

# The Language of Tourism and Hospitality:

## An Exploration of Intercultural Communication Issues in Hotels in the Netherlands



**S.P.M. van Tuijl, 3406725**

**English Language and Culture – MA Intercultural Communication**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**Department of English Language and Culture**

**Utrecht University**

**First Supervisor: Dr. W.Z. van den Doel**

**Second Supervisor: Dr. R.G.J.L. Supheert**

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in the Netherlands**

**Sanne van Tuijl**

**3406725**

## i. Summary

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This exploratory investigation has been based on research by Blue and Harun (2003), in which cross-cultural communication in the hospitality sector and the language associated with host-guest interactions was investigated. Other studies were used to give a complete overview of the relationship between tourism and language. In addition, relevant literature concerning effective intercultural communication training methods for this field of work was included. Taking all literature into account, this exploratory study employed examples taken of interviews conducted with hotel staff in the Netherlands, a web search on Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com, and questionnaires distributed among Chinese and German tourists.

The growing number of tourists, especially German and Chinese, coming to the Netherlands has formed the basis for this exploratory study. These tourists stay overnight in hotels, Bed & Breakfasts, hostels, or any other type of accommodation. Even though the Netherlands is a popular destination, research suggested that this country is home to the poorest hotel in the world in terms of service and communication skills. This suggests that hotel staff might need to become aware of different cultures, how to communicate effectively, and how to raise the level of hospitality towards foreign guests. Consequently, the main objective of this investigative study focuses on the fact that the language of hospitality is an important aspect in the field of tourism, especially in the hotel sector, as hotel staff is in daily contact with guests from all over the world. Hence, people working in this field of business should learn about cultural differences. To become interculturally competent, it might be a good solution to provide intercultural communication training programmes for hotel staff in the Netherlands. In addition to the main objective, several hypotheses were formulated which were concerned with the use of English by hotel staff and guests, as well as with the (dis)advantages of intercultural communication training programmes.

The subsequent chapter discussed the relevant literature used for this thesis. All sources found for this study were analysed and compared. In addition to Blue and Harun's (2003) study, Spradley (1979) provided helpful guidelines and tools for conducting ethnographic interviews, and how to ask descriptive questions to obtain valuable information. Additionally, Cohen and Cooper (1986) and Huisman and Moore (1999) conducted research on the relationship existing between language and tourism. They showed the effect both elements have on each other. This exploratory study builds on that in an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between tourism and language. In addition, Ottenbacher, Harrington, and Parsa (2009) described the notion of hospitality, which proved to be a starting point for further research. Furthermore, Korhonen (2010) and Fowler and Blohm (2004) described the pros and cons of several intercultural communication training methods to develop interculturally effective individuals. Last but not least, characteristics of both Chinese and German cultures were analysed, as these were the target group for the questionnaires.

Chapters 3 and 4 dealt with the different methods and designs of research used for this thesis. The present study commenced with a pilot interview, after which the questions were rearranged and rephrased and two additional interviews were conducted. The interviews dealt with critical incidents, the use of foreign languages, and communication issues within the hotels. The outcome of these interviews served as the basis upon which the questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire included issues concerning the use of English by the hotel staff, miscommunications, and application of other methods when using Dutch or English is not an option. A web search was set up to obtain additional information regarding language and communication issues. All methods were meant to contribute to

this exploratory study and were used to find out whether an intercultural communication training programme was needed.

The findings, in the subsequent chapter, suggested that most informants from the interviews felt there is no particular need for any intercultural communication training, since they never experienced any difficulties in communication in international encounters. However, they did have a tendency to make sweeping statements concerning particular cultures, which suggested they are not always culturally aware or sensitive. Similarly, they did not feel the need to learn additional languages, as they can manage in English and Dutch; nonetheless, the results of the questionnaire show that both Chinese and German tourists would use their own mother tongue when English or Dutch are not an option. According to the results of the questionnaire, guests expect hotel staff to learn other languages to communicate successfully with people from a variety of cultures. The web search also suggested underlying issues regarding communication styles and the use of foreign languages by hotel staff, which indicated the hotel industry might benefit from intercultural training.

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations to this study. The results showed that although most informants claimed there is no need for an intercultural communication training programme, the web search and the results of the questionnaires presented some underlying issues which should be taken into account. It was difficult to draw detailed conclusions, as the study was meant as a mere exploration. However, some general conclusions could be extracted, namely that hotel staff should focus on individual travellers without making generalising statements. In addition, awareness about cultural differences should be raised. Hotel staff might be trained to learn other languages in addition to Dutch and English, such as the fundamentals of Chinese, and German. Moreover, it is hoped that the findings of this study will shed some light on particular language issues that may be present in international encounters, and the possible communication difficulties which could have arisen between intercultural interlocutors. Further research into this topic should include additional informants from several hotels throughout the Netherlands. Due to the limited amount of time and the unwillingness of hotel managers to participate in research, this thesis only included three interviews. However, to create a better insight into the use of communication strategies and the use of the English language by hotel staff, it is advisable to include more participants. The same accounts for the questionnaire: distributing these among more Chinese and German respondents could contribute to a better understanding of their requirements, which could benefit further research.

All in all, this study has proved to be an exploratory study, in which no generalising statements could be made. In addition, all results and conclusions are only applicable to the hotels and target groups included in this thesis. The most important recommendation includes a narrowed down research question and subsequent hypotheses to contribute to more specific results and conclusions.

## ii. Acknowledgments

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I hereby present you with my thesis for the Master programme Intercultural Communication taken at Utrecht University, with the English language and culture specialisation. This thesis would not have been possible without the help of a large number of people. I was dependent on the willingness of hotel staff to participate in my interviews, on tourists who I needed to fill out my questionnaire, and on people to distribute my questionnaire via several social media sources and email to obtain more valuable data. Hence, I would like to express my gratitude to all participants to this study: the informants for the interviews, the Chinese and German tourists who filled in the questionnaire, and all people who have helped me in finding German respondents by sharing my questionnaire with their friends, colleagues, and relatives in Germany. All these people have been a major contributor in successfully finalising this Master thesis; it would have been extremely difficult to collect all the data without their help.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

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### 1.1 Topic Description and Impetus

It was announced in April 2013 that the Grand Central Hotel in Rotterdam received the dubious honour of being the worst hotel in the Netherlands. The claim was based on a study of review websites where tourists can voice their opinion about hotels, Bed & Breakfasts, hostels, etc. around the world. The ratings given and comments made by guests staying in this hotel showed that out of 196 reviewers almost 40 per cent (72 people) rate this hotel as terrible, while only 2 per cent (5 people) rate this hotel as excellent. Table 1 displays a selected number of comments guests made after visiting this hotel with regard to the use of language by the hotel staff and their attitude towards the guests.

C1: I never write these reviews but this hotel is so bad I want to warn people against it. It is very much run down and filthy. *But the worst part is actually the staff; they are very unfriendly and rude. Have never experienced such treatment in a hotel* and I stay in hotels all the year round [sic]<sup>1</sup>

C2: This was the worst hotel we have ever stayed in. It was dirty and *the staff were unhelpful.* (UK)

C3: There were 2 chinese cleaners who went round with an ancient vaccum cleaner and a bucket of dirty water ??? *they couldnt speak Dutch or English* [sic] (UK)

C4: *The staff do not speak Dutch!* (NL)<sup>2</sup>

C5: and the lady at the front desk, probably the owner, *has a certain air of arrogance* (IT)<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Selected guest comments from Tripadvisor.nl on the service provided by the Grand Central Hotel in Rotterdam. Comments on the use of language and communication by the hotel staff have been italicised.

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<sup>1</sup> Guests who comment and rate hotels on *Tripadvisor.nl* are not obliged to state their name or their country of origin. This comment was posted anonymously, without stating any country of origin.

<sup>2</sup> Author's translation of the original "Het personeel spreekt geen Nederlands."

<sup>3</sup> Author's translation of the original "e la signora alla reception, probabilmente la proprietaria ha dimostrato una certa arroganza."



The reviewers were anonymised; however, all reviews and comments can be found on the Internet. Hence, information concerning country of origin was retained to show that language and communication difficulties might be key issues to which guests pay the most attention and which afford hotel managers ample scope for improvement.

In addition, the Netherlands is also home to the worst hotel in the world, which is located in Amsterdam, and has the reputation of being the foulest accommodation to stay overnight around the globe. It would be expected that this hotel is also the worst one in the Netherlands; however, research suggested this is not the case. According to *Algemeen Dagblad*, the management of the Hans de Brinker Budget Hotel are proud of this dubious achievement, and even advertise it (AD, par.1). Furthermore, the *Daily Mail* reported on this hotel by stating that the owner is delighted his hotel has this status, since backpackers from all over the world are fighting for a room. (Mail Online, par.1). One would expect extremely negative comments and reviews concerning this hotel; however, out of 278 reviews, 39 people (14 per cent) rate this hotel as excellent, while 47 people (18 per cent) rate it as terrible. These numbers show there is only a minor difference in the way people review their stay in, apparently, the worst hotel in the world.

C6: I wanted to eat breakfast but *the people who work there are so unfriendly and can't speak English.* (sic) (United Kingdom)

C7: when we went to the counter we thought that we could get bacon and sausage, *no! the woman shouted at us to go round the corner for our breakfast!* (United Kingdom)

C8: The worst place you could ever stay at, and they are actually proud of it! (United Kingdom)

C9: "Morning" I say.

"We are changing shifts right now and so would you mind going into the dining room and coming back in 5 minutes", was the reply.

"No problem, I'm not in a hurry but if it's all the same I'll just wait here at reception"

"*NO, we find it IRRITATING for people to wait at reception while we're busy.*"

IRRITATING? !!!!! Well excuse me!!! I find it Irritating to have to wait while I'm trying to check out. And really irritating that despite a smile (so far) these people have no idea and

certainly no interest in the concept of customer service. [sic] (Italy)

C10: There's not much staff working here, and *the ones that are at work do not speak English*, and are incapable. (Germany)<sup>4</sup>

Table 2. Selected guest comments from Tripadvisor.nl on the service provided by the Hans Brinker Budget Hotel. Comments on the use of language and communication by the hotel staff have been italicised.

Both hotels were rated on review websites such as Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com, where guests can comment on location, rooms, hygiene, and service. The latter was the most important aspect for this thesis, as it researched language use and communication strategies. As the comments given on both hotels show, tourism and language are indisputably connected. It is difficult for tourism to survive without language and communication skills, and vice versa. It was, hence, important to analyse what the effect of language on tourism could be, but also how tourism can influence language and communication strategies. Moreover, the use of a particular language, in this case English, might be affected by travel and tourism. For instance, when NNS of English travel to English speaking countries and encounter native speakers, the English language of both participants might be adapted or changed. This may also be the case for the opposite: when native speakers of English travel to non-native English speaking countries, both guest and host could – some would say: should – adjust their language to each other in order to make themselves understood. Both NS and NNS could use English as a lingua franca to get messages across. There are many definitions of English as a lingua franca; the one that was used for this thesis is given by Crystal (2003). He argued that only one out of four users of English is a native speaker, so most English as a lingua franca interactions “take place among ‘non-native’ speakers of English” (qtd. in: Seidlhofer, 2005, p.339). Seidlhofer (2005) in turn, argued that English as a lingua franca is, in most cases, a “contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (p.339). She claimed that English as a lingua franca is part of the more general phenomenon of English as an international language or World Englishes (Seidlhofer, 2005, p.339). This definition is also important for this study, as Seidlhofer (2005) claimed that

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<sup>4</sup> Author's translation of the original: “und das wenige Personal spricht ausschließlich englisch und ist nicht im Stande.”

English as a lingua franca is not only used by NNS but also by NS of English, which can be seen in the comments written on the review websites. The tables, as shown above, mainly consist of reviews written by NS of English, which revealed that many NS commented on the use of language and communication skills of Dutch hotel personnel, while NNS were less present on these websites. NNS of English, however, are the target group for further research in this thesis. Since there are many NNS visiting the Netherlands, and the numbers are increasing (see 1.2), it might be interesting to find out how these groups view the use of foreign languages by Dutch hotel employees, and also which communication methods they would employ when it is not possible to use English or Dutch. NNS often use English as a second or foreign language, which might also be the case for Dutch hotel staff. They might, therefore, provide different insights into the various strategies used by both target groups about hospitality and communication styles. Consequently, the NNS tourist views were researched to create a coherent and complete analysis.

For this study, several aspects were investigated, focusing on communication strategies and languages used by hotel staff, and the experiences of guests. The central goal of this study is to find out whether there is a need for an intercultural communication training for people working in the hospitality sector and, in that case, which aspects should be included in this programme to create intercultural awareness and interculturally effective individuals. In addition, it should be researched where this training will be given to ensure the best possible outcome. This study focused on intercultural encounters between Dutch hospitality staff in the province of Utrecht and Chinese and German tourists. Concerning the hotel staff, reception managers and hotel owners of several hotels in the province of Utrecht were included because they might have the most interesting information. These informants may have experience with all kinds of guests, which might provide useful insights into the use and proficiency of the English language by all target groups. In addition, it was decided to include target groups with different cultural backgrounds to attain details concerning cultural differences.

This study, based on Blue and Harun (2003), was carried out within three hotels in the Netherlands, and like their study, it was also small-scale. As both tables showed, most reviewers commented on language and communication issues and service. This might indicate that hotel staff may need improvement of their use and knowledge of foreign languages, and also awareness should be created concerning the level of hospitality. One might wonder if the above is the case in more hotels in the Netherlands. Hence, further research was carried out on Tripadvisor.nl and resulted in comments as shown in Table 3.

*C1. Staff and service is typical European and not very helpful. Simple directions or even "where is the local market" is replied with... "I don't go to market, so I don't know... ". The front desk service is slow and rooms are generally not available, if you arrive on an early flight, as most Asian flights do... (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). – NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, Amsterdam.*

*C2. But what I and my friend experience was staffs are very racist especially with Asian guests or guests who might not dress up to their standards. It was shown by the way they talked to us which was rude and arrogant. I really suggest you to adjust your attitude about this. You are supposed to treat any customer nicely and equally without any bias about nationality. I will never recommend this hotel to any foreigner especially Asian guests. (sic) (Bangkok, Thailand) – Park Hotel, The Hague*

*C3. Staff was impolite and unfriendly<sup>5</sup>. (Frankfurt, Germany) – NH Hotel de Ville, Groningen*

*C4. Unfortunately, the service, with the number of guests flowing in and out, is completely overwhelmed. The service staff, unfortunately, will respond to this in a tense and nervous unkindness<sup>6</sup>. (Cologne, Germany) – Kruisherhotel, Maastricht*

*C5. The receptionist's greeting on our arrival was not welcoming, reminding us that we were early (about an hour), to which our reply was, "Can't ensure long-haul flights fit into your time frame." (Umhlanga, kwaZulu Natal, South Africa) – Grand Hotel Karel V, Utrecht*

Table. 3. Selected guest comments from Tripadvisor.nl on the service provided by various hotels in the Netherlands. Comments on the use of language and communication by the hotel staff have been italicised.

As the reviews suggested, not only these hotels have been judged on their level of hospitality, but also other, randomly selected hotels have received negative reviews

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<sup>5</sup> Author's translation of the original: "Personell war nicht hoeflich und nicht nett."

<sup>6</sup> Author's translation of the original: "Leider ist der Service mit der Anzahl der herein und herausströmenden Gäste völlig überfordert. Das Servicepersonal reagiert leider mit angespannter und nervöser Unfreundlichkeit."

concerning these issues. According to guests, the communication methods used and the provision of service by hotel staff were far below their normal standards and should, consequently, be improved by the hotel management. As these comments showed, it does not matter where the guests come from; all of them agree upon the fact that hospitality and communication skills are of great importance for the overall experience in hotels.

## *1.2 Background to the Study*

This study was carried out for several reasons: tourism in the Netherlands is growing, which means there are more people visiting hotels who might not have sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language. Consequently, it is important to create awareness about the use of other languages, in this case the English language, as well as other verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Additionally, there might be a need for a better understanding of intercultural communication methods due to the absence of intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

A study carried out by the Dutch Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS – Central Bureau for Statistics) provided useful data which supported the choice to include Chinese and German tourists. It was claimed that the number of people staying overnight in the Netherlands has been growing since 2002, and has not been as high as it is today (Veerkamp, Boskamp, van der Meulen, 2012, p.18). The number of tourists is increasing, and Veerkamp et al. (2012) argued that the Netherlands has attracted around 31 million tourists in 2011, of which 11.3 million arrived from countries other than the Netherlands (p.18). Furthermore, there was an increase in the number of foreign tourists; for instance, the number of American visitors has grown by 7.9 per cent, Germans by 4.6 per cent, and Belgians by 7 per cent (Veerkamp et al. 2012, p.18). Additionally, German tourists were, and still are, the largest group of tourists visiting the Netherlands. In total, they represented 26 per cent (3 million people) of all foreign guests (Veerkamp et al. 2012, p.18). Moreover, the Nederlands Bureau voor Toerisme & Congressen (NBTC – Dutch Organisation for Tourism & Congresses) claimed that Chinese and Japanese tourists were the fastest growing group of tourists in 2012 (which represents 23 per cent of all foreign visitors) (“Recordaantal”, par.2). Due to these numbers, German and Chinese tourists were selected to participate in this study; they are the largest and fastest growing groups of tourists visiting the Netherlands, which might mean they have the most interesting information for this study concerning different communication

strategies and use of the English language. Moreover, these two groups have a different background in norms, values, communication strategies and use of languages, which makes them interesting target groups to research. Additionally, the hotel sector has profited from this growth in tourism, as they saw an increase of 3.4 per cent in the number of guests. All of this shows that tourism is an important area of business for the Netherlands, and that people providing accommodation, food, beverages, and hospitality should invest in skilled staff to create an unforgettable experience for the guests visiting the Netherlands. In order to enhance the experience of guests, hospitality and service should be the main priorities for people working in the touristic sector, since these two aspects can positively or negatively influence guests' experiences.

Consequently, due to the growing number of tourists in the Netherlands, and the negative reviews some hotels received from guests, it might be necessary to investigate how hotel owners, managers, or employees deal with non-native speakers of Dutch. Additionally, it might be interesting to find out which communication strategies they would use with different kinds of guests, and whether they would make use of a certain language policy. Moreover, the guests might also give interesting insights into these aspects. Hence, two hotel owners and one employee were interviewed, while the questionnaire was handed out to multiple tourists visiting the Netherlands. It should be noted that only non-native speakers of English were interviewed, or received the questionnaire; there were no native speakers involved. The results coming from these methods might provide the present researcher with sufficient data to draw conclusions about the need for any intercultural communication training. The interview was set up following Blue and Harun's (2003) research, and following Spradley's (1979) guidelines, while the questionnaire was based on the results of the interviews. This study included a theoretical framework which included work by scholars such as Korhonen (2010), Huisman and Moore (1999), Blue and Harun (2003), Fowler and Blohm (2004), Spradley (1979), and Ottenbacher, Harrington, and Parsa (2009), whom investigated the notions of hospitality, tourism, intercultural communication training programmes, and designing and structuring ethnographic interviews and questionnaires. All these aspects were analysed and compared to create a coherent framework, which formed the basis for the analysis of the results, but also for the conclusion, discussion, and recommendations for further research. In addition, a number of intercultural communication issues were explored with a view to discovering the need for intercultural communication training. The absence of any evidence, however, does not mean that an intercultural

communication training programme would be superfluous. In that case, recommendations will be made about further research on the same subject while taking intercultural communication training methods into account. Additionally, possible points of improvement that might be discovered throughout this study about intercultural issues will be incorporated into the recommendations. An important notion that should be taken into account is that only a limited number of interviews were conducted; therefore, it is unwise and very difficult to make generalising statements about other hotels in the Netherlands. Thereby, any possible suggestion of intercultural communication training in this thesis will only be applicable to the staff of the hotels included in this study.

### *1.3 Main Objective*

This study started with three interviews conducted with several hotel owners/employees working in different hotels in the Netherlands. These were designed to find out whether or not critical incidents concerning intercultural communication issues could be found. The particular incidents could provide the present researcher with sufficient data about difficult intercultural encounters between non-native speakers of English that, afterwards, were considered to be misunderstandings or presented miscommunication. All three interviews showed some incidents which formed the basis for this study. The results of the interviews indicated that the language of hospitality was an important aspect in the field of tourism, especially in the hotel sector, since the hotel staff are in daily contact with guests from all over the world. It would be advisable for people working in this field of business to develop awareness concerning cultural differences. Consequently, intercultural communication training programmes could contribute to this development to raise the level of hospitality towards international guests. However, it should be taken into consideration that the focus of any training might differ per hotel, city, or culture. Hence, all statements, claims, or any other proposals for intercultural communication training programmes or methods are only applicable to the hotels included in this study.

This study could hopefully contribute to overcoming any challenges that might exist within the hospitality sector in the Netherlands. It is hoped that the limited findings of present research will help to shed some light on possible language issues that may be present in such international or multicultural surroundings, but also on possible intercultural communication difficulties. A positive result of this paper might be that the analysis of the interviews will

show an awareness of the challenges that may need to be overcome. Moreover, the findings in the analysis might contribute to a greater understanding of communicating with other cultures, and give an indication of possible intercultural communication training programmes which could potentially be designed for people working in the hospitality sector.

Additionally, it should be emphasised that this study is meant as an exploratory study. The main objective as stated above has not been narrowly defined, which resulted into the exploratory nature of this thesis. Although this might have been a limitation to the results, this study still provided some interesting insights into the use of the English language by hotel staff and Chinese and German tourists, as well as details concerning the absence of any intercultural awareness and sensitivity of the hotel staff. However, due to the nature of the present research, no generalising statements can be made; all conclusions and recommendations are only applicable to the hotels included in this study. Further research into the interconnection between language and tourism might provide more details concerning the issues as mentioned above. In addition, a more narrowly defined research question could have contributed to other useful and valuable research methods and subsequent results and analysis.

#### *1.4 Hypotheses*

Several hypotheses were formulated which might be proved or disproved based on the results coming from the interviews, questionnaire, and web search. These assumptions were designed to provide guidelines and tools for present research. All hypotheses were based on the literature as discussed in Chapter 2.

1. When Dutch or English are not an option for effective communication between Chinese and German guests and the hotel staff, other methods such as *lingua receptiva* (LaRa) or meta-communication<sup>7</sup>, may be used by both groups in order to communicate effectively or to get the points of both participants across. Additionally, knowledge of foreign languages might be important as this may be a crucial part of the overall experience of guests visiting the Netherlands.
2. Hotel staff in the Netherlands might have insufficient knowledge about intercultural issues, awareness, and sensitivity. The use of foreign languages (other than Dutch)

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<sup>7</sup> Both notions will be explained in 2.3 in which they will be discussed at length to show their relevance to this study.



might influence the guests' perception of hospitality, due to the communication skills of the hotel staff. Consequently, intercultural communication training might be needed for the latter, due to their daily contact with foreign guests to recognise and deal with cultural differences.

3. Intercultural communication training programmes might have (dis)advantages. If a sufficient, usable programme was to be created, these should be taken into consideration. However, it is impossible to create one single programme for all purposes, which means that every training should include different elements focused on the goal of the trainees; therefore, culture-general and culture-specific elements of certain cultures should be included to create awareness among hotel staff, and to enhance the overall experience of guests visiting the Netherlands. In addition, several methods should be explored to find out which of these are the most appropriate ones for different kinds of target groups.

An investigation of these hypotheses will possibly provide more insight into the claim that intercultural communication trainings should be offered to people working in the hospitality sector to create awareness. In addition, issues concerning the use of the English language by hotel staff and guests should be investigated as these might form the basis for further analysis and recommendations. Moreover, the hypotheses were created to research whether the level of hospitality towards the guests arriving in hotels in the Netherlands could be raised. These suppositions were used for the interviews, since the latter contained all necessary information about language and communication issues, but also concerning an intercultural communication training programme. Overall, the main objective and hypotheses were formulated to contribute to an exploratory study, in which language and communication issues were analysed using the results obtained from interviews, web search, and questionnaires.

## Chapter 2. Overview of Relevant Literature

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For decades, tourism, language, and intercultural encounters were analysed with interest by linguists and communication scholars, who carried out broad research about the connection between all three notions. However, not much research was carried out on the use of language in the hospitality sector; hence this study was designed in an attempt to make a contribution to the existing literature. Additionally, it was hoped to provide new perspectives and insights within this field of work, with reference to the notions of hospitality, ethnographic interviewing, and designing intercultural communication training, which will be discussed in this chapter. This section will look at the theories of different authors who write about these aspects, with the intent to create a framework as a basis for the subsequent exploratory research methods and analysis.

### *2.1 Interconnection between Hospitality, Language, and Tourism*

First of all, it is important to define the different aspects of this study, starting with hospitality. Ottenbacher, Harrington, and Parsa (2009) describe this notion and argue that it is “the act or practice of being hospitable: the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers with liberality or goodwill” (p.265). This feature, which is one of the main focuses of this thesis, is also defined as “friendly and liberal reception of guests and strangers” (Ottenbacher et al, 2009, p.265). According to these scholars, hospitality is a broad “multidimensional construct” that extends beyond food and shelter (Ottenbacher et al, 2009, p.265). Nonetheless, the notion of hospitality is not described in a straightforward manner in the hospitality sector (often associated with the tourism industry) (Ottenbacher et al, 2009, p.266). This could mean that the identification of hospitality might differ in various fields of work, such as hotels, the entertainment industry, restaurants, recreation, etc. It should also be taken into consideration that big five-star hotels are considerably different than budget hotels, and every specific hotel has its own approach towards hospitality; there is diversity within these segments, which should be recognised by researchers (Ottenbacher et al, 2009, p.280).

Secondly, the interconnection between hospitality and tourism is discussed and analysed by Blue and Harun (2003). They claim that “international travel is a rapidly growing activity entailing cross-cultural communication between hosts and guests from different linguistic backgrounds” (p.73). This means that the need for hosts with effective

communication capabilities is growing, and, training might be needed for people working in the hospitality sector, including enhancing hospitality skills (Blue and Harun, 2003, p.74). They provided the reader with a traditional arrival-departure hospitality cycle, which showed to what extent the activities of the hosts and the language used by the hosts affected their guests (Blue and Harun, 2003, p.74). In addition, they made a distinction between the traditional and the commercial hospitality cycle, which produced differences between interpersonal relationships and the use of (in)formal language between host and guest. Blue and Harun (2003) have carried out a case study in four hotels in Southampton, in which they explored hospitality practices. In addition, they placed emphasis on the “need to expose learners to actual hotel reception practices”, and the interviews they conducted revealed that “some hospitality skills could be developed through in-service training” (Blue and Harun, 2003, p.73). According to Blue and Harun (2003), such training “could be viewed as a [...] requirement of the hospitality profession” and that communication skills should be “given more serious attention by human resource managers, researchers and educators in the field of hospitality management” (p.73).

Thirdly, although the effect of language on tourism has not been researched in depth by many tourism researchers, and the relationship between these two aspects has received little attention, it is still a relevant and applicable topic (Huisman and Moore, 1999). Huisman and Moore (1999) claimed that the language of tourism “has important links with tourists’ relationships to natural languages (tourists’ own and those of locals) that deserve to be included within the overall investigation of language and tourism” (p.445). Unfortunately, it proved to be difficult to find links concerning the relationship between language and tourism in the Netherlands. Consequently, this exploratory study focused on this aspect when conducting interviews with hotel staff in the Netherlands and when distributing questionnaires to Chinese and German tourists. After all, language might influence the overall experience of tourists.

Fourthly, Cohen and Cooper (1986) designed a sociolinguistic study of verbal encounters in touristic situations, which described the relationship between language and tourism. They have tried to investigate communication between different linguistic groups under “unusual circumstances: the high temporariness of the foreigners and the high degree of linguistic accommodation of the locals to them” (Cohen and Cooper, 1986, p.533). Furthermore, they claimed that “while accommodation by locals is common to virtually all touristic situations, the degree of proficiency of locals in the tourists’ language varies

considerably and, hence, the extent to which tourists are forced to accommodate linguistically” (Cohen and Cooper, 1986, p.533). Moreover, Cohen and Cooper (1986) argued that language barriers were an important obstacle in transcultural communication (p.534): tourists were aware of the difficulties of these, which indirectly influenced their choice of destination. The study by Cohen and Cooper, even though dated, was still relevant for this thesis, since it dealt with language accommodation by both tourist and the host. Once again, it was difficult to find information concerning the level of accommodation by Dutch hotel staff when in contact with foreign guests. Hence, this study tried to explore how hotel staff in the Netherlands use the English language, in what way they accommodate to their guests, and whether they are successful or not in using these strategies. In addition, the level of accommodation by Chinese and German guests was also investigated to see whether these guests find it necessary to accommodate to their host.

## *2.2 Ethnographic Interviews, Critical Incidents, and Impression Management*

This thesis commenced with a pilot interview conducted with a hotel owner, to gain valuable information for this study concerning the level of hospitality, critical incidents, and communication issues. The particular technique used was the ethnographic interview, which was based on the basic guidelines given by Spradley (1979). He claimed that ethnographic interviews almost always consist of two “distinct but complementary processes: *developing rapport* and *eliciting information*” (p.78). According to Spradley (1979), rapport refers to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, also referred to as the ethnographer and the informant (p.78). It is important that a relationship between both participants is established in order to ensure a free flow of information. This connection does not necessarily lead to friendship or intimacy between the contributors, but it could also develop out of respect towards one another. Another important aspect of this harmonious relationship was that the interviewer should identify universal qualities upon which this connection is based. Rapport, as Spradley (1979) argued, does not have any universal characteristics, except that it “changes and fluctuates over time” (p.79); consequently, some informants need different approaches or interview questions and structures than others. The establishment of a reliable relationship proceeded through several stages, namely, *apprehension*, *exploration*, *cooperation*, and *participation* (Spradley, 1979, p.79). In addition, two other techniques in conducting interviews were asking ethnographic or descriptive questions (Spradley, 1979,

p.83-5). The first structure draws on the separation between questions and answers: these are, mostly, given from different cultural meaning systems. “Ethnographic interviewing begins with the assumption that the question-answer sequence is a single element in human thinking” (Spradley, 1979, p.83-4), which meant that questions always imply answers and statements always imply questions. Descriptive questions on the other hand “take advantage of the power of language construe settings” (Frake, 1964, in: Spradley, 1979, p.85). These questions can be divided into five major types (grand tour questions, mini-tour questions, example questions, experience questions, native-language questions), and several subtypes, all of which were further explained in Appendix 1 (Spradley, 1979, p.85-6).

All in all, conducting interviews was an important technique in discovering critical incidents which might lead to misunderstanding and/or miscommunication between hotel staff and guests from different cultural backgrounds. Critical incidents were described by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), who claimed that this term, in the intercultural context, can be used with two “slightly different meanings” (p.221). For this study, critical incidents have been defined as an “intercultural action of repeated experience which one or all parties to communication experienced as ineffective and/or inappropriate and/or unsatisfying” (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p.221). Critical incidents often take place in multilingual situations in which both parties misunderstood each other due to cultural differences; however, this was left unattended at that particular time. However, it was realised afterwards by either one or both participants that the intention of their interlocutor was misinterpreted. Wight (1995, in: Paran and Sercu, 2010) claimed that “the first use of critical incidents in a cross-cultural context, i.e. intercultural training, was in the 1960s. Critical incidents are short descriptions of contexts in which there is a problem arising from cultural differences between the interacting parties, or where there is a problem of intercultural adjustment” (p.38). These descriptions have been useful for this thesis, since it started with interviews in which critical incidents played a central part. Critical incidents might create a foundation for an intercultural communication training, as these are often occurrences that cause problems, misunderstandings, or miscommunication. They may lead to the development of intercultural awareness, as the issues will be defined and analysed to create understanding of cultural differences.

The above is related to the notion of impression management as described by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009). This term has been defined as “the process whereby people seek to control or influence the impression that other form” (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, and Riordan,

2002, in: Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p.131). Impression management is related to self-preservation, which meant that people are consciously or unconsciously influencing the impressions they want to convey. For instance, people are familiar with the concepts of politeness, respectfulness, and thoughtfulness, and automatically manage these impressions, which is an unconscious process. However, when managing these imprints becomes a conscious process, people could try to control the impression perceived by others. In addition, impression management is a complex process; people “cannot control the impressions that others form of us by pushing a button or flicking a switch” (Leary, 1995, in Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p.132). However, different interpretations of given behaviour could cause misunderstandings and defects.

### *2.3 Intercultural Communication Training Methods and Interculturally Effective Persons*

This section focuses on the guidelines for intercultural communication training programmes, designed and created by Fowler and Blohm (in: Landis, Bennett and Bennett, 2004) and Korhonen (2010). Fowler and Blohm (2004) described the pros and cons of various methods for intercultural communication training, and claimed that “globalization becomes a household word, the intercultural agenda is becoming the world’s agenda” (p.37) by which they meant to say the world is changing and that intercultural interactions are expanding and becoming increasingly important. However, Fowler and Blohm (2004) also argued that the “intercultural field is still relatively young” and that intercultural trainers are needed to create intercultural understanding and awareness (p.37). They reasoned that many intercultural training methods were developed for other fields of work, which were adapted for the intercultural field, and that a variety of methods was needed for different clients, to reach the best desirable outcome (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.37). Methods that could be used for successful intercultural communication training are lectures, case studies, role plays, simulations, critical incidents, but also video, self-assessment instruments, and computer-based training (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.38). As Fowler and Blohm (2004) claimed, trainers of these programmes can have a powerful influence on their trainees (p.39). Fowler and Blohm (2004) have tried to explore the pros and cons of various training methods, and argued that intercultural training should not focus on *either* didactic approaches *or* experimental approaches, but that a combination of both might be the most effective (p.39). Additionally, these scholars described the experiential learning cycle designed by Kolb

(1984), which “addresses the four learning styles: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation” (p.42). This model might ensure “that each learning preference is addressed (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.42). See Appendix 2 for Kolb’s Learning Preference Cycle and for the explanation of all the different stages any intercultural communication training could go through. Fowler and Blohm (2004) also discussed the guidelines for choosing a particular method and the desired outcomes (p.45). They claimed that the choice for the method must be related to the desired outcome, which might consist of acquiring knowledge, developing skills, or modifying attitudes (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.45-6).

Another author who described intercultural communication training was Korhonen (2010). She defined an intercultural training experiment in Finland, in which “the intercultural training, the implementation of the training study, the outcomes of the experiment and its effectiveness in developing intercultural competence” were discussed and justified (Korhonen, 2010, p.36). Korhonen (2010) claimed that successful companies can only be successful if they fully understand the concept of intercultural communication and all the relevant aspects. The organisations, as studied by Korhonen (2010), viewed cultural diversity as an opportunity instead of a threat, which made them more successful than their competitors (Korhonen, 2010, p.35). Additionally, she argued that intercultural competence consists of several components, of which cognition, affect, and behaviour are the main ones. These competencies included personal characteristics, as well as culture-general and culture-specific elements, and foreign language skills (Korhonen, 2010, p.35-6). Korhonen (2010) referred to Fowler and Blohm (2004) in stating that they claimed “that any method involves cognition, affect and behavior [sic] to some extent: the key is to decide which component of intercultural competence will contribute most significantly to the desired outcome” (p.38). Furthermore, Korhonen, similar to Fowler and Blohm (2004), have described the pros and cons of several methods of intercultural training. Additionally, the effectiveness of these programmes, and alternative assessment methods, in which trainees were assessed on their intercultural communication competencies have been discussed (Korhonen, 2010, p.37-41).

As described in 1.4, *lingua receptiva* (LaRa) and meta-communication are methods that should deserve some attention when included in an intercultural communication training. According to Rehbein, Ten Thije and Verschik (2012), LaRa is “a mode of multilingual communication in which interactants employ a language and/or a language variety different from their partner’s and still understand each other without the help of any additional *lingua*

franca” (in: Bahtina, 2011, p.1). Additionally, Rebhein et al. (2012), argued that “lingua receptiva is the ensemble of those *linguistic, mental, interactional*, as well as *intercultural competencies* which are *creatively* activated when interlocutors listen to linguistic actions in their ‘passive’ language or variety” (in: Bahtina and ten Thije, in print, p.3). Furthermore, these authors claimed that lingua receptiva can be compared to lingua franca, however, in LaRa the interlocutors speak their own mother tongue (L1) “or any other language they are comfortable with” (Rebhein et al, 2012, in: Bahtina and ten Thije, in print, p.3). The understanding of each other is based on the passive knowledge the participants have of the other’s language, which means they can grasp the meaning of one another’s utterances by resorting to cognates and similar expressions. Rehbein et al. (2012) also described LaRa as “a vehicle for effective communication between members of diverse language communities” (in: Bahtina, 2011, p.1). Hence, the most important goal of LaRa is to find and establish common ground between the different speakers.

Meta-communication meant that people can either talk about communication (content) or communicate about communication (relation) (Prins, 1994, p.8). According to Prins (1994), meta-communication can be seen as a separate factor; it is the one facet in communication which indicates the intention of the message of the ‘sender’, but also how the ‘receiver’ is supposed to conceive this message. In addition, several features are connected to meta-communication: someone might be a leader or a follower; others are more aggressive or provide a helping hand. These characteristics are called core strengths and determine the way in which a message is conveyed (p.8). Additionally, meta-communication comprises a general part in which it is analysed how people communicate: whether they are positive, negative, or ask many questions. The specific part analyses the pattern of communication: the reaction of people to a questions, but also how people within a group influence each other (Prins, 1994, p.8). Paying attention to these aspects could contribute to the underlying relations between guest and host. In short, meta-communication is meant to denominate or discuss communication.

All in all, creating interculturally effective persons as described by Vulpe, Kealey, Protheroe, and Macdonald (2000) could be one of the desired outcomes of an intercultural communication training programme. They argued that this specific type of person is someone who possesses adaptation skills, an attitude of modesty and respect, an understanding of the concept of culture, knowledge of the target group’s country and culture, relationship-building,



self-knowledge, intercultural communication, organisational skills, and, last but not least, personal and professional commitment (pp.23-60).

#### *2.4 Chinese, German, and Dutch Cultural Characteristics*

It would be impossible to include all different characteristics of all target groups included in this thesis; therefore it was decided to select the most relevant aspects for this study. Features that should be taken into consideration when discussing Chinese culture were described by Brown and Levinson (1987, in: Ji, 1999) as *face*, *face threatening acts* (FTAs), and *politeness* (p.1059). Face is described as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, in: Ji, 1999, p.1059). The concept of *face* consists of two desires: “the desire to be approved of by others (positive face) and the desire to be unimpeded by others in one’s actions (negative face)” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, in: Ji, 1999, p.1059). FTAs such as ordering, advising, or offering can threaten either or both positive and negative faces. Consequently, politeness comes into action, consisting of either positive or negative strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe the notion of “self-image” which might be a problematic aspect in Chinese culture, as the self is not valued nearly as much as it is in the West (Ji, 1999, p.1060). Chinese culture is focused on the harmony of the community, which might be seen as a representation of a public image, rather than a self-image (Ji, 1999, p.1060). In addition, Mao claimed that the Chinese concept of face does not include the negative face (1994, in: Ji, 1999, p.1060). Nonetheless, Ji (1999) argued that the Chinese culture might be “more positive-politeness oriented” due to certain “polite verbal behaviors in this culture” which are “attributable to maintaining positive face” (p.1060). However, there are instances in Chinese verbal communication that display a high sensitivity to the negative face. For instance, Chinese would sometimes use expressions like *qingwen* (excuse me), which are used to soften the verbal request that could possibly threaten the addressee’s negative face (Ji, 1999, p.1061).

House (1996) described the same notions for the German culture, adding *speech acts* and *directness/indirectness*. According to House (1996) Germans tend to “make more frequent and more explicit reference to self” (p.346). This means that they take less account of their interlocutor concerning the explicitness of the message they are trying to convey. In addition, Germans tend to “interact in ways that were more direct, more explicit and verbose, more self-referenced and more content-oriented (House, 1996, p.347). Additionally,

Hofstede's (1980) dimensions were taken into account which showed that Germans appear to be more individualistic in comparison to Chinese, who are often perceived to be more collectivistic. According to Hofstede (1980) "the Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity: the Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for Western people to follow" (par.4), while in the German culture "details are equally important to create certainty that a certain topic or project is well-thought out" (par.4). Additionally, Hofstede (1980) argued that in German culture "communication is among the most direct in the world following the ideal to be 'honest, even if it hurts' – and by this giving the counterpart a fair chance to learn from mistakes" (par.4).

Dutch culture, on the other hand, is similar to the German one in terms of individualism and directness. According to Hofstede's dimensions (1980) the Netherlands scores very high on the individualism scale which means there is "a high preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only" (par.2). In addition, due to the low score on power distance, "control is disliked and attitude towards managers are informal and on first name basis. Communication is direct and participative" (Hofstede, 1980, par.1). This means that Dutch people are used to informal work environments, and taking initiative is valued by Dutch employers (Claes and Gerritsen, 2007, p.141). This could sometimes cause problems when interacting with tourists who have different cultural backgrounds and are not used to direct communication, such as Chinese guests. In addition, according to Claes and Gerritsen, the Netherlands and Germany are neutral countries, which means they do not show emotions and are reserved (p.143). Another difference between Dutch, German and Chinese cultures is that the first two are monochronic cultures, which suggests that punctuality is important, as well as finalising one task before starting another (Claes and Gerritsen, 2007, p.149); while the Chinese are polychronic and can finalise multiple tasks at once, while they also value long-term relationships (Claes and Gerritsen, 2007).

Although Hofstede has received criticism from other scholars concerning the reliability of his data and the way he collected his data, the information provided some interesting details about Chinese and German cultures for this study, and proved to be a good starting point for further analysis.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

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For the first part of the investigation, the methodology, as used by Blue and Harun (2003), was employed. This entailed conducting interviews with hotel owners or employees in the province of Utrecht, handing out questionnaires to Chinese and German tourists and a web search on Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com including several hotels in different locations throughout the Netherlands. These methods were used to investigate the relation between language and tourism, and the effects both have on each other. It was hoped to find out how these two notions influence the overall experience of guests, for the purpose of creating an intercultural communication training which benefitted both host and guest, or at least to conclude whether or not this training is needed. The conducted interviews led to the discovery of interesting critical incidents, which formed the basis for the questionnaires. The web search added an extra dimension to this thesis, as the reviews produced remarkable comments about the level of hospitality and use of other languages. Consequently, this chapter will focus on the different methods employed, and why these were opted for. All in all, the methods as described in this chapter contributed towards a coherent analysis and any possible adequate intercultural communication training. Again, it should be taken into account that all research methods employed in this chapter were meant to contribute to an exploratory research.

### *3.1 Interviews*

First of all, as mentioned before, this study started with a pilot interview with a hotel owner in the Netherlands. The strategy used for conducting this and the other two interviews, was the ethnographic interview as described by Spradley (1979). At the start of research, several hotels in the Netherlands, mainly in and around the province of Utrecht, were contacted either by phone or email to ask whether they were willing to participate in the interviews. However, most hotel managers stated that there was not enough staff to contribute to the study, or they were unwilling or not interested in participating. Some hotel managers did not even reply to this question, which could have been a problematic limitation to this study. It was quite difficult to find respondents, as most hotel managers denied access to their information. The interviews and the subsequent answers were meant to create a sufficient database which would provide enough information to base this thesis upon. In the end, three hotel managers of different hotels gave their permission to conduct interviews, of which two of them were

hotel owners, and one of them was a reception manager. The hotels included in the interviews were randomly selected, without any preference for size or location. Hotel staff was needed for this thesis to discover critical incidents, to obtain information about their use of English with both native and non-native speakers of this language, and to detect possible communication methods used which led to misinterpretations or miscommunication. All these aspects would form the basis for the analysis and any possible training. Trying to uncover problematic language issues and critical incidents was important as these would display how hotel staff coped with intercultural encounters in which communication in another language than their mother tongue was needed. Furthermore, the hotel staff might present their opinion on their use of the English language with NS and NNS. The corpus for this particular method is quite small-scale; however, the data obtained from these interviews might be sufficient for further research and the analysis. Moreover, to make sure the analysis and claims made in this thesis had a concrete foundation it was decided to include a web search and questionnaires to generate more data concerning language and communication issues.

Secondly, the ethnographic interviews were designed to develop rapport, as described by Spradley (1979), to establish a reliable relationship between ethnographer and informant. This way, the most important information might be filtered out, and all other additional information could be elicited. Spradley (1979) claimed that both stages (developing rapport and eliciting information) should be included in any ethnographic interview, to gain as much valuable information as possible. Developing rapport represents the first step in the success of the interview; therefore, the informant should feel comfortable with the set-up and the themes of the interview, and the questions asked. This step cannot be deleted as it could jeopardise the outcome. In turn, the ethnographer might not obtain the information needed, due to an unreliable relationship between both participants. Furthermore, without this establishment of trust, the informant might only give socially desirable answers, which could lead to misinterpretations of the answers, and perhaps an unusable analysis. The interviews started with some general questions concerning the informant and the hotel, the approach of the interview was introduced, and the interviewee was reassured about the anonymity of all personal details and information. All information concerning the structure of the interviews can be found in Chapter 4 in which the different techniques were discussed.

### *3.2 Web Search on Review Websites*

Due to the limited number of participants to the interviews, it was decided to add a web search on review websites such as Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com, to generate more data concerning the level of hospitality, use of the English language, and different communication methods. Guests can comment online on these issues, which might provide interesting insights into how guests view hospitality in the Netherlands. Additionally, the web search was designed to provide data about guests' satisfaction with the way hotel staff responds to requests, questions, and other communication and hospitality issues. The comments used for this investigation were written by guests from all over the world. However, Dutch guests were excluded from this study as the main focus lied on communication between Dutch hotel staff and other NNS of English to find out how English is used within the hospitality sector. In addition, NS of English were included to find out how they view the use of their language by Dutch hotel staff. Several hotels in the Netherlands were randomly selected and included in the sample; however, some criteria were taken into consideration such as location, and size. The hotels included in this sample all focused on business and leisure guests; backpackers and other forms of tourism were not taken into account. Furthermore, all hotels were located in cities such as Amsterdam, The Hague, Groningen, Utrecht, Maastricht, Rotterdam, or Arnhem, because most of these cities are capitals of the different provinces, and might therefore generate the most tourism. Moreover, to find out whether guests had a different opinion throughout the Netherlands, hotels in the north, east, south, and west were included. With reference to the size of the hotels: they all varied from small boutique hotels, to large chain hotels to give a broad overview and to be as objective as possible. It was assumed that visitors might have a more subjective opinion on the large, mainstream, chain hotels due to their fame, name, or brand, and, consequently, criticise these hotels differently than smaller, boutique hotels. This assumption is supported by Ottenbacher et al. (2009), as they claim that hospitality within big five-star hotels could be considerably different than in less expensive budget hotels (p.290).

Review websites used for this thesis were Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com. These websites gave the guests the opportunity to review the hotels in their native language, and the possibility to rate the hotels from “excellent” to “terrible” and all other options in between. Tripadvisor.nl proved to be a helpful website in finding reviews, as it gave the reader the option to search per category and see all corresponding comments. This way, a selection

could be made on the language the comment was written in, which aspects of the hotels reviewers commented on, and how the guests perceived their overall stay. Additionally, these two review websites were selected because all the participating hotels were featured on both. This gave the present researcher the opportunity to read guests' comments concerning all three hotels, and to compare their opinions to the answers provided by the informants.

It should be noted that for this thesis only negative comments by guests were taken into consideration. At this stage of the present research, issues concerning service and language should be established to create a coherent analysis which could form the basis for possible intercultural communication training. As Mayzlin, Dover, and Chevalier (2013) argued, "the authenticity of online user reviews remains a concern", although they could "improve the match between consumer and products" (par.1). They claimed that virtually anyone can post a review on Tripadvisor, which could mean that some reviews might not be true or written by actual guests. Additionally, Mayzlin et al (2013) stated that "in February 2012, the UK Advertising Standards Authority ruled that Tripadvisor must not claim that it offers 'honest, real, or trusted' reviews from 'real travelers'" (p.1). This could indicate that the hotel staff were writing reviews about their own hotel and about their direct competition. As Mayzlin et al. (2013) claimed, chain hotels are more likely to promote writing positive reviews among their staff than smaller, independent hotel owners (p.3). In addition, the *Daily Mail* reported that a hotel manager in the United Kingdom ordered his staff to write positive reviews on Tripadvisor about his hotel to improve the ratings (Allen, 2012, par.1). Consequently, due to these fake positive reviews, it was decided to take only the bad reviews into consideration, as these might possibly be more reliable than the positive ones.

Furthermore, it was not possible to include all comments, as the corpus would have been too extensive. Although this might have been a limitation to the study, literature showed that positive comments on Tripadvisor.nl could not always be trusted. Nonetheless, it is assumed that the reviews used for this thesis, as stated on this website and on Booking.com, are valid and written by actual guests.

### *3.3 Questionnaires*

Another research method used for this thesis was questionnaires. These were designed to obtain additional information from tourists concerning the use of English and communication strategies employed by hotel staff. It was decided to use a combination of in-person questionnaires and self-administered questionnaires. Advantages of in-person questionnaires included higher response rates, higher response quality, and an easier way to collect multi-method data (DISM, par.3). However, it usually takes up more time to collect data through this method, and sometimes the presence of the interviewer might be disadvantageous (DISM, par.3). Self-administered questionnaires on the other hand also have advantages; for instance, they “typically have quicker turnaround time than interviewer-administered surveys” (DISM, par.1). Disadvantages of the self-administered questionnaires might be that it is difficult to obtain cooperation, slower data collection, and the fact that there is no interviewer involved (DISM, par.5). As a result, in-person questionnaires might be a better option for data collection for this study; nonetheless, due to a limited amount of time, this was impossible at this stage for all target groups included; therefore, a combination of both has been used.

The selected target groups for the questionnaires were Chinese and German tourists. As mentioned in 1.2, these two groups are the fastest growing and largest groups of tourists visiting the Netherlands, and might provide the most interesting data for this study. In addition, the number of tourists from China (and Japan) increased the most (23 per cent) in 2012 (“Recordaantal”, par.2). Moreover, the highest number of people visiting the Netherlands originate from Germany (and the United Kingdom and Belgium), similar to 2011 (“Recordaantal”, par.2). Additionally, it was decided to hand out questionnaires to these groups, as they perhaps have different views on hospitality, use of foreign languages, and knowledge of English due to their cultural background. Both groups might show diversity in norms, values, cultural awareness, and knowledge of other cultures. Furthermore, there is much dissimilarity between both cultures, which could result into different insights about the use of the English language and communication skills of Dutch hotel staff. The Chinese tourists might have a different perception of the use of English in other countries, as well as the use of different communication skills than Germans as can be seen in 2.4. Hence, it might be interesting to find out which aspects were valued differently by these two groups. As both cultures have different norms, values, etc. the information concerning the topics, as mentioned above, could be valuable for creating a possible intercultural communication training. All in

all, to generate a sufficient data collection it was decided to hand out 50 questionnaires per target group. It was hoped that 30 to 40 of these per target group were returned.

The questionnaire was originally written in English and translated into Chinese and German. Translations were made by native speakers of those languages and afterwards checked by the present researcher to ensure the questions were similar to the original English ones. Subsequently, the questionnaires were distributed to both target groups; however it should be noted that this did not take place in hotels but in Museum Speelklok<sup>8</sup> in Utrecht. This part of the investigation started in April 2013 and ended in June 2013. In these two months, 50 questionnaires were handed out per target group. It proved to be difficult to hand out questionnaires in hotels, since would disturb their guests. With the approval of the museum, it turned out to be possible to distribute the questionnaires to Chinese and German guests. Handing out questionnaires at a different location might have been a better option for this study. For instance, the guests might not feel obliged to give socially desirable answers, as they were not physically present in their hotel, and there was no pressure from hotel staff to answer positively. Consequently, it was assumed that, due to that reason, guests would answer honestly.

Moreover, both questionnaires were written in the guests' mother tongues and they were allowed to answer in their native language. This could have positively influenced the outcome, as respondents did not have to translate their thoughts into English or any other language, which could have led to incomplete, unintelligible, or limited answers. However, there was one important aspect that should be noted: the German questionnaire was distributed over the Internet (via several social media sources such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and sent by email) in addition to handing them out in the museum. The questionnaires were published via Thesistools.nl<sup>9</sup> in April and were taken off the Internet in June. Additionally, this way of delivering questionnaires might contain limitations and disadvantages, due to the fact that the present researcher was invisible for the participants, and could, consequently, not explain the questions. Moreover, people are less likely to fill out questionnaires if they do not know the person behind it; there is no actual pressure. According to Baruch and Holtom (2008) "high response rates are useful" but are apparently hard to attain (1141). Although

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<sup>8</sup> This museum attracted 113.000 visitors in 2011, which included not only Dutch visitors, but also foreign visitors (Jaarverslag, 2011, p.13). Unfortunately, there is no information available concerning 2012. The museum is located in the city centre of Utrecht in an old church, which attracts many (foreign) tourists.

<sup>9</sup> Thesistools.nl is an online platform that offers students the opportunity to create and publish questionnaires and surveys for free.



almost all research projects are dependent on responses, many participants do not answer to questionnaires, due to two principal reasons: the researcher might fail to deliver the questionnaire to the target group, and people are reluctant to respond (Baruch and Holtom, 2008, p.1141). Baruch and Holtom (2008) claimed that “thorough preparation (e.g. [...] ensuring attendance when distributing them in person) will substantially reduce the impact” of people not responding “though rarely eliminate it completely” (p.1141). This could be an explanation for the fact that there were fewer German respondents than Chinese ones. The questionnaire was handed out in person to the Chinese guests, while the German questionnaire was distributed over the Internet. Additionally, the Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology (DISM) reported on response rates, and created an “interdisciplinary initiative on survey methodology that aims to enhance research [...] in survey research methods” (DISM, par.1). A Tip-Sheet was designed in which explanations were given how to gather data in a survey development process. It was argued that “if your population is characterized by low response rates, interviewer administered surveys will typically yield higher response rates” (DISM, par.2). Self-administered surveys, on the other hand, place the burden of completing a survey on the respondent, which might lead to “significantly lower response rates in mail and web surveys” (DISM, par.2). This was exactly the case with the Chinese and German respondents: while the Chinese respondents were approached in person by the present researcher, the German participants were approached over the Internet. Hence, there were more Chinese respondents than German ones, which might be caused by the different approaches.

### *3.4 Data Processing*

This thesis has experienced some restrictions. One of these was that all participants who contributed to this study had to be anonymised. It proved to be difficult to find respondents for the interviews and the questionnaires as described in previous sections; therefore, it was decided to delete any personal information concerning hotel names, staff names, or any other details referring to persons or organisations. Without adding this information, it was hoped to acquire more respondents, and to obtain a free flow of information. All in all, anonymising all information obtained from the participants contributed towards the final results and outcomes of the interviews, as the informants elaborated on many aspects concerning language issues,

communication methods, and level of hospitality. Additionally, the informants elaborated on personal and confidential information about colleagues and daily affairs, which could have been left out otherwise. From this point onward all informants of the interviews will be referred to as I-1, I-2, and I-3. Furthermore, all information gained from the interviews was handled confidentially, and was not modified in any way. In addition, the hotels included in the interviews were selected randomly, without any preference for size, location, or staff. Consequently, two hotels were smaller, boutique hotels with few rooms and staff, while the other one was larger in size and employed more staff. Furthermore, all interviews were transcribed by the present researcher in Dutch; however, only the relevant parts for this study were translated into English. The rest was processed in Dutch as can be seen in Appendix 4.

This also applies to the questionnaires, although these did not include any personal details except for gender and age. However, these two aspects were omitted from the analysis, as these were less important to the outcome. Any possible intercultural communication training will not be focused on differences in gender or age, but will focus on culture-specific and culture-general aspects, as well as intercultural awareness. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire were exported into Excel to compile an overview of all the data. Subsequently, charts were created which showed relevant issues for further analysis. All data were then compared to each other (both Chinese and German questionnaires) to find (dis)similarities, and compared to the literature from Chapter 2. Afterwards, all data were processed to see how tourists assess the use of English by Dutch hotel staff, but also to explore which other methods of (non-)verbal communication might be used by all target groups.

Concerning the web search, there was no need to anonymise any information, as reviewers were already given the option to either add their name and country or origin on Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com, or to leave this information out. Furthermore, the reviews were widely accessible and open to all who were interested. Hence, it was decided to retain the personal information concerning country of origin. This provided important details for this study, as a distinction could be made between German and Chinese tourists and NS and other NNS of English. The last two groups might also present interesting views about the use of English by Dutch hotel staff, the different communication strategies used, and the level of hospitality.

## Chapter 4. Design of the Interview, Web Search, and Questionnaire

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Conducting interviews, creating questionnaires, and undertaking a web search requires a great deal of patience, trust, and cooperation from all parties involved. Consequently, the design of all three methods should be adapted to the appropriate target group. The interview was designed to gather qualitative data about intercultural issues, while the questionnaire was created to acquire quantitative data concerning similar aspects. The web search was completed to obtain information about hospitality, and language and communication difficulties from hotel guests in addition to the questionnaire. However, cultural aspects should always be taken into consideration when including people with different cultural backgrounds in research, otherwise, unworkable or limited information could come forward. This chapter will discuss all aspects as mentioned above, and also describe practical problems encountered during research concerning the interviews, web search and questionnaires.

### *4.1 Design of the Interviews*

The interviews were designed to gather information about the use of English within the hospitality sector, and more specifically, to gather qualitative data about intercultural issues within various hotels throughout the Netherlands. Qualitative research is understood as the interpretation of empirical data through the analysis of the actor's experience in its original context in order to create social meaning. According to Silverman (2006) this social meaning can be reached by exploring people's life histories on everyday behaviour (p.34). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not only explore behaviour while taking the contextual factors into account, but it is also open to the discovery of unanticipated findings, which means that the interviewer should attempt to interpret the different phenomena offered by the interviewee, and possibly, altering research plans to such occurrences.

Interviews were chosen as the qualitative research tool, since they were more personal than other methods (Silverman, 2006, p.34). Several possibilities of different kinds of qualitative interviewing were explored, after which the decision was made to carry out semi-structured interviews, with mostly flexible open-ended questions that enable the interviewee to shape the course of the interview to some extent. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with a fairly open framework, which gave room for two-way communication. Furthermore, these started with general questions or topics, while other relevant topics were

dealt with at a later stage, in which more specific questions can be asked. Some of the questions were prepared beforehand, but the majority was created during the interview, allowing both participants to discuss relevant issues. However, the interviewer stayed in charge and guaranteed that all topics were covered. Moreover, all interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded on the spot, which gave the interviewer the possibility of asking follow-up questions and probing, along with the chance to establish rapport with the interviewee.

The questions for the interviews were designed according to Spradley's (1979) guidelines for ethnographic interviewing. A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix 3, which shows the different topics covered during the interviews, and the questions related to these topics.

#### *4.2 Stages of the Interviews*

All ethnographic interviews proceeded through several stages; they started with apprehension, continued with exploration, cooperation, and ending with participation. This set of consecutive stages is called the rapport process as discussed in Chapter 2 (Spradley, 1979, p.78). Every interview conducted for this thesis had an uncertain start; both participants felt apprehensive as they were not sure of what to expect of the other party, and they did not exactly know how all responses would be evaluated by their interlocutor (Spradley, 1979, p.79). This is a common emotion, which could lead to the informant downgrading the importance of the information, as they could be afraid they will not meet the expectations of the ethnographer (Spradley, 1979, p.80). An example of this was found in the second interview when the participant stated that they opened recently, and that the information this informant could provide was probably not sufficient enough for this study. Consequently, the possible importance of the information was downgraded, which might have been an excuse to eliminate insufficient data. In this case, descriptive questions were a helpful tool for the development of trust and a free flow of information, which are two important principles in conducting initial interviews (Spradley, 1979, p.80). The central goal of all three interviews was to get and to keep the informants talking to gain as much valuable information as possible. However, this cannot be accomplished without proceeding through all four consecutive stages.

Apprehension will almost always lead to exploration, in which both parties become familiar with the newly constructed relationship. Exploration is mainly about listening, observing, and testing. In this phase, apprehension is left behind, there is no more uncertainty or anxiety, and a new territory within the interview can be explored (Spradley, 1979, p.80-1). This stage includes three main principles, which are 1) making repeated explanations; 2) restating what the informants say; 3) avoiding to ask for meaning and asking for use instead (Spradley, 1979, p.81). Examples of these were found in the third interview, in which the ethnographer restated the informants' claims to gain additional information, while at the same time, trying to create openings for follow-up questions. An example from this interview is: "Okay, you were talking about the fact that there are many business travellers arriving during the week, while during weekends there are more leisure guests. Where do the latter ones come from, mainly the Netherlands, or from abroad?" The interviewer used a statement from the interviewee and turned it into a question to which the first needed an answer. After this stage (exploration), the interview moved to cooperation, in which both parties knew what to expect of the other: mutual trust was built, and there was no concern about "making mistakes in asking or answering questions" (Spradley, 1979, p.82-3). The last phase is participation, in which a new dimension is added to the relationship between both parties. The informant recognised and accepted the interviewer, which led to a "heightened sense of cooperation and full participation in the research" (Spradley, 1979, p.83). Appendix 4 displays the full transcriptions of all three interviews in which the four stages of ethnographic interviewing were found.

In addition to the rapport process, Spradley (1979) provided some guidelines for asking descriptive questions. He claimed that descriptive questions form the backbone of any ethnographic interview; this means that these should always be included in order to gain valuable information. Descriptive questions can vary from very wide open-ended questions, to very specific, focused on one single aspect, questions. Appendix 1 shows the five elements of an ethnographic interview with descriptive questions. All these were taken into account when designing the ethnographic interviews. Example of experience questions are: '[C]ould you describe a situation in which you had a language related misunderstanding with a guest? What was your role in this, and how did you deal with the misunderstanding to resolve it?', or '[C]ould you tell me something about your experiences as a [job title] within this hotel?' (Spradley, 1979, p.88). These questions were related to any experience of the interviewee concerning particular situations (Spradley, 1979, p.88). This type of questions is preferably so

open-ended that participants might struggle in answering them, due to their difficult nature. Example questions focus on specific, single acts or events identified by the informant (Spradley, 1979, p.88). These should first be acknowledged, after which the interviewer asked for examples such as: “[D]o you perhaps have an example of miscommunication that you can recall at this moment?” Example questions were useful for follow-up questions concerning critical incidents and how hotel staff dealt with language and communication issues. According to Spradley (1979) there are many different ways of obtaining important information. These two aspects as described above are only limited examples. All results gained from the interviews will be discussed in depth in the subsequent chapter.

### *4.3 Design of the Web Search*

In addition to the interviews and questionnaire, a web search was set up to obtain additional information about communication issues and the use of the English language by hotel staff. First of all, the contents of review websites such as Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com were investigated to obtain information about their method of displaying and promoting hotels in the Netherlands. It was discovered that Tripadvisor.nl was easier to browse, as it gave the option to focus on single aspects of comments given by reviewers. For instance, the website divides its reviews into several categories ranging from excellent to terrible. This division proved to be useful for this study, as the main focus lied on the negative comments as explained in 3.2. These presented the most interesting details about miscommunication, and the level of service and hospitality.

Secondly, it was decided to randomly search for hotels, with only one condition: they should be located in various cities throughout the Netherlands that attract many tourists; therefore, hotels in cities like Amsterdam, The Hague, Groningen, Maastricht, Utrecht, Arnhem and Rotterdam were included. After the hotels had been selected, without focusing on size (e.g. number of rooms), the analysis of the comments commenced. Tripadvisor.nl subdivides its comments into several categories, which made it easier to select the comments in the terrible section. In addition, comments in the moderate and average section were also analysed and included in the web search. All reviewers on these websites had the opportunity to write in their mother tongue, to add their country of origin, and to review on aspects like service, hygiene, location, sleep comfort, etc. This proved to be a useful tool as the comments could be selected on service which also included language and communication issues.

Thirdly, all comments were copied and saved into a separate document. This list showed selected guest comments from Tripadvisor on the service provided by various hotels in the Netherlands, and can be found in Appendix 5. It was impossible to include every single comment as the corpus would have been too extensive. Consequently, as mentioned above, only negative comments were inserted. This does not mean that other comments are unimportant or invalid; they could perhaps contribute to this thesis. However, it was decided to include some important remarks to give a general overview of the negatives comments concerning the use of other languages, communication issues and level of hospitality.

#### *4.4 Design of the Questionnaire*

Unlike the interviews, the questionnaires were designed to gather quantitative data about the use of English by hotel staff, and also to gain information about other methods of communication and possible points of improvement concerning these aspects. These quantitative data were gathered through semi-open-ended questions about the relevant topics. The questionnaires were not distributed to the hotel staff, but to Chinese and German tourists visiting the Netherlands.

The questions formulated for the questionnaire were based upon the answers given by the interviewed hotel owners and employee as described in 3.1. Based on the answers provided by these informants, it was decided to design and distribute questionnaires to tourists to obtain additional information concerning language and communication issues which were not defined by the hotel staff. Hence, the focus of the questionnaire lied on discovering information concerning miscommunication, the use of English by hotel staff, and other methods of communication used when Dutch or English are not an option. The following table displays the questions that were formulated for the questionnaire. As can be seen, several topics were covered in the questionnaire: mostly focused on the use of English by both hotel staff and guests visiting these hotels. It should be noted that the first question might have been difficult to answer due to differences in views concerning the use of the English language and the concepts of politeness and accurateness. Moreover, nationalities and the native language of the hotel staff were not taken into account. However, the interviews suggested that in these hotels there were only native speakers of Dutch present, except for one reception employee whose mother tongue was English. The hotel owners and reception manager that were interviewed were also native speakers of Dutch.

1. Would you say that the English used by hotel staff is polite/accurate?
2. Have you ever had any difficulties with hotel staff regarding their use of English?
3. If the hotel staff speak only Dutch or English, and you do not speak these languages, how do you deal with this? What do you do to get your point across?
4. If using English or Dutch is not an option, are there other methods or languages that can or should be used to communicate?
5. When dealing with hotel staff, do you ever feel the need to adjust your use of language to theirs? If so, why?

Table 4. Questions from the Questionnaire

Designing questionnaires for Chinese and German guests required different approaches; therefore, a variety of methods should be taken into account when creating these for specific target groups; otherwise, results might be negatively influenced. According to Pan (2008), there is a growing need for conducting survey interviews in languages other than English due to the expanding globalisation, and especially for Chinese target groups as Chinese is now the “third most frequently spoken language at home other than English and Spanish in the United States” (p.17). It means that the need for understanding Chinese culture is growing. This is not only the case in the United States, but also in the Netherlands, where this questionnaire was designed and distributed. Pan (2008) claimed that “more and more Chinese-speaking respondents are being selected into the survey universe”, and that there is “a lack of research on Chinese speakers as survey respondents” (p.18). He also argued that there is not enough literature available for this group, which made it harder to design questionnaires or interviews for this particular target group (Pan, 2008, p.18). Pan (2008) stated that, according to Chinese people, the “preferred communication style is indirectness and face-saving strategies appropriate to the power relation in a specific domain” (p.18). This might have also been the case with the questionnaire distributed to Chinese tourists in the Netherlands. Most answers did not meet the assumptions of the present researcher, and showed differences with the expectations. There might be a clash in communication methods and strategies, and Pan (2008) argued this could lead to unreliable data; consequently, researchers should first fully understand the Chinese communication styles before conducting survey interviews, questionnaires or any other form of research methods (Pan, 2008, p.18).



The German tourists received a different approach than the Chinese tourists. Another method of distribution was added: distribution over the Internet as described in 3.3. It was decided to add these additional distribution channels, as it turned out that there were fewer German tourists visiting the museum than Chinese tourists. In addition, it should be noted that this method of distributing questionnaires may not have worked for the Chinese tourists, as the present researcher made use of a large network of colleagues, friends and family who all have contacts in Germany. It is unclear whether this could have been done for the Chinese tourists, due to the limited network of Chinese contacts of the present researcher.

#### *4.5 Practical Problems*

This study has experienced some practical problems which could have been perceived as limitations to the final result. However, the problems encountered during research were either solved or adapted to ensure the validity of the data collection, without making invalid or untrue generalisations or statements. One of the main problems for this study was that both the interviews and the questionnaires were dependent on other parties, which created difficulties concerning the data collection.

First of all, there were problems concerning the questions formulated for the interviews; therefore, the questions were altered after the pilot interview. This try-out was used to find out whether the questions would result in useful data. However, it turned out that the questions needed to be reformulated, while other questions were added or left out to ensure the most meaningful information was obtained. In addition, finding informants proved to be a bigger problem, as most hotel managers claimed they were not interested in participating, were too busy, or were understaffed. At a certain point it was decided to physically visit some hotels to ask for participation, which resulted in an additional interview. However, most hotel managers denied access, which made it harder to generate valuable and useful data.

The web search entailed only few practical problems, as this part of this thesis was not dependent on other people. For instance, the review websites were widely accessible by everyone who is interested in reading other people's comments about hotels in the Netherlands; there was no need to sign in, or to become a member of that website. Furthermore, most reviewers stated their country of origin, which made it easier for this study to filter out the Dutch comments and to focus on people originating from other countries. The

only difficult aspect was that most reviewers wrote comments about the rooms, the hygiene, and location of the hotels; there was less information available concerning communication issues, language problems or complaints about service. However, in the end, most information gathered through the web search contained valuable data, which were used for the analysis and could possibly contribute to the creation of an intercultural communication training. All in all, the web search did not provide the present researcher with many problems.

The questionnaires, on the other hand, contained more problems than expected. Creating and designing questionnaires for participants with different cultural backgrounds could potentially be difficult and should follow various methods and approaches to obtain the most valuable data. The best example of this is the questionnaire designed for the Chinese target group: the questions were a literal translation of the English questions, without taking cultural varieties into account. Some assumptions were made beforehand, which were not met by the answers given. Although the questionnaire was translated into Chinese by a native speaker, it should have been taken into consideration that this particular target group might need a different approach or different questions. Chapter 5 elaborated on the assumptions created for the Chinese questionnaire, and showed the results and how this practical problem affected the outcome. Additionally, there were some problems concerning the distribution of the German questionnaire. It was impossible to hand these out in the museum, since there were not many German tourists. Consequently, it was decided to distribute the questionnaires over the Internet. However, as described in 3.3, self-administered questionnaires usually generate a lower response rate than in-person survey methods. Although several friends, relatives, and colleagues forwarded the questionnaire to their German contacts, the response rate was very low. Overall, the process of collecting data was delayed due to this factor, but did not form a major limitation to the study. One final problem encountered with the questionnaire was the formulation of the first question. It should have been taken into consideration that concepts such as politeness and accurateness might have different meanings in different cultures.

## Chapter 5. Results and Analysis of Findings

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There are many reasons why intercultural communication training could be effective for people working in the hospitality sector. With the help of the interviews conducted with hotel staff, questionnaires distributed among Chinese and German tourists, and the web search on review websites, it could be investigated whether or not there is an actual need for such training. This chapter displays all the results acquired from these research methods. First, the interviews will be described and analysed to see how hotel staff view their intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Secondly, the reviews from the web search will be depicted, which showed the views from guests. Thirdly, the questionnaires were analysed, which presented sufficient data concerning language and communication issues. At the end of the chapter, short conclusions will be drawn concerning the need for any training.

### *5.1 Results and Analysis of the Interviews*

As stated in 3.1, two hotel owners and one employee were interviewed for this thesis. All three interviews were based on the guidelines given by Spradley (1979) as described in Chapter 2. The first interview was a pilot interview, used to investigate whether the questions were formulated correctly, so the information needed to base this thesis upon was acquired. Hereafter, the questions were rephrased and rearranged in a different format, which was used for the second and third interview. The results discussed below suggest there is no specific need for any intercultural communication training according to the informants. However, a closer look was taken at the sweeping statements made by these informants, to see that intercultural sensitivity and competence were underdeveloped. In addition, awareness should be raised concerning these issues. It should be noted that all interviews were conducted in Dutch and translations into English were made by the present researcher. However, the full transcripts were not translated, because all important information was included and translated in this section. All in all, all three informants claimed that it is important that all employees should have basic to extended knowledge of their surroundings: they should be able to give information about restaurants, the tourism information office, museums, etc. In addition, all informants claim that knowledge of different European languages would be helpful, but it is not a requirement for the staff. Guests who do not speak Dutch as a native language are approached in English, as the informants do not have any sufficient knowledge of other

languages. Otherwise, they will try to communicate “with their hands and feet” in order to convey their message. In addition, accommodation of one’s language and behaviour to the guests was said to be important by two informants, even though this might sometimes be difficult. Furthermore, I-1 claimed there is no need for any intercultural communication training at all, since “all goes well”, and there were never any communication difficulties. I-3, on the other hand, claimed that selecting staff on knowledge of other foreign languages (e.g. German, French, Spanish, etc.) should be a requirement, as the level of hospitality could be raised. Moreover, intercultural sensitivity and awareness concerning intercultural issues should be raised to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication.

The pilot interview was conducted in Dutch with the owner of a small boutique hotel, who will be referred to as I-1. The interview was recorded on the spot, which gave both parties the opportunity to communicate freely without any hesitations or interruptions. The start contained general questions concerning the educational and professional background of the hotel owner, which resulted in a surprising answer: I-1 had no previous education in hospitality, entrepreneurship, or (intercultural) communication.

Many other interesting issues and results were discovered during this interview. First of all, all guests are approached in a familiar manner: shaking hands when entering the hotel, introducing themselves to the guest, and using guests’ first names instead of family names or Sir or Madam. Most guests of this hotel arrive from countries other than the Netherlands, namely: Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Eastern Europe, China, Japan, and Belgium. Only one-third of all guests are Dutch. However, I-1 agreed that foreign guests need different approaches than Dutch guests, although it appeared they used the same methods for all guests.

In addition, this informant made generalising statements concerning Chinese and German tourists, which suggested the absence of any intercultural sensitivity or awareness. For instance, Germans “are more formal and do not want to be addressed by their first names”. I-1 added to this, that Germans “are always cheerful”. In addition, this informant claimed that Chinese guests are “very Chinese, because they eat with much noise”, and “they would like to be left alone, are more distant and insecure than other guests”. Moreover, Chinese guests “need a different instruction than other guests when showing them the room, because they tend to change the interior of the rooms”. All in all, Chinese guests are “not open to any personal approach” and “do not come to adapt to local culture”. All claims can be seen

as sweeping statements which could indicate that training concerning intercultural communication might be needed.

Overall, this informant did not feel the need for intercultural communication training or language courses, “because experience, practical insights, and hospitality are abilities you either have or you do not”. I-1 argued that he had acquired his language skills through experience and reading in English, which was sufficient for this informant. However, misunderstandings and miscommunications arose in the past with Swiss and English guests. These guests complained about the service on a review website, and the informant immediately sent an email to them. This could be seen as a direct communication method, which might not be appreciated in all cultures. I-1 never received an answer: perhaps due to the directness of his email. All in all, there were many instances of sweeping statements concerning different cultures; however, I-1 did realise that cultural differences exist and close attention should be paid to individual cases.

For the second interview, the questions were rearranged and rephrased and a case study was added, which led to an interview focused on communication and language issues, and on misunderstandings. This new framework was then used for both the second and the third interview. This particular one was also conducted in Dutch, with the owner of another small boutique hotel who will be referred to as I-2. Like its predecessor, this interview was recorded on the spot, although a slightly different method was followed: extra emphasis was placed on the different communication methods. In addition, a case study was added in which the informant was asked to describe particular situations.

Although this hotel opened recently, in September 2011, a number of intercultural communication issues have arisen between staff and customers. First of all, it was important to establish the origin of the guests; 50 per cent of all guests are European, of which Dutch are the largest group of visitors, followed by the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Germany. Other guests come from Sweden, Portugal, Norway, France, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Romania, the United States, Canada, Russia, China, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. The languages spoken by hotel employees are mostly English and Dutch; although, there are some employees who speak German, French, or Italian but they had not been selected on their knowledge of foreign languages. According to I-2, “English is easier, because the service will be quicker”. In addition, I-2 claimed that “everyone can read English” and “it just sounds better”. Moreover, this informant argued “when speaking German, it is more difficult and we will have to communicate using gestures”.

This informant also made generalising statements about several cultural groups, such as Russians and Indians. I-2 argued that all Russians “were distant and did not speak much”, while all Indians “like to be pampered, because they were used to this from their own country”. These comments suggested that this informant might not be very culturally sensitive or aware, as people from Russian and Indian cultures were not seen as individuals. However, I-2 did realise that “one should always keep in mind that all guests are individuals and should be treated as such”. In addition, misunderstandings were encountered with German guests due to the absence of the ability of the staff to speak this language. I-2 did not know how to approach a German guest or how to help him, and implied he “was just a grumpy man”.

One final topic covered during this interview was the accommodation qualities of both hotel staff and guests concerning language and communication methods. According to I-2 it is important to adjust one’s language and behaviour to the guests’. However, when interacting with NS of English it might be difficult to understand them; I-2 then “pretends she understood it all to look polite”. This informant made an interesting claim by stating that “it is impossible not to communicate” especially in the hospitality sector. Consequently, “either the hotel staff should adjust to the guests’ language and behaviour or vice versa”. Overall, this informant seemed relatively interculturally aware, although she also made some sweeping statements about particular cultures. It is always important to keep in mind that all travellers are individual cases, and should not be compared to other people from the same culture. In addition, due to the limited knowledge of languages other than English, it was sometimes impossible for this informant to communicate with guests who did not speak Dutch or English. According to I-2, the preferred method of communication is “to use gestures”.

The final interview followed the same method as its predecessor. However, this one was conducted with a reservations manager from a larger hotel, who will be referred to as I-3. Again, this interview was recorded on the spot, and as results below suggest, there were some interesting issues which might indicate the need for intercultural communication training.

This hotel opened in 2008 and most guests used their services for business trips. According to I-3, German, Italian, British, and American guests cover around 70 per cent of all business travellers. In addition, leisure guests mainly consist of Dutch visitors (60 to 70 per cent). Due to this variety in cultural backgrounds, the hotel staff should be able to adapt and adjust to the differences in language and communication methods. However, all receptionists only speak English and Dutch, except for one who also speaks German. I-3 argued it would be an advantage if all staff could speak French, German, English, and Dutch; however, at the

moment this is no requirement in this hotel. Due to this limited knowledge of other languages, I-3 claimed it had been difficult to communicate with French and Italian guests “as their level of English is lower”. Germans on the contrary “have a good command of the English language”. All in all, communicating with NS, both British and American, is easier than communicating with NNS.

This interview also included questions concerning the level of accommodation. I-3 argued that accommodating to the other is important to understand each other. Additionally, she claimed “it goes automatically: finding easier words, shorter sentences”, and using gestures might also be an option. However, I-3 noticed that British guests do adjust their language to the level of the hotel staff, while American travellers “did not restate their claims, except when you ask for an explanation”. According to this informant, “British guests are very polite and more aware of cultural differences than Americans”.

In addition, misunderstandings and miscommunication issues were discussed. The informant explained there have been instances of misinterpretations between guests and staff, but also between the staff members. According to I-3, there have been discussions with a British employee because “British people are overall more polite; the Dutch are more direct, and say what we think. The British employee finds it difficult to approach the Dutch staff in a direct manner”. I-3 added that the “level of Dutch of the British employee is relatively low”, and due to the existence of a “language barrier” could cause problems. Possible solutions might be reducing the speech rate and simplifying words or sentences. Furthermore, a case of misapprehension took place with a guest which had to be solved in English. The informant claimed that “due to her lower level of English” it was difficult to argue in English, and could, consequently, not solve the issue herself.

Overall, I-3 also made generalisations about particular cultures; however, this informant seemed to be the most culturally aware, as opposed to the other two. For instance, she claimed that learning several European languages might contribute to a higher level of hospitality, which could be included as a theme in possible communication training.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> All statements, quotations, and claims made in this paragraph are taken from the interviews conducted within three hotels in the Netherlands. The full interviews can be found in Appendix 4

## 5.2 Results and Analysis of the Web Search

As mentioned in 3.2, a web search was carried out on review websites such as Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com. To ensure the sample would be representative, all kinds of hotels were analysed, ranging from large chain hotels to small boutique hotels. After all, guests may be prejudiced towards particular types of hotels. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3, the comments taken from both websites might not always be reliable because some hotels have instructed their staff to write positive comments about their hotel to enhance the ratings. Moreover, Tripadvisor.nl offered the opportunity for anyone to write comments without actually booking a hotel. It meant that reviews could have been written by people who have never stayed in that particular hotel. This might have influenced the reliability of the reviews. Furthermore, anonymous reviews might also be fake reviews. However, there is no substantial proof whether these are true or false; therefore, they are not included in this analysis. Moreover, attention was paid to the negative comments, as these were assumed to be the most reliable. It should be noted that all comments were originally posted in English, unless stated otherwise; in that case, the present researcher has translated the reviews into English. Additionally, language errors have not been corrected.

Many reviews have been written concerning communication and language issues in hotels in the Netherlands. This section was divided into two separate parts; the first part showed the total number of reviews analysed, while the second part discussed the actual comments. Table 5 provided an overview of all hotels included in this web search, and was categorised according to the amount of reviews, which indicated that, despite all the positive reviews, hotels could always receive an equal amount of negative ones. The latter were taken from the terrible, moderate, and average section on Tripadvisor.nl.

<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Total number of reviews</b>	<b>Excel lent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Ave rage</b>	<b>Mode rate</b>	<b>Terri ble</b>
NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky Amsterdam	1483	495	484	289	132	83
Hilton Amsterdam	846	435	276	90	32	13
Townhouse Hotel Maastricht	513	188	235	69	16	5
Hotel Beaumont Maastricht	367	124	179	43	15	6
Intercontinental Amstel Amsterdam	277	196	43	24	6	8



Hotel Des Indes The Hague	246	155	58	12	15	6
Hampshire Hotel Savoy Rotterdam	208	27	62	72	30	17
Parkhotel The Hague	180	60	76	29	10	5
Grand Hotel Karel V Utrecht	175	100	55	16	3	1
Kruissherenhotel Maastricht	172	95	57	13	5	2
Hotel New York Rotterdam	156	78	61	8	8	1
Hampshire City Hotel Groningen	154	28	80	33	10	3
Hotel Mitland Utrecht	140	53	63	16	5	3
Carlton President Hotel	130	49	53	16	11	1
Best Western Art Hotel Rotterdam	81	9	40	20	5	7
NH Hotel de Ville Groningen	72	16	26	15	8	7
NH Rijnhotel Arnhem	65	14	25	18	7	1
Martini Hotel Groningen	51	4	16	16	10	5
Van der Valk Hotel Arnhem	42	13	15	10	2	2
Hotel Blanc Arnhem	16	2	5	4	2	3

Table 5. Number of Reviews per Hotel.

As this table showed, the NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam received the most reviews, both positive and negative. Due to its number one position in the list, this hotel was chosen for further analysis. As Table 6 showed, most reviewers have commented on the level of service and the use of foreign languages by the hotel staff. This could indicate the absence of communication qualities but also of the absence of awareness concerning intercultural differences. As comment C11 showed, the cultural differences between the host and the guest were evident, but in a negative way. Although cultural differences are embedded in every person, hotel staff should be able to adjust their language and behaviour to the guests' to provide the best possible service. Comments C12 and C14 have shown some instances of reception employees who blamed the guest for misunderstandings. This could have led to frustration and anger by the guests, which should be avoided. According to these guests, the hotel staff were impolite and rude. Additional training concerning cultural differences might create more awareness for the hotel staff, while at the same time, educating them about certain requirements of particular guests. Intercultural communication training, focusing on culture-

general and culture-specific elements, could help the hotel staff in recognising cultural differences. For instance, concepts such as politeness and face-saving strategies might be useful because these could contribute to a better understanding of cultural requirements. As the comments in Table 6 suggested, the hotel staff was direct, which might be perceived by the guests as being rude or impolite. Focusing on politeness strategies and the differences in attitudes concerning this concept might improve the overall perception of (in)directness for both hotel staff and guests. Educating the staff about the strategies used in the Dutch culture compared to strategies used by other cultures could contribute to a higher level of awareness, which might lead to a better understanding of cultural differences. As the concept and interpretation of politeness differs throughout cultures, it might be useful for hotel staff to immerse into several cultures that use a variety of politeness strategies. In addition, recognising the concept of politeness in their own culture (the Dutch culture) might add an extra dimension to the realisation that other cultures may perceive this strategy differently. Brown and Levinson (1987) divided the concept of politeness into negative and positive politeness. The latter is meant to redress the interlocutors positive face, while negative politeness could potentially threaten the others' face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.101). These aspects should deserve some attention when included in any intercultural communication training for Dutch hotel staff.

The second hotel in this table is the Hilton Amsterdam. This hotel has received many positive reviews and, compared to the NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, only few negative ones. However, as Table 6 showed, the negative reviews were comparable to the ones of its predecessor. Guests commented on language, service, and hospitality, which suggested that the staff might benefit from training that would increase their level of hospitality and cultural sensitivity. Interestingly, almost all reviews for these two hotels were written by native speakers of English. There was no particular explanation for this, but it could be assumed that native speakers paid more attention to politeness, use of the English language and level of service. However, both C11 and C13 commented on the service, which might indicate that this aspect of hospitality was the most important for them as non-native speakers of English. In addition, as mentioned before, guests might be prejudiced about these hotels, as these have a certain reputation and people might have high expectations towards the hotel staff. All in all, the reviews did not display any cultural sensitivity from the hotel staff, nor did it show awareness concerning guests' requirements. For this hotel, it would be recommended to immerse into the specific requirements of different cultures. Additionally, the concepts of

politeness and face-saving strategies might also be useful for this hotel staff to recognise culture-general and culture-specific elements concerning these concepts. Most comments for the Hilton Amsterdam Hotel were written by native speakers of English. They commented on the way the staff communicated with them which, to them, sounded patronising and arrogant. It could be due to differences in politeness that the NS felt disrespected and condescended. One of the informants of the interview claimed that “British people are always very polite”, which suggests that the Dutch directness should be adapted towards British standards to achieve a better understanding on both sides concerning communication strategies.

### **NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky**

C11: *staff and service is typical European and not very helpful*” (Malaysia)

C12: “when I tried to check out at 6am in the morning, nobody was at the reception desk and I was made to wait 20 minutes for someone to attend. *When she finally approached, she said, ‘next time, just ring the bell. Did you not see it’*” (United Kingdom)

C13: “*staff acted like they were doing you a favor* just to check you in and out” (Thailand)

C14: “I asked her (the manager) what about the previous night as it hadn’t happened then and she responded saying, *‘well I wasn’t here last night so I don’t know’*” (United Kingdom)

### **Hilton Amsterdam**

C15: “*Staff unfriendly and extremely unhelpful. Reception staff couldn’t even direct us in the correct direction for the markets*” (United Kingdom)

C16: “I was told on 2 separate occasions by *the desk clerk that he was “too busy”* and that I should come back later (the lobby was empty with no one else in sight!)” (United Kingdom)

C17: “*The staff is rude and arrogant.*” (United States of America)

C18: “*The staff here were so snobbish and patronising that we left.*” (United Kingdom)

Table 6. Selected guest comments on the service provided by NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky and Hilton Amsterdam. Comments on the use of language and communication by the hotel staff have been italicised. Additionally, language errors have not been corrected.

Table 7 showed additional comments made by guests concerning other hotels in the Netherlands. Although some hotels have received many positive reviews, the negative ones could be a major influence on future travellers/guests. The comments as mentioned in Table 7 were categorised according to city. However, all comments were related to issues concerned with service, language and communication methods. All comments about language issues and level of service have been italicised. In addition, this Table contained a variety of comments from guests from all over the world: from the United States of America to China, and from Australia to Denmark. This could suggest that no matter what their cultural background is, all people require high levels of hospitality. Moreover, there were many comments about the staff being rude and disinterested. This might indicate that the staff have not received enough training to cope with cultural differences and are, therefore, insecure in certain situations, which resulted in disrespectful and ill-mannered behaviour towards the guest. An example of this could be seen in C19, in which the guest felt the staff were racist towards Asian guests, and C26, in which the guests were reprimanded for being early. Perhaps the staff did not know how to approach the guests, which resulted in contemptuous behaviour. There were also many comments concerning the disinterest of the staff, as C21 claimed. This guest felt that the management was more interested in making money than comforting their guests. Nonetheless, these are all assumptions; to find out whether the explanations as mentioned before are correct, further research should be carried out in the hotels as shown in Table 6 and 7. In intercultural communication, perceptions of rudeness might be linked to a lack of cultural awareness concerning the different communication strategies employed in various cultures. According to Clyne (1994) “successful communication concerns the relation between the speaker’s communicative intention, the interlocutor’s expectation of the message, and communicative effects of the messages” (p.144). This suggested that all communicative effects should match the intentions. The tables showed that the messages the hotel staff were trying to convey did not meet the expectations of the guests. Additionally, the intentions of the hotel staff were misinterpreted, leading to unsuccessful communication. Furthermore, in conversations, “an important issue is also to ensure that your point of view is heard and understood, and that you do not lose face or feel threatened” (Clyne, 1994, p.144). When these aspects are not taken into consideration, it may be possible that the communication fails. In this case, it might be useful to try to raise awareness about the various communication strategies which might contribute to a better understanding of cultural differences.

Furthermore, results from the web search suggested language and communication skills should be improved by the hotel staff. Additionally, creating intercultural awareness should be an important part of the education of hotel staff. It could be concluded from the comments as shown in both tables that the employees of various hotels in the Netherlands might lack empathy and are less aware of different cultural backgrounds than they should be. All in all, due to these reasons the hotel staff might not be able to provide the best possible service concerning language, communication and hospitality. Additionally, this study was meant as an exploratory study into the use of English by hotel staff and guests, as well as investigating which communication methods would be useful for different types of guests. Consequently, further research in which these aspects are analysed might contribute to a better understanding of cultural differences and how hotel staff should deal with these.

#### **Parkhotel The Hague**

C19: “What I and my friend experience was *staffs are very racist* especially with Asian guests or guests who might not dress up to their standards (sic). *It was shown by the way they talked to us which was rude and arrogant*” (Thailand)

C20: “The staff was of a lesser problem but *they did look complacent and not particularly interested* in helping us with our questions.” (China)

#### **Hotel des Indes The Hague**

C21: “The impression I got was that *the hotel was more interested in making money* as in many small ways as possible than really providing service” (United Kingdom)

#### **Martini Hotel Groningen**

C22: “*The receptionist was neutrally interested in his customer, not at all very excited about guests*” (United Kingdom)

C23: “*Staff couldn't care less*” (United States of America)

#### **Townhouse Hotel Maastricht**

C24: “Since we arrived from Canada I could not sleep and went downstairs at 3AM only to find the *staff at the front desk on a porn site with some of his drunk buddies making phone calls and being very disrespectful to girls they were phoning*. They did not care that a guest

was only 3 meters away listening to everything.” (Canada)

**Hotel Beaumont Maastricht**

C25: “*Actually, I’m not sure what the staff did other than look at you and wish you would hurry up and leave already*” (United Arab Emirates)

**Grand Hotel Karel V Utrecht**

C26: “*The receptionist’s greeting on our arrival was not welcoming, reminding us that we were early (about an hour), to which our reply was, “can’t ensure long-haul flights fit into your time frame”*(South Africa)

**Hampshire Hotel Savoy Rotterdam**

C27: “*The worst part was the staff’s attitude at the reception. Decidedly rude*” (Denmark)

**Hotel New York Rotterdam**

C28: “*The staff speaks something that should resemble English, but it’s hardly understandable*” (Belgium)

**Van der Valk Hotel Arnhem**

C29: “*The staff was extremely rude at the smallest request and mostly aloof to the hotel guests*” (Australia)

C30: “*The reception was dutiful, kept on speaking Dutch, which was enough for the reception; nevertheless, I was answered in English (I’m German), well<sup>11</sup>*” (Germany)

Table 7. Selected guest comments on the service provided by various hotels in the Netherlands. Comments on the use of language and communication have been italicised. Additionally, language errors have not been corrected.

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<sup>11</sup> Author’s translation of the original: “Empfang geschäftsmäßig, spreche bedingt niederländisch, für den Empfang reicht, gleichwohl wurde englisch geantwortet (bin Deutsche), na ja”

### *5.3 Results and Analysis of the Questionnaires*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 50 questionnaires were distributed per target group, of which 37 of the Chinese tourists and 20 of the German tourists were returned. First of all, the answers provided by the Chinese respondents have been discussed and analysed, after which a separate section has been assigned to the results from the German respondents. It was decided to separate the two target groups, as the number of German participants was too low to provide a reliable analysis. Consequently, all details acquired from this questionnaire have been analysed briefly at the end of this section and will not be taken into account for further analysis. However, the data obtained from the Chinese questionnaire has been analysed in this section, and has been linked to relevant literature to create a coherent analysis. In addition, all the data collected from the interviews, web search, and questionnaires have formed the basis for recommendations for further research. The questionnaires, as used for this part of research, have been translated from English into Chinese and German respectively. As described in 3.3, five questions had been formulated which have resulted in interesting details concerning the use of English by hotel staff, miscommunication instances, and other methods for communication when Dutch or English are not an option.

#### *5.3.1 Chinese Questionnaire*

All Chinese respondents gave affirmative answers to the first question (“Would you say that the English used by hotel staff is polite/accurate?”), which was relatively surprising for several reasons. First of all, most Chinese tourists who had been approached by the present researcher did not even speak or understand English. Nonetheless, all 37 answered affirmatively to this question. A possible explanation for this could lie in the contrary-to-face-value communication (CFVC) strategy employed by Chinese respondents as explained in Chapter 4. This might indicate that the present researcher should read between the lines. Secondly, another explanation might be that the Chinese respondents used a face-saving strategy, in which they tried to save the face of either the present researcher, or the host (i.e. the hotel staff). According to this strategy, it would be impolite to criticise the host in public; hence, it was assumed that the Chinese tourists answered this question positively. According to Ma (1994), these strategies could be perceived as misleading or confusing to outsiders to the Chinese culture. It was assumed that at least some, if not all, would answer this question

negatively, as most of them did not speak or understand English, and were dependent on their tour guide. In addition, Pan (2008) argued that Chinese people often prefer indirect communication styles and face-saving strategies due to differences in power relations in specific domains (e.g. hotels in the Netherlands) (p.18). Moreover, Yukyee Chan (2010) argued that Chinese people usually communicate in a harmony-oriented way; therefore, it could be expected that “Chinese respondents who do not wish to participate in the [...] survey [could be] more likely to provide indirect and/ or contrary-to-face-value responses than those who are willing to do so” (p.1679). Yukyee Chan (2010) distributed questionnaires among Chinese respondents, analysed their answers based on the CFVC method, and compared them to their English speaking counterparts (p.1682). It showed that 40 per cent of the Chinese respondents actually used this method of communication in the questionnaire, while no English speaking respondents used it. Moreover, the indirect way of communication is more prevalent in the Chinese culture, than in the English culture (Yukyee Chan, 2010, p.1683). It might be possible that the Chinese respondents used indirect communication strategies for this particular questionnaire. In order to find the authenticity of a yes or no message, the context and verbal cues should also be taken into consideration (Ma, 1994, in Yukyee Chan, 2010, p.1673). However, it was impossible to communicate with most Chinese tourists due to the language barrier; consequently, it could only be assumed that the methods as mentioned above had been used by this target group. To ensure the assumptions of the present researcher were met, the questions should perhaps have been rephrased. Nonetheless, the outcome to this question provided interesting data about use of English by hotel staff.

The second question (“Have you ever had any difficulties with the hotel staff regarding their use of English?”) was answered negatively by the majority of Chinese respondents. As Chart 1 displays, only a small number of respondents claimed they ever had any difficulties, while 11 per cent did not answer this question at all. Several reasons might explain why this question was not answered. First of all, as discussed with a native speaker of Chinese<sup>12</sup>, it might be assumed that the respondents did not fully understand the meaning of the question. It was intended to find out which problems have arisen during intercultural encounters. However, most respondents answered affirmative or negatively without further explanations. In addition, they may have used a face-saving strategy, as described above, to avoid criticism towards the present researcher or the hotel staff. Nonetheless, some

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<sup>12</sup> This native speaker has helped in translating the questionnaire from English to Chinese. Additionally, he helped in translating the answers back into English.



respondents gave explanations and claimed that they had difficulties “because of the poor English”, but it was not indicated whose poor English was meant. This respondent might have referred to the use of the language by the hotel staff. If this is true, this could indicate that improvement of the language skills would be needed. However, it is difficult to make generalising statements, as only one respondent gave an explanation. Furthermore, 16 per cent claimed there were difficulties with the English used by hotel staff, which could indicate the absence of intercultural communication competencies.

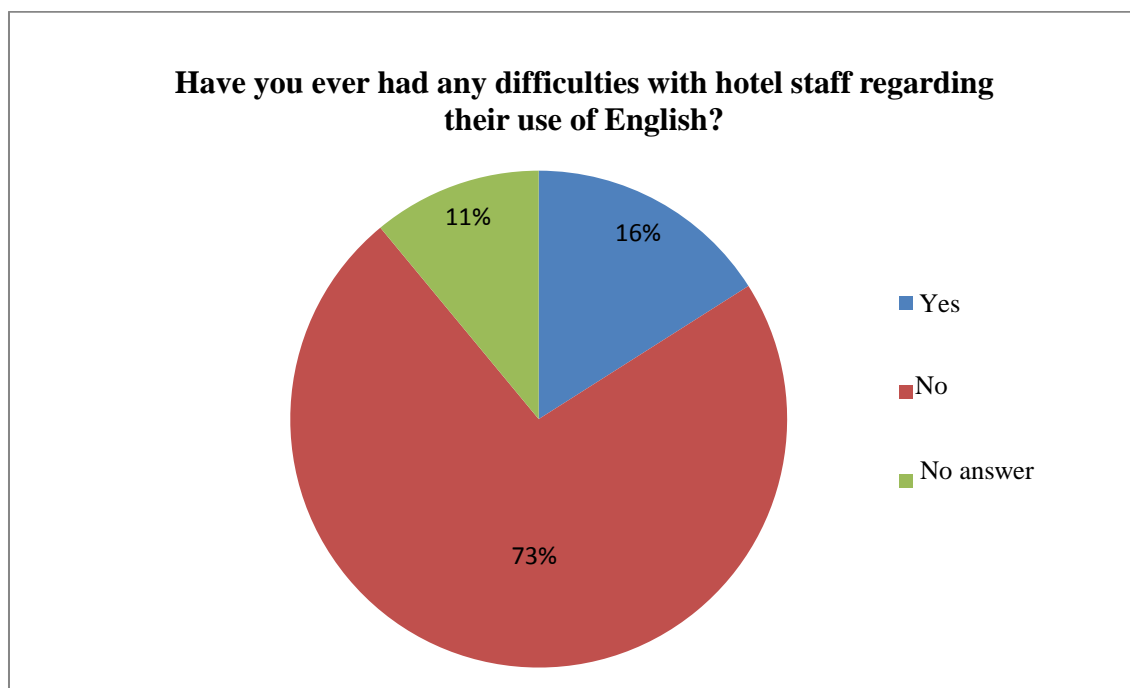


Chart 1. Results of Question 2 – Chinese Questionnaire. In total, 33 respondents answered this question with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, while the remaining 4 chose not to answer this question.

The next question (“If the hotel staff speak only Dutch or English, and you do not speak these languages, how do you deal with this? What do you do to get your point across?”) provided various and inventive answers. Interestingly, some Chinese respondents answered this question in English, even though they had been instructed to answer in their own mother tongue. The most common answer was using body language and gestures. Some suggested speaking Chinese, which is rather surprising as Chinese is not a common language in the Netherlands to learn in educational institutions. Consequently, it cannot be expected that hotel staff speak Chinese. Other options included learning English (or learning the language of the country they are visiting) and using Google Translate. Many respondents would also turn to

their tour guide to translate, which is only possible if they travel in organised groups. Others would find someone who speaks Chinese to translate. The most interesting claim, “I wish the hotel staff could speak Chinese”, showed the need for Chinese speakers. However, this might be seen as an unrealistic option, as most informants did not even speak other languages in addition to Dutch and English, and they also did not find it necessary to learn other languages as they “have managed” so far. This could suggest that they are not interested in learning more languages to enhance the experience of their guests. In addition, there were also some respondents who would draw pictures or use facial expressions to get their point across. However, using gestures or facial expressions could potentially be difficult, as these might have different meanings in other cultures. Hence, it is always important to be aware of cultural differences to avoid insulting the host or the guest. A solution for the hotel staff could lie in meta-communication, which is often used to denominate or discuss communication. As Prins (1994) argued, this form of communication could be used to talk about communication, which means that the hotel staff could use notes or signs in Chinese which state there are no Chinese speakers available in that particular hotel. This might be helpful for Chinese tourists as they are instantly informed about the current situation.

The fourth question (“If using Dutch or English is not an option, are there other methods or languages that can or should be used to communicate”) resulted in a variety of answers. Once again the Chinese respondents answered they would use Chinese as a replacement method if they could not use Dutch or English. This might have indicated the need for Chinese-speaking hotel staff, as the respondents would like to communicate in their own mother tongue. Additionally, as mentioned above, the number of Chinese tourists visiting the Netherlands is growing, which might have implied the need for Chinese-speaking staff was also growing. Other answers were similar to the answers of the previous question: using Google Translate, body language, facial expressions, pictures, and asking the tour guide/translator. Additionally, it was expected the respondents would turn to their tour guide, as most travelled in groups and were accompanied by a translator/tour guide. Although the answer “using Chinese” is surprising, it also makes sense. After all, most respondents did not speak or understand any English; therefore, it would be convenient for them if hotel staff could speak Chinese. As mentioned before, this might seem unrealistic; however, it might be possible for hotel staff to learn some basic formulaic expressions and key terms in Chinese. There are several institutions in the Netherlands that offer Chinese language courses, and the hotel management schools might be able to provide additional language courses as the

number of Chinese guests to the Netherlands is growing. However, as Appendix 7 suggested, these schools might not be very keen on offering these courses, as they claim “they take up too much time” and might not provide the best results for students. In addition, meta-communication could also work in this case: hotels could use signs which state there are no Chinese speakers present, which immediately informs Chinese guests about the current situation.

The final question (“When dealing with hotel staff, do you ever feel the need to adjust your use of language to theirs? If so, why”), was answered negatively by almost half of the respondents, while 40 per cent answered affirmatively. This outcome is interesting because as most of them do not have a sufficient command of English, they did feel the need to adjust their language. As one respondent pointed out, one should “do as the Romans do”, which indicates that interlocutors should adapt to each other. Others argued they adapted their language to “avoid misunderstandings”, because of “accents on both sides”, or “because it is the Netherlands here and not China”. Perhaps, the Chinese respondents have interpreted the question differently, because they were downgrading their knowledge of other languages, and were criticising their own understanding. This might be another act of saving face; however, this is only an assumption. Nonetheless, most Chinese respondents showed some intercultural awareness concerning languages and communication methods.

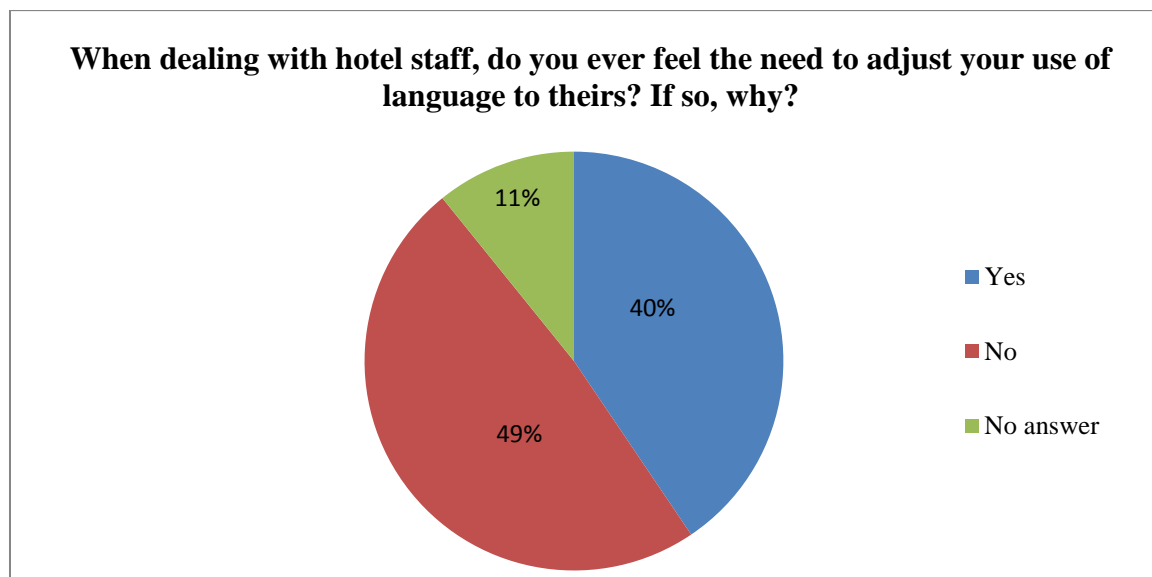


Chart 2. Results of Question 5 – Chinese Questionnaire. In total, 33 respondents answered this question with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, while the remaining 4 chose not to answer this question.

Overall, most Chinese respondents answered positively on the subjects of politeness and accuracy of the English language used by hotel staff. In addition, 73 per cent (27 respondents) claimed they never experienced any difficulties with hotel staff concerning their use of English. Nonetheless, the results of this questionnaire showed that there is need for Chinese-speaking hotel staff, as most respondents argued they would use this language when Dutch or English is not an option. In addition, they would also use gestures, facial expressions, and body language, which could indicate the need for intercultural awareness and sensitivity, as these notions could have a variety of meanings within different cultures. It could be concluded that according to the Chinese respondents, there is no need for an intercultural communication training. However, there were some underlying issues that came forward when analysing all the comments. As mentioned above, some aspects should be improved by the hotel staff to raise the level of hospitality. In addition, several verbal and non-verbal aspects might have to be developed or taught to become interculturally effective persons.

### *5.3.2 German Questionnaire*

This section will briefly discuss the results obtained from the German questionnaire. In total 20 questionnaires out of 50 were returned to the present researcher. Although only a limited number of respondents have filled in the questionnaire, there were still some interesting results to be found. The information obtained from the German respondents was relatively similar to the answers provided by the Chinese respondents. For instance, the first question was answered affirmatively by 95 per cent (19 respondents), which meant that almost all of them feel the English used by hotel staff was polite or accurate. They claimed that “in most cases it is extraordinarily good”, but the staff “were a bit distant”. The information acquired from these questionnaires was interesting, but cannot be used to make generalising statements due to the limited amount of respondents.

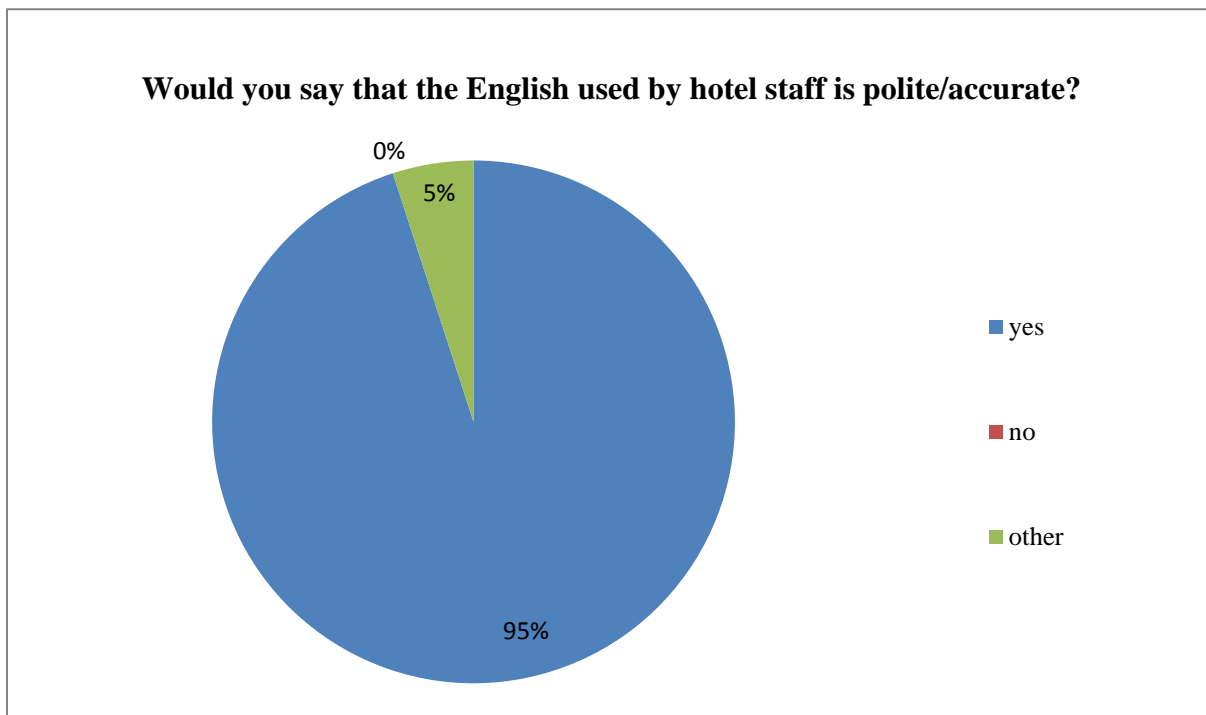


Chart 3. Results of question 1 – German questionnaire. In total, 20 respondents answered this question.<sup>13</sup>

The second question, as shown in Chart 4, was answered negatively by 85 per cent (17 respondents), who meant that they never experienced any difficulties with hotel staff concerning their use of English. The German respondents did not give any explanations, except for one, who claimed that “the staff was very helpful”. Respondents who answered affirmatively (10 per cent: 2 respondents) argued that “once there was an employee with a very strong Scottish accent, which made him difficult to understand”. Overall, only few respondents have encountered any difficulties, while the majority never experienced anything difficult.

<sup>13</sup> This chart (and the subsequent charts from the German questionnaire) shows the option ‘other’, which indicated that the respondents did not answer this question with ‘yes’ or ‘no’; they wrote comments which did not provide an answer that could be placed at either ‘yes’ or ‘no’, unlike the Chinese questionnaire where some respondents did not answer the question at all. Consequently, the section ‘other’ indicated other answers than ‘yes’ or ‘no’, while the section ‘no answer’ indicated that the question was not answered at all.

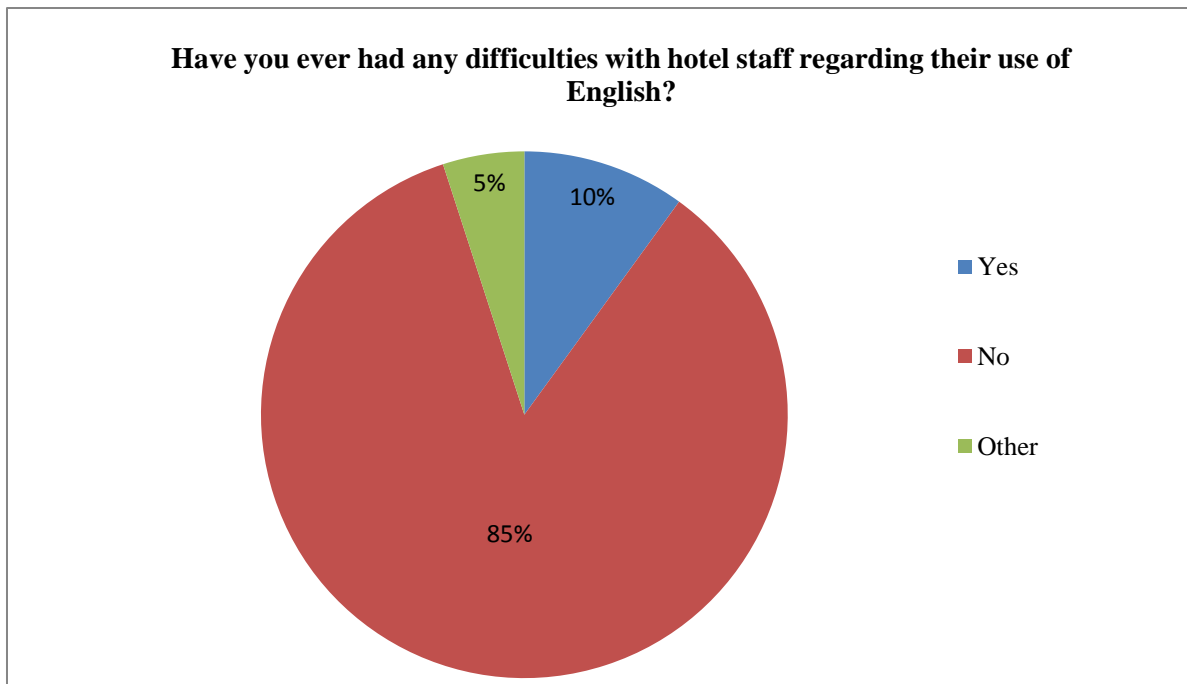


Chart 4. Results of question 2 – German questionnaire. In total, 20 respondents answered this question.

The next question (“If the hotel staff speak only Dutch or English, and you do not speak these languages, how do you deal with this? What do you do to get your point across?”) provided some interesting details. Some respondents answered they would use their hands and feet, while others would call someone who did speak any of those languages, otherwise they would try to make themselves understood in French, German, or Spanish. One respondent argued that “luckily we speak English very well”. This could indicate that the hotel staff does not speak English or not sufficiently enough. Unfortunately, there was no explanation given for this statement. All in all, the answers have shown a recurring theme: learning other languages (e.g. German, French, Spanish, Chinese, etc.) to successfully communicate with different kinds of tourists. In addition, attention should be paid to recognising gestures and facial expression, as Germans would also use these to get their point across, like the Chinese respondents. Furthermore, as described in 2.3, methods such as LaRa and meta-communication could also contribute to effective communication. LaRa in particular might be useful for intercultural communication between German tourists and Dutch hotel staff. First of all, when both parties have passive knowledge of the other language and are able to find common ground, it might be possible that both parties communicate in their own mother tongue, but still are able to understand each other. Even if one of the participants has a lower

proficiency of the other language, it might still be possible to use LaRa, since the less proficient speakers modify their language to such an extent that they give more explanations or use specific shared vocabulary in order to be understood by their interlocutor (Bahtina, 2011, p.5). This might most likely only work for German tourists and Dutch hotel staff, as the Chinese language is very different from the other languages.

The answers given to question 4 were quite similar to its predecessor. Most respondents claimed they would use their own language when either Dutch or English is not an option. The reasons they gave for this were “many Dutch understand German”, which should be taken as an assumption and not as the truth. In addition, they would use Google Translate, gestures, hands and feet, or other languages such as French and Spanish. However, using non-verbal communication methods requires cultural awareness, because these could have various meanings in different cultures. Similar to the previous question, a solution for this problem could lie in using LaRa. If the Dutch hotel staff has sufficient passive knowledge of the German language, and the German tourists have passive knowledge of the Dutch language, they might be able to communicate with each other in their own mother tongue.

The final question, whether the respondents feel the need to adjust their language to the language used by the hotel staff, is answered negatively by 70 per cent (14 respondents) (see Chart 5). Reasons for this are that “English is a natural language for me”, and “the hotel staff was always very friendly, and did not give the impression they would like to communicate in their native language”. In addition, some respondents claimed “English is a global language”; therefore, everyone should be able to communicate in this language. Other respondents, 20 per cent (4 people), argued that “as soon as one can not speak in their mother tongue, or when someone speaks in a different language variety, one should adjust their language to the other”. The remaining 10 per cent (2 respondents) claimed “it should be the other way around”, and “it should be considered an act of courtesy to speak in the native language of the country”.

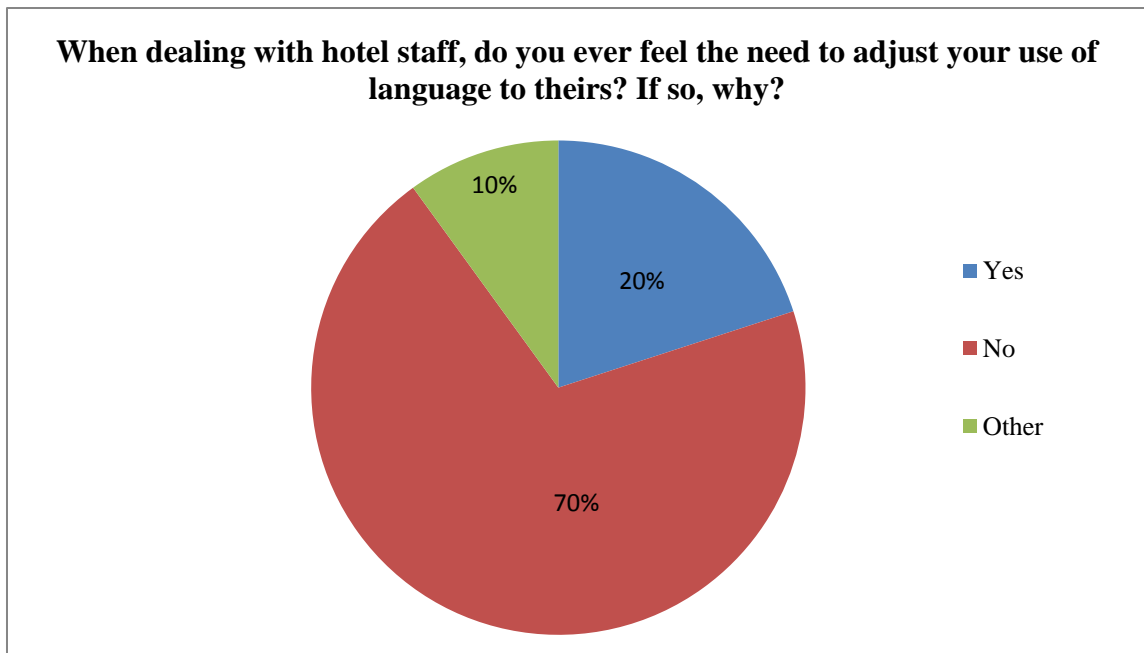


Chart 5. Results of question 6 – German questionnaire. In total, 20 respondents answered this question.

Overall, similar to the Chinese respondents most Germans claimed the English used by the hotel staff was polite and accurate. In addition, almost all of them have never experienced any difficulties with the use of English by hotel staff. However, the German respondents also argued they would use their own language when using either Dutch or English is not an option. These results suggest that these guests required German-speaking staff; otherwise, they would have used gestures and facial expression. These non-verbal communication methods could hide dangerous elements, as these differ throughout cultures and have other meanings and interpretations.



## Chapter 6 Discussion and Limitations

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Although the analyses of the interviews, web search and questionnaires provide important insights into the current interconnection between language and tourism and the absence of any need for intercultural communication training programmes, certain limitations must be mentioned. All results obtained from the research methods as mentioned before were expected to some extent; however, results suggested there is no need for an intercultural communication training programme, while the present researcher assumed hotel staff would benefit from additional training concerning cultural differences. In addition, all informants claimed they did not need any training with reference to intercultural awareness, while at the same time they tended to make generalising statements about certain cultures. This pattern was unexpected as all three informants did not have any education in hospitality, hotel management, or (intercultural) communication. In addition, the results from the questionnaires suggested that hotel staff should be trained on recognising and interpreting non-verbal communication, as most respondents would use facial expression, gestures, or body language to get their point across when using Dutch or English is not an option.

It must be noted that the limited results gathered from the German respondents might have affected the validity and reliability of the analysis. Due to the low response, no generalising statements can be made, nor could the information be used for further reference. In addition, some assumptions were created concerning the outcome of the Chinese questionnaire which were not met by the answers provided by the respondents. One of the assumptions was that most Chinese respondents would have had some difficulties in communicating with hotel staff, as they had limited or no knowledge of the English language and were unable to communicate in this language. However, almost all of them answered that particular question negatively, which meant that they never had experienced any difficulties with hotel staff concerning their use of English. It was assumed that these participants would have problems speaking or understanding English but this did not come forward in the analysis of the results. This might be considered a limitation, as the answers did not provide enough information for an intercultural communication training. However, the intention was to find out whether or not such training was needed, and in that sense, the answer is valuable. In addition, to explain the answers given by the Chinese respondents, the contrary-to-face-value-communication (CFVC) strategy by Ma (1994) can be used. This notion could have caused many miscommunication issues between Chinese tourists and Dutch hotel staff.

However, insiders to the Chinese culture could justify why CFVC might be used within this target group: they probably expected their interlocutors “to read between the lines” or to “decode messages from a holistic, context-based perspective” (Ma, 1994, p.257). Chinese tourists on the other hand could be surprised by “the bold communication style” (Ma, 1994, p.257). Understanding each other’s communication rules could become more important. Ma (1994) claimed that CFVC “refers to any communication in which what is said is the opposite of, or different from, what the speaker believes to be true or what he or she is ‘logically’ expected to say, with the intention of wanting or not wanting other to know the real purpose of communication” (p.258). Even though the answers provided by this target group did not comply with the assumptions, the results were still interesting for analysis, as it might show that people in the Western world are in need of a better understanding of Chinese culture, such as their norms, values and ways of communicating. The latter could cause misunderstandings, which might not be classified as such in the Western world due to the differences in communication strategies.

Another unexpected result was the fact that many reviews might be seen as invalid or untrue due to the fact that there were, supposedly, many fake reviews on Tripadvisor.nl. Research suggested that overly positive or anonymous comments on review websites might have been written by hotel staff in order to generate a higher ranking (Mayzlin et al, 2013). It was assumed that the negative reviews, as used for this study, were written by actual travellers; however, there is no tangible proof. This could be a limitation to present research, and for future studies it would be wise to explore other review websites which might be more reliable. As Mayzlin et al. (2013) claimed, Expedia only included comments from actual travellers (i.e. guests who have booked a hotel). Tripadvisor.nl on the other hand did not apply this requirement, which could potentially mean that many reviews were unreliable.

All in all, the hypotheses as formulated in 1.4 have not been proven by the results. Subsequent research might benefit from adapting these hypotheses into a more specific claim concerning the need for an intercultural communication training for hotel staff focusing on Chinese cultures. A possible hypothesis could be that hotel staff do not have sufficient knowledge about Chinese cultures to communicate adequately with them; therefore, training should be offered in which culture-general and culture- specific elements of this culture are covered to create interculturally effective persons. In addition, to apply the results more generally, more interviews should be conducted and more respondents should be included in future research. These can help to improve the reliability of the results.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

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The main focus of this chapter lies on drawing conclusions based on the findings and analyses of the interviews, web search, and questionnaires. However, it should be taken into account that this study has been an exploratory study, and no generalisations can be made for all hotels or all Chinese and German tourists in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the most important conclusion that can be drawn in this chapter is that close attention should be paid to individual guests; hotel staff should be aware of cultural differences and should not make generalising statements, which they saw as the truth about particular cultures. In addition, learning other languages, next to English and Dutch, might be useful to enhance the level of hospitality. Acquiring knowledge of these languages should start at the educational institution; however, not all hotel staff have attended any form of education concerning hospitality, hotel management, or otherwise, which complicates the process of reaching them.

Furthermore, the respondents of the questionnaire and the web search provided some negative comments concerning intercultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. Consequently, recommendations will be made about enhancing the perception of hotel staff concerning these issues. Additionally, all suggestions made in this section were focused on aspects which might be included in an intercultural communication training programme, and also on the target groups of this study (i.e. Chinese and German tourists). However, it may be wise to carry out further research among hotel staff and other groups of tourists in the Netherlands to create a sufficient database for any possible intercultural communication training. Moreover, additional interviews should be conducted within various hotels and more questionnaires should be distributed among Chinese and German tourists to obtain a complete and broad overview of all language and communication issues.

### *7.1 Conclusions*

This study has been based on a limited number of interviews, but also on a small-scale web search and several questionnaires. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it is hard to draw detailed conclusions. Furthermore, the collected data and research methods were relatively general, which made it more difficult to make specific recommendations. However, there are some important issues that need attention for further research. In addition, the interviews have been conducted within three hotels in the Netherlands; therefore, no

generalisations for other hotels can be made due to the limited number of respondents. This also applied to the results of the questionnaires: these have been distributed among a select group of Chinese and German tourists, and cannot be taken as a reference for all other tourists.

Conclusions drawn in this chapter have been based on the results obtained from these three research methods and were only applicable in this specific situation. This study might be seen as a tool for further research into the use of the English language in the hospitality sector, and also how tourists in the Netherlands viewed the language and communication methods used by hotel staff. The data gathered throughout this study could explore how hotel staff should be trained for intercultural encounters, but also on how to use different communication methods with these guests.

It is hoped that these limited findings will shed some light on particular language issues that may be present in international settings, and the possible communication difficulties which might have arisen during these. The interviews conducted with three hotel employees produced interesting findings, as two out of three claimed it is unimportant to learn other languages in addition to Dutch and English. The informants argued they have always managed in these languages; however, the number of tourists arriving from China and Germany are increasing. Additionally, most respondents of the questionnaires claimed they would communicate in their native tongue when using Dutch or English is not an option. However, as all informants only spoke Dutch and English, it might be useful for them to use LaRa for the German tourists. The Dutch hotel staff and the German guests could then communicate in their own mother tongue which could contribute to a better understanding. However, this might not work for Chinese guests, as LaRa requires passive knowledge of the others' language (which in this case would mean that Chinese would have some knowledge of Dutch and the Dutch hotel staff of Chinese). In addition, most Chinese and German tourists argued they would use gestures, facial expressions or body language as other forms of communication, which might have meant that in any training attention should be paid to non-verbal communication methods. Furthermore, although most respondents have claimed they never experienced any difficulties concerning the use of English by hotel staff, the web search suggested that most hotel staff (as mentioned before) were not capable of communicating effectively. In addition, most respondents argued it might be necessary to adjust their language to the hotel staff, while some claimed it should be the other way around. Hence, the

process of accommodating languages and behaviour to the guests' should be included in an intercultural communication training.

All results gathered from the research methods, suggested different possibilities and methods which might be included in an intercultural communication training programme. In addition to learning languages and accommodating to guests, it is important to create awareness concerning other methods of communication, but also about cultural differences. To provide the best possible service for all guests, hotel staff should receive some training concerning all the issues as mentioned in this study.

The most important suggestion is that hotel staff should improve their awareness of individual travellers. All informants tended to make sweeping statements about particular cultures, without taking cultural differences into account. They did not realise that there are not only differences between cultures, but also differences within cultures. The informants used for this study might benefit from additional training in which awareness is raised concerning individual travellers. Although informants and most respondents claimed there was no direct need for any intercultural communication training, the web search produced different results and arguments which could indicate that there might be some underlying issues that need attention from the various hotel managements. One of these was the use of other languages, such as German, but the most important one was the level of service and hospitality. The results from the web search suggested that hotel staff might need training to cope with international guests in intercultural situations.

## *7.2 Recommendations*

Due to the limited number of respondents and the fact that this study was small-scale, there is much room for further research into the field of intercultural communication training for hotel staff in the Netherlands to create interculturally effective persons. Hence, some recommendations can be made for future research concerning interview techniques and structures, and designing and distributing questionnaires. Additionally, the most important recommendation includes a narrowed down research question, which might possibly lead to more specific hypotheses, analysis and conclusions. In addition, various proposals for possible subjects for intercultural communication training were included in the recommendations. These will be focused on present research (i.e. Chinese and German

cultures) to create a coherent foundation for future research. If present research would be repeated, some important recommendations should be taken into account.

First of all, it would be recommended for further studies on the same subject to clarify how hotel staff in the Netherlands view hospitality. In addition, the relation between language and hospitality should be included to give an overview of how people respond and react to international encounters. Furthermore, information should be given on the level of accommodation by Dutch hotel staff when in contact with foreign guests. It is important to find out how people adjust their language to their interlocutors, and why they possibly do or do not accommodate. It might be recommended to carry out further research into this area to clarify how Dutch hotel staff approaches international guests and if they pay any attention to cultural differences. Literature concerning these aspects should be included. Additionally, it is advisable to investigate how and if people can relate to intercultural communication: they might have to be made aware of the importance of cultural differences. This could contribute to an awareness of the application of intercultural communication within international environments. After all, most of the problems seem related to a lack of politeness; therefore, intercultural communication training might be a solution to create interculturally effective persons, and mutual understanding on both sides (i.e. host and guest).

Secondly, it would be advisable for further research to include more informants for the interviews. However, it proved to be difficult to find hotel staff; most of them were unwilling to participate. They claimed to be understaffed, or did not reply to the present researcher's request. Consequently, only three informants from three different hotels were interviewed. For future research, it would be recommended to include several informants from the same hotel, and also informants from more hotels throughout the Netherlands to create a sufficient database with valuable information. Additionally, including hotels from different parts of the Netherlands would contribute to a broad overview of intercultural misunderstandings which could lead to an interesting intercultural communication programme. Nonetheless, the information acquired from these three informants made a major contribution to the analysis and created opportunities for further improvements in the hospitality sector. To reach more participants for further research it would be recommended to use a different approach. For this study, the informants were approached by email and physical visits; however, this did not give the desired effect, as most hotel owners and manager were not interested in participating. For further research it would be recommended to inform the hotel managers about the relevance of research for their hotel and their staff. Additionally, it might be an option to point

out the anonymity of the results to obtain more valuable data. Furthermore, to get more informants for further research, it might be recommended to approach them after finalising a web search on review websites. This way, the researcher might already have obtained information concerning language and communication issues, which might create possibilities for the researcher to persuade hotel owners or managers to participate in research. Pointing out positive or negative comments to the hotel staff might positively influence the chances of participation.

Thirdly, recommendations concerning the questionnaire include paying close attention to the cultural differences between designing surveys for Chinese and German tourists. For this study, limited attention was given to the specific requirements of Chinese communication methods. Future research should focus on these differences to design questionnaires with culturally adapted questions or statements. Although the information obtained from both questionnaires was helpful, some answers were difficult to interpret due to cultural differences. The questions should have been rearranged or rephrased to ensure mistakes were avoided concerning the way other cultures usually respond to questionnaires. It might be advisable to use statements instead of questions and ask for personal opinions to eliminate the possibility that respondents simply answer with “yes” or “no”. Not all Chinese respondents were indirect or implicit in their answers; however, it is still important to pay attention to cultural differences between Dutch and Chinese survey methods, because these could affect the outcome. In addition, it is wise to formulate assumptions to see whether or not these were met by the answers of the respondents. After all, these would form the basis for further analysis. There is, unfortunately, little literature to be found about designing questionnaires for Chinese respondents. Hence, research into this particular area could contribute to further studies into intercultural communication in which Chinese participants are required.

Fourthly, it would be recommended for hotel staff to participate in an intercultural communication training programme. A possible aim of any programme might be to create interculturally effective persons to avoid miscommunication or misunderstandings in the future. An important aspect that might be included in an intercultural communication training programme for the informants of this study would be language training. Although all informants claimed they never experienced any major difficulties and they have managed in Dutch and English so far, the respondents of the questionnaire argued they would like the hotel staff to speak their mother tongue, or at least know some basic expressions. However, it is unclear where this language training should be given. This could either be at the

educational institution or at the hotel. The first option might be the best possible solution, although real-life encounters and situations will most likely provide better learning experiences. In addition, when one starts working in the hospitality sector, the management is then responsible for the choice of languages. It should be noted that the choice of languages should not be limited to Dutch and English, as there are many tourists visiting the Netherlands who have a different mother tongue and might not have sufficient working command of both languages. Acquiring knowledge about the Chinese language and communication methods would be recommended; however, three higher vocational education schools<sup>14</sup> in the Netherlands do not provide any Chinese language courses, nor do they feel the need to include this in their curriculum (see Appendix 7). In addition, most hotel staff interviewed for this thesis have not attended any form of education concerning hospitality, hotel management, intercultural communication, or otherwise. This might complicate the process of reaching them to teach them about these important issues. The only possibility to train them would be to provide in-house training programmes. However, it might still be difficult to include them; after all, all three informants did not feel the need for any intercultural communication training.

In addition, Blue and Harun (2003) developed a traditional and commercial arrival-departure hospitality cycle, which showed the “hospitality practices in private homes and hotels, respectively, beginning with the arrival of the guest and ending with the departure” (p.74). Hotel staff should be able to use this cycle to create better relationships with their guests. Most travel-related communication starts with formal greetings, which evolves into personal relations. Hosts should always look after their guests and should anticipate “and provide for all lodging needs, throughout the arrival-departure cycle of the guest’s stay” (Blue and Harun, 2003, p.74). It would be recommended for hotel staff to study this cycle to find out how they could provide better service for their guests. This is connected to culture-general and culture-specific aspects as described Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009). Chinese and German guests both have different cultural background, which implies that hotel staff should be able to recognise the various verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by both groups. For instance, Chinese communication methods could include indirect and implicit answers; therefore, reading between the lines is important. Bennett (1993) added that the emic-approach is important, because the hotel staff could then view other cultures from

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<sup>14</sup> These are the Hotel Management School in Maastricht, Stenden University of Applied Science in Leeuwarden, and NHTV Breda University of Applied Science.



within their own (p.8). This would mean that cultural differences are identified and compared to from the hotel staff's own points of view. Hotel employees should first learn the critical rules of their own culture before they are able to recognise the rules of the other (Gudykunst and Hammer, in: Kothoff & Spencer-Oatey, 1996, p.496). Moreover, to become interculturally effective, trainees should have "knowledge of how their own culture and the host culture differ and finds values in both, has the motivation and desire to communicate appropriately, and has mastered the communication skills (both verbal and nonverbal) to do so effectively" (Penington and Wildermuth, 2005, p.167). Recommendations include the methods as mentioned above, for learning about other cultures requires knowledge of one's own culture before cultural differences can be recognised. This is important for Chinese and German tourists, as these cultures are different from the Dutch culture.

All intercultural communication trainings have pros and cons. As Korhonen (in: Paran and Sercu, 2010) and Fowler and Blohm (2009) suggested, it would be recommended to include critical incidents, role-plays, simulations, case studies, immersion, the cultural assimilator and the intercultural sensitizer. These methods will not include every single aspect of intercultural communication training, but most methods focus on becoming interculturally effective. In addition, some methods include the participation of native speakers (e.g. Chinese or German tourists), which could help in identifying cultural differences. Moreover, other methods (e.g. cultural assimilator and intercultural sensitizer) focus on the hotel staff and how to become aware of cultural differences. Immersion, on the other hand, focuses on submerging into a specific culture. This might be difficult as the hotel staff have to deal with many different cultures. Nonetheless, it might be advisable to learn the fundamentals of several cultures (in this case German and Chinese) to create better understanding of these.

All in all, there is no best possible way in creating or designing any intercultural communication training. However, as mentioned above, there are some methods that might be more appropriate for this particular target group (i.e. hotel staff) than other ones. In addition, despite some limitations to the study, and a need for further research in this particular area, a number of important insights can be taken from present research. It would be recommended to dive deeper into the hospitality sector and to explore communication strategies with multiple target groups, in order to create a broad overview of misunderstandings and miscommunication. The results and analysis, as presented in this thesis, will hopefully be relevant to further studies related to the exploration of intercultural communication within the hospitality sector in the Netherlands.

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## Appendices

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### Appendix 1 Kinds of Descriptive Questions

As mentioned in the Overview of Academic Discussion, descriptive questions in an ethnographic interview consist of several types and subtypes which are described below. All information provided in this Appendix is taken from Spradley's (1979) article in which he describes the ethnographic interview, with the main focus on asking descriptive questions.

#### *1. Grand Tour Questions*

This type of question is used to simulate "an experience many ethnographers have when they first begin to study a cultural scene". These questions are used to obtain a general idea about how an organisation works, and can consist of different elements such as a tour through physical space, time, events, some group of people, activities, and objects. The intended goal is to obtain a "verbal description of significant features of the cultural scene".

##### *1.1 Typical Grand Tour Questions*

These questions are asked to give a general view of events that may have happened in a particular situation. The interviewee describes a pattern of events. The interviewer is asking for a description of "how things usually are".

##### *1.2 Specific Grand Tour Questions*

This type of question focuses on the most recent series of events, or the most recent day. It is used to describe a recent situation, since most informants find it difficult to generalise something typical, but it takes them less time to give examples of recent circumstances.

##### *1.3 Guided Grand Tour Questions*

With this question, the informant is asked to give an actual tour through their organisation.

##### *1.4 Task-Related Grand Tour Questions*

These questions "ask the informant to perform some simple tasks" such as drawing a map of the building of the organisation, in order to aid the description they give.

#### *2. Mini-Tour Questions*

Mini-tour questions are often used after the grand-tour questions. The answers to the latter are usually very rich, and the mini-tour questions give the opportunity to narrow down specific elements in the answers. "They deal with a much smaller unit of experience". The four types distinguished below, are similar to the four types described above with the grand-tour questions.

##### *2.1 Typical Mini-Tour Questions*

##### *2.2 Specific Mini-Tour Questions*



### *2.3 Guided Mini-Tour Questions*

### *2.4 Task-Related Mini-Tour Questions*

### *3. Example Questions*

These are specific questions, which consist of single acts or events identified by the informant. After recognising these events, the interviewer can ask for examples. According to Spradley (1979), these questions usually lead to the most interesting stories of actual happenings (p.88).

### *4. Experience Questions*

Experience questions ask for “any experience” the informant had in a “particular setting”. These type of questions are usually very open-ended, and informants sometimes have difficulty in answering these questions, due to the open-ended nature of the question. According to Spradley (1979), these are “best used after asking numerous grand-tour and mini-tour questions” (p.89).

### *5. Native-Language Questions*

These questions are designed to “minimize the influence of informants’ translation competence”. This means that the interviewees should use terms and phrases “most commonly used in their cultural scene”.

#### *5.1 Direct Language Questions*

When asking this type of question, the interviewer actually asks “How would you refer to it?”

#### *5.2 Hypothetical-Interaction Questions*

Hypothetical-interaction questions are used to “generate many native-language utterances”. The interviewer is trying to create a hypothetical situation, for instance interaction between hotel staff and guest, in order to obtain information about the way the hotel personnel would speak to the guest.

#### *5.3 Typical-Sentence Questions*

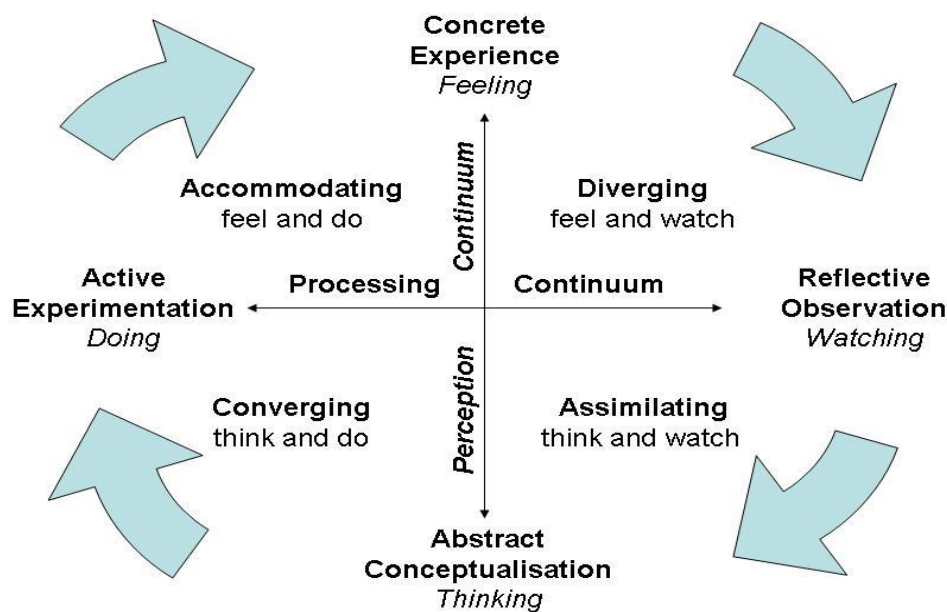
This question provides the interviewer “with one or more native terms and then asks the informant to use them in typical ways”.

As Spradley (1979) claims, descriptive questions form the backbone of all ethnographic interviewing (p.90). Hence, this type of interviewing is opted for this thesis.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The information described in this Appendix can be found on pages 86-91 from Spradley (1979) “Participant Observation – Step 4, Asking Descriptive Questions”

## Appendix 2 Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle



This cycle, designed by Kolb (1994) is used by many trainers when creating an intercultural communication training (in: Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.43). It is used to address each learning experience from every trainee. For instance, training can start with active experimentation in which participants “are often engaged in a simulation to give them a common experience. Participants then examine the experience, generalize the learning, and then apply what has been learned” (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.43). However, it is dependent on the type of participants which attend the training at which stage of the learning cycle the trainer would like to start, but it also depends on the subject of the training.

“Concrete experience draws on small group discussion, examples, autobiography, trigger films, exercises, introductions, guided imagery, music, video graphics, and peer teaching. In reflective observation, use is made of journals, discussion, brainstorming, thought questions, reflection papers, observations, checklists, worksheets, and structured tasks. Abstract Conceptualization involves lectures, papers, projects, analogies, model building, theory construction, references, research, and reading. Active experimentation requires projects, fieldwork, homework, laboratory, case study, simulations and games, practice assignments, self-paced learning, and demonstrations” (Fowler and Blohm, 2004, p.43).

## Appendix 3 Interview Questions

This Appendix will show the interview questions used when conducting the interviews within various hotels in the Netherlands. The questions were originally written in Dutch, and later translated into English for this thesis. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in Dutch, and all useful information has been translated into English. In this Appendix, the list of questions is produced in Dutch and in English in order to give the reader a complete overview of all questions asked.

### 3.1 Interview Questions Dutch

#### *Interviewee*

- Wat is uw functie binnen dit hotel?
- Hoe lang werkt u al bij dit hotel?
- Waar heeft u hiervoor gewerkt?
- Wat is uw opleidingsachtergrond?

#### *Herkomst Gasten*

- Hoeveel gasten komen er wekelijks/maandelijks?
- Hoeveel van deze gasten komen uit het buitenland?
- Welke landen komen de gasten over het algemeen vandaan?

#### *Soort Engels/Accommodatie*

- Welk soort Engels wordt door de gasten gesproken (native of non-native sprekers)?
- Is het met sommige culturen lastiger communiceren dan met andere vanwege het feit dat sommige gasten native sprekers zijn en anderen non-native?
- Is het makkelijker communiceren met een gast die Engels als moedertaal heeft of met gasten met een andere moedertaal?
- Vind u dat u uw taalvaardigheid in het Engels moet aanpassen aan de gast die wel of niet native spreker is?
- In hoeverre moet u uw taal aanpassen?
- Vind u het belangrijk om uw taal aan te passen aan de gasten of is dit ingewikkeld?
- Als er een gast komt die als moedertaal Engels heeft, merkt u dan dat deze zijn taal aanpast aan dat van u of andersom?
- In hoeverre kunt u aanpassen aan de gasten?
- Verschilt dit aanpassingsvermogen per werknemer?
- Wat is uw ervaring met gasten en welke talen zij spreken?
- Heeft u het idee dat sommige gasten beleefder of directer zijn als ze in een andere taal spreken (Engels) dan hun moedertaal?

### *Werknemers*

- Hoe ziet het profiel van de ideale werknemer eruit ten opzichte van communicatie en het gebruik van (vreemde) talen?
- Wat is het beleid ten opzichte van het gebruik van vreemde talen door de werknemers?
- Is er een beleid ten aanzien van het gebruik van vreemde talen?
- Zijn er werknemers binnen het hotel die een andere moedertaal dan Nederlands hebben?
- Hoe wordt hier mee omgegaan?
- Wanneer beslist u dat u Engels gaat spreken met gasten als zij bijvoorbeeld uit Duitsland, Spanje, Italië, etc. komen?
- Hoe reageert u op het taalgebruik van de gasten?

### *Informatievoorziening*

- In welke talen is de informatievoorziening (brochures, flyers, website) geschreven?
- Hoe komen deze ‘vertalingen’ tot stand?

### **Case Study**

Stel er verblijft een gast in het hotel die niet goed Engels spreekt (Duitsers, Italiaan, Spanjaard, etc.). Hij/zij heeft een opmerking over de kamers en u wilt uitleggen dat dit de normale gang van zaken is. Hoe pakt u dit aan om de gast zo tevreden mogelijk te laten vertrekken. Of in het geval dat de gast boos wordt, hoe zou u dit dan aanpakken/oplossen?

Stel, ik zou bij de receptie staan en er komen gasten binnen die geen Nederlands spreken, wat zou ik u dan horen zeggen? Hoe zou het gesprek verlopen? En zou u zich op uw gemak voelen om in een andere taal te communiceren?

1. Kunt u een omschrijving geven van een typische ochtend in het hotel? Wat gebeurt er zoal bij de receptie, wat doet u zoal, wat voor soort gasten komen er binnen en wat zijn typische vragen die door de gasten worden gesteld?
2. Kunt u mij vertellen wat er gebeurde toen u een taalgerelateerd misverstand had met een gast? Wat heeft u hierna gedaan en hoe heeft u dit misverstand aangepakt?
3. U heeft waarschijnlijk in de periode vanaf het openen van het hotel tot aan nu interessante dingen meegemaakt en gezien, kunt u mij hier misschien een voorbeeld van geven?
4. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over uw ervaringen als (FUNCTIE) binnen dit hotel?

### 3.2 *Interview Questions (English version)*

The following section is for reference only.

#### *Informant*

- What is your position within the hotel?
- When did you start working for this hotel?
- What is your previous work experience?
- What did you study?

#### *Origin of Guests*

- How many guests arrive in the hotel on a weekly/monthly basis?
- How many of these guests are from countries other than the Netherlands?
- Which countries do they come from?

#### *Variety of English Used / Accommodation*

- Which variety of English is used by the guests (native or non-native speakers)?
- Is communication with some cultures more difficult than with other cultures due to the fact that some guests are native speakers and others are not?
- Is it easier to communicate with guests that are native speakers of English or with guests that have another mother tongue?
- Do you feel your English language skills should be adapted to the guests who are or are native speakers?
- Do you think you should adapt to the guests?
- Do you think it is important to adapt your language to the guests or is this a difficult process?
- Do you notice that native speakers of English adapt their language skills to yours / your employees' language skills?
- In what way do you think it is possible to adapt to the language skills of your guests? / Do you think it is possible to adapt to your guests?
- Does this process of adaptation/accommodation differ per employee?
- What kind of languages do the guests use when they come to your hotel?
- Do you feel that some guests are more polite or more direct when communicating in a language (English) other than their mother tongue?

#### *Employees*

- Could you paint a picture of the ideal employee regarding communication skills and the use of other languages (besides Dutch)?
- Does the hotel have a language policy concerning the use of other languages by employees?
- Are there any employees who have different mother tongue (other than Dutch)?

- How does the hotel and the other employees deal with these differences in mother tongues?
- When do you decide to communicate in English with guests from other countries / when they are non-native speakers of Dutch?
- How do you respond to the language use by guests who are non-native speakers of Dutch?

#### *Information Provision*

- In what languages does the hotel provide their information (brochures, flyers, and website)?
- How is this information translated? Who translates this information?

#### **Case Study**

What if: there is a guest who does not have sufficient knowledge of the English language (for instance, a German, an Italian, a Spaniard, etc.). S/he has filed a complaint regarding the rooms, and you would like to explain to him/her that “this is the way we usually do things”. How would you approach the guest to ensure that s/he is satisfied with the service, and your answer? What if the guest becomes angry, what would you do then? How would you deal with this situation?

What if: I would stand at the reception desk and guests would arrive in the hotel: what would I hear you say? How would the conversation go, and would you feel comfortable communicating in a language other than Dutch?

1. Could you describe a typical morning in the hotel? Which thing happen at the reception desk, what are your usual tasks, what kind of guests arrive, and what are some of the typical questions asked by guests?
2. Could you describe a situation in which you had a language related misunderstanding with a guest? What was your role in this, and how did you deal with the misunderstanding to resolve it?
3. Do you perhaps have some interesting stories that you can still remember from when you starting working for this hotel up until now, and could you give me an example of a situation which you have not forgotten over the last few years?
4. Could you tell me something about your experiences as a (job title) within this hotel?

## Appendix 4 Transcripts of Interviews

### 4.1 Interview 1

This interview was conducted in March 2013 with the hotel manager of a small boutique hotel, and was conducted in Dutch. The information needed for this thesis was translated by the author into English and processed and analysed in Chapter 5 of this study. The bold parts are the questions asked by the researcher.

***Ik wil eerst graag eventjes wat dingetjes weten over u zelf. Gewoon eventjes wie u bent, wat u heeft gestudeerd, hoe u in het hotelwezen terecht bent gekomen, wat eigenlijk uw functie hier binnen het hotel is. Dus als u iets over uzelf kan vertellen...***

Ja. Ik heb niet gestudeerd, ik heb HAVO gedaan. Ik heb de laatste 10 jaar in dienstverband bij de (XXX) gewerkt. 15 jaar daar gewerkt, maar de laatste 10 jaar daarvan was ik verantwoordelijk voor alles wat met evenementen en activiteiten buiten de deur te maken had, met de (XXX), dus vakantiebeurs, tentoonstellingen, bij de afdeling die congressen organiseren.

***Ja***

Ik was eigenlijk een soort vuilnisvat. Alles wat anderen niet deden, dat kwam dan op mijn bureau. (XXX) had ook een groot terrein die dingen bezorgd> dat deed ik en ik had een afdelinkje die technische acties deed door het hele land

***Ja***

Met een vrachtwagentje gingen ze naar een stad toe. <met een vrachtwagen die moet worden opgeknapt> moet je af en toe daar heen rijden en dan werden er technische dingen gedaan. Met andere dingen was ook weer communicatie, dus dat was echt een heel breed ... dat was heel leuk.

***Ja***

Op enig moment ben ik weggegaan bij de (XXX), omdat ik gewoon iets anders wilde. Dus toen een paar jaar <...> een tijdje bij (XXX) gewerkt, goededoelenorganisatie

***Ja, ja, ik ken hem.***

Ik was daar coordinator vrijwilligers. Ik heb bij een fonds gewerkt als PR en evenementenman en het laatste dingetje wat ik had was ik onder andere manager in een hotel, een conferentiehotel.

***Ja, en welk hotel was dat?***

Dat was (XXX) in (XXX)

*Oke*

Dat is een oud leger... een oude kazerne. Daar zitten nu allerlei organisaties die met de bouw te maken hebben, dus daar zit een opleidingscentrum en de overkoepelende organisatie die heeft daar ook een eigen gebouw. Dus een hotel een conferentiecentrum, daar <...> om evenementen te organiseren en om het hotel te runnen. Toen ik daar... ik was bij al die organisaties niet gelukkig en toen zeiden we van “ja wat kunnen we nu in vredesnaam opzetten samen met mijn partner... een hotelletje kopen”.

*Ja*

Dat was iets wat we al lang wilden en we hadden iets heel anders in gedachten. Ergens in de Schotse Hooglanden

<<gelach>>

Dat is dit dus niet. Maar op het moment dat ik... in de week dat ik mijn ontslag nam bij dat andere hotel, kwam dit te koop. Dat leek dus echt een...

*Het heeft zo moeten zijn*

Het heeft zo moeten zijn. We hebben dit gekocht 5 jaar geleden. Het was netjes, het was...

*Want dit was al een bestaand hotel?*

Ja, ik denk dat dit het oudste hotel van Utrecht is.

*Oke*

....

*Dat wist ik helemaal niet*

Ja. We hebben een foto uit 1901. Daar staat dit huis op met een bordje ‘Pension’. Dan zie je zo’n Saartje

<<gelach>> *Ja*

We kochten het... en de vorige eigenaar had het ook zo’n 25 jaar gehad. Het was allemaal oud. We zijn begonnen zoals het was. Je weet ook niet precies wat je wilt. Na een jaar waren we eigenlijk zo ver dat we het wisten. Zijn we gaan verbouwen. We willen alles graag duurzaam

*Ja*

We willen zo persoonlijk mogelijk zijn. We hebben ook maar 8 kamers. En we willen een beetje stijlvol zijn. We zijn maar 2 sterren, 2 van onze kamers hebben ook maar een eigen badkamer.



*Oke*

Dan kan je ook geen 3 of 4 sterren worden.

*Ja*

We hebben er ook voor gekozen om dat zo te houden, omdat wij ook heel veel studenten en zo een paar weken bij ons terecht komen. Die zien juist het wat goedkoper

*Wat kleiner, persoonlijker hotel*

Ja, maar ook.. de budgetkamers die zijn daardoor wat

*Aantrekkelijker*

Wat aantrekkelijker. Dat is dus erg aangeslagen. Zeker in het begin bij organisaties die juist met dat duurzame.. We zijn een tijdje het thuishotel van de Triodosbank geweest

*Oke*

Ja van een paar andere organisaties waarvan ze de medewerkers bij ons onderbrengen, vanwege dat duurzame. En in 2009 werd de zaak verbouwd. En het is toen heel snel, met het internet gaat dat snel. We zijn nu het beste gewaardeerde hotel van Utrecht.

*Oke, dat is mooi*

En het beste gewaardeerde 2 sterrenhotel van Nederland.

*Dat is heel mooi*

Dus, het gaat goed wat dat betreft. En wat je nu ziet, we zijn ineens laatste maanden vol in de recessie gegoooid.

*hmhm... bijna net zoals alles denk ik overal.*

Ja ja, wat ik hoor is dat ze bij grote hotels, zoals Karel V, mensen ontslagen worden. Wat je ook ziet is dat alle hotels enorm gaan zakken met hun prijzen.

*Ja, om toch maar mensen ...*

Binnen te krijgen.

*Binnen te krijgen, ja. Want je zegt inderdaad dit is een heel klein hotel, je hebt maar 8 kamers, maar er komen dus wel, of in ieder geval kwamen, heel veel mensen ook op af.*

Ja. We zaten altijd vol.

*Altijd vol? En dan inderdaad ...*

Ja door de week en dan in het weekend wat minder

*Ja, want je zei net dan over studenten, maar zijn dat dan ook studenten vanuit Nederland of ook veel, nou ja, buitenlandse gasten?*

Ja ik denk dat een derde van onze gasten Nederlands is en de rest komt dus echt uit het buitenland, veel Duitsers en Engelsen, maar ook Amerikanen, echt over de hele wereld.

***Dat is toch best wel een hele hoop buitenlandse gasten. En ehm... want over bijvoorbeeld qua werknemers, hoe zitten jullie met werknemers? Zitten jullie ook echt met z'n tweeën of hebben jullie nog wat ...***

Nee, dit hotel is mijn ding. We hebben een mevrouw om schoon te maken en we hebben een vaste schilder die is in vaste dienst, de tuinvrouw

***Want zoals inderdaad dan receptie doen jullie gewoon zelf?***

We hebben geen receptie. We ontvangen iedereen, schudden de hand.

***En ook qua ontbijt en diner, hoe hebben jullie dat?***

Ontbijt doen we natuurlijk wel structureel elke dag, dat is hier. En diner dat kunnen mensen krijgen als ze het willen, in de praktijk komt het niet veel voor. Als er eentje is die wil eten dan kan dat natuurlijk wel. Ik zeg altijd dat mensen beter in de stad kunnen gaan eten.

***Gewoon lekker in de stad***

Ja, en wat ook wel eens voorkomt is dat mensen het hele hotel nemen voor een paar dagen dan hebben ze hier cursussen of trainingen, voorbereiden en dan verzorg ik dan de lunch en diner en dan...

***Dus dat wordt dan wel gewoon hier gedaan? Maar qua werknemers is het echt gewoon minimaal eigenlijk?***

Ja, de enige die we in vaste dienst hebben is onze schoonmaakmevrouw en we hebben een aantal mensen die wel eens bijspringen.

***Ja, die af en toe ook wat dingen komen doen. Ehm, nou ja, ik had inderdaad ook wat vragen van hoeveel gasten komen er uit het buitenland, dat heb je net beantwoord en ook van waar ze een beetje vandaan komen, dat is dus Duitsland, Amerika, Engeland...***

Ja dat zijn de meeste

***Dat zijn de grootste groepen***

Ja, en verder het Oostblok daar willen ook nog wel eens wat mensen van komen. Er komen aardig wat mensen via de Universiteit, bij een paar faculteiten staan wij boven aan het lijstje.

***Ja, want dat is ook mijn begeleider van de Universiteit, die heeft dit hotel ook aan mij aangeraden van nou ga eens proberen, want als wij buitenlandse gasten krijgen, sturen wij ze ook vaak hier naartoe. Dus ja, Universiteit dat wist ik dat eh...***

Verder ook Belgische is een grotere ... maar dus heel veel congressen, maar ook beurzen en tentoonstellingen in de Jaarbeurs. Daar komen de grote groepen mensen vandaan. Wat was je vraag eigenlijk precies?

***Ja, waar ze inderdaad vandaan kwamen, de gasten ongeveer uit welke landen dat een beetje is. Want het is natuurlijk wel met eh, als er buitenlandse gasten komen, heb je vaak ook wel een andere aanpak misschien nodig...***

Ja.

***...voor die gasten. En spelen jullie dan ook in op verschillende nationaliteiten?***

Wij, ja, daar heb ik al een beetje over nagedacht. Wat wij anders hebben dan de meeste hotels moet ik zeggen, wij schudden iedereen de hand. Wij weten wie het is en we stellen ons altijd voor met de voornaam. En eigenlijk 90 procent van de gasten tutoyeren we ook, behalve als ze ... vorige week was er iemand en die reageerde haast niet en was een beetje afstandelijk, aan het einde zei hij dankuwel

***En was dat een Nederlandse gast of?***

Dat was een Nederlandse gast en jonger dan ik denk ik, maar dat was duidelijk iemand die

***Die was daar niet zo van gediend***

Die zat daar duidelijk niet op te wachten. Maar meestal werkt het dus wel en je merkt het ook. De Duitsers die zijn daar wat formeler in. Die kan je gewoon bij de voornaam noemen, maar nog steeds met Sie aanspreken, maar voor de meeste mensen is dat geen probleem. En andere dingen zijn ook dat, dat zijn gewoon de culturele verschillen. Er is hier net iets begonnen, zit hier vlakbij nog iets (XXX) en daar kwam de eigenaar toevallig langs en die zegt dan "als er Chinezen komen, breng ze dan naar de kamer en wees heel erg duidelijk daarin, zie je wat er staat? Zo ziet het eruit, ik kom elke dag controleren en als het morgen niet zo eruit ziet, dan whop eruit!"

***Ja, echt waar?***

Dan denk je ook van 'nou zal wel meevallen'. Maar het werkt wel zo. Niet dat wij het doen, maar wel dat eh... Chinezen bijvoorbeeld, zijn erg van het .... bemoeien zich niet met andermans zaken. En dan, de meeste mensen staan, komen niet om zich aan te passen aan ons, maar toevallig hebben we nu een Chinees die zit hier een paar weken, die kwam voor het eerst ontbijten en die zegt "wat moet ik doen?". Nou dan pak je een boterham of een broodje, dat smeer je en dan doe je een plakje kaas of vlees of allebei. En dat heeft ie dan geleerd. Maar vervolgens gaat het wel op z'n Chinees, overjas aan, en Chinees eten dat gaat echt

***Ja ja ja ja***

Met veel geluid en... Dat is wel grappig, maar je ziet meteen van hoe ga je daarmee om?

***Want dat is wel goed inderdaad dat ie dan wel van bewust is dat het hier misschien anders werkt dan in China***

Ja ja.

***Want ik heb zelf namelijk ook een tijdje in een hotel gewerkt, in het Golden Tulip Hotel bij Zaltbommel en daar kregen wij inderdaad ook vaak groepen Chinezen en je wist gewoon***

*dat als die kwamen dat je je echt moest aanpassen. Dat dat echt heel anders is eigenlijk en toen was ik me er niet zo van bewust van dat dat inderdaad echt gewoon culturele verschillen zijn, maar nu ik inderdaad interculturele communicatie studeer, denk je van 'oh ja'. Dat waren wel dingen waar je inderdaad ook op moest letten.*

Ja, je signaleert het wel maar vaak denken mensen da's een botte boer of eh...

*Want hoe zit dat dan bijvoorbeeld met, eh nou ja, Chinese gasten inderdaad als we het daar toch over hebben. Want je zegt als mensen binnen komen, geef je ze altijd een hand en spreek je ze aan bij de voornaam, maar werkt dat bij die cultuur dan eigenlijk ook hetzelfde? Omdat die toch wat afstandelijker zijn vaak.*

Hangt er een beetje vanaf. Als je een losse toerist hebt, die zijn heel erg eh... dat zijn meestal Japanners. Die zijn wat onzekerder. Zoals nu een internationale student, die dan een paar weken meeloopt, die stelt zich ook wat open voor de ...

Ik denk dat als je losse Chinezen hebt, dat die wat afstandelijker zijn, onzekerheid, dat ze er niet voor open staan, maar niet voor open staan is wat...

*Het is vaak in China, wij hebben wel geleerd dat het soort van face saving strategie, van ze willen eigenlijk niks fout doen om de gastheer niet te beledigen en om zichzelf ook eigenlijk een soort van te redden.*

Ja, maar dat is ehm, meestal gaat het vrij hartelijk hierzo. Ook met ze naar de kamer brengen, op elke kamer staat een Nespresso dat moet je dan uitleggen enzo en dat breekt het ijs vaak wel. En dat is ook wat je terugziet in alle reviews dat ze dat juist wel leuk vinden dat het meer is dan alleen aan de receptie ontvangen worden

*Dat het gewoon echt een persoonlijke aanpak is om... Daar staan jullie ook echt een beetje om bekend?*

Ja.

*Wel interessant, want nou ja, u zegt zelf, sorry je zegt zelf van ik heb niet gestudeerd, ik heb alleen maar HAVO gedaan, maar dus eigenlijk door ervaring dat u dit nu bent gaan doen ook en dat u ook een beetje weet hoe u het moet aanpakken?*

Ja, ik heb vroeger ook wel als bijbaantje enzo in hotels gewerkt. Gastheerschap enzo dat moet je leuk vinden, je moet het kunnen. In al die jaren heb ik met evenementenorganisaties en dat soort dingen. Je bent altijd plekken aan het creëren voor andere mensen waar ze naartoe komen waar ze vinden wat ze zoeken. En in de loop der jaren als je wat meer mensen ontmoet dan zie je gewoon duidelijk verschillen dat de een heeft het en de ander heeft het niet. Dus verder moet je, zeker als je een zaak hebt als dit, je moet voldoende zakelijk instinct hebben, je moet technisch genoeg zijn als er een keer iets, dat je niet meteen in paniek raakt

*Als er iets kapot gaat*

Je moet ook een heel praktisch inzicht hebben van wat gebeurd er en hoe moet ik het plannen. Dus je hebt een heleboel van die kleine vaardigheden nodig en het moet allemaal op z'n plek komen. Dat is voor mij voor deze situatie wel het geval.

***Dus geen cursussen of wat dan ook of***

Dat niet per sé.

***Niet echt oke. Maar ehm, daar hadden we aan de telefoon ook al heel even over gesproken over miscommunicatie of misverstanden. Zijn er ooit echt waarvan je zo nog weet dingen geweest van nou dat is achteraf eigenlijk niet zoals ik het had bedoeld of misschien had de gast het anders bedoeld of***

Ja, ja. Er zijn ontzettend veel... heel veel dingen zijn er... we hebben ooit wel eens gehad een mevrouw en zij kwam hier van de Universiteit in eh nou ja maakt ook niet uit. Ze kwam hier en ze had een grote tas en die bracht ik naar de kamer en dan elke ochtend na het ontbijt kwam ze met grote stapels papier naar beneden. En ik dacht oeh, deze oude dame, ze was een jaar of 60 en ze kwam steeds met een pakje papier naar beneden. Maar dat doe ik toch voor je! En zij raakte helemaal in paniek, ze voelde zich zo op de huid gezeten ofzo. Ze wilde weg. Het kwam haar veel te dichtbij.

***Ja, want dat was een mevrouw uit ...?***

Het was een Nederlandse mevrouw, of Belgisch

***Het was een Nederlandse mevrouw, oke.***

Gewoon Nederlandssprekend. En die had duidelijk, die wilde gewoon ergens in de anonimiteit zitten en ze wilde niet dat ik zag dat ze met papieren... Het kwam voor haar te dichtbij allemaal. Dat soort dingen heb je wel eens.

***En bijvoorbeeld met een buitenlandse gast, dat daar ooit een keer iets miscommunicatie is geweest of een misverstand wat ook pas later eigenlijk aan het licht kwam? Zo van, oh ja ik wilde eigenlijk dit zeggen of dit doen maar dat is door die gast heel anders opgepakt?***

Wat er laatst is gebeurd, van vrij recent was dat er iemand een budgetkamer had geboekt, dan heb je dus een kleinere kamer met geen eigen badkamer. En dat was een ontzettend aardige man, beschaafd, een Zwitser was dat in dit geval. En na 2 dagen gaat ie weg ... En dan krijg je uiteindelijk een review te zien waarin ie zegt dat ie een tweepersoonskamer geboekt had, ter plekke een klein kamertje heeft gekregen met geen eens een eigen badkamer, en wat was er nou nog meer... Alles had ie via booking gedaan, en bij alles had ie negatief. En dan ga je sowieso booking eens bellen, van de punten mag je laten staan maar de begeleidende tekst, dat is niet waar. Hij zegt dat ie dat geboekt heeft, maar die sites zijn nooit zo snel. Uiteindelijk hebben ze het weggehaald. Dan stuur je een mailtje aan zo'n man. Het is blijkbaar een misverstand maar kijk even op je bevestiging dan kan je zien dat je wel die kamer hebt geboekt. Ik kan me voorstellen dat als je een tweepersoonskamer verwacht en je krijgt een budgetkamer dat je dat dan slecht waardeert als gast, maar waarom zeg je dat dan niet.. En dan denk je, hoe kunnen wij daar van leren? Wij vinden het vervelend dat het niet schoon is,

maar waar zit dat dan? Jammer dat je ook het serviceniveau niet hoog genoeg vond, kun je aangeven waar je dat in vond? En daar krijg je dan geen reactie op.

***Dat is wel jammer dan ja.***

Ja.

***Want dat zijn inderdaad punten als iemand dat dan zo heeft ervaren, hoe je dat dan zou kunnen verbeteren.***

Ja. En dat ie niet gewoon iets zegt als ie hier is. Dan zijn de, denk ik, dat is een paar keer gebeurd dat mensen niks zeggen, terwijl je wel elke keer vraagt eh

***Of dat het in ieder geval alles naar wens is geweest***

Ja.

***En merk je dat dan meer dat bijvoorbeeld de Nederlandse gasten wat directer daarin zijn, dat als er dan iets is dat ze dat dan meteen zeggen of is dat eigenlijk een beetje algemeen?***

We krijgen niet heel veel kritiek, ook niet achteraf.

***Dat is fijn.***

Ja. Mensen zijn vaak positief daarin, maar ik zou graag wat verbeterpunten...

<....>

Wel een keer dat een Engelsman uit Nederlandse ouders. Hij sprak goed Nederlands. Met z'n zoontje van een jaar of 5, 6. Die kwam een weekendje hierheen en elke keer dat ik hem dan zag 'heb je een leuke dag', heel vriendelijk. En die gaf dan later ook een review dat ie zich helemaal niet welkom voelde en die had op tripadvisor gezegd van ik heb geen idee waarom mensen dit een boutique hotel noemen, iedereen noemt het zo maar het is het niet. "Als ik zeg dat het geen boutique hotel is..

***Dan is het ook niet zo***

Ja. Ehm, maar hij heeft recht op zijn mening en als dat zijn gevoel is dan eh... Dat het ontbijt echt helemaal niks was en dan denk ik man zeg dat nou.

***Waarom zeggen ze dat dan niet op dat moment?***

Ja, dus ook daar een mailtje. Ik heb het hele ontbijt beschreven, wat wil je nou nog meer dan? En dan krijg je iets terug "er waren helemaal geen 12 soorten brood, ik zag er maar 4". Dan denk ik doe niet zo flauw.

***Ja, ik snap inderdaad wel wat je bedoeld. Dus dat is wel jammer dan inderdaad dat ze in ieder geval dan ook niet op het moment zelf gewoon zeggen want daardoor krijg je misschien zelf ook een beetje een vervelend gevoel achteraf***

Ja je kan er niets meer mee. En zeker als mensen het publiek maken, maar laten we dan wel realistisch zijn. Laat het waar zijn.

***En je had zelf tijdens het verblijf van die gast hier eigenlijk niks daarvan gemerkt?***

Nee, nee, nee, nee. Want die man is altijd aardig en als je met hem stond te praten dan snelde ie er vandoor. Hij nam altijd de benen zeg maar. Dus ehm, en dan wist je ook niet wat je

***Ja wat je er eigenlijk nog aan had kunnen doen. Ja dat is wel zonde dan. En denk je dat, ik neem aan dat dit bij veel meer hotels gebeurd ook, maar echt klachten krijg je niet zo face-to-face, misschien niet klachten maar zo van 'he misschien zou je dit kunnen doen of ik heb dit zo ervaren' dat heeft u niet heel veel?***

Nee, de badkamers die zijn nog niet verbouwd en daar zeggen mensen wel van 'joh dat is een beetje oude ...' en daar moet ik ze gewoon gelijk in geven, ja. We kunnen ook niet anders. Maar ja, dus dat is eh... We krijgen niet heel veel klachten, nee.

***Nou ja, dat is in ieder geval wel positief. En ehm, nou ja, ik wilde het eigenlijk nog even hebben, ik weet niet of dat je me daar iets over kan vertellen, maar denk je dat het sowieso handig is dat mensen die hier in hotels werken gewoon in het algemeen dat ze kennis moeten hebben van de omgeving? Bijvoorbeeld moeten weten waar het VVV zit, waar de leuke restaurants zijn.***

Dat is basiskennis

***Ja maar het blijkt wel, andere onderzoeken die ik heb gelezen, blijkt dat heel veel receptionisten bijvoorbeeld ook dat niet weten...***

Dat moet wel op z'n plek zitten.

***Jij vindt gewoon, dat is gewoon de basis. Dat moet gewoon iedereen weten eigenlijk. Je weet wat er is en je weet wat er te doen is.***

Ja. Wat we ook zien als mensen hier zijn en ze gaan naar Den Haag of Amsterdam dat je zelfs daarover kunt vertellen. En dat als ze een dagje naar Den Haag gaan, als je het station hebt, ga je lekker naar links naar de, hoe heet het, de Kamer, langs het Mauritshuis, als je oversteekt ga je naar het Eschermuseum, hop en je dag is vol. Juist dat geeft mensen heel veel, dat is nou juist je meerwaarde die je hebt, die hun hebben

***Als je gewoon veel kennis hebt, ja.***

Die je moet hebben. En ik kan me ook niet zo goed voorstellen dat dat niet ... Dat is een van de dingen die mensen hebben in het Oorsprongpark, die de optie hebben om zo goedkoop mogelijk te blijven, die zijn net te groot om het door de eigenaar zelf te laten, dus die hebben altijd werkstudenten en dat is best, maar die zijn natuurlijk niet zo betrokken en die hebben ook geen idee hoe het precies allemaal zit.

***Omdat ze daar dan toch tijdelijk misschien zijn.***

Ze zijn er misschien een paar maanden. Bij de studie, als avond of nachtportier daar te gaan zitten en ik snap dat ze het doen. Maar als je bedrijf moet je dat natuurlijk willen. Als je een eigen hotel hebt, zoals wij, dan blijkt dat vakanties bijvoorbeeld heel erg lastig worden, dus we zijn niet heel vaak weggeweest. Als we gingen hebben we een vriend laten komen, waarvan we dachten dat het ... maar dan blijkt in de praktijk dat hij erg slecht Engels spreekt en dan denk je 'oei' dus dat kan niet meer.

***Want hoe is, je zegt die spreekt heel slecht Engels, maar hoe is uw, je eigen niveau van Engels? Als je het moet beoordelen?***

Wel goed

***Wel goed en heb je dan ook door de jaren heen dat eigenlijk verbeterd of ook een cursus Engels gedaan of in Engeland geweest of***

Nou goed, hier in Nederland heb je natuurlijk gewoon de basisschool afgemaakt.

We hebben altijd wel, mijn partner is wetenschapper en we hebben veel Engelse teksten

***Veel ermee bezig geweest***

Ja. En je leert natuurlijk, elk vakgebied heeft eigen vaktaal.

***Je kan misschien wel zeggen dat je Engels echt wel is gericht op de hospitality sector? En dan op het hotelwezen***

Ja, in de praktijk komt het daar natuurlijk wel op neer.

***Wel interessant allemaal. Want het is toch, ik merkte natuurlijk ook toen ik zelf bij het hotel werkte dat je door die verschillende culturen die er allemaal komen moet je ook zoveel verschillende manieren ook met mensen om kunnen gaan en dat is ook best wel een vak apart eigenlijk. Je moet echt weten hoe mensen moet behandelen of kan behandelen of kan aanpakken***

Ja, en dan zit er natuurlijk een groot verschil of je achter de receptie staat, duidelijk met dat als functie. En dat gaat heel anders. Maar je moet wel in een oogopslag in de gaten hebben, bij Chinezen zie je dat wel, maar dat mensen toch een andere cultuur hebben. Toeristen zijn dan ook weer heel anders dan zakelijke reizigers. En mensen die als toerist in een hotel komen, ik zie ook steeds meer dat mensen, bijvoorbeeld Aziaten komen in een besloten groep. Die zijn onzeker, die weten niet wat ze moeten en kunnen verwachten.

***Dat is echt nog een beetje aftasten.***

Ja, ja. Dat is nu grappig. Dat zijn van die Japanners tegenwoordig, dat begint dan al dat ze in hun eentje reizen en dan vaak dat ze dan 's morgens reizen, dan gaan ze een beetje de stad in lopen tot 3 uur, dan komen ze naar het hotel en dan gaan ze op hun kamer zitten en dan denk ik mens toch. Maar dat gebeurt te vaak om bij een individueel geval te zijn. Ik zie het te vaak gebeuren dat ... dat moet wel in de volksaard zitten.

***Want eigenlijk alle Aziaten die hier komen die doen een beetje hetzelfde...***



Vooral Japanse jongeren. Die komen om een uur of 3, 4 checken ze in en dan gaan ze zitten. Dan hebben ze allemaal zakjes met noodles bij, heet water

***Ja, echt waar?***

Ja, dat komt regelmatig voor. En dan zien we vaak dat ze een origamistukje maken voor het kamermeisje dat ze dan neerzetten.

***Toch misschien een soort van waardering tonen voor de mensen die hier aan het werk zijn.***

Ja.

***Ik ga even kijken, want volgens mij hebben we de meeste dingen die ik wilde weten wel behandeld. Ik weet niet of dat u zelf nog iets bedenkt van dat wil ik eigenlijk nog wel even kwijt hierover of zelf nog even iets***

Er zijn echt volksaarden en dat leer je ook dat de Duitsers altijd wat vrolijker zijn. Dat weet iedereen wel, maar ik heb in de loop van de jaren wel bijgeleerd dat je er zoveel verschillende, want iedereen is natuurlijk anders, dat je echt van persoon tot persoon op een andere manier, je moet met iedereen op een eigen manier omgaan. Ik kan me haast niet voorstellen dat je daar bij een hotel, achter de receptie tijd voor hebt, maar ik denk wel dat het heel goed is.

Het is wel belangrijk dat je bij de receptie weet wat er gebeurt. Als je bij zo'n receptie staat, je bent altijd afhankelijk. Ik denk dat alleen aardig lachen tegen de mensen en gewoon je eigen gang gaan... Er zijn altijd een hoop formaliteiten, maar zorg dat de mensen gerustgesteld worden, op hun gemak gesteld worden. En dat is hetgene wat ik het meeste mis in andere hotels.

Dat is hier ook, het wordt als prettiger ervaren dat het allemaal wat persoonlijker gaat.

***Ik denk dat ik mijn informatie wel heb, wat ik nog wel wilde vragen mocht het zo zijn dat ik, dat me nog iets te binnen schiet of wat dan ook zou ik u, zou ik dan even contact op mogen nemen, even bellen of mailtje sturen, om dat nog even te vragen?***

Natuurlijk, gewoon even bellen

***Hartelijk bedankt voor de informatie***

## **4.2 Interview 2**

This interview was conducted in March 2013 with the owner of a small boutique hotel, and was conducted in Dutch. The information needed for this thesis was translated by the author into English and processed and analysed in Chapter 5 of this study. The parts in bold are the questions asked by the researcher.

***Dan zou ik graag willen beginnen met vragen te stellen over u zelf. Wat uw functie is. Jullie zijn nog niet zo heel lang open maar hoe lang u hier al werkt en je eigen opleidingsachtergrond. Dat soort dingen. Even voor het algemene beeld. Dus wat is je functie binnen dit hotel?***

Ik ben de eigenaresse.

***U bent de eigenaresse. En sinds wanneer bestaan jullie?***

Anderhalf jaar nu, sinds september 2011.

***Oke, en hiervoor heb je bij andere hotels gewerkt of echt...***

Nee, wel in de horeca, niet in een hotel.

***En wat is daarbij dan ook je opleidingsachtergrond? Wat voor opleiding heb je gedaan?***

SPH heb ik gedaan en interieurvormgeving.

***Dus eigenlijk heel iets anders dan dit. En hoe ben je hier zo in terecht gekomen?***

Ja. Ik heb wel altijd in de horeca gewerkt zeg maar naast mijn studie en dat vond ik eigenlijk altijd leuker dan als ik een tijdelijke stage ging lopen voor mijn studie zeg maar. Ik vond eigenlijk wat ik in de horeca deed toch leuker. Dus ik wilde eigenlijk een combinatie maken door het interieurvormgeving en dat is dan dit geworden.

***Oke, want jij hebt dit dan ook helemaal zelf vormgegeven, ingericht***

Ingericht ja.

***Ik heb een aantal thema's. Ik wil wat weten over het soort gasten wat hier komt. Ook over het soort Engels wat er binnen wordt gebruikt en hoe daarmee om wordt gegaan. Eigenlijk ook een soort profiel van de ideale werknemer, als je me daar iets over kan vertellen. En over de informatievoorziening, hoe jullie dat doen. En dan is eigenlijk qua gasten, hoeveel gasten komen er ongeveer per week, per maand, of op jaarbasis?***

We hebben 9 kamers. En we hebben een gemiddelde bezetting van 70%. Dus dan is het wel makkelijk uit te rekenen. Ja zeg maar de ene maand is de andere niet natuurlijk, want je hebt hele drukke periodes en dan december januari is het wat rustiger. Al viel dat dit jaar wel mee. En dan juli en augustus is ook wat rustiger, want Utrecht heeft heel veel zakelijk toerisme. En dan is het zeg maar, en mensen die dan, tenminste dat hadden we afgelopen zomer, ik heb ook nog maar 1 jaar zomer gedaan, maar dan was het vooral in juli en augustus gaan mensen vooral OP vakantie. Dus dan gaan ze niet zo gauw, tenminste dat is mijn ervaring, in eigen land op vakantie. Dus dan heb je minder city trippers. En de zakelijke gasten die hebben veelal vrij in de vakantie. Dus dan heb je gewoon half juli tot half augustus even een maandje een dipje en dan komt het weer.

***Want vanaf september...***

Dan wordt het weer heel druk.

***En je zei al van er zijn veel, nou ja, meer zakelijke gasten dan en hoeveel procent ongeveer zou er uit het buitenland komen?***

Dat is moeilijk. Oh uit het buitenland. Dat kan ik zo even opzoeken in het systeem. Ja want dat heb ik zo uit mijn hoofd niet, want ik denk altijd dat er meer buitenlandse zijn, maar volgens mij had ik laatst gekeken en toen bleek dat het toch vooral Hollands is.

***Veel Nederlandse gasten?***

Ja, maar ik zal dadelijk even kijken of ik dat eruit kan trekken.

***En als er buitenlandse gasten komen, weet je ongeveer uit welke landen die komen?***

Heel veel uit de landen eigenlijk om Nederland heen. Dus veel Groot-Brittannië, Duitsland, België, Frankrijk ook wat. En dan heb je ook de gasten uit Australië, USA, wat verder weg. En een kleiner deel is dan Italië, Spanje

***En bijvoorbeeld ook verder richting Oostblok of Azië?***

Af en toe. Russen, Chinees, of Pools. Maar dat is sporadisch.

***En met deze gasten, daar spreek je natuurlijk, hun moedertaal is niet Nederlands. Op welk moment kies je er dan voor om Engels te gaan spreken? Als je bijvoorbeeld een Duitse gast hebt, ik weet niet hoe het met je eigen talenkennis zit...***

Eigenlijk spreken we hier vooral Engels en Nederlands. Ja en bijvoorbeeld (XXX) die kan dan wel Frans en een andere collega van mij die kan bijvoorbeeld Duits, dus dan, en er is er zelfs een die Italiaans kan, maar goed het is een beetje gewoon wat iedereen zelf kan, maar daar heb ik ze ook niet echt op aangenomen.

***Dat is niet een voorwaarde***

Nee. Maar dat komt omdat ik zelf alleen Engels spreek. En ik kan nog een beetje Spaans. En Duits. Engels is gewoon makkelijker omdat je dan gewoon sneller... Ja, dan kan je gewoon snellere service lenen. Duits, dan wordt het toch een beetje handen en voetenwerk denk ik zo.

***Ja want als je het zelf niet zo heel goed spreekt. Maar vind je dan ook dat als er dus hier gasten komen die als moedertaal niet Nederlands hebben, vind je het dan lastiger om met sommige te communiceren in het Engels dan met anderen?***

Ja, bijvoorbeeld, ja Fransen. Dat is vaak lastig in het Engels zeg maar. En ja, soms heb je inderdaad Russen die.. ja of het is ook misschien hoe kijken, want die, tenminste dat is mijn ervaring, dat ze sowieso een beetje naar beneden kijken en een beetje kort van stof. Dus dan weet je niet of ze echt kort van stof zijn of dat het met hun cultuur te maken heeft, dat ze geen Engels kunnen en niet weten wat ze terug moeten zeggen. Dat is allemaal interpretatie natuurlijk.

***Maar hoe ga je daar dan mee om? Als je dat ziet zeg maar, dat bijvoorbeeld als iemand ja een beetje afstandelijk is of niet zo veel spreekt? Hoe ga je daar dan mee om?***

Ja, als iemand gereserveerd is dan ben je ook gereserveerd. Het is zeg maar je spiegelt je een beetje aan de gast, want dan, tenminste dat is dan een soort van gevoel van sommige mensen zijn heel amicaal, dus kan je ook een beetje meer, beetje grapjes. En sommige mensen zijn gewoon heel gereserveerd, maar dat kunnen ook gewoon Nederlandse gasten zijn. Zakenmensen die gewoon denken van hup ik wil inchecken, ik wil de sleutel en ik wil gewoon naar de kamer. En dan ga je ook niet ellenlang uitwijden over “Weet u waar de Domtoren is en heeft u nog tips nodig over?”

***Dus je past je eigenlijk aan aan de gast?***

Ja, ja.

***En merk je ook dat de gast zich ook een beetje aanpast aan jullie misschien?***

Ja je probeert wel, of tenminste hier is het dan ook een van de selling points dat het heel huiselijk en persoonlijk is. Je probeert wel mensen echt op hun gemak te stellen en ja wij zijn allemaal niet zo heel formeel. Toch wel correct zeg maar, maar niet dat je helemaal zo ‘heeee’, maar het is, ja niet heel erg dat je gewoon zo’n receptionist hebt van ‘ik sta achter mijn balie en ik doe mijn riedeltjes’. Nee, wel een beetje van ‘bent u hier vaker geweest’. Dat je wel een beetje door probeert te vragen. Maar als mensen gewoon geen antwoord willen geven, ja dan merk je al snel van ik hou daarmee op want je wil ook niet dat het een soort van ongemakkelijke situatie wordt. Dus dan is het wel een beetje aanvoelen en dat hebben wel alle collega’s.

***Die weten ook gewoon wel wanneer ze wel en niet...***

Ja die mensenkennis.

***Dat is natuurlijk ook wel belangrijk hier in dit vak.***

Ja, ja.

***En stel bijvoorbeeld er komt een Engelsman, die heeft natuurlijk Engels als moedertaal, merk je dan ook dat zij hun taal aanpassen aan jullie. Dat ie het bijvoorbeeld iets makkelijker maakt in het Engels?***

Sommige denk ik wel, maar sommige ook echt niet. En het hangt er ook vanaf, ik denk dat het ook per collega afhankelijk is, want ik heb wel veel gereisd, mijn Engels is wel prima zeg maar. Dus ik kan ook snel uit de voeten en dan gaan mensen ook gewoon weet je wel, dan zullen ze waarschijnlijk gewoon meer kletsen. Ja, andere collega’s die zijn misschien net met wat minder grote woordenschat. En ik denk dat, ja, dat hangt ook van de gast af. Als je zeg maar tegen iemand praat en je merkt dat ie om de paar woorden ‘sorry’ vraagt, dan maak je het ook alweer makkelijker denk ik. Maar dat zou ik doen, ik weet niet wat de gasten eigenlijk doet.

***Soms dan merk je het ook wel dat als je met inderdaad een native speaker in het Engels spreekt dat ze het misschien een beetje hun taalgebruik iets simpeler maken. Versimpelen ten opzichte van de niet native speakers.***

Maar het is natuurlijk ook, je probeert uit ook beleefdheid, doe je soms ook wel of je het hebt verstaan. Als iemand zo (MOMPELEN) en dan maakt ie een grapje en dan “hahaha” en dan denk je “oh ja(!) haha”. Dan is het ook dat je eigenlijk maar zo kort contact hebt omdat, ja je wil, je wil vertellen over de stad, naar de kamer begeleiden, ja als je dan een keertje iets mist, dan oh, nouja.

***Heb je dat zelf ook wel eens gehad?***

Ja, maar dat is meer als het zeg maar Schots-Engels is, of als mensen echt binnensmonds soms. Ja dat was laatst dus inderdaad een gast en die bewoog dan bijna d'r... of niet articuleren, dus dan kun je het ook niet zeg maar door echt goed te kijken naar die mond, dus dan, ja, probeer je dus een beetje omheen... Ja, ik vraag niet heel snel van ‘sorry’

***“Kunt u dat herhalen”. Dan ga je meer gewoon verder...***

Ja, of je kunt uit de hele rest van de zin wel opmaken wat ongeveer de strekking is van het verhaal. En als ik het echt niet op kan maken net als een vraag ja dan moet je natuurlijk ook vragen of ze het kunnen herhalen, anders kun je ook niet antwoord geven.

***Als we het nu toch een beetje over dat aanpassingsproces hebben aan de gast of andersom. Vind je zelf ook dat je moet aanpassen aan de gasten als zij bijvoorbeeld niet zo goed Engels spreken of juist wel goed Engels spreken. Vind je ook dat je dat moet doen?***

Ja. Want je wil wel, je wil je boodschap overbrengen. Je wil ook dat zij hun boodschap over kunnen brengen. Want als zij niet kunnen, als zij bijvoorbeeld extra handdoeken willen of weet ik veel. Als zij iets willen, ja dan moet je wel dat zij zich op hun gemak voelen dat ze het wel kunnen vragen. Niet van “oh shit we kunnen het niet precies in goed Engels”

***En denk je dat dat ook mogelijk is om je altijd aan te passen?***

Ja, ik denk het wel. Want ook als iemand, bijvoorbeeld een Franse dame die geen Engels praat bijvoorbeeld en ik praat geen Frans, dat zou ik eigenlijk ook moeten leren, dan ga je gewoon maar met handen en voeten en dan wijs je dingen aan, de sleutel, en dan gaat het op heel kinds Engels en dan zegt zij Franse woorden ertussen en dan probeer ik ook te bedenken wat zou dat kunnen betekenen, moet je natuurlijk wel basis Frans... en dan probeer je er toch uit te komen. Want je kan ook niet NIET communiceren, want dan... je MOET communiceren, want zij komen hier en ze hebben een kamer geboekt bij ons en zij verdienen uitleg daarover.

***Oke, daar hadden we het net ook al even over dat aanpassingsvermogen, merk je ook verschil per werknemer. Want je hebt bijvoorbeeld sommige spreken ook Frans of Duits of Italiaans, maar merk je inderdaad ook dat zij het ook aanpassen aan de gasten? Is dat een beetje algeheel beeld hier of scheelt dat echt heel erg per werknemer?***

Ja, ik denk dat de ene is misschien ook wat expressiever dan de ander ofzo denk ik. De ene die zal eerder alles uit de kast halen dan de ander die misschien vanuit zichzelf wat, die is misschien wat gereserveerder. Maar ik denk, je gaat gewoon door totdat de boodschap over is gekomen aan beide kanten, dus hoe je dat ook doet. Ik denk dat iedereen wel evenveel doorzettingsvermogen heeft. Ja en dan de ene doet het zo en de ander doet het zo, ja.

***Ja, dus dat is wel echt verschillende...***

Ja, ik denk ook dat het van je persoon afhangt. En dan is het gewoon het belangrijkste dat je wat mensenkennis hebt en dat je een beetje kan aanvoelen waar iemand behoefte aan heeft. Hoe je met iemand om kan gaan.

***En daar hadden we het net al even kort over van de verschillende talen die de gasten spreken, maar dat is neem ik aan over het algemeen ook Engels? Maar dan heb je soms bijvoorbeeld ook Duits erbij zitten, Frans, je zei ook Russisch af en toe...***

Ja, Spaans, Italiaans, ja.

***Oke, en als deze gasten hier komen, merk je dan bij sommige gasten ook dat ze bijvoorbeeld wat beleefder zijn als ze dan in het Engels moeten spreken of juist wat directer en ik weet niet of je daar misschien ook een voorbeeld van hebt?***

(stilte) nee

***Nooit echt gemerkt? Dat ze misschien wat overbeleefd zijn, of juist heel direct zeggen van 'nou ik wil dit of dat'***

Ja dat wel

***Nooit echt opgevallen?***

Nee misschien dat je dan denkt dat de persoon gewoon inderdaad, vooral met de Russen die zijn een beetje stram ofzo, maar dat komt inderdaad omdat ze 3 woorden kennen en als je dan heel kort die woorden zegt, dan lijkt het net of je heel erg kortaf bent.

***Terwijl dat misschien...***

Terwijl dat misschien typisch Russisch is. Ja dat zou wel kunnen. Maar dat heb ik niet zo direct...

***Maar merk je dat bij de meeste Russen die hier komen? Dat ze inderdaad wat afstandelijker zijn ook?***

Ja, dat je ook denkt 'oeh vinden ze dat wel leuk'. En dan lees je het feedback formulier en dan is alles helemaal geweldig. Dus ja, daar kan je het dan niet zo van af lezen.

***Heb je wel eens gehad dat mensen bijvoorbeeld, stel er is iets niet goed met de kamer of met het ontbijt of wat dan ook, dat mensen dan naar jou toe komen om dat ook te zeggen?***

Ja mensen zijn wel echt beleefd. Je moet wel echt gaan vragen 'is alles naar wens' en ook als mensen langer blijven, dat je dan ook, dan heb je na de eerste nacht bij het ontbijt contact dat je ook dan vraagt 'heeft u alles wat u nodig heeft op de kamer'. Dat je wel die weg elke keer weer open zet, maar mensen klagen niet zo veel.

***En ook niet als je het dan vraagt expliciet?***

Dan wel. Dan hoor je het wel, maar je moet wel echt vragen, want dan hebben ze 'oke' het gevoel van 'we mogen wel zeggen wat we ervan vinden'

***En heb je daar dan ook wel eens mee gehad dat bijvoorbeeld qua communicatie dat dat dan niet helemaal goed verliep, nadat je had gevraagd ‘is alles naar wens’ en dat de gast zegt ‘nou eigenlijk...’***

Dat je het verkeerd had begrepen?

***Of dat de gast misschien iets verkeerd had begrepen? Of dat je zelf iets verkeerd had begrepen?***

Nee, niet dat me zo te binnen schiet. Nee. Ik weet nog wel een keer dat was een hele Duitse familie en daar was 1 Duitse meneer en iedereen vond het echt een hele chagreinige man. Wat is er mis? En wij nog proberen enzo. Wat is er niet goed en wat kan beter? Want je wil toch dat iemand helemaal happy de deur uitging. En toen kwam dus inderdaad die collega die wel Duits kan en toen was het ineens een hele vriendelijke man, maar hij kon gewoon geen Engels. Dat was echt een voorbeeld dat je denkt ‘wat is er aan de hand’. Dat je probeert weet je wel, wilt u nog meer koffie, alles helemaal, ja. En dan is het dus echt de taal.

***Dus echt een taalbarriere waardoor hij zich misschien ook niet op z’n gemak voelde.***

Nee, en toen mijn collega die wel Duits kon, toen kwam die los en ging ie allemaal vertellen over... Ja toen was het eigenlijk allemaal prima.

***Dat je dan toch merkt dat als iemand in zijn eigen taal kan spreken dat het dan veel makkelijker wordt.***

Een heel ander persoon.

***Maar dat heeft dan inderdaad ook te maken met dat aanpassingsproces, want je past je dan aan aan de gast en hij wilde zich misschien ook wel aanpassen aan jullie maar kon dat misschien niet zo***

En voelde zich misschien ook bezwaard misschien dat wij allemaal om hem heen ... ‘gaat het allemaal wel goed’. Terwijl hij dan misschien juist niet daardoor op z’n gemak was.

***Want je zei, het was een heel gezin, maar bijvoorbeeld dan de vrouw of de kinderen die spraken eigenlijk ook geen Engels?***

Die spraken ook alleen maar Duits, en geen Engels, nee.

***Dan wordt het toch lastiger. En probeer je dan wel, want je probeert dan wel gewoon in het Engels...***

Ja mijn Duits is gewoon echt niet op zo’n hoog niveau.

***Over de werknemers, hoe zou je de ideale werknemer omschrijven? Die als die hier zou komen wat zouden de vereisten zijn voor de werknemer?***

In ieder geval hele vriendelijke uitstraling en een open uitstraling. Iemand die van aanpakken weet, iemand die z’n schouders eronder zet. En qua talen enzo, ja. Ik heb eigenlijk, ja het maakt me allemaal niet zo veel uit, als diegene maar heel erg vriendelijk is. Het zou

inderdaad, nu ik er over nadenk, is toch wel handig als iemand z'n talen kent, maar dat is niet een vereiste denk ik.

***Er is dus ook niet een taalbeleid van je moet bijvoorbeeld Engels spreken...***

Je moet wel Engels kunnen, dat is waar.

***Maar andere talen, daar wordt niet op geselecteerd?***

Nee, alleen Nederlands en Engels, want er zijn ook heel veel buitenlandse studenten die hier solliciteren, maar ja, als je ook geen Nederlands kan dan werkt dat ook niet.

***Want er komen hier toch best wel veel Nederlandse gasten ook?***

Ja, en dan vind ik dat je gewoon in de moedertaal moet kunnen ontvangen.

***Want dat is ook wel belangrijk denk ik voor de ervaring dan van de Nederlandse gasten, dat ze dan in hun eigen taal worden ontvangen.***

Ja, het zou misschien niet een heel groot probleem zijn als ze echt iemand, weet je iemand die een beetje exotisch Engels praat, dan snappen mensen ook wel dat die geen Nederlands kan. Nee, ik vind dat wel belangrijk en gewoon ook computerprogramma's zijn in het Nederlands en je moet mailtjes kunnen beantwoorden. Ja, dan kan iemand gewoon maar de helft van de taken doen. Dat wil ik natuurlijk niet.

***Dus het is echt Nederlands, Engels en de rest dat is mooi meegenomen maar geen vereiste?***

Nee.

***Want zijn er ook werknemers hier binnen het hotel die een andere moedertaal hebben dan het Nederlands of echt alleen maar Nederlandssprekenden?***

Nee.

***Over de informatievoorziening had ik ook nog wat vragen. Bijvoorbeeld jullie hebben een website, maar ik neem aan dat jullie ook flyers en brochures en dat soort dingen hebben.***

Alleen een website

***Die zag ik is in het Nederlands en Engels ook. Hoe komen die vertalingen tot stand?***

(ONDERBREKING DOOR COLLEGA)

***Ja, over de website, hoe is die vertaling tot stand gekomen? Wie heeft het geschreven en hoe vertalen jullie dat?***

Ik heb het zelf vertaald. En toen heb ik het naar een vriendje van mij gestuurd die is Engels en die heeft het, dat is het makkelijkste, iemand die gewoon native speaker inderdaad is. Ja want sommige zinnen kun je dan net beter bouwen. Of die heeft net leukere woorden voor iets dan dat je het letterlijk vertaald. Maar ik moet eerlijk zeggen dat ik zelf, ik schrijf het



makkelijker in het Engels, ja het is heel stom eigenlijk, dan in het Nederlands. Ik heb eigenlijk eerst de website in het Engels geschreven en toen weer in het Nederlands vertaald.

***Je hebt het toen de andere kant op vertaald***

Ja. Ja, en ik vind Engels ook leuker. Dan kan je het leuker vertellen.

***Het klinkt wat anders***

Ja.

***Vind je dat het wat beter klinkt ook dan het Nederlands als je het in het Engels zet?***

Ja. Ja, wat funkier ofzo, ik weet het niet. Ik hou meer van Engels dan van Nederlands, maar het is natuurlijk ook een beetje raar... Op de kamers hebben wij ook room directories, dat is dus waar alle informatie over het hotel instaat en die is dus alleen in het Engels, omdat ik het ook weer zo iets vind om het twee boekjes weet je wel en dan denk ik van 'Engels kan iedereen lezen', maar dat vinden sommige mensen ook een beetje raar.

***Ja dat is misschien lastig ook voor sommige gasten als ze niet zo heel goed Engels spreken. Wil je dat nog wel gaan vertalen of laat je het gewoon in Engels?***

Ik laat het gewoon in het Engels.

(ONDERBREKING DOOR COLLEGA)

***Ik had nog een soort van case study, want stel, ik sta... jullie hebben niet echt een receptie of wel of is dit de receptiebalie?***

Dit is de receptie en ontbijtzaal in één.

***Stel ik zou bijvoorbeeld hier bij de receptie zitten en er komen gasten binnen. Hoe zou dat verlopen? Hoe zou zo'n gesprek verlopen en wat zou je zelf doen? Zou je dat een beetje kunnen beschrijven?***

Oh hoe je iemand incheckt? Nou sowieso gaan we de deur open doen, dus dan ben je al daar. Ik zeg meestal 'hallo' zo een beetje er tussen in en dan kijk ik wat zij zeggen en dan hoor je dus welke taal ze dus zijn. Dan stel ik me voor 'hoi ik ben (XXX)' en dan hoor je ook de naam en dan denk je oh ja het is die. Dan weet je ook een beetje wie je voor je hebt. Dan vraag je of je iets kan tillen, de koffers, en dan ga je hierheen (WIJST NAAR RECEPTIE), en dan welkom bij XX HOTEL, dit is de receptie en de ontbijtruimte in een. Ik heb een registratieformuliertje en dan geef je dat. Dan vraag je of ze even willen checken of dat klopt wat er allemaal staat '2 personen, 3 nachten' en of ze dan de lege vakjes in willen vullen. En dan heb jij tijd om even in de computer de reservering erbij te pakken om te kijken welke kamer en dan pak je het stadsplattegrondje en dan vraag je 'is dit de eerste keer dat u in Utrecht bent, ik heb een stadsplattegrondje voor u' en dan kruis je aan waar wij zijn en dan dat je dus naar rechts moet en dan komt u in het stadscentrum waar alle winkels zijn en restaurants. En dan vraag je of ze ergens specifiek op af gaan en of je dat voor hun aan kan kruisen, of als dat misschien buiten de stad is of je dat even uit kan zoeken of je een taxi kan bellen wat dan ook. Dus dan heb je een beetje op weg geholpen met hun eerste stap zeg maar.

En dan zeg je zal ik even kort wat vertellen over het hotel en dan naar hun kamer begeleiden. En dan vertel je dat dit de ontbijtruimte is en de openingstijden, welke ontbijtjes we hebben, dan vraag je ook of ze gaan ontbijten, want wij proberen dan zo groen mogelijk te ondernemen dus vragen we aan iedereen of ze willen ontbijten, want anders gaan we heel veel maken voor niemand bijvoorbeeld. Dan kan je het ook sneller doen en vers. Dan schrijf je het ontbijtje op. En dan vraag je of ze nog vragen hebben of ze nog iets willen weten. Nou zo niet, dan gaan we naar de kamer. Dan vraag je weer of je wat kan tillen voor ze. En dan in de kamer leg je uit hoe het slot werkt, de electra, hoe de kaart werkt, waar de minibar staat, en of ze verder nog vragen hebben. En als er iets is dat ze dan altijd naar beneden kunnen komen.

***Want in principe is er ook altijd iemand hier bij de receptie?***

Ja, of je bent beneden, ja. Dan zet je een kaartje neer van 'ik ben beneden'. Ja, het is eigenlijk van hier vertellen, van de stad vertellen, van hun kamer vertellen en elke keer vragen 'wilt u nog iets weten'.

***En je zei dan van dat je een stadsplattegrondje hebt en dan kruis je dingen aan van nou kunt u daarheen of daarheen. Vind je het ook belangrijk dat er veel kennis is bij de werknemers van de omgeving? Dat ze echt wel weten van nou als je daar heen wil dan moet je zo en zo lopen of het VVV of musea dat soort dingen?***

Ja, de algemene dingen weet iedereen wel, maar het is ook wel eens zo van ze moeten naar de universiteit en daar zijn echt heel veel afdelingen van. En ik heb hier nooit gestudeerd, dus ik weet dat ook niet, dus dan is het wel even zo van 'heeft u een adres dan kunnen wij het even opzoeken'. Google is natuurlijk fantastisch, want je kan alles meteen opzoeken. We verwachten ook niet dat ze alles helemaal kennen, want sommige wonen niet in het centrum, de meeste wel, maar ja dan weet je ook niet precies alles. Wel dat ze dan meteen hun best gaan doen om dat wel helemaal uit te zoeken. Als het langer duurt dan is het 'ik breng u even naar de kamer en als u dan geïnstalleerd bent enzo, komt u even langs de receptie voor u naar buiten gaat en dan heb ik voor u uitgezocht'. Dus wel proberen om alle vragen te beantwoorden. Het is niet erg als je het niet zo meteen kan zeggen.

***Is er wel eens echt een, naast dat voorval met de Duitse familie, een misverstand geweest met buitenlandse gasten, dat je zo nog weet...***

Qua taal?

***Ja, qua taal. Dat het echt door de taal kwam dat je, dat er, dat iets, nou ja, niet helemaal is misgelopen, maar dat je wel merkte van nou dat is niet helemaal goed gegaan?***

Ik kan zo even niks bedenken.

***Mocht je het later nog opkomen, als je het mij zou willen mailen of bellen dan, heel graag. Want dat zijn ook dingen waar ik wel wat mee kan natuurlijk. Heeft u verder nog sinds dat jullie zijn geopend tot aan nu nog iets meegemaakt van nou dat is echt, qua cultuur, zo anders geweest dan dat ik gewend ben.***

Ja, je merkt wel dat verschillende culturen, ja als je dat een paar keer ziet. Bijvoorbeeld Indiase mannen, die willen heel graag gewoon dat alles voor hun gedaan wordt. Maar dat is ook... soms dan denk je van '(ZUCHT)' het is wel echt, ja gewoon dingen ... Ja die willen gewoon heel graag verzorgd worden, dat is gewoon uit hun cultuur. En dat is wel dat je dan de eerste twee keer denkt 'jeetje, dat is opvallend' en dat je dan bij de derde keer dat je dan denkt 'oh' en dan ga je er een beetje verder over nadenken.

***En hoe ga je daar dan mee om?***

Ja gewoon doen wat zij willen. Nee echt, een gast is gewoon.. ze zeggen altijd 'klant is koning' Gasten, ja ik bedoel ze betalen daarvoor om gewoon te krijgen waar ze om gevraagd hebben, maar je moet je ook wel als gast gedragen. Dus als ze echt heel... als ze dan geen rekening houden met de andere gasten of echt heel onbeschoft of zo, dan ga ik er niet in mee.

***Heb je dat wel eens meegemaakt, dat gasten echt, nou ja, wat onbeschofter zijn, of dat ze echt doen wat...?***

Nee eigenlijk niet. We hebben echt fijne gasten.

***En heb je ook wel eens gehad dat bijvoorbeeld achteraf op zo'n reviewsite dan iets komt te staan waarvan je denkt van nou dat heb ik niet zo ervaren?***

Nee. Nou ja, dat was dus laatst. Wij staan echt een (9.1) ofzo gemiddeld op Booking.com, en laatst was er ineens een 5.6 ofzo. Dat vind ik heel erg. Maar dat waren dan 4 dames en die hadden dan 2 kamers die aan elkaar zijn. En ze hadden allemaal hun eigen drank en wij nou oke prima, daar gaan we niks van zeggen, maar dat is natuurlijk eigenlijk niet de bedoeling. Dat doe je zelf ook wel eens in een hotel. Maar gewoon een beetje, allemaal prima. En dan echt zo'n review dat de kamer te klein was, maar daar heb ik dan niks van gehoord. Terwijl je wel elke keer 'dames, is alles naar wens' en 'hebben jullie alles kunnen vinden'. Dat je toch probeert om die opening te geven, maar dat je ze dan niet .. en dat ze dan thuis gaan ...

***En heb je daar ook nog wat mee gedaan?***

Nee want in principe zijn die reviews eigenlijk niet ...

**(ONDERBREKING TELEFOON)**

Nee maar dat... ik weet niet of dat een Hollandse cultuur is ofzo. Wel Nederlandssprekend, dus het is niet alsof ze het niet konden ofzo.

Ik zou het wel kunnen doen, is wel een goeie. Maar wij hebben wel een feedbackformuliertje op de kamer. Ik heb wel 1 keer dat was een vrouw die was helemaal van 'dit en dat', dus ik had ook wel een mailtje getypt, van 'jeetje, ik vind het heel jammer dat ... ik ga uw feedback natuurlijk wel ter harte nemen'. Toen had ze ook teruggestuurd, van 'oh nou ja, het was niet zo erg, ik was vergeten om te vertellen dat het wel heel mooi was enzo' en allemaal positieve punten. Dus waarschijnlijk had ze gewoon een ochtendhumeurtje.

Ik denk dat Duitse mensen en ook Japanners, die vinden het helemaal fantastisch hier, al die design dingen. Dat het allemaal een beetje anders is dan anders. Maar Belgen, die vinden typische kamers dan weer wat minder. Het hangt er ook natuurlijk weer vanaf wat voor persoon zoals ik al zei. Je hebt meer behoudende mensen. Franse mensen, avontuurlijke Franse mensen die zijn er natuurlijk ook.

***En je zei nu ook over Japanse gasten, krijgen jullie die hier ook veel?***

Redelijk.

***En zijn dat dan wat jongere of wat oudere, of gemixt?***

Jongeren.

***En qua taal, is het communiceren jullie met hen ook gewoon in het Engels?***

Ja, maar dat is soms ook wel heel erg moeilijk. De ene die kan wel Engels inderdaad, maar ik weet ook nog wel een gezinnetje dan kon echt nul Engels. En dan is het heel moeilijk want Japans heeft totaal geen referentie. Met Frans kun je nog een beetje, maar Japans, dat is echt...

***Heb je wel eens gehad dat je, dat er Japanse mensen hier waren en dat zij geen Engels spraken en jij dan inderdaad toch wat moet uitleggen?***

Ja dan beeldt je het echt uit, het kaartje en hier dan de sleutel. Je laat het echt zien ja. Maar dan denk ik als je een heel vriendelijk gezicht hebt, dan vergeven ze je het ook wel ja. Maar dat is natuurlijk ook Japanners, die verwachten ook niet dat wij Japans kunnen. Franse mensen verwachten misschien wel dat wij Frans spreken.

Je wil het op zich wel (ANDERE TALEN SPREKEN) het is niet dat je denkt 'ik spreek alleen maar Engels', maar als je het gewoon niet kan. En het wordt ook wel gewoon gewaardeerd als je het probeert. Als mensen denken dat het onwelwillendheid is, dan vinden ze het niet zo relaxed.

***Nou, ondanks dat je zei we zijn nog niet zo lang open en ik weet nog niet zo of dat ik je kan helpen, maar toch moet ik zeggen dat het wel interessant was en wel goede informatie waar ik wel wat mee kan.***

***Wat ik ook nog wilde vragen, mocht ik ook nog iets vergeten zijn of willen weten zal ik dan gewoon even mailen of bellen?***

Ja hoor

### ***4.3 Interview 3***

This interview was conducted in March 2013 with the owner of a small boutique hotel, was conducted in Dutch. The information needed for this thesis was translated by the author into English and processed and analysed in Chapter 5 of this study. The parts in bold are the questions asked by the researcher.

***Dan gaan we beginnen met de eerste paar vragen. Dus als je gewoon wat over je zelf kan vertellen. Wat je functie is, hoe lang je hier al werkt, je opleidingsachtergrond, die zaken.***

Nou ik ben (XXX), ik ben 25 en ik werk sinds 1 mei 2008, dus bij de opening, werk ik bij de (XXX). We zijn een combinatie van hotel, restaurant en brasserie en vergaderzalen. In eerste instantie, want ik heb gestudeerd in Utrecht, Bestuurs- en Organiseringswetenschappen, dus ik kom eigenlijk helemaal niet uit deze sector. Ik heb gestudeerd van 2006 tot 2011 en in principe werkte ik achter de receptie in die tijd. Gewoon als bijbaantje dus, 16 tot 24 uur zo iets. Afhankelijk van hoe druk het was met mijn studie tot wel 32 tot 40 eigenlijk. Dus eigenlijk is het altijd wel een hele leuke bijbaan geweest. Toen ben ik afgestudeerd, toen ben ik er even door omstandigheden een jaartje uitgeweest en toen ben ik hier weer teruggekomen. Tenminste, ik ben nooit uit dienst geweest. Toen ben ik hier weer teruggekomen in een andere functie, als reserveringsmedewerker en daar doe je de trouwpartijen regelen, de bedrijfsdinners, borrels, de vergaderingen, grote partijen reserveren voor zowel restaurant, als brasserie en hotel. En dat doe ik nu 32 uur per week en zo af en toe nog een beetje receptie erbij en ondertussen zoek ik natuurlijk naar een baan in mijn vakgebied.

***Ja, want, sorry, dat is me heel even ontschoten, wat had je gestudeerd?***

Bestuurs- en Organiseringswetenschap aan de Universiteit.

***Dat is inderdaad wel heel iets anders dan dit.***

Ja.

***En je bent hier dan echt gekomen door je bijbaan eigenlijk?***

Ja.

***Oke, nou, dat is duidelijk. Heb je hiervoor ook, zeg maar voordat je hier bij de receptie ging werken ook al een beetje in de horeca gewerkt of is dit je eerste ervaring in de horeca ook?***

Ik heb bij een pizzeria gewerkt daarvoor. Dat was afhaal. We verkochten vooral eigenlijk broodjes en dat soort dingen. Ja, wat is horeca?

***Heel anders dan hier?***

Ja dat is natuurlijk iets heel anders. En daar heb ik drie jaar gewerkt. Dus wel een tijd, maar ja, echt horeca... Officieel wel, maar ja, het is heel anders.

***Oke. En qua gasten, heb je ongeveer een beeld van wat voor gasten hier komen zeg maar.***

***Hoeveel gasten komen hier gemiddeld per week ongeveer?***

Dat vind ik lastig te zeggen. We hebben een bezettingsgraad in goede tijden van ongeveer 70 tot 75 procent, soms nog wel hoger. Nu gaat het natuurlijk door de crisis wel iets omlaag. Dat gaan we wel merken dat (...) het percentage is gedaald naar 65, nouja, keer 27 kamers, keer 7. We hebben vooral veel zakelijk. Zeker door de weeks is het veelal zakelijke mensen en in het weekend is het leisure, dus vrije tijd.

***Zoals de meeste hotels denk ik ook wel hier in Utrecht?***

(ONDERBREKING DOOR TELEFOON)

***Goed, je had het over dat er veel zakelijke gasten komen door de weeks en in het weekend is het vooral leisure. Die gasten die er dan komen, komen die vooral uit Nederland of vooral uit het buitenland of is dat een beetje een mix?***

Het is een beetje een mix, maar heel veel gasten uit Duitsland. Dat komt omdat we wat zaken doen met bedrijven die, zoals bijvoorbeeld een (XXX) ofzo, dan komen er heel wat mensen uit Duitsland, Italië en dan is er nog een groot gedeelte dat uit Engeland komt en Amerika. En voor de rest zijn het geen grote.. dat zijn de voornaamste aantallen.

***Hoeveel procent denk je dat dat ongeveer is van het totale aantal gasten?***

70. Door de weeks van de zakelijke.

***En van de leisure gasten die dan in het weekend komen, zijn dat...***

Bijna allemaal Nederlands. Ja, laat ik zeggen 60 procent of 70. In het weekend is het veel Nederlands, want we hebben natuurlijk ook nog veel gasten van bruiloften die hier zelf reserveren.

***Dus het is wel een mix, maar je ziet dat door de weeks meer buitenlandse gasten zijn en in het weekend meer Nederlandse gasten eigenlijk?***

Ja.

*Dan gaan we even verder op de buitenlandse gasten, want je zei net al er komen dan bijvoorbeeld mensen uit Duitsland, Italië, maar ook Engeland en Amerika. Dus dat betekent dat er native speakers bij zitten, maar ook non-native speakers van het Engels. Vind je het lastiger om met bepaalde culturen te communiceren in het Engels dan met andere culturen?*

Ja. Met Fransen is het lastiger en ik vind met Italianen ook lastig, omdat zij de Engelse taal minder beheersen. Vooral, nou ja, Duitsers die beheersen dat eigenlijk vrij goed. En het zijn eigenlijk meer de, nou zit ik te denken, ja zakelijk Italiaans gaat ook wel goed. Wel met een accent vind ik. Dus, Duitsers, Italianen gaat nog wel, en alle andere culturen vind ik vaak lastig.

*Ook met de native speakers? Zeg maar met de echte Britse gasten of Amerikaanse gasten?*

Nee, dat is natuurlijk makkelijk. Engelsen en Amerikanen dat gaat prima, dat gaat goed.

*De non-native speakers daar vind je het dus wat lastiger mee communiceren omdat die gewoon een accent hebben of echt een taalbarriere hebben.*

Ja.

*Zou je dan zeggen, het is dus inderdaad makkelijker met een native speaker zeg je.*

Ja.

*Goed, vind je dan, als er bijvoorbeeld een Duitse gast komt of een Italiaanse of een Franse die dan misschien de Engelse taal niet goed beheerst... vind je dan dat jij jouw taal moet aanpassen aan de gast? Dat je je niveau van Engels misschien iets versimpelt?*

Ja dat vind ik wel. Ik probeer daar wel mee bezig te zijn, plus dat het soms handen en voetenwerk wordt dan, maar ik vind wel dat je een beetje moet aanpassen aan wie je voor je hebt. Kijk, het liefste zou ik meerdere talen spreken, maar dat doe ik niet.

*Want hoeveel talen spreek jij zelf?*

Twee, gewoon Nederlands en Engels. Mijn Frans en Duits is helemaal weggezakt en Duits kan ik dus wel verstaan, dat is prima, maar spreken dat is zo houtje touwtje daar waag ik me maar niet aan. En dat hebben wij eigenlijk allemaal. Alle receptionisten spreken eigenlijk maar twee talen, dat is Nederlands en Engels en we hebben er 1 bij die ook nog Duits spreekt.

Dus eigenlijk vind ik wel, ik vind het gastvrijer als je als hotel meerdere talen spreekt zeg maar, in ieder geval vier.

***Zeg maar, Nederlands, Engels, Duits, Frans?***

Ja. Maar dat hebben wij niet.

***Ja, op 1 na die dan Duits spreekt.***

Ja.

***En vind je het ook makkelijk om jouw taal aan te passen aan de gast?***

Ja dat vind ik... ja dat gaat wel. En, nou ja, mijn Engels niveau is sowieso niet heel hoog, dus dat ik echt mee zou kunnen, echt in die zin, met de echte Britten, maar je voelt vanzelf wel wat mensen begrijpen en wat niet. Want ja, het is gewoon een automatisme denk ik wat makkelijker (...) kortere zinnen, andere woorden zoeken.

***En merk je ook wel eens als bijvoorbeeld Britten hier komen of Amerikanen dat zij dan ook hun taal aanpassen aan jou?***

Nee, dat merk ik niet.

***Dat ze misschien herformuleren?***

Britten wel, Amerikanen niet.

***Die doen dat niet?***

Britten, dat is wel zo. Die kunnen nog wel eens herformuleren, maar Amerikanen is mijn ervaring, dat is echt, die

***Die zeggen wat ze willen zeggen? En heb je dan ook wel eens problemen mee gehad dat zij inderdaad iets zeiden en dat je het eigenlijk niet echt verstond, maar dat ze het niet herformuleerden zodat je het wel begreep?***

Nou ja, ik vraag er dan wel naar. Kijk en als je er echt naar gaat vragen, dan doen ze dat wel. Alleen Britten zijn... Ja, Britten zijn, dat vind ik altijd heel opvallend, zijn hele beleefde mensen. Die proberen het je dan ook wel echt een beetje makkelijker te maken. Bewuster dan Amerikanen. Dat is mijn ervaring.



*En dat merk je dan een beetje over het algemeen bij Britten en Amerikaanse gasten die hier komen.*

*Over het aanpassingsvermogen. Je zei zelf van 'nou ja dat gaat eigenlijk vrij natuurlijk', merk je dat dat ook zo is bij alle werknemers die bij de receptie staan of verschilt dat ook nog een beetje per werknemer?*

Het verschilt, ja. Er is sowieso een groot verschil tussen stagiaires en de gewone medewerkers zeg maar. Ik merk wel dat, misschien ook wel omdat het toch, want vele van hen toch van MBO studies komen en niet eens per sé niveau 4, dat het toch lastiger is. Om zich wat meer te presenteren zeg maar. Om daar ook zeker van te zijn. Dat je er toch wel staat. Dus dat is een verschil. En ik denk wat betreft de vaste mensen zeg maar die kunnen redelijk anticiperen, maar er zit wel een verschil in taalniveau. We hebben 1 collega die komt uit Engeland, dus ja. Allicht dat die dat natuurlijk een stuk gemakkelijker doet dan dat wij dat doen. Er zit dus verschil tussen stagiaires en de vaste werknemers en dan binnen de vaste werknemers hebben we dat verschil, maar ja, we zijn niet met een heel groot team, dus ja, dat wisselt. Geef ik zo antwoord op de vraag?

*Jawel, jawel, want het gaat over het aanpassingsvermogen per werknemer en je zegt dus inderdaad dat stagiaires die hebben dat wat minder dan het vaste personeel, maar binnen het vaste personeel zit daar natuurlijk ook nog verschil tussen, omdat er toch inderdaad 1 collega uit Engeland komt, nou ja, die is daar misschien iets anders op ingespeeld dan de rest vanuit die cultuur.*

Precies, en ik kom net natuurlijk van de Universiteit, dus ik heb net veel wetenschappelijk gelezen in het Engels, dus dan zit ik er ook weer meer in dan onze moeder met 4 kinderen die dat al heel lang niet meer Engels heeft gelezen en dat soort zaken. Dus ja, zo heb je verschillen per werknemer. En ik zeg ook niet dat ze het niet kunnen, maar die groeien er in, je moet er echt in groeien.

*Ja, dat is echt een kwaliteit eigenlijk misschien wat je nog dan moet ontwikkelen. Als we het nu toch over de werknemers hebben, hoe zou je de ideale werknemer omschrijven qua talen? Zoals je net al zei 'die spreekt vier talen' maar die moet dan denk ik ook gewoon een goed aanpassingsvermogen hebben, dus eigenlijk hebben we die vraag een beetje beantwoord, maar wat is ook zeg maar het beleid? Want is er uberhaupt een beleid ten opzichte van het aantal talen dat iemand moet spreken?*

Nee.

***Dat maakt niet uit?***

Nee, nee. Jammer genoeg niet. Nou ja, misschien niet jammer voor mij, want anders was ik hier ook niet aangenomen, maar daar, wij hebben daar geen strikte personeelsbeleid daarvoor.

***Dus als je alleen Nederlands en Engels spreekt, dat is gewoon voldoende?***

Ja. Kijk, je moet wel Engels spreken, maar buiten dat zijn er geen vereisten.

***Ja, en je zei net 'er is 1 werknemer die komt uit Engeland' hoe wordt er bijvoorbeeld met dat cultuurverschil ook hierbinnen omgegaan? Merk je iets van een cultuurverschil tussen die werknemer en de rest?***

Ja. Ja, dat denk ik wel vaker te merken. Wat ik net ook al zei, Britten zijn wel iets beleefder en ehm is beleefd het goede woord? Ja ik denk gewoon beleefder. En Nederlanders zijn wat directer. Toevallig is zij ook manager van een bepaalde afdeling bij ons, dus zij doet veel met personeel en dat soort zaken. Dus je hebt ook meer met haar te maken dan met alleen een receptiemedewerker die een aantal diensten draait. En dan merk je wel dat wij, in ieder geval ik, als Nederlander en daar hebben we er wel een aantal van in het team zitten, die toch wat meer recht-toe-recht-aan directer formuleren wat ze vinden en denken. Voor haar naar ons toe is dat wat lastiger. Ze zegt minder dan ze denkt.

***En hoe wordt daar dan verder mee omgegaan? Want is er dan nooit iets geweest waarvan zij zoiets had van eigenlijk, dat ze het misschien heel beleefd of correct formuleert, maar dat ze eigenlijk iets heel anders bedoeld. Maar dat dat misschien door de Nederlandse collega's dan niet wordt opgepakt? Zijn daar ook wel eens problemen mee geweest?***

Ja, we hebben er wel eens problemen mee gehad. Ik moet hier aan toe voegen zij spreekt zelf minder goed Nederlands. Aan haar moet ik vooral mijn Nederlandse niveau aanpassen, niet omdat ze dom is, maar omdat ze het minder vloeiend begrijpt of als je te snel praat. Dus ook in die zin heb je te maken met een taalbarriere. Dus niet alleen qua vorm dat we denken dat Britten dus wat beleefder zijn, wat zij ook heeft, maar ook de taalbarriere op zich. En ja, dat is bijna onvermijdelijk, daar heb ik wel eens problemen mee, miscommunicatie, dat je elkaar niet begrijpt.

***Heb je daar misschien nog een voorbeeld van echt miscommunicatie dat je zo nog weet?***

Misschien kom ik er nog op, nu even niet.

***Dat komt nog wel dan misschien. Ik had ook nog een vraag van wanneer beslis je dat je Engels gaat spreken met de gasten als ze bijvoorbeeld uit Duitsland, of Italië, Spanje, Frankrijk komen, maar goed, als je inderdaad alleen Nederlands en Engels spreekt dan gaat dat al heel snel, maar stel bijvoorbeeld dat die gast geen Engels spreekt, hoe los je dat dan op?***

Of ik zoek iemand die de taal wel spreekt, dat hebben we nog wel eens, iemand van de bediening, stagiaires die een uitzondering is zeg maar, maar eigenlijk heb ik er nooit problemen mee. Eigenlijk lost het zichzelf altijd wel op. Handen en voeten, beetje aanwijzen. Eigenlijk lost het zichzelf altijd op. Ik heb geen concreet voorbeeld dat het is misgegaan.

***En over de informatievoorziening, wat voor informatie hebben jullie, bijvoorbeeld flyers, een brochure, website en in welke talen zijn die geschreven?***

De boekingsformule is in bijna alle talen beschikbaar geloof ik, Spaans, Italiaans, Duits, Engels, Nederlands, Frans. Ja, dus de boekingsformule via de website die is in veel talen beschikbaar. Onze website zelf ook, die is ook in het Engels en Nederlands beschikbaar. En de brochures die wij hebben, we hebben er eigenlijk weinig, 1 is een fotoimpressie dus geen taal, en alles wat op de kamer ligt is in 2 talen. De informatiemap is geloof ik in twee talen.

***En dat is dan Nederlands en Engels?***

Ja.

***En die vertalingen, weet je toevallig hoe die tot stand komen, wie die vertalingen doet en of dat bijvoorbeeld een native speaker dat doet of een vertaalbureau?***

Dat doet onze collega die uit Engeland komt.

***Die doet de Engelse vertalingen?***

Ja, en dat wordt wel nog door iemand gecontroleerd, omdat zij nog wel eens grammaticafouten wil maken, een beetje dyslectisch soms dus het wordt nog wel gecontroleerd. En zij stelt officiële teksten op en dan wordt het nog 1 keer gecontroleerd op grammatica door een van ons.

***Oke, door een van jullie gewoon als Nederlands spreker?***

Ja. Maar ik moet ook wel zeggen dat onze kracht van het hotel, dat zie je ook in alle reviews, zit vooral in de vriendelijkheid van het personeel. Kijk want als het gaat om, en de gastvrijheid, als het gaat om talen spreken, de uitgebreidheid van informatie zou je bij een (XXX), dat is daar echt vele malen beter en dat kan hier ook wel een stuk beter. Maar wij onderscheiden ons vooral in die diensten.

***Echt klantgerichtheid?***

Ja. De vriendelijkheid.

***Oke. Ik had ook nog een vraag, was eigenlijk of je soort omschrijving kan geven van stel ik sta bij de receptie en ik ben aan het observeren daar, wat zou ik zien als er gasten binnenkomen? Hoe zou dat proces verlopen?***

Hoe bedoel je dat precies?

***Nou, stel er komt een gast binnen en die gaat naar de receptie toe, wat voor handelingen doen jullie daar? Hoe zorg je ervoor dat de gast zich op zijn gemak voelt of thuis voelt en wordt ingecheckt? Een beetje het proces vanaf dat ie binnenkomt totdat ie naar de kamer toe gaat.***

Je begint altijd met welkom heten natuurlijk. Kijk we hebben ook heel veel restaurant- en brasseriegasten die vragen komen stellen bij de receptie, dus het is altijd eerst even uitvinden wie waarvoor komt. Welkom heten. Gegevens controleren en je legt gewoon heel vriendelijk uit hoe het zit, waar de kamer is, wanneer je kunt ontbijten, dat mensen altijd kunnen bellen of langs kunnen lopen.

***En stel mensen willen dingen weten over de omgeving. Vind je het ook belangrijk dat de werknemers ook kennis hebben van de omgeving, wat er te doen is, waar mensen heen moeten, waar bijvoorbeeld het VVV zit, dat soort zaken?***

Ja, ik vind het wel belangrijk dat wij de basis wel kennen. Dat je musea kan aanraden, dat je ook weet wat er is, welk restaurant leuk is, bezienswaardigheden, ja. Dat je daar iets van weet, dat is toch wel belangrijk. Sommige stagiaires die komen niet uit Utrecht, die komen van een bepaalde school in ik geloof Tilburg of ergens anders in de buurt, dus die zijn bijna niet

bekend in Utrecht, dus dan heb je dat je dat echt moet opbouwen. Eer dat ze het weten, gaan ze weer weg. Dus dat is altijd lastig. Maar ik vind wel dat de vaste medewerkers dat zeker moeten weten.

***Heb je ooit, heb ik volgens mij net ook al even kort besproken, ooit echt een misverstand gehad met een gast of miscommunicatie waarvan je denkt dat was echt iets wat ik totaal niet zo had bedoeld maar dat wel bijvoorbeeld verkeerd door de gast is opgepakt of dat de gast misschien iets had gezegd maar dat jij dat verkeerd interpreteerde?***

Oeh, dan moet ik even nadenken hoor. Nou, ik heb wel, dat is al wel een jaar geleden hoor, had ik iets met een gast die wilde zijn reservering verplaatsen. Ja, booking.com heb je een bepaalde reservering, of je kan gewoon de reguliere ‘regular rate’ kan je boeken, dat is de best beschikbare prijs op die dag, of je kan een ‘hot deal’ boeken, die prijs ligt lager, maar annuleren is niet mogelijk. Dat betekent dat het hotel mag bij binnenkomst van de reservering al direct de creditcard belasten. Dat staat tegenover de lage prijs zeg maar. En ik had toen iemand aan de telefoon die wilde zijn reservering verplaatsen en in principe zegt booking.com ‘ja maar de betaling, lastig, moeilijk’ (...) nou ja prima, maar ik moet wel de creditcard belasten. Oke dat was best, dus ik die creditcard belast en hij belt later terug over die reservering dat er nog iets gewijzigd moest worden, dus ik zei ‘ik heb net de creditcard belast en zal ik u even een kopie van de bon toesturen’. Nou ik heb toen echt een lading over me heen gekregen, omdat het toch echt asociaal was dat de creditcard zomaar was belast. Kijk dat zijn wel gewoon hele vervelende dingen zeker als het om geld gaat. Natuurlijk is het niet asociaal dat de creditcard wordt belast op het moment dat je gewoon een reservering hebt gemaakt, dat zijn gewoon de voorwaardes, maar dat was echt totale miscommunicatie. Ik kon het totaal niet plaatsen. Die man denkt dat je hem geld afhandig maakt.

***En hoe is dat uiteindelijk afgelopen, hoe hebben jullie dat dan opgelost?***

Ik geloof zelfs dat de hotelmanager het heeft opgepakt omdat hij helemaal witheet was. En dat was ook Engels, en dan vind ik het inderdaad ook wel ingewikkeld.. als je echt een discussie moet voeren in het Engels

***Bijvoorbeeld om jouw punt duidelijk te maken***

Ja. Gewoon adequaat kunnen reageren. Dat je niet gaat stotteren of stil valt. Dus toen is het door iemand anders opgepakt.

***En die heeft het toen verder helemaal afgehandeld?***

Ja. Ja, eigenlijk vind ik het wel, daar hadden we het van de week nog met elkaar over, dat dit zo'n ontzettend rustig hotel is. Het is zo gemoedelijk. Er gebeurt helemaal niets raars, echt nooit. Dat we hele rare gasten hebben, het gaat altijd zo soepel en gemoedelijk. Het is heel fijn, maar in vergelijking met wat er in de omgeving gebeurd is het wel bijzonder.

***Bedoel je dan de omgeving hier gewoon de omgeving van jullie hotel of omgeving als in andere hotels?***

Andere hotels.

***Want wat voor soort dingen hoor je daarvan dan dat er bijvoorbeeld gebeurd?***

Nou, je krijgt regelmatig mailtjes over pooiers, mensen die meermaals een kamer proberen te boeken onder verschillende namen en dan steeds niet betalen. Wij hebben dat 1 keer gehad en verder weinig gekke dingen.

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## Appendix 5 Full List of Comments from Review Websites

All comments have been taken from Tripadvisor.nl and Booking.com: two review websites who provided guests who stayed in any accommodation in the Netherlands with the option to comment on several aspects of their stay, such as location, cleanliness, service, etc. The comments, as stated below, were not translated by the author nor were they adapted or changed: spelling and grammar errors were left in to give a complete overview of all comments made on these websites. Additionally, all comments were selected on their nature; they all contained information about communication or language issues, and matters concerning general service by hotel staff.

### *Amsterdam*

1. NH Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky
  - Staff and service is typical European and not very helpful. Simple directions or even "where is the local market" is replied with... "I don't go to market, so I don't know... ". The front desk service is slow and rooms are generally not available, if you arrive on an early flight, as most Asian flights do.... *(Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)*
  - Also this "person" stopped me from getting in to the hotel on the Saturday night unless I showed him my room key. I informed him I was a guest of the hotel, but he said he didn't care, he wanted to see the room key. I asked him approximately 10 times to call the hotel manager and he refused. I proceeded to go in and he physically tried to stop me knocking my hat off in the process, I eventually shoved him aside and carried on into the hotel. I have NEVER seen this behaviour at a 5 star before. I complained to the manager and she told me that it was policy to do this after 11pm (in a 5 star???) I asked her what about the previous night as it hadn't happened then and she responded saying, "well I wasn't here last night so I don't know". *(Southampton, UK)*
  - The room was also filthy, so i politely requested another room. They again were very rude, and reminded me that I needed to pay for a 'better room'. Upon much discussion, the member of staff agreed to change my room, but (having been made to queue at the reception desk again, in order to collect my new key), I was sniggered at by the other members of the reception desk, as if to say that my request was completely out of order. When I tried to check out at 6am in the morning, nobody was at the reception desk, and I was made to wait 20 minutes for someone to attend. When she finally approached, she said, 'next time, just ring the bell. Did you not see it?'. *(UK)*

- reception: willing but insufficient, and as a cherry to the cake: they tried to charge 350 euros for a phone call that never took place. when i denied it they implied i was a liar... what a wonderful attitude! beware... (*Ioannina, Greece*)
- Staff acted like they were doing you a favor just to check you in and out and had their hand out for everything else. (*Pattaya, Thailand*)

## 2. Intercontinental Amstel Amsterdam

- Most of the staff bar a young man were rude and gave the impression they were doing you a favour. I was asked "would I like eggs?" When I asked if I could have something else I was told "pancakes." It turned out we could have a cooked breakfast but my brother specifically had to ask for this. When on the second day he asked if there was a menu he was told "no". If we wanted something we were made to feel like we were being awkward, for example asking for some more tea. I also overheard one of them moaning my brother had asked for something. (*Swansea, UK*)
- However, my last stay here was a complete disaster - so bad that I actually wrote a letter to the management (which they never responded to).(*London, UK*)
- Staff at this hotel are not so helpful and have a surly attitude. (*London, UK*)
- Although the room was ornate and luxurious as promised, it was the service, I had problem with. And as a discerning traveler, I consider, the service to be the soul of a Hotel. (*New Delhi, India*)
- After waiting about 30 minutes, they found another room that smelled better but also backed onto the elevator shaft. When I asked about that, the young woman said "There's nothing else available" and walked away. The much-vaunted service vanished. (*Fort Lauderdale, USA*)
- Beim Servieren der Kellner: "Sorry, but we have no more Aperol " Unsere Frage wann wir denn noch mal solche Getränke betsllen könnten... Antwort "may be next week". (*Stollberg, Germany*)

## 3. Hilton Amsterdam

- Staff unfriendly and extremely unhelpful (which was a shock as previous reviews state otherwise). Reception staff couldn't even direct us in the correct direction for the markets (*Edinburgh, United Kingdom*)



- Desk staff unwilling to help with minor issue. I was told on 2 separate occasions by the desk clerk that he was "too busy" and come back later,( the lobby was empty with no one else in sight! He just could not be bothered! Terrible attitude!) (*Tripadvisor member*)
- the staff is rude and arrogant. Even if you have status with Hilton, expect to be treated rudely by the disorganized and lazy front desk staff. (*Atlanta, USA*)
- It was terrible. Don't get me wrong but when you walk through the doors of a hotel that you will spend a lot of money at you don't expect to be treated like crap. The staff here were so snobbish and patronising that we left. (*Cardiff, UK*)

### *The Hague*

#### 1. Parkhotel

- The staff were bordering on being rude and were disinterested that the room was unsuitable. (*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*)
- But what I and my friend experience was staffs are very racist especially with Asian guests or guests who might not dress up to their standards. It was shown by the way they talked to us which was rude and arrogant. I really suggest you to adjust your attitude about this. You are supposed to treat any customer nicely and equally without any bias about nationality. I will never recommend this hotel to any foreigner especially Asian guests. (*Bangkok, Thailand*)
- The staff was lesser of a problem but they did look complacent and not particularly interested in helping us with our questions. (*Hongkong, China*)
- trotz vorauszahlung mit credit-card mußte ich mehr als 30 min. auf den zimmerschlüssel warten weil: man mußte erst einen mitarbeiter aus der buchhaltung finden um meine 1 woche zuvor geleistete vorabzahlung zu überprüfen!!! nach dieser langen wartezeit wurde mir - ohne ein wort der entschuldigung - der zimmerschlüssel ausgehändigt. (*Cologne, Germany*)

#### 2. Hotel Des Indes

- I have stayed here before and have been referring this hotel to friends and colleagues but now I have been extremely disappointed by the very poor customer service and willingness to solve a very simple issue with my stay. The duty manager, Marianne

did not care that I was a SPG member or a returning customer, she just did not want to help. (*Vienna, Austria*)

- Also there were many other service issues in both reception and F&B, throughout the two nights. For example: the receptionist continued to address me by my last name, but every time she initiated a conversation or greeted me she did so in English – even though I am (and speak) Dutch. Additional issues included: noisy room, no doorman and staff that cares more about themselves than their guests: each and every time the staff was a little too late, and “too late” is “too little” for a luxury property like this which strives to be the best hotel in the city. (*Düsseldorf, Germany*)
- The impression I got was that the hotel was more interested in making money in as many small ways as possible than really providing service. (*London, UK*)

### *Groningen*

#### 1. Martini Hotel

- The girl that was working that night was not interested and evidently irritated that we asked for a room bigger than a closet. When we took of she could just roll here eyes and sit her behind asap behind the desk.... (*Amsterdam, the Netherlands*)
- Staff couldn't care less (*New York, USA*)
- The receptionist was neutrally interested in his customer, not at all very excited about guests. (*UK*)

#### 2. NH Hotel de Ville

- But the worst thing about the hotel has to be its customer service, or should I say lack of! The girls on the front desk were rude. They do nothing to be helpful or understanding. (*Nova Scotia, Canada*)
- Personell war nicht hoeflich und nicht nett. (*Frankfurt, Germany*)

#### 3. Hampshire Hotel City Hotel Groningen

- Service was below par - the welcome guide states that the reception have a list of times of local religious services. When I asked, the man at reception was unable to tell me any details, including local churches - he wasn't sure if there were any churches nearby, let alone their denomination. (*Dublin, Ireland*)

- The hotel apparently has a reputation from tourist guides, etc., as being somewhat chic and trendy - not sure why - and we wonder if that accounts for the snobbiness of the staff we encountered. (*Kennebunkport, Maine, USA*)

### *Maastricht*

#### 1. Townhouse Hotel Maastricht

- the hotel was not welcoming: couldn't check in until 3 p.m. "or Later" they encouraged (*Chicago, USA*)
- Since we arrived from Canada I could not sleep and went downstairs at 3AM only to find the staff at the front desk on a porn site with some of his drunk buddies making phone calls and being very disrespectful to girls they were phoning. They did not care that a guest was only 3 meters away listening to everything. (*Vancouver, Canada*)

#### 2. Kruisherhotel Maastricht

- I was blamed for damage to the floor outside my room upon checking out. protested but was called a liar to my face in front of other guests in the reception area (*Wynyard, Australia*)
- Nevertheless I was not satisfied with the service. I was disappointed when the receptionist did a troublesome mistake while issuing my bill and either him or his chief didn't even try to apologize for my inconvenience. (*Tripadvisor member*)
- Leider ist der Service mit der Anzahl der herein und herausströmenden Gäste völlig überfordert. Das Servicepersonal reagiert leider mit angespannter und nervöser Unfreundlichkeit. (*Cologne, Germany*)

#### 3. Hotel Beaumont

- Hotel Beaumont is not a bad hotel, and it has some advantages such as free wifi and a central location. However, when I travel, I value cleanliness above all, and was quite disappointed to find little, black hairs in both bed and bathroom. Unfortunately, the staff did not seem very keen on setting things right, and so cannot recommend Hotel Beaumont. (*Copenhagen, Denmark*)
- The reception was average. Dutyfull check in, nothing more than that. The ambiancne is very nice, service however is average. (*Tripadvisor member*)

- Actually, I'm not sure what the staff did other than look at you and wish you would hurry up and leave already. (*Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates*)
- The staff often seemed a bit brusque, particularly in the evening when trying to close down the bar. They'd sort of stomp around and bang things in the background and then close the bar without saying so. (*Nottingham, UK*)

### *Utrecht*

#### 1. Grand Hotel Karel V

- The restaurants were amazing but all staff were extremely arrogant. (*Stellenbosch, South Africa*)
- The receptionist's greeting on our arrival was not welcoming, reminding us that we were early (about an hour), to which our reply was, "Can't ensure long-haul flights fit into your time frame." (*Umhlanga, kwaZulu Natal, South Africa*)

#### 2. Carlton President Hotel

- The hotel rooms are pretty good for Utrecht but the general attitude of staff and both the food and running of the restaurant needs a lot of improvement. The hotel does nothing to make you feel welcome and a valued guest, more of an inconvenience. (*London, UK*)
- This hotel is disappointing in all respects. The rooms are ok (albeit a bit small), but that is about it. The restaurant was terrible - the food was poor and the service non-existent. Our waiter forgot to bring our drinks even though we reminded him 3 times. (*UK*)

#### 3. Mitland Hotel

- Renovated rooms are ok but the service is really way below standards of a 4 stars. When the internet doesn't work, you get a "call the cable company" and when there is no hot water (sic !!!) you get a "you can shower at the pool), without anyone feeling sorry for you. The restaurant is average, basic services are charged (eg. locker at the pool), and the personnal is quite unfriendly. I certainly don't recommande it. (*Paris, France*)
- The people at reception are sometimes pretty ignorant and tend to be a bit arrogant. This is not a four-star hotel! (*Brussels, Belgium*)

## Rotterdam

### 1. Hampshire Hotel Savoy

- When we arrived there was a champagne bottle and 4 glasses dumped outside our door - it had not been cleaned away after a day later. Reception did not really care and why would you place guests in a room that looked like Keith Moon had been staying in there for a month. Horrible experience and would never return. (*Northampton, UK*)
- Definitely not a 4-star hotel! The rooms are worn, the bathrooms smelled and maids forgot towels and toilet paper. The size of the room quite well. The worst part was the staff's attitude at the reception. Decidedly rude and required deposit, even though I had paid the entire stay in advance. (*Copenhagen, Denmark*)
- Hotel is allegedly non-smoking, but this is not enforced or policed by management. Smell of smoke in hallways quite strong, and twice I smelled cannabis/hash at night. Calls to front desk were met with a what-can-you-do-about-it shrug, they didn't care. (*Toronto, Canada*)

### 2. Best Western Art Hotel

- For me the reception people was really unprofessional. It took me more than half hour to check-in , the same to check-out. Just for my self. (sic) (*Tripadvisor member*)
- Check in took 15 minutes with the only receptionist continually disturbed by the phone and other enquiries. The restaurant at night had only one waitress who also doubled as the bar attendant, suffice to say that service was unbelievably slow. However, the absolute worse was still to come. Came down to the lobby at 06:30 to check out. Seeing that the breakfast bar was already set out I attempted to obtain a glass of orange juice. I was promptly told that breakfast only started at 07:00 and that I could not have a glass of orange juice. On protest it was made quite clear that I could not have a glass of orange juice as breakfast was not yet available despite my paying €215 for a single night. (*Tripadvisor member*)
- Großer Kritikpunkt: beim Frühstück war der Service unaufmerksam und wenig entgegenkommend. Z.B. wurden die Saftgläser nicht nachgefüllt und als mein Mann dann ein Glas aus einem Regal nahm, wurde er rüde abgebügelt. (*Tripadvisor member*)

### 3. Hotel New York

- We enjoyed our stay in the restaurant and hotel until we tried to order a bottle of wine in our room. We were denied room service, as per the hotels policy we were not allowed to have other hotel guests over in our room. We understand the hotel wants to prevent loud room parties at night, however, it should have been clear to the staff that we just wanted to have a quiet last drink after the hotel bar had closed (at 1am, quite early in my opinion). When trying to explain our situation we were baffled by the extremely rude response of the staff, who told us to "listen and shut up". Very bad service, even for Dutch standards. *(anonymous)*
- The staff speaks something that should resemble English, but it's hardly understandable. *(Antwerp, Belgium)*
- Foreign und local calls waren nicht möglich, niemand machte Anstalten das zu beheben. Der Service lässt sehr zu wünschen übrigen. Preis-Leistungsverhältnis: schlecht!!! *(Frankfurt, Germany)*

### *Arnhem*

1. Van der Valk Hotel
  - The staff was extremely rude at the smallest request and mostly aloof. to the hotel guests. I feel taken advantage off by the name of the hotel which is misleading and very costly. *(Sussex Inlet, Australia)*
  - Empfang geschäftsmäßig, spreche bedingt niederländisch, für den Empfang reicht, gleichwohl wurde englisch geantwortet (bin Deutsche), na ja *(Mönchengladbach, Germany)*
  - The general culture of the staff is quite dismissive. The reception staff seems to be unable to say "good morning" when you pass them on your way to the breakfast room. In fact, they can't even acknowledge your presence, they won't even look at you. *(Bedfordshire, UK)*
2. NH Rijnhotel
  - This is by no means a four star hotel. My advice is to avoid it. I was treated rude by staff and manager eventhough I was renting a suite, which also was not of very high standard. *(Tripadvisor member)*
  - A staff member told me confidentially that the hotel has had the bugs problem for as long as she remembers and that the management never made the expense to

adequately deal with the problem. She told me that the management simply denies it high and low and even lied to the newspapers about it. I also learned that the hotel has the dreadful kitchen policy, like so many lower range middle class hotels these days, of mixing fresh food and beverage supplies with over date product. Clearly the management of the Rijnhotel has little respect for its guests and should perhaps strive to change its methods and offer quality service, as should be expected of a four star hotel. (*Tripadvisor member*)

### 3. Hotel Blanc

- However for using Hotel Blanc car park you have to pay 10 euros if you are british and 7.50 euros if you are any other nationality! Obviously the staff at hotel balnc think British people can not read foreign languages, even if we couldnt we can still read figures and we can see that 10 euros is more than 7.50 euros!! (sic) (*London, UK*)
- my take on this hotel is if there is nowhere else to stay then use this as a last result. was like a students digs, lady in charge very rude basically not a nice place to stay unless you want to stay in a tower block as rooms are short coming in main building, (sic) (*London, UK*)

### Amsterdam - Hans de Brinker Budget Hotel

- The Staff very rude and didnt want to assist. Breakfast was the worst i have had in my travels! It didn't even offer the occupants a toaster! I asked for a glass of water & the man rolled his eyes & passed on sarcastic comments.
- If your looking for any amount of humanity from the staff you should look else where. They were rude, obnoxious, offensive and all round unhelpful.. and complimented this with excessive amounts of eye rolling to any question, such as where is the nearest police station. When we tired to enquire about a western union the response was, under the ladies breathe whilst throwing daggers at us, that they did not work there so they would not know so why don't we go and find one ourselves. (*Cardiff, UK*)
- We complained to the staff, who denied knowing anything about the bugs, and eventually we had to speak to the manager. He told us they were full and there was nothing they could do. He also denied responsibility for the bed bugs, saying that other people bring them in and what is he supposed to do. (*London, UK*)

**Appendix 6 Questionnaires**

*6.1 English Questionnaire*

Dear guest, my name is Sanne van Tuijl and I am a Master student of Intercultural Communication at Utrecht University. I am currently researching communication strategies used by people working in hotels in the Netherlands and the experience of guests visiting these hotels. Hence, this questionnaire is designed in order to gain information regarding the use of English by both groups in the Netherlands. For this questionnaire, 5 questions will be asked which should ideally be answered as elaborately as possible. Please try to give your opinion on the different issues and give examples where needed. The questions can be answered in your native language.

1. Would you say that the English used by hotel staff is polite/accurate?  
.....  
.....

2. Have you ever had any difficulties with hotel staff regarding their use of English?  
.....  
.....

3. If the hotel staff speak only Dutch or English, and you do not speak these languages, how do you deal with this? What do you do to get your point across?  
.....  
.....

4. If using English or Dutch is not an option, are there other methods or languages that can or should be used to communicate?  
.....  
.....



5. When dealing with hotel staff, do you ever feel the need to adjust your use of language to theirs? If so, why?

.....  
.....

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age:

- >25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55<

Country of Origin: .....

Thank you for your cooperation.

## 6.2 Chinese Questionnaire

亲爱的顾客，我是Sanne van Tuijl，乌特勒支大学跨文化交际方向的一名在读硕士研究生。我正在进行一项研究，是关于荷兰本地酒店（旅馆）的工作人员所使用的交际策略以及酒店顾客的体验。

此问卷的目的是获取关于这两个群体（酒店工作人员和顾客）的英语使用情况的信息。本问卷包括5个问题，我期待您对这些问题给出尽量详尽的回答。对于各个问题，希望您能分享自己的观点和看法，如果需要也可以举例子。

问卷可以用您的母语作答。

谢谢！

1. 你认为酒店工作人员的英语使用是否礼貌/准确？

.....  
.....

2. 你是否曾经因为酒店工作人员的英语而感到沟通困难？

.....  
.....

3. 如果酒店工作人员只讲荷兰语或者英语，而你不讲这两种语言，你会如何解决？你会怎样做来表达清楚自己的想法？

.....  
.....

4. 在不能使用英语或荷兰语的情况下，有什么其他方法或者语言可以或应该用来沟通？

.....  
.....

5. 当与酒店工作人员沟通时，你是否感觉过需要调整自己的语言使用来适应对方？

如果有，为什么？

.....  
.....

请填写一下信息：

性别：

- 男
- 女

年龄：

- >25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55<

国籍：.....

谢谢您的合作

### 6.3 German Questionnaire

Lieber Gast, mein Name ist Sanne van Tuijl und ich bin Masterstudentin der Interkulturellen Kommunikation an der Universität Utrecht. Ich untersuche derzeit das Kommunikationsverfahren zwischen Hotelangestellten und Hotelgästen in den Niederlanden. Folglich wurde dieser Fragebogen gestaltet, um Informationen über den Gebrauch des Englischen beider Gruppen zu erlangen. 5 Fragen werden innerhalb des Fragebogens gestellt, welche idealer Weise so ausführlich wie möglich beantwortet werden sollten. Bitte versuchen Sie Ihre Meinung zu den verschiedenen Aspekten und gegebenenfalls Beispiele zu formulieren. Die Fragen können in Ihrer Muttersprache beantwortet werden.

1. Würden Sie sagen, dass das Englisch der Hotelangestellten höflich/präzise ist?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. Hatten sie jemals Schwierigkeiten mit Hotelangestellten, wenn diese Englisch gesprochen haben?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. Wenn die Hotelangestellten nur Niederländisch oder Englisch sprechen, Sie jedoch keine dieser Sprachen sprechen, wie gehen Sie damit um? Was tun Sie, um sich zu verständigen?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Wenn der Gebrauch von Niederländisch oder Englisch keine Option ist, gibt es andere Methoden oder Sprachen, die angewandt werden können oder sollten, um zu korrespondieren?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. Wenn Sie mit Hotelangestellten zu tun haben, haben Sie jemals das Gefühl, sich deren Sprache anpassen zu müssen? Wenn ja, warum?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Bitte beantworten Sie außerdem folgende Fragen:

Geschlecht

- Männlich
- Weiblich

Alter

- >25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55<

Herkunftsland:.....

Vielen Dank für Ihre Zusammenarbeit!

## Appendix 7 Email contact Hotel Management School Maastricht

### *Email 1 – 10 June 2013*

Hallo Sanne,

Als antwoord op je vraag: nee, aan de Hotel Management School Maastricht bestaat de mogelijkheid om Chinese taallessen te volgen niet. Daar is een duidelijke reden voor: gezien de beschikbare tijd, kan er niet of nauwelijks verwacht worden dat deelnemers aan het einde van de cursus meer dan de absolute rudimenten van de taal (ergens laag niveau A1, dus) beheersen, en dat is, gezien de inspanning, de moeite niet waard.

Je vraag over het taalbeleid wil ik ook graag van een antwoord voorzien, maar ‘hoe ziet jullie taalbeleid eruit’ is een wat vage vraag – ik zou graag wat gerichtere vragen hebben. Als je me die mailt, zal ik ze beantwoorden. We kunnen ook, als je dat liever hebt, een telefonische afspraak maken.

Met vriendelijke groet,

### *Email 2 – 10 June 2013*

Hallo Sanne,

Voor Frans, Duits en Engels geldt het als ingangsniveau het (theoretische) uitstroomniveau Havo: B1 voor Frans en Duits, B2 voor Engels. Naast Engels zijn er twee moderne vreemde talen verplicht, en studenten kunnen kiezen uit Frans, Duits en Spaans (buitenlandse studenten ook nog Nederlands als Vreemde Taal), en bij Spaans en NVT2 geldt dat er geen voorkennis verondersteld wordt.

De toetsen richten zich, met het oog op het beroepsprofiel, vooral op mondelinge taalvaardigheid (monoloog en interactie), en onze assessments zijn inderdaad geënt op het ERK. Voor Engels geldt aan het einde van het derde semester (d.w.z. na anderhalf jaar studie) als uitstroomniveau C1 (let wel: in mondelinge taalvaardigheid – en dat geldt voor alle talen!), voor Frans en Duits B 1.2, voor Spaans en Nederlands B 1.1. In het derde jaar volgt er dan nog een intensieve cursus in één taal, naar keuze van de student. Het uitstroomniveau na die cursus is voor Frans en Duits B2, voor Spaans en Nederlands B 1.2/B2. In het geval van Engels is die intensieve taalcursus een cursus Academic Writing (als uitzondering dus géén mondelinge taalvaardigheid) en ook hier is het uitstroomniveau C1.

Er wordt, maar niet zozeer bij de talen, getraind op interculturele communicatie. Dat traject wordt ingezet in het tweede semester, en vindt vooral in de aanloop naar de eerste stage en

tijdens deze stage (die in de tweede helft van het tweede jaar gepositioneerd is) plaats. Het taalonderwijs speelt hierop in waar nodig, met name om studenten bewust te maken dat de beroepspraktijk in het betreffende land een andere invulling van de te spelen beroepsrol vereist.

Mocht je nog meer vragen hebben, of mochten er onduidelijkheden zijn, mail dan gerust nog een keer.

Met vriendelijke groet,