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## **THE ROLE OF MULTILINGUALISM IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF HOSPITALITY SERVICES**

This study investigates the impact of multilingual communication on hospitality service management and quality enhancement in the hotel industry. Multilingualism plays a crucial role in improving service quality and customer experience by facilitating effective communication with international clients and enhancing service efficiency. The ability to communicate in multiple languages fosters a more welcoming environment for tourists and strengthens intercultural interactions. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing questionnaires for data collection. A total of 179 questionnaires were distributed to hospitality sector employees across three Balkan countries: Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania, who were interviewed about their perceptions. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software to assess employees' perceptions of the influence of multilingualism on service management and quality improvement. The findings reveal that hospitality employees perceive multilingualism as a key factor in enhancing service quality and

customer satisfaction. Proficiency in multiple languages optimizes communication and contributes to greater service efficiency. Moreover, the results underscore the significant role of multilingualism in improving services and fostering effective intercultural communication, ultimately increasing the overall efficiency of the hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Multilingualism, hotel services, employees, intercultural communication.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the tourism sector, it is essential for the supply and demand sides to maintain excellent communication to ensure the required quality and performance standards. In tourism business practices, verbal communication holds greater importance than written communication; however, both forms are highly valued (Kay & Russette, 2000). Language is a means of communication that involves spoken or written symbols to express ideas, emotions, and experiences. Understanding its role can help businesses improve coordination, make better use of new technologies, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve more effective management in the tourism sector (Akoumianakis, 2009). For tourism employees, the ability to communicate effectively is one of their most essential skills, as it has become a vital part of daily tourism business operations (Brownell, 2017). Developing language proficiency not only improves communication but also fosters intercultural understanding and integration (Kramsch, 1998). This skill is also important for those who can communicate in more than one language, whether actively, by speaking and writing, or passively, by listening and reading (Jajić, 2017). In the tourism and hospitality sector, communication is of particular importance, as it is not just a way to convey information but has a deeper meaning, especially when it comes to interactions between tourists and staff (Ryan et al., 1996). Positive relationships cannot be maintained if the communication between the visitor and the host is not effective, particularly when it comes to verbal communication. Multilingualism is a phenomenon that occurs when two or more languages are used and coexist in a specific communication context (Barton and Lee, 2016). Therefore, the use of foreign languages is essential to enable such communication, allowing for conversations with visitors in their own language (Leslie & Russell, 2006). The role of foreign languages in delivering quality service is significant, as they are an important tool in making a guest feel at home, thus fostering greater brand loyalty and larger financial returns (Torres & Kline, 2013). The ability to understand the needs of guests and resolve issues effectively is a key component of successful services,

contributing to the enhancement of the visitor experience and the quality of service provided (Tziora et al., 2005).

## **2. EMPLOYEE SKILLS AND MULTILINGUALISM IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR**

In every organization, employees represent one of the most important resources that influence its success and the achievement of its objectives. They play a key role in determining the organization's vision and perspective for the future. For this reason, organizations aim to recruit capable, experienced, and qualified individuals (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015). Excellent service quality has gained importance as a tool to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Gouthier et al., 2012). The hospitality industry today is increasingly characterized by professionals with multilingual skills, enabling them to better understand the needs of guests and provide the best possible service. This has made language skills essential for businesses that want to maintain competitiveness in the global market (Pace, 2015). Multilingualism refers to the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, and societies to regularly use more than one language in their daily lives (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023). In the tourism sector, effective communication with tourists is a crucial aspect for those providing services or acting as intermediaries in the distribution process. Customer experience plays a key role, and only employees who manage to deeply understand the needs of visitors and anticipate their expectations can ensure a consistent quality of service. The tourism and hospitality industry leverages employees' language skills as an economic resource, valuing multilingualism as a marketable asset. Knowledge of different languages offers advantages for employers, such as expanding trade opportunities, increasing competition, and improving service quality, while also providing benefits for employees through the development of multilingual skills (Duchêne & Piller, 2011). Since the ability to provide excellent service is closely linked to proficiency in foreign languages, language skills are a critical factor in maintaining high standards in the hospitality industry (Manson et al., 2011). Language in the hospitality sector is often characterized by a formal tone, which depends on the level of knowledge and relationships between the individuals communicating. This process involves several important skills that must be developed to provide quality service. Some of these skills include: addressing a person appropriately, gathering and providing necessary information, responding to questions and requests, using proper requests, appropriately using gestures, as well as managing problematic clients and calming those who complain (Šuljić Petrc et al., 2021). These skills are essential for building and imple-

menting an effective hospitality language in practice (Blue & Harun, 2003). In this context, multilingualism becomes a powerful tool that enables the faster and more efficient resolution of potential issues with clients, contributing to a more positive and healthy communication atmosphere. This highlights the need for qualified employees in these sectors, who must have the ability to speak multiple languages and work in a multicultural environment. Furthermore, the tourism industry, which is fundamentally service-oriented, relies on skilled employees to ensure excellent services for its visitors (Luka, 2015; Zehrer et al., 2014; Kaufman & Ricci, 2014). Effective communication and multilingualism are essential for the success of the tourism and hospitality industry. Language skills help improve service, optimize the visitor experience, and maintain high-quality standards. Effective communication and multilingualism are essential for the success of the tourism and hospitality industry. Language skills help improve service, optimize the visitor experience, and maintain high quality standards. Qualified employees, who can communicate in several languages and operate in a multicultural environment, are a valuable asset for any organization that wants to increase competitiveness and customer satisfaction in the global marketplace.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study used a quantitative approach, distributing structured questionnaires to analyze the impact of multilingualism on hotel service management. In total, 179 questionnaires were distributed, in three Balkan countries: Kosovo (69 respondents), Montenegro (53 respondents) and Albania (57 respondents). The purpose of distributing the questionnaires was to collect data from employees in the hospitality sector regarding the importance of language knowledge and other necessary skills required for providing quality services. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software, including various analyses such as mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis, item-total correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The results will enable drawing conclusions about the impact of multilingual knowledge on improving employee performance and their preparedness to manage demands and needs in the hospitality sector.

#### **3.1 Instruments**

For data collection in this study, a structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument. This questionnaire was designed to examine the impact of multilingualism on the management of hotel services, focusing on

the perceptions and experiences of hospitality sector employees regarding the importance of language knowledge and its impact on providing quality services. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions, which were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, allowing participants to express their opinions from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This format was used to ensure a clear and objective assessment of the responses, enabling accurate comparison and analysis of the data. Each question in the questionnaire is supported by academic literature, ensuring that the questions are reliable and relevant for the purposes of this study. For this reason, several well-known authors in the field of multilingualism and hotel service management have been selected to support the questions. The collected data are focused on analyzing how multilingual skills impact the provision of quality services and the management of various situations with clients. Furthermore, two distribution formats were used for the questionnaires: via email and in physical form. This distribution method allowed for the inclusion of a wide and diverse group of participants, ensuring full representation of the hospitality sector from three Balkan countries: Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania. This approach has enabled the collection of data from a significant number of hospitality sector employees, who were asked about the importance of multilingualism in their work and its impact on service performance.

The following presents Table 1, which contains the questions directed to the interview participants, supported by relevant academic literature.

Table 1: Interview Questions and Theoretical Support from the Literature

Questions	Authors
Q1. Are multilingual skills important for providing quality service in the hospitality industry?	(Gouthier et al., 2012; Pace, 2015)
Q2. Communication with tourists who speak different languages is often a challenge for hospitality employees?	Kramsch, 1998; Leslie & Russell, 2006,
Q3. Knowledge of foreign languages directly contributes to improving the experience and satisfaction of customers?	(Manson et al., 2011)
Q4. My personal experience has shown that communication in foreign languages has helped in resolving issues with customers?	(Tziora et al., 2005)

Q5. Multilingualism is a necessary skill for improving relationships with customers and handling challenging situations?	(Šuljić Petrc et al., 2021)
Q6. The hospitality sector should recruit skilled and experienced individuals to provide quality service?	(Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015)
Q7. Working in a multicultural environment is important and helps in providing better services in the hospitality sector?	(Cenoz & Gorter, 2023)
Q8. Multilingualism can create opportunities for career advancement and professional development in the hospitality industry?	(Zehrer et al., 2014; Kaufman & Ricci, 2014)
Q9. Knowledge of multilingualism is a key factor in maintaining a hotel's competitiveness in the global market?	(Pace, 2015)
Q10. Multilingualism has a direct impact on improving the economic performance of the hotel and the quality of services provided?	(Torres & Kline, 2013; Akoumianakis, 2009)

Source: Author's

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 2. Socio-demographic variables

Socio-demographic variables	Category	N (179)
Gender	Male	92
	Female	87
Age	Less than 20 years	31
	21-30 years	57
	31-40 years	43
	More than 40	49
Educational status	Primary	22
	Secondary	67
	University	55
	Postgraduate	35

Work Experience	≤1 year	9
	1–3 years	25
	4–6 years	31
	7–9 years	44
	10–15 years	37
	≥16 years	33

Source: Author's

Table 2, presents the socio-demographic data of 179 interviewees in the hospitality sector in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania, categorized by gender, age, education level, and work experience. The sample includes a balanced gender distribution, with a higher concentration of employees in the age group of 21-30 years. The majority of participants have a secondary or higher education, while work experience ranges from less than one year to over 16 years, with a predominance of employees having 7-9 years of experience. These data indicate a diverse workforce with varying levels of experience, reflecting the development and dynamics of the hospitality sector in the region.

## 4.2 Results of the Statistical Analysis

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis regarding the perceptions of hospitality sector employees in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania, concerning the importance of multilingual skills for providing quality services. The analysis includes various measures such as the mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis, item-total correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. These parameters were used to assess the distribution of responses, the consistency of respondents' answers, and the reliability of the measurements. The results provide a comprehensive insight into the perceptions of employees in these three countries and the importance of developing multilingual skills in the hospitality industry.

Table 3: Employees' Perception of the Importance of Multilingualism in the Hospitality Sector in Kosovo

Variable	%					Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
	SD	D	N	A	SA							
Q1	4.5	13.4	17.9	28.4	35.8	3.7761	1.20379	1.449	-.681	-.565	.933	
Q2	3.0	6.0	4.5	22.4	64.2	4.3881	1.02920	1.059	-1.881	2.939	.974	
Q3	3.0	7.5	11.9	23.9	53.7	4.1791	1.09994	1.210	-1.283	.813	.974	
Q4	3.0	3.0	6.0	28.4	59.7	4.3881	.95275	.908	-1.944	3.896	.974	
Q5	0	1.5	9.0	29.9	59.7	4.4627	.78486	.616	-1.811	4.532	.951	
Q6	0	0	6.0	17.9	76.1	4.7015	.57774	.334	-1.821	2.345	.918	.973
Q7	3.0	1.5	4.5	34.3	56.7	4.4030	.88864	.790	-2.101	5.337	.950	
Q8	0	0	0	22.4	77.6	4.7761	.41999	.176	-1.355	-.169	.845	
Q9	1.5	3.0	3.0	28.4	64.2	4.5075	.82339	.678	-2.207	5.686	.954	
Q10	0	0	0	16.4	83.6	4.8358	.37323	.139	-1.855	1.484	.831	
SD: Strongly Disagree (1), D: Disagree (2), N: Neutral (3), A: Agree (4), SA: Strongly Agree (5)												

Source: Author's



The analysis results from Table 2, which include 69 employees from the hospitality sector in Kosovo, show strong consensus on the importance of multilingual skills in providing quality services. All questions have an average score above 3.7, indicating strong support for multilingualism. The overall average for all questions is high, ranging from 3.77 (Q1) to 4.84 (Q10), indicating strong consensus that multilingual skills are essential for providing quality services. The responses are very positive, as the majority of employees selected "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." The standard deviation is also notable, particularly for questions such as Q1 (1.20379) and Q10 (0.37323), which suggest a wide distribution of responses, but without significant deviations from the mean. The negative skewness for most of the questions, such as Q10 (skewness = -1.855) and Q9 (skewness = -2.207), indicates that the responses are concentrated towards the more positive values of the scale, with more employees agreeing on the importance of multilingualism. High kurtosis in some questions (such as Q9 and Q7) indicates that the responses are more concentrated around the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" options, reflecting a strong consensus among the employees. The Item-Total Correlation coefficient is high for all questions, indicating that the questions are strongly related to the overall measurement of the perception of the importance of multilingualism. Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.9 (0.973), suggesting excellent reliability and high consistency in measuring employees' perceptions. This high level of reliability and consistency confirms that the questions are appropriate and the measurements are trustworthy in reflecting employees' perceptions. The analysis results suggest broad support for multilingual skills as a key component in providing quality services in the hospitality sector in Kosovo. The majority of employees are aware of the importance of multilingualism and believe that this factor is crucial for attracting tourists and improving the quality of services.

Table 4: Employees' Perception of the Importance of Multilingualism in the Hospitality Sector in Montenegro.

Variable	%					Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
	SD	D	N	A	SA							
Q1	0	0	0	32.1	67.9	4.6792	.47123	.222	-.791	-1.430	.825	
Q2	0	0	3.8	20.8	75.5	4.7170	.53268	.284	-1.755	2.327	.942	
Q3	0	0	0	17.0	83.0	4.8302	.37906	.144	-1.810	1.326	.921	
Q4	0	0	0	28.3	71.7	4.7170	.45478	.207	-.992	-1.058	.877	
Q5	0	0	0	9.4	90.6	4.9057	.29510	.087	-2.857	6.404	.787	.957
Q6	0	0	0	22.6	77.4	4.7736	.42252	.179	-1.346	-.198	.926	
Q7	0	0	0	18.9	81.1	4.8113	.39500	.156	-1.638	.709	.929	
Q8	0	0	0	9.4	90.6	4.9057	.29510	.087	-2.857	6.404	.787	
Q9	0	0	0	17.0	83.0	4.8302	.37906	.144	-1.810	1.326	.921	
Q10	0	0	0	5.7	94.3	4.9434	.23330	.054	-3.950	14.137	.646	
SD: Strongly Disagree (1), D: Disagree (2), N: Neutral (3), A: Agree (4), SA: Strongly Agree (5)												

Source: Author's

The results of the analysis on the perception of multilingualism in the hospitality sector in Montenegro, presented in Table 3, show strong support for the importance of multilingual skills in providing quality services. All questions have a high average, above 4, reflecting a clear positive trend in employees' perception. The average for all questions is above 4.6, with Q10 (4.94) having the highest rating and Q1 (4.68) as the question with the lowest average, yet still remaining at high levels. The standard deviation is also low for most of the questions, particularly for Q10 (0.23) and Q5 (0.30), indicating a high level of unanimity in the responses, meaning a similar opinion among the participants. Negative skewness (with values such as -3.95 for Q10) suggests that the responses are more concentrated around the higher values, with a tendency to strongly support the importance of multilingual skills. Furthermore, the high kurtosis in some questions (such as Q5 and Q10) indicates a concentration of responses around the more positive options, emphasizing the consensus regarding the value of multilingualism. The Item-Total Correlation coefficient is high for all questions, indicating that each question has a strong relationship with the overall score, meaning that the questions are well-connected and measure a common dimension. Cronbach's Alpha, which is above 0.9 for all questions, indicates excellent reliability of the measurements and high consistency in the responses. These results highlight the importance of multilingualism in providing quality services in the hospitality sector in Montenegro.

Table 5: Employees' Perception of the Importance of Multilingualism in the Hospitality Sector in Albania.

Variable	%					Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
	SD	D	N	A	SA							
Q1	0	0	10.2	16.9	72.9	4.6271	.66691	.445	-1.569	1.133	.948	.960
Q2	0	0	1.7	10.2	88.1	4.8644	.39206	.154	-3.028	9.342	.894	
Q3	0	0	0	5.1	94.9	4.9492	.22157	.049	-4.196	16.157	.763	
Q4	0	0	6.8	13.6	79.7	4.7288	.58222	.339	-2.064	3.202	.956	
Q5	0	0	0	5.1	94.9	4.9492	.22157	.049	-4.196	16.157	.763	
Q6	0	0	3.4	27.1	69.5	4.6610	.54489	.297	-1.345	.921	.872	
Q7	0	0	6.8	20.3	72.9	4.6610	.60487	.366	-1.623	1.596	.947	
Q8	0	0	1.7	8.5	89.8	4.8814	.37530	.141	-3.374	11.831	.878	
Q9	0	0	5.1	15.3	79.7	4.7458	.54435	.296	-2.094	3.556	.953	
Q10	0	0	0	11.9	88.1	4.8814	.32614	.106	-2.421	3.994	.880	
SD: Strongly Disagree (1), D: Disagree (2), N: Neutral (3), A: Agree (4), SA: Strongly Agree (5)												

Source: Author's calculation.

The results of the analysis on the perception of multilingualism in the hospitality sector in Albania, presented in Table 4, show strong support for the importance of multilingual skills in providing quality services. All questions have a high average, above 4.6, reflecting a strong consensus regarding the benefits of multilingualism. The overall average for all questions is above 4.6, with question Q3 having the highest average (4.95) and question Q1 having the lowest rating (4.63), but still remaining at very high levels. The standard deviation is relatively low, especially for questions Q3 (0.22), Q5 (0.22), and Q10 (0.33), suggesting a high concentration of responses at the higher values and a strong consensus on the importance of multilingualism. The negative skewness for most questions, such as Q3 (skewness = -4.196) and Q5 (skewness = -4.196), indicates that the responses are concentrated at the higher end of the scale, emphasizing widespread support for multilingual skills. High kurtosis in some questions (such as Q3 and Q5) suggests that responses are clustered around the more positive options, giving more weight to support for multilingualism. The Item-Total Correlation coefficient is high for all questions, indicating a strong relationship between the questions and the overall measurement. Cronbach's Alpha is also high, reaching 0.96, which demonstrates excellent reliability and high consistency in the responses, providing strong credibility to the data. The results suggest that employees in the hospitality sector in Albania have a very positive perception of the importance of multilingualism in providing quality services.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results of this study is based on the perceptions of hospitality sector employees in three different countries (Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia), as well as support from various authors' literature addressing the importance of multilingualism in the hospitality industry. The results of the questionnaire analyses have shown that employees largely agree on the importance of multilingual skills for providing quality services and improving the performance of the hospitality sector. The employees' responses show a clear consensus on the importance of communication in different languages to manage customer relationships and enhance their experience. This stance is supported by previous studies such as those by Gouthier et al. (2012) and Pace (2015), which emphasize that language skills are essential for quality service and customer satisfaction. Additionally, employees' perceptions regarding communication with tourists who speak different languages reflect the challenges they face in their efforts to provide effective services. This fact is supported by other authors such as Kramsch (1998) and Leslie &

Russell (2006), who discuss the difficulties that arise when employees need to communicate with individuals from different cultures and languages. Another important result observed is that hospitality employees mentioned that the use of foreign languages helps in resolving issues with customers, which aligns with the findings of Tziora et al. (2005). These results suggest that multilingualism is an important and necessary skill for managing problematic situations and improving relationships with customers. Furthermore, hospitality employees are aware that multilingual skills can create opportunities for professional advancement and career development, as highlighted by authors such as Zehrer et al. (2014) and Kaufman & Ricci (2014). They also agree that the hospitality sector should recruit skilled and experienced individuals to provide quality services, an idea supported by Bellou & Chatzinikou (2015). In conclusion, the perceptions of hospitality employees and the statistical analyses show that multilingualism has a direct impact on economic performance and service quality in this industry, supporting the findings of other authors such as Torres & Kline (2013) and Akoumianakis (2009), who argue that multilingualism is a key factor in maintaining competitiveness and ensuring the long-term success of the hospitality industry.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the perceptions of hospitality sector employees regarding the importance of multilingual skills and their impact on providing quality services. The results of the questionnaire analyses administered in three countries, Kosovo, Albania, and Montenegro show broad consensus among employees, who consider multilingualism an essential skill for success in the hospitality sector. Employees have emphasized that knowledge of foreign languages contributes to improving services, increasing customer satisfaction, and facilitating communication in a multicultural environment. Additionally, they have highlighted that multilingual skills are necessary for managing problematic situations and creating opportunities for professional advancement. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that multilingualism is a key component for the success of the hospitality industry and provides opportunities for improving service quality. Employees who possess multilingual skills are better equipped to handle the challenges that come with the dynamic tourism environment and provide high-level services to customers. This result suggests that the hospitality sector should invest more in developing the multilingual skills of its employees to cope with the challenges of an ever-changing environment and to maintain competitiveness in the global market.

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KOMUNIKACIJI I UNAPREĐENJU  
USLUGA U UGOSTITELJSTVU**

Ova studija istražuje uticaj višejezične komunikacije na upravljanje ugostiteljskim uslugama i poboljšanje kvaliteta u hotelskoj industriji. Višejezičnost igra ključnu ulogu u poboljšanju kvaliteta usluge i iskustva korisnika olakšavajući efikasnu komunikaciju sa međunarodnim klijentima i poboljšavajući efikasnost usluga. Sposobnost komunikacije na više jezika doprinosi stvaranju prijatnijeg okruženja za turiste i jača interkulture interakcije. Usvojen je kvantitativni istraživački pristup, koristeći upitnike za prikupljanje podataka. Ukupno 179 upitnika distribuirano je zaposlenima u sektoru ugostiteljstva u tri balkanske zemlje: Kosovo, Crna Gora i Albanija, koji su intervjuisani o svojim percepcijama. Analiza podataka izvršena je korišćenjem SPSS softvera kako bi se procenile percepcije zaposlenih o uticaju višejezičnosti na upravljanje uslugama i poboljšanje kvaliteta. Rezultati otkrivaju da zaposleni u ugostiteljstvu višejezičnost smatraju ključnim faktorom za poboljšanje kvaliteta usluge i zadovoljstva korisnika. Poznavanje više jezika optimizuje komunikaciju i doprinosi većoj efikasnosti usluge. Štaviše, rezultati naglašavaju značajnu ulogu višejezičnosti u poboljšanju usluga i podsticanju efikasne interkulture komunikacije, što na kraju povećava ukupnu efikasnost sektora ugostiteljstva.

Ključne reči: Višejezičnost, hotelske usluge, zaposleni, interkulture komunikacija.