



Enhancing Cross-Cultural Communication in Eastern European Hospitality: The Role of Interslavic Language

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Haaga-Helia Bachelor's Degree

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03 December 2024

Abstract

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Degree Bachelor of Strategic Hospitality Management
Thesis Title Enhancing Cross-Cultural Communication in Eastern European Hospitality: The Role of Inter-slavic Language
Number of pages and appendix pages 24
<p>This thesis explores the potential of Inter-slavic to enhance cross-cultural communication in Eastern Europe's hospitality industry.</p> <p>As tourism and international trade grow in the region, effective communication across language and cultural differences becomes increasingly important. The wide range of Slavic languages and dialects presents both opportunities and challenges for fostering mutual understanding.</p> <p>This thesis examines how Inter-slavic might improve guest services, reduce language barriers, and promote intercultural awareness by reviewing available research, analyzing existing case studies, and gathering insights from relevant sources.</p> <p>The findings suggest that Inter-slavic could serve as a practical lingua franca for hospitality workers, potentially enhancing service quality and enriching the tourist experience.</p> <p>The study also considers the cultural implications of promoting Inter-slavic in such a diverse region, including identity issues and the broader context of multilingualism in Eastern Europe.</p> <p>The methods used (such as the Theory of High Context and Low Context Cultures, the SERVQUAL Model, and Communication Accommodation Theory) aim to show how Inter-slavic, as a constructed language, could be used in the hospitality industry across Eastern Europe.</p> <p>In conclusion, this thesis suggests that implementing Inter-slavic could improve cross-cultural communication and collaboration within the Eastern European hospitality sector.</p>
Keywords Inter-slavic, Communication, Hospitality, Multilingualism, Barriers, Tourism

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1 Introduction

This thesis explores how the lesser-known Interslavic language can serve as a bridge for everyday communication in the tourism sector across Eastern European countries. By focusing on its potential to enhance cross-cultural interactions, it aims to demonstrate its value in fostering greater understanding and cooperation. Eastern Europe is a region of immense cultural and linguistic diversity, comprising fourteen nations: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. For practical reasons, this study narrows its focus to four countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Ukraine, as they offer a representative sample of the region's linguistic and cultural dynamics.

As a native of Poland with a strong appreciation for cross-cultural experiences, I have had the opportunity to travel extensively across Eastern Europe. My journeys to cities such as Prague, Brno, and Bratislava, combined with hiking trips in the Tatra Mountains on both the Polish and Slovak sides, have provided firsthand insights into the region's cultural and linguistic richness. These experiences have also highlighted the challenges posed by language barriers, especially in moments when effective communication is essential. The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has further emphasized these issues. Poland has received a significant influx of Ukrainian immigrants, resulting in the Ukrainian language becoming a more visible part of Polish public life. Ukrainian translations on billboards, train stations, and signs are now even in medium-sized towns, and changes have become commonplace; however, these changes have also revealed underlying social tensions, misunderstandings, and instances of exclusion resulting from the lack of effective communication between Polish and Ukrainian communities. In this context, the Interslavic language emerges as a potential tool to address these challenges. By providing a shared linguistic platform, it can promote greater inclusivity, lighten conflicts, and foster mutual understanding among diverse communities in Eastern Europe.

Interslavic (Medžuslovjansky/меджусловјанскы) is a pan-Slavic auxiliary language created to facilitate communication among speakers of different Slavic languages. Unlike artificial languages such as Esperanto, Interslavic is designed to be naturalistic, incorporating elements common to most Slavic languages. This design allows speakers of Slavic languages to understand Interslavic without prior study. Developed in 2011, it has continuously evolved, with its creators striving to ensure it remains intuitive and practical for real-world use. Interslavic also offers non-Slavic speakers a simplified way to engage with Slavic-speaking communities, expanding its relevance beyond the Slavic world (Serhieiev Y. 2024).

The language achieves its inclusiveness through vocabulary and grammatical structures that align with the shared linguistic heritage of Slavic languages. For instance, the word for "human" in InterSlavic, *člověk*, is strikingly similar to its counterparts in Czech, Slovakian, Polish, and Ukrainian, making it easily recognizable. Similarly, basic terms like *dom* (house) and *pes* (dog) exhibit the same pattern of shared intelligibility. As of 2022, InterSlavic has grown to include approximately 20,000 users, reflecting a sharp increase from 7,000 in 2020. This rapid adoption underscores the growing interest in its potential applications, particularly in areas like tourism, education, and community building (Van Steenberg J., 2017).

This thesis aims to explore how the InterSlavic language can simplify communication, strengthen social bonds, and reduce linguistic barriers across Eastern Europe. By providing a neutral and accessible language, it has the potential to address long-standing issues of miscommunication and cultural misunderstandings. These barriers often hinder effective collaboration, particularly in industries such as hospitality and tourism, where clear communication is crucial. Businesses that adopt InterSlavic could enhance customer satisfaction and foster an environment of inclusivity, benefiting both travelers and local communities.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on a practical solution to the communication challenges faced by Eastern Europeans. In my observations, I have often witnessed frustration and misunderstandings arising in everyday scenarios, such as at train stations, pharmacies, and other public spaces. These situations highlight a broader issue: the lack of a common linguistic platform to bridge the gaps between Slavic communities.

In countries like Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, deeply rooted cultural traditions and historical identities can sometimes amplify fear of the unfamiliar. This fear often manifests as resistance to change or mistrust of individuals from different backgrounds. By introducing InterSlavic into public life – particularly in sectors like tourism and hospitality – it may be possible to reduce these fears, create opportunities for connection, and foster a sense of shared identity.

This study aims to investigate how InterSlavic facilitates communication and cultural connections among Slavic communities through a combination of detailed observations, surveys, and statistical analysis. It seeks to explore participants' exposure to the language, their experiences with communication barriers, and their perceptions of the challenges and benefits associated with using InterSlavic. The research also strives to identify potential obstacles to its adoption, such as resistance to change or lack of awareness, and to propose practical strategies for addressing these issues.

The survey component of the study will gather insights into whether participants have encountered difficulties communicating with individuals from other Slavic countries, as well as their openness to adopting a shared linguistic tool. By analyzing these responses, the research aims to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the use of InterSlavic in public services and tourism. Ultimately, it seeks to demonstrate how embracing InterSlavic could lead to improved social cohesion, stronger cultural ties, and a more inclusive future for Eastern Europe.

2 Theoretical Framework

In this theoretical framework, I aim to explore the potential role of the Interslavic language in improving cross-cultural communication within the Eastern European hospitality industry. First, I will discuss the foundational aspects of Interslavic as a constructed auxiliary language, examining its origins and its intended use as a neutral linguistic connector for Slavic speakers. This includes looking into the historical development of the language and its current applications, particularly in cultural and public contexts.

Next, I will explore the concept of cross-cultural communication, emphasizing its importance in the workplace, particularly in hospitality. I will investigate how Interslavic could serve as a tool for overcoming language barriers and facilitating clearer and more effective interactions between diverse staff and guests.

Additionally, I will investigate the impact of Interslavic on customer experience within the hospitality and tourism sectors. I aim to understand how enhanced communication can improve the quality of guest interactions, increase satisfaction, and contribute to a more inclusive, welcoming atmosphere for visitors. The framework will also consider the potential for implementing Interslavic training programs for hospitality workers, focusing on practical applications that can foster better communication, cultural understanding, and a higher level of service.

2.1 Interslavic Language

This study investigates the potential of Interslavic, a constructed auxiliary language intended to promote understanding among speakers of various Slavic languages, to address these challenges. Interslavic was created to act as a neutral linguistic connector that is accessible to different Slavic-speaking groups. "Being an auxiliary language means that Interslavic does not intend to replace any living Slavic languages or serve as a language for high literature – we already have vibrant, living languages for those purposes. Instead, its goal is to aid in communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds" (Serhieiev Y., 2024).

The Interslavic language's history is closely tied to Pan-Slavism, a belief that the Slavs are a single nation and seeks to unify them culturally and politically. The idea of a common Slavic state also involves the belief in a shared Slavic language. From the start, the issue has been how this language should be designed (Van Steenbergen J., 2020).

How widely is Interslavic used?

The history of Interslavic starts in the 17th century but the Interslavic we know today was created in 2006 (and was still developing). In today's culture, Interslavic found its place. In September 2019,

Václav Marhoul's film *The Painted Bird*, based on Jerzy Kosiński's novel, premiered at the Venice Film Festival. Most dialogues were in Interslavic to evoke an unnamed Slavic country. The film was well-received, won several awards, and became the Czech Oscar candidate in 2020. The film's publicity led to a rapid growth of the Interslavic community, with the main Facebook group expanding from 1,900 to 9,000 members in six months (Van Steenberg J., 2020).

Moreover, at the Interslavic language website (<https://interslavic.fun/>) we can find an Interslavic grammar, dictionary, and even text for guidance like *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry translated into Interslavic. Nowadays, Interslavic does not have any "practical" usage on a bigger scale. We do not learn it at school. It is more used as a hobby. Currently, we do not have any language training for the hospitality sector with Interslavic in the main role, but after a few analyses, I can say, we could have. I will return to this statement a little later.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Communication (CCC)

Culture, language, and social norms play a fundamental role in shaping how we communicate. Each culture has its own set of communication rules and expectations, which are essential to understand when interacting with people from diverse backgrounds. This understanding is particularly crucial in the workplace, as effective communication directly influences the success of business interactions. To overcome challenges and prevent misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, it is vital to focus on one of its core elements, which is language. (Warren 2005, 1-3)

In the hospitality sector, cross-cultural communication (CCC) can be especially important, as the industry thrives on positive and clear interactions between diverse guests and staff. By bridging linguistic gaps, effective communication enables employees from different cultural backgrounds to understand each other more easily. This can lead to improved customer service, enhanced guest experience, and smoother interactions in multicultural environments, particularly in international hotels or resorts with diverse staff and clientele.

CCC is a field of study that examines how people from different cultural backgrounds communicate with each other—both in similar and differing ways—and how they strive to understand one another across cultures. The lack of meaningful contact or understanding between cultures can lead to ignorance and misunderstandings. This is a common challenge in hospitality, where effective communication is essential to meeting guest needs and ensuring satisfaction. Guest satisfaction relies on the staff's ability to address needs in a clear, precise, and empathetic manner (Schriefer P., 2016).

A key concept in cross-cultural communication is Edward T. Hall's Theory of High Context and Low Context Cultures. This theory illustrates how different cultures engage in communication

depending on the level of context involved. In high context cultures, much of the communication is implicit, relying on shared understanding, nonverbal cues, and indirect language. In these cultures, the assumption is that the listener can interpret the hidden meanings based on context. In contrast, low-context cultures value clear, direct, and straightforward communication, where little is left unsaid or assumed. (Kimberly & Flak 2018, 2-3)

In the hospitality sector, especially when engaging with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds, high-context communication styles can lead to misunderstandings if both guests and staff do not share the same cultural assumptions. Many Slavic cultures in Eastern Europe are traditionally considered high context, relying on indirect cues and shared cultural conventions.

2.3 Customer Experience (CX)

Customer experience refers to all the efforts a business makes to prioritize its customers, guide their journey, and meet their needs. It involves delivering exceptional value and experience that drive customer satisfaction and business growth. In today's world, how a company engages with customers is just as important – if not more so – than the products or services it offers. With the rise of online reviews and social media, it is essential for businesses to connect with customers emotionally throughout their journey to build lasting relationships and positive public perceptions. (Villani 2018, chapter 1)

In the hospitality sector, Interslavic can enhance the CX by enabling clearer communication between staff and guests from different Slavic countries. Breaking down language barriers helps staff provide more personalized and efficient service, making guests feel more comfortable and understood. (Puhakka, 2023. 19) This can lead to higher guest satisfaction, as they experience smoother interactions and a greater sense of being welcomed, regardless of their specific Slavic language background.

2.4 Hospitality & Tourism

Hospitality refers to the act of warmly welcoming guests and providing a "home away from home." The term originates from the Latin word 'hospes,' meaning host, visitor, or stranger. The hospitality and tourism industry are a broad sector encompassing all economic activities related to travel, tourism, and hospitality services. Tourism, which involves traveling away from home for leisure, relaxation, and enjoyment, typically relies on commercial services. The industry evolved in response to modern social developments, particularly in Western Europe during the 17th century. The hospitality sector in Europe has shown remarkable resilience, gradually recovering from the pandemic's challenges. Promising performance figures from 2022 highlight an encouraging trend across the

sector, though recovery rates vary by region. Northern and Central Europe, traditionally reliant on business travel, have seen a slower rebound. Nevertheless, the industry's ability to adapt and thrive underscores its commitment to meeting new demands and overcoming obstacles. Europe's hospitality sector has demonstrated its capacity to rise above adversity with resilience and innovation (September 2024).

In Eastern Europe, hospitality holds unique importance due to the region's rich diversity of cultural practices, which shape guests' expectations and experiences. Effective and empathetic communication is essential to meeting guests' needs, ensuring their comfort, and enhancing overall satisfaction. (Puhakka, 2023. 19-21) With the region's linguistic and cultural diversity, creating a unified form of communication could significantly improve interactions. By providing a shared linguistic tool to bridge language gaps, the hospitality industry could set new standards for cross-cultural communication in Eastern European contexts.

In many Eastern European cultures, hospitality is seen not just as a service but as a societal obligation and a personal duty. Guests are often regarded as members of the extended family, and cultural pride enhances interactions. This strong tradition of hospitality shapes expectations regarding formality, respect, and communication styles (Bengoesplaces, 2023). However, in increasingly globalized hospitality settings, language diversity can pose challenges, making clear communication essential. To address this, adopting a common language could help streamline service delivery and meet the growing expectations of international guests.

The SERVQUAL Model, developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry in the 1980s, offers a valuable framework for evaluating service quality. The model emphasizes the gap between customer expectations and their perceptions of service quality, focusing on five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. (Minnaar 2014, 9-11) In the diverse and linguistically rich context of Eastern European hospitality, language barriers can impact each of these dimensions, affecting overall service quality. Identifying these challenges and addressing them with a common language could significantly improve guest experiences.

For example, language barriers impact tangibles, the physical elements of service such as signs, informational resources, and room directories. When these are presented in languages not understood by all visitors, guests may miss crucial details about services or amenities, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction. A common language could improve this by ensuring that vital information is comprehensible to a broader range of guests, thus enhancing their experience.

Similarly, language differences can impact reliability, reducing the dependability of service. For instance, a guest's request for room service or special accommodation might be misinterpreted due to language obstacles, leading to mistakes or delays. By fostering better mutual understanding

among staff and guests, a shared language can enhance reliability, ensuring that service requests are accurately understood and fulfilled.

Responsiveness also suffers when language barriers prevent staff from effectively assisting guests. Miscommunication can lead to slower service or inappropriate responses, leaving guests feeling ignored or frustrated. A shared language could facilitate faster and more accurate responses to guest requests, enhancing the perceived attentiveness and responsiveness of staff.

Language differences can also diminish assurance, as guests may lose confidence in the staff's abilities if communication is unclear. Guests who struggle to convey their needs or understand staff may feel anxious, which can erode trust in the service. A common language would improve communication, helping staff provide clearer instructions, policies, and service details. When guests feel understood, their trust and confidence in the service increase, and they may feel more secure and comfortable.

Finally, empathy, which involves understanding and responding to guests' needs, is often hindered by language barriers. If staff cannot fully grasp a guest's concerns or communicate compassionately, guests may feel overlooked or undervalued. A shared language would allow staff to engage with guests in a more empathetic and individualized way, creating an atmosphere of kindness and respect that is essential to a positive hospitality experience (Bhasin, 2024).

2.5 Implementing Interslavic

Interslavic, as mentioned earlier, is a constructed auxiliary language aimed at promoting communication among speakers of various Slavic tongues. Unlike artificial languages like Esperanto, which cater to individuals from all linguistic backgrounds, Interslavic specifically serves those who speak Slavic languages, such as Polish, Russian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian, and others. By incorporating shared features from different Slavic languages, Interslavic is crafted to be easily understandable to native Slavic speakers without the need for extensive learning. It highlights the commonalities within Slavic languages while reducing specific regional expressions or idioms that could lead to confusion.

Communication is a continuous process, with information conveyed not only through words but also through body posture, facial expressions, and gestures (Marta, 2013). Slavic-speaking countries share notable commonalities in culture, languages, traditions, and habits, which suggest a foundation for fostering stronger connections. However, linguistic diversity can present challenges in communication, especially in hospitality settings where clear and effective interaction is crucial.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), formulated by Howard Giles, examines how and why individuals modify their communication styles during conversations. According to CAT, people

may change their language, tone, and nonverbal signals to either converge (become more alike to their conversation partner) or diverge (highlight their differences) depending on social motivations. Convergence tends to foster social harmony and mutual understanding, while divergence can create distance and conflict. In Eastern European hospitality, where guests and staff often come from diverse Slavic-speaking backgrounds, CAT offers a valuable framework for understanding how shared communication strategies could improve the quality of interactions. (Matevo 2024, 6-8)

Establishing a unified communication atmosphere is crucial for guest satisfaction in the hospitality sector. When guests and staff communicate in different languages or possess varying degrees of language proficiency, it can lead to miscommunication and frustration. Clear communication helps ensure that both parties feel understood, which contributes to a more comfortable and welcoming environment. By embracing convergent communication, mutual understanding and clarity can be promoted, leading to smoother interactions and a more inclusive atmosphere.

2.6 Research Questions

The research questions specified in the Thesis Project Plan were created to investigate the influence of cultural and language barriers in Eastern European hospitality, along with the possible effects of InterSlavic as a remedy for these issues. This section offers both the research questions and the answers created from the survey and comprehensive research results.

- **Cultural Differences:** what are the primary cultural differences that contribute to communication barriers between hospitality staff and international guests in Eastern European countries?

This question seeks to identify significant cultural elements – such as language, traditions, and social norms – that obstruct successful interaction between hospitality workers and travelers from various cultural backgrounds. Recognizing these impediments is essential for finding ways to improve communication within the industry.

Cultural differences significantly influence communication problems. In Eastern Europe, variations in social customs, service expectations, and communication methods frequently result in misconceptions between personnel and international visitors. For instance, differing views on hierarchy and authority can impact how guests from various cultures perceive service. Moreover, non-verbal signals (such as gestures and eye contact) might be understood differently, potentially resulting in misunderstandings or conflicts. As I mentioned before, many Slavic cultures in Eastern Europe are traditionally considered to be high context. The most encountered issue is typically the absence of a common language, which is intensified by contrasting expectations regarding service quality.

- **Current Language Strategies:** how do Eastern European hospitality establishments currently address language barriers when interacting with international guests?

This question examines the current strategies and techniques employed by hospitality personnel to address language barriers. It analyzes whether businesses depend on employees' fluency in foreign languages, utilize translation services, or implement other communication tools, and evaluates how effective these strategies are in enhancing positive interactions with guests.

Numerous hospitality businesses in Eastern Europe depend on their staff's ability to communicate in commonly spoken languages, especially English, to overcome language differences with international visitors. Some hotels and restaurants opt to hire professional translators or utilize translation applications to assist with communication. However, the success of these methods can differ. In nations with lower levels of English proficiency, such as Ukraine and Serbia, the employment of translation tools or bilingual personnel is more relevant. Despite these initiatives, language obstacles continue to pose a significant issue, particularly in more isolated areas where staff may not be proficient in foreign languages. Furthermore, relying on English can be restrictive, as guests may speak a range of languages, resulting in inconsistent communication.

- **Cross-Cultural Competency:** how does the level of cross-cultural communication competency vary among hospitality staff in different Eastern European countries?

This question explores the differing degrees of cultural understanding and communication abilities among hospitality workers in various Eastern European nations. The objective is to analyze how employee training, cultural exposure, and individual experiences shape their capacity to handle cross-cultural communication difficulties in the tourism industry.

The factor of competency in cross-cultural communication differs significantly throughout Eastern Europe. In nations with more developed tourism infrastructure, like Poland and Croatia, hospitality personnel usually possess greater cultural awareness and language proficiency, largely due to their interaction with international visitors. Conversely, in areas with fewer tourists, staff may have limited encounters with various cultures and languages, leading to a reduced level of cross-cultural competency. Training programs that emphasize cross-cultural communication remain relatively rare, yet there is a growing recognition of their importance, especially considering recent geopolitical changes and the need to serve a more diverse group of visitors.

- **Impact of Interslavic Training:** to what extent does the implementation of Interslavic language training programs impact the quality of cross-cultural communication and guest satisfaction in Eastern European hospitality establishments?

This question examines the possible advantages of implementing Interslavic language training for hospitality employees. By investigating the effects of such initiatives, the study aims to assess

whether Interslavic can boost communication effectiveness, minimize miscommunications, and ultimately improve guest satisfaction in hotels and tourist locations across Eastern Europe.

Previous results from the survey indicate that training in the Interslavic may enhance both intercultural communication and customer satisfaction. Although Interslavic is not yet widely recognized or utilized, the survey participants expressed a willingness to learn the language, especially in the context of hospitality. Introducing Interslavic language programs could create a shared linguistic connection among staff from various Eastern European nations, likely diminishing language obstacles and enhancing interactions with guests from nearby countries. Embracing Interslavic would not substitute for native languages but could complement communication, providing a smoother and more effective option than relying solely on English or other foreign tongues.

- **Integration Strategies:** what strategies can be implemented to effectively integrate the Interslavic language into the communication practices of Eastern European hospitality staff to enhance guest experiences?

This last question investigates effective methods for integrating Interslavic into the training and communication frameworks of hospitality venues. Its goal is to discover ways to ensure that Interslavic is smoothly incorporated into daily operations, enhancing cross-cultural interactions in a manner that is advantageous for both personnel and international visitors.

Various strategies for integrating Interslavic into the hospitality industry can be explored. Firstly, basic training in Interslavic should be included in new employee orientation programs, emphasizing essential phrases and vocabulary connected to guest services. Furthermore, hospitality businesses could develop straightforward reference materials or mobile applications featuring Interslavic translations to aid staff in communicating more efficiently in real time. To facilitate broad adoption, a gradual and phased strategy would be beneficial, whereby language training is accompanied by continuous support and practice. Collaborative initiatives, such as partnerships with language institutes or online Interslavic resources, could also contribute to embedding the language within the sector. It will be crucial to present Interslavic as a means of fostering regional collaboration - rather than supplanting existing languages - to secure the commitment of both staff and management.

To sum up, the study aimed to investigate communication obstacles in hospitality across Eastern Europe and evaluate the viability of Interslavic as a potential solution. The results indicated that cultural differences, including distinct service expectations and communication methods, play a significant role in misunderstandings between hospitality personnel and international visitors. Hospitality businesses in Eastern Europe predominantly use English for communication; however, in areas with lower English skills, staff frequently depend on translation tools or bilingual team members to address these gaps, which still present difficulties. The ability to communicate across cultures

varies by nation, with employees in more tourism-centric regions demonstrating enhanced cultural sensitivity and language proficiency. The proposal to implement Interslavic language training received a favorable response, with more than 50 % of participants endorsing its application to enhance communication, particularly in tourist contexts. To successfully incorporate Interslavic, the study recommends providing basic language education and developing practical resources such as guides and mobile applications. In conclusion, the research suggests that Interslavic could improve interactions between staff and guests, minimize misunderstandings, and boost guest satisfaction in Eastern European hospitality, particularly in areas where English skills are limited.

3 Summary and Relevance to the Research

The text examines the communication challenges in Eastern European hospitality due to linguistic and cultural diversity. It highlights the importance of effective communication for guest satisfaction, focusing on how language barriers can impact service quality. The discussion includes the relevance of Cross-Cultural Communication (CCC) and the SERVQUAL Model, which emphasizes five key service dimensions. It also introduces Interslavic, a constructed language designed to bridge linguistic gaps between Slavic languages, noting its growing user base and presence in social media. The text explores the potential for improved communication and inclusivity within the hospitality industry through a shared language.

This study aims to provide insights into the communication challenges within the Eastern European hospitality sector, particularly regarding linguistic diversity. By analyzing the impact of language barriers on service quality and guest satisfaction, the research seeks to deepen the understanding of how communication influences interactions in multicultural environments. It also aims to contribute to the field of cross-cultural communication by examining the role of shared language in bridging gaps between diverse cultural and linguistic groups. Additionally, the research is trying to explore the potential implications of using a common language within the hospitality industry, offering a comprehensive examination of communication dynamics in Eastern European hospitality settings.

4 The Empirical Part

The empirical part of this research investigates the application and results of utilizing Interslavic as a shared language to improve guests' experiences in the hospitality industry of Eastern Europe. This part will outline the research approach with justification, criteria for target group selection, techniques for data collection, processes for data production, and strategies for data analysis, along with solid justifications for each choice.

4.1 Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative research approach to explore how Interslavic can enhance cross-cultural communication and elevate service quality within the hospitality sector of Eastern Europe. Qualitative methods are selected to understand the personal experiences of both employees and visitors engaging in a multicultural setting, where language plays a critical role in shaping satisfaction. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth analysis of how innovations in language, such as Interslavic, may be perceived by those involved (Bhandari P. 2020).

4.2 Target Group Selection

The study's target group consists of hospitality employees and guests from Slavic-speaking nations in Eastern Europe (look: link to the survey, page 17 of this document). This group was selected due to their probable experience with language barriers that Interslavic seeks to resolve, making them suitable for examining its potential advantages and getting to know the disadvantages. The sampling will concentrate particularly on regions of Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Slovakia, which I mentioned before I would concentrate on, to gather a range of viewpoints.

4.3 Data Collection

To gather information, an online survey was utilized to collect insights from both hospitality personnel and customers. This approach is selected for its ability to reach a broad audience efficiently, allowing participants to share detailed feedback about their experiences and perceptions regarding Interslavic at their own convenience. The digital format provides flexibility for respondents from various locations within Eastern Europe, facilitating the collection of diverse viewpoints. The surveys will feature both closed-ended questions for measurable data and open-ended questions, enabling participants to express more personalized and comprehensive opinions about their cross-cultural

communication encounters. Moreover, this questionnaire is made in four languages: English, Polish, Ukrainian and Russian to reach the bigger group of interviewees (Muhmutovic, 2021).

5 Questionnaire

The survey, named "Breaking Language Barriers by Implanting a Common Language" aimed to collect insights into the views of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, with the goal of assessing the feasibility of a common language solution in Eastern Europe. A total of 48 people responded to this questionnaire. To ensure a broad and comprehensive understanding, the respondents were randomly selected from a diverse range of backgrounds. This strategy was based on the belief that individuals of different ages, backgrounds, and economic situations could potentially be tourists or employees in the tourism sector, thus representing a wide range of people who might be affected by or engaged in using a common language for communication.

The questionnaire does not collect any personal data from participants. The only question related to personal information pertains to nationality, which is essential for the purposes of this thesis in understanding the cultural backgrounds of the respondents.

The survey's target audience included individuals who grew up in or currently reside in Eastern Europe, particularly in Slavic-speaking nations such as Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Additionally, the survey also included individuals who work with people from Eastern Europe and are in regular contact with these languages due to their professional interactions.

I chose these specific questions for the survey (I will mention them in the next parts) to gather insights that would be directly relevant to my thesis on the potential role of a common language in improving communication within Eastern European hospitality. The questions were designed to assess respondents' awareness of language barriers, their familiarity with Interslavic, and their views on how such a language might improve communication in a multicultural environment, particularly within the tourism and hospitality industries. By focusing on these areas, I aimed to explore both the current challenges faced in cross-cultural communication and the openness of individuals to adopt a shared language like Interslavic.

To reach a broad and diverse group of respondents, I primarily distributed the survey through Facebook. This platform allowed me to approach as many people as possible, reaching individuals from various backgrounds and geographic locations. Sharing the survey on social media enabled me to gather a larger pool of responses, ensuring that I could capture a wide range of opinions from people who might be affected by or involved in the use of a common language for

communication in Eastern European countries. This approach maximized the reach of the survey, helping me obtain diverse perspectives to support my research.

An important initial question of the survey was to find out how many respondents had ever heard of Interslavic, a language created to enhance communication among Slavic-speaking individuals. This step was essential in gauging the overall awareness and openness to the idea of a common language within the region.

The first section of the survey contains three single-choice questions, concerning the nationality of the interviewees (respondents were presented with thirteen distinct answer options, each corresponding to a different Eastern European country, which I mentioned above, along with an additional "Other" option), how frequently they do interact with people from different Eastern European countries, and if they have experienced communication barriers due to language differences between Eastern European countries. Based on the first section we can say that more than forty people who found some time to fill up my survey are from Eastern European countries (88 % from Poland), and most of them interact with people from different Eastern European countries "several times per week" (26,7 %), "rarely" (22,2 %), and "daily" (15,7 %). What is more, 46,7 % of respondents answered "yes, occasionally" to the question about communication barriers due to language differences.

In the second section of the survey, I started by explaining what an Interslavic language is because not all the respondents ever heard of it. That is also what I asked in the first question: "Prior to this survey, were you aware of the existence of Interslavic language?". And it is almost 50 to 40 between "No" (48,9 %) and "Yes" (40 %). I have one more single-choice question in this section: "What are your thoughts on the concept of using a common language like Interslavic to facilitate communication among people from different Eastern European countries in a hospitality setting?". 51,1 % of interviewees answered, "Yes, it could improve communication".

In this section, I also have two open-ended questions. First: "What potential benefits do you foresee in using Interslavic language for cross-cultural communication?". I received forty-five answers and most of them were about communication: "Improving communication", "Easier communication between neighboring countries, no need to use translators", "Less likelihood of communication problems occurring in the case of words that sound the same but have different meanings.". There were also some about ease of establishing contacts, better help in times of war (Ukraine-Russia conflict), or the ability to speak in a language that is closer to our native languages. It is compatible directly with my thesis and cross-cultural communication between Eastern European countries.

Second open-ended question: "What concerns or reservations, if any, do you have about adopted Interslavic language?". For forty-five answers I received sixteen that did not see any concerns. The rest have consecutive answers: "the meaning of Interslavic's existence in international

communication in English”, “may reduce cultural individuality”, “the risk of losing native languages” or “knowledge of the Interslavic language is not widespread”. I do understand these concerns and I agree with them.

The third and final section of the questionnaire consists of three single-choice questions and is titled “Interslavic in Eastern European Hospitality.” This section provides context regarding the study's focus on tourism, marketing, culture, and customer service, as well as the potential benefits of using Interslavic in these fields. For instance, the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) reported that in 2023, there were 997,737 Ukrainian residents living in Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023).

The first question is about interest in learning the Interslavic language for better cross-cultural communication. 46,7 % of interviewees answered that they definitely would be interested in learning Interslavic. 31,1 % said “Maybe”. Second question: “How important do you think cross-cultural communication skills are in the hospitality industry?”. Almost all (82,2 %) answered “very important”. People understand how important communication is in the tourism industry, where even the smallest misunderstanding can lead to major mistakes. Last, but not least, the question showed the use of Interslavic language in real life: “Imagine that you are going on vacation to another Slavic country. Would you be supportive of introducing Interslavic language to improve the overall guest experience in Eastern European hospitality establishments?”. Here we have three main answers: “Yes, I would strongly support it” (48,9 %), “Yes, I would be supportive” (26,7 %) and “Not sure” (17,8 %).

In summary, the survey titled “Breaking Language Barriers by Implementing a Common Language” aimed to explore the potential use of a common language in Eastern European hospitality. It was completed by a group of respondents, including individuals from Eastern Europe and those who regularly interact with people from these regions. The questionnaire addressed nationality, interactions with people from different Slavic countries, and experiences with language barriers. Many respondents had not heard of Interslavic, but most saw its potential to improve communication in hospitality settings. The survey revealed significant interest in learning Interslavic, with many participants recognizing the importance of cross-cultural communication in the hospitality industry. Respondents largely supported the idea of introducing Interslavic to enhance guest experiences in Eastern European hospitality establishments.

The links to the questionnaire:

ENG/PL: <https://forms.gle/UHTHnQwb4Wi9r92Z6>

UKR/RU: <https://forms.gle/RHF9nbjCVoHd2hkQ6>

The survey results indicate a strong regional bond among respondents, with frequent interactions between people from different Eastern European countries. Many participants acknowledged that they regularly engage with individuals from other Slavic-speaking nations, underlining the interconnectedness of the region. However, language-related communication challenges were commonly recognized, as respondents reported that language barriers often cause misunderstandings, particularly in professional settings such as hospitality.

When introduced to the concept of Interslavic, the majority of respondents expressed a positive outlook on its potential to address these communication challenges. Although many were initially unfamiliar with the language, they understood its value as a neutral tool for bridging gaps between Slavic-speaking nations. This indicates a general openness to the idea of using a shared language to improve communication, especially in environments where clear interaction is crucial, like hospitality.

The idea of using Interslavic in the hospitality industry received significant support. Respondents believed that a common language would facilitate smoother communication between staff and guests, enhance inclusivity, and contribute to a more welcoming atmosphere. The potential for the Interslavic to ease communication and reduce misunderstandings in hospitality settings was widely acknowledged.

Additionally, the survey highlighted the importance of cross-cultural communication in the hospitality sector. Respondents recognized that effective communication is essential for providing quality service and meeting the diverse needs of guests. Despite language barriers, there was strong support for the idea that improving communication through a common language could strengthen relationships and ensure a more satisfying experience for guests.

In conclusion, the survey results suggest a high level of interest in using a shared language like Interslavic to improve communication and cross-cultural understanding in Eastern European hospitality. Respondents expressed strong support for the potential benefits, particularly in reducing language barriers and enhancing the overall guest experience.

6 Discussion

This study aimed to explore the potential of the Interslavic language as a common linguistic tool to enhance communication among Slavic-speaking countries, specifically in the context of the hospitality industry in Eastern Europe. Through the survey, I sought to assess the feasibility of using Interslavic to address language barriers, facilitate smoother interactions, and ultimately improve guest satisfaction.

One of the key findings from the survey is the recognition that language barriers can significantly impact communication, especially in high-context cultures such as those found in many Slavic countries. Interslavic, by design, offers a simple, neutral, and easily understandable framework for communication among speakers of various Slavic languages. As highlighted in the theoretical framework, Interslavic could help minimize misunderstandings that often arise from the reliance on high-context communication, which presupposes a shared cultural background. The language's simplicity and neutrality make it a practical tool for fostering clearer interactions in environments like hospitality, where effective communication is critical to ensuring positive guest experiences.

From the perspective of the SERVQUAL model, Interslavic could address language-related challenges across all five service quality dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. By providing a common language for staff and guests, Interslavic would enable clearer communication of instructions, requests, and personalized attention. This would help guests feel more comfortable and valued, which in turn would improve their overall experience and satisfaction. In a competitive industry like hospitality, where guest reviews and repeat visits are crucial to success, enhancing communication can lead to better service quality and stronger business outcomes.

The concept of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is particularly relevant in understanding how Interslavic could function as a tool for convergence. CAT suggests that when individuals use a common language, they are more likely to reduce social distance, build rapport, and foster understanding. This is especially important in hospitality, where creating a welcoming and cohesive atmosphere is key. The survey results suggest that when guests and staff from different Slavic-speaking backgrounds are able to communicate effectively, they feel more at ease, leading to a more positive interaction. For example, a Czech guest and a Polish staff member using Interslavic to communicate might experience a smoother exchange, as both parties would feel understood and respected.

Furthermore, Interslavic offers a pragmatic method of achieving convergence, which could lead to stronger social connections between staff and guests. Communication that is more empathetic and respectful creates an atmosphere where guests feel more valued. This aligns with the idea that

convergence in communication can bridge cultural gaps and improve interpersonal relationships, a crucial component of successful hospitality interactions.

My interest in Interslavic as a tool for cross-cultural communication stems from both my academic background and personal observations. Prior to conducting this study, I was already aware of Interslavic and had seen its potential, especially after watching the film "The Painted Bird" which I mentioned before. The film, which used Interslavic to depict an unnamed Slavic country, opened my eyes to the broader possibilities of the language, particularly in fostering communication among people from different Slavic nations. This sparked my interest in further exploring Interslavic's potential, especially within the context of hospitality.

As I developed the questionnaire, I realized that I could improve my approach by addressing some concerns that participants might have, particularly regarding the use of English as a common language. One notable concern is that while English is widely spoken in many countries, proficiency tends to vary, especially among older generations in Eastern Europe. Based on my observations, I found that many individuals in these countries do not speak English fluently, and the gap tends to be larger in older age groups. This observation further reinforced my belief that Interslavic, as a language closer to many Slavic speakers' native tongues, could serve as a more familiar and accessible alternative.

Through this survey, I aimed to demonstrate the potential of Interslavic as a tool for better communication in Eastern European countries. I wanted to show that while it may not be widely known or spoken yet, it holds promise for facilitating smoother interactions, particularly in the hospitality industry. My research also addresses concerns regarding the cultural individuality of Slavic nations. It is important to note that the goal is not to replace or diminish the importance of native languages (Interslavic is an auxiliary language. I am talking about it in "*2.1 Interslavic Language*"). Rather, the objective is to provide a tool that can help people communicate more effectively, especially in situations where multiple languages are spoken, and misunderstandings are common.

In conclusion, the potential of Interslavic as a common language for Slavic countries is evident in its ability to facilitate communication, reduce misunderstandings, and enhance the quality of service in the hospitality sector. Although Interslavic is not yet widely adopted, the increasing awareness and interest in the language, as seen through the survey responses and current social media presence, suggests that it could play a significant role in future communication efforts within Eastern Europe. If implemented, the knowledge and use of Interslavic would likely expand, providing greater opportunities for individuals from diverse Slavic backgrounds to connect and collaborate, ultimately benefiting the region's hospitality industry.

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Artificial intelligence: This thesis's production involved using ChatGPT 4.0 mini and Grammarly AI paraphrasing tools. The text has been created using AI on several occasions and iteratively. For example, the question "To this questionnaire 48 people in total answered. To achieve a broad and thorough understanding, I selected a diverse target audience." Could you revise my question to

reflect a more academic tone?" has been used as a prompt. The author of the thesis has further refined the AI-generated texts to make them error-free, relevant, clear, and understandable. The AI application has been used responsibly, considering data protection and copyright. All sources cited in the report have been used correctly and are not AI-generated.