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IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR A CAREER IN TOURISM AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT YEARS OF STUDY

Abstract

The proficiency in multiple foreign languages is a basic prerequisite for successful communication in the tourism industry, as well as for mutual understanding among students involved in the exchange programs with different universities, especially in foreign countries. In this regard, tourism and mobility play a significant role, while intercultural contacts contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue. Raising awareness of the importance of foreign language proficiency as well as fostering the development of intercultural competence in the area of tourism and hospitality industry is extremely important. This survey has attempted to explore the differences among the third and fourth year American College of Management and Technology (ACMT) students' perceptions of the importance of the knowledge of various foreign languages for tourism industry. A key finding of this survey about the differences in the perception of students in different years of study of the importance of foreign language knowledge is that, as compared to younger students, fourth year students consistently attach greater importance to the knowledge of foreign languages. Since in most variables we have not found statistically significant differences, this conclusion cannot be accepted as an absolute rule.

Keywords: *communicative competence, intercultural communication, multilingualism, linguistic diversity, linguistic awareness.*

Zusammenfassung

Die Beherrschung mehrerer Fremdsprachen ist eine Grundvoraussetzung für eine erfolgreiche Kommunikation in der Tourismusbranche, aber auch für das gegenseitige Verständnis unter den Studierenden an den Austauschprogrammen mit verschiedenen Universitäten, vor allem im Ausland. In diesem Zusammenhang spielen Tourismus und Mobilität eine wichtige Rolle, während interkulturelle Kontakte zur Entwicklung des interkulturellen Dialogs beitragen. Die Sensibilisierung für die Bedeutung von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen sowie die Förderung der Entwicklung von interkultureller Kompetenz im Bereich des Fremdenverkehrs und Gastgewerbes ist extrem wichtig. Diese Umfrage hat

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versucht, die Unterschiede in der Wahrnehmung der Studenten des dritten und vierten Studienjahres des Amerikanischen College für Management and Technology (ACMT) in Bezug auf die Bedeutung der verschiedenen Fremdsprachenkenntnisse für Tourismuswirtschaft zu untersuchen. Eine wichtige Erkenntnis aus dieser Studie ist, dass, im Gegensatz zu jüngeren Schülern, Studenten im vierten Studienjahr konsequent mehr Wert auf die Fremdsprachenkenntnisse legen. Da in den meisten Variablen keine statistisch signifikanten Unterschiede festgestellt worden sind, kann diese Schlussfolgerung nicht als absolute Regel akzeptiert werden.

Schlüsselwörter: kommunikative Kompetenz, interkulturelle Kommunikation, Vielsprachigkeit, sprachliche Vielfalt, sprachliches Bewusstsein.

Introduction

In Europe, languages have long been a fundamental and accepted part of educational programs. In today's globalized world, the importance of knowing foreign languages is a necessity and multilingualism is viewed as an investment in the future. With the continued expansion of the European Union, European language policies are moving towards the teaching of 'at least two foreign languages from a very early age' and describe the knowledge of foreign languages as a 'basic skill' (Euridyce 2005).

In the increasingly mobile and multilingual Europe, knowledge of foreign languages plays an important and sometimes a decisive role in the employability of graduates. It is also important to state that in today's world of globalization, tourism and mobility have a significant and important role, where intercultural contacts contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue. The knowledge of foreign languages has evidently the key role in the development of tourism which has a multiple role and is viewed as economic, social and cultural activity. Therefore, it is indisputable to state that it represents one of the most important activities of the modern, contemporary society around the world, but especially in Europe (Vuković, 2006).

All European educational systems are attaching ever-increasing importance to the learning of foreign languages. There is a strong need to educate multilingual and multicultural individuals in a context where the linguistic consequences of globalization are more and more evident. The globalization process is forcing European educational systems to pay more attention to the learning of foreign languages. Lasagabaster (2008) points out that one of the most important issues in many European education systems is whether it is better to start foreign language teaching at an early age, or whether it is better to include content and language integrated learning at a later stage without establishing an early first contact with the foreign language. Numerous empirical studies in the field of *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) have shown that children who start learning a second language before adolescence exhibit more native-like pronunciation and are more likely to become fluent speakers. *The critical period hypothesis* states that there is a period when language acquisition takes place naturally and effortlessly (Ellis, 1986: 107). It is argued that the optimum age for language acquisition falls within the first ten years of life. During this period the brain retains plasticity, but with the onset of puberty this plasticity begins to disappear. Recent findings in brain research indicate that the specialized functions of specific regions of the brain are not fixed at birth but are shaped by experience and learning. This means that we should promote the importance of learning more than one foreign language in the early age. It must, however, be

emphasized that L2 learners vary considerably both in how quickly they learn and how successful they are. The evidence suggests that the explanation for this lies in differences in personal and general factors. Second language (L2) learners vary on a number of individual factors that have to do with personality, motivation, learning style, learning strategies, aptitude and age (Dörnyei, 2005).

Multilingualism in the modern world

The last decade has witnessed a rapid increase in interest in multilingualism. This increase is certainly linked to the commitment of the European Union to a multilingual Europe (Jessner, 2008). The language policy supported by the Council of Europe promotes teaching and learning of several foreign languages in the European educational context. In accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) it was proposed that EU citizens should be proficient in three European languages, their mother tongue (L1) and two other community languages, to ensure multilingualism as an essential characteristic feature of European identity.

Multilingualism has long been of interest to researchers but for the most part their research has been focused on sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic studies that have been carried on in this area (Ramsay, 1980; Nation and McLaughlin, 1986; Klein, 1995). However, the recent research into multilingualism has expanded into many new areas in the last 10 years. It has often been noted that experienced language learners are better at learning an additional language than learners with less experience. As Cenoz (2003) stated bilinguals have been found to be better than monolinguals at learning another language, while multilingual people have been found to be better than bilinguals in recognizing grammatical stimuli in artificial grammars (Nation and McLaughlin, 1986; Nayak *et al.*, 1990) and better than monolinguals at learning another language (Klein, 1995; Ramsay, 1980). Multilinguals may differ in increased positive effects such as motivation, attitudes and self-confidence (Ramsay, 1980), conceptual knowledge and intuition, enhanced cognitive skill (Klein, 1995), cognitive effects such as metalinguistic awareness (Jessner, 1999, 2006) and making more effort to learn (Nation and McLaughlin, 1986).

As pointed out in earlier publications (e.g. Jessner, 2008), language learning strategies present a crucial part of multilingual development and, as results of recent studies show, the number of strategies employed seems to increase with language experience and language proficiency in the various languages in contact. Multilinguals use a number of different strategies serving as a tool that helps them independently influence the effectiveness of foreign language learning (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). Multilingual learners also differ by their choice of learning strategies and they consciously choose strategies that suit them most. Metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness also play an important role in the development of language learning strategies in multilingual learners and users (Jessner, 2006; Moore, 2006).

One fact is obvious – students' prior linguistic experience influences strategies which they subsequently adapt and their success in the foreign language classroom. According to the large-scale study on the language learning strategies in multilingual students in German context which was carried out by Mißler (1999, 2000, *in* Jessner, 2008) it was found that the increase of language learning experience was reflected in the number of strategies, which also turned out to depend on individual factors. Ender (2007, *in* Jessner, 2008) conducted a very interesting study, having found out that expert learners outperformed other learners who did not exploit their prior language knowledge in the same way. Kemp (2001, *in* Jessner, 2008)

also highlighted that multilinguals pick up the grammar of another language faster, i.e. they use more grammar learning strategies. Jessner (2008) pointed out the importance of cross-linguistic influence which takes place in a multilingual system. She emphasized that the L3-learners do not rely on their L1 as expected, but on their L2. Various studies of Third Language Acquisition (TLA) and L3 have made clear that the L2 in a trilingual system has to fulfill a particular role.

As described above, language learning strategies present a crucial part of multilingual development and, according to the results of recent studies, the number of strategies employed seems to increase with linguistic experience and language proficiency in the various languages in contact. In this context it is necessary to emphasize the importance of explicit strategy instruction (Božinović, 2010, Božinović and Sindik, 2011). The aim of explicit strategy instruction and the development of individualized strategy systems help learners to raise their awareness of the strategies they already use and to encourage them to develop a set of new adequate and effective strategies within a particular language context. Another objective of strategy instruction is to encourage learners' autonomy and self-direction, in order to enable them to choose their own strategies in a spontaneous way, without constant teachers' intervention. When this is applied to a multilingual classroom, Jessner (1999, 2008) argued that silent processes in multilinguals that are already recognized from natural language learning and usage should be made explicit in instructed language learning. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) pointed out that learning through discovery also helps to develop procedural knowledge, and it is suggested to foster this type of learning in multilingual learners since it equips a learner to be autonomous.

Promoting intercultural communication

It is evident that in the field of tourism and hospitality, beside the communicative language ability it is extremely important to also develop the intercultural competence, or the ability of successful communication between members of different cultures. In the process of learning a new language it is important to be aware of its cultural aspect(s), because the knowledge of other cultures helps a learner to learn a certain language and to assess cultural values of that language (Ellis, 2005; Williams and Burden, 1999, *in* Luka, 2007). In order to develop intercultural competence, students should not only learn a foreign language, but such a process should also include intercultural training and intercultural exchange of ideas. It is evident that the knowledge and the skills acquired in this learning process will highly contribute to the development of tourism and hospitality services in general.

Students of tourism, hospitality and management also have to acquire theoretical and practical cultural knowledge, which can be gained through intercultural communication and the development of intercultural competence (Božinović, Friganović Sain and Perić, 2011). If we transfer this into the area of tourism and hospitality, and try to distinguish what is important to know about the language that hotel and restaurant employees use, we will soon realize that it is not only the knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary that they need to apply but they need to be aware of the importance of socio-cultural aspect as well (Petrovska, 2010). Although their grammatical and their lexical competence of a foreign language may be outstanding it still can cause cultural misunderstanding, or a final failure in communication with native speakers. Petrovska (2010) points out that this failure may be a result of lack of knowledge of cultural differences between the two (or more) societies, or the influence of their mother tongue and direct transfer of meaning in the other language.

The process of globalization has indeed opened many doors thus forcing us to recognize the existing differences and diversities of people living in European Union. Still, it is an ongoing process to learn how to recognize, respect and learn to appreciate those differences. According to the CEFR (2001) knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce this intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. This process is also enriched by the awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both languages in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes. Intercultural skills and different know-how skills include the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other. It also helps develop the cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies to contact those from other cultures. Those strategies should also include the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations as well as the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships (CEFR, 2001).

Multilingual competence for professionals in tourism and hospitality

According to Cenoz and Genesee (1998), multilingual acquisition and multilingualism are complex phenomena because they can occur simultaneously or successively, formally (through instruction) or naturally (outside school), and in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. Complexity and diversity in multilingual education are related to the variety of forms of language teaching leading to multilingualism and diverse social environments requiring different forms of multilingual education. In multilingual education the choice of languages plays an important role (Jessner, 2008). Moreover, multilingualism can characterize individuals or whole societies.

Cook (1995) uses the term *multi-competence* to refer to the linguistic competence of a multilingual learner, which is substantially different from that of a monolingual learner learning his first foreign language (Grosjean, 1995, 2001; De Angelis and Selinker, 2001). Cook's notion of multilingual competence is characterized by increased metalinguistic awareness, greater creativity and cognitive flexibility, and more diversified mental abilities. It is obvious that a multilingual learner acquiring an additional language will approach the learning process in a different way than monolingual learner and the cross-linguistic influence will be more complex when three or more languages are in contact rather than two. The learner's *linguistic awareness* is a key variable in the acquisition processes and his/her language performance and is often related to educational background. Awareness is not limited to linguistic structures and semantics but also refers to phonological, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic knowledge, while cross-linguistic influence can occur in any of these fields. Jessner (1997) also emphasizes the fact that multilingual competence is dynamic rather than static and states that language proficiency changes as a result of adjustments to the interacting linguistic subsystems that reflect the user's communicative needs.

When discussing the role of the teacher in multilingual learning, Jessner (2008) claims that it is important to focus on the *multilingual teacher*. Teacher multilingualism is perceived as an advantage, even if the teacher only teaches one language. This means that an ideal language teacher has already had language learning experience and can transfer and use this knowledge in the classroom. As Jessner states, this language learning experience should be

complemented by the study of language acquisition research as part of teacher education. Before multilingual awareness can be raised in the classroom, it needs to be manifested in the teacher through her/his own multilingual learning skills and knowledge (see also Skuttnab-Kangas, 2000).

With a view to more efficient development of tourism industry, an emphasis should be placed on the development of multilingual competence, which is crucial for entering into intercultural dialogue. Multilingualism, as a key aspect of the European language identity, allows for a high-quality information exchange and raising awareness of the importance of multilingual education not only in tourism domain, but also with regard to other aspects of target language community. The development of multilingual competence will undoubtedly contribute to the establishment of more efficient communication and opinion exchange among different peoples.

In view of the aforementioned importance of foreign languages for a career in tourism, the objective of our research was to identify the differences in the importance of the knowledge of selected foreign languages for the improvement of overall hospitality services offer in Dubrovnik. Additionally, we were also interested to examine the differences in the third and fourth year American College of Management and Technology (ACMT) students' perceptions of the importance of the knowledge of a foreign language for different tourism categories in the overall tourist offer, such as cultural tourism, congress tourism, nautical tourism and ecotourism, as well as to identify which foreign languages they consider to be important for specific types of tourism. These differences among the third and fourth year ACMT students are also considered in the context of the identification of the importance of foreign language skills in different institutions and organizations, such as hotels, restaurants, tourist boards, local government and public sector institutions that are responsible for the development of the city of Dubrovnik as a tourist destination. Finally, our research aimed to find differences in the students' perception of the difficulty of learning certain foreign languages. Our initial hypothesis was that we would find no differences in any of the previously defined areas, as all participants have almost the same educational level and most of them live in the same town.

Methodology

Instrument

The importance of the knowledge of foreign languages was examined by a questionnaire that was designed by one of the authors of this paper in previous research (Božinović, Friganović Sain and Perić, 2011). This questionnaire is a semi-structured questionnaire, divided into 6 categories of questions which examine the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages in specific areas of tourism. A five-point scale was used to evaluate the degree of importance of foreign languages in each tourism category (1 - 'not important', 2 - 'slightly important', 3 - 'moderately important', 4 - 'very important', 5 - 'most important'). In the first category of the questionnaire the participants had to rate the importance of knowledge of a particular foreign language in improving the overall hospitality services offer in Dubrovnik. In the second category the participants had to rate the importance of the knowledge of different foreign languages for different types of tourism. In the third category the participants had to rate the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for elite and mass tourism. In the fourth category the participants had to rate the importance of knowledge of foreign languages in different institutions and organizations according to participants' year of study. In the last category, participants were given a task to rank the

languages concerning the difficulty of learning certain foreign languages according to the participants' year of study (1- 'most difficult to learn', 2- 'difficult', 3- 'neither difficult nor easy', 4- 'easy', 5 – 'easiest'). The questionnaire also provided some demographic data on the participants (gender, age, language learning degree, mother tongue, first (L1) and second (L2) foreign language).

Participants

A total of 107 participants that are currently attending ACMT in Dubrovnik participated in this survey. There were 58 male (54.2%) and 49 female (45.8%) participants. 46 of them (43%) were senior students, while 61 of them (57%) were the students in their third year of study (junior students). It is important to mention that all participants are enrolled in *Hospitality and Service Management Program* (HSM). 89 participants (83.2%) were native speakers of Croatian, while 18 participants (16.8%) were native speakers of one of the following languages: Bosnian, English, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Albanian, Serbian, German, Norwegian and Italian. For 91 participants (85%) English was their first foreign language. 28 participants (26.2%) took German as their second foreign language while 40 participants took Italian (37.4%) as their second foreign language. 11 participants (10.3%) took French as their second foreign language, 22 participants (20.6%) took Spanish as their second foreign language, 5 participants learned English (4.7%) as their second foreign language, and for 1 participant (0.9%) Russian was his second foreign language. As to an answer to the question how many languages they speak, 52 participants (48.6%) declared to speak two foreign languages, 29 participants (27.1%) three foreign languages, while 12 of them (11.2%) declared to speak four foreign languages.

Data collection and analysis

All the data in this questionnaire were collected during regular classes at ACMT and its participants were not informed beforehand about the survey. The survey was anonymous, in order to provide sincere and honest answers to questions. Data analysis was performed using t-test for independent samples and Chi-square test and the data from the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical package *SPSS 11.0*.

Results and discussion

The differences with regard to the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for the improvement of the overall hospitality services offer in Dubrovnik were analyzed. As shown in *Table 1*, we have not found any statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the role of the most important foreign languages in the hospitality industry in Dubrovnik. A simple explanation can lead us to presume that all students from different years of study estimate the communicative aspect (using certain foreign languages in communication) to be (very) important.

Table 1: T-tests concerning the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for the improvement of the overall hospitality services offer according to the participants' year of study

VARIABLE	t-test (df=105)	p	M 3 rd	σ 3 rd	M 4 th	σ 4 th
English	0.156	>.20	4.85	.625	4.83	.526

German	-0.479	>.20	3.66	1.048	3.75	.856
Italian	-1.522	>.20	3.57	1.078	3.87	.853
French	-0.978	>.20	3.19	1.096	3.40	1.092
Spanish	-.696	>.20	3.40	.970	3.53	.929
Russian	-0.624	>.20	3.13	1.115	3.27	1.177

Legend: M= Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

As indicated in *Table 2*, there are no statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the importance of a foreign language in various types of tourism.

Table 2 T-tests concerning the importance of the types of tourism according to participants' year of study

VARIABLE	t-test (df=105)	p	M 3 rd	σ 3 rd	M 4 th	σ 4 th
Cultural tourism	0.867	>.20	4.64	.735	4.52	.701
Congress tourism	-0.239	>.20	3.89	.814	3.93	.899
Nautical tourism	0.868	>.20	3.85	1.000	3.68	.983
Ecotourism	-0.206	>.20	3.57	1.098	3.62	.993

Legend: M= Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

The questionnaire, completed by the third and fourth year ACMT students, has revealed no statistically significant differences with regard to the importance of the knowledge of different foreign languages for different types of tourism. Both groups of students (in different years of study) found the knowledge of English to be the most important for the development of all types of tourism. This fact has confirmed our initial hypothesis that English has become a global language. It is common knowledge that millions of people all over the world are learning English.

As indicated in *Table 3*, there are no statistically significant differences between students from different year of study with regard to the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for elite and mass tourism. However, we can note a non-significant trend of higher means among the fourth year ACMT students.

Table 3 T-tests concerning the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for elite and mass tourism according to participants' year of study

VARIABLE	t-test (df=105)	p	M 3 rd	σ 3 rd	M 4 th	σ 4 th
Mass tourism	.129	>.20	3,81	1,329	4,07	1,087

Elite tourism	-,982	>.20	4,70	,623	4,82	,567
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Legend: M= Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

As indicated in *Table 4*, there is only one statistically significant difference among the students from different years of study with regard to the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages in different institutions and organizations. We can note that this significant trend indicates higher means among the fourth year ACMT students from the aspect of the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for tourist board employees.

Table 4: T-tests concerning the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for different institutions and organizations according to participants' year of study

VARIABLE	t-test (df=105)	p	M 3 rd	σ 3 rd	M 4 th	σ 4 th
Hotels, restaurants, coffee bars	-1.840	>.05	4.55	.775	4.78	.415
Institutions of local government and self- government units	.324	>.20	4.04	.932	3.98	.948
Tourist board	-2.826	<.01	4.40	.876	4.80	.443
Public sector	.279	>.10	4.19	.770	4.15	.755

Legend: M= Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

As indicated in *Table 5*, there are few statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the importance of the knowledge of certain foreign languages for different services. We can note there is a strong trend of statistically significant higher means among the fourth year ACMT students in comparison to the third year students. Among the statistically significant differences (according to a type of service) in terms of the year of study, we can note that most of the differences are found for the receptionists (two) and for the French language (three of possibly four). There are no statistically significant differences in terms of the year of study (according to the type of service) found for: waiters, cooks, chambermaids, hotel managers and public sector employees.

Table 5 T-tests concerning the importance of the knowledge of certain foreign languages for different services according to the participants' year of study (*only statistically significant tests are indicated*)

Service – Language	t-test (df=105)	p	M 3 rd	σ 3 rd	M 4 th	σ 4 th
Receptionist - Italian	2.277	<.05	4.04	.884	4.40	.694
Receptionist - French	-2.109	<.05	3.70	1.214	4.13	.791
Tourist agency employee - French	-2.536	<.01	3.49	1.21	4.03	.94

Public sector employee - French	-2.019	<.05	2.55	1.06	2.97	1.04
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Legend: M = Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

As indicated in Table 6, our study also aimed to determine the differences among students in different years of study with regard to the level of difficulty of learning various foreign languages. In this regard, our participants were asked to rank the following foreign languages: English, French, German, Spanish and Italian according to the given scale: 1 - most difficult to learn, 2 - difficult, 3 - neither difficult nor easy, 4 - easy, 5- easiest. Our research has revealed that there is only one statistically significant difference with regard to the difficulty of learning certain foreign languages and the participants' year of study (in the category of which language is hard to learn). The students attending the fourth year of study at the ACMT consider German to be more difficult to learn (as compared to the third year students). Table 6 Chi square-tests concerning the difficulty of learning certain foreign languages according to the participants' year of study

	English	German	Italian	French	Spanish	Russian	Chi square
	<i>Hard to learn language</i>						
3 rd year	4	14	2	26	0	0	9.397*
4 th year	0	30	1	29	1	0	

* Chi-square significant at $p < .05$

The main limitation of this research is relatively small and specific (non-representative of general population) sample of participants (ACMT students in Dubrovnik). However, the same sample of participants may be considered an advantage of this research: the population educated in this specific field can better reflect some genuinely important aspects in tourism management. This survey has indicated that foreign language proficiency is very important, but has to be differentiated by year of study in specific fields of tourism planning, especially in the field of education of certain profiles of public servants or hospitality workers employed in tourism. Our main finding is that (besides the fact that differences between students are not numerous) older students, more frequently than the younger ones, consider the knowledge of foreign languages to be very important for the tourist offer.

Therefore, the programme of studies needs to be adjusted in order to raise students' awareness of the importance of multilingualism as earlier as possible. In this regard, in view of further development of tourism industry, it is necessary to promote the importance of integrating multilingual education in the teaching process which would include learning various foreign languages at an early age and which would undoubtedly contribute to more efficient communication and exchange of ideas among the participants in the educational process. However, in view of improving overall hospitality industry offer in Dubrovnik, the authors of this article strongly recommend other foreign languages beside English to be learned. The authors believe it would be beneficial to explore other aspects as well, such as the importance of the knowledge of a particular foreign language as perceived by students from other universities. The effects of such research are just some of the aspects that could be covered in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the survey, we have partially rejected our initial hypothesis. We have found few statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the role of the most important foreign language in the hospitality area in Dubrovnik. We haven't found any statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the role of the most important foreign language in the hospitality area in Dubrovnik, as well as with regard to the importance of certain types of tourism and the importance of the knowledge of different foreign languages for different types of tourism. No statistically significant differences among students from different years of study have been found with regard to the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for elite and mass tourism, while only one statistically significant difference has been found with regard to the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for different institutions and organizations. There are some statistically significant differences among students from different years of study with regard to the importance of the knowledge of certain foreign languages for different services, while the fourth year ACMT students, as compared to the third year students, consider German to be more difficult to learn. Therefore, our initial hypothesis can be partially confirmed. A key finding of our research about the differences among students from different years of study with regard to the importance of the knowledge of certain foreign languages is that, as compared to younger students, fourth year students consistently attach greater importance to the knowledge of foreign languages. Since in most variables we have not found statistically significant differences, this conclusion cannot be accepted as an absolute rule.

This survey has indicated the need for continuous promotion of learning various foreign languages at an early age with a view to establishing efficient communication which would allow for opinion exchange and awareness raising about the importance of multilingual education for different areas of human activity, such as tourism and business. In this regard, it should also be mentioned that one of the most important skills in tomorrow's Europe will be the ability to communicate in more than one language. Encouraging people to learn other languages and get to know other cultures will help improve their communication and mutual understanding. It is also well known that being able to communicate directly in a foreign language might also bring cultural and economic benefits to all participants in the communication process. Therefore, raising awareness of the importance of foreign language proficiency as well as fostering the development of intercultural competence in the area of tourism and hospitality industry is extremely important.

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