This paper deals with the politeness strategies potential in subject specific fields and highlights the role of learning politeness strategies as a powerful cognitive tool fundamental to further enhancing the second language learner’s ability to cope with this specialized verbal characteristic in hospitality industry discourse. The paper explores the close interplay between social (extra-linguistic) and structural (linguistic) factors shaping the linguistic idiosyncrasies of English and Macedonian politeness strategies in hospitality industry discourse.

It has been argued that the awareness of cross-cultural differences concerning politeness strategies may be exploited as a valuable teaching resource for classroom interaction.

**Key words:** politeness strategies, communicative competence, specialized discourse.

**Introduction**

Many hospitality training programs available nowadays to advanced students in ESP courses focus on culture and cross-cultural communication skills. The context of culture is an important frame within we interpret the reality and organize our experience. Katan (1999:17), emphasizes that culture maybe viewed as a commonly shared mental model or map of the world consisting of beliefs, values and cognitive environments which affect the behavior and identify individual persons. Cross-cultural understanding is of considerably great importance when ESP courses are taught. It has been widely recognized that moving across cultures actually means communicating not only with foreign visitors but also dealing with foreign social and cultural systems. Functioning successfully in academic, business or other professional settings always understands adjustment to cultural variations in social relationships.

In the hospitality industry, human resources represent an agent of the uttermost importance. Education for the hospitality industry, further upgrading, professionalism, together with a change of the mentality in the service encounter i.e. communication culture, assume an exceptional significance within quality standards improving strategies. Future hospitality
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industry employees, represent the base for a further development in tourism - a complex phenomenon requiring an interdisciplinary approach towards professional training. ESP students being professionally trained should gradually become aware of strong relationship that exists between linguistic communication and culture and realize that social behavior depends on socially prescribed norms which differ from one country to another.

According to Prichard, (2000:239), the ultimate goal of ESP professionals is to ensure pragmatic success in communication. In developing awareness of the needs and concerns of ESP students, teachers should consider teaching matters beyond teaching the language. The author is definite that the answer is clearly affirmative because most tourism and hospitality English courses, especially those designed for advanced learners, often focus on such areas as polite requests, apologies, expressing regrets, etc. In these areas behavioral strategies and techniques play important role.
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Students should be made aware of socio-cultural contexts in which communication occurs, culturally-influenced behavior, the impact of different cultures on their languages. Therefore, cultural awareness raising and cultural instruction should play an important role in advanced ESP courses. No one involved in teaching ESP is likely to argue for cross-cultural understanding and multicultural diversity, but some may question the relative emphasis to be given to cross-cultural as opposed to target or local culture components in course design. The main teaching/learning aim should be mastering spoken communication, as tourism is actually a human exchange in which it is extremely important to communicate respecting and understanding the tourists’ different cultural values in order to create reliability and trust.

One of the most important task in the ESP teaching process is the students’ cross-cultural awareness. Foreign language teachers should bear in mind that they are actually teaching operators in direct contact with customers a very complex art of how to “manage, interact, negotiate and compromise with people of different culture backgrounds and at different levels of communication. “(Yu, 1999)

**Cross-cultural Aspects in Verbal Communication**

Wierzbicka, (1985:145-178) believes that different cultures find expression in different systems of speech acts, and that different speech acts become entrenched, and to some extent, codified in different languages. Thus, in interpersonal communication where English is used as a means for transmitting the message, there are cultural differences with respect to how and what type of directness is expected from participants in a particular situation. Failure to anticipate the communication, a problem may occur in unwilling social incidents which may leave native speakers of English hurt and offended. For instance, the English use of the imperative is mostly used in commands and orders, instructions and directness for the benefit of the addressee, which implies that there is a heavy restrictions on the use of the imperative in English. Katan (1999:215-221) notes that “…..the imperative is a sign of extreme urgency or lack of politeness.”
Macedonian politeness strategies are not alone among European languages in differing from English in this sense. According to Wierzbicka (1985), these differences in the degree of directness …would also apply to Russian, Serbian, Croatian, Spanish and many other languages. It is English which seems to have a particularly rich system of devices reflecting a characteristically Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition.

Consequently the speech act Book a double room will need further ‘softening’. While the possible context-bound variants of this request in Macedonian would be Ќе ве молам да резервирате една двокреветна соба, Можам ли да ве замолам да резервирате една двокреветна соба, the English language offers a wide range of lexical and grammatical options depending on the learner’s awareness of the degree of indirectness required:

Can/could you book a double room, please?
book a double room?
I was wondering if I could ask you to book a double room?
I wonder if I could ask you to book a double room?
Do you think I could possibly ask you to book a double room?
If it’s not too much trouble, do you think I could ask you to book a double room?
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The mechanisms the English use to express their feelings, opinions or ideas is acquired at very early age. Therefore, students of English should learn how to deal effectively with this typically English rich system of devices reflecting their cultural tradition which tolerates individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, which respects everyone’s privacy.

Goodale (1987) identifies lexico-grammatical devices that can be used to convert direct statements into culturally appropriate tactful messages. He notes, for instance that the dogmatic tone of many statements can be cushioned by simply adding I’m afraid, to make clear that you recognize the unhelpfulness of one’s response or comment. Thus, introductory phrases such as To be honest ..., or Frankly... may be used to warn the listener that disagreement follows, while the grammatical negative not used with a positive word, for instance, not very comfortable instead of the obvious negative counterpart uncomfortable, makes any suggestion more open and negotiable.

According to Wierzbicka (in Katan, 1999:215), the English indirectness seems to be “related to core English values of freedom, respect for privacy, principles of negative politeness and not wishing to impose.” Thus, EFL students should be strongly advised to avoid direct contradictions and learn to split direct disagreement into stages, although this might not be the way they map the various options when using their mother tongue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Possible options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting a conversation</td>
<td>I wonder if I could book an all inclusive tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’d like to book an all inclusive tour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for understanding</td>
<td>Did you say something about ….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could you possibly repeat ….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing tactful redirecting</td>
<td>Isn’t there any other tour you would like to book,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>madam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why don’t you have a look at our promotional brochure first?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering</td>
<td>We could offer much better arrangement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the often used communicative mechanism in hospitality industry are requests. Requests can be realized with a variety of constructions. In Macedonian three moods can be distinguished: indicative, subjunctive and imperative. Depending on the context all three moods can be used in expressing requests. As morphologically rich and at the same time being functionally flexible, imperative mood is very often used for everyday requests in Macedonian, for instance: резервирајте ми за четири особи една маса до прозорец; (Make a reservation for four by the window). Subjunctive interrogatives are also used for requests as they make it easier for the addressee to provide a negative response. For example, Кога би можеле да не сместите во поубавиот хотел; (If you could possibly accommodated us in the more beautiful hotel?). Within hospitality discourse, subjunctive interrogatives occur in both formal and informal contexts when there is high level of cooperation. A common everyday conversational means of requesting in Macedonian is the present indicative interrogative as in Ќе одиме на разгледување на градот; (Do [can] we go city sightseeing? A possible explanation for this use is that the present indicative interrogative expresses a degree of certainty and present reality, whereas subjunctive and modals express uncertainty and distance. For contrast, in English, imperatives are considered the least polite constructions when compared to declaratives and interrogatives. (Leech, 1983:119).

One of the most common mitigating devices used with requests in Macedonian hospitality discourse is the use of diminutives. Diminutives are formed by adding special suffixes (e.g.—енце, -ичко,-елценце, --уле) to nouns and adjectives (e.g. хотел [hotel] / хотел-че [hotel.dim]. Multiple suffixation is also possible (e.g. кафуле [café] / кафулченце [café.dim+dim]). Even though their prototypical function is to indicate smallness, diminutives in hospitality settings are used extensively to indicate affection, endearment and informality. This is especially the case in restaurants where it is not uncommon to hear people asking for or offering сиренце (cheese.dim), винце (wine.dim), пржени компирчиња (fried potatoes. dim) etc. Speakers may freely decide whether to use diminutives or not and use them only in relatively informal contexts. (Terkourafi, 2004:266). It seems as if the diminutive strategies in hospitality discourse were developed for the purposes of expressing informal, positive politeness.
Intercultural Communicative Competence

So far, in the analysis of the speech acts in the hospitality discourse the stress was put basically on the Anglo-American cultural values, which are reflected through the English language. This should not lead to a conclusion that the speech acts in L1 reflect certain cultural values, whereas the speech acts realized in the L2 reflect only the absence of these values. It is completely understood that the speech acts completely reflect those values that are a characteristic of the L2. For instance, the speakers of English may think that the speakers of Macedonian through the way they communicate reflect dogmatism, insufficient interest for their interlocutors in the speech interactions, inflexibility even a tendency to be too indiscreet, curious, etc. On the other hand, having in mind the speech acts of the speakers of English, the speech acts used by the speakers of Macedonian can be defined of missing cordiality, spontaneity, and directness.

As for the differences in the speech acts in both compared cultures the analysis show that even though there exist literature on speech acts where English communicative strategies are often interpreted as manifestation of universal natural logic, or a universal logic of conversation (Gordon and Lakoff, 1975) the analysis have shown that such certifications are too ethnocentric. The specific speech acts in English which are pointed out to universal principles in expressing politeness, have shown to be linguistically and culturally specific. In the English language there are no universal rules of politeness, nor specific rules of politeness when communicating with a guest, but rather there is a difference between communicative strategies in the English language and the reflected cultural values in it.

The hospitality industry with its specific services is an arena of cultural clichés and cultural misunderstandings. It is of great importance to know the cultural norms and the language used by the hospitality personnel when communicating with foreign guest. However, if the attitudes in the speech acts of the native speakers of English reflect what is ‘normal’, natural’, are widely accepted, a successful intercultural communication among the speakers of different cultures cannot be realized. If a speaker of Macedonian tries to use simple imperative constructions in the English language will be marked as impolite and rough.
communicator. The same speaker may be defined as uncooperative and insufficiently intelligent when not being able to offer a reply to a well elaborated indirect addressing by the speakers of English. On the other hand, too loud expression of emotions for instance, when a customer is complaining or the use of direct forms of address, for the speakers of English can be considered as insulting and irritating.

It is obvious that future challenges in hospitality education are calling for re-examining the methodology of teaching intercultural communication. According to Hymes, (1964) the ability to understand the speakers who come from different national cultures does not rely only on communicative competence but on the consciousness that the cultural meanings and values incorporated in the foreign language are specific for each national culture.

Hospitality students who learn foreign languages should become aware of learning how to understand the cultural differences and cultural relativity. Learning foreign language begins with a change towards applying the intercultural communicative competence. The cultural mirrors of the source culture and culture – target which are incorporated in the speech acts can offer great contribution not only in the methodology of foreign language learning but for the participants themselves in the hospitality industry.
Conclusion

The differences in the realization in the speech acts in the category of polite requests reflect the connection with the different ways of evaluation cultural values in both cultures such as cordiality, hospitality, spontaneity, directness, intimacy and affection in contrast to indirectness, distance, tolerance and antidogmatism, individualism, which as such are reflected in the hospitality discourse.

Globally, this is a reflection of the Anglo-Saxon social matrix in contrast to the Byzantine social matrix. On the one hand, the English language and culture come from a long-time existing capitalist society, in comparison to the Macedonian language and culture upon which the long years of socialist system of existing left traces. The differences in the speech acts in the hospitality discourse in English and Macedonian are due to the fact that the cultural systems of both languages are organized differently which means there are differences in the cultural norms and cultural assumptions, and the social mechanisms of competence appear to be culturally specific.

Speakers of a given culture very often and much more are exposed to the influence of a foreign culture and ever since before, as a result of the demand of their profession or as a result of the socio-economic makes which contribute towards the ethic profile of a country being quite picturesque. In that colourful field of different cultures, traditions, languages and dialects, insufficiently informed person can very often experience a cultural shock, thus confronting diverse influences on a daily basis. Therefore, the systematic study of the cultural phenomenon in general and specially studying the specific a nation’s cultural conventions the guests encounter becomes an integral part of the modern educational system. The information offered through this approach offers better penetration in one’s own culture. The importance of multiculturalism is seen in overcoming the ethnocentrism which is a needed precondition for living in a multinational and multicultural society.
In the area of cross-cultural encounters misinterpretation of politeness strategies may occur if cultural variables are not respected. EFL learners, especially those pursuing advanced courses should be taught to develop ‘sensitivity’ when using English as a means of communication. In the light of these cross-cultural considerations, there is a pressure on the ESP teachers to include cultural information in their courses so that students can have proper functioning in professional settings.

References


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Summary

This paper deals with the politeness strategies potential in subject specific fields and highlights the role of learning politeness strategies as a powerful cognitive tool fundamental to further enhancing the second language learner’s ability to cope with this specialized verbal characteristic in hospitality industry discourse. A number of authors have contributed towards this exceedingly diverse and complex phenomena. (Brown and Levinson’s 1978/1987, Watts et al., 1992, Kasper, 1997). The paper explores the close interplay between social (extra-linguistic) and structural (linguistic) factors shaping the linguistic idiosyncrasies of English and Macedonian politeness strategies in hospitality industry discourse.

The analysis showed that there is an extensive use of derivational diminutives in Macedonian communicative strategies as a tool to express the politeness of involvement, especially in hospitality situations as offering coffee, food. English strategies form this domain mostly rely on indirectness and usage of mechanisms for expressing indirect requests.

It has been argued that the awareness of cross-cultural differences concerning politeness strategies may be exploited as a valuable teaching resource for classroom interaction and as a springboard for further enhancing of the adult learners’ communicative competence in subject specific fields.