1960s in the United States and Canada. The American ethnologist E. T. Hall is considered an important representative of this research movement. According to Lüsebrink (2012), a boom in Europe in research happened in 1980s. The knowledge of cultural differences in communication and the ability to respond appropriately are fundamental for harmonious encounters (p. 3). Intercultural encounters and the resulting relationship between tourists and locals are shaped by many factors. According to Hennig (1997), above all, the characteristics of the respective actors have a tremendous influence (p. 127).

Since the fifties of the last century, which mark the beginning of the modern tourist boom, the characteristics of tourists have been changing constantly. Thus, according to Wohlmann (1993), the number of journeys has increased, travel motives have changed, new socio-demographic layers of society have participated in tourism and wishes and needs have been modified (p. 12). As Hennig (1997) says, although travel today is no longer something for privileged social groups, travel behavior continues to depend on socio-demographic factors such as education, occupation,
income, etc. To date, the travel intensity of the wealthy and educated population is the highest (p. 72).

According to Luger (2007), the different travel motives of humans have a strong influence on the success of intercultural encounters. Tourism and its intercultural encounters may encourage the eradication of xenophobia. A tourist has the opportunity to get in touch with another foreigner in a relaxed way. Thus, despite differences among tourists with various cultural background, it can be said that a stranger is not to be judged as bad but as attractive and exciting (p. 36).

There are, on the other hand, some examples in the literature in which tourism represents a positive impulse for a better intercultural understanding of a society. As Freyer (2011) wrote, German tourism researcher Walter Freyer explains that institutionalized contact of tourists with local population, permanent meetings of residents of different countries, and the increase of the amount of information in mass media can increase understanding, enable more contacts and peace between individuals, as well as that between states be it from north to south, or from east to west (p. 497).

The expert in tourism Astrid Kösterke (2000) interprets intercultural meetings in tourism as personal encounters with people from other cultures (p. 22). Kösterke (2000) says that as part of a holiday abroad - whether there are classic holiday packages, study trips or self-organized individual travel, there are countless opportunities for encounters between people of different cultures, either in restaurants, shops, public transport, in a discotheque or on excursions, either accidentally, spontaneously or intentionally controlled [...] interests for such intercultural encounters can be conditioned by different factors and at the same time lead to different results and consequences (p. 24).

One of the important aspects of analyzing interculture as a concept is the role and meaning of tour guides in intercultural encounters. One definition comes from the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA). According to Ap & Wong (2001) the tour guide is a person who interprets in an inspiring and entertaining manner, in the language of the visitors' choice, the cultural and natural heritage and environment.
On the other hand, the "interpretive function" involves the understanding of other cultural systems and thus contributes to building bridges between cultures. Tour guides can mediate between groups and people from different cultural systems and are thus able to reduce prejudices, reduce conflicts and initiate a change in thinking. As a result, tour guides are also involved in intercultural encounters, for example in restaurants, in accommodation, shopping or on the road, in public transport. They can organize arranged meetings as part of sightseeing or directly in the form of an exchange dinner.

According to Kahlenbach (2013), in practice, the importance of learning foreign languages in the field of hotel industry is closely connected with the main subject of this field – communication and interaction both with domestic and foreign tourists. In the future, younger generations may be more willing to approach foreign guests' cultures in their domestic tourism and see it as enrichment (p. 117).

A model proposed by Herdin (2008) shows tour guides as mediators between cultures, as a mediator of knowledge and as an ambassador of one's own culture. The model focuses on the features of tour guides for travelers. For the announced strategy, the author proposes to extend this model by one dimension, namely that of the traveled ones (p. 270).

**Language knowledge as inevitable factor of successful intercultural communication**

According to Breede (2008) some problems may arise in intercultural communication situations. Causes can be communication problems due to the lack of language knowledge. Furthermore, unpleasant situations can arise because you have inadvertently addressed a taboo topic or asked an inappropriate question. In addition, wrong interpretation and decoding of silence, emphasis, tone of voice, etc. inhibit communication. A different style of speech and different discourse strategies also lead to communication problems (p. 36). In the field of non-verbal communication, it becomes problematic when gestures such as laughter or gaze behavior are used differently by the cultures of the two parties. On the basis of previously mentioned, success criteria were derived in the literature, which show how such communication problems can be reduced. For example, Müller-Jacquier, Professor of Intercultural German Studies, deals with the limits of the cultural-contrastive approach. He judges that 90 percent of the empirical work in the field of intercultural
communication deals with comparative recruitment studies on cultural value orientations and thus uses a culture-contrasting approach. Müller-Jacquier (2004), however, doubts the relevance of the results of such work for practice, as this is mainly the clash of differences in the context of emphasized intercultural encounters. He points out that today's society is more often confronted with intercultural encounters and therefore people have developed better abilities to deal with foreign cultures. So it should not be considered as a clash of different communication styles. In extreme cases, this approach of clashes can even reinforce stereotyping by emphasizing the differences between the alien and the self (p. 106).

**Intercultural concept in teaching modern languages**

In modern times, speaking more than one language is an assumption, since around two thirds of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. Neuner et al. (2009) in the German-foreign language study define multilingualism, in the context:

- Mother tongue (L1) as the primary language,
- the first foreign language (L2) as a secondary language,
- other foreign languages (L3, L4, Ln) as tertiary languages (p. 6).

In most of the schools English is taught as the first foreign language. However, students also learning another foreign language, which can be German, French, Russian, or even Italian. These languages may be called tertiary ones / tertiary languages. The basic starting point for adopting tertiary languages is finding ways to facilitate the application of already acquired knowledge and structures from native and previously learned foreign languages in the current foreign language. According to Krumm & Tselikas (2006) it is a pedagogical task to continue learning German using previously adopted knowledge. This implies greater demand for authentic texts, more complex tasks, a more comprehensive understanding of scenarios in textbooks and teaching itself (project teaching, drama pedagogy, narration and complex tasks for written production, intercultural content, linking literature and multilingual works). Learning interferes with socio-cultural development, and therefore the topic of encountering other cultures and topics on experiences from other cultures should become the leading point in the development of curricula and materials. It is a greatest task for teachers to encourage their students to recognize and find cultural contexts that are related to the German language (p. 39). They suggest that perhaps the best role German can fulfill today, is in fact German as the language of
confronting a student with a new person he becomes in the process of learning this language – with a new self, a new person (p. 40).

**Landeskunde vs. Cultural Studies**

An inevitable segment of education in the field of tourism is, according to Zerajic (2018a) foreign language teaching, which, besides communicative, should aim at acquiring intercultural competences. Numerous studies and research testify there is a need for foreign language skills for anybody who works in tourism. (p. 161).

According to Zerajic (2018b) various circumstances have made tourism a significant phenomenon; it has become an inseparable part of life, it influences the economy of many countries and this is why it became even more interesting field for researches in language for special purposes (p. 748).

The basis of the new intercultural concept in teaching foreign languages makes comparison of a language in the sense of comparing cultural specifics and certain individual factors, comparing the details of learners’ source culture and target-language culture (culture, politics, social perspective), and German *Landeskunde* or Cultural Studies are becoming an integral, inevitable element of language learning, and consequently stereotypes and prejudices are an ideal incentive for a dialogue based on intercultural exchange.

Under the term "Landeskunde" or pragmalinguistics, foreign languages teaching refers to the transfer of cultural and material information and the knowledge of a country or region whose language is taught or studied. In particular, it refers to the current life and to the possible perspectives that students of German language as a foreign language meet in the German speaking area or in contact with speakers of the German language. Until recently, the Landeskunde area had no role in teaching German as a second language (DaZ). The importance of this field in teaching German as a foreign language has been valued differently over time. In post-war Germany, the transfer of information about the country was at the center of interest. Then Landeskunde was defined as an independent area which, due to its demands of universality and objectivity, could be offered exclusively to the "advanced" individuals, limiting itself to institutions,  

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2 The German term means the study of the geographic, regional, and cultural aspects of a country.
states and "high society" cultures. During 1970's, in the context of the communicative approach, the term "Leutekunde" was used to refer to information and activities. Since it was related to everyday life, it could also be used in teaching beginners.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the Council of Europe has been striving to create a somewhat more communicative approach to learning foreign languages, which aims not only to learn foreign language by adopting and training linguistic skills, but also implies to some extent a kind of socio-cultural emancipation. Therefore, the question arises as to whether communicative didactics can be viewed as a pragmatic-functional and/or pedagogically-oriented concept. The Council of Europe defines the CEFR's basic goals and the planned outcomes of learning a foreign language, so the acquisition of the so-called multilingual and multicultural competences becomes the most important. Since the language is the instrument of man's action, the focus is on the use of language (pragmalinguisics), on understanding (and understandability) rather than on accuracy. New approaches to the adoption of foreign languages also entail a drastic change in social forms of work, so that group and pair-work becomes much more popular in relation to frontal teaching and lessons based on textbook units so that teachers in practice face the strategic, yet everyday dilemma - whether to develop more linguistic or communicative skills.

Competences are described in the ZEO\(^3\) as the sum of (declarative) knowledge, (procedural) skills and components that relate to personality, as well as general cognitive skills, which allow one man to perform actions. As a whole, general competences are those which are not linguistically specific, but that are applied in actions of every kind, especially in language actions. Whether it is about those who learn the language or those who use it, they consist of knowledge and competence, competence oriented to personality and attitudes, as well as the ability to learn. Knowledge, that is, declarative knowledge savoir (Fr. know) is considered the result of learning from experience (knowledge of the world) and formal learning processes (theoretical knowledge). On the other hand, according to GER (2011)\(^4\), communicative competences train...
a man to work with the help of specific language tools, while the procedural knowledge **savoir-faire (Fr.)** is based more on the ability to perform actions and processes than on declarative knowledge, although such abilities can be encouraged by the adoption of the declarative knowledge ‘that can be forgotten’ (p. 21-23).

According to CEFR (2003), in this sense, "insisting on adhering to the concept of language diversity and learning more foreign languages in school gets its full meaning. Learning foreign languages at the current historical moment in Europe is not only important for political reasons or no less significant perspectives that are pointed out to young people for whom language learning comes naturally", but it is also very important because of the opportunity to help students build linguistic and cultural identity by integrating different experiences of other people and cultures, and developing learning abilities through the same diversified experience of interweaving different languages and cultures (p. 136).

Since 1990, as Röhner (2008) says, thanks to the intercultural concept, the understanding of foreign culture has become an inevitable and integral part of teaching German as a foreign language, and in the context of **Landeskunde** the **Tübinger Modell** integrative concept of **Landeskunde** with interdisciplinary orientation is developed (p. 132). This model emphasized the authenticity of content selected for didactic reasons, which requires its own experience with countries as well as applications in the role of teachers, as a form of work and evaluation within the so-called "*Experienced Landeskunde*" (Wicke, 1995). Veeck & Lindmayer (2001), distinguish linguistically and realistically oriented concepts that can be target-oriented but can also be in-cultural-specific for the addressee (p. 1163). Hans Werner Hess (2004) criticized this concept of pragmalinguistics\(^5\) concentrated solely on communication, because he could only come into the cognitive, rather than communicative pragmalinguistics. He strives for an information-oriented pragmalinguist who emerges from the framework of didactics of German as a foreign language and strives for the cognitive competence of analysis and understanding. In practice, this would mean that teachers of German as a

\(^5\) There are different or even contradictory opinions about what pragmalinguistics is and what should be taken as its research object. Prucha (1983: 13) distinguishes four main directions:

1. Pragmalinguistics as a theory of instructional styles (registers) of language.
2. Pragmalinguistics as a theory of the communicative (pragmatic) component of the utterance.
3. Pragmalinguistics as a theory of influencing people through verbal messages.
4. Pragmalinguistics as a theory of verbal activity in social intercourse.
foreign language should be educated not only in philological but also in terms of general knowledge of the country, culture, society, politics, economics, etc. of that language. The quest for integrative knowledge of culture and the language taught is defined by DaF Liu Liu from China Li Yuan, which offers a more comprehensive concept that has an intercultural competence as its goal. It proceeds from the model of the competences of the famous psychologist Alberto Bandura, according to which the competence of acting develops with the mutual effect of factual, methodical, social and self-competence. Li Yuan summarizes social and auto-competence and formulates intercultural skills for each of the three areas. What was completely new and very attractive is her attempt to formulate the professional competence of D-A-CH in the context of Landeskunde and thus create a close connection with the country of the addressee, in this case China.

As above mentioned, according to Röhner (2008), a decisive turning point, however, occurred in 1990 with the introduction of the so-ABCD thesis (A - Austria, B - Germany / Bundesrepublik Deutschland /, C - Switzerland / Confederation Helvetica /, D - DDR). Based on these theories, Landeskunde is not a separate subject, but a combination of cultural information and the sensitization of feelings for foreign language interaction, taking into account the entire German speaking area, as well as the phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic diversity of German (p. 131). From the very beginning, there was a tendency to include authentic, socially critical materials from all regions of the German speaking region, and insisted on the active participation of pupils in the selection of these materials in order to find an appropriate approach on their own, not relying solely on teachers as intermediaries. Today’s equivalent of ABCD-thesis is D (Germany) - A (Austria) - CH (Switzerland) - L (Liechtenstein) principle driven by triple integration:
- the countries of the German speaking region in all their diversity,
- students in planning and flow, and
- language teaching and Landeskunde (p. 132).

First of all, interculturalism as a concept gives rise to numerous reflections and opens many possibilities for designing new, interesting content and materials. Consequently, it implies a step forward from stereotyped forms of teaching and adoption of L2 and provides an entire network of innovative tasks and forms of material adoption, which automatically implies greater engagement of teachers / lecturers in processing of inputs that students offer. The communication concept
emphasizes that the content and meaning of linguistic expression have a much greater significance than the accuracy of the form itself, i.e. successful communication is more important than linguistic accuracy. Accordingly, when the sequence of adoption and mastering of language skills in a foreign language is concerned, it is first necessary to master receptive language skills in order for production (writing and oral expression) to be possible.

In intercultural comparison, grammatical progression is no longer the most important, but rather the so-called communicative progression or mastering certain structures that are necessary in communicative acts in a foreign language. Consequently, intercultural input gets more important than grammatical. Among other things, there is a need for regional textbooks, so that a textbook itself supports intercultural comparisons and provides additional ideas and incentives.

The communicative ability and activity of students is not only influenced by knowledge, understanding and their skills, but also by individual and for their personality characteristic factors such as motivation, attitudes, beliefs, cognitive styles and personality types savoir-être (Fr.). Personality factors and attitudes do not only affect the role of learners in communicative situations, but also their ability to learn.

In order to achieve their communicative intent, students apply their general abilities and specific language competences.

In this narrow sense, communicative competence consists of:

1. linguistic competences;
2. sociolinguistic competences, and
3. pragmatic competences.

Foreign language teaching has changed greatly in recent decades, the audiovisual has followed the cognitive phase. Although these processes of change primarily relate to sciences such as linguistics and psychology, they certainly have to do with the learning of foreign languages. There is a great discrepancy in Europe when it comes to foreign language learning. Despite the steadily growing interest and the need for foreign languages, not only in Germany, but in other European Union countries, there is a general tendency to reduce foreign languages in practical institutionalized use, primarily as regards the time base as well as the number of foreign languages in general. The knowledge of foreign languages that are in
decline is related to the state of didactic practice of a foreign language in schools. The communicative approach, which is considered to be dominant in Europe, has brought about the return to some traditional and conventional forms of language learning. Most teachers return grammar and rules to instruction, and although communication in itself represents the interaction of teachers with students, they do not sufficiently process authentic content. One of the current concepts recommends early language learning for faster and better learning of foreign languages, which is noticeable from the earliest primary school when introducing the first foreign language. Children work with the current textbooks of the modern concept. Although there is an adequate curriculum to which they are oriented, they have foreign language at least two hours a week, if one looks at the very concept of teaching it can be concluded that it is similar if not the same as the traditional one with a frontal type of lectures and stress on grammar and vocabulary. When all this is taken into account, there is clear evidence that foreign language teaching at an early stage has yielded significantly better results than in adult learners, except in the area of pronunciation that is certainly better and almost close to native speakers in children learning a language.

Very important aspect of teaching foreign languages as languages of profession is adequate textbooks. Textbooks still play a very important role in foreign language teaching and the quantity and quality of intercultural content are very significant. Is it possible for a learner to actively, autonomously and holistically develop his intercultural skills with the help of a textbook? Can he achieve better understanding in a foreign language through socialization and identity formation? Another question is how authentic the material is, since this aspect is central for acquisition of intercultural competence. For publishers, it is now fashionable to emphasize in the advertisement the textbooks (e.g. New Address) that are abundant in intercultural or cultural communication and that follow the European Framework of Reference and the renewed curriculum, both of which emphasize intercultural communication.

According to Neuner (1994), textbooks are shaped by certain didactic-methodological guiding concepts of an epoch (p. 111). In language teaching, according to Roche (2001), intercultural communication takes place simultaneously on four levels: between textbooks / teaching materials and learners / teachers, between learners (for example, from different source cultures), between learners and teachers, and between the group and other foreign cultures (p. 48).
According to Gerighausen & Seel (1983), in each foreign language teaching always - whether deliberately accomplished, organized or unconscious, concurrent tracking - processes one, intercultural communication 'take place' (p. 5). The latest textbooks bring these processes into the awareness of teachers and students.

**Vocational language studies for the travel and tourism studies in higher education institutions of applied studies**

In spite of the fact that English does not lose the status of a globally significant language, the so-called *lingua franca*, the knowledge of every other foreign language is additionally of enormous importance in tourism. According to Kusluvan (2003), the intensity of dependence on human factors is more pronounced in tourism than in other sectors, since the provision of services and interactions with clients is the basis of this activity. The tourism sector implies a higher share of the labor force in total investments compared to other economies. Therefore, tourist activity puts all employees in front of great demands in terms of communicative and intercultural competence, as well as knowledge of at least one foreign language.

A foreign language as the language of profession is obligatory from the first year at all faculties of academic and professional studies, and this is most often, but not exclusively, English. Students enrolled in a higher education institution are highly expected to master professional terminology in the practical application of their knowledge after completing their education. Considering that German is one of the languages offered by the College of Hotel Management since the first year (the foreign language has the status of an elective and apart from German, French and Russian are offered. The elective foreign language is taught during five of the total of six semesters according to prescribed syllabus with a fund of 3 hours per week, which means one hour of lectures and two hours of exercises and we start with expectation that their higher education in the area of the foreign language will end at the A2 / B1 level crossing. At these language levels students should:

A2 - The student has a wide range of elementary language resources that allow him to solve everyday situations with the help of the previously given content. As a rule, a student can make compromises in relation to the realization of the spoken purpose and to search for words. In addition, he may use short, useful expressions to meet simple, specific needs and
ask, for example, for certain information about a person, everyday routines, desires or needs.

He/she can use simple sentence forms and express them using memorized sentences, short group words and speech patterns about himself and other people, what they do or own, etc.; has a limited repertoire of short memorized statements that satisfy the simplest basic speech situations. In situations that come out of the daily routine, there is often an interruption and misunderstanding.

B1 - The student has sufficient language resources to handle. The dictionary satisfies the need to be apologetic with hesitation and with the help of individual descriptions, to talk about various topics, such as family, hobbies, interests, business, travel, current events; however, the limited vocabulary leads to frequent repetitions and difficulties in formulations. (GER, 2001: 111).

**How can the process of language teaching and learning be improved?**

Student autonomy is a concept of European glotodidactics, which has been developed rapidly on the basis of the Council of Europe's assumptions in recent decades; applicable at all levels of education, and also in the higher education of languages. This concept implies that during the process of their socialization in schools students will be able to take their own learning independently and genuinely into their own hands. According to Wolff (1994), this understanding of learning relies heavily on the ideas of constructivists and cognitivists. According to Dam (1994, 1995), Wolff (1997), Bach & Neuner (2008) propose the essential characteristics of autonomous learning in the classroom by the following points:

1. Working in small groups, with individual groups simultaneously carrying out various activities. The results are later shown on posters in the classroom in frontal work;
2. Activities within small groups open a much broader field that involves the creation of images, writing grammar for other students, listening to CDs, including the independent writing of different essays;
3. Group work is encouraged by the preparation of materials that are constantly available to them. In addition to textbooks, grammar and dictionaries offer materials related to the process itself;
4. Students can even bring their own materials, even those that they themselves have developed or prepared;
5. Each student writes his / her diary in which he / she lists the activities he / she participated in, what he / she has learned, how the results of individual small groups are evaluated;
6. The foreign language must be the only language in the classroom. This approach can best be explained to pupils by the fact that the goal of learning and teaching itself is to master foreign language, which can best be achieved by using it;
7. A shared evaluation of the learned takes place in equal intervals and relates to the most diverse elements of the teaching process, to goals, activities, materials, results, social aspects, roles of teachers / learners, testing in foreign language;
8. Interaction on the process of learning a foreign language;
9. The teacher assumes a new role in this situation - he is no longer a competent instructor who plans and controls, but is more a moderator who monitors the process, and helps the students make language teaching as efficient as possible.

This concept can contribute to improving multilingualism in Europe more than the traditional communicative approach in teaching.

**Conclusion**

Tourism researcher Freyer (2011) states that in the future, it would be important to develop tourism as a cultural sociology research field better and extensive research on the cultural and sociological impact on the travelers would be desirable.

English is the most often used language around the world and it applies to the hospitality industry as well, but other languages should not be forgotten, bearing in mind the importance of the intercultural concept and plurilingualism. Foreign language in the hospitality industry is needed when working in a non-English speaking country. Also, students of hospitality programs benefit immensely from learning a foreign language. Many universities with hospitality management majors have been providing study abroad programs, and foreign language has become crucial to the education of the industry. It is well known that colleges that offer hospitality degrees which integrate foreign language learning contribute to the success of the hospitality industry in general and to the success of the individual students in their future careers as managers.
Such in hospitality degree courses, the teaching of foreign languages has focused on the learning for professional purposes that students may likely be facing in their future career.

According to Žerajić (2011), a foreign language professor is familiar with the material. He comes across various sources and uses a myriad of methodical, didactic and linguistic information and resources. They may not always be transparent, and it may be difficult for a teacher / professor to estimate their efficiency in teaching. Nevertheless, the teacher / professor is the one who shall decide when, how and what he will teach, and to what extent teaching should be based on vocational language.

References


