Interaction between Culture, Interculture and Everyday Culture and their impact on Foreign Language Classes in the Field of Tourism

Guidelines for the application of the SLEST - Model

Contents

Culture, Everyday Culture and Interculture in the SLEST Project

The SLEST project with its areas of culture and tourism is primarily not about research concerning the field of cultural tourism, but it is about the influence of specific dimensions on intercultural communications and intercultural competences of culture of the participating EU countries in the project, particularly of professionals who work in different fields in the tourism sector (see *Questionnaire for Employees in the Tourism, Transportation and Leisure Industries* at: http://www.slest-tourism.org/uk/marco.htm). Moreover, SLEST is not concerned with the analysis or application of a model which is about the solution of problems between "B2C" (Business to Customers), but between "B2B" (Business to Business). A broad analysis on behalf of the EU, which was made independently of the SLEST Project, confirms the results. In this analysis the authors found out the following:" *Regarding the question of core topics of vocational training in tourism, the most important of the named issues were sales training, intercultural communication and management, foreign languages, costumer orientation, new market forms, new media, social and personal competence and human resource management. The topics which focus more on theory as well as transnational and European topics e g know how in business law, were seen as less important. This can be understood as the wish of a more practical approach to vocational training in the tourism sector".[1]*

The results of the first phase of the project (a survey of professionals in the tourism sector of all participating countries) shaped the ongoing direction of the analysis and of the project. This means that the subject area "Culture, Everyday Culture and Interculture" is incorporated in the main parts of the project (e.g. Standardised Model). In this context an important conclusion was the recognition that the tourism industry as a service sector basically differs only in two main points:

1. Like every sector the tourism industry has its own terminology and idiomatic expressions, which are especially used by specialists.[2] This is a central aspect of the materials developed in the SLEST models.

2. These specialists (users) are influenced by and contribute to a creation of a (not only professional) cultural identity, a series of work-related cultural standards, which mix and/or overlap with standards or national cultural standards of the professionals.[3] The impact of a special terminology is also highlighted by respected consultants. Copywriter Armin Reins noticed that companies are prepared to pay "Hundreds of thousands for

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[1] Hans, F., Rupp, K.-J.: *Europäische Ergänzungsqualifizierung im Tourismusmanagement.2005, S. 15*
[2] Calvi, M.V., in : http://www.ub.es/filhis/culturele/turismo.html
[3] Thomas, A.: *Psychologie interkulturellen Handelns*, Göttingen/Bern/Toronto/Seattle 1996, 89 – 112.

'Corporate Identity' and 'Corporate Design'. But language, as the most important distinctive feature – is often forgotten".[4] This is the case in all branches of the economy, particularly in the service sector.

Cultural standards and employees in the Tourism Sector

If you are interested in research into the interrelation of Culture and Interculture within tourism, you have to find among the numerous definitions of culture the one, which best reflects the particularities of the relations in the tourism sector. From this perspective, we define culture as the

Totality of customs, beliefs, values and actions, which are shared by a group of people, who naturally take for granted the resulting expectations in each encounter. [5]

What does this mean for tourist activities and encounters in the business fields B2C and B2B, if tourists or representatives of two or more nationalities have to spend two weeks in a hotel (B2C and C2C) or if several qualified employees with different cultural backgrounds have to negotiate an international proposal (B2B)? Do the values of the various cultural systems collide if the hotel owner comes from the United Arab Emirates, the customers from Germany or England and the airline which has to be integrated is from France or Italy? Even if the customers are not (emotionally) that distant from each other, the risks of the success of the communication are present. In this situation the subdivision of *culture* within Culture, Everyday Culture and Interculture has to be considered.

This subdivision is based on so called cultural standards, i.e. socially and individually relevant norms (conscious well as unconscious), which affect the intra- and intercultural communication of every culture.[6] The necessity to learn to understand intercultural communication, evolves above all from situations in which misunderstandings and conflicts could be avoided through unintentional effects of individual communicative actions. Therefore, culture is understood as a condition and a consequence of enduring social interaction and for this reason as a human achievement, to

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[4] In C. Rattmann: Die Welt, 09.02.04

[5] Hansen, K.-P.: *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung.* Tübingen u. Basel, 1995, S. 9-16

[6] Thomas, A., Hrsg. 1993: *Kulturvergleichende Psychologie*, 380-381

understand this can help to recognise in advance the reactions of members of a group, organisation or society and to control actions and reactions.

As already defined by the term "Culture", every person identifies consciously as well as unconsciously with the specific norms of a specific culture. Cultural standards, also known as norms, help the members of a culture to orientate and to improve their perception, their thoughts, their evaluations and actions. Furthermore, they decide what can be seen as normal, typical or compulsory for the members of this culture. These standards which regulate and evaluate individual and foreign behaviour can be perceived in the interaction between two individuals belonging to the same cultural community.

Cultural standards are norms and rules which are seen as mandatory and used to judge and to perform actions. The members of a culture are provided with the orientation for their own behaviour and enable a decision in which behaviour appears to be normal, typical or still acceptable, or which behaviour must be rejected. One possibility to present cultural standards is the analysis of overlapping cultural situations in which unusual behaviour for participants results in a process of reflection about the individual and the foreign system of orientation. This leads to a deliberate focus on critical situations of interaction, so called *Critical Incidents*, which are also referred to as cultural assimilators – sensitisation and recognition instruments of a culture.[7] The examination of cultural standards should take a strong position in foreign language training while imparting knowledge about tourism. These (intra- and inter) cultural factors should also form a compulsory part of the exam regarding qualification and competence of professionals and qualified employees in the tourism sector.

The encounter among people becomes even more difficult, the more apart from each other the cultures are. You can compare culture with an iceberg[8], whose biggest part is not visible to the naked eye because it is under the surface of the water (See appendix 1). In interactive situations misunderstandings and conflicts often occur, but include at the same time the invisible trigger. This is often of great importance for the tourism sector: for tourists as well as employees. All areas which offer services in tourism will be confronted with colliding norms. The tourism industry with its international background should deal, in detail, with the topical interactions between Culture, Interculture and Everyday Culture as well as B2C and B2B communication.

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[7] Maletzke, G. : Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1996.

[8] Hall, E.T.: *Beyond Culture*, New York, 115; Hofstede, G.: *Lokales Denken, globales Handeln, Muenchen 1997, 400-403.*

What is acceptable or important for a middle European person, is often judged differently by members of other cultures. For example it would be a big mistake, if a group from an Arabic country spending a night in a Spanish restaurant is served a glass of Jerez at a reception. This and other well known mistakes are "invisible" aspects of a culture (in this example the consequence of religious beliefs), which should be avoided.

With the help of cultural standards, each person regulates and judges his/her own and foreign behaviour. The norms which are recognizable in a specific cultural community, are barely noticed by members of the same group. In contrast to this, there are recognizable activities, as soon as there are encounters between individuals or groups of different cultural communities. The recognition and classification of cultural standards regarding tourists is of primarily importance.

Intercultural communication and competence of professionals in the Tourism Sector

How do cultural standards in the tourism sector work? The observations which were made so far, enable the issue of additional or special examination regarding the encounter between individuals from different countries to be broached. The recognition of foreign cultural standards of individuals and groups is problematic for professionals, although it is very important. This is seen for example during a tour for international groups: On the one hand it would be easier for the well prepared tour guide of a multicultural group to establish and create positive communication with the hotel representative of another culture. On the other hand, even the best preparation is not a sufficient condition to guarantee successful communication, provided that there is preparation in an intercultural sense. The deeper the cultural dimensions are hidden in the Iceberg model, the most arguable are the chances of success. Dramatic and very different cultural standards of two business partners could cause the failure of the trip and the business, whereby the aspect of language can not be underestimated.

New insights in the field of intercultural research confirm the observation which was also made by the SLEST-Team, that the intended intercultural qualification of a person is connected to a series of competences, which are based on intercultural knowledge and abilities. Jürgen BOLTEN questions, whether intercultural competence can be seen as an independent competence. For him, intercultural competence "*is not an individual subsidiary competence next to individual, social,*

professional and strategic competence, but the ability to adapt these subsidiary competences of intracultural action on intercultural concepts of action."[9] From an socio–scientific and behaviouristic view, the general decision – making and responsibility of each individual typically contains an

- individual

- professional

- social and

- strategic subsidiary competence

which have to be existent intraculturally as a precondition for the acquisition of foreign – cultural particularities.[10]

Complemented by the knowledge of foreign languages and specific cultural knowledge, intercultural competence should be understood as individual, social, professional and strategic subsidiary competences which are intraculturally available, adapted and transferred in their combination with intercultural contexts.

To summarise, the difference between general and intercultural decision-making and responsibility lies in the quality of the particular insights into central cultural standards[11] of the individual culture and the foreign culture. In this connection, Bolten talks about subsidiary competences of each individual (approx. 20), which enable the acquisition and application of intercultural competences with the help of foreign language knowledge only because of existing intracultural competences.[12]

From this perspective, two consequences become apparent:

a) Intercultural communication will be successful among employees of the tourism sector, if they acquire adequate oral and written language skills (skills, idioms, specialist terminology, pronunciation, intonation) and

b) If they develop an adequate intra- and intercultural sensibility and hence intercultural competence which is necessary for the dealing with their professional and personal tasks. At the same time it is important to develop

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[9] Bolten, Interkulturelle Kompetenz, 2003, 87.

[10] Bolten, 2003, 86

[11] Alexander Thomas, Kulturstandards in der internationalen Begegnung, 1993, 55-71

[12] Bolten, 2003, 85-86

geographical knowledge about the region of the communication partners as well as their background and the wider framework of the individual and the foreign culture.

The following systematisation of the proposed competences should provide users of the SLEST Models with an overview of the interlinked qualifications, which should eventually guarantee successful intercultural communication between professionals within the tourism sector.

Intercultural competence of qualified employees in the tourism sector according to the SLEST-Model - Interacting factors

(Application of Can-do Statements in the SLEST-Model regarding cultural competence)

intercultural competence[13]		professional competence	strategic competence	social competence	individual competence
cultural knowledge: • general geographic knowledge • specialised knowledge about politics • economy, • history • religion general knowledge knowledge about cultural standards, everyday culture and business culture moral concepts	*foreign and specific language knowledge[1415]* basic competences • reading • comprehension • speaking • translation • general vocabulary specialised terminology grammatical knowledge	*specialised knowledge (based on mother tongue):* • business management • knowledge (also international • special knowledge of the tourism sector: • hotel • travel business • travel agency • tourism organisation • transport company	*methodical competence (based on mother tongue):* • analytic conceptional thinking • organisational skills • problem solving competence • decision- making authority • purposefulness • knowledge management • improvisation skills	*(based on mother tongue):* • capacity for teamwork • flexibilty • can do attitude • communication skills • empathy • tolerance • respect • leadership skills	*personality (based on mother tongue):* • self-motivation • role • self-organisational skills • self-control • optimistic attitude • willingness to learn • self critiscm and sovereignity • polyzentrism • openness • acceptance • psychological capacity
culture- specific (extra) competences		intracultural competences			
intercultural decision making and responsibility: productive application of intra- and extra cultural competences					
encouragement through experiences					
jobrelated work placement		tandem partner programs			
work placement in a foreign country		long and intensive travels abroad			
other work experiencs		intercultural trainings (off the job or on the job)			
studying abroad		participation in social projects abroad			
		looking after foreign visitors			

Juárez/Huebert/Lotzmann,3 2006

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[13] For a descriptive list of cultural determinants see appendix 1 – 3 as well as the examples of the SLEST exam tasks on the following pages (13 - 16)

[14] The SLEST – Model provides in dependence on the Common European Framework for languages (CEF) a classification of three levels (B1,B2 and C1), which include detailed can-do descriptors for the language competences reading, writing, listening/speaking and translation.

[15] Lotzmann, Katrin: *Leitfaden zur Förderung Interkultureller Kompetenzen von Tourismusstudenten*; Diplomarbeit (Betreuer Juárez, Antonio), Heilbronn, Juli 2006.

Can successful intercultural actions be trained?

Successful intercultural action is given, if

1. there is a productive co-operation with mutual advantages with people of other cultures
2. individual satisfaction is guaranteed
3. it is possible to establish sustainable relationships with people belonging to other cultures.

Intercultural competence is expressed by

- Becoming aware of the individual cultural standards
- Understanding other cultural standards
- The ability to switch perspectives ("to perceive oneself from outside")
- The ability to cope with ambiguous situations (ambiguity- tolerance)
- Interest in others
- Recognition and reduction of prejudices.

Intercultural competence exists as a general concept as well as a specific one, if it is underlined with concrete knowledge about a particular culture. This knowledge is accessible within academic classes and is most suitably situated in language classes, because *"language and culture interact and co-relate, the language knowledge about the highlighted culture has to include more than just issues of politeness in order to understand this specific culture"*.[16] In the SLEST- Project, important intercultural situations in the business world of professionals in the tourism sector were worked out, which fill the training units, but also include ideas and starting points for exams. The following chart includes some intercultural tasks, which are shown on two different levels in the first and in the second foreign language. These tasks could be used directly within the training but also for the assessment of already existing knowledge before the beginning of the lesson.

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[16] Bolten, 85

Examples for intercultural tasks

Examples for situation no.1		Example of tasks General conceptual formulation		Example of tasks conceptual formulation instancing Germany	
		First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)	First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)
intercultural aspects	speaking with colleagues (greetings)	Which greeting is usual in a business situation between persons with the same status in a given country? (open question)	Which greeting is usual in a business situation between persons with the same status in a given country? (choose one from the given alternatives)	You have worked in a German travel agency for three days, how do you greet your colleagues? - with handshake - with a kiss on the cheek - only orally, e.g. Hello! Good Morning! - kiss on the hand	

Examples for situation no.2		Example of tasks General conceptual formulation		Example of tasks conceptual formulation instancing Germany	
		First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)	First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)
intercultural aspects	Speaking about business matters at a business lunch	When would be the right moment to talk about business in your country? - Before the meal or at the very beginning of the meeting - During the meal - After the meal		-It would be best before the meal, due to the fact that in Germany it is impolite to talk while eating about business. -During the meal, because business is the reason for the meal and can therefore be in the foreground - Preferably after the meal. The associate is full and therefore more agreeable.	

Examples for situation no. 3		Example of tasks General conceptual formulation		Example of tasks conceptual formulation instancing Germany	
		First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)	First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)
Intercultural aspects	Negotiation (beginning)			Your hotel in Mallorca would like to sign an exclusive contract with TUI for a whole year with a guaranteed room price of 50,- Euro per night. TUI only wants to guarantee the price for the high season or the whole year for 35,- Euro per night. How would you begin the negotiation in this case? Plan the first 10 minutes of the meeting.	
Intercultural aspects	negotiation (final phase)	Is it possible in your country to re-enter the negotiation after signing the contracts? -Impossible! After signing the contract is secure. -You should be able to as every contract is only the basis for anew negotiation. -If you do not want to leave a negative impression, you would negotiate every important point before you sign the contract.			

Examples for situation no. 4,5		Example of tasks General conceptual formulation		Example of tasks conceptual formulation instancing Germany	
		First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)	First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)
intercultural aspects	Dealing with complaints	You are not contented with the meal in a restaurant. How would you complain about? - Directly to the waiter/waitress - You ask for the manager - Later, in writing -			
	How to deal with high- and low- context cultures	What is more important to the people in your country during a conversation? - WHAT do you say? (content) - HOW do you say it? (emotional background)			

Examples for situation no. 6		Example of tasks General conceptual formulation		Example of tasks conceptual formulation instancing Germany	
		First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)	First foreign language: primary level (C1)	Second foreign language: secondary level (B2)
Intercultural aspects	Different rituals during negotiations and during the establishment of international contacts according to national, regional and local standards.			After the presentation of your hotel to a German travel business you are told:" It sounds interesting, we will call you within the next days." How would you interpret the message? - It is only a polite way of saying: Sorry, we are not interested. - Please wait a few days and we tell you our decision via phone. - There will not be a call, forget it!	

Can successfully intercultural actions be examined?

From the examination examples given it is clear that intercultural situations can not be examined in isolation from other parts of the business. As already seen in the Iceberg Model, cultural aspects are part of each business or private meeting and influence communication partners of other cultures depending on the success of the usage of intercultural competences, positively or negatively, if the intercultural sensibility and/or language knowledge is not given or fail. The fact that intercultural aspects play an important role in every business contact leads directly to the SLEST models which enable the users to recognise the co-relation of intercultural competences subdivided in three levels for the professionals who have to be examined.

Standardised can-do statements for the identification of intercultural competences according to the SLEST - Model[17]

Abilities and competences in intercultural communication	Competence levels according to the SLEST standards		
	Low competence:	**Intermediate competence:**	**High competence:**
Special competence a): • **Openess** • **Tolerance** • **Flexibility** • **Willingness to accept ambiguity** **…** **Special competence b):** • **Knowledge acquisition** • **Knowledge management** • **Empathy** • **…** **Special competence c):** • **Adaptability** • **Communication - consciuos** • **Flexibility of behaviour** • **…** **For a specification of the special competences see appendix 1 -3.**	• can interact with persons from other cultures in simple situations • can interpret and learn from new situations, but he/she does not have the experience to develop a specific method for the general handling of intercultural situations • can react to situations rather than preparing in advance for them • can be tolerant towards other moral concepts, customs and conventions, even if they are, in his/her opinion, suprising or strange and accepts them or not.	• can recognise simple co-relations in intercultural meetings, which he/she seen as important because of his/her experience or training He/she has a mental checklist of these situations, which seem likely to occur to them and learns how to cope He/she is able to prepare better for the demands of unusual situations and react to them • Can recognise patterns more easily (within the already made experiences) and draw conclusions independently • can react to differences more easily and neutrally and agree or disagree	• Can apply competence intiutively which he developed in the second competence level • Can prepare for situations or meetings and can use knowledge, judgement and competences correctly • Has a wide range of strategies to deal with differing ideals, morals and customs within one intercultural group • Can accept differing world views of people and also put him/herself in another's place • Can avoid behaviour which is unacceptable for the dialogue partner • Can mediate by occuring difficulties and help descreetly other members of the group by mutual agreement • He/she is stabilised in his/her position that he/she is able to represent his/her point of view politely and is respectful towards other point of views

Juárez / Huebert, 2006

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[17] see Portfolio Interkultureller Kompetenz Assessment (INCA): Assessorenhandbuch, 12-13. http://www.incaproject.org

Situations from the Standardised Model – An example for a seminar unit[18]

Part 1: Introduction - the "Iceberg-Concept of Culture"as a game (see Appendix 1).

Time needed: 30 minutes

Material: a poster with an iceberg, Post-It notes with phrases written on them

Objective: active examination of the Iceberg - Concept

Course of action: Each participant received a few Post It notes, which contain general characteristics of cultures. The participants were asked to stick them on the drawing of the Iceberg (on flipchart) above or under the water surface.

Debriefing: Why did you position the note on this part of the Iceberg? (The participants are brought interactively closer to the Iceberg - Model with this activity.)

Working language: B2 English, C1 another language of the SLEST - Project

Helpful Terms: theatre, classical music, pop music, folk dance, literature, painting, games, kitchen, exposure to money, beauty ideal, exposure to children, family structure, esoteric, relation to animals, relationship line manager – employee, definition of sin, flirtation, perception of law, motivation of work, characteristics of leadership, pace of work, group dynamics, idea of tidiness, dealing with minorities, concept of illness, strategies to solve problems, strength of social classes, eye contact; definition of insanity, body language, concept of friendship, personal space, reception of past and future, structure of conversation

Version 1: two groups which work independently, combined debriefing.

Part 2: Putting Business Negotiations into Practice

Time needed: 60 minutes

Level B2: German, Italian and two cultural areas

Situation: negotiations between hotel manager (e.g. from Italy) and representative of a travel agency (e.g. from Germany). The objective is that the hotel is featured in the Travel Agency Catalogue.

Level C1: German, English, Spanish and three cultural areas

Situation: negotiations between hotel manager (e.g. from Spain) and representative of a travel agency (e.g. from Germany or England). The objective is that the hotel is featured in the Travel Agency Catalogue.

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[18] **(see Appendix 1-3)**

Task: During business negotiations: think about the reception and comparison of two (B2) or three (C1) cultural areas as well as summary of culture standards (see appendix 2) and the application of cultural - assimilators (see Appendix 3) regarding

   a) perception of time

   b) style of communication

   c) style of conversation

   d) nonverbal communication forms

   e) other general culture dimensions (e.g. style of action, personal vs. fact orientation)

Appendix 1   The Iceberg Concept of Culture

The Iceberg Concept of Culture
Like an iceberg, nine-tenths of culture is below the surface.

Surface Culture
Above sea level
Emotional load: relatively low

food ▪ dress ▪ music ▪
visual arts ▪ drama ▪ crafts
dance ▪ literature ▪ language
celebrations ▪ games

Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules
Partially below sea level
Emotional load: very high

Unconscious Rules
Completely below sea level
Emotional load: intense

courtesy ▪ contextual conversational patterns ▪ concept of time
personal space ▪ rules of conduct ▪ facial expressions
nonverbal communication ▪ body language ▪ touching ▪ eye contact
patterns of handling emotions ▪ notions of modesty ▪ concept of beauty
courtship practices ▪ relationships to animals ▪ notions of leadership
tempo of work ▪ concepts of food ▪ ideals of childrearing
theory of disease ▪ social interaction rate ▪ nature of friendships
tone of voice ▪ attitudes toward elders ▪ concept of cleanliness
notions of adolescence ▪ patterns of group decision-making
definition of insanity ▪ preference for competition or cooperation
tolerance of physical pain ▪ concept of "self" ▪ concept of past and future
definition of obscenity ▪ attitudes toward dependents ▪ problem-solving
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

Indiana Department of Education ▪ Language Minority and Migrant Programs ▪ www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp

The visible and invisible dimensions of a culture contribute to the development and specification of cultural standards, which vary in each cultural group. They appear in critical situations at encounters between persons of different culture ("critical incidents").

Appendix 2
Examples of cultural standards (example Germany) which could be relevant in an exam in the field "Culture, Everyday Culture and Interculture".

(central) cultural standards	in every-day culture (private and business)
What is typical	**German**
importance of standards in the orientation system and – values: subject/object orientation	only interested in the task competent insensitive,cold in conversations: direct! goal- orientated, even arrogant reason - orientated not generous with elusive pleasures
importance and influence of structures and norms	organised, systematical bureaucratic inflexible do not trust the business partner
importance of time planning	like plans always in a hurry punctual like to plan (even in private life) not spontaneous panic at disturbances
importance of norm orientated, internalised sense of responsibility	reliable stick rigidly to the rules fussy, efficient, accurate disciplined with oneself severe with others dogmatic authoritarian environmentally conscious calculable, boring
importance of direct/indirect communication style	say, what they think honest undiplomatic do not read between the lines like to discuss and to argue often insulting and threatening without humor
importance of separation of life areas	separate job and private life, role and person not open for personal contacts reserved firm, unemotional, unpersonal correct professional Using the polite form is normal Holiday- and leisure - orientated
importance of stable self assurance	know what they want act without self doubt are convinced by themselves and their actions

(Juárez / Huebert, 2005)

To understand the intention of a person you have to understand the context in which actions take place. Culture contributes to this and therefore it is very important to have knowledge about a particular culture, before judging the motivation of another person. In different cultures associations vary about what is right and acceptable behaviour, this often leads to the idea that the behaviour of

people from a foreign culture in unacceptable. Usual reactions to confrontations in well known or new contexts are discomfort regarding different cultural backgrounds (which lead to prejudices), negative labeling (stereotypes) and the rejection of contacts to other cultures (discrimination).

"Somewhere in Germany":

"Interculture at its best…"

Appendix 3

Suggestions for a seminar unit: Use of cultural - assimilators in a training seminar for professionials in the Tourism Sector

Intercultural training programmes have the objective that participants learn to make similar or the same perceptions and judgements about persons of other cultures, as these persons would do themselves.

Participants receive feedback and they start to understand a different subjective culture and to select the right answers. The programme is a success, if somebody is able to replace his/her initial prejudices with new ones.

Culture General vs. Culture Specific Training

Culture specific Assimilators: This training is very helpful if the target country which the person will visit is known. But because they are very specific, they are only useful for a small target group. Furthermore, there are only a few specific assimilators published and are hard to find.

Culture general assimilators: They assumed that intercultural experiences have similar effects on people e.g. feelings of being uprooted, difficulties to socialize in the new country etc. In this training participants are prepared for experiences which they will definitely make, *independently in which country they travel.*

The culture general assimilators can not be a complete substitute for specific information about the target culture. They have at least five advantages. They
1) are helpful if there is no a culture – specific training available
2) offer a good base (input of ideas), to design a culture - specific training for a specific country
3) are an easy opportunity to handle a lot of information with good examples
4) to encourage people who work as intercultural trainers, to develop a global, multi-cultural view
5) are a useful didactic medium to teach students in intercultural psychology, ethnology

Instruments for the recording and building of culture general assimilators (via pictures, texts, accustic media, role plays and situations)

Instruments for analyzing the behaviour of people from foreign cultural areas and techniques for intercultural communication[19]

Identity
Identity defines itself either as more or totally collectivist or individual
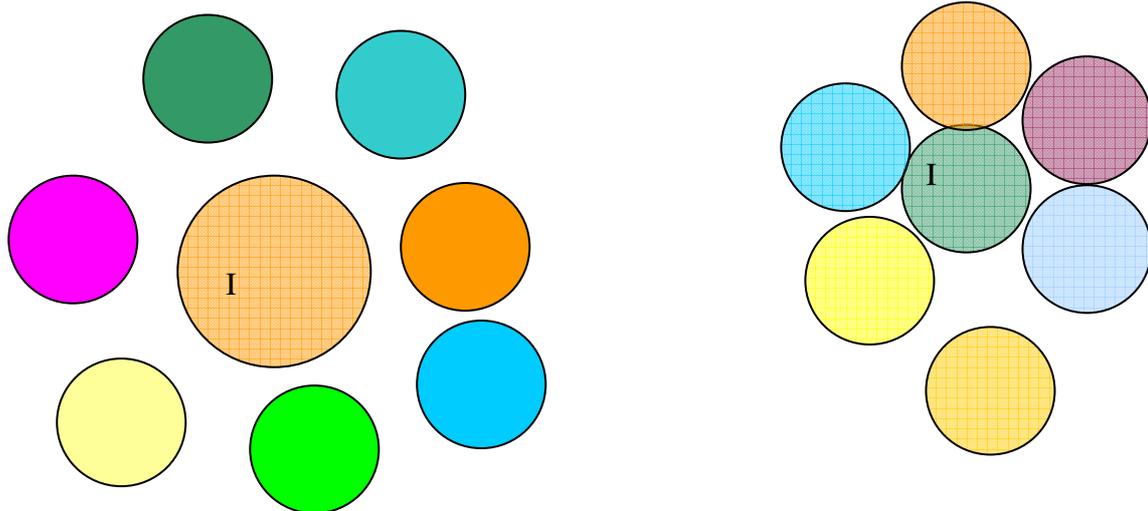
The collectivist identity understands the "I" as part of a group , the individual identity interprets fellow human beings as independent third party, which lead to different list of values.

individual identity	collectivist identity
independence	solidarity
self-realisation	harmony
personal opinion	loyality
low-context communication	high-context-communication
object orientation	subject orientation
guilt	shame
competition	co-operation

From a statistical perspective, the predominant number of cultures is "collectivist".

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[19] Breternitz G., 2003

Style of action

- depends on the specific culture and can be subject or object oriented.
- The styles of actions create a certain impression, which is described as followed:

object orientation	subject orientation
demure serious joyless effective	intrusive curious can not keep a distance open minded

In situations of stress negative evaluations, in relaxed situations e.g. in holidays, outweigh more positive evaluations. An objective "Good or Bad" does not exist.

Style of communication

reflects the identity

"low context" communication	"high context" communication
• most information is expressed explicitly • direct phrasing, low ambiguity • conflict can be separated from the person • evasive statements or to say something in a roundabout way is seen as an insult • relatively direct confrontation should lead to a fast end of the conflict • conflicts are: direct, verbally explicit, instrumental logical – face to face • most information is included in the physical context of a person (insider vs. outsider) • direct, low ambiguity	• most information is included in the physical context of a person • indirect phrasing • litigation is closely connected to the parties in conflict • confrontation means a threat of the individual person and seen as a rude offence • instead of direct confrontation there is an accurately calculated grade of vagueness and paraphrasing in the foreground • conflicts are indirect, tactful, affective – intuitive / mediating in conflicts • big difference between insider vs. outsider • indirect, high ambiguity

Conversation style

- the specific distance in a conversation is a cultural difference
- tone pitch and intonation are in different languages differently documented (not every tirade is an abuse
- conversations in consultancy situations immediately release tension, if it is clear that embarrassing or explosive situations are not passed on
- the course of conversation is culturally defined, which includes the meaning of silence, cultural conditioned breaks have to be followed, to avoid monologue situations, but breaks should not be too long, to avoid to cut off the conversation
- the speaking (time) of German speakers overlaps for a few moments, French people tend to cut each other off whereas in great Britain there should be a short break between the speaking phases of the conversation participants
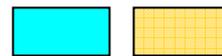
Examples of conversations in three different countries
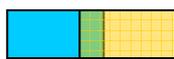
Germany	France	England

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal signals create impressions about the communication partner!

visual	tactile	olfactory	auditory
mimic	distance	body scents	volume
gesture	tangency	perfume	tempo
eye contact		scents in general	tone pitch
habits, e.g. clothes			

The evaluation of the communication partner decides about the effect of the action.

General culture dimensions

are tools of thoughts and have to be differentiated constantly:

identity	individuality	or	collectivism
power distance	closeness	or	distance
concept of time	monochrone	or	polychrone
insecurity avoidance	high	or	low
communication style	„high context"	or	„low context"
social orientation	co-operation	or	competition
style of action	subject orientation	or	object orientation
relation human being - environment	harmony	or	control
attitude to personal space	privacy	or	public sphere
styles of thinking	deductive	or	inductive
	linear	or	systematic
gender roles	diffuse	or	differentiated
written contracts are	always negotiable	or	unalterable rule

Social norms decide which emotions at what time have to be shown. For example, laughter: Cheerful laughter only occurs with the participation of the eyes, laughter in an unsuccessful situation, e.g. somebody drops a glass, is used in Asia to relax an embarrassing situation, whereas this is seen in Europe as schadenfreude, or even silliness.

Attention: It is quasi impossible to let go of individual behaviour pattern, you can only react consciously or try to foresee the foreign behaviour pattern.

The SPATEN Model[20]

Practical support with solutions regarding potential misunderstandings in intercultural encounters. The SPATEN model (derived from a German acronym) is a recommendable tool in connection with the mentioned cultural dimensions for the analysing and problem solving in intercultural overlapping situations:

- Stop the automatic process of judging
- Define what is irritating
- Analyse individual and situational conditions
- Recognise individual cultural standards
- Use the knowledge about individual and foreign cultural standards

The appointment of a mediator is recommendable for the solution of intercultural conflicts, whose credibility and benevolence is recognised by both sides.

Intercultural competence exists as a general aspect as well as a specific intercultural competence, if it is backed up with concrete knowledge about a specific culture.

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[20]*Thomas, A.,2003*

- **Appendix 4:**

Akademie für Information und Management Heilbronn–Franken gGmbH

Testing the SLEST-Model in the IHK-Akademie Heilbronn

SLEST-Tourism Simulation: Seminar for foreign students

Nine partner organisations from seven European countries representing the educational field as well as practical operations of the tourism sector are working on a draft of a standardised model for language exams in the field of tourism. SLEST aims to introduce international standards for foreign language education of professionals in the tourism sector on a European level. Detailed SLEST teaching modules enable teachers to impart contents optimally and enable students to learn effectively, even without the permanent support of teachers, e.g. in the form of simulations.

Objective of the seminar

In the *business simulation* course*,* business situations in the tourism sector are simulated. The participants represent companies like tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, airlines or incoming agency. So they learn, as managers of a company, tasks according to their positions to cope orally and in written form, to prepare offers, make decisions and lead negotiations. In the course authentic situations are integrated with original working material from the tourism sector, to provide participants with an insight in their future career and to communicate appropriate behaviour in a German - speaking area.

The participants acquire necessary tools for their business life and get an impression of economic, tourism focused language. In the central meeting of the simulation, the teams introduce their written documents for examination. Oral skills are presented and examined in the final meeting in an interactive co-operation of all participating „companies". If the exam is passed, the participants get the European SLEST certificate according to the guidelines of the Common European Framework (CEF).

Participants

This language seminar is designed for foreign students with a good previous knowledge (B2 – C1 according to CEF), who want to extend their language skills with business and tourism vocabulary. The participants train business skills like telephoning, negotiating and presenting intensively.

Seminar content

- introduction to specialist tourism terminology
- standard procedures of business transactions: preparing inquiries/offers, clarification of business conditions, estimation, placing of orders, cancellation
- preparation of all-inclusive tours and individual travel components
- designing a catalogue
- make business calls
- business motivated contacts: presentation of offers, reservations, negotiations
- written and oral communication between participants of a service chain
- preparation and conduct of meetings
- organisational structure of the tourism industry
- business- and product presentations
- language fields of tourism
- intercultural aspects and perspectives of industrial Germany

Method

The lessons are participant-orientated, whereas written and spoken language is trained intensively. The course is as far as possible held in the foreign language German. The business teams which were created in the simulation have to take care of individual tasks with the help of directions from tutors and stay in constant simulation with other teams. Cultural dimensions, cultural standards and assimilators are instruments of the development of the participants' intercultural competence and are analysed in each meeting and examined.

Tutors: **Prof. Dr. Antonio Juárez, Doz. Victoria Hübert**

Duration: **5 seminar days (30 lessons)**

Dates: **07.04., 05.05., 12.05. (written exam), 19.05., 26.05(oral exam)**
(Fridays from 16:00 – 21:00 h)

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