

The impact of authentic materials on enhancing Cross Cultural Skills of German Tourism learners

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The language proficiency in multiple foreign languages, is a required prerequisite, for successful communication in the tourism industry. Tourism industry which has become one of the main foreign income sources in Sri Lanka, is recruiting graduates with high foreign language proficiency skills, for a productive development of intercultural competence in the area of tourism and hospitality management. Therefore teaching Foreign Languages for tourism learners, can be regarded as a new academic discipline, which aims to bridge the gap between foreign language teaching with specific language learning skills required for current and future professionals in the field of tourism. Foreign language sessions for tourism learners are based on developing specific language skills required for tourism, while fostering cross cultural awareness. This study was designed to investigate how effective is the use of authentic materials, in enhancing the cross cultural skills of tourism learners. Authentic materials can be defined as “language materials that were originally designed to be used by first language speakers and were not intended for use by language learners (Nunan & Miller, 1995). Authentic materials such as Flyers, brochures, menu cards, hotel catalogs, magazines, train tickets and invitation cards are not being designed for language teaching purposes, but to fulfil the daily social requirements of the native speakers of the target language country. Therefore they contain authentic up to date real life situation based information, which provide the learners, the first-hand experience of travelers, visiting the target language country. This research is based on class room observations and data collected by semi structured interviews and distributed questionnaires among tourism learners. According to the findings of the research, it was evident, that the use of authentic materials, including audio visual and printed materials for German tourism teaching sessions, allow the learners to make contact with the real-life language experiences of the target culture and is also a great motivational factor for the learners to develop cross cultural sensitivity to overcome cultural barriers when working with customers, employees and suppliers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

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