

# **Mastering the Gap between Theory and Practice in Academic Intercultural Training**

## **Theoretical Considerations concerning a Best Practice-Program**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses some questions concerning the experiences we had with an intercultural training program which was instituted in 2005 at the European University of Viadrina to promote the students' intercultural competence. While the program soon was recognized as one of the most comprehensive and exemplary best practice models of its kind in Germany, we continue to develop our theoretical basis, improve our concepts and reflect on the impacts. One of the challenges in academic training is to support practice with contemporary scholarly concepts. By showing and discussing the development of the program, we reveal our understanding of the concept of culture and intercultural competence as a theoretical foundation for the program's practice. Another important issue concerning the program is the question of how we can assess the effects of the students' intercultural competence development. To illustrate one possibility of assessment, we present one of the programs' new tools – a role-play as an instrument for assessing the student's intercultural competence.

### **The European University Viadrina and its need for an intercultural competence program**

The European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), with a student body of around 30 % international students from over 70 countries, and an extensive network of partner universities, is one of the most international universities worldwide. Situated on the German-Polish border, it represents a cross-border university, with a highly symbolic political meaning for a Europe that is increasingly intertwined and interconnected. In addition to this, the Viadrina is supposed to be a precursor institution to a place to acquire *intercultural competence*.

However, empirical reality had shown that communicative interaction between students of different nationalities had been very limited. Several surveys have proven that the contacts wished for between students had not been established.<sup>1</sup>

Altogether, we can conclude from these results that an accompanying preparation for the students of the Viadrina concerning the intercultural environment was missing. There were observed not only a lack of intercultural knowledge but also a lack of curiosity toward others and deficits in behavioral skills. As the problems were not limited to the Viadrina (Isserstedt/Schnitzer 2002; Bosse/Harms 2002; Heublein et. al 2008), all German universities are challenged to find new ways of sensitizing their members to intercultural problems and helping them to develop intercultural competence.

Taking this in consideration, we started in 2004 to explore how we could enhance the proclaimed "intercultural competence" in an international institution like the European University Viadrina. Furnham/Bochner had already suggested in 1986 that the students' preparation for intercultural contexts in Social Skills Training could prevent misunderstanding and conflicts on a communicative level (compare Furnham/Bochner 1986, 204). But in our case, as in most German universities, there were no pre-existing measures of this kind. Concerning the Viadrina and its intercultural potential, the first challenge was to awaken interest in communicative exchange without having to force it. At the same time, the students should be made aware of what kind of enrichment (and learning) intercultural contact can offer; as according to Isserstedt/Schnitzer, the enriching side-effects of intercultural contact between German and foreign students „has up to now been mainly overlooked and not sufficiently systematically used“ (Isserstedt/Schnitzer 2002: 57).

When we started, our aim was to develop strategies to sensitize the students on an intercultural level and motivate them to get involved with this topic. Within a period of two years a complex and substantiated course program was created step-by-step within the Department of Intercultural Learning to deal with promoting intercultural competence. The process of how we overcame the structural and organizational problems, such as convincing the University's directors to establish the program and to awaken the students' interest in it, was described in Hiller/Woźniak 2009. Here we will present our experience and discuss which concept of intercultural competence we rely on and show how we apply it in our training. Furthermore, we want to reflect on a question which inevitably occurred: How can we define and, moreover, assess the effects on students' learning concerning the development of their intercultural competence?

### **Developing an understanding of intercultural competence**

When developing our understanding of intercultural competence as the central theme of the program, we were approaching a broad field in which concepts of divergent branches of sciences and the direction-setting philosophies of science (socio-constructivism, essentialism, symbolic

interactionism, etc.) were intersecting with concepts arising from diverse political interests (foreign policy, education policy, political integration programs, etc.) and economic needs (efficiency of international cooperation, marketing of intercultural training, etc.) - altogether providing a conglomerate of either overlapping or oppositional definitions and models of intercultural competence. Helpful structured overviews of established models of intercultural competence can be found in Bolten (2007), Graf (2004), Scheitza (2007), Straub (2007), Warthun (2007) or Rathje (2006).<sup>2</sup> Our aim was to find our way through the wide variety of propositions already existing and to develop a concept suitable for the program.

### **Revealing the philosophy of science**

In order to illustrate the interdependency of the concept of intercultural competence and the philosophy of science, it is necessary to turn our attention to the prevailing dispute about the concept of *culture*. The dispute we are alluding to refers to the opposing positions of science and practice. (Moosmüller 2007:48; Otten 2007: 62; Hüsken 2003).

The practitioners<sup>3</sup> are confronted with the critique that their intercultural practices are holding on to an outdated, culture-relativistic concept of culture, provoking cultural essentialism. The culture-contrastive approaches revolve around a closed concept of culture (mostly national culture). This understanding of culture states that belonging to a certain nationality/ethnicity/cultural background is to a large extent responsible for problems such as misunderstandings, failed delegations abroad, conflicts within multinational teams and generally to communicative difficulties in intercultural encounters. When revealing this argument, the practitioners are said to provide their fields of research (e.g. intercultural conflict research) relevance and at the same time a justification for their products (e.g. intercultural training) as a solution to deal adequately with the diagnosed problems. They are currently being criticized for ignoring the current state of philosophy of science that has left behind deterministic conceptions of culture and developed new understandings along with the poststructuralist discourse. These advanced concepts view cultures as open, penetrable, diffuse, contradicting and fluid constructs that are interwoven and discursively produced, depending on hierarchical power structures and encompassing factors such as gender, educational level, generation, religion, status, etc.. (Breidenbach/Zukrigl 1998: 234; Moosmüller 2004: 24; Welsch 2000: 336). Therefore, culture is no longer bound to nationalities, but embraces diverse intra-national / intra-societal collectives (Rathje 2006: 12).

The hardening of the positions, here discussed shortly, reveals the challenge we are facing when developing our foundation of intercultural competence. The program, being placed at the intersection between science (produced by the university's faculties of cultural studies, economics and law) and practice (offering workshops for the university's multinational student body) is in need of a concept of culture and intercultural competence that on one hand meets an funded and prevailing state of philosophy of science and on the other hand provides a comprehension of the concepts we are able to work with and which justify the need of the program. We believe that the gap can be mastered.

We view culture as an open, dynamic construct. We consider it as a collection of various co-existing "Angebote" [offerings] that are originated by human beings as a (re-) action to their environment, interests and needs. These offerings combine material artefacts (architecture, eating habits, media, clothing habits, etc.) and perceivable non-material, social artefacts (languages, dialects, traditions, social structures) as well as internalized artefacts "below the surface" (attitudes, needs, values, etc.). (Graf 2004: 42; also see Bolten 2007b: 94 "Perceptas" / "Conceptas"). It can be said that offerings are in constant change; that is, they are being modified, discarded and recreated due to societal differentiation that is driven by globalisation and internationalisation processes. Which offerings achieve acceptance and are formed into norms depends on the predominant societal, political and economic power constellations. The enforcement of dominant norms does not necessarily exclude the existence of further (contradicting, variant) offerings. We state that these cultural differences in intercultural encounters might be one possible factor that has an impact on the results of intercultural encounters. Divergent culture-specific communicational and behavioural cues as well as differing perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of the situation and the underlying values might be the source of potential misunderstandings. But there might also be other reasons for failing intercultural interactions such as structural, institutionalized, hierarchical power constellations (see examples concerning the Viadrina in Hiller 2008) and very often presumptions attached to cultural background. It can be said that very often conflicts do not arise due to the national or ethnic heritages of interacting persons and attributed culture-specific characteristics, but due to the presuppositions the interacting individuals carry about each other. These assumptions may be responsible for unsatisfactory contact – or no contact at all. This brings us back to the students at the European-University Viadrina and the aim of the program: developing intercultural competence.

### **Revealing the concept of intercultural competence**

When intercultural competence is based upon a conception of culture as an open, dynamic, and changeable construct, referring to all sorts of collectives in constant blending, an interculturally-

competent student must consequently be able to move confidently within the constantly alterable contexts, that is, to sense and adjust to changes appropriately and effectively. *Appropriateness* and *effectiveness* – two terms that appear in many definitions that advance the idea of intercultural competence from an instrumental-rational angle. In opposition to the instrumental-rational perspective, the normative-metaphysical approach interprets intercultural competence as encouragement for personal or human development (Rathje 2006: 5; Straub 2007: 40). A definition of intercultural competence from the instrumental-rational perspective can be found in Deardorff (2006: 05): “Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on specific attitudes, intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection”. Appropriateness is achieved when “actions of the communicators fit the expectations and demands of the situation” (Straub 2007: 41), while effectiveness can be detected when “people are able to achieve desired personal outcomes” (Wiseman 2002: 209). The inclusion of the criteria effectiveness (and appropriateness) into the concept of intercultural competence appears comprehensible, especially when facing the problems of measuring intercultural competence. Expectations of the interaction partner are an important criterion when it comes to the evaluation of intercultural competence, because intercultural competence *is* evaluation (Graf 2004: 57). The success of an intercultural encounter depends on the judgements of the participants, on whether certain behaviour was viewed as positive/competent or negative/non-competent. The more a person acts according to the positive expectations and the less to the negative expectations of the interaction partner, the more positively his/her behaviour will be evaluated (Graf 2004: 57). Burgoon/Hubbard (2005: 150) state that “successful performances depend upon discerning the norms or expectations for a given situation and conforming to those expectations”.

Considering intercultural encounters, such as going abroad, a person cannot be 100% sure in advance what the other interactant will expect. He or she may prepare him/herself concerning expectations that can be localized at the level of the above-mentioned “perceptas”, such as an appropriate host-gift, topics which should be approached carefully due to specific historical background of the host-country, etc. But considering the level of “conceptas”, a preparation for the expectations will be hardly possible. There is no other way than finding out in the situation itself – being interculturally competent in time and place. Closely attached to appropriateness is the concept of “*face-saving*”, a term connected to the theory of Brown/Lewinson (1978). *Face* is the self-image that every human being claims for him/herself, therefore face is “something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction”

(Brown/Lewinson 1978: 66). According to the *Face-Negotiation Theory* by Ting-Toomey, face is bound to “identity respect and other-identity considerations” (Ting-Toomey 2005: 73). Brown and Lewinson argue that human beings generally co-operate when it comes to the saving of face in interactions, because threatening the interactant’s face may lead to the threatening of one’s own face in return. The authors point out that the boundaries between face-loss and face-saving are culture-specific (we would like to add: individual-specific) as well as the contents (what topic may be face-threatening). Brown and Levinson view the conclusion that human beings possess such a mechanism and that face serves as orientation in interactions as universal. They distinguish between *positive* face (expressed by the need for acceptance and acknowledgement and the need for personal desires to also be desirable to others) and *negative* face (becomes evident in the need for saving personal autonomy and liberty) (Brown/Lewinson 1978: 66 ff.). An interculturally-competent person should therefore think, feel and act in a way that no face is threatened. Again, we view a preparation in advance concerning the right handling of the interactant’s face (e.g. along culture-contrastive theories) as questionable. Within the frame of the discussion about the universality of intercultural competence, several authors emphasize that what is considered as interculturally-competent and non-competent behaviour varies depending on culture area (e.g. Bolten 2007a: 7; Deller/Albrecht 2007: 752; Deardorff 2006: 25; Otten 2007: 68; Warthun 1997: 71). The concept of intercultural competence as a discursive product of the Anglo-Saxon/Western perspective cannot be transferred 1:1 to “non-Western” (Deardorff 2006: 25) contexts. As an example of a “non-Western” perspective, authors often refer to “Asia”. Bolten (2007a: 6) refers to the strategic skills of German managers that differ depending on whether the contract conclusion will be in Germany or in “Thailand”. Warthun (1997: 71) refers to features of a good communicator within the western sphere (open-mindedness, self-confident appearance, and strong personal charisma) which would not necessarily be evaluated as competent by a communicational partner from the “Far East”. Deardorff (2006: 25) refers, among other authors, to Yum (1994), who has identified elements of “Korean communication” as follows: “empathy, sensitivity, indirectness, being reserved and transcendental”. “Often, the unit of analysis in Asian cultures is not the individual but rather the group or interpersonal relationships”. Summarizing the brief discussion of non-Western perspectives, Deardorff (2006: 25) concludes that “while there are some distinctive aspects of intercultural competence in non-Western cultures that may not be found in Western views of the construct, there are also some elements that may be the same, regardless of cultural perspective”. She adds that further research is needed in order to gain a full understanding of non-Western perspectives on intercultural competence. At the same time, we want to stress that it is questionable whether definitions of culture-specific intercultural competences

are possible when taking the concept of fluid cultures into account. Still, there must be some kind of functioning concept of intercultural competence, due to the fact that there are “individuals marked by a strikingly effective capacity for cross-cultural communication, regardless of circumstances; and there are other individuals who are marked by an equally striking incapacity for cross-cultural communication regardless of circumstances” (Gardner 1962: 248)<sup>4</sup>.

Having taken the present arguments into consideration, we came to the conclusion that tracing culture-specific components of intercultural competence that guarantee a successful intercultural interaction in a specific culture is not possible. It seems therefore obvious that intercultural competence must consist of components that enable the person to think, to feel and to act appropriately within the situation. Components, which help the individual to evaluate the interactant (no matter whether he/she is from Lithuania, Chile or Kenya) and the situation/context correctly and to react flexibly and adequately according to the circumstances prevailing at that time and at that place.

In order to define such culture-generic components of intercultural competence one needs to have an understanding of the nature of intercultural encounters. Because it is the intercultural interaction in which intercultural competence becomes evident. We view them as situations in which individuals with different cultural backgrounds negotiate new standards for their interaction. These encounters may be highly ambiguous because the communicational and behavioural cues which are common in ones own culture might not match the expectations of the person with a different cultural background and vice versa. It is all about creating a new context in which the gap between divergent conventions is bridged, differing expectations and interpretations are balanced and adjusted and possible conflicts and misunderstandings resolved without face loss on both sides. So what enables an intercultural competent person to deal appropriate and effective in such situations?

### **The program’s concept of a (culture-general) intercultural competence**

An intercultural competent person combines a set of skills, knowledge and values that enable him or her to act in a self-organized, effective and appropriate manner in intercultural encounters. Considering the nature of intercultural interactions the interculturally-competent person combines the following skills: tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, creativity, the ability to communicate, behavioural flexibility and the ability to handle conflicts.

Taking the concept of culture and intercultural interactions as presented above into consideration, the interculturally-competent person combines the knowledge of culture as a dynamic construct and that

cultural differences can be located on the levels of material, social and internalized artefacts. He/she is aware of his or her cultural imprint and its impact on perception, interpretation and evaluation of interactions. He/she knows that this might be one possible source of potential misunderstandings but is at the same time aware of the fact that structural factors as well as presumptions attached to cultural background may be the reason for an unsatisfactory interaction. Furthermore, he/she knows that intercultural encounters are created by the interacting persons through negotiating new communicational and behavioural standards that are appropriate for the involved persons and effective for the course of interaction.

The underlying values of interculturally-competent persons can be summarized as open-mindedness and curiosity for different cultures, acceptance, tolerance and respect for cultural differences on one hand, and acceptance and respect of one's own limits of tolerance on the other. He/she additionally possesses the willingness to acquire intercultural knowledge in formal and informal contexts, the willingness to modify one's own communicational and behavioural skills and to create an intercultural interaction together with the involved persons in an appropriate, face-saving and effective way.

### **Assessing the student's intercultural competence**

Accepting that the development of intercultural competence as presented here is a process and takes far more engagement than participating in a one- or two-day intercultural seminar, we are aware of the limitations regarding the goals which can be achieved within the program. Besides a various set of rigorously chosen exercises to train the above mentioned competences, we provide the chance for students to assess their intercultural competence and therefore give valuable information about where improvement can be achieved. For this purpose, a new tool has recently been integrated into the program: a role-play, measuring five skills of intercultural competence. Mayhofer et al. (2007: 183) view *role-plays* in which the participants can experience whether their behaviour is evaluated as appropriate through the reaction of the counterpart as a promising method for the assessment of intercultural competence. The development of the intercultural competence of the participants is therefore already stimulated during the course of testing. Role-plays offer the frame for dialogues and negotiations which are the crucial tasks in most encounters. According to Straub (2007: 39) intercultural competence can be understood as an aspect of the personal acting potential which is displayed within the interpretation of the context and the situation. Intercultural competence becomes therefore evident particularly in behaviour. A person may have highly developed intercultural

knowledge and the best of intentions, but not be able to display cognition within the intercultural interaction, that is, transferring it into behaviour. (Precht/Davidson-Lund 2007: 478).

Having taken the presented arguments into consideration, the integration of role-plays into the training, among other methods, was crucial. It enables the participants to stimulate and develop various components of their intercultural competence affecting all three levels of cognition, affection and behaviour. Furthermore we decided this technique for measuring the development of intercultural competence was adequate. As an example of this method we discuss a particular role-play below.

### **The role-play “Archivum 2060”<sup>5</sup> as instrument for the assessment of intercultural competence**

The basic concept of the role-play “Archivum 2060” is similar to dyadic role-plays, which are utilized in intercultural training in order to sensitize the participants to their cultural background, to acquire knowledge about other cultures, to increase the sensitivity for cultural differences, etc. (Losche 2000: 96). The design of the role-plays usually consists of a situation in which two somehow “differently poled” groups (cultures) have to interact. They reveal an unexpected behaviour to each other, which has to be handled in a certain way, according to the aim of the exercise (e.g. sensitization for own cultural imprint). The main aim of the role-plays is therefore the pedagogic learn-effect. In addition to the learning experience, the goal of the role-play “Archivum 2060” is to measure five skills of intercultural competence – *behavioural flexibility, empathy, ability to communicate, creativity and tolerance for ambiguity*. The content of the role-play involves the interaction of groups – the candidates, whose intercultural competence is tested and the group of role-players, which challenge their intercultural competence.

*The theme:* The theme of the role-play consists of a fictional scenario: The preparation of the international art-exhibition “Archivum 2060”, which is being organised by two teams from different cultures. The setting of the role-play is the meeting of the two groups in order to decide about the arrangement of twelve pieces of art within the three designated exhibition rooms.

On the one hand, the pieces of art can be classified into three groups (therefore three exhibition-rooms) as pictures of four landscapes, four geometrical figures and four animals.

On the other hand, the twelve pieces of art carry three colours (three red, four green and five blue) offering another possibility of arrangement within the exhibition rooms – along colour lines. The pieces of art are chosen in such a way that the three colours are shuffled within the three categories

of landscapes, geometrical figures and animals. The category of the landscapes consists of two green pictures, one red and one blue picture, the category of geometrical figures consists of two blue and two green geometrical figures and the category of animals consists of two blue and two red animals.

*The challenge:* The “intercultural” challenge which occurs is the collision of divergent forms of perception and its expression, resulting in different ways of classification and hence dissimilar conceptions of the arrangement of the pieces of art. While the team of the candidates is instructed to classify the pieces of art according to three categories (animals, landscapes and geometrical figures), the team of the role-players is instructed to classify the pieces of art according to colours (red, green, blue). The aggravating factor comes into play through the fact, that the colours are bonded with three emotions (red = anger, green = happiness, blue = sadness).

*The setting:* The meeting for the arrangement of the pieces of art takes place in a room with a table and a screen. For the visualisation, a DIN-A3 drawing of the exhibition-rooms is provided with cards showing the art-pieces, which can be moved around on the drawing. After the formation of the teams, a PowerPoint presentation is screened, showing the twelve pieces of art, followed by the discussion concerning the arrangement of the pieces of art in the exhibition rooms.

*The informational material:* The members of each group receive an information sheet with relevant information, which also shows copies of the pieces of art and a sketch of the exhibition rooms.

The informational material for the candidates is printed in black and white, avoiding the detection of the other classification along colours before the interaction.<sup>6</sup> Their information sheet contains, as well as the relevant information, a sketch of the exhibition rooms with a prefabricated arrangement according to the categories mentioned above (room 1: landscapes, room 2: geometrical figures, room 3: animals).

The informational material of the role-players is printed in colours, showing the sketch of the exhibition room with a prefabricated arrangement along colours (room 1: blue, sadness; room 2: green, happiness room; room 3: red, anger room). It further provides detailed instructions for behaviour during the interaction.

The observers receive an information sheet and an observation chart. The information sheet consists of precise definitions of the five skills of intercultural competence, as well as their positive and negative occurrence. The evaluation chart shows the relevant evaluation criteria with a scale of 1-4 (1 = “is not the case” – 4 = “is the case”).

*The course of action:* After the specification of the groups (candidates, role-players and observers) the workshop participants are given an introduction by the moderator revealing the background information concerning the theme of “Archivum 2060”. The team-members and the observers receive their information sheets and the group of candidates leaves the room to prepare for the meeting along with a co-moderator. Meanwhile, the role-players are instructed by the moderator and practice their behaviour. In order to do so, the power-point presentation is screened, showing the art-pieces one by one. The role-players are instructed to show the emotions attached to the colours of the art-pieces in a verbal and non-verbal way. The role-players also practice their behaviour when arranging the art-pieces in the exhibition rooms.

The observers have time to study the information sheet and the evaluation chart as a basis for their observation. Furthermore, they have to decide who will observe which candidate (each candidate has two observers) and where to sit for a good view of their chosen candidate.

The role-play starts when the group of candidates enters the room. After the reception, the PowerPoint presentation is screened. The candidates are confronted with the emotional rollercoaster of the role-players for the first time. The role-players comment on the various art-pieces and express certain feelings, depending on which picture is being shown. After the presentation the players suggest their concept of arrangement, displaying it on the drawing on the table. The candidates are confronted with the specific behaviour of the role-players for the second time. For example: Talking about the happiness-room, being enthusiastic, while turning sad when touching the cards with art-pieces from the sadness room. The end of the role-play is set after 10 – 15 minutes. The outcome depends on the stage of development of the candidate’s empathy and behavioural flexibility.

*Evaluation:* The feedback is based on the evaluation of the observers along certain criteria, such as we demonstrate here in the example of *empathy* and *behavioural flexibility*. The questions on the observers’ evaluation charts are as following:

### **Empathy**

- How fast does the candidate recognize the “different behaviour” of the role-players?
- Does the candidate show the willingness to adopt the role-player’s perspective, e.g. asking for the reasons of the behaviour?
- Does the candidate show understanding for the other form of classification of the art-pieces?
- Does the candidate show appreciation for the role-player’s perspective?
- Does the candidate react sensibly to the emotional expressions of the role-players?

- Does the candidate refer to the divergent classification styles and try to combine them?

### **Behavioural flexibility**

- Does the candidate react calmly to the unexpected reaction of the role-players?
- Does the candidate adopt a defensive posture?
- Does the candidate view the divergent approaches as enrichment for the team and the exhibition?
- Does the candidate show adaptive behaviour?
- Does the candidate try to imitate the behaviour of the role-players during the PowerPoint presentation without ridiculing or mocking the other point of view?
- Does the candidate show flexibility concerning various solutions for the arrangement of the art-pieces?

Furthermore, the role-players are asked to express their impressions after the role-play. This is an important step, considering the fact that intercultural competence is evaluation by the counterparts - whether the course of action was considered as desirable or not and if face-loss was experienced.

We tested this kind of competence assessment in several seminars and got the confirmation from the students that this kind of assessment is much more fruitful than e.g. the often used self-assessment questionnaires. So we consider “Archivum 2060” as one applicable and qualified possibility to give the students feedback about the competences reflected in their behaviour. At the same time, this kind of exercise, giving simultaneously the players the possibility to master an intercultural challenge and to the observers, to assess their peers, evokes an especially intense base for the feedback discussion. Thus the students can benefit from it on different levels.

Proposition: Insert illustration 1: Role play

### **Conclusion**

In this article we reflected on some of the questions which arose by developing an intercultural training program to promote students' intercultural competence. After overcoming structural and organizational problems, such as convincing the University's directors to establish the program and awakening the students' interest in it, we saw the need to develop a theoretical basis, a continuous improvement of the concepts and reflection on its impacts. By showing and discussing the theoretical foundation of the program, we revealed our considerations on intercultural competence. We are aware of the limitations regarding the goals which can be achieved within the program. But we see also its huge potential after accompanying and observing hundreds of students over the years. We

have observed over the last years that the program supports the development of intercultural competence of students who are willing to learn. As we understand the development of intercultural competence as a dynamic process of competence acquisition, we always try to optimize our program to create the best conditions possible for the students to develop competences.

In the face of the difficulties concerning the assessment of intercultural competence, as we discussed above, we continue to develop different methods of assessment of the students' competence and evaluation of the program's learning outcome. To illustrate one of our innovative tools, we presented the role-play "Archivum 2060" as an instrument for assessing the stage of development of the student's intercultural competence.

Especially for training in academic surroundings, it is indispensable for the method to be backed up by recent academic concepts. Underlining this, we finish our considerations with the desire that there will be more research which focuses on the combination of the contemporary concepts of culture and competence as presented here and their application into training.

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<sup>1</sup> The surveys have proven intercultural learning doesn't happen in everyday life, even at an institution like the Viadrina. The intercultural potential at the Viadrina tends to go unnoticed in the students' daily lives. This is, for example, manifested in the fact that students tend to form national groups, distant from one another, and the communicative interaction between these groups is therefore very limited. The majority of students prefer to be with members of their own national group. Earlier research has already drawn attention to the national separation among the students at the Viadrina (Pickel 1998, John 2001, Glaum/Rinker 2002; Gröppel-Klein et al. 2003). As presented in a cross-sectional study, the motivation to form friendships with the other group sinks during the term of study, and convergence hardly takes place (Gröppel-Klein et al. 2003, 2005). If first-termers of economic studies beginning in 1997/98 are compared with those beginning in 2003/04, a reduction in cultural openness can be ascertained, despite an increased effort of European integration due to the entry of ten new countries in 2004. In the latter group, fewer contacts take place, the Polish find the Germans more abrasive, and are more antagonistic toward the Germans than comparable students in 1997/98 (Gröppel-Klein et al. 2005). All in all, the contact between Germans and Poles has diminished or worsened. Pickel (1998) and Gröppel-Klein et al. (2003) had discovered that during the final phase of their studies "students of both nations did not put as much emphasis on friendships with members of the other group" and concluded that "both groups felt that it was rather unlikely to establish long-term friendships with students from the other group." (Gröppel-Klein et al., 2003, p. 80). Many students who sought contact at the beginning had since withdrawn. Altogether, contacts between the students have not been established to the extent that had been originally intended by the Viadrina's founders. At the same time, both groups tend to separate themselves from each other and cement their prejudices. (John 2001, Gröppel-Klein et al. 2003). A summary of the situation and research for causes can be seen in Hiller 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The models of intercultural competence are mainly distinguished in two groups: listing-models and structure-models. *Listing-models*: intercultural competence consists of multiple components, s.a.

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*flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, etc.* Although the compositions of the features and skills may vary, this approach to intercultural competence assumes, that a person having the relevant features is able to competently act in intercultural interactions. It has been often criticized that definitions of those components can not provide empirical research. Instead, they tend to be based on intuition, personal or theoretical assumptions. (e.g. Straub 2007: 42). The attempt to structure the unmanageable amount of (often) arbitrarily composed features results in the *Structure-models*: intercultural competence is viewed as a multidimensional construct whose constituent features (as presented in the listing-models) are divided into three mutually supporting categories: The *cognitive* dimension, the *emotional* dimension and the *behavioural* dimension (Wiseman 2002). While the *emotional* dimension encompasses features such as tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence and role-distance, the *cognitive* dimension embraces features such as the understanding of cultural differences and meta-communication skills. The willingness to communicate, can be found within the frame of the *behavioural* dimension. (Straub 2007: 43). Modifications of the model arguing for the process-oriented interdependency of the dimensions are presented e.g. by Bolten (2007b: 214) and Deardorff (2006: 7).

<sup>3</sup> Compare: Moosmüller (2004: 49) „Interculturalists“, referring to intercultural trainers, consultants or mediators.

<sup>5</sup> Developed by M.W. in line with the Seminar „Interkulturelle Kompetenz in der betrieblichen Personalauswahl“ in the master program Intercultural Communication Studies, European-University Viadrina, lecturer: E. Prechtel, winter-semester 2008/09.

<sup>6</sup> A note is added, asking for pardon that the informational material is a black/white copy, due to technical problems.