

INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION IN  
EXPERIENCE TOURISM IN THE  
INARI AREA

Pro Gradu Thesis

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## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Multicultural people both live in and visit the Inari area, where tourism is the main industry. Interaction between tourists and people working in the tourism industry is an essential part of the experience provided to the tourists. The focus of this study is on how multicultural workers in experience tourism in Inari area interact with international tourists. Another focus is how the workers act together as a multicultural team.</p> <p>The empirical part of this study focuses on one company located in the municipality of Inari. The interviews concentrated on gathering stories of both successful as well as challenging events of the interaction and teamwork. The stories were analyzed using a narrative structure. Due to the small amount of stories gathered, the rest of the transcribed interview data was also analyzed by using content analysis. The analyzed data was divided into two categories: tourist-worker interaction and multicultural teamwork. These two main categories were further divided into subcategories, namely: language, communicative competencies, professional competencies and intercultural awareness. These subcategories were discussed following a review of intercultural communication literature. Multicultural teamwork has two subcategories: teamwork and “it always works for us”. These were discussed following a review of multicultural teamwork literature.</p> <p>In the case study company, the success factors are: careful planning and training, good co-operation between the teams, flexibility, as well as experienced and professional workers. The findings show that the workers in the experience tourism industry need foreign language, interaction, and intercultural skills as well as their professional competencies. The major challenges the workers face when interacting with tourists are most likely caused by the assumption of the similarities and the difficulties in interpreting nonverbal communication. The analysis of the multicultural team remains rather superficial due to the work division of the case company. Based on the findings of this research the influence of multiculturalism of Inari does not seem to have a significant impact on the interaction and teamwork in the case study company.</p> |   |
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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Inarin kunnassa sekä asuu että vierailee monikulttuurisia ihmisiä. Kunnan pääelinkeino on matkailu. Elämysmatkailun parissa työskentelevien työntekijöiden ja ulkomaisten turistien välinen vuorovaikutus on tärkeä osa turisteille tarjottavaa elämystä. Tämä tutkielma keskittyy monikulttuuristen elämysmatkailutyöntekijöiden vuorovaikutukseen kansainvälisten turistien kanssa Inarissa sekä työntekijöiden keskinäiseen vuorovaikutukseen monikulttuurisena tiiminä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus perustuu yhteen Inarissa toimivaan elämysmatkailuyritykseen. Haastattelemalla työntekijöitä kerättiin tarinoita onnistumisista ja haasteista vuorovaikutuksessa ja tiimityössä. tarinat analysoitiin narratiivista rakennetta käyttämällä. Koska tarinoita kertyi vähän, loputkin haastattelumateriaalista käsiteltiin sisältöanalyysimenetelmällä. Analysoitu materiaali jaettiin kahteen kategoriaan: turistien ja työntekijöiden välinen vuorovaikutus ja monikulttuurinen tiimityö. Nämä pääkategoriat jaettiin vielä alakategorioihin. Vuorovaikutuskategorian alakohdat ovat: kieli, viestinnälliset kompetenssit, ammatilliset kompetenssit ja kulttuurien välinen tietoisuus. Näistä kategorioista keskusteltiin kulttuurienvälisen viestintäkirjallisuuden näkökulmasta. Monikulttuurisen tiimityön alakategoriat ovat tiimityö ja ”me onnistumme aina”. Näistä keskusteltiin monikulttuurisen organisaatiokirjallisuuden näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Tutkimusyrityksen menestystekijät ovat huolellinen suunnittelu ja harjoittelu, hyvä yhteistyö tiimien välillä, joustavuus sekä kokeneet ja osaavat työntekijät. Tutkimustulosten perusteella elämysmatkailutyöntekijät tarvitsevat kielitaitoa, vuorovaikutus-, ammatti- ja kulttuurien välisen viestinnän taitoja. Suurimmat haasteet vuorovaikutuksessa turistien kanssa perustuivat oletukseen samankaltaisuudesta ja vaikeuksiin tulkita sanatonta viestintää. Monikulttuurisen tiimityön analyysi jäi vähäiseksi yrityksen sisäisen työnjaon vuoksi. Tämän tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella Inarin monikulttuurisuudella ei näyttäisi olevan vaikutusta työntekijöiden kohtaamisessa turistien kanssa eikä kanssakäymiseen tiimin sisällä.</p> |   |
| Asiasanat – Keywords <b>Kulttuurienvälinen viestintä, monikulttuurisuus, elämysmatkailu, vuorovaikutus, monikulttuurinen tiimityö</b>  |   |
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

My current place of living is located in the municipality of Inari in the eastern part of Finnish Lapland.. Inari is the largest municipality in Finland, located in the northeastern part of the country. The population of Inari is spread into small villages (such as Ivalo, Inari, Nellim and Saariselkä) within an area of 17,333.77 square kilometers. The municipality shares borders with two countries: Russia in the east and Norway in the west and north. It is a part of the European Union's Northern Dimension, which includes Finnish Lapland, Finnmark in Norway and northwestern Russia. Inari is the North European gateway to Russia and the Russian city of Murmansk which enables it to take part in the Barents Sea Cooperation. The road to the most northern point of continental Europe - North Cape (Nordkapp) - goes through Inari. The airport in Ivalo and the country's key north-south European Route E75 (Finland's National Road 4) bring summer as well as winter vacationers to the area. Finland's largest National Park, Lemmenjoki, is partly located in Inari, as is the Urho Kekkonen National Park. (Inari municipality web pages 2011)

An Inari municipality brochure promotes Inari with the following text:

### ***Multilingual and multicultural***

*The Sámi identity is part of Inari's multicultural heritage. The Sámi are an indigenous people with their own colourful culture, language, identity and history. Inari is the only municipality in Finland with four official languages: Finnish, Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi and North Sámi. The culturally rich and distinctive Sámi identity is an integral part of Inari's character. The Sámi identity of today forms a natural bond with tradition; reindeer husbandry, handicrafts, fishing and hunting are still important, but other livelihoods have*

*risen alongside. Sámi culture is traditionally international. The Sámi live in four countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia.”*( Inari municipality web pages 2011)

There are several other groups of people that should also be mentioned, such as people with no Sámi background who were born in Inari and still live there, Russians, and international tourists. Inari can be seen as a cross roads for different peoples.

### **Global tourism and Inari area**

The leading idea in contemporary tourism business is the possibility of benefiting from culture and multicultural heritage. The Internationalization action plan of Lapland does not mention either multiculturalism or cultural heritage, both of which are widely discussed in a similar plan developed in Inari. Both plans emphasise the international dimension, due to the particular location of Lapland which shares 1700 kilometres of its borders with Norway, Russia and Sweden (The Internalisation Action plan of Lapland 2002 -2006, The Internalisation Action plan of Inari 2010- 2012). In their bulletin (Inarin kunnan tiedote 2009), Inari municipality announced that its focus in tourism will be more and more towards Asia, especially China and India together with already familiar areas of Middle and East Europe.

The social motivation of this research is based on the phenomenon that multicultural people both live in Inari and visit the area. From the perspective of intercultural communication, the approach taken in this paper is twofold. Firstly, the kind of challenges that people working in experience tourism face when providing experiences to international tourists will be examined. Secondly, the paper will analyse the team work of multicultural workers who provide experiences for tourists. The analysis investigates the ways in which the workers interact and the kinds of intercultural competences that are required of the workers in order for the team to work successfully.

My personal motivation for seeking answers to these questions lies in a plan of getting employed in the Inari area into a job related to intercultural communication and multicultural teamwork. I am also interested in learning more about the tourism business in the area as such.

The empirical part of this study focuses on one case company located in Inari municipality. The company provides accommodation and experiences services for foreign and domestic tourists. The firm is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Subsequently in this thesis, the word “worker” is used to describe anyone working at the case company. The nationality and/or manager-subordinate position of a worker is clarified as necessary. As this research focuses on experience tourism in an area within Finland, the term “international tourist” here means nationalities other than Finns. The words “customer” or “tourist” are used when referring to the international customers of the case company. The chosen case experience company employs French husky musher and handlers. However, French tourists are considered international tourists here also. The research was conducted by interviewing the workers -including the owners- of this particular company.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The structure of the thesis is as follows: chapter two defines the terms “culture”, “intercultural communication”, and “intercultural communication competences”. It discusses the development of the intercultural competence and sensitivity. Chapter three describes the term “multicultural” and introduces the multicultural aspects of Finland and the Inari area. It provides a brief overview of the tourism business in the Inari area. It examines the topic of inter-cultural communication in tourism, and summarises the existing research that has been carried out in this area in Inari. Finally, it describes intercultural communication within a multicultural team. Chapter four discusses the research methods used in this paper, and describes the case firm. In chapter five and six, the research findings are presented and subsequently analysed against the inter-cultural communication competences defined in chapter three. Chapter seven discusses the methodological limitations of this paper, draws conclusions from the findings, and suggests topics for further research.



## 2 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

This chapter defines the central terminology of the theoretical concepts of this study. It provides a brief introduction to the area of inter-cultural communication research. It also discusses the challenges and opportunities within the inter-cultural communication, and examines the development of inter-cultural sensitivity.

### *2.1 Culture and intercultural communication*

Before discussing inter-cultural communication, it is necessary to define the term **culture**. The definition varies depending on the analyst's scientific perspective. Common usage of the word culture refers to arts, science and institutions. A wider definition incorporates the values and the behaviour of a certain group of people.

To describe the different layers of culture, the common metaphors are onion (e.g. Hofstede & Hofstede 2005) and iceberg (e.g. Salo-Lee 1996). The outer layers in the onion or the top of the iceberg represent the visible aspects of the culture such as the Sámi dress, Lappish food and sauna. The inner invisible layers consist of the norms, rules and values, which are known by all the members of that culture, and are not visible to outsiders. Anthropology sees culture as a construction of visible and invisible elements. Hofstede (2005) sees culture as software of the mind. *"It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others."* (Hofstede & Hofftede 2005: 4) Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997:6) claim that *"culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas."* On the other hand, the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall claims that (in Bennett 1998) *"culture is communication"*.

From the point-of-view of intercultural communication, culture is often seen as either national (Finnish, French), ethnic (Finnish mainstream, Finnish Sámi) or regional (Northern-Finnish, Southern-Finnish). In this research, the focus is on the first two types of distinction. Organisational culture is also a common term used in organisational studies. In this research organisational culture is discussed in the light of the multicultural teamwork at the case study firm. From his international knowledge management perspective, Holden defines culture as an organisational resource and a factor of core competence. Yet, it “*is a dead resource until its value and utility are recognized as knowledge*” (Holden 2002:289).

The term *intercultural* refers to ‘between cultures’, and *intercultural communication* is usually understood as a communication or interaction between the people coming from different cultures (Gudykunst 2003).

The concept of communication -and therefore intercultural communication- includes the verbal message transfer as well as many behavioural concepts such as kinesics (body movements), proxemics (space organisation, personal space), oculusics (eye movement), haptics (touching behavior) and paralinguistics (accents, intonation, speed of talk, conversational style etc) (Dahl 2004). All of the above, except the paralinguistic, are also called nonverbal communication. In this research some behavioural concepts, in addition to verbal communication, are taken into consideration to the extent to which they appear in the interview data.

Intercultural communication is a multidisciplinary field of science, which has its roots in different fields such as anthropology, linguistics, communication studies, psychology, and international business. One way to describe the different perspectives in the field is to divide it into two groups; etic and emic. Etic refers to culture-specific perspective where things are considered within one culture and from that culture’s point of view. Also the comparison of different cultures belongs to this category; what is true and important in a certain culture, but not in the another. Emic, on the other hand, means culture-general. That is, something that is true in all cultures in general. Both stand

points are mutually completing. In this research both views are used in order to gain a wider understanding of the phenomena under consideration. Etic research is used in analysing the cultural differences and their influence on the interaction between the tourists and workers and multicultural teamwork. The emic standpoint is used in explaining and analysing both interactions (tourist-worker and worker-worker) against different intercultural communication competences and sensitivity, which are presented later on in this chapter.

Also the term **cross-cultural** is often used to describe the culture-comparative studies whereas intercultural is used in interactional studies. Cross-cultural and intercultural are also used as synonyms. Although, according to Wiseman et al. (1993) intercultural has become the prevailing term, cross-cultural is often preferred among in international business scholars such as Nigel Holden. In this paper, the term “inter-cultural” is used when referring to any situation that involves communication between two or more cultures.

The need for better understanding of other cultures and the development of the study of intercultural communication has its roots in the U.S. military, where soldiers with excellent foreign languages skills were sent abroad as spies. Still, they faced problems with fitting into the foreign society which they were supposed to belong to. Different communicative styles, which prevail even though one changes the language used, contributed to these problems. Communicative style means a choice of different behavioural concepts mentioned earlier such as proxemics, paralinguistics, etc. It also includes the topics people refer to in discussions and how much they rely on verbal and nonverbal communication (Barnlund 1989 in Bennett 1998).

Whorf, on the other hand, (1956 in Bennett 1998: 90) talks about linguistic relativity “*which holds that all observes are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic background are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.*” Therefore, in addition to foreign language skills, understanding in intercultural encounters also requires knowledge of the other person’s communicative style.

When interacting with each other, people seek mutual understanding and often look for similarities with their own world in order to understand each other. To consider one's own culture as the only truth is called ethnocentrism. Bennett (1998) emphasizes the risk of being ethnocentric in intercultural encounters. According to him intercultural understanding is possible only if we are able to accept that things can be done differently and still be successful. That is, the others can operate successfully even if their ways and values are different from our own. Assuming similarity between yourself and someone from another culture does not provide mutual understanding. Bennett calls for empathy in intercultural relations and assuming the other's perspective rather than your own. Hall, on the other hand, defines acceptive awareness i.e. cultural relativism in intercultural encounters. *"It means recognizing others as simply different, but not inferior. And most of all, it means being accepting as well as nonjudgemental."* (Hall 1991 in Bennett 1998:64)

Due to their unconscious nature, behavioural concepts such as facial expressions are particularly interesting when looking for mutual understanding. One often sends nonverbal messages without realizing that they are doing so. A search for affirmative action or reaction from one's counterpart in an intercultural interaction can cause misunderstanding or even a complete communication breakdown if affirmative action is interpreted differently than what the sender had intended (Dahl 2004). For example, when a Finnish person is looking for a sign of whether or not their Japanese counterpart agrees, they interpret the smiling face as a positive reaction while for the Japanese it can be a sign of confusion.

Barna (1994, in Bennett 1998) discusses different stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. She defines six different communication challenges: assumption of similarities, language differences, nonverbal misinterpretation, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety. All the others have been discussed already but anxiety requires further explanation. According to Gudykunst (2005), anxiety refers to the uneasiness of not knowing what is going to happen in the intercultural communication situation. It is present in all communication with strangers and

we have minimum and maximum thresholds of anxiety. This level of anxiety between the minimum and maximum is considered as a sufficient level to be motivated in communicating with a stranger. If it is below the minimum, there is not enough interest in communicating, and if it is above the maximum, we are unable to communicate successfully because we are too focused on the anxiety.

Even though communicative problems seem to multiply in intercultural communication, at its best it can provide several interpretations and alternatives and provides a possibility to learn more.

## ***2.2 Cultural dimensions***

In order to gain understanding of cultural differences, and to distinguish one culture from another, some cultural categories are required. This kind of categorization requires generalizations and stereotyping. Allport (1982:191) defines a stereotype as “*an exaggerated belief associated with a category.*” Stereotyping often has a negative connotation and it never is fully right or wrong. Yet, stereotyping often serves as a useful tool. Hall (1991), Hofstede (2005), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) have all created national culture dimension which are both full of stereotyping and useful tools in understanding the differences between cultures.

Edward T. Hall (1991, in Bennett 1998, Hall & Hall 1990) was the first person to define **high and low context** communication. Low context communication style means that the interpretation of the message is mainly based on what is said and the message is based on verbal words. In high context cultures, the message includes gestures, place, the context, hierarchy, the situation etc. and relatively little emphasis is put on what is actually said. The same applies when interpreting the message. Asian cultures are typical high context cultures whereas Scandinavian cultures are low context. The French, on the other hand, score higher in the context scale than Scandinavians, but less than Japanese. A common saying is that Chinese people read us Finns like an open book. The

saying is based on this difference on the communication styles and the excellent ability to interpret nonverbal communication of the Chinese.

Hall (1991 in Bennett 1998, Hall & Hall 1990) has also introduced the terms **monochronic and polychronic perceptions of time**. Monochronic time perception concentrates on one task at a time and polychronic means that several tasks and several people are encountered at the same time. In monochronic cultures time is linear and schedules are strictly followed. Such cultures are also task-oriented. The Finnish culture is typically monochronic. Polychronic cultures emphasizes on involvement with people and completion of transactions.

Dutch professor emeritus Geert Hofstede (2005) conducted his famous research at the multinational company IBM, by carrying out a value survey among IBM workers in the various countries where IBM offices are located. Based on the results of his survey, he identified four different cultural dimensions. These dimensions are power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a cultural group expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Individualism refers to cultures where the ties between individuals are loose and where individuals' priorities lie with their personal needs. In comparison, collectivism refers to cultures with tight connections within cohesive in-groups, whose priorities are the goals and the needs of the group. Individualist cultures – like the Finnish one - use a more direct communication style whereas collectivist cultures – the Japanese one, for example - use a more indirect way. Masculine cultures have clearly differentiated social gender roles while in feminine cultures roles are overlapping. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which members of a cultural group feel threatened by uncertain or unknown circumstances.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) seven cultural dimensions are

- universalism versus particularism,
- individualism versus communitarianism,

- neutral versus emotional,
- specific versus diffuse,
- achievement versus ascription,
- attitudes to time,
- attitudes to the environment.

Universalism prefers rules while particularism relies on close relationships. Individualism versus communitarianism seems to be identical to Hofstede's individualism and collectivism. Neutral/emotional describes the extent to which feelings are openly expressed. On the other hand this dimension seems to be a behavioral aspect of Hofstede's individualism and collectivism, since in individual cultures feelings are expressed openly and collectivist cultures prefer harmony. Specific/diffuse describes the level of involvement with others. Achievement/ascription is linked to Hofstede's power distance, but is not exact equivalent, because it does not measure the acceptance of the power distance. Attitudes to time are closely related to Hall's (1990) time perception. Attitudes to the environment refer to the belief of whether man should control the nature or to go along with it.

The Sámi culture has not been analysed against the cultural dimensions described above. In her doctoral thesis titled "Cultural Sensitivity In The Sámi School Through Educational Anthropology", Pigga Keskitalo (2010) points out that Sámi views of time and knowledge vary from the mainstream Finnish views. The Sámi perception of time is cyclic connected to the seasonal duties of reindeer herding. This is an example of Hall's polychronic or Trompelaar & Hampden Turner's synchronic time perceptions, while the mainstream Finnish culture is the opposite in those dimensions. According to Keskitalo, the mainstream Finnish education system is teacher and authority centric, whereas for Sámi people, knowledge is communal and negotiated together. This seems to be similar to Hall's high context communication style. Aimo Aikio (2007) came to a similar conclusion in his research on the upbringing of successful Sámi people. According to Aikio, Sámi people have a keen sense of perception, which is also apparent in social situations and non-verbal behavior,

which are the characteristics of a person using a high context communication style in interpreting the message.

In this research, the cultural dimensions are used in the analysis of intercultural encounters in experience tourism. It is important to stress that these dimensions are merely interpretive frames of behavior, and they are limited to simply reflecting central tendencies of a particular cultural group (Dahl 2004, Hofstede & Hofstede 2005).

All of the aforementioned cultural dimension frameworks have been criticised for the lack of empirical data on the one hand, and for outdated data on the other hand (Dahl 2004, Holden 2002). Studies that use these frameworks are also considered to suffer from western cultural bias, meaning that they are mainly conducted by western researchers, even though their research teams may include researchers from other nationalities. To avoid the western cultural bias in his dimensions, Hofstede added a fifth element to his dimensions later on, which he called long-term versus short-term orientation. This fifth element was designed together with Canadian researcher Michael Harris Bond, who had lived and worked in Far-East for a considerable length of time (Hofstede 2005).

According to my experience in working for an international corporation, international business managers in particular rely on lists of “do’s and don’ts” which derive from the above mentioned cultural dimension. These are used when information about a foreign business partner’s culture is needed. Even if the business manager studies one of the frameworks described above, one important matter may be dismissed, that is, knowing yourself and your own cultural behavior. (Hall 1991 in Bennett 1998:59) *“Culture hides much more than it reveals and, strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.”* Cultural dimensions can be valuable tools when trying to understand intercultural encounters. On the one hand, one should bear in mind that people are not uniform representatives of their stereotyped culture. On the other hand it is important to recognise how your own cultural background and upbringing influence your behavior.



### ***2.3 Intercultural communication competence***

How can one become more successful in intercultural communication? As discussed earlier, it requires the awareness of cultural differences and a non-judgmental attitude towards those differences. It also requires good self-knowledge. In order to achieve more successful intercultural interaction, several researchers have identified the key factors to that success. These factors are called intercultural communication competences. Other terms such as overseas effectiveness by Kealey (Kealey and Protheroe 1996), host communication competence by Kim (2001) and intercultural interaction competence by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2009) also refer to the same factors. Although they all are about competences, the focus and whose competence is measured vary in all these terms. Salo-Lee (2006) has described the different approaches by varying focuses as follows:

- we there; expatriate perspective (for example Kealey's research on expatriates)
- they here; immigrant perspective (Kim)
- we all here; inclusive local perspective (in addition to immigrant and foreign expatriates also the hosts and the homecoming expatriates are included )
- we all here and there, inclusive global perspective. (children of the immigrants and multicultural relationships)

It can be argued that this study takes a "we all here"-approach because it discusses the host's ( i.e. experience tourism worker's) competences and also expatriates ( i.e. French workers) competences together as a team. This research could also be argued to fit into the last category due to the multicultural background of Inari and the workers. However, Salo-Lee's definition places more emphasis on immigrant children which is not the case in Inari. On the other hand she includes the children of the multicultural relationships. In this research, multicultural Sámi are considered in this context because immigrant children are usually bilingual and have multicultural identities. Therefore, this research fits into the last two categories.

Intercultural communication competence involves the knowledge, motivation, and the skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures and emphasizes contextual factors (i.e. the particular environment, where communication takes place) (Wiseman 2001, Chen & Starosta 2005).

What are the qualities that make one an interculturally competent communicator? Researchers have listed several qualities to define such a person. The Canadian Service Institute (2000) has created a profile of an interculturally competent person (IEP). The person possessing those competences has: adaptation skills, attitude of modesty and respect, understands the concept of culture, has the knowledge of host country and culture, aims for relationship-building, has self-knowledge, knows the intercultural communication, has organizational skills and is personally and professionally committed. Their list of qualities is particularly useful because it gives examples how this quality is applied in various situations. Also Nakayama and Martin (2003) agree on the usefulness of this profile over many others lists of competences, which do provide the information about their applicability. Kealey's (1990) overseas effectiveness defines what is needed in order to live and work effectively in an overseas assignment. These competences are categorized into three central issues: professional expertise, interaction and adaptation. Interestingly, intercultural communication competence is not limited to communicative and cultural skills, but also includes professional skills.

The problem with lists of competences is that they are not applicable in all situations for every person. (Nakayama and Martin 2003) According to Wiseman et al. (1993) intercultural communication competence is defined by social judgment. This judgment is an evaluation of one's communication performance by other counterparts of the interaction according to their perceptions of appropriateness and effectiveness. Furthermore, competence is not a judgment of only one participant's performance at the interaction, but judgments of the performance are rather relational outcomes. Therefore one can be competent in one intercultural situation and incompetent in another and

it is not individual achievement but more a collective experience. For example, when considering politeness in terms of this kind of social judgment, generally speaking we judge the politeness of the behavior against our own cultural frame of reference. In order to be polite - in terms of intercultural communication competence - one needs to know how the politeness is expressed in the interlocutor's culture and act accordingly. Yet, it can be that your interlocutor is doing the same and the situation is somewhat confusing. Barnlund (1989) points out that the challenge is that there are very few cultural universals and communicative codes do not overlap perfectly. As a conclusion one could say that intercultural communication competences are ideal qualities and good guidelines, but they do not guarantee success in all circumstances between all people.

### **Becoming intercultural**

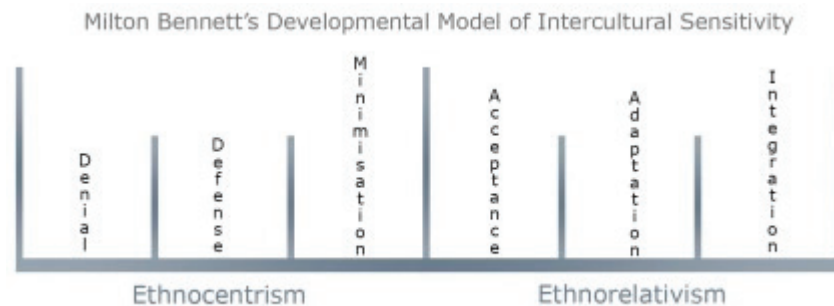
Intercultural communication competences, just like any other competences, can be both learned and trained (Wiseman 2001). Tools to measure the competence have also been created along with training programmes to train such skills. Various organisations provide these tests and training courses for several purposes, such as international management and business, relocation of employees, expatriate training and culture shock (See, for example, Spencer Oatey & Franklin 2009, chapter 8). Measuring competences is difficult, especially if using the social judgment definition. That requires a judgment given by other interactants of the intercultural interaction and yet being competent varies in accordance with people and the situation. There are some ethical problems in measuring someone's competence in intercultural communication. Namely, one can be competent in one situation and incompetent in another.

Some theorists argue that obtaining intercultural competence requires staying abroad at least for a year. It has been suggested that going through a culture shock enables one to gain intercultural awareness. Alternatively, culture shock can be experienced in one's home country, for example at a multicultural workplace. Salo-Lee (2006) points out that both multiculturalism and globalization raise people's awareness of cultural differences. Allport's (1954)

famous contact hypothesis sets out four conditions for an encounter between different cultures to promote intercultural understanding. If those conditions are not met, the encounter does not decrease negative stereotyping and prejudices. These conditions are: equal-group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and institutional support. In addition to these terms, a successful encounter requires a positive change in attitudes at two levels. At the first level, the successful encounter enables the negative ideas raised from negative stereotyping towards the person met to be replaced with more positive ones. This is called target –specific attitude change. At the second level, those positive ideas are widened to cover the whole group to which the person belongs. Contact hypothesis has been criticized for setting conditions on the encounter that are too strict. Amir (2000) states that contact between cultural groups *tends* to produce change in the attitudes. Whether the outcome *tends* to reduce the prejudices or to increase them depends on several favorable and unfavorable conditions. According to Amir, a higher level of intimacy and pleasant and rewarding contact can cause a positive change. For example, a tourist-worker encounter is often rather casual although some friendships can develop. The favorable conditions of that encounter in terms of intercultural communication are one of the main points of interests of this research.

One way to increase one's sensitivity and competence in intercultural settings is Bennett's (1986) development model of intercultural sensitivity, that is, to become interculturally competent. He defines the developmental steps for a person to learn intercultural sensitivity. He divides the steps into six different levels: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration.

<http://blog.communicaid.com/cross-cultural-training/cross-cultural-theory-developmental-model-of-intercultural-sensitivity/> (27.5.2011)



The continuum begins with denial i.e. ethnocentrism towards more ethnorelativism and integration. At the denial step one ignores the existence of the differences between cultures completely and is often superficially tolerant. Defence usually occurs when one recognizes the differences but uses negative judgment over the other cultures. At minimization the differences in some customs are recognized. At this stage one could claim that using common sense works all around the world and the emphasis is on the similarity and communal values of the people. The acceptance stage means that one has recognized and accepted the differences also at value level and realizes that others can be as right as oneself even though getting into the same conclusion was reached in a different way. Adaptation starts when one begins to alter one's communication and behavior according to intercultural situations in order to understand and to be understood. Integration stage allows one to have a lively participation in a variety of cultures and making a use of wide repertoire of cultural perspectives and behaviours. At this stage, people often feel that they are in a constant process and never really at home anywhere.

One can become intercultural by training, by experience or by a combination of both. There are tools for measuring levels of intercultural sensitivity or competence, but ethical issues as well as the reliability of the results should be carefully considered. Intercultural interaction at its best is a dialogue which promotes creativity and at its worst it is a source of problem or threat (Salo-Lee 2006).

### 3 TOURISM IN MULTICULTURAL INARI-AREA

This chapter provides definitions for the term multiculturalism. It describes what multiculturalism means in the Inari area. Also, an overview of Inari's experience tourism industry is provided. Finally, it discusses about the intercultural communication and multicultural teamwork in experience tourism.

#### *3.1 Multiculturalism*

The term **multicultural** is often used in public discussions about immigration, refugees and ethnic minorities. It is interlinked with such words as education, training, society, community or workplace. That is, it is used to describe that there are several different cultures existing in one place. Multicultural training refers to training in which different cultures coexist, although one is usually dominant. The training concentrates on how other cultures can be appreciated and exists alongside the dominant one.

According to Martikainen, Sintonen and Pitkänen (2006:14-15), multiculturalism traditionally refers to the coexistence of several culturally different but internally consistent groups within a certain place - such as a state. In recent years, the term has been used in three different meanings: 1) the existence of the culturally different groups worldwide 2) the coexistence of different ethnic groups within a society 3) a certain policy executed by a government or society that aims to maintain the predominant ethnic and cultural inequality (Martikainen, Sintonen and Pitkänen 2006). In the case of Inari municipality, the last two meanings are useful. A multicultural society is also seen as a place and context, where people negotiate their different identities.

In her study of behaviour within international organization, Adler (2002:15) states that “*multiculturalism-- means that people from more than one culture*

*(and frequently more than one country) interact regularly.*” This view is similar to the definition of intercultural communication. Adler claims that multiculturalism makes organizations more complex due to the different perspectives and approaches introduced by multicultural team members. According to Aikio (2007) multiculturalism for Sámi exists within a person and therefore is close to what Adler (1977, in Bennett 1989) defines as a multicultural identity. Sami are traditionally bi-or multilingual and have been breeding the reindeers in the area of three different countries, which has provided them with intercultural interaction from the earlier childhood. Adler and Aikio both mention the ability to adapt into various situations circumstances and cultures and extremely good self-knowledge as characteristics of a multicultural person.

Salo-Lee (2003) points out that multiculturalism and utilizing the cultural differences at the individual and the community level is a current topic in many sciences. Multiculturalism is also acknowledged in development plans of Finnish cities and municipalities such as in Inari. In a recent parliamentary election in Finland, multiculturalism (in terms of immigration and the integration of the refugees in to the Finnish society) was widely discussed.

Multiculturalism is often considered to be something new in Finland. Traditionally, Finnish people have considered Finland to be an extremely homogenous country. Martikainen, Sintonen and Pitkänen (2006) bring up the fact that there have always been people with different languages and cultures in the area now known as Finland, for example Sámi and Finnish –Swedish. According to them, multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon. They claim that national unity and homogeneity is a myth, which obviously has had a great influence on the attitudes of the Finnish people.

### ***3.2 Multicultural Inari***

On the contrary to the national homogeneity ideas of the most Finns, the municipality of Inari promotes itself as being multicultural and international.

Multiculturalism is apparent in Inari in the context of three Sámi minorities, all of them having their own language. Inari can be seen as an international area because of its geographical location neighbouring Norway and Russia, and also because of its international tourism.

Some events in Inari's history can be argued to still have an effect on the multiculturalism of the area today. For example, during World War II, German troops burned many parts of Lapland, including Inari. During the war, many Finnish women (including Sámi and mainstream) had romantic relations with German soldiers. Due to those relations, numerous children were born without a father after the war. This was often considered a sin, and subsequently many of these children suffered hardship because their biological fathers' identities were not known.

Sámi children were forced to integrate into the Finnish society when they went to school. Usually, children lived in student dormitories and visited home a couple times of a year. They were not allowed to speak any Sámi on the school premises. That caused many of them to lose the ability to use their mother tongue. One whole generation was brought up by using Finnish and abandoning the Sámi languages. The challenge in reviving the Sámi languages is that even if children were provided day care in Sámi, the language is not spoken in their homes.

The international aspects of Inari are represented in several current internationalization projects going on such as:

- 72 hour visa between Murmansk and Finnish Lapland to enhance shopping tourism
- The municipality motivates its employees to study more languages and especially Sámi, Norwegian, Russian and English are encouraged
- Negotiations on direct charter flights to Ivalo from France, Spain and Benelux-countries
- The Arctic Ocean Corridor, which is an international corridor from Finland to Norway and Russia. It connects the Baltic Sea area to the deep-water harbours of the Arctic Sea and the Kola Peninsula, which



are large oil and gas production regions and the western end of the Northern Sea Route.

- The Calotte center's Russia projects, which arrange student exchange project between Finland and Russia
- Co-operation with China via a friendship municipality of Handan (Savela 2011, Inarin kunnan kansainvälistymisohjelma 2010-2012)

### *3.3 Experience tourism in Inari*

The Municipality of Inari is Finland's largest municipality by area. It has 6,840 inhabitants, 2,200 of which are Sámi. The Municipality of Inari has three significant tourist service clusters – Inari, Ivalo and Saariselkä. At the moment, the largest of these centres is the Saariselkä ski resort. The history of tourism in Northern Lapland is related to the development of the Ruija Trail as a bustling trade route back in the 16th century, and the River Ivalojoiki Gold Rush starting in the late 19th century. Development of tourism in the Saariselkä region began in the 1950s when scheduled flights to Ivalo were opened. (Saariselkä web pages)

In contrast with other ski resorts in Lapland, there was no village in Saariselkä before the resort was established, and therefore Saariselkä does not have a long history or traditions of its own. This is somewhat problematic when it comes to marketing the resort to tourists as an area with multiculturalism and traditional Sámi culture. This is because the traditional Sámi culture areas are relatively far away from Saariselkä. For example, the village of Ivalo is located 30 kilometres north of the resort.

The main international tourist seasons in Lapland are Christmas, January-March and June -August. The main tourist groups in Saariselkä come from the UK, Germany France, Japan, Norway and Netherlands (in descending order). (Foreign overnights in Saariselkä 2007 – 2008 in Tourism facts in Lapland – Statistical review)

Experiences and activities provided during the winter season include cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowmobile-, husky- and reindeer safaris, curling, ski kite-flying, snowshoe hiking, winter driving programs at the Action Park, ice swimming, ice fishing, Northern light safaris etc. During the summer season the experiences include hiking, Nordic walking, mountain biking and gold panning, canoeing and fishing. Guided tours to culturally interesting places such as Siida (Sámi museum) and Sámi villages Nellim and Sevettijärvi are also part of the experience services (Saariselkä web pages).

A long serving member of the Sámi parliament, Jouni Kitti, writes about his views on Travel Expo 2010 held in Helsinki in the local newspaper Inarilainen (Inarilainen Jan, 27, 2010:11). According to Kitti, contemporary tourists are consumers from modern cities, on the one hand requiring modern services but on the other hand they are also interested in local culture. In his view, this creates new challenges for the tourism business in Sami area; travel organisers must know both local culture and the demands of the modern city dweller. This is a challenge due to the nature of the tourism business having a lot of seasonal workers from southern parts of Finland. The seasonal workers' knowledge of the local culture and nature of is not often in a sufficient level. Kitti also brings up the negative attitude towards tourist business which is shared by many Sami. It is like double-edged sword: it brings money and the work what Lapland desperately needs, but on the other hand it is thought to destroy the local Sami culture. Kitti himself does not see tourism solely as a bad thing if the development of the area's tourism takes sustainable development in its agenda. Also, the usage of the traditional Sami dress and Sami artifacts in tourism seems to be a hot topic. Who can use those artifacts and who gets the money? Many Sami people are against the tourism business because they fear that non-Sami people use Sami culture and artifacts in their own benefit. Other challenges that the tourist business in the area faces were raised in February 2011 at a seminar concerning the shopping trips to Lapland made by Norwegians and Russians. Although Inari is multilingual, more emphasis on foreign languages was called for. Norwegians and especially Russians hoped to be able to receive services in their own language in Inari. In particular, multilingual information signs were requested. The municipal manager of Inari

called for a special marketing strategy aimed at European countries, the U.S., Japan, China and India. This strategy would emphasise Northernmost Europe, including Northern Lapland and Norway together with Murmansk and Kola area instead of a current strategy to advertise wider Lapland, which includes also the area of Kuusamo and Ruka. He refers to the debated topic of whether Kuusamo area is a part of Lapland or not. That issue creates tensions between the actors in marketing Northern ski resorts. (Saariselkä Nyt! Maaliskuu 2011:10)

### ***3.4 Intercultural communication between tourist and worker***

One can assume that the intercultural interactions between a tourist and a worker can and should enhance the knowledge of cultural differences. It can even enhance creativity. This all can lead to a successful performance on experience provisioning. It can also have stumbling blocks and challenges. One positive impact to the successful interaction from the workers' perspective can be the multicultural identity of Sámi (Aikio 2008, see also Adler 1977 in Bennett 1998). At least one earlier research into intercultural encounters in tourism in Lapland can be found. It focuses on the encounters between Finnish tourists and Sámi (Länsman 2004). In her research, the Sámi are not tourism workers like in this research, but more like hosts to tourists. Her findings are somewhat in accordance to Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis and especially with Amir's (2000) findings. The relationships between the Sámi and Finnish tourists at their best can grow into a friendship in which is fulfilled with social emotions, equality, mutual respect and appreciation. These factors could be considered as what Amir (2000) calls favourable conditions of the contact and they can lead to a positive change in attitudes towards a stranger.. At their worst these relationships are characterised by social and cultural distance, social hierarchy and misuse of trust. Länsman highlights that those guest-host relationships has their disputes and are unequal, but there is a possibility that they could also be mutually respectful if both parties were able to save their identities.

In tourism, the word “**experience**” has been used to describe the experiences the tourists gain when travelling. Sometimes Finnish tourist organisers use the English word “adventure” when referring to the same issue. This is because the Finnish translation of the word “experience” refers to something experienced while travelling as well as a long experience in something (Aho 2001). The Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry (LEO) suggests that a meaningful experience is individual, authentic, has a story, is possible to experience with as many of the senses as possible, contrasts significantly from the customer's everyday life and emphasizes the successful interaction between the experience provider and the customer. Aho (2001) on the other hand defines core contents of the experience. According to him there are four types of core contents, which can also exist simultaneously in one experience:

- informative experiences (awakening interest into something)
- practice experiences (such learning how to drive a snowmobile or learning to ski)
- emotional experiences (this is closest to the Finnish word “elämys” ) and
- transformations (rather permanent change in state of mind, physical state or in the way of life of the subject person).

In this thesis I consider the whole stay at the case firm as an experience, which consists of several activities and casual hanging around in between those activities. Intercultural communication situation obviously occur during the whole process of the total experience from gaining the information of the target (place, activities, how to get there etc.) to the memories of the trip. In this thesis only the communication happening while the tourists are at the premises of the case firm or during the actual activities are considered. The Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry (LEO) defines the interaction and the importance of it to the whole experience process as follows:

*“**Interaction** translates to successful communication between the product and the ones who are experiencing it, between the customers, as well as between the service providers and the customer. Experiencing something together with others increases the social acceptability of the product. In terms of individuality, personal interaction between the guide and the customer has a decisive role in how well the experience is conveyed to the customer.”*  
(LEO 2009)

Awareness of cultural issues when designing an experience for foreign tourists is also emphasised on LEO's web pages:

*In producing contrast, the nationality and culture of the customer need to be taken into account. What is exotic to one may be common or garden to another."*  
(LEO 2009)

For example, Japanese people are considered to live in harmony with nature. From the Finnish perspective, nature is preserved and nurtured with care. For the Japanese, the harmony with nature includes the appreciation of domesticated nature and man built gardens, which are artificial nature objects from the Finnish point of view (Oedewald 2001). Yet, not all cultures automatically seek for exoticism when travelling. Oedewald (2001) states that for example to Japanese people, something strange or foreign is not considered interesting or worthwhile to get more familiar with. "The stranger", - for example a wild natural place - , needs to be made familiar by using rituals or cultural symbols, and then it is worthwhile visiting. Lapland can be worth to visit due to Santa Claus and Inari can be worthwhile visiting due to culturally important places to the Sámi located in the area.

The time that the tourists spend on enjoying the actual experience and the time at the case firm are rather short. The tourists can spend a week or two at the case firm and engage in several activities there visiting a local reindeer breeder's farm and so on, but how much of the real Finnish or Sami lifestyle do they really see? Reindeer farms, for example, are rather superficial in the sense that normally, reindeer run free and no one really keeps them at the farm inside the fences all year round. Also, how much information about the tourists' culture is gained by the workers in such a short period of stay? Do people behave and interact just like at home while travelling abroad? All of these questions lead to the idea that intercultural encounters in tourism might be rather superficial (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). How deep do intercultural communication competence and intercultural sensitivity really need to be in the context of experience tourism? Research findings in the business world support the idea that non-verbal communication has a rather big influence on the

impression of how professional and committed the worker is considered to be (Salo-Lee 2006). For example, body language and facial impressions can cause tourists not to consider their snowmobile guide or husky driver very professional, and that can lead to other problems with the interaction.

In this research I describe situations where intercultural communication occurs between a worker and a tourist. Furthermore, I analyse the cultural dimensions effective there, possible stumbling blocks and what makes an interaction successful according to the workers' opinions and from my perspective as a researcher. I also consider how the workers' defined competences are used in those encounters and how the workers themselves analysed what happened in the interaction.

### ***3.5 Intercultural communication in multicultural team***

Multicultural teams working in experience tourism in Inari are common nowadays. Local actors have foreign business partners and foreign employees. As an example, long-lasting work relationships have been established between the local tourism actors and French tourist guides who spent long periods in Finland during peak season. Local actors have both Sámi and mainstream Finnish backgrounds. How do these multicultural teams work together? They need to be able to work using foreign languages and often the lingua franca is English. In addition to traditional language skills, also a special professional language is used, that is, reindeer breeders, husky drivers, tourist guides and other professionals all have their own professional language and vocabulary. According to Holden (2002), today's multicultural teamwork requires the ability to work across professional cultures. In the chosen case firm it means that Finnish, Sámi and French workers use English as a working language and several other languages with their customers. Other workers have to be able understand - at least to some extent - the professional terminology of the husky drivers and also the requirements of successful husky safari.

Holden (2002) has criticised the Hoffstedian way of defining culture because according to him, it does not resonate with the interactions of international companies and organisations in their global networks. He considers culture

from a cross-cultural knowledge management perspective. Holden's (2002) definition of culture as varieties of common knowledge and shared meanings is similar to what Aikio (2006) describes as Sámi perception of knowledge. Aikio (2006) claims that the Sámi consider knowledge as being made up of relations rather than stable systems, a common knowledge of the origination, not common to everybody, but common to its place of origin. This definition of culture sets also new requirements for the multicultural team workers. They need to have skills which Holden (2002) calls "interactive translation" and "participative competence". Interactive translation means that multicultural team members interact with each other in order to negotiate common meanings and understanding within the company. At the same time they learn how to be able to work in that team. Interactive translations requires participative competence, which is

*"An adeptness in cross-cultural communication for engaging in discussions productively in, say, a group project, even when using a second language; to contribute equitably to the common task under discussion and to be able to share knowledge, communicative experience, and stimulate group learning.."*

(Holden 2002:217)

My ten years' work experience at an international company confirms Holden's claims concerning today's intercultural teamwork's need for a knowledge management perspective. Yet, in many occasions, cultural dimensions described earlier have helped me to understand why something happened the way it did in our multicultural team. Salo-Lee has come to the same conclusion and points out that challenges with intercultural communication at a workplace are caused especially by:

- ethnocentrism
- nonverbal communication
- linguistics
- high and low context communication
- values such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, universalism vs. particularism and perception of time

(Salo-Lee 2003)

One could assume that in case of experience tourism there is a strong motivation among the workers to learn to be able to interact interculturally competently, because it contributes to good customer service. The interaction within the multicultural team requires that the team members work together effectively when providing the experiences to their customers. Therefore it could also be assumed that there is motivation to effective intercultural interaction within the team also. My research interest is how intercultural communication is manifested in internal teamwork of the case firm, how they create their organisational culture and how they use it as a resource in producing experiences for tourists.



## 4 CONDUCTING THE STUDY

### *4.1 Aims and Research Questions*

Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) emphasise that the main issue to be decided when conducting intercultural communication research is to decide whether the research will be culture-comparative or culture-interactional. This research is culture comparative in the sense that different cultural dimensions are used in the analysis to provide possible explanations why something happened the way it did in the intercultural communication situations. It is also a process study in the sense that it studies how the workers use different competences and how the working methods used in multicultural teamwork might influence the encounter with international tourists and vice versa. The aim of this research is to describe and analyze experience tourism workers' experiences concerning their interaction with foreign tourists and other workers operating as a multicultural team in the Inari area. According to existing research, successful intercultural interaction requires several competences, sensitivity and awareness of cultural differences. Being competent in such a situation also requires a positive social judgment from all the people involved. This study focuses on the workers' experiences of the interaction. The research questions are:

1. What kind of intercultural communication situations are seen as challenging by the workers when providing experiences for the international tourists?
2. What intercultural competences are needed from the experience workers' perspective in order to be successful when interacting with international tourists?
3. How do the workers describe their communication with other members of their multicultural team?
4. Which success factors do the workers report regarding intercultural communication and successful experience tourism?

These research questions can be approached in several ways. In the early days of intercultural communication studies quantitative methods were preferred, but nowadays both qualitative and quantitative are equally used and appreciated (Wiseman et al 1993). This research was conducted by interviewing the workers of one experience tourism company in the Inari area. The interview data was analysed using different qualitative methods: narrative research and content analysis. Some quantitative aspects are also present, such as the amount of narratives and utterances in different categories and themes. Also the consistency of the interviewees over a certain theme illustrated quantitatively.

#### ***4.2 Narrative Study and Interview***

Narrative research is a significant part of social sciences, especially in research concerning life stories. It is also used in disciplines such as psychology, education, sociology and history. According to Liebliech et al. (1998:2) “*narrative research--- refers to any study that uses or analyzes narrative material*”. The data in a narrative study do not necessarily have to be gathered as a story, but other methods can be used as well. Narrative research can either be the object of the study or it can be used to study something else, such as in this research, where the aim is to learn more about intercultural interaction in experience tourism (Liebliech et al. 1998). A term narrative refers to a story. In this research, a piece of the transcribed interview text - which has a chronological plot - is considered as a story (Alasuutari, 1995). In other words, a description of interaction is not considered a story unless it has a plot, meaning that there is an initial state, then something happens and it leads to another state.

In this research, the narratives are gathered by interviewing the case company’s workers. Interview is often defined as a conversation that has a predefined meaning. That is, it aims to gather for information and is planned beforehand. A research interview includes at least the following procedures: the planning of the interview questions, conducting the actual interview, transcribing the

interview data and coding the transcribed material. It also requires that an interviewer has sufficient knowledge of the phenomena to be studied and the theoretical background of it. The interviewer should act as objective and neutral as possible towards the research topic and interviewees in order to gain reliable research data (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 1995). Berg (2004) uses the following categorisation of the research interviews: standardised (structured) interview, semi standardised (focused) interview and unstandardised (nondirective) interview. In this research the aim of the interview is to gather narratives of certain topics. Therefore it can be called a semi standardised interview.

#### ***4.3 Introduction to the experience company in Inari***

One company from Inari area was chosen for this study. The company is a small family-run experience business, which includes hotel accommodation and different outdoor activities. The business is run by an entrepreneur couple. In addition to the owner couple, there are some workers in the kitchen and for snowmobiles and other activities. There is also a French husky musher who provides husky safaris together with a couple of French handlers. The musher is a person who owns and leads the huskies. The handler is the one who helps the musher to organise the team in the morning to the leave with the customers, feed the dogs, gives medicine, takes care of cleaning and so on. Occasionally there is also a French guide who runs extreme safaris such as long cross-country skiing trips to the wilderness. Occasionally there are guiding trainees from a local guiding school. Altogether there are around ten workers during the main season.

They provide outdoor activities such as snowmobile safaris all the way to the Arctic Ocean, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, ice-fishing, excursions to see the Northern lights, visits to a local reindeer farm, excursions to Skolt and Inari Sámi cultures in the villages of Nellim, Inari and Sevettijärvi, Husky Safaris and other similar experiences.

The company has three types of customers: full-package, day-group and independent travellers. The full-package customers are provided with the transportation from the airport to the company premises, accommodation, food, everyday activities and equipment and outfits needed in the activities. Day groups visit them for one day and participate in some of the activities during the day. Independent travellers use the accommodation, but conduct their own activities such as hiking during the summer. The customers of the company are mainly from the U.K. and France, increasingly also from the Netherlands, some from Norway, Russia and - especially in the winter season - Japan.

The foreign languages abilities of the Finnish workers include English, Swedish, Norwegian and some German and French. The Finnish Sámi workers do not speak the Sámi language (due to the historical reasons discussed earlier) even though they are Sámi people. The French workers speak English and a little bit of German, Italian, Finnish and Spanish. The working language at the case company is mainly English, which is used between Finnish and French workers and between the workers and customers.

Customer feedback concerning the case company can be found for example from <http://www.tripadvisor.com>. At these pages tourists' comments about the workers, atmosphere and the trip in general were very positive. The tourists state that the workers will do anything to make their customers to feel welcome and nothing seems to be too much trouble for them. That suggests that this case company can provide information on success factors needed at experience workers intercultural interaction.

#### ***4.4 Interview process***

I chose to use interview as the method of gathering the data due to my prior experience in interviewing in my earlier studies. Interviewing was chosen also because during the interview it is possible get deeper into the topic by asking clarifying questions and justifications for the ideas the interviewees introduce.

On the one hand, the interviews conducted were themed interviews because they concentrated on two themes, namely interaction between tourist and worker and teamwork among workers. On the other hand the interviews concentrated on collecting narratives. A narrative research method was also chosen because I had used the method before, but also because by telling stories about actual events the interviewees may reveal much more than just being asked direct questions.

To begin with, my plan was to interview workers from several experience tourism companies in the area. I received some aid from the local Calotte Institute's project coordinator; she was willing to present and promote my research topic to the experience entrepreneurs in one of their project meetings. The Calotte Institute runs a quality project concerning the local tourism business together with Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.. I also contacted some companies directly. It turned out to be rather difficult to motivate entrepreneurs to participate in the interview. This might be because I contacted them during the main tourist season and also because they claimed that there were many researchers contacting them frequently. One company agreed to be interviewed after the tourist season.

At one point in the process I also considered asking the tourists on their views of the encounters. Using this method I could find out the success factors more easily. I could have compared the tourists' answers with the organisers answers. I contacted the case company concerning the interviews of the tourists. I also contacted a project manager at Haaga-Helia concerning the answers of a Destination Quality Net –questionnaire conducted in all the experience tourism companies involved in the Saariselkä Quality Project. The company that I focused on was one of the participants of the Quality project. I was hoping to either get permission from the case company to interview their customers or to get some customer experiences out of the quality questionnaire. Unfortunately, the questionnaire for tourists did not contain questions concerning interaction and therefore there was not much that I could have used in my research. I discussed with the case company the possibility of

interviewing their customers, but in the end it was too hard to organise. Therefore I decided to concentrate on the workers perspective only.

They are asked to tell stories about the interaction between themselves and tourists and among themselves as a team producing the experiences for the tourists. In order to let the interviewee talk freely and not to be lead by the interviewer's assumptions, direct questions were avoided. The aim is to see which topics are brought up spontaneously. In case the workers were not able to come up with any stories, they were asked questions like what kinds of competences are needed at their work or what kinds of events have made them wonder why it happened the way it did.

Since people from Lapland are famous for storytelling, it was assumed that it could be easy for the interviewees to produce narratives for analysing purposes. During the interviews it turned out to be rather difficult to make the interviewees tell stories and one of the interviews does not include any stories. From the narrative research perspective, my aim was to analyse only the stories and to leave the rest of the interview material out. Due to a small amount of narratives in my data, I decided to include any utterances from the interviews which were relevant in terms of my research questions.

Altogether four workers were interviewed; three Finns - among them Sámis - and one French person. Since there are a limited number of interviews, no distinction is made between the males and females. All the interviewees are referred in the text either with codenames X1-X4 or personal pronoun *he*. Codenames are used in order to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees. The gender division is not relevant due to the research aim. The distinction between the owner husband and wife is also not relevant, and therefore they are both referred to as "owner".

The interviews were conducted in May 2010 in Inari. I told the interviewees at the beginning of the interview that I will treat their comments as anonymous and if there is any business information they would like not to be published, they should mention it. I got permission to mention the name of the company

but in the end I thought that, in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, the company's identity is not revealed. I told them that I am writing my thesis about intercultural communication in experience tourism business in the Inari area. I explained the process of the interviews as follows: I conduct my research by interviewing the workers and analysing the stories told by the interviewees within the framework of intercultural communication. The interviewees were first asked to tell some background information about themselves.

**Background of the interviewee:**

1. Name
2. Nationality
3. What are your duties in the company?
4. What languages do you speak?

The interview questions were formed after literature review of the research topic. Forming the questions was based on two aims: to make open questions, that is not to lead the interviewee and to make them think of memorable stories. The following questions were used to uncover stories i.e. narratives about the interaction between the international tourists and the service providers and also about their internal teamwork:

- Could you tell me about the events with international tourists that were particularly successful? What happened, why do you think it went so well, what tells you that it was a successful event?
- Could you tell me about the events with international tourists that were particularly unsuccessful? What happened, why do you think it went so poorly, what tells you that it was a failure?
- Could you tell me about the events with international tourists that surprised you or made you laugh? What happened, what were you surprised about or what made you laugh, why?
- Could you tell me about the events in which you as a multicultural team worked together particularly well? What happened, why do you think you as a team worked so well together?
- Could you tell me about the events in which you as a multicultural team worked together particularly badly? What happened, why do you think you as a team worked so badly together?

All four interviews lasted approximately an hour each. The transcribed data output was altogether 26 pages long.

#### *4.5 The data interpretation process*

All the interviews were transcribed word by word except some small talk between the interviewee and interviewer. After that narratives and background information i.e. general information of the case company was extracted from the transcribed text. General information was gathered as an introduction to the case company. Narrative research has many options for analysing the story. A categorical-content perspective (Lieblich et al, 1998) was chosen for this research. It is also known as content analysis. The categories can either emerge from the data or be predetermined according to, for example, a certain theory. In this case, the two main categories were formed from the research questions: tourist-worker interaction and multicultural teamwork. Altogether ten stories discussed the tourist-worker interaction and one described the multicultural team. The stories were given a name and a reference number (Story A1-10) for tourist-worker interaction and Story B1 for multicultural. Later on, Story B1 was moved into tourist-worker interaction category. One of the interviews did not include a story at all. It concentrated more on describing the competences needed in experience tourism business and topics discussed with customers.

After dividing the stories into two main categories I went through the remaining transcribed data and looked for any utterances concerning the tourist-worker interaction and coded them with X1- A1 etc. X refers to the interviewee and A refers to the tourist-worker utterances. Then I did similar coding for the multicultural team utterances using the code X1-B1 etc. After coding the text, I started to look for themes emerging from the utterances and stories. Similar themes were then gathered into one category. These subcategories were divided between the two predetermined categories. The categories, themes and codes are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.



| <b>Tourist-worker interaction</b>  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Language</b>  | <b>Communicative competences</b>                             | <b>Professional competences</b>  | <b>Intercultural awereness</b>  |
| <b>Language usage</b>  | <b>Good atmosphere promotion</b>                             | <b>Feedback</b>  | <b>Stereotypes/differences</b>  |
| X1-A1 (languages used), X2-A1,(Japanese)X2-A12,X2A13, StoryA7(x2)"on vacation for real",X3-A13 | X1-A3 (athmosphere), X3-A20(positive talk)                   | X1-A4 (smiling), X2-A26, X2-A23,(feedback +)X2-A4 , X3-A2, X3-A7(feedback-),X3-A11, X4-A1  | X1-A15,X1-A16 (stereotypes), X2-A1( Spanish), X3-A12(Japanese),StoryA6(x2)"quitting the job",X1-A11 X2-A21, X2-A22, X2-A23X2-A17 (analyzing differences), X2-A18, X3-A19(individuals) |
| <b>Guides</b>  | <b>Intepreting and adjusting</b>                             | <b>Handling problematic situations</b>   | <b>Self-evidents</b>  |
| X1-A10 (interpreters), X2-A11, X2-A14,X2-A15, X3-A3, X3-A4                                     | X1-A5 (reading), X3-A15, X3-A17, X1-A6(try and error, X3-A18 | X1-A8 ( Softening),Story A3(x2)"Tank"(samaX1-A8)StoryA4(X2)"Snowmobile driver" (completion of the experience),X3-A9(motivate), StoryA9(X4)"Dogs didn't want to go", StoryA10(x4)"Japanese men", X4-A4(fear), X4-A5 | Story A1(X1) "Everyman's right" , Story A2(X1) " Crazy Finns", X1-A13, X2-A16, X3-A5  |
|  | <b>Humour</b>  | <b>Handling amazement</b>  | <b>Adjustment</b>   |
|  | X1-A7 (situation comedy), X2-A6                              | X1-A12 ,X2-A3 (tourists laughing), X2-A24(Snow games), Story A8(x2)"Happy old man", X3-A8  | Story B1(X1)"French guide",X4-B2(coming back),X4-B15, X4-B16,X4-B17   |
|  | <b>Talking</b>   | <b>Enjoyment</b>   | <b>Dealing with difference</b>  |
|  | X3-A14(talking), X2-a27,X3-A16, X4-A2(small talk)            | X2-A25 (enjoy to work), X3-A21, X4-A3,X2-A7(good mood), X3-A10   | X2-A20(time challenge)  |
|  |  | <b>Expert</b>  |   |
|  |  | X2-A8(local knowledge &experience), Story A5(X2) "Rescue", X3-A6, X3-A22   |   |

Table 2: Categories, themes and coding for multicultural teamwork.

| <b>Multicultural teamwork</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Teamwork</b>   | <b>It always works for us</b>  |
| <b>Division of the work</b>   |  |
| X1-B2,X1-B3, X1-B5, X2-B1, X2-B3, X2-B4, X2-B5, X2-B7(naturally), X3-B1,X3-B2,X3-B6,X3-B9,X4-B1,X4-B3,X4-B5,X4-B6,,X4-B8,X4-B11,X4-B12          | X1-B1(networks), X1-B6,X2-B2(planB), X2-B6,X1-A2 (Always), X2-A2,X3-A1,(comparing) X1-A9,X2-A5 |
| <b>Cooperation</b>  |  |
| X1-B4, X1-B7, X1-B8, X1-B9, X1-B10(symbiosis), X3-B3, X3-B4,X3-B5,X3-B7,X3-B8,X4-B4(feedback),X4-B7,X4-B9,X4-B10,X4-B13(not enough dogs),X4-B14 |  |

One code could belong to many themes, but the most obvious one was chosen in order to make the tables readable. This has been taken into considerations when describing the results and the same code, i.e. utterance is discussed under several themes. For example, X2-A1 which describes the difficulties when communicating with Japanese people, is placed under “Language usage”, but is also discussed in “Interpreting and adjusting” and “Dealing with differences”.

In order to place the stories under certain categories and themes, a further analysis was needed. The stories were opened up into the different narrative schemes. Vilkkö (1990:94) uses the following schemes in life story analysis: introduction to the topic/ summary, orientation/background, complication, result, evaluation, coda/morality conclusion. Not all stories have to necessarily have all these parts. The complication and coda were mainly used to define the theme and category of the story. The stories told by the Finnish interviewees were translated into English. All stories were summarised in order to make them more readable and concrete. This is justified as the research focuses on the story. Therefore, the style in which the story is told is not relevant. An example of a story analysis by using Vilkkö’s schemas:

### Story 1: Everyman's rights (translated from the original)

"Well, thinking of funny events... when we started this business, we had two Japanese tourists. I explained to them that we have these everyman's rights which mean that you can go to that swamp over there and take photos, walk freely and pick berries. They said that it's great. Then they went for a walk to the swamp. After a while they came back and said that they are not allowed to go there. I asked them what they meant by that. They said that there is a kind of a red sign prohibiting them from going there. What sign, I asked. You see, we have these snowmobile track signs which have two crossing red lines (shows x-mark with hands) and those signs are everywhere. For those who don't understand the language and the culture, it is common understanding that if you have this kind of x-mark it usually means that you are not allowed to enter. So the Japanese had figured that they could not go there. I realized then that some things that are self evident to us are not self evident to everybody. Because there was no explanation under that sign, only the red x-mark."

Original story in Finnish:

"X1: mut kyllähän tossa jos noita hauskoja tilanteita, et meillä oli tos kerran sillon ihan alussa kun oli kaks japanilaista eiku yks. Nehän kysy, et onk suomessa jokamiehen oikeudet tai miehän selitin, et tääl on jokamiehen oikeudet voi mennä tonne suolle ja ottaa valokuvia ja saa kävellä ihan vapaasti poimia vaikka marjoja. Ja ne että oi mahtavaa. Sitte ne mennee sinne ja tulee vähän ajan päästä ja että ei sinne saanu mennä. Mä että miten nii. Siel on sellanen punanen kieltomerkki. Mä, että mikä kieltomerkki. Kato kun meidän kelkkareitit menee. sehän on sellanen punanen missä on näin poikittain (näyttää käsillä) ja niitä oli joka paikassa. Sehän ei joka ei ymmärrä kieltä ja kulturi niin se on yleensä kun ristiin pannaan näin ja sinne ei oo mitään asiaa (näyttää käsillä) että ei sinne voinu mennä. no siinä minä huomasin, et se mikä meille on itsestään selvää ei se kaikille oo itsestään selvää. Koska ei mitään selitystä siinä et jos pannaan kädet ristiin, niin siitä ei mennä "

#### **The schemas of the story:**

**Introduction to the topic/ summary:** "But yes there are those funny situations"

**Orientation/background:** we had once then in the beginning, when we had two Japanese, no one... They asked, that do we have these everyman's rights or I explained to them that we have these everyman's rights and you can go to that swamp and photograph and walk freely and pick berries.

**Complication:** Then they went there and after a while they came back and said that they were not allowed to go there. I asked what do they mean. They said that there is this kind of red sign prohibiting them to go there. I asked, what sign.

**Result:** You see, we have these snowmobile track signs. That sign is red, in which it is like this crosswise (shows x-mark with hands) and those signs are everywhere.

**Evaluation:** Those who don't understand the language and culture, it is usually that if you have this kind of x-mark it usually means that you are not allowed to go there

**Coda/morality conclusion:** I realised then that some things what are self evident to us is not self evident to everybody.

The amount of references (utterance or story) that one or several interviewees made to a certain theme is mentioned when presenting the theme. Some themes were discussed by several interviewees, but with opposing or different points of view. Nevertheless, those comments were coded under one theme. One utterance (X2-A9) was eventually left out from further analysis because it was not considered relevant to the study, but rather just explaining why tourists come to Inari in general. To begin with, there was a subcategory called "Success factors" under tourist-worker interaction and an "It always works with us"-subcategory under "Multicultural teamwork". During the further analysis those two were united as one and placed under "Multicultural teamwork" because it seemed to more about teamwork than tourist worker interaction. Theme "Adjustment" was first placed under "Multicultural teamwork", but in the further analyses it was considered to be a part of "Experience worker competences" and therefore moved under "Tourist-worker interaction".

The further analysis of the categories and themes is based on stories and utterances of successful, unsuccessful, surprising or amazing communication. The analysis is carried out in order to reveal certain patterns of interaction within a tourist-workers interaction and multicultural teamwork (See Wiseman et al 1993). In intercultural communications we cannot possibly know what is the truth in any interaction, but looking at as many possible explanations we can find the most possible ones and yet there can be several explanations that apply. The explanations provided in this research are based on theoretical

framework and my interpretations of what happens in intercultural communication taking place in case company during spring 2010.

## 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *5.1 Intercultural interaction between tourists and workers*

Altogether four categories were identified in the interaction between workers and tourists (see Chapter 4 Table 1:40). Those four categories were given the following descriptive names: Language, Communicative competences, Professional competences and Intercultural awareness.

#### *5.1.1 Language*

##### **Language Usage**

The foreign language abilities of the Finnish workers include English, Swedish, Norwegian and some German and French. The working language at the case company is English. According to worker X1, English is the language of the tourism industry. Although there are French workers, French-speaking customers are mainly served in English. That is due to the distribution of the work and duties; the French workers' duty only includes husky safaris. The distribution of work is further described in the "Multicultural team" section. One of the Finnish interviewees mentions that it would be beneficial to be able to speak French, German and Japanese in addition to English. Sámi -languages are not spoken by any of the workers, even though some of them are Sámi. The historical events of mainstream Finnish not allowing the Sámi to use their own language at school caused one generation not to learn Sámi as their mother tongue. On the other hand, there does not seem to be a great need for knowing Sámi languages in the experience tourism industry. One interviewee pointed out that there have only been a few Sámi customers from Norway and Russia and they usually know other languages as well.

X2 describes the difficulties in mutual understanding when talking to Japanese people:

"One can often think that the other person fully understands you. But when you start to investigate and say "Jump into the river", they answer

by laughing. Then every question gets the same reply. Happily smiling and yes, yes....then you realise, that they just don't understand."

According to this worker, he has been trying to explain something to the Japanese and then he starts to suspect that probably the message is not understood, even though the Japanese seem to agree with what he is saying. Then he decides to test the customers by saying something that they should not agree with in order to provoke a reaction, which would imply that the customers understand his words. However, he gets the same agreeing reply from the customers.

Story A7 "On vacation for real" describes how one of the Japanese tourists studied Finnish for couple of years prior to his trip to Finland. He spoke very good Finnish when visiting Inari. The Finnish workers were surprised about this tourist's language ability. It was amazing for the Finns, how much effort the Japanese people could place on their single holiday trip to Lapland. Learning to speak the local language just for a few days trip's sake was considered as a big effort from the Finnish workers' point of view.

### **Guides**

French and Japanese tourist groups usually have guides travelling with them. According to the Finnish worker, they have a well-established working relationship with the French guide travelling with the French tourist group. Despite the good relationship, the Finnish worker states that one cannot be sure about whether the guide translates everything correctly or not. The company provides guided tours to historically and culturally significant places. These tours are guided in English and then translated into French by the tourists' own guide. It can be argued that these guides travelling with tourists should have rather comprehensive knowledge of the Sámi culture and the history of Inari in order to translate everything to their customers. The data does not provide information on whether the guides have such knowledge or not. It only reveals that the worker is unsure of the accuracy of the translations.

The data provides contradicting information about the French language usage at the company. The Finnish worker provides the guided tours to the French tourist groups. He uses English and then the French guide travelling with the

tourist group translates it. The French worker claims that he speaks only English with the customers, whereas the Finnish worker states that it is a benefit to have French guides. It is unclear, whether the Finnish worker here refers to French workers or the French guide travelling with the tourists. If he refers to the French workers, one could assume that the French worker would speak French to the French customers, but he claims that he speaks only English. Maybe he means other tourists than French. In the end, it can be said that both the French guide and the French workers are a benefit to the company when serving the French-speaking customers, because the Finnish workers do not speak French.

The Japanese guide travelling with customers is considered to be a good thing by three of the workers, whereas the British guide is considered to be rather annoying by one of the workers. The lack of English language ability of Japanese tourists causes the Japanese guide to be considered to be a positive thing. According to one worker, the British guide is trying to run everything - including the workers' duties.

### *5.1.2 Communicative competences*

#### **Good atmosphere promotion**

The owner emphasises the importance of being able to create a good homely atmosphere by using one's own personality and individualising the service by using customers' first names. According to him, it is also important to create a feeling that there is no rush. Humour in terms of situation comedy is used to create the atmosphere. The owner emphasises positive language in order to create a good mood for the customers. Even if there is less snow than usual, or the weather is not that good, there are still many activities that can be done and experiences to be offered. Therefore, it is important that the workers find the positive sides of everything. Telling negative things should be avoided because that might upset the customers. Encouraging the customers during the activities is the method used by all the workers. Sometimes the workers also have to deal with the customers who are afraid of participating in the activity.



### **Interpreting and adjusting**

The importance of being able to read the people and the situation is emphasised. Being able to adjust one's own behavior is equally important - even changing the plan of the activity, for example shortening a skiing trip.

X1: Of course if you notice that one of them [tourist] is in a really bad mood, you can try that [humour]. You will notice quickly if it works and then, if needed, you can take another stance. It can be so that when someone is really irritated, you have to be very understanding and polite to him and acting a slightly different way than usual, but generally humour works."

Trial and error is also used with interpreting the customers. If something does not work, a different method is used.

### **Humour**

Humour is used quite a lot according to the interviewees, yet it is not really about telling jokes, but rather using a situational comedy and laughing at something that is happening or happened yesterday. Lapland's mysticism and fairytales are used in telling the tourists that they may come across Santa Claus when driving the snowmobile. According to the worker, even a short reference to Santa Claus makes the tourists laugh.

### **Talking**

All the workers mentioned that it is important to be able to have small talk with the tourists. The owner particularly emphasises that the workers need to be able to talk freely, because tourists can ask about anything. They need to be able to answer any kind of questions politely and hide any irritation or embarrassment. Both X2 and X4 report enjoying conversations with tourists. Both of them usually talk about their own experiences of living in Inari with tourists because they are particularly interested in how one can cope in such a cold place. The owner states that anyone working for them has to like working with different people and to be a social character.

### 5.1.3 Professional competences

#### **Feedback**

All the workers have received positive feedback from the tourists. Positive feedback is given all the time and negative very seldom. Negative feedback has basically been about things like running out of toilet paper. When asked about how the workers find out, whether the customers are satisfied or not, all the Finnish workers say that it can be read from customers' faces. They also say that satisfaction can be sensed. The owner emphasises that the workers should be able to sense it. All the workers report customers giving them positive feedback verbally. The French worker reports that the owner had told him that customer were happy with the husky ride.

#### **Handling problematic situations**

The difficult situations that were reported mainly refer to difficulties with completing the activity i.e. to the experience itself rather than to the communication with tourists. Yet, these occasions create demanding communication situations for the workers. Such occasions reported were caused by a snowmobile accident, difficulties with driving the snowmobile, the dogs refusing to run and a fear of the dog sledge ride. The other problematic situations reported were problems with mutual understanding with the Japanese (discussed already in "Language usage") and difficulties with following the planned timetables with the Spanish (to be discussed later on in "Dealing with difference").

The snowmobile accident was described by X2 as follows:

#### Story A3(X2) Tank

The most difficult events usually occur at the end of the season. There was a big tank by the beach. There was enough room to pass the tank from either side in order to get to the lake. We started our snowmobile safari to the lake. One lady drove straight from the yard into the tank. The snowmobile crashed completely, but the lady was OK. Of course she was very upset. After the accident, she did not even want to jump on board anyone else's snowmobile. In the end, the accident made her laugh. The customers have excess when driving with snowmobiles. She calculated that 500 meters cost her 300 Euros. Of course they had insurance. And the most important thing is that nothing happened to her. Yet, it was quite funny, because it looked like she aimed directly for the tank.

According to the storyteller and another worker, the first thing to do in case of this type of accident is to make sure that nothing happened to the tourist. The second step is to calm the tourist down. Then, one has to explain the fact that the snowmobiles are the driver's responsibility, but emphasising that fortunately, nothing happened to the driver. The notion "she did not even want to jump on board" illustrates the general feeling among the workers: the tourists should be encouraged to continue until the end of the activity. The same can be seen in another story in which the worker gets really irritated by the tourist but is still able to motivate the tourist to continue with the experience.

#### Story A4(X2) Snowmobile driver

I was leading a snowmobile safari for a French family with a father, a mother and an 18-year-old son. They were all driving a snowmobile of their own. The weather was bad when we were leaving. It was snowing and there was water on the ice. The father simply could not stay on the track. He got stuck to the water when falling off the track thirty times during that day. It took us thirteen hours to drive that route, which usually takes about seven hours. I was pulling him back onto the track every time and he kept sinking with the water up to the handle bars.

I was cursing him in my mind and hoping that he would never come back to our Safari. And if he happened to come back, I certainly would refuse to go with him. On the other hand, these trips are expensive for the customers and no matter what you cannot show a customer your irritation. It is good to have a helmet on. That helps you to hide your anger.

The customers were quite happy because they did not have to pull the snowmobile out of the water. It is no use to ask them to help because they wouldn't know how to get it out of the water. It was unbelievable how the man just could not keep on the track. I had seen him driving the snowmobile before on our shorter safaris and he was driving just fine. I don't know what went to him. On a stretch of 50 meters he got stuck three times.

Then the man suggested that we would call a helicopter to pick him up in order to let the others to continue with the trip. I told him that I don't think that is necessary. Our destination is not far away. To be honest, I thought that his suggestion was a great idea and I would be so happy to get rid of him, and I did have the telephone number for the helicopter. I discussed it with the man and in the end, he was willing to continue.

The next day, we were able to drive on the crusted snow due to the temperature having been below zero during the night. The sun was shining and the weather was just great. Also, the man was able to drive again and the rest of trip went fine. Nobody got stuck anywhere. This trip was so annoying that it kept irritating me even the day after the trip. It really seemed that the man was doing it on purpose. It felt like he did

not accidentally fall off the track into the water, but he was actually aiming to it.

The following story, on the other hand, describes how the worker "prepared" the customers for possible difficulties during the experience.

Story A9(X4) "Dogs didn't want to go"

"There is one thing, one problem during the winter with the dogs, which could disappoint the tourists but it seems not to. These dogs are not mine they are the Musher's dogs. Yet, they know me very well. In the beginning when I began to bring tourists to the lake, I told the dogs to go right, go left or go straight. And of course they know my voice, when I feed them, when I heel them, but not when I lead them, when I'm the musher. That was quite a problem because sometimes they did not want to listen to me at all. And some of them, my leading dogs, were stopping in the middle of the lake and sitting down. They were just looking at me and I said "go go go". I was pulling them for twenty minutes. All the customers with the shouting dogs behind me and my dogs were just sitting down quietly. It was not a big problem to the tourists since I had told them during the briefing to the activity that sometimes the dogs might just stop running. As I knew that this could happen I prepared the tourists nicely to this kind of situation. I told them that maybe sometimes the dogs are tired because we are in the middle of the activity and they are working hard. Maybe one moment they will stop and don't want to work anymore.

This worker also refers to the importance of briefing the customers before the activity. By telling the customers that dogs can become tired and stop running, he is able to avoid disappointment if it does happen. Especially when he knew that in the beginning the dogs might refuse to listen to him since he was not their musher. A similar occasion was described also in Story A10 (X4). That time, there were two Japanese customers. When the dogs had refused to go for several times, the Japanese men approached the worker and told him that they do not have to continue if the worker does not want to. Despite the problems with dogs and the Japanese telling that it is OK to stop, the worker continued and they were able to finish the activity.

Sometimes the tourists are afraid of the husky ride:

X4:"When you come from a big town or you have never seen that it is a big shock, as it can be very noisy. Sometimes they are little bit afraid. A woman, the wife told me: "No, I don't drive. I will sit down. My husband will drive. I said "Oh, you will drive, when we turn back." She said "I will see". I said "Yes you will". And sometimes, they are afraid off falling down. At the start, when you remove the rope, all the dogs are pulling so even if you pull the rope and brake sometimes you can't make the dogs stop. Sometimes they fall over as the dogs pull with such force.-----What I don't want at all is that they regret not having

driven. So I try as much as possible to make them drive and to find positive points to make them trusting”

Also in this case the worker encourages the tourists to continue with the experience and lets the woman first get used to the ride and then makes her drive.

### **Handling amazement**

The wild nature that surrounds the Inari area, the cold and snowy winter keep amazing the tourists. The adult tourists often play in the snow like children. In a story A8 “Happy old man” the worker describes how an old man comes out of the tourist bus and goes directly to the snow bank and begin to eat the snow and to make snow angels. Seeing and touching the snow had always been his dream. The worker described the situation by saying that one could see how the man was enjoying the snow and it probably provided him with a couple of extra years of life. Especially in the spring time, when the ice-covered-lake has water on the top of the icy surface, it is common that one gets stuck in the water with the snowmobile. One has to be an experienced snowmobile driver in order to get the snowmobile out of the water. When tourists fall into the water with their snowmobile while in the safari on the Lake Inari, it is the duty of the snowmobile guide to get the snowmobile back on track. The workers have to pull the snowmobile using all the force they have. The sight of the worker pulling the snowmobile out the water as well as out of the snow bank often makes the tourists laugh at them. One could assume that sometimes the laughing could cause irritation among the workers.

The closeness of the Russian border is another matter that interests the tourists a lot. The tourists often ask whether the closeness of the Russian border has any influence on the ordinary peoples’ lives. On the one hand, the people who live in the Inari area are so used to living close to the border that they do not see it having any influence on their lives and therefore they consider such a question odd. On the other hand, the tourists’ question is understandable if one compares the border formalities in the Russian border to the formalities in the Norwegian border; crossing the first takes couple of hours and crossing the latter goes without noticing.

### **Enjoyment**

The workers report specifically that they enjoy their work. They also point out that it is fun to be with the tourists. According to the owner, all of the workers like working with people. On the other hand, the tourists are also enjoying themselves. According to the workers, people are generally in a good mood while on holidays. One of them reports: “I don’t know what it is, but they [tourists] are just in such a good mood. It is extremely fun to be with them.”

### **Expert**

Being able to do the work the employee is assigned is emphasised by the owner. The story A5(X2) “Rescue” did not happen in the case company, but at an earlier workplace of the employee. However, it together with other utterances from the interviews illustrates that in order to work successfully, experience of the local wild nature and weather is necessary. It is important to know when it is better to stop the experience or take a break. That demands a special know-how of the Inari area.

#### *5.1.4 Intercultural awareness*

### **Stereotypes/differences**

The workers identified some cultural differences among the tourists. Spanish people are considered never to be on time for scheduled activities. The Japanese are hard to interpret. In story A6(X2) “Quitting the job”, the worker describes the differences in holiday allowances between the Japanese and the Finns. A Japanese person was not allowed to have a couple of extra days off in order to come to Inari, so he quit his job. He did have another job waiting for him upon returning to Japan. The Finnish worker was amazed by this, because if he needed a day off from his work, it could be easily negotiated. On the one hand, all the Finnish workers pointed out that there are some cultural differences such as rules on how you can talk to somebody. On the other hand, they emphasised that people should be treated as individuals.

One Finnish worker considers the Japanese the most polite and nicest customers. He claims that the Japanese are truly interested in everything.

However, he was wondering whether they truly are polite and nice, or whether they are only acting polite.

### **Self-evident**

The workers often face situations were something that is self-evident to them is totally strange to the tourists. One of the workers describes the tourists' questions about the self-evident matters as follows:

“People come to ask anything. They also ask about things that do not even cross my mind.-----It is just like when I am travelling abroad, I ask the guide “ Why is that there?” The guide replies “ Well, it just is.”

The owner emphasises the workers' abilities to handle these kinds of questions and conversations. He says that the workers should be ready to discuss anything. He also states that if he does not know the answer to something he replies that he will find it out and answer later.

The workers often need to explain why the doors should be closed tightly during the winter, how to dress for the cold and that children especially need to be well-dressed. Even though the tourists' unawareness of how to live in cold conditions keep amazing the workers, they have learned that the cold winter climate requires a lot of briefing, explaining and teaching because most tourists do not have any idea of how to manage in such a cold weather. Yet, the problems are not restricted to the cold weather. There are other matters which require more explaining, like in story A2(X1) “Crazy Finns”.

“Two experienced hikers from Austria came to ask, if there are any marked hiking routes nearby. I told them that one route starts just behind the corner. There was no map of the route, but I told them that it is so well-marked that one cannot miss it. A couple of hours later the Austrian women came back and said that they just had to give up. The route was too demanding. I was wondering, how that could be, because the route was quite easy and the women were experienced hikers. Then the women explained that the wet swamp was in itself difficult to cross and they barely made it, but they thought that since Finns have made the route, they cannot give up. Then they came to the lake and saw one route sign on the beach and the next on the other side of the lake. Then they decided to give up because they did not want to swim. They thought that Finns must be crazy. That moment I realized that the women had been following the snowmobile route which goes through frozen swamp and lake during the winter. In the end, we were laughing about the misunderstanding. I realized that what is self-evident to somebody is not self-evident to everybody.

In this story the worker assumed that the tourists would know that the x-mark stands for the snowmobile track and that the hiking track would be easily recognized. The tourists on the other hand, believed that since the Finns are famous for their guts, the hiking track can be as hard as it was.

#### *5.1.5 Adjustment*

The regular Finnish workers are either local or have lived in the Inari area for a long time. The French musher has also been working with his Finnish counterparts for a couple of years. The French handler on the other hand, was in Inari and in Finland for the first time. He did not report problems with adjusting to the area or to the culture, but one of the Finnish workers told the following story X1-B1:

“We had one French guide here. They are not used to having such a long dark period as our “kaamos”. That one guy could not stay at all. He left in the middle of the season. Everyone else has always stayed, but he couldn’t last more than two weeks. He was nervous, when there was no sun at all. He left and we did not hear from him since. That was only one guy, but the others are also waiting for the sun to show up. “

According to this story, some of the French workers do have challenges with adjusting to the long periods of darkness.

#### **Dealing with difference**

In addition to the difficulties mentioned earlier, the workers have come across one cultural difference which has forced them to alter their plans. One of the workers reported that whenever they have Spanish customers, they might as well forget about timetables. The Spanish will never show up on time for the scheduled activity. That causes problems for the workers because they will also be late for the next activity. Sometimes they give the Spanish a starting time which is earlier than the actual starting time in order for them to be on time. If there are non-Spanish tourists who show up on time, they divide the group in two, start with those who showed up and then start later with the Spanish when they eventually show up. In extreme cases, they have just had to start without



the Spanish. Unfortunately, the interview data does not provide information on what happened when the Spanish were left out of the activity.

## ***5.2 Multicultural teamwork***

Two categories were created to describe what happens with a multicultural team (see Chapter 4 Table 2:41). Those two categories were given the following descriptive names: “Teamwork” and “It always works for us”.

### ***5.2.1 Teamwork***

#### **Division of the work**

According to the workers’ description, the division of work in the case company is as follows: The French musher owns the huskies and provides the husky Safaris with a couple of French handlers. The Finnish owner couple buys the Husky services from the musher. The owner wife takes care of French day groups (meaning the guided tours), accommodation in general, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. The owner husband takes care of the sales, marketing, planning and coordinating the activities. He is also the manager, who defines the policies and principles according to which the company operates. The snowmobile guides’ work include other duties as well such as snowmobile maintenance, caretaking, karaoke hosting and computer maintenance. There are women working in the kitchen and sometimes guides from the local guiding school, who do snowshoeing or skiing trips. All the interviewed Finnish workers also report that they do everything from cleaning to peeling the potatoes, when necessary.

The decision making process is described by the French worker as follows: The owner husband decides, but he does not make the decisions alone. First he makes the plans with the French musher on how many customers can be taken on per day. Then he makes plans with the snowmobile guides. The owner wife occasionally participates in the decision making. The Finnish workers describe the process by saying that the owner husband decides and it is his duty to decide on the schedules and take care of the coordination between the activity groups.

Everyone seems to have their own duties according to their area of expertise. However, there is a clear division between the French and the Finns. The French only take care of the husky Safaris whereas the Finnish workers do pretty much anything to a certain extent. For example the snowmobile guides can work at the restaurant and the owner wife can teach the tourists how to drive the snowmobile.

### **Interaction**

Based on the interview data, the multicultural team consists of two separate groups; the Finns and the French. The interaction between the two groups goes mainly via the owner who coordinates the groups. However, it is not that the two groups do not talk to each other. Rather the company policy is that everyone has their own responsibilities and therefore everyone is occupied with their personal duties. There is a clear division of the work as described earlier.

One interesting notion is that when asking the French worker how he knows whether or not the customers are satisfied, he answered that either the customers say it directly to him or the owner tells him that customers told him they were satisfied.

Outside work interaction between the French and Finnish is friendly but it does not seem to be very vivid. The Finnish worker describes that the French have their own “little France” at the company’s premises. The French, on the other hand, says that whenever he comes to the restaurant to hang around, all the Finns are very nice to him. The Finnish workers also say that the cooperation is very smooth because they are familiar with one another. During the summer, there are no husky safaris and therefore the musher used to take the dogs to France for the summer. This year they will stay in Inari. The owners also say that the French worker looks after the place when they are on holidays. They also explain that the cooperation is a kind of symbiosis; together they will either survive or die. The French worker, on the other hand, describes the interaction between the Finns and the French as follows:

“When I think back now after the season this is not intercultural. I don’t feel intercultural. But it is not negative. It is not anybody’s fault or it is everybody’s fault. I don’t know but I don’t have the ...I tried. I came often here to this restaurant to learn Finnish because I like this and I would like to maybe come back...”

The cooperation between the two cultural groups seems to be rather smooth, but at least the French worker hopes for more interaction. Yet, there is no multicultural team, but rather two separate teams working together.

### 5.2.2 *It always works for us*

When asked about the events which either went well or not so well, all of the Finnish workers said that they always go well. The French worker said that the only times the events have not gone so well were the occasions when the dogs refused to run because they did not consider him their leader yet. What are the success factors then? Two of the workers point out that the small size of the company - with only ten workers during the busy season - allows them to be flexible. In larger organisations, it is not so easy to rearrange plans and timetables because there is always a next group waiting. Another success factor mentioned is the workers’ knowledge of the weather and nature conditions as well as their own specialised duties. Every worker knows that in case of bad weather conditions, there has to be another plan and in case people get too tired, there is rescue team and extra shelters along the route. The owner points out that everything they do is extremely well planned. They also test and train all the routes in advance. The timetables and planned routes are strictly followed, but in case the activity takes longer than planned, there is no other group waiting to come next. According to the owner, they do everything they can in order to keep their customers satisfied.

## 6 DISCUSSION

### *6.1 Stumbling blocks in worker-tourists interaction*

The theoretical part of this thesis started with an explanation of intercultural communication means and what the common challenges in such an interaction are. It included the assumption that the interaction is analysed from one cultural perspective compared to another culture. In this thesis, the workers are Finnish, Finnish Sámi and French. Therefore, it is rather difficult to draw generalised conclusions of the challenges that they *all* face. That is important to bear in mind when analysing the results.

Barna (1994, in Bennett 1998) defines the most common stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. These include the assumption of similarities, nonverbal misinterpretation, preconceptions and stereotypes, the tendency to evaluate and high anxiety. These stumbling blocks were not clearly present in the interview data. The worker's suspicion that the customer is causing trouble on purpose may be caused by the tendency to evaluate (See Story A3 Tank and Story A4 Snowmobile driver in Chapter 5:49). Hall (1991, in Bennett 1998) advises people not to be judgmental when interacting with someone from different a culture. Yet, the worker's irritation is understandable considering the circumstances, especially after having pulled the same snowmobile out of the water for thirty times during one day. Secondly, the negative evaluation of the tourists' actions can be caused by the assumption of similarities in learning how to drive the snowmobile. Teaching someone who has grown up with snowmobiles to drive one does not necessarily a take long time. The workers may assume that the customers will learn as fast as locals even though they know that the customers may be seeing a snowmobile for the first time in their lives. The locals have the benefit of having experience of different weather conditions during the winter. It is important to realise that every weather

condition is a new driving situation for the tourist. It can be argued that one of the main reasons why the tourist kept falling off the track was the water on the ice. That is, because on the second day - with crusted snow - he did not fall any more. However, the data also shows that any evaluation or judgment is kept to oneself. That is rather obvious as the work involves customer service. There is no place for evaluation; the whole atmosphere in the company aims at making customers happy and satisfied.

The assumption of similarities (Barna, 1994, in Bennett 1998) seems to be causing challenges to many other communication situations as well. The workers reported that they are often surprised when something that is self-evident to them raises the questions with the tourists. In stories A1 “Everyman’s rights” (See Chapter 4:42) and A2 “Crazy Finns” (See Chapter 5:53) the worker assumed that the red cross signs would be recognised as signs for snowmobile tracks by the tourists. Two of the workers were amazed by the tourists need to be told how to dress for the cold weather. This is because, for the workers, dressing well for the cold comes naturally. One worker described how the tourists ask questions about everyday matters and about things that he would not even consider enquiring about because they were self-evident to him. Yet, the workers were able to handle the situation without causing bigger challenges in communication between them and the tourists. Afterwards, the misinterpretation of snowmobile track signs turned out to be humorous. Naturally we cannot tell how the Austrians or the Japanese really felt about it. They could have felt ashamed or embarrassed. The difficulty in interpreting the customers’ reaction lies with the different communicative styles of the workers and the customers. A communicative style refers to the choices made by the communicator concerning the emphasis on verbal and nonverbal communication and other behavioral aspects (Barnlund 1989, in Bennett 1998). It is also important to bear in mind that in addition to the choices in communicative style the message is interpreted according to communicators own cultural background. Dahl (2004) argues that nonverbal messages can cause misunderstanding or even communicational breakdown if the nonverbal message is interpreted differently than what the sender had intended. For

example in the Japanese culture, laughing can be a sign of embarrassment and confusion, whereas for the Finns and the French it is usually a positive sign.

The workers recognized that knowing several languages would be beneficial when communicating with tourists. Yet, not many misunderstandings due to language barriers were reported. Only the communication with Japanese was problematic due to the lack of English ability of Japanese tourists. A Japanese interpreter travelling with the group made the communication easier. Yet, those problems were not reported when discussing with Japanese who were able to speak English well. The laughing effect described by one worker (See Chapter 5:45), can be caused by embarrassment because Japanese really did not understand what was said. It could also be caused by the “testing” their language ability. Japanese agreeing with everything can be caused by their aim to maintain harmony and avoid the direct confrontation (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). Finnish people consider speaking one’s mind to be a characteristic of an honest person. These challenges in interpreting Japanese customers cause the Finns to suspect whether the Japanese are just being polite or whether they are being honest. The assumption that all the tourists are happy and satisfied because they smile and laugh can be misleading in case of Japanese tourists.

Any utterances concerning the guides travelling with tourists were placed under the language category because in most cases they acted as interpreters as well. Guides were considered both good and bad. The guide was considered to be helpful especially with the Japanese tourist groups as the presence of a Japanese speaking guide made communication easier. It can also be argued that the Japanese guide can serve as an interpreter between cultures, smoothing down possible clashes. The British guide, on the other hand, seemed to be making things more complicated for the workers. Interfering with the workers’ tasks is probably the main cause for workers’ irritation towards the guide. The division of work among workers is relatively clear and there is no overlapping. Everyone’s specific area of expertise is highly valued. There seems to be no interference with others’ work unless they ask for help.

Some of the Japanese tourists were reported having excellent Finnish language skills. It is not as common for Finnish people to learn to speak the language of the destination country just for a one week's travel's sake. Holidays are longer in Finland than in Japan. It also seems to be easier for Finn to get days off as described in story A 6 "Quitting the job" (See Chapter 5:52). Therefore, it seems that Japanese people prepare more for their holidays than their Finnish counterparts. Oedevald (2001) claims that strange and exotic place does not necessarily attract Japanese tourists, unless the place is made more familiar to them through some ritual or reference to its cultural importance. It can be argued that studying Finnish is a way for Japanese to make a strange place more familiar and therefore more attractive. The references to Inari area's cultural importance for the Japanese people can be the existing Sámi culture and reindeer herding (Asian cultures consider reindeers' horns having some health benefits) and Lapland being the home of the Santa Claus. The mysticism of the Northern lights may be considered having ritual importance.

Stereotyping is one of the stumbling blocks in intercultural communication as defined by Barna (1994, in Bennett 1998, Allport 1954). The preconception of Spanish people being late is clearly caused by stereotyping. It is relatively negative stereotyping when considering it from the Finnish point of view, in which being on time is considered as a virtue. Yet, this stereotyping of Spanish being late does not seem to make the workers to serve the Spanish any worse than other nationalities. It only makes the workers alter their schedules in a way that the Spanish are also able to enjoy the experience and that the other groups are not affected by this alteration. According to Bennett (1998), this awareness of cultural difference and ability to be sensible about it, is considered as intercultural sensitivity. This same behaviour is also considered as part of a profile of interculturally competent person (Canadian Service Institute 2000).

The last of the stumbling blocks is high anxiety (Barna 1994, in Bennett 1998). According to Gudykunst (2005), anxiety refers to uneasiness of not knowing what is going to happen. It is present in all communication with strangers and we have minimum and maximum thresholds for anxiety. There is a level of

anxiety between the minimum and maximum that is considered to be sufficient level for motivating communication with stranger. If anxiety is below the minimum, there is not enough interest in communication. In contrast, if it above maximum, we are unable to communicate successfully because we are too focused on the anxiety. There are several situations reported which can cause high anxiety in the workers such as when the dogs refused to run (See story A9 “Dogs didn’t want to go” in Chapter 5:50) or the snowmobile accident (See story A3 “Tank” in Chapter 5:49). Also tourists’ questions can cause anxiety if they are too personal in nature. Japanese laughing in occasions which are not considered humorous according to workers can cause anxiety among them. Yet the workers did not really report feeling uneasy. However, they did say that one has to deal with such situations. Dealing with these kinds of situations is considered to be a part of their work, something that they need to be able to handle. The only time that a worker described any negative or uneasy feelings was in the story A4 “Snowmobile driver”. The worker became really irritated and even started to suspect that the tourist was falling out of the track on purpose. It is impossible to tell whether the tourist just got tired and was not able to stay on track or whether he intended to fall off the track as he knew that the worker would help him. It is likely that the worker’s irritation was sensed by the tourist because he suggested asking the helicopter to pick him up. Despite the easy way out of the difficult situation offered by the tourist, the worker remained rather calm and was able to motivate the tourist to continue and the rest of the trip went well. All these occasions demand rather high threshold for anxiety from the workers. Therefore, based on the findings of this research, anxiety does not appear to be a stumbling block in tourist-worker intercultural communication. The reason for anxiety not being a stumbling block is most likely caused by the workers motivation to serve customers well.

Some communication challenges were anticipated between the workers and tourists due to presence of different cultures. All the national cultures which are represented among the workers and tourists vary in scoring of cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). Cultural dimensions refer to the different ways in



which cultures value things. The bigger the difference in scoring is, the more misunderstandings in intercultural communication are anticipated. Also Hall's (1990) concepts of high-context and low-context cultures and different perception of time between national cultures were assumed to cause challenges. The different perception of time (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997 and Hall 1990) was probably the main cause of challenges with Spanish tourists. One worker explained that Spanish customers are never on time for a scheduled activities. This causes delays for subsequent activities as well. The Spanish perception of time is more polychronic compared with the Finnish one which is more monochronic in nature. People with monochronic time perception concentrate on one task at the time, whereas people with a polychronic time perception can manage several tasks and people at the same time. In monochronic cultures time is linear and schedules are strictly followed. Polychronic cultures emphasizes on involvement with people meaning that one's manager at work is treated similar both at work and outside the working time. For polychronic cultures it is important complete the conversation with a friend or family member properly eventhough it would mean that they would be late for the scheduled activity. Monochronic Finns consider it important to be on time for scheduled meetings while for the Spanish, schedules are generally subordinate to relationships, and therefore appointments are more approximate. To a Finnish worker it can seem like the Spanish are not in a hurry to get to the activity, but for Spanish it can be more important to finish a conversation with a family member first. This can easily create negative stereotyping among Finnish workers due to the Finnish tendency to value punctuality as a virtue.

Hall's (1991, in Bennett 1998, Hall & Hall 1990) high and low-context cultures, Hofstede's (2005) individualism/collectivism and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) individualism/communitarianism provide some explanation for the workers difficulties in interpreting Japanese customers. A low context communicative style means that the interpretation of the message is mainly based on what is said and emphasis is on verbal communication. In high context cultures the message includes gestures, place, context, hierarchy and the situation. Relatively little emphasis is placed on what is actually said.

While Finnish workers expect direct feedback and direct communication in general, the Japanese style is indirect, it emphasizes nonverbal communication and aims for harmony. The Japanese style is hard for Finns to interpret because they are not used to reading nonverbal messages or paying attention to the context and people involved. Exception to mainstream Finns are the Sámi people, who according to Aikio (2007), use nonverbal communication more than verbal communication and therefore are skilful in interpreting nonverbal messages. Yet, the Sámi workers reported having similar problems interpreting the Japanese customers than the mainstream Finns. On the one hand, based on this finding one could easily draw conclusion that the Sámi people are not interpreting the nonverbal messaging any easier than the mainstream Finns. On the other hand, the challenges the Sámi workers face could be explained by different nonverbal communicative style that is the same nonverbal cues have different meaning in the Japanese and the Sámi cultures. Time perception of the Sámi people also has something in common with polychronic time perception that is the Spanish time perception. Based on the interview data though, the Sámi workers operate according to the mainstream Finnish punctuality rules. It can be argued that the case company's culture is mainly based on Finnish values.

Knowing more about the tourists' culture would help the workers understand things what now seem to puzzle them. However, it similarly important to know one's own culture. Hall (1991, in Bennett 1998) points out that one's own cultural behavior is usually the most difficult to identify. One worker described how the tourists ask questions about everyday matters and about things that he would not even consider enquiring about because they were self-evident to him. It would be useful for the workers to be able to see the Inari surroundings and the way of life in cold climate from the tourist's perspective. The more the tourists ask about the things that are self-evident to the locals, the more information the workers will gain about what might be amazing, surprising or interesting from the tourist's perspective. It also may reveal things about their own culture that are so natural to them that they had not thought about them before.

## ***6.2 Experience worker competences***

Some competences needed by the experience workers can be drawn from the data. Those include:

- Foreign language skills
- Being able to create a relaxed atmosphere by using situational comedy, for example
- Being able to interpret the tourists and situation and to adjust one's behaviour and activity plans accordingly
- Being able to tell stories about the nature, the history etc
- Being able to answer self-evident questions
- Being able to brief the customers about the activity
- Being able to act calmly in case of an accident in order to calm the tourists down
- Being able to handle the possible fear of the tourists towards the activity
- Motivating the tourists during the activity - even though it looks impossible - and encouraging them go through with the experience
- Talking with a positive tone even if things looks bad (the weather, for example)
- Enjoying what you do and being with people
- Being an expert in your own work such as husky driving, snowmobile driving or other experience producing
- Having the experience and knowledge of the nature and the climate of the Inari area
- Sticking to planned schedules and tracks unless it is necessary to alter them
- Being able to keep emotions to oneself
- Being able to work in a team
- Being aware of cultural differences
- Knowing intercultural communication (such as being polite across cultures)

- Being able to adjust to the long period of darkness

There could be others as well, but the above emerge from the data either from the workers' descriptions of the needed competences, from the analysis of the stories or from the researcher's observations. These competences have a lot of similarities with the profile of an interculturally competent person (Canadian Service Institute 2000). The following table illustrates how experience worker competences correspond with this profile. The experience workers competences are not an exact match with the competences listed in the profile, but rather close.

| Experience worker competences  | A profile of interculturally competent person |
|--|---|
| Being able to adjust to the long period of darkness  | Adaptation skills                             |
| Being able to keep emotions to oneself   | Attitude of modesty and respect               |
| Being aware of cultural differences  | Understanding of the concept of culture       |
| Being able to answer self-evident questions, Having the experience and knowledge of the nature and the climate, Being able to tell stories about the nature, history etc, Being able to interpret the tourists and situation and to adjust one's behavior and activity plans accordingly   | Knowledge of host country and culture         |
| Being able to create a relaxed atmosphere by using situational comedy, for example<br>Being able to handle the possible fear of the tourists towards the activity<br>Motivating the tourist during the activity - even though it looks impossible - and encouraging them go through the experience<br>Talking with a positive tone even if it looks bad (the weather, for example)<br>Being able to act calmly in case of an accident in order to calm the tourists down | Relationship-building                         |
| Being able to answer even self-evident questions   | Self-knowledge                                |
| Knowing intercultural communication (such as being polite across cultures), Foreign language skills, Being able to interpret the tourists and situation and to adjust one's behavior and activity plans accordingly  | Intercultural communication                   |
| Being able to work in a team, Sticking to planned schedules and tracks unless it is necessary to alter them  | Organizational skills                         |
| Enjoying what you do and being with people, Being an expert in your own work such as husky driving, snowmobile driving or other experience producing.  | Personal and professional commitment          |

All the competences in the Canadian profile correspond with the items in the experience worker's list to some extent. The adaptation skills in Canadian profile refer to adaptation of the worker to the host country. In this research, the host country refers to Finland and to the Inari area. Therefore, for the Finnish workers, this means knowledge of their own culture. The French workers' adaptation to Finland and especially the ability to cope with "kaamos" (the period of darkness) is necessary to some extent in order for them to work in Inari. On the other hand, a Finnish worker coming from southern Finland would face the same adjustment challenge with the period of darkness. Therefore, these experience worker competences are somewhat culture-general in Inari experience tourism context.

The experience worker competences list mostly consists of interactional and professional competences. The knowledge of intercultural communication as such is not emphasized by the workers, but is rather the researcher's remark based on the stumbling blocks the workers face. Workers emphasised that all tourists are treated as individuals. According to them, it is more important to adjust their behavior according to a person than according to what nationality they represent. However, according to the workers, it is good to consider some cultural behavior such as what is a polite way to talk to someone in a certain culture. It is important to bear in mind that nonverbal messages are not universal; for example smiling is not a sign of positive feeling in all cultures. Workers suspect that what they have interpreted may not be what is actually happening. For example, a worker was wondering whether the Japanese really are as polite as he had interpreted. The encounters between the workers and the tourists are rather superficial and brief. Nevertheless, in order to be able to interpret customers and situations and to adjust accordingly, intercultural sensitivity is required of the workers. According to Bennett (1986), intercultural sensitivity can be increased by training. He divides the learning process into six different levels: denial, defense, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the case company, further knowledge of the Japanese culture and communication style could be the next step in developing

the workers' intercultural sensitivity. That would also help them in the challenging communication situations with their Japanese customers.

### ***6.3 Multicultural teamwork***

Adler (2002) claims that one of the fundamentals in global firms is multiculturalism which refers to people from many cultures interacting regularly. This definition seems to be somewhat inadequate in the context of the case company. In terms of multiculturalism, the traditional definition is more accurate. That is, coexistence of culturally different but internally consistent groups within a certain place (Martikainen, Sintonen and Pitkänen 2006). The workers of the case company include Sámi, Finnish and French people. The company consists of two separate teams: a Finnish one and a French one. The two teams communicate mainly through the Finnish manager on work related issues. It can be argued that the Finnish team is not internally consistent due to having both Finnish and Sámi members.

On work-related matters, the Finnish workers state that they do not *interfere* when the French are working. The French, on the other hand, say that the Finnish *do not come to them* when they work and *they do not see each other* when working. The division of the work and the Finnish workers' respect for the French Husky expertise are probably the two major causes of the lack of interaction between the two teams.

Outside work, the French worker tries to "mix" with Finnish by hanging around where they work during his spare time. He also tries to learn some Finnish. Finnish workers, on the other hand, stated that they do not have much interaction with French workers. They state that if they happen to meet, they do talk together casually. They also describe that the French have their "little Paris" on the company's premises. It is typical for the Finnish not to get intensively involved with work colleagues outside of work. This is an example of a specific-oriented cultural behavior (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997). However, the French are also specific-oriented. Therefore, the French

worker's efforts to have more interaction with the Finnish outside of work could be driven by an interest in Finnish culture and language. It is also most likely an effort to socialise and make friends in general. There seems to be trust between the groups because the French workers are going to leave the dogs in Finland for the summer for the first time (earlier the dogs were taken back to France for the summer). Also, the French workers look after the place when the Finnish owners are on holidays.

The clear work divisions and relatively strict schedules are very typical of the monochronic Finnish culture (Hall & Hall 1990). The Finnish manager states that everything is so well practiced beforehand that there is no opportunity for anything to go wrong. This statement includes the expectation that everything is done exactly in the same way as it was done in the training. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), Finnish people are very universal, (i.e. rule-oriented) whereas French people are more particular (i.e. relationship-oriented). This difference could easily cause misunderstandings within the team. Based on the research data, one cannot draw conclusions about whether the Finnish manager is making the team to carefully practice the activities beforehand due to this Finnish-French cultural difference or in order to make sure that everything goes well or for the both reasons.

Holden (2002) claims that today's multicultural teamwork requires an ability to work across professional cultures. The case company is able to run the activities successfully without having much communication between the different professions such as husky drivers and snowmobile drivers. It is actually the owner who communicates across the professional cultures. According to Holden (2002), culture should be seen as an organisational resource in intercultural management. The case company has a lot of potential cultural resource which have not been taken into use yet. By increasing the interaction between the French and the Finnish workers, they could take advantage of this resource.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

This study provides information concerning the success factors in experience tourism in the Inari area. In the case company, success factors are careful planning and training, good cooperation between the teams, flexibility and experienced and professional workers. An indicative experience workers' competence list can be drawn from the findings of this research. The list consists of foreign language skills as well as interactional, professional and intercultural competences. These competences are in the line with earlier studies of intercultural competences. However, the actual intercultural aspects of the list are not emphasised as much as in earlier research. The artificial nature of the encounter between the worker and tourist contributes to the lack of emphasis on intercultural aspects. The major challenges the workers face when interacting with tourists are most likely caused by the assumption of the similarities and the difficulties with interpreting nonverbal communication. Based on these stumbling blocks and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, it can be argued that increasing the workers knowledge of intercultural communication and their customers' cultures could help them cope with these challenges.

The multicultural team is divided into two cultural groups: Finnish and French. The division of work is the main cause of this separation. In line with the company's culture, everyone has their own area of responsibility. These duties are highly respected and the interference with other worker's duties is not common, although help is provided when needed considering individual competences. The analysis of the multicultural team remains rather superficial due to the separate groups. This research does not provide comprehensive information about the competences or challenges facing the multicultural team



operating in the area of experience tourism. The success factors listed above also define the multicultural teamwork in the case company.

It is important to bear in mind that the stories and events discussed in this study are the most memorable ones, in other words events which do not occur on daily basis. Therefore, based on this research, one cannot draw conclusion about the everyday activities of the case company. The case company operates mainly by using Finnish cultural values and does not fully take advantage of the cultural resources available to it. Based on the findings of this research, multiculturalism in the Inari area does not seem to have much influence on the interaction and teamwork at the company in question.

### *7.1 Validation of data*

There are some methodological limitations concerning this study. First, the aim of gathering stories about the events was challenging. One of the interviews did not include a single story. It was difficult to convince the interviewees to tell stories. Maybe the design of the interview questions was insufficient. Especially the opening question “Could you tell me about the events with international tourists that were particularly successful/unsuccessful?” caused the interviewees to evaluate their work. Since the success or failure is extremely important to their work, the question seemed to raise the suspicion that I was evaluating their work and the quality of the service. That obviously was not the purpose of this study. I was able to obtain information about the competences by asking why the interviewees thought everything worked so well.

Secondly, the content analysis and especially coding was challenging. In order to make the results more readable and concrete, the utterances and stories were placed under a single category and a theme. It can be argued that they could fit under other themes or categories as well. This was considered in the Chapter 6, in which the results were evaluated against the theoretical frameworks. The categories and themes could be named differently. They could be integrated such as “Language” category could be a theme under “Communicative competences” or “Intercultural awareness”. However, it is clear that the

language abilities form a base enabling the other competences to be taken into usage.

Furthermore, a study with no cultural bias is impossible to conduct, but some methods can be used to diminish the influence of one's own culture on research analysis and interpretation. Cultural decentring (Hofftsede 2005, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009) is the best method for overcoming the cultural bias, that is, the influence of the researcher's own background and cultural point of view. Decentring is usually executed by involving several researchers from different cultural backgrounds into a study. In a single master's thesis conducted by one student, decentring is impossible to conduct. It is true that there is a danger of seeing something that is not there just because it usually occurs when Finnish and other cultures meet. I have tried to overcome this problem by letting my interview data speak for itself. I analyzed the phenomena from several perspectives in order to create a wider range of explanations for what may be happening. In this way, the readers are able to decide for themselves which explanation is most credible.

The scientific value of qualitative research is based on the sufficiency of the data, how widely the data is analyzed and how well the analysis can be evaluated. It is also important to describe the methods and procedures used in order to repeat the study if needed (Mäkelä 1990). There are limitations to the methodology used in this study, but the procedures taken are explained clearly. The sufficiency of the data is questionable because only four workers out of ten were interviewed. Especially the French workers' perspective is based on only one interviewee. Therefore, the findings cannot be said to represent all the French workers in the case company. Also the data analysis remains relatively insufficient. The multicultural teamwork is analyzed against one earlier study. In order to gain wider analysis of the matter, more of previously carried research should have been included in the analysis.

### ***7.2 Implications for further research***

This research focuses on the workers' perspective. Further research that investigates the customers' perspective is needed in order to gain more understanding of intercultural communication within the experience tourism business in the Inari area. Also, a wider sample of experience tourism companies in the Inari area would provide the data necessary for an analysis with generalisable results. Multicultural teamwork could be studied in its own right. Conducting a similar research on multicultural teams in other companies in the area would be needed in order to evaluate whether the clear work divisions based on national cultures is a common practice or a special feature of the case company. To conclude, this study provides a brief glance to the world of experience tourism workers and can serve as a starting point for further research on the topic. It provides some ideas of what experience tourism companies may face with international tourists and what kind of competences may be useful.

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