The good soldier Svejk learns cross-cultural competencies

Irma Rybnikova

Tina Obermeit[1]

Chemnitz University of Technology[2]

Abstract

In this paper, we focus on the resistance of students who are taught in cross-cultural competencies. Drawing on resistance research in organizational studies where overt and covert forms of resistance are differentiated, we present a case study realized during the course "Introduction to intercultural communication" at a German university in summer term 2009. The case study is based on repeated observations of students in seminar classes, interviews with tutors and students, and document analyses as well. The case study reveals different kinds of students' resistance. Besides demonstrations of overt resistance, such as complaints, the subliminal resistance seems to dominate, i. e. constantly being late for class or a passive attendance at the seminar, which highly corresponds with the so-called "Svejkism" (Fleming/ Sewell 2002). Furthermore, our findings suggest that the different kinds of resistance can be traced back to different reasons. Whereas perceived injustice of appraisal coincides with the overt resistance, the covert resistance or "Svejkism" of students is mainly based on the fact that students do not consider cross-cultural competencies as relevant for their field of study or for their 'employability'.

1. Introduction: Resistance of students learning cross-cultural competencies – an underexplored research topic

Cross-cultural trainings, experiences and knowledge have been considered to be necessary for an effective, globally acting management for a long time. With the prevalence of such concepts as "intercultural management" or "global leadership", the topic of cross-cultural competencies became self-evident in undergraduate curricula of economy and business administration studies. There are many concepts considering effective training of cross-cultural knowledge and competencies, such as cultural specific or cultural general training (Gudykunst/Guzley/Hammer 1996).

However, the main discussion on teaching cross-cultural competencies is effectiveness-focused if not effectiveness-obsessed; conflicts and frictions of intercultural learning have

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[1] Contact addresses: irma.rybnikova@wirtschaft.tu-chemnitz.de, tina.obermeit@wirtschaft.tu-chemnitz.de
[2] Department of Organization Studies and Work Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

often been faded out or addressed insufficiently. As a result, the research focusing on problems and conflicts with teaching cross-cultural competencies at universities is still underrepresented. In this paper, we will focus on this critical side of cross-cultural education and address one of the problems associated with it, namely the resistance of students who were taught in cross-cultural competencies.

Informed by the extensive research tradition of resistance in work organizations, we undertook an empirical study at a German University. 1) We addressed two research questions: What kind of resistance could be observed? 2) To which issues can different forms of resistance be traced back? Thus, we are interested in occurrence and characteristics of student' resistance by learning cross-cultural competencies as well as origins of resistance forms observed.

2. Teaching cross cultural competencies: mainly normative and prescriptive discussion

In the last years teaching cross cultural competencies increasingly became a part of different fields of research. Reasons for this can be seen in the political and economical development, especially in the so called economical globalization. Due to this a lot of universities took cross cultural competencies into their curricula.

Teaching cross-cultural competencies can take place in different kinds. In 1996 already Gudykunst, Guzley and Hammer have shown that different types of trainings and teaching methods can be adopted for intercultural trainings. Some distinctions are quite important for using the right methods in training. One of the first points is the decision for *cultural general* trainings and teachings, where the focus is given on developing and improving sensitivity for intercultural aspects and situations. For example, the lecture belonging to the courses observed in our case study mainly contains culture general aspects. It emphasizes on the different classifications of culture, demonstrates single cultural critical incidents and addresses the diversity between cultures. On the opposite, tutorials observed in our study have a *culturally specific* base. In these working groups the goal is to emphasize aspects of a special culture, which were taught during the lecture and often put into context and comparison with the German culture. The next distinction that needs to be done when designing a training or course is the issue of an *intercultural* or *cross cultural* approach. The aim here is to understand the differences between the cultures and bring them in a context

to realize them and understand as well as accept them. The work focuses on the dividing points, the facts that "matter" in the dialogue between two or more national cultures. Another tendency in cultural work, esp. in cross-bordering regional projects is the *trans-cultural approach*. Here, the focus of is laid on the similarities between the nations. The aspects addressed are not the separating but the unifying cultural habits and specialties. This approach is a very practical way to enable two national groups to work together, because the differences are minimized and the common values are emphasized.

The relevance of teaching cross-cultural competencies at universities as well as the appropriate methods and their success are broadly discussed in the literature. However, the critical perspectives of intercultural training as well as the resistance of students are mostly ignored, although both points belong to the day-to-day life of the trainers and teachers.

3. Resistance in educational settings: an unknown variable?

Educational settings, or to put it concretely, universities, and resistance are two topics which are seldom discussed together. The theme 'resistance of students' may rouse prominent examples, such as students demonstrations in 1968'ies or current strikes of students against the bachelor- and master-reform in Germany starting in 2009. But as an empirical and theoretical concept the resistant behavior of students in the teaching process is still strongly understudied and doesn't receive considerable attention by researchers, either in educational nor in organizational studies.

In contrast to this, the issue of resistance on the workplace became one of the most dynamic topics of organization studies of the last ten years, yielding a huge amount of conceptual and empirical studies (Feming/Sewell 2002). Though the literature in this domain is far from being able to give plausible answers to all the complex questions regarding workplace resistance, the current research can provide many sophisticated and convincing approaches regarding workers' resistance. Thus, we decided to consult organizational studies on workplace resistance in order to more deeply understand resistance processes in educational settings, such as university courses.

In the meantime, the literature on workplace resistance covers a myriad of approaches, theoretical positions and concepts. To differentiate the very main theoretical approaches, we can make a distinction between the normative, rather functionalistic approach on the one

hand and the critical approach on the other. The functionalistic approach considers workplace resistance mainly as an abnormal behavior threatening effective functioning of organization and thus requiring methods and approaches to hinder it. The main examples of this kind of research can be found by articles addressing resistance to organizational change.

In contrast to this, the second main approach, the critical, discusses power relations at work as a fundamental basis for workers resistance in organizations. Inspired by Hegelian' and Marxist' thoughts tradition, this approach considers resistance and power (of employers) as dialectical relationship. There, power can be thought as a trigger of resistance, and vice versa, resistance is conceptualized as a trigger for power manifestations (Mumby 2005). According to this approach, resistance is an endemic part of the workplace and inextricably linked with it. Instead of searching for methods hindering resistance, like the functionalistic colleagues, researchers committed to the critical approach rather than to focus on describing the forms and mechanisms of workplace resistance.

The kind of resistance considered in critical research fluctuates over time. In their research overview, Prasad and Prasad (1998) differentiate between the *conventional* and the *modern* view regarding workplace resistance. The conventional research tradition addresses only organized, collective opposition of employees which directly intend to damage or to disrupt the functioning of organization. Such examples of resistance, like organized strikes and output restrictions have predominantly been studied here. The authors criticized this research tradition as restrictive because it ignores the so called 'routine resistance' (Scott 1985) or workplace resistance (Prasad/Prasad 1998). This kind of unorganized resistance is mainly addressed by the modern perspective. The research focus shifts here from organized to unorganized, spontaneous and often less visible oppositional practices in organizations. Those practices are less likely to alter structural working conditions, but are nevertheless inherently complex and ambiguous (Prasad/Prasad 1998).

According to Prasad and Prasad (1998), routine resistance is "a creative act", which can be expressed in marginal events and masked actions. The authors differentiate between four forms of routine resistance. It is 1) *open confrontation* which is in most cases not planned, spontaneous and often triggered by some workplace incident or a change in workplace routine, 2) *subtle subversions of power relations*, e.g. petty thefts, acts of carelessness or "forgetting" to save important pieces of data, 3) *disengagement and withdrawal of cooperation*, including such behaviors as disinterest of workers, daydreaming, listening to

radio music while on the job as well as humor or joking, and 4) *ambiguous accommodations* which include such behavior as cooperation and at the same time violating managerial rules in order to get a sense of control over the job.

A recent study by Fleming and Sewell (2002) contributes to the growing body of resistance research considering routine resistance by developing the concept of "švejkism" which highly corresponds the classification of Prasad and Prasad (1998). The authors borrow the term "švejkism" from the Jaroslav Hašek's novel, The good soldier, Švejk (1973). As the character of the novel, Josef Švejk, resists the discipline of the army through subtle forms, the authors considers švejkism as a subtle form of undermining organizational power relations, thus, resistance. From Flemings and Sewells point of view the dominant tactic of švejkism is 'disengagement' coupled with 'irony'. "Švejks" just do enough to appear as if they are doing their duty, show respect to demonstrate disrespect (Bailey 1993). However, Švejks aren't 'reformers' in a democratic sense and they do not necessarily wish to change the status quo as they possess a pronounced realistic comprehension regarding the power asymmetry in organizations and low possibility of essential changes. Fleming and Sewell (2002) differentiate four dimensions of švejkism, such as *equivocal affirmation*, *practice as performance, an ironical disposition and skepticism and cynicism*. It does not astonish that the concept of švejkism directly parallels some resistance forms distinguished by Prasad and Prasad (1998), as all three authors consider the unorganized spontaneous resistance. The resistance behavior of Švejks as described by Fleming and Sewell (2002) seem to highly correspond with ambiguous accommodations in terms of Prasad and Prasad as both kinds entail the ambiguity of demonstrated behavior and underlying motives. Furthermore, there are many parallels between the subtle subversions of power relations and disengagement and withdrawal on the one side and švejkism on the other side, because both entail subversive ironical and cynical elements. To sum it up, the concept of švejkism can be considered as an animating example of routine resistance.

Having discussed the forms of resistance, we would like at least to touch upon a complex issue of the aspects triggering resistance, especially routine resistance. The assumptions on what triggers routine resistance differ quite sharply between the scholars from different theoretical orientations, such as Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Interpretative, Critical-Cultural or Post-Structural traditions (Prasad/Prasad 1998). Nevertheless, power and control relations at workplace have been in unison considered a main background of resistance in all theoretical

settings. Resistance, organized as well as spontaneous, indicates efforts of workers to overcome or at least to escape managerial control or as White (1987) suggests, routine resistance signals refusal of workers to become "mindless entities" in Taylorized conditions and allow them to become an active subject. Hodson (1991) endorses this position stressing that routine resistance bears the symbolical value and can symbolically enhance workers self-identities as autonomous individuals fully capable of opposing managerial actions when necessary. According to Morgan (1975), routine resistance is also an endless process of moves and countermoves of workers and managers and is part of a constant process of implicit bargaining around the rules and expectations governing the workplace.

There are some authors trying to integrate different theoretical and empirical positions in order to develop a general acceptable overview of the resistance triggers. For example, Lawrence and Robinson (2007) suggest in their study that the instances of organizational power can result in workers' resistance through three main mechanisms. These are: 1) perceived injustice, 2) threatened autonomy of participants and 3) threatened identity. According to Hodson (1995) different forms of organizational control (direct personal control, technical control, bureaucratic control and concertize control) provide different triggers for resistant behavior of workers, respectively 1) deflecting abuse, 2) regulating the amount and intensity of work, 3) defending autonomy and 4) expanding workers control through workers participation.

Even if routine resistance in contemporary organizations has been addressed in numerous studies up to now, mechanisms of resistance in educational settings are still underexplored. It is still not known if the theoretical concepts borrowed from organizational studies can be adequately applied to educational contexts as well. In contrast to the usual working relations, educational contexts, especially the relations between the teaching personnel and students seemingly are not power-oriented because of the lacking hierarchical order. Nevertheless, educational contexts are permeated with power relations as well in that students have often to obey to course requirements without many participation possibilities by developing those requirements or contents of courses. Thus, in educational contexts there is a tendency to powerful position of teachers, lecturers and organizers of the courses and an obeying position of the students. Thus, the question of routine resistance showed by students in educational contexts is more than warranted.

After having discussed numerous theoretical approaches, we have to say that our own position conforms to the critical modern approach considering routine resistance from power-perspective. In accordance with Prasad and Prasad (1998), we define routine resistance of students as "any action in teething context that either symbolically or substantively contains oppositional or deviant elements".

Despite of the numerous conceptual models, the study of routine resistance, as Prasad and Prasad (2000) indicate, is difficult because of its frequently covert and hidden, informal nature. Thus, the authors consider ethnographic field studies as the most obvious research method examining routine resistance. We followed this suggestion in our study and undertook a case study in an educational setting.

4. Research questions

Having shown that the research on teaching cross-cultural competencies in mainly occupied with (effective) teaching methods and ignoring possible resistance by students on the one side and a ubiquitous resistance behavior in economic organizations on the other side, we might conclude that both research traditions have been barely combined up to now. In this paper, we focus on the resistance of students learning cross-cultural competencies drawing on research tradition of resistance at work.

In our paper, we will discuss two questions: 1) What kind of resistance could be observed among students learning cross cultural competencies? 2) To which issues can different forms of resistance be traced back? Among other issues, we will ask if the national culture (in this case the German culture) has an impact on the perceived (ir-)relevance of cross-cultural competencies in educational contexts. Thus, we are interested in observing and describing the occurrence and characteristics of student' resistance by learning cross-cultural competencies on the one side as well as tracing back potential reasons for different forms of resistance.

5. Empirical study: context and methods

We undertook our empirical study in the summer term 2009 at a German university. We focused on one course considering cross cultural competencies. In our study, we applied

several investigation methods. Two researchers and six master students repeatedly observed the students in seminar classes, interviewed tutors and students, and analyzed documents, such as feedback sheets or email correspondence. Thus, our undertaking can be considered as a case study.

a.   Context of investigation

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the mentioned university offers classes on Intercultural Communication since summer 2008. A couple of severe students' complaints about their grading and assessing after the first course led us to assume similar problems in 2009 and thus, to examine them more profoundly.

The examined course "Introduction to intercultural communication" is part of an obligatory module constituting the bachelor studies in Economics and Business Administration. This module addresses basics of social research and social competencies. One of the module's goals is to impart knowledge on social research as well as interdisciplinary social and intercultural competencies. With five courses completed, students can achieve 15 credits points with an average of 450 working hours required in this module.

The explicit goal of the course was to apply so far acquired social competencies and to learn cross-cultural competencies.

In summer term 2009, 270 bachelor students attended the course. Generally, the course was attended by the students in the fourth semester of the studies. The course consists of a two-weekly lecture and a weekly tutorial unit. Whereas the lecture addresses general aspects of intercultural theories and examples, such as Hofstede's studies, acculturation model, GLOBE study, National Business System etc., the weekly tutorials focus on application and exercising of lecture materials by discussing selected countries. During the whole term each tutorial focuses on only one selected country, such as Mexico, Romania, the Netherlands, etc. or one group of countries, like e.g. the Mid-East or the countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia with focus on one country in special, but not exclusively. In the term of investigation there were 14 regular weekly tutorials and one blocked tutorial over three days, each attended by 8 to 20 students. It should be noted that tutors were in most cases students as well, however, more advanced in their study than participants of tutorials. The tutors were mainly Magister- and Master Students with major or minor in intercultural communication,

neighboring subjects or PhD students in intercultural organizational studies. One of the relevant criteria for engaging these tutors was considerable direct experience in the taught culture, i.e. longer stays. Some of the students were natives, as well.

Additionally, the time schedule of tutorials was often precarious. Tutorials took either place in the early morning (i.e. one at 7.30 am, three at 9.15 am) or late in the evening (i.e. three classes at 5.15 pm, one at 7:00 pm) due to university rules and other lectures with higher numbers of participants.

For the preparation of the tutorial exercise and the exam a script with relevant text was compiled. In the term of investigation it covered approx. 220 pages.[3] Additionally to this the country-specific literature needed to be read as well.

In order to finish the course successfully, students had to attend the weekly tutorials, with a maximum of two times of absence. They also had to write a country report[4] and were expected to actively support preparing the conference of the countries[5] and to pass the written exam over 90 minutes. The exam consists of three parts: 1) questions on the discussed theoretical concepts, 2) interpreting critical incidents dealing with intercultural situations and 3) a comparative essay considering the country of the tutorial, Germany and a free chosen third country, based either on written country reports of other groups or their presentations in the "country-conference". Additionally, the students groups which provide the best country reports, as they are evaluated by the lecturing professor and his assistants, receive a note-upgrade of 0,3 degrees. The number of reports getting an upgrade was not fixed but expected not to be more than one third of all groups each year. In the summer term 2009, three countries got the upgrade.

As mentioned earlier, the course "Introduction to intercultural communication" is part of an obligatory module constituting the bachelor study in business and administration, and the course note adds 50% to the module note. Based on proportional weight, this course-note accounts only for 2,5 per cent of the total note in the bachelor certificate. Hence, the course

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[3] It was reduced from about 270 pages in 2008.
[4] The country-report, written in English, can be understood as a summary of the tutorials. It should give a basic overview over the history, cultural specifics of the country and include the concrete application of the theories on this country. Every student participated here, thus, the average amount per student should be 1 to 1.5 pages.
[5] At the "conference of the countries" each tutorial group shortly presents their studied country by addressing typical aspects of the country and providing interaction possibilities. The variety of presentations was from self-made video documentations, interviews with natives working or living on the campus or little scenarios according to the method of critical incidents. The intention of the conference was to give the students a brief overview over the other countries and to help them to master part three in the exam.

studied has only a small priority for the students in the fourth term. It should also be noted, that in the fourth term students have to attend further 15 courses beside the course "Introduction to intercultural communication". The proportional low weight of the course observed as well as overload of parallel courses seem to be in opposition to the time and effort required from students learning cross-cultural competencies. However, the analysis of the feedback papers showed that the students used as much time for the course as intended from the Bachelor commission (average 90h).

b.   Methods of investigation

As previously mentioned, the inspiration originated by severe complaints by students concerning the course examined after the summer term 2008. At this time our ethnographical observations began, focusing on the discussions and email correspondence between one of the authors and students complaining. The content analysis of this conversations and emails is thus our first method and data source.

In summer term 2009 both researchers and six master students started systematically observations of tutorials. There were participatory observations, in most cases they were overt, in a few cases covert. Prior to the observations all potential observers took part in a short teaching workshop addressing observation techniques as empirical method as well as systematic challenges observing resistance. The main part of the course consisted of film-observation and a group-discussion about overt and covert resisting behavior observed. Before the observations started, all the tutors were informed about the plan and were motivated by potential feedback from observers. From 14 tutorial groups, three were accidently chosen for a regular observation. It can be assumed that there were no systematic differences to the remaining groups, as all three groups were similar in regard of the main criteria, i.e. all were led by German tutors and had a similar number of participants. Each tutorial group was observed at least three times (three weeks), most of the observations took place in the middle of the summer term between April and July 2009, thus, we barely have material from the potentially "conflict-laden-time" when appraisals for country-reports or the exam-notes were announced. Additionally to the regular observations, some observers undertook spontaneous interviews with tutors and students. Furthermore, in one of the tutorial observed the tutor undertook an "in-between-evaluation" of the own group. There

were evaluation sheets where students have been asked to write down their appreciations of the course: the best issue during the course, the worst issue, ideas of improvements. Happily, the tutor provided original evaluation sheets to the researchers, thus, the earlier students' perspective of the course can be considered as well, at least for this one group. All observations of tutorials, interviews as well as the evaluation sheets of the one group can be content-analyzed and represent the second source of our empirical data.

The third source is provided by quantitative data from evaluation sheets that students filled out at the end of the course. They entail a list of issues, such as the perceived learning gains (i.e. new competencies achieved) through the course, perceived relevance of the course, satisfaction with the course as well as with the tutor, and the intensity of recommendation of this course to other students. Not all groups have filled those evaluation sheets. As we will match our observational material with quantitative results from subject perceptions, we only consider the results from two groups observed in our analysis.

6. Main findings

First stream: 'season of complaints'

The inspirations of the investigation were complaints by different students in the summer term 2008 where fourteen tutorials were held. One of the researchers was working as teaching assistant and taught the students as well as corrected the tests at the end of the semester. So the researcher could do participating observations.

Even before the investigation time frame the researcher realized different difficulties in connection with the "country report". The informal complaints dealt already with the sharing of work in the groups as well as the comparability between the groups. The bonus on the final mark was a good reason for the students to encourage in this work. The decision which reports get the bonus was made by the professor, the coordinator and one assisting researcher. After announcing the reports getting a bonus the resistance of the students began to become overt. The students wrote protesting mails, why their groups did not get the bonus[6].

[6] One special case was remarkable. Before the decision was made a representative of one tutorial group went to the coordinator and asked how his group's report is overall. The coordinator's answer was: "Not too bad". After the results of group notes were announced and it was obvious that the group mentioned did not get the bonus, the same student went to the researcher who in a meantime changed to the coordinator's position with a demand

Beside this, other complaints expressed partly dealt with the content of the lecture as well. Reasons mentioned where the complexity of the theoretical models analyzed. Over winter term different meetings between the professor, the researcher and a student assistant took place in order to dissolve the conflicting aspects of the course. Because of this stirring experience, the two researchers decided to carry out an observational study regarding the resistance of the students in the course considered.

Second stream: observational findings

The observations in four tutorial groups provide a rich and colorful material on routine resistance of students. By looking at students in tutorials we could notice that most of them would actually not attend the tutorial; however, they were in some extent forced to by the compulsory attendance. Accordingly reluctant and resistant behaviors by students shown in a myriad of subtle ways were manifest and obvious. In most cases, passive individual resistance dominated the scene. On and off we could observe some spontaneous solidarization among several students as well, for example by making fun of the tutor. This kind of 'collective resistance' was in most cases only temporarily and disappeared within a few minutes. Altogether, there was a bulk of different, fancy and creative resistant behaviors observed in tutorial groups. However, we have found some main kinds of behavior in all four tutorials studied.

One of the most obvious forms of the students' resistance was **coming late** to the tutorial, sometimes even up to 15 min. Students then simply came into the room, without saying a 'hello' or apologizing being late. It was apparent that these students came late consciously, since they often entered the room still with a coffee bag in the hand. They signaled in this form that they do not consider the tutorial as very important. Late arrivals effected participants of tutorials in different ways. In one of the tutorial group we observed the following scene: Two students came late at the time when four other students already held

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to get the bonus because of the positive evaluation by the first coordinator. The student didn't want to leave the office unless he got an upgrade on his mark. He didn't bother if the researcher would give him a bonus or would find some other ways to give him more points. After he had no success he wanted to pressure the researcher with the threat to go to the professor. "I will go to the prof and he will give me a better mark! You will be the loser in this story!" This was not successful for the student, because the professor shared the mark suggestion of the researcher. The next step of the student was to use his cooperation with the student government association of the faculty. He used this position to mobilize the student in the undergraduate committee to fight against this procedure. Although the student didn't have success, the rules for the "country report" were made clearer and the procedure of grading more transparent.

their presentation. These four students were more irritated by their comrades than other students in the class or the tutor. He noticed the delay, showed his contempt about it by ignoring two students in the discussion, but did not deal with this behavior in detail. Other students in the class shortly noticed the two late students, but were not bothered by the fact that these were not punctual. The four students, who stood in front and held their report, however, became visibly diverted and challenged by the late arrival of the two comrades. Their glance suggested that they were upset because of the unnecessary disturbance.

Even if in each tutorial some students were active and cooperative, a **general passivity** in the tutorial groups was one of the most common forms of resistance. It manifested by few voluntary statements on the side of students and reactions only on direct request by the tutor. Many times participants avoided the questions of tutors regarding the study-texts with pejorative „No idea, you can find everything there!". Sometimes students did not answer the questions of the tutors at all or only reluctantly. Usually, the activity and attention of the students rose while their comrades presented their reports. But it was not always the case. Thus, not only the questions of the tutors were ignored, but sometimes the questions of the referring colleagues in the group were over-heard, not considered. In one of the groups we observed students who directed some questions to a colleague after finishing their presentation. The colleague could not answer the question. He asked back what the question was about and laughed, because he found the situation amusing. One of the presenters reacted angrily with „you just have to listen!" The tutor as well as the students presenting were indignant over such behavior because in their opinion it hinders the class to advance. Instead of repeating the question, the asking student called simply another comrade. The passivity and disengagement of students was obviously not so much connected with the concrete teaching methods, such as reporting and discussions, but are triggered by all assigned teaching methods. In the group mentioned the following incident was observed. After the questions of presenting students were finished, the tutor announced that now a cloze text has to be solved. Many students moaned immediately, accompanied it with the call „Ooooooaaaar! ", which signaled that they were little motivated to solve the task. Accordingly, the engagement of them was very low and many of them refused any co-operation at all. The analysis of the cloze text was also very passive. Nobody made a statement about a solution. The tutor waited briefly and tried to begin the discussion while he asked a student from the first tier whether she would solve the first line of the cloze text. The student concerned

showed little enthusiasm and answered briefly and scarcely: „No!" The tutor then made a suggestion to solve the next task in a group work. However, this idea was not able to break the restraint, too. Already the formation of the groups ran very sluggishly. After the tutor assigned different tasks to the three groups, each group had to find a solution, prepare it on an A2-format sheet, stick it on the board and explain the solution to their colleagues. After the first group was finished, the tutor called the second group to the board. However, this group ignored the call and considered their solution sheet further. The repeated request of the tutor was missed again. Finally the tutor preferred to ask the third group to the board. It is remarkable that the passivity of the students disappeared fast, as soon as discussions with the tutor concerning the workload for the course can be instigated. Students who were so far disengaged became active and use their chance to complain about the course requirements which are perceived as too high and unjust.

Lack of interest and **mental absence** also belonged to the catalogue of the resistant behaviors observed in the tutorials. There were predominantly nonverbal activities of the students. The lack of interest was expressed by mental absence of participants or a remarkable chewing a gum. In the class, some students regularly wrote „notes ", or painted. Students repeatedly stared out of the window, bored, wobbled nervous with the feet, played with pins in the hand, seesawed with chairs, bowed their heads into the hands, ate and drunk. Some students lay down almost on the desks and nearly slipped under the table. Others leant with folded arms over the table and let their head hang. These behaviors make clear that the students do distance themselves from the tutorials. An observer noted a remarkable scene in one of the tutorial groups: The tutor announced briefly presented the observers to the group and said that the tutorial will be evaluated. Shortly before the announcement one of the participants had put a crossword puzzle on her desk, which she apparently wanted to solve in the course. After she had heard about the observation she put the booklet directly back into the bag.

Furthermore, we saw the lack of interest in the fact that students often had **forgotten some of the teaching materials** for the tutorial or they **did not do their homework**. Some of the students did not even have any teaching materials at all. Others did not make any notes and sat passively with their arms folded. Furthermore, the students had not read given texts, although this was announced in the preceding unit as task. In one of the groups the tutor once asked who had not read the text. It was the predominant majority of the class.

One impressive illustration of lack of interest among students observed shows figure 1. It presents the answer of one student in an in-between-evaluation of the class initiated by the tutor. Accordingly to the so called "five-finger-scheme" the students were asked to write down their impressions from the tutorial so far regarding the pros and cons of the tutorial, their own wishes or suggestions. One of the participants solely wrote as a suggestion "I`m here, because I have to be here".

- Insert Figure 1 around here -

The next obvious kind of resistance from our point of view was an **active disturbance of tutorials**. We often could observe verbal disturbances n the groups, like chatting or interruptions of tutors. Such disturbances rose with seminar progress. It was observed that even during presentations of fellow students participants chatted among themselves. Often only after the interventions from tutors repeating „Psst! Psst!" the class stopped chatting. Furthermore, at the end of the meeting time the students frequently went to pack their teaching materials while their colleagues were still busy with solutions. They ignored the fact that the noise caused by them heavily disturbed their colleagues.

Besides that, on and off we observed **disregard and depreciation** among students to their fellows who actively cooperated and engaged in tutorials. It was not uncommon that some students laughed about their fellows when they gave an answer to a question of the tutor. In one group studied we observed how some students made fun about the pronunciation of a presenting fellow and apparently tried to copy it.

Refusal to support tutors is the last kind of subtle resistance we observed. In one of the tutorials the tutor wanted to show a pedagogically relevant movie. There were some technical problems so that the tutor asked for help. The students hardly noticed the question of the tutor and did not interrupt their informal considerations. Only few of them answered with comments „We don't know how it works, either".

Our observations show that tutors are absolutely aware of the more or less subtle resistance behavior of participants and in some cases address it actively. In some tutorials the essential passivity of participants and their lack of interest led to the change of teaching style practiced

by the tutor in the course of the term. While at the beginning of the course the tutor showed a style which could be considered as „democratic" and „cooperative", with progressing time (and obviously with rise of frustration over the passivity of students) we observed an increase in structuring and instructions in the tutorial, which indicates a more authoritarian teaching style.

The observational results may suggest that participants are very critical and resistant to tutorials only. The evaluations of tutorials by students which were undertook in three from four observed groups make clear that students are quite content with the work in the tutorials. They were rather dissatisfied with the work load in the whole course (tutorials plus lectures), particularly due to the extensive text work required. Interestingly, one of the observed group was one of the three groups that got the note upgrade for their "country report" in the summer term 2009.

Third stream: quantitative data based on evaluation sheets

Three of four observed groups took part in the quantitative evaluation at the end of the course. In the fourth group an evaluation of the course wasn't undertaken at all. In order to get the feedback from students, standardized evaluation sheets were applied. This means that the items used and information asked are not course-specific but general for all courses hold at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. The evaluation sheet asks data from the course considered as well as 20 items regarding the quality of the course from a student's point of view.

In total, we got the answers of 50 participants, 15 from group 1 as well as from group 2 and 20 from group 3. We undertook a statistical descriptive analysis (frequencies, group means) as well as a comparative means' analysis. The results of the quantitative data confirm our observed findings in some points, but contradict in other points.

The qualitative results confirm the impression we got by observations: The majority of the students (between 80% and 100% of the group) marked that they aren't voluntarily attending the tutorials, but take part because their study reglementations require this. Only in a few cases participants indicate attending the course because of genuine concern about the theme and contents studied. Thus, most of the students perceive themselves as forced to attend the

tutorials. The myriad of the subtle resistant behavior of students in the tutorials is thus not astonishing.

Through our observations we assumed that most resistance of students results from the fact that they deny the relevance of tutorials. This counts for the whole course of intercultural communication, for their study's advance or occupational success. The quantitative data provide an opportunity to prove this assumption as evaluation sheet entailed the item "What I have to learn in this tutorial, is relevant for me" on the one side and the item "The tutorial contributes considerably to my occupational competencies" on the other. In both cases participants could mark their answer on a 6-point Likert-Type scale (from 1 – "I completely disagree" to 6 – "I completely agree"). As Table 1 and Table 2 show, the results do not indicate that students perceive the tutorials as generally irrelevant for them. Apart from group 3, the mean results of both groups 1 and 2 are above the theoretical mean of 3 points. In fact, no euphoria about the course dominated here, but most of the participants credit the tutorials at least with some personal relevance. Nevertheless, 17 from 50 students are very critical with regard to the course relevance, in that they answer with "completely disagree" or "rather disagree".

-Please insert Table 1 about here-

The question regarding the contribution of the tutorial to occupational competencies yields similar results. Despite of the differences between the groups, with group 2 achieving best results (group mean of 4,27) and group 3 with the worst results (group mean of 3,21), the total average value of all participants is 3,52 and thus above the theoretical mean. Furthermore, 10 from 50 participants consider the contribution of the course very critically with "I completely disagree" or "I rather disagree".

-Please insert Table 2 about here-

The question "Would you recommend this tutorial to your fellows?" presents the last item indicating the perceived importance of the course. The findings confirm that most of the students (28 if we count the answers "Yes, of course", "Yes" and "Rather yes") would present

the course in a positive way to their comrades and, thus, apparently attribute some relevance to the course. Nevertheless, 13 of the participants wouldn't recommend the course and 7 are neutral and would potentially do a recommendation.

-Please insert Table 3 about here-

7. Discussion and conclusions

Our research questions were twofold: 1) What kinds of resistance could by observed among students of the course considered? and 2) Which aspects of educational contexts trigger which resistance forms? The empirical study we undertook reveals numerous forms of students' resistance. As cited in the studies, there were demonstrations of overt resistance, as well as of subliminal routine resistance. In summer term 2008, previous to our observations we could observe overt resistance. The numerous individual complaints of students about the upgrading results regarding the so called "country reports" were in one case even coupled with an attempt to collectively challenge the whole marking procedure. On the other side, the observations in the tutorials disclose numerous forms of routine resistance among students, especially coming late to the tutorials, disengagement and passivity in the class, lack of interest and distancing as well as actively disregarding of active fellows, i.e. constantly being late for class or a passive attendance at the seminar. These behaviors highly correspond with the theoretical categories of routine resistance developed by Prasad and Prasad (1998), such as 'disengagement', 'subtle subversions' (e.g. through coming late) as well as 'ambiguous accommodations' (e.g. attending the tutorial but remaining passive and distanced from the class). The students observed match the description of Švejks provided by Fleming and Sewell (2002) very well: They aren't reformers of the course, they rather show minimal engagement (attendance to the course) in order not to become "a problem" and an issue for the professor. Through this they escape from the tight educational control (i.e. study regulations, professor and tutor) and creatively use it for regaining their autonomy and to create their own 'retreat areas'.

Regarding our second research question the study findings suggest that there are different triggers of resistance. In accord with the considerations of Lawrence and Robinson (2005) we could observe perceived injustice (by upgrading the country reports or by work load in comparison with low weight of the mark) as a relevant trigger for resistance. Additionally, we can assume that a perceived threat to the autonomy of the students triggered spontaneous informal resistance in the tutorials. The question was furthermore if the perceived (ir)relevance of the course can be considered as a trigger as well. The quantitative findings provide no clear answer in that the groups studied were very heterogeneous in their different perceptions with some participants considering the course as rather relevant and some participants attributing only marginal relevance to the course as a whole and to the tutorial. How can we explain this perceived (ir)relevance of the course? From the perspective of the culture-oriented research as represented by Hofstede (1991) we can assume that the perceived relative irrelevance of intercultural competencies has also to do with the German culture, especially with the relatively high uncertainty avoidance and ethnocentrism which should highly correspond with the uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1991). This means that German students are generally detached from the foreign cultures and aren't willing to voluntarily handle the questions of intercultural communication. From the perspective of resistance research, however, we can say that this perceived and reported (ir)relevance of the course already represents a form of routine resistance, a kind of švejkism-like behavior negotiating the relevance of the task which is associated with tight control practices (little participating possibilities for students, rigor attendance requirements).

Furthermore, different kinds of resistance can be at least partly traced back to different triggers. The overt resistance strongly corresponds to perceived injustice (especially the injustice of appraisal), while the covert or subliminal resistance was mainly based on the fact that students attempt to escape tight controls applied. It seems that our results confirm the assumption made by Fleming and Sewell (2002) in regard of švejkism: When there are low chances of change, the realistic Švejks do not challenge the issues and retrench their resistance to covert behaviors. If the matter considered seems to be changeable the resistance of students can become overt and even organized.
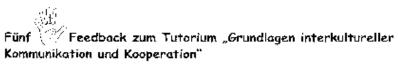
8. Acknowledgement

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10. Appendix

Figure 1: Reaction of one participant to the "in-between-evaluation" of the tutorial: "I'm here because I've to be here" (ger.: "Ich bin hier, weil ich hier sein muss")

Table 1: Answer' statistics of the question „What I have to learn in this tutorial, is relevant for me"

	Group observed			
	1	2	3	Total
Completely disagree	2	0	4	6
Slightly disagree	3	2	6	11
Neutral	3	5	7	15
Slightly agree	6	6	1	13
Mainly agree	0	1	2	3
Completely agree	1	1	0	2
Total	15	15	20	50

Table 2: Answer' statistics of the question „The tutorial contributes considerably to my occupational competencies"

	Group observed			
	1	2	3	Total
Completely disagree	1	0	2	3
Slightly disagree	1	1	5	7
Neutral	4	3	10	17
Slightly agree	3	3	3	9
Mainly agree	5	7	0	12
Completely agree	1	1	0	2
Total	15	15	20	50

Table 3: Answer' statistics of the question „Would you recommend this tutorial to your fellows?"

	Group observed			
	1	2	3	Total
Completely disagree	2	0	2	4
Slightly disagree	1	3	5	9
Neutral	4	0	3	7
Slightly agree	4	4	6	14
Mainly agree	2	8	2	12
Completely agree	1	0	1	2
Total	14	15	19	48