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МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ В ЭКСКУРСОВОДЧЕСКОЙ ПРАКТИКЕ

Аннотация: Так как современная жизнь 21-ого века становится все более и более интернациональной, межкультурная коммуникация и межкультурная компетенция становятся очень важными, особенно во время путешествия. Межкультурная коммуникация происходит, когда человек из одной культуры делает нечто, чему дается смысл другим человеком из другой культуры. Туризм – способ межкультурного обмена, которая реализуется между туристами и местными людьми, так же как экскурсоводом посещаемой страны. Экскурсовод не только должен владеть хорошими знаниями об историческом и природном наследии своей страны, а еще и должен иметь межкультурную компетенцию для общения с посетителями/туристами своей страны.

В этой статье рассматриваются особенности межкультурной компетенции и ее роль в экскурсоводческой практике.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная компетенция, туризм, экскурсовод, туристы.

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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TOURIST GUIDING PRACTICE

Abstract: As the modern life of the 21st century is becoming more and more international, intercultural communication and intercultural competence are of a great importance today, especially when travelling. Intercultural communication occurs whenever a person from one culture does something that is given meaning by a person from another culture. Tourism is a way of intercultural exchange which is realized between the tourists and the local people of the visited country, as well as the tourist guide. The tourist guide is not only supposed to have a good knowledge of the historical and natural heritage of his/her country, but also has to have intercultural competence to deal with the visitors/tourists of his/her country.

The peculiarities of intercultural competence and the role of it in tourist guiding practice are studied in this article.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, intercultural competence,

tourism, tourist guide, tourists.

Intercultural Competence in Tourist Guiding Practice

The universe is a perpetual chain of different things and phenomena. People, who live in societies, are one of the links of this chain. Society cannot exist without communication, which is one of the basic needs of human existence and can be defined as the transfer or exchange of information between entities. This exchange can be realized both verbally and non-verbally, but the first one, the language, is the basic way. It is the means of forming and storing ideas as reflections of reality and exchanging them in the process of human intercourse. Speaking a particular language gives an individual a cultural identification. Language is social by nature. It is inseparably connected with the people who are its creators and users. It grows and develops together with the development of society. Language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality. It is said that all of us are prisoners of our culture, as without a culture we cannot see, but with a culture we are forever blind. Our own native language and culture are so much a part of us that we take them for granted. Culture gives meaning and provides the context for communication, and the ability to communicate allows us to share our language and our culture. As the basic building blocks of communication, words communicate meaning, but the meanings of words are very much influenced by culture. The gaps in communication are filled in by knowledge commonly shared by people¹. Meaning is in the person, not in the word, and each person is the product of a particular culture that passes on shared and appropriate meanings. It follows that communication, language and culture are linked, and this link is inseparable.

¹ Brislin, R., K. Cushner, C. Cherrie, and M. Yong. "Intercultural Interactions", page 8

In today's life, when globalization is occupying the whole world making the boundaries between countries less and less significant, intercultural communication and intercultural competence are getting a greater importance. Intercultural communication is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or how culture affects communication. It is used to describe the wide range of communication processes and problems that naturally appear within an organization or social context made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. This interaction happens every day and every moment when people travel from one place to the other. Travelling which includes displacement is considered to be tourism. There are many definitions of tourism. The first definition of tourism was made by Guyer - Feuler in 1905. Guyer and Feuler defined tourism as "a phenomenon unique to modern time which is dependent on the people's increasing need for a change and relaxing, the wish of recognizing the beauties of nature and art and the belief that nature gives happiness to human beings and which helps nations and communities' approaching to each other thanks to the developments in commerce and industry and the communication and transportation tools' becoming excellent". Another definition given by Macintosh and Goeldner states that "tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting tourists and other visitors"². Hosting can be effective if the host country is "interculturally" literate. Both the host community and the specialists working in the host country must be "interculturally" competent. Communication across cultures is made difficult by each person's ethnocentric tendencies to perceive objects, events, and behavior through lenses designed in the person's own culture. The ability to communicate well suggests that one

² <http://www.tugberkugurlu.com/archive/definintion-of-tourism-unwto-definition-of-tourism-what-is-tourism>

should pay attention to the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of communication. To give a breath and soul to communication one should be “interculturally” competent. Intercultural competence is the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures which is essential in tourism development.

Nowadays there are more and more discussions and more and more books published on the topic of intercultural communication, intercultural competence and their role in different disciplines. Tourism is often mentioned among them, but there is a very little attention paid to the importance of intercultural competence for tourist guides. This article touches upon some points referring to the role of intercultural competence for the tourist guides, preparation of tourist guides paying special attention to the issues connected with intercultural competence and the ways of creating appropriate atmosphere for the guide to develop intercultural skills.

The actuality of this topic is related to the continuous growth of international tourism and the important role that the tourist guide has and can have in the tourism development as the cultural ambassador of his/her country, region or city. Tourism is considered to be one of the world’s largest industries with a great global economic contribution (direct, indirect and induced). The latter was over 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016, and this numbers are continuously growing. The direct economic impact of the industry, including accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions, was approximately 2.3 trillion U.S. dollars that year³.

Although there are tourists who prefer to travel on their own, still a great number of tourists prefer ready-made or tailor-made tour-packages which include the service of professional tourist guides. And in such cases the guide

³ <https://www.statista.com/topics/962/global-tourism/>

becomes the link between the guests and the host country, so intercultural background of the tourist guide becomes vital.

The aim of this article is to show the brief analysis conducted in the sphere of tourist guide preparation and to give some hints how to improve guide preparation courses and how to contribute to the chances for the guides to have the necessary information and to develop the needed skills.

The history of tourist guiding starts from ancient times. First, they were the pagan priests. The medieval guides were Christian priests and monks who acted as guides for pilgrims. Scholars possessing language skills also served as guides.

Modern guides were employed by Thomas Cook (1808 – 1892) – the first modern travel agent. He organized a group tour for 570 tourists by train from Leicester to Loughborough in 1841. The tour package included services of qualified and language skilled guides.

The beginning of Alpine and mountain guides is considered the 19th century, Switzerland.

In America in the early 1800s the New York State had its first tourism boom - the birth of the guiding industry. It was mostly seasonal work. The majority of guides were just hired for hunting and fishing trips. In 1870 members of the Browns Tract Guides Association earned \$3 per day. The wages are higher today, but accordingly higher are the demands as well.

According to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA⁴), **tourist guide** is the person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area in which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or

⁴ WFTGA - World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations

recognized by the appropriate authority (A definition adopted by WFTGA at its Dunblane, Scotland Convention 2003)⁵.

In order to be able to interpret something, one should have the competence to communicate in the right way. In the case of tourist guiding the latter undoubtedly includes intercultural competence as well.

As David Berlo says, "Meanings are in people"⁶. One should grow out of the shell of his/her mother tongue and his/her own culture in order to open the horizons of other cultures, too. This is mostly true in the case of tourist guides who are always in interaction with representatives of other cultures. They speak foreign languages – the languages of the tourists' choice, but speaking this or that language is not enough for effective communication even if the speaker is perfectly fluent in it.

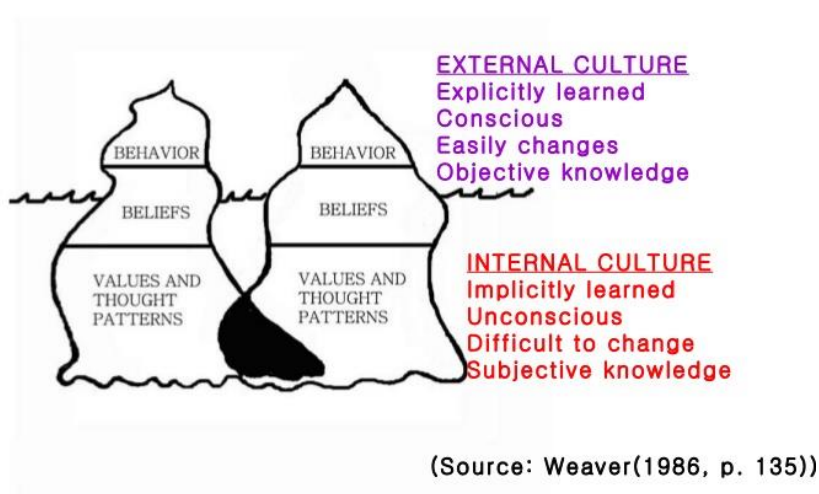
Some linguists and first among them Brembeck decided to create a model of culture called "The Iceberg Analogy of Culture". The latter compares the notion of culture to an iceberg, only the tip of which is visible whereas a very large part of it is difficult to see or grasp. The iceberg graphically demonstrates the idea of having both visible and invisible structures. When two different cultures come close to one another, it is like iceberg colliding. Under the surface often without people's realizing unspoken assumptions are competing with one another, that's why knowing both the visible and the invisible sides of the "culture-iceberg" is essential⁷.

⁵ <http://www.wftga.org/tourist-guiding/what-tourist-guide>

⁶ Rogers, E. and Th., Steinfatt. "Intercultural Communication", page 116

⁷ Tomalin, B. and S., Stempleski. "Cultural Awareness", page 7

The 'Iceberg analogy' of culture



Pic. 1. Iceberg analogy of culture, iceberg colliding

In linguistics there is a hypothesis called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It makes the claim that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves. In fact, this is a two-sided phenomenon as the way of thinking in its turn influences on the languages we speak. According to Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about". The one who is in direct contact with the tourists and speaks their language (a foreign language for him/her) is the tourist guide. So, it is crucially important for the tourist guide not only to know the language but also to perceive the culture which stands beyond the language.

The tourist guide needs to be well-trained in order to know his/her own culture shaped by his/her own language and the culture and the language of his/her segmental groups.

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned points, there are some suggestions intended to improve the intercultural knowledge and practical

skills of professional tourist guides who are already in the tourist market and who are yet to come.

1. Tourist guide training course organizers should include special courses providing abilities of successful intercultural communication.

The rules and the rights to train tourist guides vary from country to country. Each country has its regulations, and that's the reason there is no sense in taking the example of this or that country. Because of that the example of WFTGA has been taken as it is the organization which unites tourist guide associations and individual tourist guides all over the world. WFTGA is the organization which gives the rules of professionalism of tourist guides.

For the assurance of high level professionalism, there is a special code of Guiding Practice which is as follows: Adherence to the WFTGA Code of Guiding Practice provides an assurance of the high level of professionalism and a value-added service offered by the individual guides to their clients. Tourist Guide Associations which belong to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations accept on behalf of their members WFTGA's principles and aims:

- To provide a professional service to visitors, professional in care and commitment, and professional in providing an objective understanding of the place visited, free from prejudice or propaganda.

- To ensure that as far as possible what is presented as fact is true, and that a clear distinction is made between this truth and stories, legends, traditions, or opinions.

- To act fairly and reasonable in all dealings with all those who engage the services of guides and with colleagues working in all aspects of tourism.

- To protect the reputation of tourism in our country by making every endeavor to ensure that guided groups treat with respect the environment, wildlife, sights and monuments, and also local customs and sensitivities.

- As representatives of the host country, to welcome visitors and act in such a way as to bring credit to the country visited and promote it as a tourist destination⁸.

WFTGA has 3 main stages of training courses:

1. HOT - hands on tourist guiding
2. TtT – train the trainer
3. ITtT – international train the trainer

All the above mentioned training courses are for the tourist guides who already have the needed knowledge to be able to work in the tourist market as professional tourist guides and for trainers who train professional tourist guides. In general, in all the training courses there are courses including intercultural knowledge and skills. In the case of guide preparation courses each country itself makes the course to prepare tourist guides. If they want the participants of their courses to receive a certificate accredited by WFTGA, they have to pass a special accreditation. According to WFTGA, tourist guide training courses should include special proportion of hours for theoretical and practical lessons, but the topics and subjects are left for the specific country to decide based on the peculiarities and characteristic features of the mentioned country. One of the points of this article is the suggestion to include omnipresent courses of intercultural communication and intercultural competence in guide preparation courses in all the countries as an obligatory demand.

2. Tourist guide training course organizers should include courses providing specific knowledge about the cultures of the segmental countries

⁸ <http://www.wftga.org/tourist-guiding/code-guiding-practice>

where the groups of the tourist guide usually come from (from the point of view of the language the tourist guide speaks and works in).

Intercultural competence comprises the ability and the skills of effective communication with representatives of different cultures. It is not difficult to realize that there are thousands of cultures in the world which have their subcultures, and it is not possible to perceive all of them. That is why it is preferable to have general ideas about different cultures and then to get concentrated on the culture of the segmental group the tourist guide works or will work with. These segmental groups can be decided according to the foreign language the guide speaks and works. There are languages which are spoken only in one country, and there are languages which are spoken in many countries each of them having their own characteristic features and cultural peculiarities. For example, Italian is spoken only in Italy, and all the tourists who are Italian-speaking are basically Italians. Of course, inside the Italian culture there are subcultures, too, but all of them belong to the same general culture. But the same thing cannot be said about Spanish which is spoken not only in Spain but also in 19 more sovereign countries⁹. All these countries are different from each other by their cultural background, and the cultural features of all these countries should be studied individually.

3. It is important to provide conditions for the tourist guides to develop intercultural competence in the specific cultural atmosphere.

Cultures are not just to be read and explained, they are also to be felt and perceived. For that it is more than vital to be in the specific cultural atmosphere. There are two ways of it:

⁹ Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela

- Tourist guides go to the specific country
- In the country of the tourist guides they appear in the specific atmosphere

It is more than clear that the first variant is much more preferable and effective. The guide who speaks the certain language should live in the country of segmental culture for some period to be able to understand the people he/she already works or will work with in the future. But this suggestion can have some financial hindrances. In many countries tourist guides are freelance, and no travel agency will take this financial responsibility. In some countries there are associations of tourist guides but not all of them can afford this. In many countries there are ministries and committees of tourism but the state is not always ready to provide such amounts. It is suggested that the guide is totally funded by the travel agency, association or state if it is possible according to the certain possibilities of this or that country or at least the guide is provided with some financial support by them.

In the case of no possibility, the travel agency, association or the state should at least contribute to creating the specific atmosphere for the guide to be in interaction with the representatives of this or that culture in the country of the tourist guide. Although there are different possibilities of this, but of course this is less effective.

4. The tourist guide should have the knowledge and the skills to organize his/her speech according to the cultural background of the group and according to the specific type of tourism for that region for that certain group.

As it has already been mentioned, cultures have subcultures. The professional tourist guide should not only have the ability of effective communication, but also the ability to organize his/her speech according to specific type of tourism for that region. For example, if the leading type of

tourism of the specific country is the religious tourism, the tourist guide should have correct and exact knowledge of theology and dogmatic issues of the church of his/her country and the church of the country of his/her tourists. It is possible to offend the person even without noticing it especially if it refers to the cultural sensitivity of that person.

5. Monitoring of the provided tourist guide service based on the feedback of the tourists.

Each profession is an endless path of education and obtaining new knowledge and skills. The same rules exist in tourism which is extremely wide and does not know limitations. In order to improve service in tourism there should be a regular control each time. As the regulations of the countries are different, it is not easy to mention who should be responsible for the monitoring and control: the travel agency the guide works for, the association the guide belongs to or the state itself. Based on the regulations of the countries, this responsibility should be taken by the appropriate institution. From time to time tourists should be given questionnaires to be filled in, and based on their results new theoretical and practical courses should be organized, or the existing ones should be modified.

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