

INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

Band 8



Jutta Berninghausen | Connie Gunderson | Eva Kammler
Ulrich Kühnen | Renate Schönhagen

LOST IN TRANSNATION

Towards an Intercultural Dimension on Campus

Collaboration and Current Developments

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Lost in Transnation

Towards an Intercultural Dimension on Campus



Jutta Berninghausen, Connie Gunderson,
Eva Kammler, Ulrich Kühnen and Renate Schönhagen, (Eds.)

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Preface

Christian Bode

From „Translation“ to „Transnation“: no pun intended?

“Lost in Transnation” – the title of both this publication and the corresponding conference held in Bremen in 2008 is still another variation on the title of the 2003 Sofia Coppola movie “Lost in Translation”. In a poetic and somewhat melancholy manner, this film, featuring Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, tells the story of two American strangers very different in almost every regard - age, sex and their respective outlook on life - making friends during a short and somewhat confusing stay at a Tokyo hotel. Having obtained enthusiastic reactions from critics all over the world, this movie conveys, in a beautifully intriguing manner, that finding ourselves in a decisively strange environment may trigger our need to escape the prison of our own skulls and to move resolutely towards the understanding of others.

This takes us right to the heart of our subject: This publication is all about the dialectics of strangeness and familiarity, of curiosity and fear, of understanding and misunderstandings. It explores the conditions for successful or failing communication in the context of the international classroom. The reader will find out a lot about how the learning cultures he or she grew up with are no longer to be taken for granted. There is some evidence that they are no longer appropriate to a campus deeply marked by the diversity and mobility of its student population. Teaching and learning efficiently, in the context of the international campus, needs a patient and serious effort of questioning and redefining goals, methods and messages in order to proceed to a new quality of mutual understanding.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has supported this remarkable initiative very happily. We strongly believe that developing strategies for a better integration of international students into the German scholarly and campus culture is one of the most important challenges our institutions of higher education are facing. It is well known – and obvious from daily experience - that the number of students from abroad has risen considerably over the past decade. More than 230,000

international students in 2008, 65% more than only thirteen years ago, rank us third, along with our French neighbours, among the host countries for international students. I am proud to say that this development is, to some extent, due to the activities of our institution. Over the past fifty years, DAAD has been actively promoting international exchange, developing new mobility schemes and, more recently, helping the German institutions of higher education to be ever more present on the global education market. In order to promote the integration of international students, DAAD has also launched a series of programmes, the most well-known among them being the so-called STIBET, PROFIS and PROFIN programmes. Needless to say that our partner number one in this field are the international offices.

So much for the good news. However, the influx of bright students from all over the world into Germany has been slowing down recently. Certainly, there are various reasons for this development many of which are well beyond our realm of influence. Still, this stagnation may have something to do with the chronically low success rates of our international students. Intelligent guess (there are no reliable figures) tells us that more than 50% of all students from abroad never take a degree from a German institution of higher education. Even considering that a good percentage of them never intended to do so in the first place, this number is far too high – both from the individual and from the institutional point of view. This takes us back to the goals of the initiative documented in this publication. Very likely, the number of successful international students can be raised most efficiently exactly by the type of reflections and measures this conference and this book stand for. The strive for more integration, communication, openness and a new academic culture are the key elements towards higher satisfaction and performance of our international students. May this publication be widely read, discussed and may its messages be carried on, to the advantage of our students from abroad and of all members of our scientific community.

Dr. Christian Bode

Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service

Introduction

Jutta Berninghausen, Connie Gunderson,
Eva Kammler, Ulrich Kühnen, Renate Schönhagen

Lost in Transnation

– Towards a new cultural quality on campus –

To an increasing extent, international students are taking part in university campus-life. However, international officers, lecturers and international students find themselves frequently confronted with questions, misunderstandings and failures showing that, in spite of all positive experiences, a new quality of academic life and work has not yet been developed.

The city of Bremen has always had a cosmopolitan background through its long maritime history and international trade. Bremen is a city with a very old tradition in international exchange. The strong focus on international relations is valid until today. Also in the sector of higher education Bremen has proved to be an international city, attractive for international students. A recent study revealed that Bremen has (together with Saarland) the highest proportion of international university graduates, namely 17%, while the average of Germany lies at only 12% (Heublein, et al, 2007, p. 16).

Three major institutions of higher education in the city of Bremen; the University of Bremen, the Bremen University of Applied Science and the Jacobs University are equally aware of the problems and chances which international educational mobility provides for the development of their institutions. This is why, in 2008, we jointly organised a conference on which this book is based.

As we face the past, it seems to us that we are presently experiencing a truly paradigmatic change. We are aware that our understanding of scholarly work and science claims to be committed to finding objective truth and is thus universal. And we know that, in the past, international research networking has offered valid evidence for a successful university. Thus, one could think that we have been on the right track all along.

However, in a process of globalization, both economic development and education are driving forces in the advancement of economies. Thus, we are confronted with a new dimension and challenge. The universal scientific values may still hold worldwide, but the specific cultural setting in which students and scholars strive to reach these values undoubtedly influence ways of learning and researching. The student and the researcher, as subjects, have their culturally defined ways of reaching out to an identified scholarly object.

Due to increased international mobility, we were frequently confronted with a somewhat ambiguous perception of international scholars and students. For quite some time, we have perceived them as culturally enriching people. None the less, as students, they needed to be integrated into a support system, because we sensed some kind of deficit. Certainly, it is not an intellectual deficit, but a social- communicative or a methodological deficit. Integration, however, was perceived as a one-way road of adjustment to the given standards. Under a global perspective, one could assume that our view on scholarly matters has had a culturally Eurocentric bias. If this would be the case, how could we transform our assumptions on teaching and learning?

It seems to us that institutions of higher education are about to leave a Eurocentric viewpoint. Our understanding of an intercultural dimension in education forces us to leave one-way roads and focus on intercultural processes of development in teaching, learning and researching, in order to reach a new level of quality on campus.

The universities in Bremen (University of Bremen, Bremen University of Applied Sciences, Jacobs University) organized a conference sponsored by DAAD, Wolfgang-Ritter-Stiftung and the Bremen International Graduate School for the Social Sciences (BIGSSS; Thematic Field IV „Attitude Formation, Value Change, and Intercultural Communication. The conference took place from October 22nd - 23rd, 2008, and was aimed at developing strategies for improved integration of international students into the German scholarly and campus culture. Our intention was to enhance conditions and develop training and support structures to enable interOur intention was to enhance conditions and develop training and support structures to enable international students to perform success-

fully. Moreover, the conference was organized to increase knowledge transfer, and to achieve a more efficient networking of professionals working with and for international students.

Therefore, in a unique attempt to establish a multi-perspective approach, we invited several target groups: Professionals in International Offices, experts of Intercultural Studies, and international researchers and students. Conference speakers as well as participants travelled to Bremen from Europe, North America, China, India and Cameroon, so that very diverse cultures could come together. This gave us the opportunity not only to talk about diverse campus cultures, but to do this in a multicultural setting. The conference was product-oriented and focused on problem solving. Therefore, it covered a broad range of already existing and successfully operating projects.

On the first day, keynote presentations provided a theoretical framework. They focused on learning beliefs and intercultural communication on campus, how culture shapes basic beliefs about learning and students' learning behaviour. Learning beliefs encompass often implicit answers to such questions as:

- What is the ultimate goal of learning?
- Which processes does it involve?
- What affective reactions are evoked by learning, and what are the characteristics of the ideal student and teacher?
- Moreover, what differences are obviously existing in scholarly cultures, and how do they influence academic work and writing?

On the second day, the emphasis was on intercultural experiences, and the development of "toolboxes" in order to gain perspectives for a successful academic integration of international students. The organized conference was a contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

This volume, *Lost in Transnation*, assembles major contributions to the conference and is meant to challenge the reader to look at how global educational mobility affects our educational systems. Differing paradigms of teaching and learning, contrasting approaches to measure aca-

ademic success, along with trends towards transculturalism offer our scholastic institutions new opportunities and provocations as they attempt to address students' needs in an ever changing global community.

This book is organized in three segments. The first segment addresses learning beliefs and intercultural communication on campus. Prof. Dr. Li begins by sharing her research project involving Chinese and European-American students to show essential differences in standards and approaches concerning learning. In a special presentation of the theme "Mind and Virtue", what may be seen as learning in one culture may be very different in another. In the next chapter, Prof. Dr. Kühnen and his colleagues expand on her research results by noting how culturally transmitted implicit learning beliefs affect the interactions between students and faculty members in multicultural environments. Here, it is emphasized that care must be taken in one's assumptions of core aspects of learning, and open communication about similarities and differences as to how one learns and teaches must be encouraged to improve the quality of cooperation in the classroom. In the chapter, Contents and Contexts: Negotiating Transnational Education, Prof. Dr. Neeti Badwe shares her expertise as an "Indian Germanist" who interfaces between two languages and two cultures. While acknowledging the various facets of developing an international campus, such as addressing economic, political and administrative processes, she believes that true success will lie in recognizing and developing the human aspects of interpersonal relationships; by understanding and respecting both the Self and the Other. Following suit, Prof. Dr. Alexander Thomas reflects on his plus 40 years of academic involvement, and shares his concerns about the many problems of intercultural communication. Intercultural issues that were relevant in the 1960s remain relevant in 2009. In this chapter, Thomas defines intercultural competence and offers practical interventions to improve campus life for German and foreign students. Finally, Connie Gunderson introduces basic tenets of Relational Cultural Theory and its relevance as a model of interaction on our college campuses. Understanding the importance of interpersonal connection and the basic human interactions involving empathy, authenticity and mutuality, empowers faculty and students. Instead of being lost-in-transnation, we can be found-in-connection.

The second segment, *Changing Places and Switching Codes* begins with the author Prof. Dr. Kolyang confronting the “Ivory Tower” construct where the academic mission based on teaching, research and development is oftentimes not fully comprehended by incoming students (foreign or domestic). Simply put, many international students are busy dealing with daily life issues. Confrontations resulting from being separated from home, language difficulties, integration mishaps, financial needs, religious preferences, gender issues, and the like are stressful. Developing holistic networks and partnerships where international students are able to merge with other students on campus is helpful and necessary. Integrating foreign lecturers adds color and a way for international students to identify themselves. In the following chapter, Prof. Dr. Darla Deardorf illustrates potential encounters with cultural differences in the classroom. Beyond the obvious enticement of dealing with language and communication styles, other aspects must be addressed. Deardorf encourages the reader to explore the underlying causes and bases for cultural differences. Her article introduces a helpful means to address classroom cultural issues. The OSEE tool helps instructors move beyond cultural assumptions to explore differing perspectives and meanings through sound inquiry. Finally, she invites the reader to continue to raise questions and explore new ways of improving academic resources that are to be found in the individual classrooms on our university campuses. Moving from the classroom to living with host families, Henrike Evers demonstrates that understanding complex cultural conditioning and measuring the ability to acculturate when exposed to another cultural context, can be difficult. Evers’s research using Host Family Programs to look at emotional and cognitive changes in students’ intercultural competencies offers new insights to the theoretical frameworks and concepts to approach empirical social research. Examples of a study of two students who participated in the Host Family Program serve as an introduction to illustrate how culture and intercultural competencies are measurable. Her study adds to the ability to acquire knowledge which, in turn, will assist the ongoing theoretical debates relevant to our time.

The third segment of the book, *Making best Practice Even Better*, begins with Dr. Gundula Gwenn Hiller and Maja Woźniak discussing ways to master the gap between theory and practice in academic intercultural training at the European University of Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). By

using one of the program's assessment tools – the role play – one can assess the effects of the students' intercultural competence development process. It is a way to bring current theory to life in practical applications. Prof. Dr. Heike Tauer Schmidt from the Hochschule Bremen writes in her article, Towards an Integrated "International Campus" Concept, that the perception of internationality at Hochschule Bremen is gradually changing from a purely exchange-based activity to a more integrated „international-campus“ concept. She discusses several projects to improve the service and study situation for international students, be it exchange students, regular degree students (undergraduates and graduates) or alumni. Additionally, the concept of Diversity Management is introduced as a driving force of the internationalization strategy so that the quality of the interactions between all students as well as between students and lecturers, and the individual learning atmosphere can be improved. The next chapter, How to Go Intercultural? – Developing academic support schemes for international students – written by Dr. Eva Kammler and Dr. Anne Renate Schönhagen review the current European student mobility program (ERASMUS), and assess the ongoing learnings of this program resulting in the declaration that ongoing processes of mobility in research and higher education demand more comprehensive structural solutions and an enhanced understanding of the intercultural dimension. Thus, at the International Office of Bremen University, the idea has grown to develop a support scheme which would offer help and advice to international students, and to departments and university administration. This chapter presents programs run by the University of Bremen, which aim at social integration, academic integration, and strengthening intercultural understanding.

The author, Prof. Dr. Sanghamitra Bhattacharyya recognizes that in today's globalized world, business success requires intercultural awareness and effective cross-cultural communication skills. She introduces and describes an initiative for teaching Cross-Cultural Management. The innovative Multi-Cultural Team Project has been proven to be educational and it offers a unique way to participate to enhance intercultural learning by opening the doors of understanding to unique patterns of cultural interaction. In closing this segment, Karoline von Köckritz asserts that the bureaucracy involved in the process for international students to travel abroad has become so extensive that motivation to par-

ticipate has diminished. To counter the bureaucratic trend, the Free University in Berlin has implemented an e-learning portal, "Distributed Campus", to deal with the problem of properly preparing foreign students for their stay abroad. This technological designed tool supports international students efficiently and effectively, leading to a better quality in support for the entire German academic landscape while also adjusting the academic institutions to the new challenges lying ahead.

Prof. Dr. Jutta Berninghausen and Connie Gunderson close the segments by inviting the reader to explore mobility at both the level of thought and action. Campus life continues to change. Universities and colleges will continue to be asked to meet ongoing challenges as the world and those of us who participate, connect and disconnect.

May this volume contribute to the ongoing academic research and review of our interculturally dynamic campuses worldwide. And may we be willing to share our experiences, assessments and analyses while being open to learning from the perspectives of others.

August 2009

Bremen, Germany

Resources

Heublein, U., Özkilic, M. & Sommer, D., 2007. *Aspekte der Internationalität deutscher Hochschulen*, DAAD Band 63. Hannover: HIS Hochschul-Informationssystem GmbH.

Learning Beliefs and Intercultural Communication on Campus



Special Presentation by Jin Li

During the Lost in Transnation Conference in October 2008, Prof. Dr. Jin Li from Brown University, USA presented her research results on learning beliefs in the West and in Asia. In this study she explored what learning means to people in each culture. Her presentation focused on the different cultural learning philosophies by using quotes from the philosopher Francis Bacon and the Confucian author Liu Xiang. Existential themes about cultural learning were descriptively highlighted throughout her presentation. In order to share some of her research with the reader, she has kindly granted permission to use portions of her presentation in this chapter.

Francis Bacon Wrote in his Book

The Advancement of Learning:

... God has framed the mind of man as a mirror or glass, capable of the image of the universal world, and joyful to receive the impression thereof, as the eye joyeth to receive light; and not only delighted in beholding the variety of things and vicissitude of times, but raised also to find out and discern the ordinances and decrees, which throughout all those changes are infallibly observed.... For that nothing parcel of the world is denied to man's inquiry and invention, ...; for all knowledge and wonder (which is the seed of knowledge) is an impression of pleasure itself....let men endeavour an endless progress or proficiencie in both [God's word and God's works]...; only let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling; to use, and not to ostentation.... (pp. 3-4).

Six Essential Themes

- The external world is the object of learning
- Inquiry is an enterprise on which human beings are destined to embark. The purpose is to produce objective knowledge about the world
- The human mind is supreme in carrying out this inquiry
- Scientific discovery requires active engagement of the learner
- One derives intrinsic enjoyment and pleasure by participating in this process
- Knowledge as produced by such learning must be put to ethical use

A Beloved Story by a Confucian Writer

Liu Xiang (77-6 B.C.E.):

The king of Jin, Ping Gong, asked his blind musician Shi Kuang “I am already seventy. I’d like to learn, but I am afraid it’s too late.” Shi Kuang replied “Why not light a candle?” Ping Gong was offended “How could a subject ridicule his king?” Shi Kuang responded “How dare I, a blind subject?! I have only heard that love for learning in young age is like the light from the rising sun; love for learning in adult prime age is like the bright sunlight at noon; and love for learning in old age is like the light from the candle. Lighting the candle or groping in darkness, which one is better?” Ping Gong brightened “How marvelous!”

Six Essential Themes

- Self (not the external world) is the object of learning
- A person without the desire to learn is one without aim and power; not even the king can be exempt
- The pursuit of learning enables and dignifies powerless individuals (to the degree that they are legitimized to challenge the otherwise powerful)
- Learning is a lifelong process
- Love for and commitment to learning are sine qua non for lifelong learning
- The purpose of learning is not to produce objective knowledge but to cultivate or perfect oneself morally

In the following charts, Dr. Li asked 366 Chinese and European American college students to create cultural learning modules to generate a “lexicon” about learning. Here are the results:

Method

- Participants: 366 middle class Chinese and European American college students
- Prototypical methods with 4 steps:
 - Step 1: Generating an initial lexicon
 - 3 native speakers brainstormed associations with Chinese terms *xue/xuexi* (学/学习) and English *learn/learning*
 - Equivalence achieved by frequencies of “primers”
 - Cross-translation
 - By-confirmation of ratings of English *learn/learning-study*
 - Initial Chinese and English terms: 145 and 242