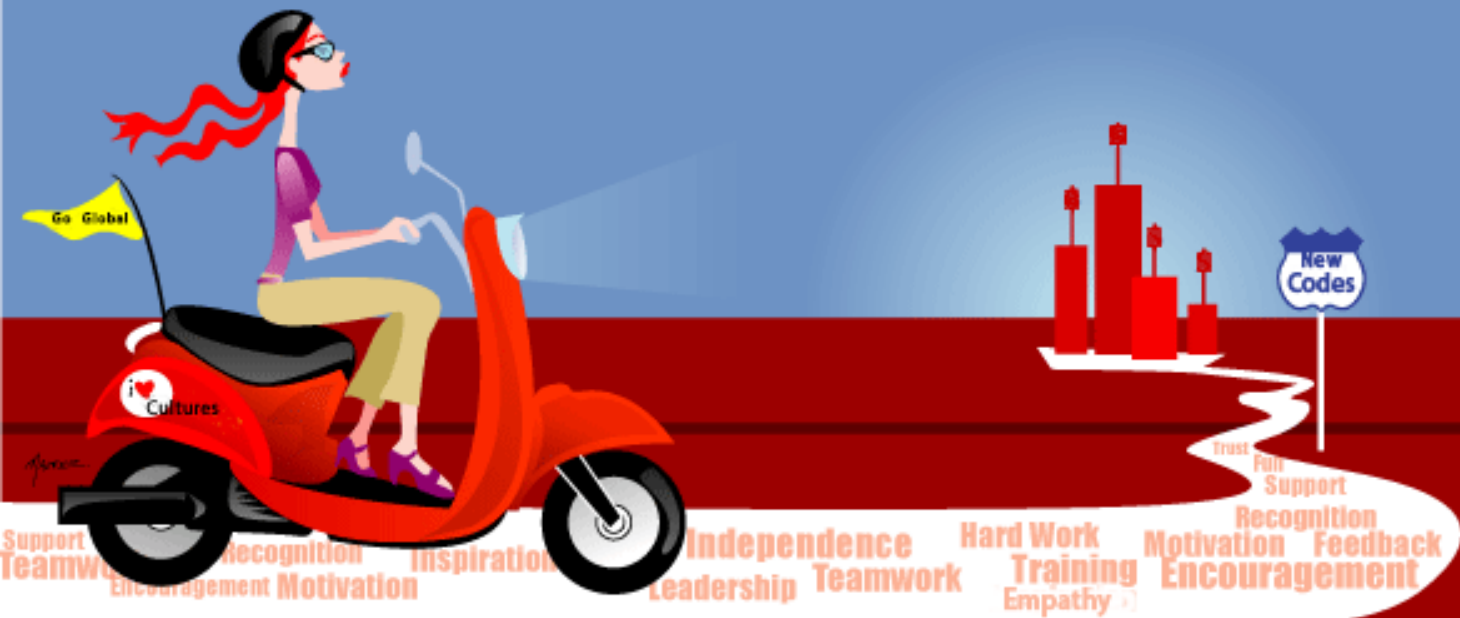


# SIETAR JOURNAL

## Facilitating Intercultural Awareness in the Business World

*What does it take to be an effective trainer?*



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### Impressum

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# SIETAR Journal

## Editorial

### How do companies assess an intercultural trainer?

Albert Einstein once famously wrote on a Princeton blackboard, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." This rather simple observation of life sums up what we interculturalists are confronted with, namely, how do we measure the effectiveness of — and justify — our work? Essentially we deal with subjective worldviews and try to generate alternative perceptions and form new mindsets, something that's extremely difficult to quantify.

Robert Gibson, our interviewee for this issue, is confronted with the issue on a daily basis. A senior consultant for intercultural business with one of Germany's largest companies, he talks about what globalized organizations look for when hiring a trainer. His thoughts are quite instructive and he concludes that what counts most is to have an intuitive feel for the business requirements of the company you work for. (Pages 3-8)

On September 18-21, SIETAR Europa held its congress in Tallinn. The Estonian culture provided the background for a unique, exciting encounter, with 280 people from all over the world. In attendance, Stéphanie Stephan provides a summary of the highlights and writes about some of the many excellent presentations, including Charles Hampden-Turner and Milton Bennett's intercultural analysis of the English musical "Les Misérables". (Pages 12-15)



Dan MacLeod shows how the ripples of French colonization in North Africa are now washing ashore in another ex-colony, Québec, creating intercultural havoc. But if Islam is seen as "supra-national", what of the multinational corporations we live with every day? (Pages 17-19)

SIETAR Europa has gone through some changes, with Livingstone Thompson replacing Debbie Swallow as President. All of us join together in thanking Debbie for the dedication and enthusiasm she showed during her time at the helm. We also want to express our gratitude to departing Board members Marianne van Eldik-Thieme, Svetlana Aladjem, Anna Zelno and Irina Budrina and to wish them all the best for the future. The newly elected Board is presented on pages 15-16.

It's that time of year again...Wishing you all a merry holiday season, joy at being with family and friends, and a very Happy New Year!



Patrick Schmidt

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# Robert Gibson

## An interview with a passionate interculturalist in the business world



**B**ack in the pioneer days of 2000, intercultural training was pretty straight-forward: you focused on the behavior patterns of a particular national culture. Increased sensitivity to foreign counterparts obviously leads to improved communication. But companies have now become more discriminating in their demands.

A new generation of managers, who have studied and worked abroad, are questioning the need for only intercultural training. The increasing diversity of projects depends on managers, engineers, sales reps and lawyers sharing knowledge and cooperating across different fields and cultures--intercultural sensitivity combined with leadership and management skills.

One person who has been at the forefront of adapting training to the contemporary needs of companies is Robert Gibson, senior consultant for intercultural business competence at Siemens AG in Munich. British by birth and education, he exemplifies the new breed: reflective, discreet, soft-spoken and highly articulate. The type who, while sizing up a situation, is already mapping out a strategy.

Active in the intercultural field for over 25 years, he was a founding member of SIETAR Deutschland as well as Vice-President of SIETAR Europa and remains an ardent spokesman. He also writes a popular column in the Ger-

man magazine *Business Spotlight*, and is the author of the hands-on book "Intercultural Business Communication" (Oxford University Press). An expert 'par excellence' on the emerging intercultural needs of the business world.

**Perhaps you can tell us about some of the experiences that led you toward becoming an interculturalist in Germany...**

I grew up in Croydon, a suburb in South London — classic commuter-belt with a rail link to the city. At school, I was very interested in history at an early age but a major event was when I started learning German. I had an excellent teacher who got me really interested in the language and it led to my first trip abroad, an exchange program in Hamburg when I was 17.

After finishing school, I had a gap year before going off to study History and German at Oxford. I got a place in a program run by the *Deutsch-Britischer Jugendaustausch* and lived in Berlin for six months in 1977. It was a fantastic opportunity to experience the effects of world politics at first hand. I'd go cycling with my host family in Spandau and suddenly we reached the Wall and couldn't go any further. But that didn't stop me from getting to know people in East Berlin; I used to go there regularly, via Check-Point Charlie or Friedrichstrasse.

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# Robert Gibson

## — continued

*The town hall of Croydon. It's one of the London boroughs and was the home town of Robert Gibson.*



In 1980, as a third-year student, I worked as an assistant at a teacher training college in Vienna. Central and Eastern Europe was still blocked off and I travelled to places like Prague and Budapest at weekends. At that time this was quite an adventure. I got to know people there and conversations inevitably centred around our cultural differences.

After university I became a history teacher in Britain and, during summer holidays, taught English in Poland and Hungary at summer camps run by UNESCO. I had a Polish girlfriend, a significant person in my life, who was a leader of one of the camps. Our relationship made me realize how important cultural differences were.

### ***How is it that you ended up in Germany?***

In 1985 I received an offer to teach English and Cultural Studies at the University of Munich. 'Landeskunde' (geography, history, country's institutions) was a rather dry subject at the time and I looked for ways of making it more interesting and relevant for the students. I discovered SIETAR, saw that there were professional interculturalists and started going to their conferences and getting involved in the organization, .

After 5 years at the university I was offered a position developing curricula for vocational schools at the Bavarian Ministry of Education. This was an interesting experience and

very good for my language skills because everything was in German and I had to run workshops and meetings with teachers, business people and ministry officials.

### ***This takes us to the topic of training teachers. As you have been through both the British and German systems, what differences do you see?***

In Germany, I felt that a lot of effort was put into defining and developing a detailed curriculum; we had different courses for specific groups. For instance, I developed an English syllabus for opticians, based on the language an optician needs. In Britain it was the other way round at that time, not much emphasis on curriculum but much more on testing the pupils with standardized exams .

Some German students and teachers that I met were critical of the British school system; one even wrote an article about how British schools 'wasted time' by keeping the pupils at school the whole day. I was brought up in Britain to see this as something positive, with much more emphasis on developing the whole personality of the pupil; we had clubs and activities in the lunch break and team sports after school This is where I saw a potential synergy effect: combining the holistic approach of the British with the German expertise in curriculum development and vocational education. I believe the two systems can still learn a lot from each other.

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# Robert Gibson

— continued

*Robert Gibson worked two years for the Bavarian Ministry of Education, learning how German schools develop extremely detailed curricula.*



**What did you do after your time at the Ministry of Education?**

I spent eight years as Head of Business Languages at the School of Management of the University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. When I left school I thought the business world was the last place I wanted to work; I certainly didn't want to follow in the footsteps of my father who had worked as a chemical engineer for BP. But gradually I began to see that the interesting developments in the intercultural field were coming from business.

In 2000 there was a breakthrough: Siemens hired me to bring together their language and intercultural training programs. In moving from a university to a corporate environment, I had to make the case for intercultural training differently. It wasn't enough to say, "We have the best trainers, innovative methods and excellent materials." I had to show my clients how it helped them to be successful in their business. The other things were of secondary importance. My mindset changed so much that, a few years later at a SIETAR conference, a colleague said, "Rob, you're talking different now!"

**Your present role is to coordinate intercultural competence training at Siemens. What do you look for when hiring an interculturalist?**

Siemens is a highly complex organization with cultures of

different sectors and divisions, and products ranging from gas turbines for power stations to computer tomography machines for hospitals. Obviously building a power plant for a pulp factory in Finland is very different from dealing with hospital managers in China. We're looking for people who appreciate the complexity.

To be more precise intercultural trainers need three qualities. One is relevant cultural knowledge and background. Clients often expect the trainer to come from the target culture. Trainers should work well in tandem, for example an expert from China working with a German facilitator.

The second is training skills and experience. This is probably the easiest quality to acquire if you have the right personality. We employ trainers for groups as well as expert coaches and consultants.

The third quality is often the hardest to find — appropriate business knowledge and experience. It is essential to link the intercultural content with the business at hand.

My advice to people studying intercultural communication who want jobs in the corporate world is to make sure you get as much business experience as possible through studies and internships. Intercultural training is not a stand-alone.

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## Robert Gibson — *continued*

*Cultural understanding has an impact on business success.*

# “Return on Culture”

### **How do you decide if a person is qualified to facilitate training?**

A trainer who comes with a ready-made product may not be so interesting to us. They might come with an excellent e-learning tool, but if it isn't compatible with our IT landscape then it is unlikely that we can work together. We are not just a broker of training but have our own distinct approach and develop our own materials in cooperation with external partners. I'd advise trainers to find out what companies are already doing and what they are really looking for rather than making too many assumptions.

I think that a very important quality in trainers is being 'easy to do business with'. Sometimes, a trainer will have a list of what equipment they want and we have to tell them, 'Sorry, we can't do that. You will be doing this in a meeting room in a factory and they don't have the time to look for 4 flipcharts and 2 pin boards.' We work under time pressure and do many different things, often at short notice. I don't always have time to discuss every detail with the trainer. It's all about being flexible without compromising on quality.

Another issue is respecting copyright. It's not enough to say I got the picture from the Internet. We need to know the source and be certain that we have the rights to use it. Otherwise, there might be compliance issues. As an individual, you can probably get away with it, but not as a company.

### **Are your clients satisfied with the intercultural training they receive?**

We have a department dealing with intercultural competence and I still have a job so maybe that means yes. We are continually asking ourselves how to measure the effectiveness of training. Training is an investment and we have to provide reasons for people to put money into it.

One of my colleagues came up with the term "return on culture": investment in culture will pay off in business terms. Of course if we could demonstrate the return on culture, it would make training more appealing to our clients. "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it" is what people often say in the business world. I am not sure if you can really measure soft skills but believe that while the cultural factor is not measurable, it's perceivable. I'm increasingly finding clients who appreciate this and that culture can't be separated from a lot of other factors which play a role in their business. It's like salt in the soup; you can taste it but can't take it out.

On a more practical level, we have a standardized feedback process which is different from the "happy sheets" at the end of a seminar, where it might just be the participants' euphoria about a trainer's personality. What we do is send an email to all participants a week after the course and ask them to rate the workshop. After three months,

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# Robert Gibson

— *continued*

**“I’m not at all amused.”**

*The indirect communication style of the British can sometimes confuse Germans.*



they get another questionnaire asking them if they have applied what they learned and if not what the barriers were. We also compile investors’ feedback by asking the person who paid for the training if they thought it was a good investment; they sometime have a different perspective from the participants.

***Turning to another subject, what has it been like as a British national in Germany?***

When I came to Germany all those years ago I didn’t think there would be massive differences between Britain and Germany. There probably aren’t in the world context. When you go to China, you expect people to be different. The differences between Britain and Germany are more subtle.

One of the main difference is in terms of communication style. Issues in Germany are often dealt with and understood in a very direct manner. For instance, the feedback I got after I ran a workshop was, “You use the word *vielleicht* (perhaps) too much.” That made me think. The word suggested to my German colleague that I wasn’t sure what I was doing. To me it was a way of trying not to be too bossy, softening the instructions to get the group on my side.

Or when a German says, “I gave a presentation in England and they said it was very interesting.” I reply, “Oh dear.’ They are confused and then I point out that it may be that the Brit-

ish person was just being polite and didn’t find it interesting at all. I like the saying ‘The Germans are too honest to be polite and the British are too polite to be honest’. After nearly 30 years in Germany, I have got used to this direct communication and even find it quite refreshing. I now get frustrated when I sense British people are beating around the bush. For many Germans, though, I’m still not direct enough.

Another area of difference is in the attitude to planning. This is connected to uncertainty avoidance. German colleagues often want a detailed agenda but I sometimes ask myself, why are we doing all this planning? I just feel like going in, doing something and seeing what happens. This can irritate them. For Germans planning provides security, a framework and a logical structure. The British tend to be more pragmatic reacting to the the situation rather than strictly following a plan The key to dealing with this is to be aware of the differences.

For me, the challenge is to combine empathy with being authentic. Even after such a long time in Germany I still discover new. differences. I think that your cultural identity is probably formed in your childhood but I have changed a bit. Maybe I’m now somewhere in the middle of the North Sea. Living in another culture, you discover a lot about where you come from. When I was at Munich University, students would ask, “Why do you have a monarchy in Britain?” Although I’d studied history, I couldn’t come up with an answer.

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# Robert Gibson

— *continued*

*A few examples of the many SIETARS in the world — a great network of people.*



## **Finally, could you tell us how you became involved with SIETAR?**

SIETAR has been very important for my development. The first contact I had with the organization was a wonderful SIETAR International conference in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1990. What struck me was the diversity of the people I met — not only their national cultures, but also their professional ones. Next to me at dinner the first day was somebody from the U.S. Peace Corps in jeans and a manager from the World Bank in a smart business suit. The exchange of ideas was fascinating.

At that time SIETAR International was very active in the U.S. and many members were Americans living abroad. We wanted to have more conferences in Europe so the idea of SIETAR Europa was born. A few years later people then said we should found SIETAR at another level in Germany and I hosted the first SIETAR Deutschland conference in Ingolstadt in 1994. I was able to offer use of the seminar rooms at my university. I recall saying, “The great thing is we don’t have any real costs. We buy a bottle of whisky for the caretaker and pay someone to clean up at the end. If we have 10 people, that’s okay, if we have 200 people, that’s okay.” In fact we had about 130 people.

Today, both SIETAR Europa and SIETAR Deutschland have become much more professional. I really enjoy going to the

regional meetings here in Munich. Someone gives a talk or a workshop and people meet and share experiences. ‘By members, for members’ — I think it’s a great model.

What we need for the future is a combination of these two things: active regional and national SIETARs, but also a body like SIETAR Europa to bring everyone together, including people who don’t have a national organization of their own. The key is that the combination of cultural and functional diversity be retained. It would be sad if it became an organization just for trainers or just for researchers. SIETAR’s uniqueness is that it brings together interculturalists from different national and professional cultures.

I’m most grateful for the experience I had on the international Board as well as the workshops and conferences I’ve attended. It’s played a major role in my development. To begin with I asked myself why I was spending so much time and money going to meetings. Looking back, it was one of the best investments I have ever made.

My advice to people would be to get involved with SIETAR. You may have very idealistic visions of what you want to do, but also be prepared to do practical things. And you really meet some fantastic people. SIETAR is a great network.

*Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

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# A Journalist's Impressions of the Tallinn Congress

by *Stéphanie Stephan*

*In Tallinn new perspectives in intercultural training and research became evident*

It's as if the spark of dynamism and enthusiasm of the small country of Estonia had communicated itself to this year's SIETAR Europa Congress which took place in Tallinn from September 18th to September 21st.

During three days 280 interculturalists listened to around 90 presentations, including many that were TED style, and took part in workshops and discussions in a spirit of innovation and excitement. The program had been divided in five tracks: community and identity, interconnectivity, constructing culture, working virtually and film & media festival covering almost every domain in the intercultural field.

"Global Reach, Local Touch – How Streams of Culture are Shaping our Future." The title of this year's congress carried the essence of multiculturalism and integration in just four words, as the Vice-President of the Estonian Parliament Ms Laine Randjärv put it in her opening speech of the event. Unfortunately she couldn't be there in person, but her online speech allowed the audience insight into the spirit of Estonia and Estonians as an open-minded, culture and music loving country. She recalled that the country used its own culture to sing itself free from the Soviet re-



gime and thus regained independence after more than half a century.

Today Estonia is the leading country among the post-Soviet countries trying to catch up with the so-called Old Europe. Loving its own culture and respecting that of others is the basis of the multiculturalism that impregnates life of Estonia today. Around 38 percent of the population is Russian.

Almost all presentations and workshops reflected an awakening in the intercultural scene due to the fact that the times we are living in confront us with permanent change. Globalisation, multiculturalism and technological innovation urge us to adopt almost every day to a new situation. This of course has an enormous impact on our cultures.

"It is not so much the learning of new things that is uncomfortable, it is the unlearning of the things that have been." Kate Berardo, founder of Culturocity.com made this statement in her presentation entitled "An Inconvenient Truth: The Need to Retire the Long-Favored U-Curve Model of Adjustment". Instead she favoured the five Rs of adjustment stress: routines, reactions, roles, relationships, and reflections about oneself, in order to build cultural competence. A remarkable reaction to this theory came from the audience: 'When meeting new people one should not ask "Where do you come from?" but

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## A journalist's impressions...— *continued*

*In the presentation "What actually is culture", Milton Bennett pointed out that the iceberg metaphor, with its related Titanic disaster, is incoherent in intercultural research.*

instead "What's your culture?" and further, "How do you identify yourself?".

Jean Monnet, the father of the European Market, is referred to as having said: "If we were again facing the challenge to integrate Europe, I would start with culture." In hindsight this would definitely have been a direction to be taken seriously.

The old question "What actually is culture?" was discussed in a number of presentations, for example, in Milton Bennett's "Culture is not like an Iceberg, and Competence is not like Intelligence: The Ravages of Reification in Intercultural Theory & Research." He defined culture as a kind of observation that we make about human behaviour, especially about how we coordinate meaning and action amongst ourselves in groups.

Citing from *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann), "Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer and his products is lost to consciousness." Milton Bennett tried in his presentation to show how to avoid reification in theory and research, with the ultimate goal of creating a non-reified approach to intercultural training. The majority in the audience recognized this to be a revolutionary, completely new approach.



Another unusual view on culture and the main implications for intercultural research and training was presented by Ida Castiglioni of the IDR Institute in Milan. She discussed the idea of memes being patterns of behaviour, communication, aesthetic views that are distributed in human minds in relationship to the concept of culture. Like genes they survive through selection and, according to memetics, human culture is both the product and the process of the selection. She questioned whether this definition of culture generates a different set of memes and depicted a broader scenario for including the global construction of culture through the World Wide Web.

Joseph Shaules, Associate Professor of the Rikkyo Graduate School of Intercultural Communication in Tokyo who has lived more than twenty years in Japan where the intercultural scene is not as widely spread as it is in Europe gave another intriguing workshop on the subject of "Applying Cultural Neuroscience to Intercultural Training and Education." He discussed how our mind and cognitive process construct our experiences and that mental processes that are inaccessible to the conscious mind influence judgments and behaviours.

According to Shaules culture must be learned by an intuitive mind through a trial and error process, because we are configured by cultural patterns that become natural to us.

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## A journalist's impressions...— *continued*

*Charles Hampden-Turner discussed in an unusual and fascinating presentation ethical dilemmas and intercultural applications from the musical film "Les Misérables".*



He also highlighted shared culture vs. individuality. Only within the shared rules of the game we are able to express ourselves as unique individuals. There is no contradiction in being an individual and sharing cultural frameworks. It is the same as sharing a language and having our own way of talking. Our minds have built-in biases i.e. culture and unconscious cognition, culture and confirmation, coherence and culture. He asked the audience and himself, "Where will we be going in the 21st century with this new body of research?"

How can cultural neuroscience influence the work of intercultural trainers? Which concepts and paradigms can be of practical use for interculturalists? How does a cognitive approach complement or contrast with the understanding of intercultural relations? Most probably we will be able to read some solutions to these questions in Shaules' new book 'The Intercultural Mind which will be published toward the end of 2014.

An unusual and fascinating way of discussing ethical dilemmas and intercultural applications was the presentation of excerpts from the English film version of the musical Les Misérables by Victor Hugo, facilitated by Charles Hampden-Turner and Milton Bennett of the IDR Institute. Looking at the film from this perspective provoked an animated discussion on dualism and diversity, justice, ethicality and identity.

The congress brought not only business interculturalists together who seized once more the opportunity to profit from each others' experience, knowledge and insights, but it also offered the opportunity to connect with all those whose life and work puts them at the interface of cultures in today's global village. It became evident that the interdependent economy needs more than ever the right set of tools to navigate across different culture landscapes in order to produce culturally intelligent leaders.

A spirit of innovative ideas, joy and enthusiasm for the fascinating field of interculturalism prevailed during the whole congress – in particular during the numerous coffee breaks.

However, it was also discussed how to promote a plausible strategy in the years to come in order to make SIETAR more visible to the outside world. It was the expressed desire of the new generation of Young SIETAR-members – many of them present in Tallinn – to contribute to this at their congress next year from 26th to 29th of June in Vancouver.

*Stéphanie Stephan was editor with renowned economic and management publications in Paris and Hamburg and now is a free-lance journalist, not to mention an interculturalist.*

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## A few photographic souvenirs of the Tallinn congress



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# Some Interesting Facts about Bilingualism

by Patrick Schmidt



*“To have another language is to possess a second soul.”*  
Charlemagne 742 - 814

One characteristic that makes the intercultural field different from other professions is the relatively high percentage of facilitators who have spoken two or more languages fluently since early childhood. Research indicates those who grow up bilingual are able to:

- learn new words easily
- use information in new ways
- resolve conflicts and ambiguities more harmoniously
- better connect with others (listening skills)

Bilingualism seems to have a profound effect on the brain, lasting well into the twilight years, and even improves certain cognitive skills not related to language.

How is it that the words and phrases we hear and speak have such a heavy impact? This is what the research tells us:

**System interference:** Neuroscientific experiments on bilingual persons demonstrate clearly that both languages are working simultaneously, even when only one language is being used. This means one language is blocking the other but this is actually a blessing in disguise — because

neurons are required to obstruct signals from the second language, the cognitive muscles of the brain are given a “positive” workout.

These reinforced cognitive muscles, in turn, refine the brain’s management function, an ordering system for directing attention, solving problems and performing other complex tasks. Examples include ignoring distractions, remaining focused and remembering information, which explains how actors are able to play Hamlet and Lear.

It would seem that the advantage bilinguals have over monolinguals stems primarily from a heightened ability to monitor one’s environment. As a Spanish researcher pointed out, “Bilinguals have to switch languages quite often — you may talk to your mother in Spanish and your father in German.” The continual demand to keep track of changes is similar to the way people observe the traffic when driving.

A fascinating study in the South-Tyrol compared the ability to monitor tasks on the part of German-Italian bilinguals and Italian monolinguals. The bilingual subjects not only performed better, they were also more efficient, doing so with less effort.

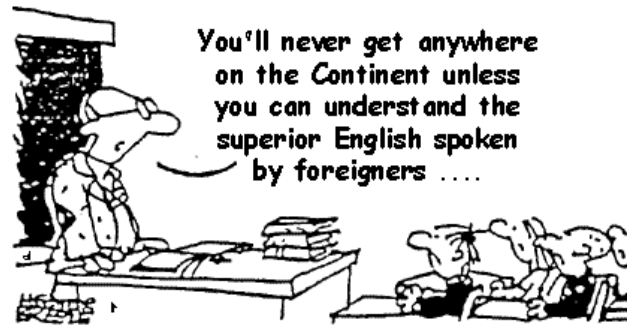
**Linguistic Relativity and Personality Changes:** The language people speak shapes the way they see the world.

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# Bilingualism...

— *continued*

*A humorous interpretation of bilingualism as seen by the British newspaper "The Guardian".*



Since bilingual people possess two linguistic realities, they have a broader, more diverse way of perceiving phenomena. One's personality is also broader. Ziao-lei Wang writes in her book *Growing up with Three Languages: Birth to Eleven*: "Languages used by speakers with one or more than one language are used not just to represent a unitary self, but to enact different kinds of selves, and different linguistic contexts create different kinds of self-expression and experiences for the same person."

Generating the appropriate personality may be the reason bilingual people get high scores on tests for personality traits such as cultural empathy, open-mindedness and social initiative. This form of contextual self-expression is best summarized by linguist Francois Grosjean: "What's seen as a change in personality is most probably simply a shift in attitudes and behaviors that correspond to a shift in situation or context, independent of language."

**Critical period:** Mastering the high-level semantic aspects of a language implies an understanding of the culture and history in which that language evolved. Children using a second language in the "critical period" up to age 11 or 12 normally assimilate its cultural assumptions, something which doesn't usually occur after that period. A person may know a language fluently but, if the cultural knowledge is lacking, it's a very good way to make a "fluent fool" of oneself. This

is where intercultural trainers come into play--making participants aware of the values and assumptions of the target-culture as well as their own.

**Firewall against dementia:** Bilingualism seems to affect the brain well into our senior years. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, studied 44 elderly Spanish-English bilinguals and found those who were fluent in both were less susceptible to dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Their conclusion was that the better one is at speaking two languages, the later the onset of cognitive disintegration.

While the advantages of bilingualism are obvious in terms of the development of the brain, as well as social skills, this is not an end in itself. Nothing is more exciting than the actual experience of talking to new people in their mother tongue, understanding the background buzz of conversations on foreign streets, reading a great book in the language it was written in, or watching a classic film without subtitles.

This is why basically everyone on the planet is exhilarated by the intercultural experience of speaking another language, and why most describe it — in whatever language — as "mind-blowing".

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# Introducing the SIETAR Europa Board



**Dr. Livingstone Thompson** is a theologian with specialisms in inter-faith relations, intercultural theology and the ecumenical movement. His PhD from the University of Dublin/Trinity College, Ireland, focused on the theological dialogue between Christianity and other world religions, with particular reference to Islam. Livingstone represents SIETAR Ireland and is currently President of SIETAR Europa.



**Dr. Deborah Swallow** (immediate past President) addresses interculturalism through the perspective of business, especially in the transfer of knowledge across cultures in high-knowledge companies. She has a DBA in Change Management; MSc in Management and Business Development. She represents SIETAR UK.



**Dr. Pari Namazie** has over 18 years of experience working as an intercultural, HR and organisational development consultant to multinational and international companies. Pari holds a PhD in International Human Resources Management (2007) from Middlesex Business School in London and a BA(Hons) in Business Studies from the same university. She represents SIETAR Europa direct members.



**Laurence Sicot** is a corporate trainer and a social anthropologist with worldwide professional experience with corporates. She today divides her time between São Paulo and Paris. She holds a DSEC from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales and a post-graduate degree in social anthropology from the University Sorbonne-René Descartes (HH). She represents SIETAR France.



**Dr. Tzvetana Guerdjikova** has extensive experience in international consulting and training. Since 2007, she has held senior management positions in the Bulgarian state administration, where she has directed units responsible for the management of EU co-funded programmes. She is one of the founders of SIETAR Bulgaria and is its representative on the SE Board.



**Dr. Sigvor Bakke** is Norwegian, now based in Bremen, Germany. She is an experienced intercultural coach, consultant and trainer. She has lived and worked in the USA, Spain and Peru before she ended up Germany. She holds a PhD in Social Sciences and Economy. She is also a member of the German-Norwegian Business Council. She represents SIETAR Germany.

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# SIETAR Europa Board...

— *continued*



**Katarzyna Artemiuk** is a freelance intercultural trainer, teacher trainer and language teacher. She's a graduate in German Philology at the Catholic University of Lublin and Intercultural Relations at the University of Warsaw. Since the beginning of her professional career until present, Katarzyna has been teaching, training, delivering workshops and lectures. She represents SIETAR Polska.



**Saskia Lackner** is a Phd-Student at the University of Vienna and holds a MA degree in Intercultural Psychology and a post-graduate degree in Intercultural Studies. She has written articles, a book about German-Austrian cooperation and also partly works as intercultural trainer. She studied and worked in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Austria. She represents SIETAR Austria and is currently the secretary of SIETAR Europa.



**Mathias Ekah** is training collaborator with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Peacekeeping Training program Geneva and also in the higher educational sector in Switzerland. He is originally from Cameroon with Swiss nationality. He represents SIETAR Europa direct members.



**Candela Fernandez** works as a trainer and consultant, with the mission of making Spanish society aware of the importance of the intercultural field. Her fields of expertise are cross-cultural communication between Germany, France, USA and Spain. She represents SIETAR Espana and is currently the treasurer of SIETAR Europa.



**Maura Di Mauro** is a freelance intercultural trainer, coach and consultant, based in Milan (Italy). She collaborates with different kinds of organizations of the public, private, and non-profit sector. She is specialized in the analysis of training needs, in designing and conducting training programs aimed at the development of intercultural communication. She represents SIETAR Italia.



**Dr. Hanneke Brakenhoff** is a senior lecturer of intercultural communication at the Hanze University for Applied Sciences in Groningen, the Netherlands, where she is training intercultural competencies to international students. Furthermore she is involved in international development projects funded by NUFFIC to support tertiary education in Ghana, Uganda and Mozambique. She represents SIETAR the Netherlands.

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**Reporter's Sketchbook**  
*...an American in Montreal*

# Interculturalism

## in the Age of Multinational Corporations...

by Dan MacLeod

*Montrealers demonstrating against the government's plan to ban the wearing of religious symbols by public employees.*



This will be an unusual exercise—a suspense-oriented column where even the writer doesn't know the ending until the end. I was going to write about living in a “*coopérative d'habitation*” in Montreal where around 40% of the 86 apartments — a new \$14-million developmen — are inhabited by non-whites. In fact, I'd started to do so when my hard-drive died...

...

An interesting experiment, in that half of the apartments are subsidized. Real unemployment in Montreal has hovered around 15 % for 30 years in a row and governments have begun to realize the casualties of global capitalism are a permanently-recurring debit for which creative solutions must be found if urban order is to be preserved.

One goes back to Thoreau's “four necessities”, of which *food* is (obviously) the first. What were called “soup kitchens” in 1929 — and had all but disappeared a decade later — returned permanently in the '80s. Today there isn't a city in North America where “food banks” aren't a statistical and demographic imperative, the need for which increases every year.

*Clothing* (3) is available at countless outlets where poor individuals and families pay almost nothing to outfit themselves for winter...as for summer, spring and fall. *Fuel* (4) is also available at a reduced price, thanks to government assistance or that of non-profit organizations, to a certain number of households.

*Shelter* is Thoreau's second and social housing, in whatever form, is the wave of the future in North America. My co-op is a perfect example, where some pay \$800 a month, others \$125 with the government providing the rest. Having lived in Germany, I approached moving there in a German (for me) frame of mind. Beautiful buildings, the latest ecological standards in energy and water consumption, a logical social concept, good will on all sides, everyone working together in committees...

Or not. As might be expected, there are people who do as little as possible, others who do too much. Surprisingly, the issue of who pays full price and who doesn't hasn't been an issue, no one ever mentions it or, in fact, knows. Unsurprisingly, the ethnic mix is something of a problem. And that's what I was writing about when my hard-drive died.

...

Those of you who've read this column on a regular basis will have noted my insistence on superimposing other social constructs on intercultural analysis. Economic class, education, belief in science versus blind faith in (whatever) religion, even the fact that Vladimir Putin, despite being a “Commie”, is probably seen as a role-model in Texas.

In the same vein, I find it transcendent that history's revenge on war is for those involved to be forever joined. When the U.S. sent the Marines to Vietnam there were basically no Vietnamese living in the States, now there are nearly two million.

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# Interculturalism ...

## — continued



*The changing ethnic and religious make-up of Paris... and, increasingly, Montreal.*

Likewise France. When I first got to Paris, at age 28, I was surprised at how many Arabs there were. Then I remembered the French colonies, the film “Casablanca”, also the fight for independence in Algeria.

Twenty-eight years later a quarter of the members of my co-op are from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Why? Because they speak French. Quebec emphasizes its difference from the rest of Canada — and keeps hope for sovereignty alive — with a francophone-first policy on immigrants.

Think of it. France colonized Quebec and lost it to England, then England let Canada go and, while Quebec hasn't yet separated, it's not for lack of trying. Meanwhile, France occupied half of North Africa and lost those colonies too but left the language behind. So my co-op resembles the *XVIIIe arrondissement* in Paris.

This isn't a problem for me, I lived in the *XVIIIe* for over a year and hung out with Algerians. For most Quebecers, though, there's some culture shock. Insignificant things, our annual barbecue featuring both regular sausage and *hallal*. But also real differences, real problems. Every few months, in the General Assembly, approximately fifteen Arab men sit in a group, separate from non-Muslims and women, Muslim or not. Several Arab women wear the *hijab*, even the *tchador*. It's not just my co-op, it's become a province-wide existential crisis. In an attempt to gain voters on the right,

the *Parti Québécois* government is moving to ban the wearing of religious symbols by employees in government offices, schools, day-care centers and hospitals. Except nobody's talking about Jewish *kippas* or Sikh *kirpans*, it's all about the Islamic veil and sharia law creeping into a society which only recently shook off the dictates of the Catholic church. One comment is that Muslims are “supra-national” — they don't care what country they live in as long as they can live according to the Koran. This made me think of McDonald's.

When I first got to Paris, at age 28, I was surprised at how many McDonalds' there were; I have a place-mat map of the city with the “golden arches” at 28 different locations. Interculturalism wasn't even a word in 1985 but I immediately wondered how the corporation was dealing with labor relations in European social democracies. In Quebec, whenever the employees at a McDonald's tried to organize a union, the restaurant immediately closed.

Some people think Muslims are trying to take over the world, a patiently insidious encroachment which sounds to me a lot like McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Walmart. Which brings us back to my hard-drive dying and the suspense I alluded to at the beginning...

...

“Hello, my name is Matt...”

I'm calling Carbonite, they're supposed to back up my hard-

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# Interculturalism ...

## — continued

A "McDonald's" in Paris: insidious encroachment on French cuisine?



drive. I'm expecting to deal with a faceless corporation and for all I know their call-center may be in India but the number is in the Boston area-code.

Thinking Matt's from the same place as me makes me feel good; before explaining my problem I say, "Hey, you're in Boston? I'm calling from Montreal but I'm from Boston..." He's probably not supposed to tell me where he is: first he says "farther north" and, when I name a couple of suburbs, "actually I'm closer to Canada." He finally tells me he's in Maine, calls are re-routed through headquarters in Boston. I've spent a lot of time in his state, I do my *down-Mainuh* accent and he chuckles. He quickly catches himself, calls are reviewed, he's not supposed to fraternize: familiarity can sometimes defeat facelessness.

He makes sure my hard-drive is retrievable, then tells me I didn't buy the service, the chain I bought it from (Staples) did. I have to ask them to ask Carbonite for a password-reset before I can download the back-up. He asks if I'm planning to renew, which I'm not. He hesitates. I tell him I know my coverage runs out in a couple of days, it's too late to call the store now but I'll do it tomorrow. His voice changes slightly, as if he might get into trouble. "You should probably do it before 4:30."

There's a Staples affiliate in Montreal but the computer was bought during a visit home. I call the Boston store and ask for Ian, the ex-Physics major who sold it to me. He no longer

works there but the technician I talk to remembers him and is impressed that I do. When I mention the deadline is a few hours away, he says "I'll get back to you within 20 minutes."

It's a long-distance call and his manager won't like it but 15 minutes later my phone rings. "All you have to do is contact Carbonite and choose a new password. I told them you have until 4:30 but they say your coverage is up." He wishes me luck.

"Hello, my name is Teri..." She's politely distant, the faceless corporation. She tells me I have to sign up with Carbonite for another year if I want to retrieve my data. I tell her her colleague Matt said I had until 4:30. So she tells me a lie. "Oh, he meant you have 24 hours when you ask for a reset."

"Staples asked for the reset 20 minutes ago." She's momentarily confused, talks to her supervisor, comes back and repeats what she said before. I could hear in her voice that she knew it wasn't true.

So do I pay the ransom, do I call back Carbonite and argue, or do I lose my files? I have another week to decide. In the meantime, I rewrote this column more or less from memory — so much for suspense.

*Editor's note: Mr. MacLeod sent a detailed e-mail to Carbonite. Less than three hours later a representative called with good news...and even helped him through the download-process.*

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## Book Review

### Western Europe

People, Cultures and Customs

(full review can be found at [www.dialogin.com](http://www.dialogin.com))

by Roger Jones

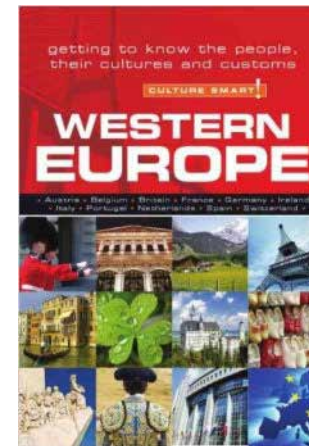
U.S. \$ 24.95, 480 pages

Published by Kuperard Publishing

As we interculturalists well know, the development of intercultural sensitivity has taken on an importance that no one could have imagined 15 or 20 years ago. Due to the ever-increasing influence of globalization, the Internet and even Twitter, cross-cultural contact has become almost a daily occurrence.

Not surprisingly, travel guidebooks have picked up on this transformation — moving beyond the classical ‘what to see and where to eat information’ and now offering savvy advice on how to deal with unfamiliar situations in culturally appropriate ways. The ‘Culture Smart’ series from the British publishing house Kuperard is a prime example of this trend. One book from their series is *Western Europe*, which is a collection of 11 countries united into one volume. It is geared to the tourist who wishes to explore and experience many countries on one trip and at the same time to intelligently avoid faux pas and misunderstandings with their foreign counterpart.

As author Roger Jones states in his introduction, the book is essentially a “survival guide”, that is what are the right strategies when travelling through so many diverse countries. For the tourist who doesn’t have much knowledge of Western Europe, it does a surprising good job in generating alternative templates that can be used to organize one’s perceptions of foreign cultures. Although it makes no pretense of making a person intercultural competent, reading these strategies does trigger a light form of intercultural proficiency.



To begin with, the texts and pictures are generously well laid out; the publisher has obviously gone to great lengths, if not expense, to induce a reader-friendly experience. Each country is described from the differing perspectives – the country and people, values and attitudes, festivals and traditions, getting to know the people, daily life, leisure time, getting and business and professional life. For instance, the chapter on Switzerland I found remarkably refreshing and written in an easy, yet sophisticated style. I’ve had many experiences with the Swiss and thought to be well informed about their mental software, but this short overview of 39 pages gave me new cognitive insights on how three diverse cultural groups have managed to stay together as one nation.

The author points out that the Protestant reformers Zwingli and Calvin have had an immense influence on the Swiss. All individuals are expected to be responsible for their actions and to conform to the socially accepted behaviors. These values were so deeply imprinted on the Swiss minds that today its citizens sincerely and willingly believe in fulfilling one’s civic duties as well as respecting the rights of others, including culturally diverse cantons. What the Swiss preach and practice in their daily lives are in many ways similar with what we interculturalists do in our trainings.

For those who want to explore Europe with a zip of sophistication, and not be overloaded with heavy theoretical intercultural analysis, it’s perfect. Not to mention, an ideal gift to anyone embarking on a trip to Europe. *Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

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## Book Review

# French and American Perceptions of Arrogance in the Other

*A Comparison of French and American Values and Implicit Norms*

(full review can be found at [www.dialogin.com](http://www.dialogin.com))

by Natalie Lutz

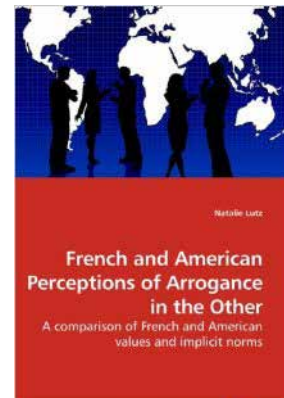
U.S. \$ 86.40, 176 pages

Published by VDM Verlag Dr. Müller

Rarely however does anyone look into the causes, or should I say the triggers of these feelings and their articulation. Now Natalie Lutz examines the discourse behind the values that each culture uses to define itself and its righteousness in respect to the other. As a US American living in France, it was pretty easy for me to recognize again and again how spot-on her analysis is. Most fascinating to me as a professional in this field was the author's ability, particularly in the introductory chapters, to proceed from a basis of what we are learning today about the fluidity of cultural discourse, its constellation into mythology and values, as well as the contribution of linguistics, pragmatics, and other contemporary disciplines.

The book is the fruit of a dissertation, written by a bicultural author, for whom identity construction has been a conscious personal project, and who blends first-hand observation with studies in critical literature in the field. This literature review leaves you curious to read titles on the list that may have escaped you to date. Particularly well articulated here are the challenges defined by the concept of cultural capital and the process of identity formation.

The work's challenge lies in establishing legitimate comparisons of real phenomena that give rise to conflicting discourse about the attitudes of the other. To make it concrete, the author starts by looking at the promotional activities of the bookseller Amazon in both the US and France around the same publications, counting on the bookseller's marketing ability to appeal to what consum-



ers like and expect in each culture. Advertising copy for the same product (in translation) on either side of the Atlantic must appeal to the diversity of the bookseller's respective reading public.

Lutz compares the publicity given biographies of sports figures, Lance Armstrong of Tour de France cycling fame and tennis star John McEnroe. The author then examines Serge Batson, a Cameroonian French rugby player, singer Hélène Ségara, actors Annie Girardot and Jean-Louis Trintignant. The keywords in the French analyses are *passion*, *pudeur* (discretion), *faiblesse* (endearing weakness), which are manipulated to correspond to the expectations the French readers and which, on the other hand would likely be off-putting to US audiences. The marketing pieces, drawn on for each of the books discussed, are conveniently placed before the bibliography at the end of the book so that one can taste the language for oneself.

Many other comparisons, such as arrogance or self-confidence, are made. It is hard to do justice to the richness of Lutz's analysis and the light it sheds on our experience of each other as well as how it contributes to the state of intercultural thinking. If you don't read French, you will miss the full flavor of this book, as the author cites texts and interviews in the original languages without translating them. This feels excusable, particularly when one is trying to develop an authentic palate for cultural differences. Here the principle "*traduttore, traditore*" obtains. It is nonetheless worth a close look. *Reviewd by George Simons*

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## Events, workshops, congresses

### Bath, U.K.

13-17 January, 17-21 March, or 23-27 June 2014 *Developing Intercultural Training Skills*. This 5-day course is for experienced trainers in language, management or other areas of training, who want to develop their knowledge and skills to design and deliver intercultural training in a variety of contexts, or integrate intercultural topics into their current courses.

3-17 January, 17-21 March, or 23-27 June 2014 *Designing and delivering intercultural training*. This 5-day course is a follow up to Developing intercultural training skills. It is also suitable for trainers who already have good experience in the intercultural training field. Both courses (from June onwards) are eligible for EU funding under the new Erasmus+ programme. The facilitators are Adrian Pilbeam and Phil O'Connor. More information at [www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm](http://www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm)

### Warsaw, Poland

3-5 April, 2014

*Cultural Detective Facilitator Certification Seminar* Cultural Detective® helps to increase performance, productivity and profitability through loyalty, teamwork and return on investment. It

is a tool you and your colleagues and staff can use immediately to achieve the solid insights and bottom-line results that intercultural competence can bring to the organization. It explores the complexities of a chosen culture or cultural challenge, and examines the values and communication styles of this community or environment. More information by writing to [office@eific.org](mailto:office@eific.org)

### Budapest, Hungary

21-25 April, 2014

*"Art migration adaptation" trainers' training* This four-day course gives an introduction to intercultural work, to adaptation and shares tools, approaches on how to use art to facilitate the adaptation process. It is also a space to share your own tools and strategies. For more information, write to [vera@elanimerculturel.com](mailto:vera@elanimerculturel.com)

### Valleta, Malta

30 May - 1 June 2014

*6th International Conference on Intercultural Pragmatics and Communications* The Institute of Linguistics of the University of Malta and the Intercultural Pragmatics Journal are hosting an

intercultural conference in Malta. More information at: <http://www.um.edu.mt/events/intercultural-pragmatics2014>

### Konstanz, Germany

13-14 June, 2014

*Dialogin International Conference Global Leadership Competence: Personal Qualities, Culture, Language* The continuing internationalisation of business and management activity has long since challenged the simpler truths of leading and managing at home. So, the rationale of this conference is to look into the personal qualities and competencies required to lead people and organisations across cultures. More information at <http://www.dialogin.com/index.php?id=224>

### Online Everyday

The SIETAR Europa group discussing

**"Visual Stereotyping...  
How do you use them"**

on LinkedIn has now over 6000 members. Plus it offers videos, articles, books, tools for the intercultural profession.

For more information, contact George Simons at [diversophy@gmail.com](mailto:diversophy@gmail.com)

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