

## **An Analysis on Common Errors Made by German Language Learners Working in the Travel and Tourism Sector**

B.Madhupali Sugandhika Cooray<sup>1</sup>

Being a global industry, tourism involves cross-cultural encounters where Foreign Languages play a crucial role. Mastering a Foreign Language proficiency is considered essential for employees working in the tourism sector, as it provides many benefits for employees to enhance their interpersonal relationships between customers from different cultures and to engage in successful communications with overseas clients. The tourist arrival data, published by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) for February 2019 shows that India, the United Kingdom, China, France and Germany are the five most important international tourist markets in Sri Lanka in February this year. (Gamini Gunaratna, S.2019)<sup>2</sup> Due to the increasing tourist arrivals in the recent years, many employment opportunities are being created for qualified graduates with a foreign language speaking background. Yet, the lack of practical knowledge and experience of graduates in the travel and tourism sector was questioned by many experts during the past few years. The main objective of this research is to do an analysis on the common errors made by the German language learnt Graduates in the travel and tourism sector to identify how the errors could be minimized through professional training oriented teaching activities during their undergraduate period. Expert interview data collection method, which uses to collect data from experts in a particular subject field was used to collect data from the tour guides. When selecting the research sample, purposeful sampling method was used and priority was given for individuals with the most experience in the German market. This research is beneficial for the professional purposes course unit, conducted by the Department of Modern Languages for German, Russian, Korean, French, Chinese and for Japanese Language learners focusing professional training in the travel and tourism sector, to identify the pitfalls in their current teaching methods. The findings of the research revealed that the errors made by foreign language learning graduates, in the tourism sector, can be mainly divided in to two categories, which are errors made due to lack of knowledge and experience and errors made due to lack of cultural competency. Through the data analysis it was revealed that the graduates receive more theoretical knowledge than practical training during their teaching sessions at the university. Furthermore, it was identified that although the culture teaching activities used to enhance the learner's cultural knowledge about the target language country are at a satisfactory level, the graduates find it difficult to interact with tourists representing different cultural backgrounds when they enter in to the professional working environment. Therefore it was suggested, that there is the necessity to introduce teaching activities not only to enhance the learner's knowledge about the target language culture but also about common cultural themes such as cultural conflicts, stereotypes, discriminations and about prejudices. In addition to that, it was highlighted that the learners should be given more opportunities to participate for overseas training programs, workshops, internships and field visits which enhance both their theoretical and practical knowledge about the future working environment.

Keywords: “common errors; German language learners; Travel and Tourism; cultural competency”

<sup>1</sup> Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, *madhusugandhi@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup> Gamini Gunaratna, S. (2019). *Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka tourist arrivals up by 7.0 percent in February 2019* [online] Colombopage.com.