

EVALUATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM EAST EUROPE

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This paper presents a comparative evaluation of didactic and experiential training in Germany carried out on a sample of international university students from Eastern Europe. The long-term evaluation was conducted by using a quasi-experimental design with a control group according to Kirkpatrick's model including three steps: reaction, learning and behavior. Empirical results on the reaction level indicate that the students prefer the learner centered didactic training. Learning effects, measured by a previously unrepresented case study showed that the experiential group differed significantly from the control group in the posttest on culture specific knowledge and empathy. They also performed significantly better on culture specific knowledge than in the pretest. On the other hand the didactically trained subjects achieved significant learning progress in their ability to identify sources of problems in cross-cultural encounters, culture specific knowledge, empathy and problem solving ability. A significant contrast to the control group in the posttest was found only in empathy. However behavioral results evaluating the transfer of achieved knowledge and competencies into "daily work" and encounters with foreigners were rather modest. In addition, no special differences between trained and non-trained individuals on the degree of work performance, adjustment and satisfaction during internships abroad were reported in interviews with superiors and the self reports of the students.

INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural training programs (CCTs) have been conducted for at least 60 years¹. CCTs have been integrated into international human resource management and social work and have become a part of education, especially language education, and are used in international youth and student exchanges too (Bennett, J.M., Bennett, & Landis, 2004; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). However, when we talk about the 60-year history of CCT we can not forget that it refers to the history of CCT in the western world,

¹ Pusch traces the origin of CCT to the End of the World War II and the entry of E.T. Hall into the Foreign Service Institute (Bennett, 2004, p. 3).

notably in the U.S., Canada and Western Europe. Behind the iron curtain in East Central and East-European countries shaped by socialist ideology the situation was different. The official ideology stressed socialist internationalism and tried to lessen cultural differences or to banish them into the sphere of folklore. The term CCT was unknown. In fact there was no necessity for CCT. The Eastern Bloc was not so attractive for immigrants, and youth exchange took place to a limited extent. Moreover, it was highly ideologized and controlled. Technical advisors were allowed only in particular countries and lived there relatively isolated from local staff. But in terms of development aid for friendly socialist oriented nations, specific education for international students and apprentices from those countries was offered. Special language programs involved lessons about the culture and society of the host country. But these matters were only peripheral issues in the courses. Similar conditions prevailed in language education for domestic inhabitants. Unfortunately, language education was rather rigid, dominated by ex-cathedra teaching and a grammar translation method. Culture issues were confined to topics such as holidays or arts and literature.

The year 1989 brought political and economic transformations. Western investors, notably German companies, started businesses in East European countries which had a cheap labor force, a relatively stable economy and good infrastructure. They brought new know-how and capital, as well as a new organizational culture. People in transformed states had to learn to deal with a new situation; notably they had to adapt to the rules of a market economy, to learn new technologies and to accept the new organizational culture. Some companies sent local middle management to the parent enterprise abroad for training. But also employees staying in their home countries have intensive contact with host nationals, for example, in international projects doing business with foreign partners.

In other regions the redevelopment of enterprise did not succeed and unemployment increased. As a consequence of this, young, well qualified professionals looked for a new chance abroad and became economic migrants. Many young people used various scholarships to study abroad. Cross-cultural interactions have accelerated due to the enlargement of the European Union and this development is expected to continue.

Because this study will focus on international students trained to go to Germany, we will consult the data from this country. According to the data of the German Federal Statistical Office the number of international students has doubled in 1997-2007. After China -- Poland, Bulgaria and Russia were the countries where most of the students came from in the fall term 2007 ("Wissenschaft weltoffen", 2009).

Whether expatriate managers, international students or members of multinational teams, everybody realized that language skills are essential but have to be supplemented by intercultural competence to reach desired work performance and harmonious cooperation with members of the host culture.

East European graduates became a new important target group for CCT. But what do we know about these learners? What are their preferred learning methods? Are they experiential methods, like the ones that Early (1987) and Pruegger & Rogers (1994) concluded for US and Canadian learners respectively? How should the training be designed? Which training approach is appropriate and effective for East European graduates? Cross-cultural research on these issues is in the fledgling stages. The present study can not answer all these questions: But it offers a complex comparative evaluation of the effectiveness of didactic and experiential CCT by international students from Central East Europe in Germany. The **main research questions** which were investigated are

- a) Which training approach – didactic or experiential– do East European graduates prefer? According the typology of Gudykunst, Guzley & Hammer (1996) there are two methodic approaches of CCT: didactic and experiential. The didactic approached is cognitive orientated and includes methods such as lecture, case studies, film analysis, culture assimilator, culture-specific reading, and so forth. Didactic training is usually training about the culture. The experiential approach tries to involve not only the cognitive but the affective and behavioral domains of the learner as well. Its aim is to simulate cross-cultural contact or to experience it in real life. Role plays, simulation games and field trips are considered for the most typical experiential training methods.
- b) How does the training affect the sensibility of sources for cultural misunderstandings, culture specific knowledge demonstrated by appropriate isomorphic attribution², empathy and problem solving ability? Which training approach is more effective in meeting these goals?
- c) The participants of which training approach transfer better achieved knowledge and skills in real cross-cultural encounters in their internship?
- d) Which training approach has more positive effects on adjustment, work performance and satisfaction in the internships abroad?

² Isomorphic attribution is the ability of the individual to interpret the (cultural) behavior of others similar to the way they intended it, in terms of their own culture (Triandis, 1977). Triandis maintains that this ability is key to promoting cross-cultural understanding.

METHOD

Sample

The evaluation was conducted at The International Graduate School Zittau (Germany), a multinational university providing master's studies including at least a 15-week internship in a company or another organization in a different culture. Forty students from Poland (54.2%), Czech Republic (25%), Ukraine (2%) and Germany (former East Germany) (18.8%) participated in the research. All students had already reached their first degree in their home country and studied one of the following in Germany: general business administration, production management and information technology, social sciences or environmental process engineering. The participants were approximately 22 years old. During the training period they lived for one and a half years in Germany, but many of them were only little or moderately acculturated and had no experience of internships abroad. Hence it seemed reasonable to provide cross-cultural training to prepare them for the new role of intern and assignments in a foreign culture in the compulsory subject "intercultural education".

Eighty percent of trainees were Non-Germans who intended to complete their internships in Germany. The target destinations of German students were scattered in many different countries but it was impossible to provide different training for each country. For this reason we decided to develop a balanced training program including general culture and culture specific items with German as the focal culture, in the hope that the German participants would use the opportunity to increase cross-cultural understanding -awareness of their own culture – an important aim of CCT too (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) – and could profit from knowledge presented in discussions by the international students in order to know their home countries. The culture specific part of CCT involved the transmission of German cultural standards (Schroll-Machl, 2002). The general culture part focused on coping strategies to deal effectively with culturally diverse people, acculturation strategies and specific problems of interns in foreign companies.

Three experimental groups were created. One received didactic training, the second experiential training, and the third group was a comparison group of non-trained students who were asked to read materials covering German history. For study-organization reasons it was not possible to assign the students randomly. Therefore, the subjects were assigned to the training groups according to their program of study. The students of social sciences and environmental process engineering participated in experiential CCT. The relatively big group of students of general business administration and production management and information technology was divided,

one half completed the didactic CCT and the other half was used as a comparison group. The experiential trained group consisted of 16 subjects, 14 of whom completed the evaluation tests. From the final sample 7 participants were German, 5 Poles and 2 Czechs; 6 men and 8 women. The didactically trained group was comprised of 14 students (all of them completed the evaluation tests): 7 Czechs, 5 Poles, 1 German and 1 Ukrainian. The gender distribution was approximately equal: 8 men, 6 women. The comparison group consisted of 12 people, 8 Poles and 4 Czechs. The control group was comparable to the experimental groups in age, duration of study abroad and educational background.

Treatment – training design and conditions

To conduct a meaningful comparative evaluation of training approaches, some essential conditions were met. Both training groups received equal training with regard to the training's aims, contents and extent of 15 lessons covered in one and a half days. Both trainings were conducted by the same trainer to rule out other confounding factors. The only intended difference lay in the training methods. In addition, our aspiration was to develop a useful training program covering all three dimensions of intercultural competence: cognitive (knowledge), affective (motivation, attitudes) and conative (skills) (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). The cognitive dimension involves general culture I and culture specific knowledge; that is knowledge about the impact of culture on people's behavior and understanding conventions, concepts and values of one's own and the target culture, as well as appropriate self concept, self awareness and realistic pre-departure expectations (Müller & Gelbrich, 1999). The affective dimension refers to the set of feelings, intentions, needs, and drives associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication (Wiseman, 2002). It involves elements such as lack of ethnocentrism, open mindedness or impartiality (Müller & Gelbrich, 1999). Having these attitudes should mean that one will have positive motivation and will seek out and engage in interactions with members of foreign cultures. Finally, the skills subsumed in the conative dimension refer to the actual performance felt to be effective and appropriate in the communication and cultural context (Wiseman, 2002). Table 1 illustrates how all three dimensions of intercultural communication competence were fostered in both types of training in the preservation of common aims and contents.

Table 1. Design of the trainings

	Training aims and contents	Methods	
		Experiential	Didactic
K N O W L E D G E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepening of cultural general knowledge and cultural awareness • Transmitting of culture specific knowledge on German culture in the form of German cultural standards • Information on cultural differences between Czech, Polish, Ukrainian and German culture • Fostering of self awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation • Role plays with additional debriefing and background information • Pantomime-Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Film • Lecture • Case studies and critical incidents, especially making isomorphic attributions in case studies • Discussions
M O T T V I A T I O N S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement of empathy, tolerance for ambiguity and ethnorelativism Dealing with negative emotions coupled with cross-cultural misunderstandings and failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in role plays and analysis of own feelings and needs • Interaction with other participants in role plays and simulation • Experience of strange new situations and cross-cultural problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagination in the positions of the protagonists of critical incident • Analysis of emotions the protagonists
S K I L L S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of culture adequate behaviors • Solving of cross-cultural problems • Training of metacommunication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing new scenarios for conflict-laden role plays and their performance • Solving the task in the simulation game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing new scenarios for critical incidents • Identifying of successful acculturation strategies in the film and broadening of one's behavior repertoire

The table shows the embodiment of German cultural standards in critical incidents in case studies in didactic training; role plays in experiential training were the core of the training. The role plays were designed according to critical incidents cited by Schroll-Machl (2002) in her training manual “Die Deutschen – Wir Deutsche Fremdwahrnehmung und Selbstsicht im Berufsleben”³ as examples of the manifestation of the particular cultural standards. The case studies referred to the experience of the trainer and other East European scholarship holders during their internships in German organizations. Both role plays and case studies involved cross-cultural interactions with one or more problems to solve.

³ English version: *Doing Business with Germans. Their Perception, Our Perception.* (Schroll-Machl, 2008).

When we take Kolb's (1984) Learning Cycle as a model to describe the learning process in both types of training, then the experiential training began with a concrete experience in dealing with a challenging cross-cultural situation. After the performance, the participants examined their experience: they described their perceptions of the situation, the people and problems involved, clarified their decisions and finally evaluated the performed solution in terms of effectiveness and appropriateness from their point of view and from the point of view of their partner in the role play. In this phase cross-cultural theory and abstract concepts (e.g., particular German cultural standards) were introduced or deduced by students on their own.

In the didactic training it was the opposite. Firstly, abstract concepts (e.g., German cultural standards) were explained in a lecture and their impacts on everyday life were discussed. Then the students got case studies with the task of finding manifestations of the abstract cultural standards in the concretely described situation and solving the problems sketched out in the case study. After working in small groups, the solutions were presented and discussed in the class. In the discussions the focus lay on the same issues as in the reflection after the role plays. Usually the new enhanced solution was developed as a result of class discussion.

Similar methods were chosen for deepening general cultural knowledge and cultural awareness using the simulation game "Bei den Derrdianen"⁴ (Losche, 2005) and the film "Nirgendwo in Afrika"⁵ (Link, 2001). The film presented the troubles of a German Jewish family taking refuge in Africa. The students participated in the task of observing and evaluating the acculturation strategies of the family members and deducing the elements of intercultural competence.

Evaluation Design

To evaluate the comparative impacts of both training approaches, an eleven-month panel study with a quasi-experimental design was conducted, driven by Kirkpatrick's (1979) four steps Model of Evaluation with triangulation in perspectives and methods involving the following steps: Reaction, Learning, Behavior – micro level, Behavior – macro level.

Reaction focused on measuring the opinions and satisfaction of the participants with the training. The comment sheet completed by the participants and the non-standardized observation documents recording events during the training and kept by the trainer served as evaluation tools. The comment sheet for the participants,

⁴ English translation: "Among Derrdians." Derrdians stand for inhabitants of a fictitious country "Derrdia".

⁵ English translation of film title: "Nowhere in Africa"

consisting of 38/39 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, was adapted from Rindermann (2001, 55-76) and covered five dimensions: Training Contents, Training Methods, Trainer, Organization and Conducting of the Training and Outputs of the training. Furthermore, we asked the participants to evaluate the received training on the German grading scale of 1-6 where 1 is the best. Data concerning attendance in the CCT program, active participation in the modules in the CCT program, and previous knowledge about training topics as well as demographic data – including gender, subject of study, and nationality - were also collected, and served as control variables. The Dimension Training Contents consisted of five items (α .84) including “the content of the training is relevant”. The Dimension Training Methods concerning processing of critical incidents involved five items (α .89) including “the role plays/ case studies helped me to understand theory,” “I learned to empathize with others by participation in role plays/ case studies,” or “role plays/ case studies gave me an opportunity to develop and fathom various behavioral strategies.” Moreover, five items were related to the simulation game in the experiential training, four items in the film and two items in the lecture in the didactic training. Because the situation experienced in the simulation game did not completely coincide with the situations shown in the film, separate items were created to evaluate these elements of the training. The evaluated Dimension Trainer (α .89) employed eight items, such as, “The trainer exemplified material clearly.” or “The trainer involved the group.” “The trainer tried to interface theory and practice”. The dimension Organization and Conducting of the Training (α .71) focused on tempo, extent and demands, as well as overlaps of the training contents with other courses. Training Outputs (α .94) consisted of 4 items tapping the perceived progression in cultural awareness, intercultural interest and willingness for further autonomous cross-cultural learning.

Learning effects were measured in a pretest-posttest-design by doing a case study with several critical incidents presented in German. The case study used as an evaluating tool was unfamiliar to the participants. It was not a replication of any of the case studies or role plays that participants encountered during the training. The first days for a foreign intern in a German company and his problems with colleagues and superiors due to different cultural orientations as well as typical challenges connected with foreign internships (i.e., seclusion in a new environment, communication in a foreign language, etc.) were described in this case study. Four tasks were presented to students for analysis of the case:

1. identify the acts which are differently interpreted in the different cultures of the protagonists of the case study and therefore become sources for cultural misunderstandings

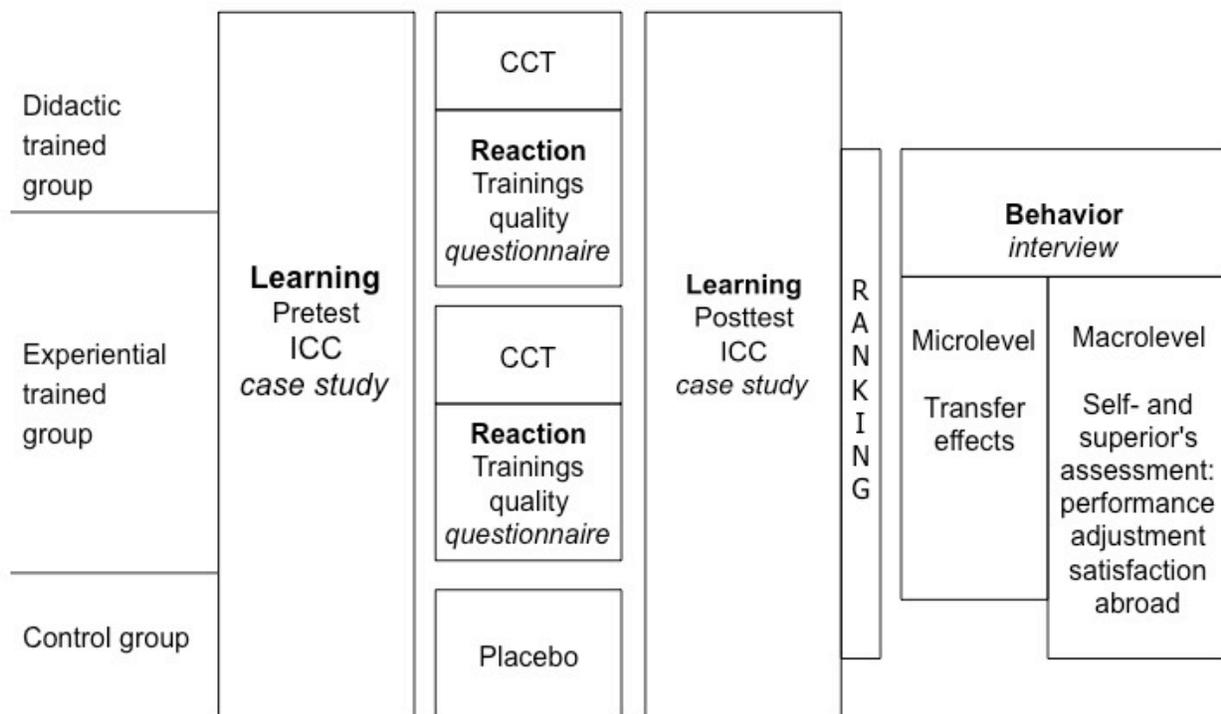
2. identify the cultural norms affecting the behavior of the protagonists (culture specific knowledge, making correct isomorphic attributions)
3. describe the feelings and emotions of the protagonists during an interaction (empathy)
4. submit proposals for adequate interaction with hosts and develop a solution for problems which arose in the cross-cultural encounter (problem solving ability)

We created the tasks to cover the core elements of the cognitive, affective and conative dimension of intercultural communication competence. The dependent variables were the ability to indicate the sources for cross-cultural misunderstandings, culture-specific knowledge, empathy and problem-solving ability. The method of assessing learning effects was adapted from Podsiadlowski & Spieß (1996). The students' protocols were rated twice within the space of three months by the same evaluator, who was ignorant of the three conditions. Each right answer was awarded one point, while displaying an ethnocentric perspective was scored negatively. Proposals submitted for adequate interaction with hosts and solutions developed for problems which arose in the cross-cultural encounter described were rated on a 10 point scale. A maximum score of 10 points was given for effective lasting proposals/solutions described in depth, considering the opportunities of the protagonists and the cultural context.

The quantitative learning scores in each evaluated dimension were compared in the pretest and posttest to ascertain a significant learning progression in each group (Wilcoxon-test). In addition, the scores of the groups in the pretest and posttest were compared with the score of the control group and examined on significance (Mann-Whitney-U-test). We employed the training approach as a control variable. Furthermore, the protocols were subjected to content analysis to check the modification of problem-solving strategies before and after the training. **Behavioral** effects were discovered in the qualitative part of the study, including in the interviews with training participants as well as non-trained students, and their supervisors and peers familiar with their performance during internships abroad. The evaluation of behavioral effects had two levels. On the macro level training effects on adjustment, work performance and satisfaction in the internships abroad were identified in the self- and supervisor's/peer's assessments. On the micro level the transfer of the acquired knowledge and skills in real cross-cultural encounters during the internship abroad was examined. Understandably, the transfer could be researched only on trained individuals. Extreme cases, according to the scores in the learning measures, were selected for interviews: students with the highest learning score, with the lowest learning score, with an extreme learning progression and regression (the maximum positive and maximum negative difference between the learning scores in the posttest and pretest). Because participation in this phase of evaluation was purely voluntary, in those cases where one

person refused to have an interview, the next person in the ranking was asked. Five people from the didactically trained group (one pilot interview was included in the final analysis, too, two people from the experiential trained group and two people from the control group were interviewed. The small number of interview partners from the last two groups arose because of overlaps in the selection categories. In these groups the person with the highest learning score in the posttest and the highest learning progression was the same, as well as the person with the lowest learning score and the lowest learning progression. Including interviews with supervisors and peers, 21 interviews were conducted in the work place. The interviews lasted 30 – 120 minutes and the respondents could speak in their mother tongue. However, since they were acquainted with the process of data analysis most of the subjects preferred to speak German (the language of the evaluation report). The behavioral measures were conducted from 5-28 weeks of the internship up to nine months after the training. All interviews were transcribed and translated into German and subsequently evaluated. Figure 1 shows this rather complex evaluation design.

Figure 1. Evaluation design



CCT- Cross cultural training ICC – intercultural competence

RESULTS

On **reaction measures** the trainees evaluated the didactic training significantly better than the experiential one in the dimensions of Training Contents, Training Outputs, Trainer and Organization and Conducting of the Training, as well as on a summary evaluation of the final mark. No significant contrasts were identified on items characterizing the participants of both groups: active participation of the trainees and their previous knowledge. However the most important finding is that there was no significant difference among conditions in the evaluation of the training methods (see Table 2 below). The rating of training contents and perceived training outputs seems to have closer links to the summary evaluation of the training than the training methods used. Correlation tests showed a middle correlation between the summary evaluation of the final mark and the evaluation of training contents ($r = -0,78$, $p \leq 0,01$) or training outputs ($r = -0,75$, $p \leq 0,01$) but no significant correlation between the summary evaluation of the final mark and the evaluation of training methods ($r = -0,52$, $p \geq 0,05$ for the didactic CCT; $r = -0,42$, $p \geq 0,05$ for the experiential CCT).

The didactic training was rated very positively. The means were higher than 5,5 on a 7-point Likert-type scale in the dimensions of Training Contents, Training Outputs, Trainer, Training Methods and in the active participation of the trainees. In the dimension of Organization and Conduct of the Training the desired value of about four was reached (this dimension involved the tempo, the extent and demands of the training, which should be not too low (values of about 1-2) and not too high (6-7); therefore a desired value of about four or slightly higher).

In comparison with the didactically trained group the participants evaluated the experimental training worse, especially in the means of the dimensions of Training Outputs and Training Contents. These were notably lower and achieved only average values (see table 2)

Table 2. Results Reaction

Evaluated Dimension	Didactic CCT (n = 13)		Experiential CCT (n = 15)		Level of significance
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	p
Training contents	6,05	0,60	4,70	1,02	0,001
Training outputs	5,58	0,78	3,81	1,37	0,000
Training Methods processing critical incidents (case studies/ role plays)	5,88	0,90	5,03	1,43	0,079
Trainer	6,56	0,32	5,99	0,71	0,046
Organization and conducting of the training	4,60	0,48	4,00	0,67	0,011
Active participation of the trainees	5,92	1,12	5,20	1,97	0,239
Previous knowledge of the trainees	5,15	0,80	5,27	1,10	0,762
Summary evaluation for the training in the final mark for the training	1,44	0,39	2,60	0,59	0,000

Learning Measures

Learning effects were evaluated by a subject's analysis of a cross cultural encounter involving several critical incidents in a case study. Pretest learning scores showed no differences on any of the measured criteria (ability to indicate cross-cultural misunderstandings, culture-specific knowledge, empathy and problem-solving ability) among the conditions. The situation changed in the posttest results. Both training approaches measured the **cognitive dimension** of ICT as positive. The participants of both trained groups identified more acts in the case study, which were differently interpreted by protagonists in the different cultures of the protagonists, and so became sources for cultural misunderstandings. They also discovered less self-evident problems in cross-cultural interaction (e.g., the different role expectation by the partner). Moreover, while in the pretest all participants of the study defined the personality disposition of the protagonists or situational factors or both as a cause for the clash between protagonists, in the posttest the participants with training included stronger different cultural norms as a reason for misunderstandings than students without training. Table 3 presents a significant progression; that is, a positive significant difference between posttest and pretest by the didactically trained group, but no significant difference between the didactically trained group and the control group on this criterion in the posttest. The experiential trained group achieved, for a change, a significant difference from the control group in the posttest but did not do significantly better in the posttest than in the pretest.

Table 3. Learning results - Identifying of sources for cultural misunderstandings

Average score on Identifying of sources for cultural misunderstandings	Control group		Didactic CCT		Experiential CCT	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	1,542	,81	1,536	1,13	2,786	1,31
Posttest	2,208	1,20	2,893	1,30	3,071	0,83
Significance in pretest-posttest-comparison	,158		,008		,470	
Significance in posttest-comparison to the control group	-		,176		,067	

The participants of both trained groups increased their culture specific conceptual and attributional knowledge. The Wilcoxon-test indicated that there were significant differences between pre- and posttest scores by both groups and the Mann-Whitney-U-test showed a significant contrast in the posttest between the participants of the experiential training and non- trained individuals (see Table 4).

Table 4. Learning results – culture specific knowledge

Average score on identifying the cultural norms affecting behavior of protagonists	Control group		Didactic CCT		Experiential CCT	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	0,636	1,18	,714	1,20	,964	1,08
Posttest	1,800	1,46	2,846	2,44	3,86	1,86
Significance in pretest-posttest-comparison	,020		,011		,001	
Significance in posttest-comparison to the control group	-		,343		,011	

Regarding **affective modification** we chose empathy as a dependent variable. In this criterion the trainees in the experiential group performed significantly better in the posttest than the comparison group, but the statistical tests showed no significant posttest-pretest difference. In comparison to these results, the participants of the didactic training scored significantly better in posttest than in the pretest and their posttest scores differed significantly from those of the control group (see Table 5). The content analysis showed that the participants could empathize relatively well with the foreign intern from the case study in the pretest, and this ability increased particularly with the trained people. However, only a few participants paid attention to the German superior's feelings and to his perception of the situation, and gave him a predominantly negative score. The trained people focused on him more in the posttest. Negative attributions stayed constant in the control group (38.5 %); slightly increased in the experiential trained group (Pretest 21.4 %; Posttest 26.7 %); were reduced only in the

didactically trained group (Pretest 30.8 %; Posttest 23.1 %); however, this trend was not significant.

Table 5. Learning results - Empathy

Average score on empathy	Control group		Didactic CCT		Experiential CCT	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	2,375	1,21	1,821	2,44	4,429	3,25
Posttest	2,458	1,23	3,893	1,55	4,821	2,88
Significance in pretest-posttest-comparison	,877		,009		,850	
Significance in posttest-comparison to the control group	-		,031		,023	

The impact of training on the conative dimension of intercultural competence was measured by an examination of proposals submitted about adequate interaction with hosts and solutions developed for problems that arose in the cross-cultural encounter described. Experiential training failed to affect the behavioral strategies of the participants. No significant differences were found to exist either in a pretest-posttest-comparison or in a posttest-comparison to the control group. On the other hand, participants of the didactic training reached a significant learning progression but they did not score significantly higher in the posttest than the control group (see Table 6).

Table 6. Learning results – problem-solving ability in cross-cultural encounter

Average score on solutions for a smooth interaction	Control group		Didactic CCT		Experiential CCT	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	4,208	1,48	3,750	1,79	5,538	1,52
Posttest	4,917	1,88	6,269	1,94	6,429	2,18
Significance in pretest-posttest-comparison	,228		,024		,246	
Significance in posttest-comparison to the control group	-		,060		,076	

The content analysis revealed six types of solution strategies in the student documents in the case study. The solution strategy of reflection about culture differences with reciprocal adjustment in creating a “third cultural place” was found to be the most appropriate for cross-cultural arrangements (Bolten 2001, p. 55); 28.6% of didactically trained participants and 14.3 % of experiential trained individuals. But nobody from the non-trained group chose this strategy in the posttest.

To sum up the results of the learning measures, both training conditions had a positive impact in the cognitive dimension. But the didactic training surpassed the experiential training in the affective (empathy) and conative (generating of the solutions for a smooth cross-cultural interaction) dimensions of intercultural communication competence.

Behavioral measures

In contrast to other studies examining training effects only in simulated interaction with hosts, we evaluated training effects in real cross-cultural encounters four to eight months after the training and searched for long-term training effects. For this purpose we asked selected training participants from both groups with extreme scores to talk about cross-cultural critical incidents they experienced or observations of cultural diversity and about the **transfer of in-training achieved knowledge and competencies** in those matters. The reports on cross-cultural critical incidents they experienced were more valuable because the participants were usually asked for reactions to all three dimensions of intercultural competence, while attributions in observation of cultural differences that were adequately made could indicate only a transfer on a cognitive dimension of intercultural competence. The respondents were strongly encouraged to be completely honest and open in order to obtain credible data. Since just a few cases of desired effects were detected, it seems that the respondents heard of this and did not tend to give a desired response to “please” the researcher. Knowledge transfer and transfer of attitudes were ascertained, albeit rather rarely. Three categories of knowledge transfer were established:

1. uninformed transfer with an activation of knowledge and impacts on attitudes and behavior,
2. uninformed transfer only with an activation of knowledge, without impacts on attitudes and behavior
3. informed transfer “ex post facto”.

The members of the didactic group who were interviewed displayed knowledge transfer better than the interviewed participants of the experiential training. The first two categories were only identified by didactically trained responders. The cases from didactically trained participants also predominated the third category (seven reports from didactically trained participants vs. three reports from the experiential trained group).

The following report can be seen as indicative for category 1 - uninformed transfer with an activation of knowledge and impacts on attitudes and behavior. Unfortunately, this is

the only case that could be identified from the interviews of this most valuable category of transfer.

Have you remembered something from the training?

Yes, the cultural dimensions of power distance or low context explained on examples. I observed their manifestations in real life; therefore I've remembered them well. [...]

The issue with German straightforward communication and knowledge about their view of criticism [discussed in the training] was very important for me. I know after the training that when somebody passes criticism on to me, he just gives his opinion. And that I learned in the training: Germans are used to boldly saying what they mean. This is different to what we Czechs consider to be criticism. If somebody passed criticism on to me, I would get sad because I would assume he did not like me. The realization of cultural difference in the concept of criticism was important to me. I learned to deal better with criticism.

Mhm, you learned then that personal and objective issues are usually regarded separately and that criticism is mostly fair; however, the criticism may sound harsh to you.

Yes and it was very important for me to know. Otherwise, I would brood the whole week about why my superior said that to me. Now I know the criticism is primarily focused on the issue, not on the person. [...] Finally, I like this kind of criticizing. It is very straightforward but not personally oriented. It's simply the truth, a true comment. In my country [Czech Republic] criticism is expressed badly and it is badly accepted.

[In another part of the Interview the responder described her meeting with the director] The director was amazed that I expressed fair comments so openly and gave some recommendations for improvements, too.

(didactically trained person with the highest score on learning)

The following statement describing the manifestation of a standard German cultural appreciation of rules and structures is cited as an example for category 2 - uninformed transfer only with activation of knowledge, without an impact on attitudes and behavior

I saw this German orderliness is evident in details. I usually ride my bicycle to work and I have to cross the road. In the middle is a pedestrian island, where the road forks and there are two traffic lights in place. Germans always wait on the

pedestrian island for the second green light. I pass through, since from the pedestrian island you can see if a car is approaching or not. And if there's no traffic, I pass through. I don't care whether it is green or red. I won't hinder myself or somebody else uselessly. I think this is typical Czech strategy. There is some traffic rule – to hell with it! In contrast to this, Germans always wait for a green light. [...] As I said, Germans strive to observe the rules, in comparison to this, Czechs are little bit anarchistic. The imperative is "forbidden fruit tastes the sweetest." Because there is a rule we try to break with it.

(didactically trained person with regression on learning)

The trainee appropriately recognized in the behavior an influence of the cultural standard but the impact of his attitudes was not verbalized and he behaved according to the standards of his home culture.

The informed transfer after the encounter is illustrated by the following fragment of the interview with an experiential trained person.

And the communication with a Designer, what was it like?

I noticed – not only in the communication with him but also in communication with others – they are busy and make their calls brief. He wants to hear just two words from me and then tells me "OK, thanks. Bye!" and hangs up. And I feel sometimes a kind of tension or impatience on his part due to my "extensive" narration in complete sentences, in cases where two words would do. But can I express myself in another way? Not yet.

Can you explain this behavior otherwise? The reason is maybe not your foreign language skills ...

Yes, it's not up to me. They could be simply busy.

Can you explain the behavior of your counterparts due to different cultural norms?

OK, Germans are always considered to be straightforward and task oriented. I am a blunt person, too. [pause]. They stick to facts. They want facts not small talk.

(experiential trained person with a high score and the highest learning progression)

The transfer of knowledge occurred in this case only by intervention from the interviewer, who pointed out the relevance of cultural knowledge acquired in the

training. After this intervention the trainee recognized the impact of cultural influence on the behavior of host nationals, but she only made this attribution after the encounter. Since the transfer occurred “ex post facto”, impacts on attitudes and behavior could not appear in the situation described. However, the interview fragment shows the knowledge was available even six months after the training and could possibly be applied in future encounters.

We classified the appropriate reports of cross-cultural critical incidents and observation of cultural differences made upon cards, with cultural standards shown as the informed transfer “ex post facto” too. Then we identified the informed transfer (12 reports) more frequently than the uninformed transfer (4 reports). The reports from didactically trained individuals prevailed in the informed transfer too (didactically trained participants - 8 comments, experiential trained participants - 4 comments). There was also quite a large contrast between good and bad learners. While the learner with the highest score from the didactic training reported about 4 incidents in which she applied her cultural knowledge and the learner with the highest score from the experiential training recognized a transfer three times, the responder with the lowest score from the didactic training referred only once to an informed transfer and the responder with the lowest score from the experiential training could not remember any incident of applying her knowledge.

Two people, one from each type of training, commented not only on the knowledge transfer but also on the transfer of attitudes. Here are their comments reflecting the change from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

We've learned that people in other countries can behave differently and what the reasons are. It's important to know, since we can misunderstand such behaviors. I learned that it is necessary firstly, to see things from a distance, to think about it and then to act. Not all people see things in the same way. Therefore, they behave differently. Other people have grown up in other cultures and it has affected their behavior. Yes, that's it. That is what I've learned. Moreover, I've learned things important for me needn't always be important for everybody everywhere. I think that is what I've learned.

(didactically trained person, with high learning progression)

And what's important for me, training calls your attention to some issues. I don't believe all people ... No, I'll begin in another way... Some people believe everything they think is the wisest, the most important, the best and is imperative for everybody. They can't imagine there are other views, other perceptions and other cultures. Since I've come to Germany and after attending the training and

because I collaborated with foreigners, I've become sensitive to this. However, I experienced encounters with bad ends, too. And then I think about it "Why didn't it work? What was the perception of my counterpart? What was my perception? What did we see differently? What was the reason for our misunderstanding?"
(experiential trained person with a high score and the highest learning progression)

To sum up, the students interviewed rarely reported about their transfer. Comparing didactic and experiential training on this criterion, the participants with didactic training performed better.

Behavior measures on macro level included an evaluation of **training impacts on adjustment, satisfaction and work performance** during internships abroad. Differences between the trained and non-trained individuals didn't concern the degree of adjustment, but the strategies of adjustment. The participants of didactic training brought up the widest array of adjustment strategies. While the non-trained individuals reported on observation learning, facilitation of language skills and the overcoming of negative stereotypes, as well as use of the social support that was offered, the repertoire of the adjustment strategies of trained people was much wider. The responders of both training groups also commented on conscious cultural learning, active searching for social contacts with host nationals and some palliative strategies caused by problems (e.g., verbalizing of negative emotions due to problems during the internship in calls with parents, a realization of the temporariness of the assignment, discrimination between spheres of life where a cultural adjustment is needed and those where it's not). Moreover, the didactically trained participants used verbal self-presentation and undertaking and fulfilling of extra difficult tasks to build a positive social identity and to get accepted by the local staff. Regarding the degree of satisfaction, no differences between the conditions were found. Job content, quality of relations with the host nationals and satisfaction with one's own performance were identified as determining factors. Besides this, subjects interviewed from the didactic group emphasized the learning effect of their internships. The training influenced performance abroad only minimally. The average rating of superiors for the trained interns from the didactic as well as experiential training was 1,5 and for non-trained interns 2.

In summary, training effects on behavior in real cross-cultural encounters evaluated four to eight months after the training were much smaller than learning effects. The didactic training surpassed the experiential on this evaluation level, too.

DISCUSSION

The data about the preferences and effectiveness of the training approaches by East European graduates revealed that the didactic training seems to be better accepted and more successful. This may be explained by a combination of different reasons. Firstly, educational traditions in East Europe and the learner's education experiences up to the time of the training could be responsible for the results. Lecture and Socratic tutorial dialogue have been the predominant methods (Bútorac, 1996). Forms of action-oriented instruction or experiential education are being introduced slowly and are not really disseminated yet. A lot of teachers assume those methods to be appropriate only for children. Hence, the trainees are not used to, or have stopped learning through, playing. As we found out from the trainer's observation, playing according to scripts before an audience and reflecting on one's feelings, perceptions and experiences was extremely difficult for the participants. It is possible that that's why the potential of experiential methods was not utilized completely. Another reason for less popularity of experiential training in our sample than in the US/Canadian samples (Early, 1987; Fowler & Blohm, 2005, and Pruegger & Rogers 1994) can be that US culture is more action driven (Müller & Thomas 1991) than Central East European cultures. Secondly, some special characteristics of the sample could condition a preference for didactic training. The sample consisted of graduated students with highly developed cognitive skills, used for learning on the basis of text materials. As such, they could feel better served by the didactic training. Thirdly, some results could be distorted by students being assigned to particular conditions of the course of study. Because of this many more Germans succeeded in the experiential training rather than the didactic training. They could regard the training as not so relevant due to the transmission of knowledge about their home culture and therefore they did not evaluate the training so favorably. It should be noted that the didactic training that was given was not just lecture based – as is usually expected. It was learner centered and highly participative, involving a wide variety of methods (lecture, case studies, discussions, film analysis; see Table 1). However, these attributes are characteristics of experiential training also. This being the case, our findings should be replicated with a bigger random sample of East Europeans to examine if the preference for the cognitive method is really influenced by culture or selection bias.

The results of the learning measures correspond with previous research. Both types of training in our study were effective in enhancing cultural knowledge. Mendenhall et al. (2004) summarized in his review of previous evaluation-research, that knowledge is a dependent variable in the training which yielded the highest percentage of significant positive results. In contrast to this, the previous evaluations show mixed findings regarding impact on attitudes and behavior. Experiential training demanding a

cognitive, affective and conative engagement of the participants was considered to be more successful in this field (Black & Mendenhall 1991; Mendenhall, Punnett, & Ricks, 1995). However, in the present study, surprisingly only the participants of the didactic training significantly facilitated their intercultural competence on the affective (empathy) and conative (problem-solving ability in cross-cultural encounters) criteria in pretest-posttest comparisons. Still their posttest score on the conative criterion was not significantly different from the posttest score of the non-trained group. Social psychological (Nákonečný, 2000) and cognitive psychological research (Cargile & Giles 1996) supports the findings regarding the difficulty of change of attitudes and behavior patterns that emerge over years and which are determined by the context one lives in. The research on transfer on the behavioral level showed only modest results, even though all interviewed participants, except the person with the lowest learning score or a learning regression in posttest from the experiential learning, could mention at least one situation during their internship abroad when they applied the knowledge or attitudes fostered by the training. The results are disappointing; the ratio of a resulting positive transfer and non-existent transfer was 2:3.

A comparison with other studies is difficult since transfer in real cross-cultural encounters is very rarely examined. An analogous qualitative evaluation by Kinast (1998) yielded comparable results. Quantitative studies from Bhawuk (1998) and Harrison (1992) documented no significant impact on the behavior of didactic or experiential instructed participants. The poor transfer was possibly caused by a long period of time between the training and the evaluation of the transfer, and due to an absence of transfer facilitating activities during this time. Another possible reason is the inappropriateness of the research method used for this purpose. Or as Bittner (2003) suggests, trainees are simply overwhelmed by their work in foreign assignments and success is rated on other criteria, so that they have no time to focus on the transfer of cultural issues.

The training impacts shown here on adjustment, satisfaction and work performance during internships abroad indicate that the participants could benefit from the training as they developed a broader spectrum of adjustment strategies and were slightly better rated by their superiors. The superiority of the didactic training appeared in these criteria, too.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

We consider the present study to be a first step in the research of training effectiveness by learners from East and Central East Europe. Although we tried to conduct a rigorous

cross-cultural evaluation research conforming to the requirements of Kealey & Protheroe (1996) and fulfilling the recommendation made by Mendenhall et al. (2004) in their review of evaluation research on CCT, due to the field nature of our study the evaluation exhibits some weaknesses. Our findings are tentative due to a small, limited sample and due to the impossibility of randomization of the sample. Since we examined a student sample living a year and half in the host country, additional research will want to address the issue of young professionals receiving pre-departure training in their home countries. Our research on transfer shows the necessity for the development of new measurement tools for this uncharted area of CCT evaluation.

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