

A comunicação como competência fundamental no setor do turismo e da hospitalidade

Rasa Jodienė - Utena Higher Education Institution, Lithuania

Interviewer: Gorete Dinis



Could you share a bit about your background and teaching experience, and explain how you became interested in studying communication within this field?

My educational background is in linguistics and education – I have a Master degree in Teaching English from Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and a Master degree in Educational Sciences from Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania.

I am currently teaching English for Specific Purposes - Business English and Intercultural Communication in Hospitality – to local and foreign students, at Utenos Kolegija [Utena Higher Education Institution] in Lithuania.

I am a teacher from Generation X teaching students from Generation Z – which is very challenging. My 34 years of teaching experience, mostly in tertiary education, allow me to understand what barriers and fears students face in foreign language interactions and find tools to guide them through.

At the moment I am interested in foreign language teaching digitization.

By being involved in many national and transnational projects, I have learned a lot of different things, met interesting people and have been to many foreign countries. I love watching and observing. Speaking to people, travelling and learning about countries and cultures have always been the most interesting activities for me. I learned in practice how important communication is or lack of it. Teaching tourism and hospitality students focused on communication is very rewarding.

In your view, why is communication considered a fundamental skill in the hospitality and tourism sector?

Any segment of this industry – providing food, lodging and recreation, planning and managing events, arranging travel and tours, relies on effective communication since each of them deals with information. Information to be delivered, received, or processed. The effectiveness and smoothness of these processes create certain experiences for customers and retain the good reputation of the provider. If it is excellent, a customer will return or will recommend the place to others. Hospitality means personality.

What are the key communication skills that hospitality professionals should possess to excel in their roles?

Contemporary studies indicate and researchers highlight a great variety of skills, but we can identify some of them which appear repeatedly in various studies: active listening, empathy, emotional intelligence, multitasking, teamwork, digital and technology skills, clear verbal and nonverbal communication, conflict resolution, awareness of and respect for cultural differences.

How does the cultural and social context of Lithuania or Portugal influence communication practices in the hospitality industry, and are there any unique challenges or advantages?

Cultural and social aspects of any country are very important in communication because different stereotypes, traditions, behavioural norms and beliefs can shape communication. In the tourism and hospitality sector, they are particularly important because social and cultural diversity is guaranteed. Both of them must be understood and respected.

How do you think the tourism course outlined in your country or Portugal can be improved to better equip students with these key communication skills?

Each country and each higher education institution has specific guidelines for programme structure, content and implementation. I cannot speak for all the higher education institutions in Lithuania that offer tourism or hospitality studies, nor am I familiar in detail with the programmes in Portugal. However, I think that even in a traditional curriculum structure, where communication or language (including foreign language) teaching subjects are included, there are ways of developing communication skills. Interdisciplinarity is one such way, with several subjects working towards the same learning outcome. Since communication channels are diverse (not only human beings and their speaking and writing), teaching digital and technological literacy can also focus on and address how to communicate properly through such channels. The purpose of communication is also important - it is possible to provide information to a customer not just to inform them, but to do so for marketing purposes for instance. In this case,

the subject of marketing can also teach certain communication skills in its framework. We offer a study programme *Management of Tourism Services* where there is a considerable emphasis on communication skills – there are 2 foreign languages in addition to business language, Psychology of Communication, Intercultural Communication and Negotiations.

How do you foresee the role of communication evolving in the hospitality industry over the next decade, particularly in response to globalization and technological advancements?

The hospitality industry like any other industry will inevitably be affected by AI or AI-powered tools. With its help hospitality service providers will be able to analyse the preferences of customers, so service and communication may become more personalised, or even anticipated. The professionals in the industry will have to manage versatile communication channels from e-mails to various apps, as well as real-time interactions and not necessarily face-to-face. Globalisation will increase the diversity of clientele multilingualism will be in demand much more, and communication strategies will have to be culturally sensitive.

What emerging trends or technologies do you believe will most significantly impact communication in hospitality, and how should professionals prepare for these changes?

World Economic Forum (WEF, 2023) says that the green transition, technological change, supply chain transformation and changing consumer expectations are driving the need for new jobs across industries and regions. New types of jobs will require professionals with the appropriate competencies. The WEF list of essential skills, which includes 26 skills, mentions multilingualism alongside technological literacy and knowledge of artificial intelligence, perhaps the most valued skills. The solution to get ready for all these changes is to learn, be trained, be educated, be curious, take risks and extra effort to master new skills. For instance, the last project I took part in alongside with a group of talented people from several countries was to create several modules to teach English and German in a mixed and augmented reality! It is the same as in the hospitality industry: first come, first serve!

Sobre a entrevistada:

Nota biográfica da autora:

The educational background - Master's degree in teaching English and Master's degree in Education Sciences.

I am currently teaching local and foreign students at Utenos Kolegija [Utena Higher Education Institution] in Lithuania. I am teaching English for Specific Purposes; Business English and Intercultural Communication in Hospitality.

I am a teacher from Generation X teaching students from Generation Z – which is very challenging. My 34 years of teaching experience allow me to understand what barriers and fears students face in foreign language interactions and find tools to guide them through.

At the moment I am interested in foreign language teaching digitization.

website da instituição e email da autora:

<https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/>

jodiene.rasa@gmail.com