

Seewald, Stefanie

Schroll-Machl, Sylvia (2003). Doing Business with Germans. Their Perception, Our Perception. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 216 pp., 24,90 €.

[Rezension]

Tertium comparationis 10 (2004) 1, S. 136-138

urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-33173

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



<http://www.waxmann.com>

Nutzungsbedingungen / conditions of use

Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Die Nutzung stellt keine Übertragung des Eigentumsrechts an diesem Dokument dar und gilt vorbehaltlich der folgenden Einschränkungen: Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document.
This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. Use of this document does not include any transfer of property rights and it is conditional to the following limitations: All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.
By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS
Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung (DIPF)
Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft
Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung
Schloßstr. 29, D-60486 Frankfurt am Main
E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de
Internet: www.pedocs.de

of languages in Scotland's schools in general and of Gaelic in particular. In this respect, they draw attention to the historical discrimination against Gaelic and the resulting differences in today's needs of Gaelic education, depending on the individuals' previous Gaelic knowledge and local demography. Politically, Nicolson and MacIver point to a secure legal status for Gaelic, a wider integration of Gaelic into the educational system, and the prevailing lack of support among many politicians, despite various counter-examples. In their summary, the authors draw a moderately positive conclusion: On the one hand, they call GME "one of the success stories of recent Scottish education". On the other hand, several major issues remain unsolved, and "if Gaelic as a language is to survive into the next century, ..., then GME will require attention as one of several key language planning factors central to the survival policy".

To sum up, the aim of the book in providing an introduction on current Gaelic Medium Education, including its historical background, is well achieved. The texts are easy to read and are well supported by statistical data. Given its limitedness of only 73 text pages, one can deduct that an extended analysis was not the aim of the editors. Readers who wish to have such a detailed analysis should consult the detailed bibliography (covering titles up to the year 2002). However, for all those that are looking for a short, general introduction into GME, the volume nicely fulfils its purpose.

Heiko F. Marten
Freie Universität Berlin

Schroll-Machl, Sylvia (2003). *Doing Business with Germans. Their Perception, Our Perception*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 216 pp., 24,90 €.

Due to the process of globalization, cultural differences are no longer a matter of interest to tourists and scientific research, but have become part of the daily life of many. A vast amount of knowledge about culture is necessary in order to successfully manage international business, as Alexander Thomas claims in the foreword to this book (p. 9).

Germany is an important player in international business, therefore many people world-wide are working with Germans, and many Germans come into contact with foreigners.

Doing Business with Germans. Their Perception, Our Perception by Sylvia Schroll-Machl specifically addresses members of both groups. The author, an intercultural trainer with a background in psychological research, provides the readers with information about the 'cultural logic' of their own and the other's behavior, in order to enhance their intercultural competence.

Schroll-Machl uses four chapters to address both the theoretical and practical issues of German culture. The introductory chapter (7 pages) explains not only the relevance of understanding the 'cultural logic' of other's and one's own 'culture standards' to intercultural competence, but also informs the reader that the book describes *probabilities* and does not try to explain the behavior of each German individual without exceptions.

The following chapter (12 pages) provides the reader with an explanation of the concept of 'culture standards'. On the

basis of defining culture as an orientation system it explains intercultural misunderstandings as the application of different systems. The cultural socialization provides the individual with communication tools which may lead to wrong conclusions when communicating with an individual of a different culture / orientation system. In order to communicate effectively in an intercultural context the individual must not only understand the system of the other culture, but must also reflect his own system. Each system contains elements, which are interrelated. These elements are called 'culture standards', they simplify complexities and provide behavioral guidance. By analyzing so called 'critical incidents' it is possible to identify and describe central 'culture standards'. The author stresses the fact that the concept of 'culture standards' is limited since culture is only *one* aspect of human behavior. Therefore it is essential to keep in mind other produce variables which influence behavior, such as interpersonal and situational aspects. Nevertheless, since people often interpret behavior from an interpersonal or situational viewpoint, as the author claims, the book can provide the reader with information on the third – the cultural – aspect of communication.

In the chapter 'the historical context' (7 pages) the reader will find an explanation of how German cultural standards have developed over time. It contains a brief overview of German history and names the large pillars of the Occident (classical antiquity, the Judeo-Christian religions and Protestantism), the disintegration into territorial states and the ongoing existential upheavals as the major factors which shaped German mentality.

The chapter on 'Central German Culture Standards' is the most extensive chapter (164 pages), and this is where the strength of the book lies. Schroll-Machl presents eight central German 'culture standards' and illustrates them with several 'critical incidents' she learned from participants of her intercultural training courses. The chapter is therefore organized in 8 subchapters, each about 20 pages long: 1. Objectivism (Objectivity, Task-Orientation), 2. Appreciation of Rules, Regulations and Structures; 3. Rule-Oriented, Internalized Control, 4. Time-Planning, 5. Differentiation of Personality and Living Spheres; 6. Differentiation Between Professional and Private Life, 7. Low-Context Style of Communication, 8. Individualism.

To help the reader to quickly find information, all subchapters are broken into the following sections. The first section of each subchapter is called 'How Germans are perceived by other cultures' and contains a list of spontaneous responses from foreigners asked about behavioral differences they have noticed. It is followed by several examples of situations reported during intercultural training courses in Germany. The author then defines and explains the specific 'culture standard' which is the basis for the situations described. She gives additional examples for behavior influenced by this 'culture standards', often with a specific focus on communication style. The next section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the particular 'culture standard'. The section 'Recommendations' consists of two parts, one is a list of suggestions for non-Germans working with Germans, and the other a list of suggestions for Germans working internationally.

Each chapter concludes with a section called ‘Historical Background’ which explains how this particular ‘culture standard’ has developed over time and what circumstances have influenced its development.

The 8th ‘culture standard’ ‘individualism’ is a fundamental standard in western culture in general. This chapter therefore includes a section called ‘Individualism and other Culture Standards’ which explains how individualism influences all other German ‘culture standards’.

The book concludes with an explanation how the reading will influence the reader’s perception – again differentiated between the German and the non-German reader – including a list of challenges and tasks to conquer in the future.

As opposed to many classical readings on German culture such as Craig, G. (1991)¹, Ardagh, J. (1995)² and Hall, E.T. & Hall, M.R. (1994)³ this book is written by a German. It is based on results of current scientific research done by Alexander Thomas and the Regensburg Institute of Psychological Research. The book helps the reader not only to understand the basics of the concept of ‘culture standards’ – and can therefore be used as an introduction to this concept –,

but also to apply theoretical findings to every day life.

The theoretical background is explained in language that is brief and clear and is illustrated with several examples from the authors experience as an intercultural trainer. This feature makes the book a rich resource for anyone who deals with situations in which Germans are involved, such as Non-Germans working with Germans, Germans working in an international context, exchange students, etc. It can also be used as reading material to be discussed in an intercultural training or a seminar about intercultural communication.

The book is also available in German: *Die Deutschen – Wir Deutsche. Fremdwahrnehmung und Selbstsicht im Berufsleben.*

Stefanie Seewald
Universität Lüneburg

1 Craig, G. (1991). *The Germans* (5th edition). New York: Penguin Books.

2 Ardagh, J. (1995). *Germany and the Germans*. (3rd edition). London: Hamilton.

3 Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R. (1994). *Understanding Cultural Differences. Germans, French and Americans* (8th edition). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.