Diverging interpretations in German-Russian business communication

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Summary

This study explores intercultural business communication between German and Russian employees. Building on existing research, the study aims to understand the interpretation patterns in German-Russian daily interactions and the formation of German-Russian interculture.

The empirical study addresses the aim of the dissertation in 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with German and Russian employees. The interviews are analyzed with a holistic approach that unites the different macro and micro approaches to study intercultural communication and considers the standpoint of both the German and Russian sides.

The results of this dissertation reveal three possible interpretation patterns: attribution to the individual characteristics of the counterpart, attribution to the historical and socio-environmental context of the counterpart, and attribution to individual characteristics of oneself. Furthermore, the findings of the study demonstrate that German-Russian interculture incorporates a continuous conflict of cultures, which is usually of a tacit nature. Although the study focuses on interactions between German and Russian cultures, its final recommendations may be equally useful to enhancing the understanding between representatives of other cultures.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Geschäftskommunikation zwischen deutschen und russischen Mitarbeitern im Hinblick auf interkulturelle Aspekte. Aufbauend auf bisherigen Forschungsergebnissen werden Interpretationsmuster in den täglichen deutsch-russischen Interaktionen sowie die Entstehung der dazugehörigen Interkultur untersucht.

Die empirische Untersuchung umfasst 30 semi-strukturierte Tiefeninterviews mit deutschen und russischen Mitarbeitern. Zur Analyse dieser Interviews wurde ein ganzheitlicher Ansatz gewählt, der unterschiedliche makro- und mikro-analytische Ansätze zur Erforschung der interkulturellen Fragestellungen vereint sowie die Sichtweisen sowohl der deutschen als auch der russischen Seite berücksichtigt.

Die Resultate der Untersuchung decken drei mögliche Interpretationsmuster auf: Attribuierung zu den individuellen Merkmalen eines Kollegen, Attribuierung zu der historischen und der sozialen Umwelt eines Kollegen und Attribuierung zu den eigenen individuellen Merkmalen. Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung zeigen außerdem auf, dass die deutsch-russische Interkultur durch einen durchgehenden Konflikt der Kulturen geprägt ist, die zum größten Teil als stillschweigend abläuft und nur in seltenen Fällen offensichtlich wird. Die abgeleiteten Empfehlungen betreffen damit nicht nur die Interaktionen zwischen der deutschen und der russischen Kultur, sondern lassen sich auch auf die Verbesserung der interkulturellen Zusammenarbeit sowie der gegenseitigen Verständigung in anderen Kulturräumen übertragen.

Table of content

Figures

Tables

1 Introduction

1.1 Research motivation

In the new global economy, companies all over the world are increasingly extending their operations beyond their national borders. While the level of involvement in international business relations may vary from non-binding cooperation with foreign partners to extensive outsourcing activities and relocation of manufacturing sites abroad, all these relationships have one attribute in common: they all require close cooperation between people from different cultures. As a growing number of interpersonal interactions takes place in the intercultural environment, *"cultural competence is no longer a nice skill to have; it is an economic necessity"* (Brake, Walker, & Walker, 1995: 32). Moreover, the need for intercultural communication competences does not come solely from company activities abroad; more and more companies employ an international workforce within their own national boundaries (Limaye & Victor, 1991: 2). In this light, successful inter- and intra-company collaboration requires not only knowledge about appropriate behaviors, but, more importantly, a deep understanding of the reason why certain behaviors are appropriate in a particular situation.

The role of culture in international business research has increasingly gained in importance over the past decades, triggered largely by the publication of Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences: International Differences of Work-Related Values* in 1980 (Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2005: 357). Today, cross-cultural research covers the majority of the nations around the globe. Nevertheless, cultural comparisons between West and East are prevailing, with the USA, United Kingdom, Germany, and France representing Western cultures, and Japan, China, and Hong Kong dominating among the Eastern countries (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou 2007: 457-459).

Despite being one of the largest emerging economies possessing major natural resources, Russia has not received as much attention as the other BRIC[1] countries, such as China or India, neither in academic research nor in the business press. Nevertheless, Russia is of twofold interest for the international business research: On the one hand, the country is

[1] The acronym BRIC was introduced by Goldman Sachs in 2001, and refers to four of the world's fastest-growing economies: Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

one of the key export markets and strategic suppliers of natural resources for Western European economies. On the other hand, Russia is undergoing a substantial transformation from the economic, political, and cultural heritage of the Soviet System towards a more market-oriented economy (Puffer & McCarthy, 2011: 21). Due to strong growth during the last decade, Russia became the third most important trading partner of EU, following the USA and China: From 2002 to 2012, Russia's import from the EU grew from EUR 34.5 billion to EUR 123.4 billion, and its exports rose from EUR 65 billion to EUR 215 billion, reaching a new annual peal in 2012.

Among the 28 EU countries, Germany is by far Russia's most important trading partner (Eurostat, 2014). In 2012, the trading volume between the two countries again reached a record level of EUR 80.5 billion. Germany's exports to Russia, mainly of industrial products, increased by more than 10%, and amounted to EUR 38 billion. This constituted 35% of all EU exports to Russia. Meanwhile, ca. 6,100 German companies have their subsidiaries or representatives in Russia. Contrary to the general economic trends, German enterprises have increased their investments in Russia significantly. In 2012, German direct investment grew by EUR 0.7 billion to amount to EUR 8.9 billion (Ost-Auschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft). Similarly, German enterprises anticipate positive trends in the German-Russian relationship and plan to extend their investments and recruiting activities further in 2014.[2] [3]

The growth of the German-Russian business relationship is leading to an increase of interactions between German and Russian employees on a daily basis. The majority of German enterprises send German employees from their headquarters to their Russian subsidiaries with the aim of ensuring knowledge transfer, establishing a strong interlink between the local office and the headquarters, and countering the existing lack of skilled

[2] Based on a survey of 105 German enterprises operating in Russia carried out by the Deutsch-Russische Auslandshandelskammer:

http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/sites/default/files/pm_pdf/Gesch%C3%A4ftsklima%20Russland%202014_0.pdf

[3] Though recent political events related to crises in Ukraine led to tensions in the German-Russian diplomatic relations, German companies keep pursuing their business opportunities in Russian market. The recent visit of Siemens CEO, Joe Kaeser, to Moscow on March 26, 2014, in the middle of the Crimea crises, may serve as an evidence of strong intent of German enterprises to continue and to expand their operations in Russia. Another evidence of strong commitment of German enterprises to pursue their business in Russia is the attendance of top German managers - such as E.on-CEO Johannes Teyssen, Metro-CEO Olaf Koch or Member of the Board of Executive Directors of BASF SE, responsible for Oil & Gas, Harald Schwager – to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum held on May 22-24, 2014.

labor in Russia. Representing mainly middle and upper management in Russian subsidiaries, German expatriates spend the majority of their time interacting with Russian employees, and they have a high exposure to a variety of aspects of Russian culture.

In these settings, both German and Russian sides need to have a deep understanding of one another's cultural backgrounds in order to reduce potential misunderstandings and facilitate collaboration.

Though the volume of German-Russian business interactions is constantly increasing, German enterprises usually provide only limited support to their employees in dealing with the challenges of intercultural communication. Sometimes intercultural training or any other form of intercultural support is not even offered to German expatriates leaving for a long-term assignment in Russia. On the other hand, the majority of the existing intercultural training offerings either limit themselves to a general overview of the targeted culture or provide merely theoretical frameworks and irrelevant examples. This results in a subsequent denial of any intercultural communication support and the building of stereotypes, as in the following example from an intercultural training program for Russia:

> *"Don't expect punctuality, but feelings and the ability to hold one's drink instead. The critical topic is corruption, but not status: those who are important travel with a driver"* (English translation from Financial Times Deutschland, October 14, 2008).

However, real-life interactions cannot be summarized in several stereotypes or cultural dimensions: they are much more complex and diverse. This complexity and diversity in the field of intercultural business communication offers interesting research opportunities and immense practical applications.

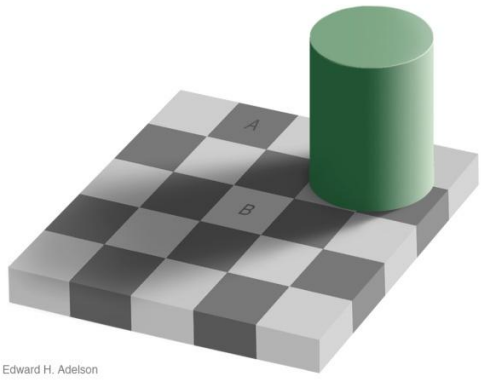
In addition to the significant business and research relevance, my motivation for this dissertation also comes from my previous intercultural experiences and background. I was born and grew up in Ukraine. When I was a university student in Kyiv, I received a grant to continue my studies in Germany. This was my first intensive contact with another culture. During the past ten years, I have lived and worked in Germany, where I was constantly exposed to German culture while still keeping contact with my Ukrainian family and friends. As a native Russian speaker, my employer, a German multinational industrial company, nominated me for an assignment to Russia, where I spent more than

a year. During my stay in Russia, I had to deal with other German employees from the headquarters, as well as Russian colleagues from the local office and external Russian partners. My work required intense communication with other people, and my communication always took on an intercultural character. As never before, I realized the importance of cultural sensitivity, and that made me curious about the underlying mechanism of intercultural communication.

Though my bicultural background enabled me to view many situations from different points of view, it was not always sufficient to understand my colleagues from Germany and Russia and to act in the best possible manner. My experience has shown me that it is not enough to be open-minded and act intuitively in an intercultural environment; it is necessary to combine personal insights with proper theoretical knowledge. And this is my personal motivation for undertaking this dissertation.

I would like to start this intercultural study with an example of how we perceive reality. The following picture in Figure 1, known as a checker shadow illusion, shows that what we perceive is not an objective external reality, but rather a product of our previous knowledge and experience:

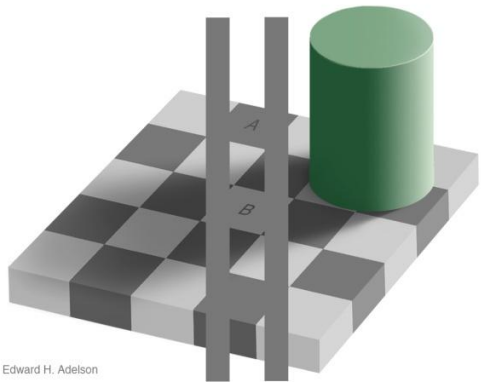
Figure 1. The checker shadow image: illusion
Source: http://persci.mit.edu/gallery/checkershadow, accessed on February 9, 2014



By taking look at the squares marked A and B at this checkerboard, most people will assume that they are different shades of grey. In fact, squares A and B have exactly the same color. The proof is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The checker shadow image: proof

Source: http://persci.mit.edu/gallery/checkershadow, accessed on February 9, 2014



This example clearly illustrates that our visual system does not inform us about objective reality, but rather interprets it based on our previous experiences and knowledge. Similarly, our brain interprets intercultural interactions based on our previous individual culturally bound experiences and knowledge.

This dissertation is composed of five themed chapters. The first chapter continues with an overview of the current state of research, putting a special focus on intercultural business communication research on Russia. This chapter goes on to specify the research scope, questions, and objectives, and provides a summary of the current state of the discussion of the definitions of culture and intercultural communication. The second chapter lays out the theoretical frameworks relevant for the purpose of this dissertation, and looks at how these frameworks are interlinked. The third chapter describes the research method and procedure used in the empirical study. It also presents the findings of the empirical study, focusing on three key themes identified in the analysis. Finally, the forth chapter draws upon the entire thesis, discussing the major findings and their applications for both researchers and the business community.

1.2 State of research

Historically, intercultural communication research has its roots in a wide range of academic disciplines[4], including linguistics, philology, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, ethnology, history, communication, economy, sociology, and religion (Thomas, 2007: 54). As a result, the field is characterized by its considerable variety in research topics, questions, and approaches.

Nevertheless, the majority of the studies can be classified into three groups: mono-cultural studies, comparative or cross-cultural studies, and intercultural studies (Hart, 1998: 1). Mono-cultural studies focus on describing a single culture, often aiming at outlining and explaining its peculiarities. This type of study is common in anthropology and sociology (e.g. Rohlen, 1979; Silin, 1976). Cross-cultural studies deal with similarities and differences between cultural systems (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2010a: 119). Intercultural studies focus on the interaction of two or more cultures, emphasizing the dynamics of intercultural interaction (e.g. Bolten, 1999), and often utilizing the analytical methods of linguistics (e.g. Ertelt-Vieth, 2005; Mueller-Jacquier, 2000). According to the estimations of Mueller-Jacquier (2004: 106), approximately 90% of empirical studies with the title "intercultural communication" employ a comparative research approach, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions or Thomas's cultural standards. Table 1 provides an overview of the major characteristics of cross-cultural and intercultural research.

[4] There is no consensus among the researchers from different disciplines as to whether intercultural communication should be considered an autonomous discipline. See Moosmueller (2007) for a detailed discussion of the roots and subject of intercultural communication.

Table 1. Cross-cultural and inter-cultural research
Source: based on Barmeyer, 2000: 117

Cross-cultural research	Inter-cultural research
Contrastive comparison of characteristics of two or more societies or groups	Interaction of individuals from different cultural systems
Investigation and analysis of similarities and differences	Investigation and analysis of problems and potential synergy in interactions
Particularities of cultural systems	Process of interactions

Similarly, the cross-cultural perspective has also been dominant within the field of international business research. The following paragraphs summarize the overall trends and recent developments in this field.

1.2.1 Intercultural communication in international business research

Only in the past three decades has international business research recognized the importance of intercultural communication in management and business. For years, a "culture-free" view dominated the field of management research (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1955; Mintzberg, 1973; Mouton & Black, 1970). The representatives of this view argue that the significance of cultural context is diminished under the influence of competition, industrialization, and technological advances (Child, 1973; England, Negandhi, & Wilpert, 1979). However, since the 1970s the opposite, "culture-bound" view has increasingly gained ground among researches and practitioners. The supporters of the "culture-bound" perspective argue that cultural context has a strong influence on business practices (Adler, 1983; Dore, 1973; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1982). However, in investigating the influence of culture on business issues, the majority of scholars in international business have emphasized the role of cultural attitudes and, thus, neglected the role of communication aspects (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2006; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003).

The impact of culture on business activities became increasingly important in international business research during the 1980s, largely triggered by the 1980 publication of Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences: International Differences of Work-*

Related Values (Leung et al. 2005: 357). Using Hofstede's five-dimensions framework, scholars reported the direct influence of national culture on major business activities, from individual decision-making and negotiation behavior to market entry choices and joint venture performance[5]. Later, Trompenaars (1994), Schwartz (1994), and House et al. (2004) suggested competing cultural frameworks to classify cultural patterns. Nevertheless, Hofstede's dimensions remain most frequently cited to this day (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006: 285).

Though numerous studies have investigated how cultural context influences international business, the researchers emphasized cultural attitudes, not the aspects and processes of intercultural business communication. This also applies for the studies that have clear communication applications, such as expatriate selection and training. These studies typically focus on functional business problems, such as the process of expatriate selection and training content (Varner, 2000: 40).

For example, Bennett, Aston, and Colquhoun (2000), Graf (2004), and Tung (1998) investigated expatriate selection processes, singling out intercultural skills as an important factor in increasing expatriate success. Others examined such aspects of expatriation processes as expatriate adaptation strategies (van Oudenhoven, van der Zee, & van Kooten, 2001) and adaption processes (Suutari & Brewster, 1998), failure rates (Harzing, 1995), and repatriation processes (Paik, Segaud, & Malinowski, 2002). A large number of researches have explored the effectiveness of different concepts of intercultural training (Bosse, 2011; Konradt, Hertel, & Behr, 2002; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004).

To date, only a few studies have concentrated on intercultural communication aspects within the business environment. For example, Clausen (2007) investigated how differences in Danish and Japanese cultures influenced communication and collaboration practices. In her study, Clausen (2007) utilized a multi-contextual analysis to describe the dynamics and complexity of sense-making process in the collaboration between Danish and Japanese managers based on data gathered from both the Danish and Japanese sides. The results of the study showed that communication practices were adjusted over time on both sides and, as a result, a cultural "middle ground" emerged. Clausen (2007) also

[5] See Kirkman et al. (2006) for a detailed review of international business studies utilizing Hofstede's cultural value framework.

provided an overview of the "negotiated" issues, such as meeting styles, work culture, cultural and business philosophy, etc., that characterize this "middle ground."

Another example is the study by Brannen and Salk (2000). The researchers also used the negotiated culture framework to analyze the process of organizational culture formation in the example of a German-Japanese joint venture. Based on the series of interviews with German and Japanese managers, the study described the process of cultural negotiation within the company in seven domains: decision-making, concept of work, job-role perception, production and sales conflict, language, quality, and other. The findings showed that a negotiated culture gradually emerged in the joint venture, constituting the convergence of cultural dimensions towards the common approach. At the same time, the negotiated culture left many aspects of the original cultures of the joint venture members relatively unchanged. Furthermore, the willingness and ability to change were strongly determined by the degree to which individuals had internalized initial cultural aspects from their home organization.

Comparable investigations have been conducted by other authors over the past decade (see for example the series of contributions in Primecz, Romani, & Sackman, 2012), reporting the emergence of a new "middle" culture in the intercultural context. All of these studies have several aspects in common. The first commonality is the concept of culture utilized: all of these studies went beyond cultural dimensions and adopted current views of culture in anthropology and interpretive sociology, where culture is seen as a dynamic concept that can be learned and therefore changed over time. The second is an interactive approach: these studies focus on the process of interaction and its result. Finally, the studies share an interpretive character. However, this type of study is rare and requires further research (Bjerregaard, Lauring, & Klitmøller, 2009; Moosmueller, 2007; Shenkar, 2004; Varner, 2000).

Like the variety of investigated research topics, the intercultural communication studies utilized a wide range of research methods for collecting and analyzing data, the majority of them originating from the field of social science and having a qualitative character. Most of the reviewed studies used open and semi-structured interviews for collecting data (Clausen, 2007; Graf, 2004; Owari, 2005). Other studies also employed observation, ethnography, and experiments as possible data sources. Quantitative research methods were more popular in the 1980s and 1990s; during that period, cultural distance was a widely used construct that measured the extent to which different cultures are similar or

different. However, due to numerous limitations[6], the cultural distance construct lost its popularity over the last ten years in favor of a qualitative description of culture.

Intercultural communication research is also characterized by an uneven geographical distribution of focus countries and regions. The majority of intercultural studies focus on communication between representatives of Western and Eastern cultures, with the USA, United Kingdom, Germany, and France representing Western cultures and Japan, China, and Hong Kong dominating among Eastern countries (Tsui et al. 2007: 457-459). However, the landscape of intercultural studies has broadened during the last ten years, mainly due to the economic importance of emerging markets and in particular the BRIC countries. Nevertheless, the research on intercultural communication involving Brazil, India, and Russia is fragmented and should be addressed further.

Uneven geographical coverage also applies to the methodological approaches used in intercultural studies. The majority of the theoretical approaches for the study of culture have been developed in the USA, and subsequently extended to the international arena (Gudykunst, 2003: 184; Novak & Liu, 2007: 11; Shenkar, 2004: 166). Non-US and non-Western European theories, such as the Chinese Value Survey (Bond, 1988) or the lacuna model (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005), remain a rarity and offer potential for further research.

1.2.2 Russia in intercultural communication research

Only since the early 1990s Russia has drawn the increasing attention of scholars of international business and intercultural communication research. After the fall of the USSR, the Russian market opened to foreign investors, offering vast business opportunities and challenges at the same time. Business practitioners faced not only transformation challenges of an economic and political character; many of them encountered the peculiarities of the Russian culture for the first time. As a result, a number of guidebooks have emerged providing the basic outlines of the Russian historical, economical, and cultural background (e.g. Groys, 1995; Richmond, 1992).

Since the early 1990s, Russia has also emerged as part of the geographical landscape of intercultural communication research. Like the general tendencies in intercultural business communication research, the intercultural studies relating to Russia had a cross-

[6] See Shenkar (2001) for a critical review of the cultural distance construct

cultural character. The majority of them utilized the value-based frameworks of Hofstede, Schwartz, and House to explore or explain key characteristics of Russian culture (e.g. Fey, Adaeva, & Vitkovskaia, 2001; May, Puffer, & McCarthy, 2005, Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Kai-Cheng, 1997, Volkema, 2004).

Until recently, Hofstede's value-based framework remained the most popular among scholars focusing on Russia. Hofstede's original study published in 1980 did not include the Soviet Union. Only after the fall of USSR did Hofstede (1993) publish his first value estimations for Russia, based on available national statistics and cultural and historical literature. The first empirical assessment of cultural dimensions in Russia was carried out by Bollinger (1994), who surveyed 55 executives and directors in training at the Higher Commercial Management School of Moscow. Three years later, Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, and Nicholson (1997) published the results of a much larger study on Hofstede's work-related values in Russia, employing a slightly modified methodology developed by Dorfman and Howell (1988) among the sample of 1,236 Russian business professionals and business students. Both Bollinger (1994) and Fernandez et al. (1997) reported a high uncertainty avoidance and power distance among Russian managers and a rather low score in individualism. Their findings differed only with regard to the fourth dimension, masculinity: while Bollinger (1994) reported a low score, Fernandez et al. (1997) argued that Russia scored above the mean on this dimension.

Almost in parallel to study by Fernandez et al. (1997), from October 1995 to June 1996, Naumov and Puffer (2000) assessed 300 Russian managers, professionals, and business students using a questionnaire derived from Hofstede's models. The findings of Naumov and Puffer (2000) differed from those of Fernandez et al. (1997) only with regard to power distance. According to Naumov and Puffer (2000), Russia scored an average of 40 points on power distance, which puts the country on the same level as such developed countries as the USA (40 points) and Canada (39 points). The authors attributed this score to the reforms ongoing at that time (Naumov & Puffer, 2000: 715). Additionally, Naumov and Puffer (2000) included a fifth dimension into their survey: paternalism, or Hofstede's long-term versus short-term orientation, reporting an above-average score. Furthermore, Naumov and Puffer (2000) also pointed out the role of generational differences: the younger group showed the highest score in masculinity and the lowest in paternalism. The researchers concluded that the value profiles of the younger generation

tended to converge in their values towards those of the Western developed countries (Naumov & Puffer, 2000: 717).

In order to check the hypothesis of value convergence in Russia, Naumov and Petrovskaya (2010) repeated the empirical survey of Hofstede in Russia in 2006. Their results showed slight deviations from the previous study by Naumov and Puffer (2000). Whereas uncertainty avoidance and paternalism scored almost the same, individualism, power distance, and masculinity showed slightly lower scores. The author attributed these shifts to the reaction to the recent economic developments in Russia, but also to a potential measurement bias, since the respondents were asked to note its perception, which does not necessarily reflect reality.

Alexashin and Blenkinsoop (2005) also investigated the convergence of Russian managerial values towards those of US mangers over time, based on the set of measures from the Schwartz Value Survey. The earlier studies by Holt, Ralston, & Terpstra (1994) and Ralston et al. (1997) also used the same methodology. This allowed the comparison of Russian scores at three different points in time – 1993, 1996 and 2001 (Alexashin & Blenkinsoop, 2005: 436). The overall findings of the study confirmed the hypothesized convergence of Russian managerial values to those of US managers. Like Naumov and Petrovskaya (2010), Alexashin and Blenkinsoop (2005: 441-442) attributed this shift to the changing economic environment and the growing presence of Western and US enterprises on the Russian market, as well as to potential differences in the assumed meaning of such values as achievement and conformance. However, Alexashin and Blenkinsoop (2005: 441) suggested that the convergence applies only to the managers, since they were exposed in their professional activities to the influence of Western management education. In contrast, the workers remained more constant in their values. Thus, it would lead to the divergence of values between managers and workers within the country.

Another extensive study undertaken in the Russian context was the GLOBE study. The main quantitative data set for the GLOBE[7] study was obtained from 450 managers during 1995-96, with additional data for media analysis collected in 2001. The results of the study showed that charismatic and team-oriented leadership are considered to be the main characteristics of outstanding leadership in Russia (Gratchev, Rogovsky, & Rakitski,

[7] Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness

2002). Like the observations of Naumov and Puffer (2000), Gratchev et al. (2002: 19-20) pointed out generational differences in the perception of effective leaders, reporting the growing interest of young people in the dimensions of future orientation, moral values, and individualism.

Similar to the GLOBE study, Fey et al. (2001) investigated effective leadership styles in the Russian context. In the first phase of the research, the responses of 90 managers indicated that the most common characteristics used to describe Russian leaders were task-oriented, relations-oriented, authoritarian, and democratic (Fey et al., 2001: 620). In the second phase, Fey et al. (2001: 634) determined that task-oriented democrat and relations-oriented democrat were the most preferred leadership styles among Russian managers.

Though both the GLOBE project and the study by Fey et al. (2001) investigated similar research questions and utilized similar approaches, the findings cannot be easily compared. Three main reasons make the comparison difficult: the focus of the research (only positive dimensions versus all dimensions), the types of questions asked (open questions versus the rating of a suggested list of items), and the underlying theoretical basis (Ambrozheichik, 2011: 315-316).

Further examples of quantitative research include the studies by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2006) and Lewis (2006). According to Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner (2006), the main characteristics of Russian culture are high particularism, individualism, a tendency towards specificity, ascription of status, high outer direction, short-term time orientation and affective emotional approach. One obvious contradiction between the findings of Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner and those of Bollinger (2004), Fernandez et al. (1997) and Naumov and Puffer (2000) is in the score for the individualism versus collectivism dimension. While Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner (1997) argue that Russia is an individualistic country, Hofstede's framework demonstrates only a moderate to low score in individualism. One possible explanation for these deviating results can be found in the different research approaches and methodologies (Jansson, 2008: 124). Jansson (2008: 124) suggested another potential explanation for the deviating results: the transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy. However, such an explanation seems to be less appropriate following the subsequent Hofstede-based survey conducted by Naumov and Petrovskaya (2010), which reported an even lower level of individualism in Russia.

Lewis (2006: 33) grouped world cultures into three rough categories: linear-active, multi-active, and reactive. Based on this scale, Russia is classified as a multi-active culture, and placed between France, Italy, and Spain on the linear-active versus multi-active scale (Lewis, 2006: 42). In addition, Lewis (2006: 372-379) described Russians as an *"essentially warm, emotional, caring people"* (p. 374), but also as passive, practicing corruption to beat the system, with low legal consciousness, secretive in public, and open in private. According to Lewis (2006), these characteristics of the Russian people resulted from their historical background: the Orthodox Church, the Czars, and the Soviets.

Based on the findings from the quantitative studies described above, a significant body of literature has explored the impact of cultural characteristics on different aspects of doing business in Russia. Husted and Michailova (2002), Hutchings and Michailova (2004), and May et al. (2005) investigated the impact of culture on the sharing of knowledge between Western managers and their Russian colleagues. Michailova (2000) studied differences in the understanding of time, control, and planning between Russians and Western expatriates. Michailova and Worm (2003) discussed the role of personal networking in Russia. Puffer (1994) and De Vries, Florent-Treacy, Korotov, & Shekshnia (2004) described Russian leadership styles. Kimura (1996), Lewis (2006), and Svedberg (1996) explored characteristics of Russian negotiation behavior and tactics. Fey (2005) investigated the impact of national culture on the choice of motivation tools.

Mirroring the common trend in international business research, the majority of the cultural studies on Russia had a cross-cultural character. Only a few studies had an intercultural character, focusing on the interactions of individuals from different cultures.

An example of intercultural research in the business environment is the study by Yoosefi and Thomas (2003). The researchers interviewed German professionals and managers with experience in Russia to gather examples of their daily problems and their solutions in communication with Russian colleagues. Subsequently, the material was analyzed regarding potential culturally bound influences and grouped into eight themes, each with respective examples and possible explanations. The eight topics identified by Yoosefi and Thomas (2003), i.e. hierarchy, collectivism, prestige mentality, people orientation, informal networks, flexible attitude towards the rules, lack of work discipline, and traditionalism, correlate to a certain extant with the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980) or Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner (1997), i.e. high power distance, collectivism, paternalism, ascription of status, affective values. However, the significant

differences between the study by Yoosefi and Thomas (2003) and those of Hofstede, Schwartz, House, Trompenaars and Hamden-Turner are in the underlying research question and the research approach. While the others intended to describe Russian culture according to a set of pre-defined dimensions by the means of a questionnaire, Yoosefi and Thomas (2003) looked at the source of misunderstandings through open questions. Furthermore, Yoosefi and Thomas (2003) provide culturally-grounded explanations for the misunderstandings as well as suggestions regarding expected behaviors in Russia. However, the authors overlook the fact that intercultural interaction usually requires some adjustments from both parties, resulting in a so-called "interculture"[8]. Thus, the question of how and why this "interculture" is formed remained unanswered.

Another example of comprehensive intercultural communication research is the empirical study of German-Russian school exchanges by Ertelt-Vieth (2005). The researcher investigated intercultural communication between Russian and German scholars by means of observations and interviews with German and Russian participants before, during, and after the exchange period. In order to analyze and explain the gathered exchange experiences, Ertelt-Vieth (2005) used the lacuna method. This method allowed not only the analysis and the categorization of the gathered empirical material, but also a contextual explanation of the interactions from different perspectives (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005: 301).

Denisova-Schmidt (2007) also employed the lacuna model to investigate problems in intercultural communication, however in a business context. The author described and explained six critical incidents based on interviews with US metallurgists working with Russian companies in the aircraft industry. However, due to the limited scope of research, the study only shed some light on several communication issues in USA-Russian business communication. Additional examples utilizing the lacuna model in business communication research could not be found.

From a geographical perspective, only a limited amount of research into intercultural communication between Russia and the other cultures has been conducted. The existing studies focused mainly on differences between Russia and the USA (e.g. Anderson, Glassman, & Pinelli, 1997; Elenkov, 1997; Fey & Denison, 2003; Matveev & Nelson,

[8] Cf. Chapter 1.4.2.5 for a detailed discussion of the results of the interactions of different cultures and an explanation of the term "interculture".

2004). Many studies examined Westerners as the counterpart of Russians (e.g. Camiah & Hollinshead, 2003; D'Annunzio-Green, 2002; Husted & Michailova, 2002; Michailova, 2000; Svedberg, 1996). Michailova and Hutchings (2006) and Michailova and Worm (2003) investigated cultural similarities and differences between China and Russia. Recently, the geography of intercultural studies includes Germany (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005; Potapova & Potapov, 2011; Yoosefi & Thomas, 2003) and Sweden (Fey, 2005; Fey, Morgulis-Yakushev, Park, & Björkman, 2008).

From the methodological perspective, intercultural research relies mainly on theories developed outside of Russia. In Russia, the field of intercultural communication was introduced only in the early 1990s. In 1996 intercultural communication became a part of higher education programs, not as stand-alone specialization, but as an element of linguistics (Ter-Minasova, 2002: 2). Thus, the research of intercultural communication in Russia is strongly linked to linguistics in terms of research topics, research questions, and research methods (e.g. Grishaeva & Popova, 2004; Tkhorik & Fanyan, 2005). Intercultural communication in the field of business is represented mainly through translations and summaries of Western studies (e.g. Bunina, 2008; Persikova, 2002).

1.2.3 Formulation of research gap

A large body of empirical and theoretical studies has been conducted in the field of intercultural communication over the past 50 years. The researchers investigated various topics, using a wide range of research methods and approaches. However, a number of shortcomings offer a potential for future research:

1. Focus on cross-cultural studies

A cross-cultural character strongly dominates studies in the field of intercultural communication research. Thus, the interactive aspects of communication are usually overlooked, in particular the field of intercultural business communication research. The majority of the existing studies either investigate the national characteristics of the culture or assess their impact on different business activities. As a result, studies that focus on interpersonal interaction process are rare in intercultural business communication and should be considered for future research.

2. Predominance of value-based frameworks

The field of international business research is strongly influenced by value-based and dimensional frameworks. A large body of literature either describes national culture according to selected dimensions and values or uses these dimensions and values to analyze the impact of national culture on different aspects of international business, offering suggestions for how to avoid cultural conflicts or adapt to a new cultural environment. Thus, the intercultural research occurs on the macro level, while the importance of studies on the micro level, which emphasize interactions, has only recently been recognized. Additionally, the field of intercultural business communication is lacking methodological approaches to study culture on the micro level. The field should take advantage of intercultural research in the neighboring disciplines, such as linguistics, philology, psychology, communication, and sociology, by adopting their approaches to investigate intercultural communication within the peculiarities of business environment. Furthermore, the research should go even further and establish a currently missing link between macro and micro approaches.

3. Uneven geographical coverage of studies

Currently, the field of intercultural business communication research is characterized by uneven geographical coverage of focus countries. A significant body of literature focuses mainly on intercultural communication between Western developed countries, like the USA, United Kingdom, Germany, and France, and several Eastern countries, such as Japan, China, and Hong Kong. Other national cultures have only recently attracted the attention of scholars, thus offering an open field for further research.

Uneven geographical coverage can be also observed in the country of origin of methodologies, approaches, and until recently, even scholars in intercultural communication research, with majority of them representing Western European countries or the USA. Thus, methods and approaches that were developed in the USA or in Eastern European countries are employed not only in the culture of their origin, but also in completely different cultural environments, often without any adaptation. One major drawback of this approach is that such intercultural studies might miss important cultural aspects that are not inherent in the cultural environment of Western Europe and the USA.

1.3 Research scope, questions, and objectives

1.3.1 Research scope

With regard to the research gap identified in the foregoing sections, the current research focuses on intercultural business communication between German expatriates and their Russian colleagues. Specifically, I aim to investigate those interactions that are perceived as unusual, both in positive and negative contexts, by German expatriates and their Russian colleagues in Russian subsidiaries of German large industrial enterprises. Thus, the research has a clear focus on contemporary[9] interactions.

The rationale for choosing Russia and Germany as focus countries is threefold. First, there is a growing economical interlink between these two countries. Consequently, many large German enterprises, which have already been active on the Russian market for one or two decades, aim to extend their business in this country. At the same time, German small and medium-sized firms are entering the Russian market for the first time. In order to transfer the knowledge from the headquarters and to keep a strong connection to the local subsidiary, the vast majority of German enterprises delegate their employees from headquarters to the local offices in Russia. Thus, the success of local subsidiaries relies heavily on the smooth interactions of German expatriates and their Russian colleagues.

Second, the past research on German-Russian business communication has covered cultural aspects mainly from the macro perspective, utilizing value-based frameworks. The intercultural study by Yoosefi and Thomas (2003) is an exception: the researchers described examples of problems arising in German-Russian business communication and offered a rationale for the respective Russian behavior. The authors, however, intended to offer assimilatory training for German employees doing business in Russia or with Russians. Hence, the suggestion of "correct" behavior, as expected in Russia, implies the adaptation of German employees, which in many cases does not reflect reality. The study also omitted the interpretation and reaction patterns of German and Russian employees – and therefore the evolvement of interculture.

Finally, my personal background and experiences with German and Russian cultures should enhance my research.

[9] This encompasses interactions that take place currently or have taken place recently, within the past five years.

Additionally, I am limiting the scope of the study only to Russian subsidiaries of German industrial enterprises in Russia. In contrast to previous studies, which investigated cultural aspects in Russian subsidiaries of all Western enterprises, I will attempt to minimize the effect of industry and organizational culture on the context of interaction by focusing only on German enterprises within the industry sector. For a similar reason, I am not using a single case-study enterprise for my research in order to avoid the potential impact of a strong corporate culture on intercultural interactions.[10]

1.3.2 Research questions

Based on the considerations from the previous sections, the current research aims to understand:

- How intercultural interactions in Russian subsidiaries of German industrial enterprises are perceived and interpreted by Germans and Russians; and
- How different cultural characteristics affect the formation of a shared "interculture" in Russian subsidiaries of German industrial enterprises.

Additionally, a set of sub-questions will direct the research and provide the answers to the main research questions:

- What situations do German expatriates and Russian employees perceive as "unusual" while interacting with each other on a daily basis (in both peer-to-peer and hierarchical relationships)?
- In which contexts do these "unusual" situations occur?
- How do German expatriates and Russian employees perceive and interpret these situations?
- How do German expatriates and Russian employees react to these situations?
- How can their reactions be explained?
- How do German expatriates and Russian employees subsequently deal with these kinds of "unusual" situations?

[10] Chapter 3.3.1 provides further detailing of the scope of the empirical study.

1.3.3 Research objectives

The main research objective of this dissertation is of an exploratory nature: It explores intercultural communication between German expatriates and Russian employees. By means of in-depth interviews, the research aims to discover the "unusual" situations in German-Russian interactions and explore how these situations are interpreted and handled. Furthermore, the current research aims to explore the characteristics of German-Russian interculture and how it evolves over time.

The secondary objective of this research has an explanatory character. Based on the potential outcomes of the explorative section, the research aims to explain why the "unusual" situations were interpreted and handled as described by the interview partners.

The stated objectives have implications for both future research and the business community.

This study contributes to the broader research community in the following ways:

- by shedding light on the cultural aspects of German-Russian business communication on the micro level;
- by adopting a holistic approach to investigating intercultural communication, from both the German and Russian perspectives;
- by combining approaches on both the macro and micro levels to study intercultural business interactions;
- by introducing and further developing the lacuna model – a non-Western methodological framework for studying intercultural communication on the micro level – from the field of linguistics to the field of intercultural business communication; and
- by providing an example of intercultural business communication research on the micro level that may also be adapted and tested for other cultures.

The business community may benefit from the current research by obtaining a better understanding of intercultural communication processes in business environments, thus improving communication and with it, the performance of German-Russian intercultural

teams[11]. Furthermore, the empirical study may provide a wide range of examples of "unusual" situations and their interpretations for intercultural training materials.

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Culture

The term "culture" has been the subject of numerous discourses in various academic disciplines. Related literature provides diverse definitions of "culture" that often encompass similar characteristics but emphasize different aspects depending on the underlying cultural paradigm. Already in the early 1950s, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) presented more than 150 different definitions of the term "culture". Coming from different social sciences and historical periods, all of these definitions represent the broad consensus that culture manifests itself in repeatable activities and comprises common elements, such as language, place, underlying values and meanings (Berry, 2000: 199; Genkova, 2010: 269).

> *"Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts: the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may on the one hand be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action"* (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952: 181).

More comprehensive definitions of culture have emerged over the last 50 years as the role of culture and cultural differences gained on importance in the wide range of disciplines. Depending on the discipline, the researchers have used different approaches to define and analyze culture. Thus, new conceptualizations of culture have emerged, making it impossible for representatives of multiple fields of studies to agree on a uniform definition of culture (Bolten 2004: 26-28, Bolten 2007: 39).

[11] Previous research has shown that a high intercultural sensitivity on the part of employees results in improved team performance, revenue contributions, job satisfaction and increased work motivation if their work is performed in an inter-cultural context (e.g. Matveev & Milter, 2004; Sizoo, Plank, Iskat, & Serrie, 2005).

Despite the variety of diverging conceptualizations of culture, Barmeyer (2010b: 13) stresses their complementary nature and distinguishes three approaches to define and study culture. The first and most well-represented approach is to define culture as a value system acquired through socialization. Geert Hofstede is the most well-known follower of this stream. The second approach specifies culture as a system of meaning and interpretation. Geertz, Hall, Thomas follow this concept. The third approach refers to culture as target-achieving and problem-solving system, with Kluckhohn and Trompenaars as its representatives.

In the following paragraphs, I will review definitions of culture from each of the three approaches suggested by Barmeyer (2010b). Afterwards, I will introduce a fourth conceptualization of culture, culture as knowledge, which is increasingly being pursued in anthropology and linguistics. Finally, I will suggest an appropriate definition of culture for the purposes of this dissertation.

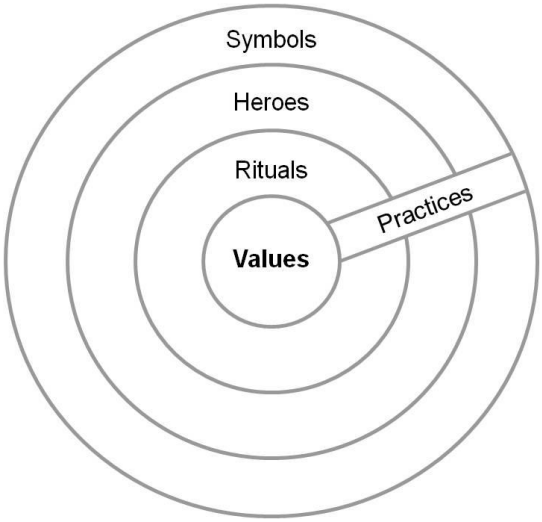
1.4.1.1 Culture as a value system acquired through socialization

Hofstede (2001) associates culture with *"mental software"* and defines it *"as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another"* (Hofstede, 2001: 9). According to Hofstede (2001), individuals acquire feeling, thinking and acting experiences through socialization within their respective environments. Any of these experiences is unconsciously "saved" and subsequently reflected as attitudes, norms, rules, and values. Hofstede (2001) goes on to point out that *"values are a core element of the culture"* (Hofstede, 2001:10). Thus, values represent the core of Hofstede's well-known "onions diagram". Initially, they are invisible, and manifest themselves only through practices or other "visible elements", such as symbols, heroes and rituals. Figure 3 illustrates the different levels of culture as suggested by Hofstede (2001).[12]

[12] Similar approaches to conceptualize culture as a multi-level construct have also been suggested by Schein (1984: 4) and in Iceberg model (follow e.g. Rothlauf, 2009: 25; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012: 16-21).

Figure 3. The "Onion Diagram": Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth

Source: Hofstede (2001: 11)



One major criticism of Hofstede's concept of culture concerns the assumption of extreme cultural stability across many generations. Recent findings in the field of cognitive psychology show that the human mind is fluid and adaptive to its environment, suggesting a dynamic concept of culture (Leung et al., 2005: 366). A number of studies have found out that individual behavior can change over time due to the external influences of the environment. Thus, Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez (2000) found in a series of cognitive prime experiments that Hong Kong Chinese, who were collectivists in their behavior, showed more individualistic behavior after being exposed to symbols from individualistic American culture, such as Superman. Taras and Steel (2006: 5) argued that culture might change on the national level because of dramatic changes in the political and economic systems.[13] Consequently, alternative concepts have emerged that define culture as a less static phenomenon. In these concepts, culture and individuals influence each other reciprocally, reacting to major changes in their environment.

[13] For an extensive critical review of Hofstede's framework, see Taras and Steel (2009).

1.4.1.2 Culture as meaning and interpretation system

> *"Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning"* (Geertz, 1973: 5).

Geertz (1973) sees culture as a system of meanings that requires interpretation. According to his concept, the individuals within a given society share definitions, assumptions, and meanings; thus, they are able to have clear and meaningful communication and cooperation within this society. In contrast, misunderstandings arise when individuals from different societies or cultures interpret the same set of symbols using their own system of meanings (Barmeyer, 2010b: 20-21).

Similarly, Thomas, Kammhuber, & Schroll-Machl (2003) define culture as an "orientation system". It manifests itself through symbols such as language, mimicry, clothing, and rituals, and it helps to assign meanings to objects, occasions, sequences of events, and the like. Usually, the assignment of meanings proceeds automatically as part of perception and information processing. In this regard, culture is an invisible mechanism coordinating our thoughts. Individuals became aware of this mechanism only by being exposed to other cultures (Hall 1976, Hall & Hall, 1990).

In contrast to a value-based definition, culture as a system of meaning and interpretation represents a dynamic concept. Individuals acquire a "system of meanings" or an "orientation system" through a socialization process in their respective societies. Since the socialization process continues through the whole lives of individuals, the "system of meanings" or "orientation system", respectively, adjusts to their changing environments (Thomas et al., 2003: 23).

1.4.1.3 Culture as a target-achieving and problem-solving system

The third concept of culture is complimentary to the previous two and emphasizes differences in approaches to target achieving and problem solving (Barmeyer, 2000: 23). According to this concept, all individuals have similar problems and challenges to be solved. Despite the availability of the wide range of possible solutions, which are *"present in all societies at all times,"* individuals choose only those that correspond to

their value orientation and have already been proven through previous experiences (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961: 221). In this context, culture can be defined as:

> *"a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems"* (Schein, 1992: 12).

The third approach to defining culture encompasses a higher dynamic than the previous two approaches (Barmeyer, 2000: 24). The first, value-based approach implies a rather static view of culture, while the second admits cultural changes as a result of changes in the environment. In the third concept, the changes in a cultural system are possible through inner impulses, which result from the conscious decisions of system members. When system members realize that the existing ways of target-achieving and problem-solving are no longer efficient, they start searching for new ways to tackle their problems. This leads to new structures and processes of problem solving in the system – that is, to a change of culture.

1.4.1.4 Culture as knowledge

Wald Goodenough, one of the most famous representatives of cognitive anthropology, defines culture as knowledge:

> *"a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members […]. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. As such, the things people say and do, their social arrangements and events, are products or by products of their culture as they apply it to the task of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. To one, who knows their culture, these things and events are also*

> *signs signifying the cultural forms and models of which they are material representations."* (Goodenough, 1964: 36)

Goodenough's definition of culture contains two aspects: On the one hand, like Geertz's approach, the definition reveals an interpretative side to the cultural concept. In this concept, culture manifests itself in people's perceptions and attitudes toward circumstances and events. On the other hand, Goodenough explicitly defines culture as knowledge. This common knowledge allows individuals from one society to perceive, interpret, and handle circumstances in the same manner.

However, Goodenough's definition of culture heavily emphasizes the interpretive character of knowledge, neglecting its "material" side, such as language and personal skills. In contrast, the Scandinavian anthropologist Fredrik Barth uses a broader definition of the term "knowledge" to refer to culture. According to Barth (2002), knowledge is *"what a person employs to interpret and act on the world,"* including *"feelings (attitudes) as well as information, embodied skills as well as verbal taxonomies and concepts: all the ways of understanding that we use to make up our experienced, grasped reality"* (p. 1). Furthermore, Barth (2002) sees little difference between culture and knowledge since both culture and knowledge focus on *"many of the same"* phenomena:

> *"Knowledge provides people with materials for reflection and premises for action, whereas 'culture' too readily comes to embrace also those reflections and those actions"* (p. 1).

The concept of culture as knowledge suggests a dynamic character that is reflected in two aspects: First, knowledge is learned from others through the process of socialization; second, the process of socialization accompanies human beings during their lifetime. Consequently, the amount and substance of our knowledge are both constantly changing. In this sense, culture can be defined as a horizon that individuals construct, shape, and enlarge according to their knowledge and experiences over the course of their lives (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005: 276).

1.4.1.5 Definition of culture in this dissertation

This dissertation is based on a concept of culture as knowledge comprised of two aspects: first, tangible knowledge in the form of language and symbols, and second, intangible

knowledge in form of perceptions and interpretations as defined by Geertz (1973). This definition best suits the purpose of the current research, which is to reveal and explain different perceptions in German-Russian business communication, since it encompasses several important aspects:

- Culture has an explicit nature in the form of language, rituals, laws, and customs;
- Culture has an implicit nature in the form of perceptions, meanings, and interpretations;
- Both the explicit and implicit sides of culture can be observed directly (explicit side) or indirectly (implicit side); thereby the implicit side of culture manifests itself in what people say or do in reaction to circumstances;
- Culture is a dynamic concept, i.e. cultural characteristics can change over time in reaction to changes in the environment; and
- Culture can be learned, i.e. individuals from different cultures can actively influence and facilitate their communication and cooperation by broadening their knowledge horizon of other cultures.

1.4.2 Intercultural communication

The term "intercultural communication" can be generally used to describe two phenomena. In a narrow sense, intercultural communication refers to communication between individuals from different cultures (Gudykunst, 2003: 1). More broadly, intercultural communication refers to an academic field of study and research that was founded by Edward T. Hall in the 1950s as a branch of cultural anthropology influenced by linguistics, ethnology, and Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Moosmueller, 2007: 14; Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002: 5). In order to understand how intercultural communication works, I will first give a brief overview of communication in general, then outline the role of culture in communication; after this, I will proceed with a definition of intercultural communication in general and in the context of the current research. This section concludes with definitions of "interculture" and "stereotype".

1.4.2.1 Communication

Communication is a term frequently used in the literature, but its meaning varies depending on the field of studies and the researcher's objectives (Bolten, 2007: 11). In a broad sense, every human interaction can be regarded as communication (Burkart, 2003: 17). Griffin (2009) gives an all-encompassing but, at the same time, more precise definition of communication:

> *"Communication is the relational process of creating and interrupting messages that elicit a response"* (p. 6).

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (2000) emphasizes an unintentional character of communication. With the statement *"one cannot not communicate"*, Watzlawick et al. (2000: 51) shows that individuals communicate not only deliberately by exchanging messages, but also unintentionally through their behavior. In this context, non-action or non-communication can be also considered as a communicating act because it conveys a message that can be realized and interpreted.

Regardless of different definitions, every communication process consists of three structural components. The first component is a message – information that needs to be communicated. The second component is a sender – someone who originates the message. The third component is a receiver – the person who is intended to receive the message.

Furthermore, each communication process incorporates three aspects or levels: technical, content, and relationship (Bolten, 2007: 12). The technical aspect of communication or of a communication channel refers to *"any means that provides a path for moving the message from the sender to the receiver"* (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2012: 9). Thus, message can be transmitted directly, in case of personal interaction, or mediated through a telephone, television or text. The content level of communication conveys the data, the information transmitted from the sender to the receiver. The last level of communication, relationship, refers to meanings that are assigned to the message. While the content level of communication serves to transmit data in form of symbols, the relationship level suggests how these data and symbols should be understood and interpreted (Watzlawick et al., 2000: 55). Due to the differences in meanings included into the message by the sender and those interpreted by the receiver, *"the sent message is never identical to the received message"* (Adler, 2003: 248).

Similarly, the relationship aspect of communication plays an important role in Schulz von Thun's "four-sides" model. It is also known as the communication square or "four-ears" model. According to Schulz von Thun, Ruppel, & Stratmann (2000: 33-41), each message can be considered from four sides: facts, relationship, self-disclosure, and appeal. Hence, with every message, the sender, willingly or unwillingly, produces simultaneously four messages on the receiver's side. Furthermore, the sender never knows which of the receiver's "four ears" is most active at the moment and how the initial message will be interpreted. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

Figure 4. Schulz von Thun's four-ear model

Source: based on Schulz von Thun et al. (2000: 33-41)

The relationship aspect plays a decisive role in intercultural communication. Whereas the communication channel and content remain relatively stable across cultures, the meanings and interpretations are subject to cultural influences. For this reason, this dissertation focuses on the relationship aspect of communication in order to find out how culture influences the repertoire of meaning assigned to the message.

1.4.2.2 Communication and culture

All researchers definitely confirm a strong interconnection between culture and communication, however, leaving room for discussion regarding the direction of this interconnection. Moosmueller (2004: 59-61) points out that the direction of this connection depends on the approach to intercultural communication and the respective

underlying theoretical concepts[14]. In the macro perspective, culture is regarded as a given phenomenon that influences all aspects of our lives, including communication. In contrast, the micro perspective regards culture as a product of individual experiences obtained in processes of socialization. Since communication is an indispensable part of socialization processes, communication influences culture.

Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida (1996) advocate reciprocal relations between culture and communication:

> *"Communication and culture reciprocally influence each other. The culture in which individuals are socialized influences the way they communicate, and the way that individuals communicate can change the culture they share over time"* (p. 3).

This view is supported by Bolten (2007: 140-141), who views intercultural communication[15] as the interplay of different cultures. Thus, intercultural communication leads to the exchange of cultural knowledge among the members of two different cultures. In turn, this newly acquired knowledge influences the communication process itself. This view of the reciprocal relationship between culture and communication serves as the basis for the current research.

1.4.2.3 Intercultural communication

According to Adler (2003: 249), intercultural communication *"occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture"*. Similarly, Bolten (2003: 18) defines intercultural communication as the interaction between two different cultures. In contrast, Thomas (2004: 146) refers to general aspects of intercultural communication where signs and symbols play a decisive role. When two communicating individuals do not share the same system of symbols and meanings, communication problem arise.

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[14] A detailed description and discussion of the approaches to the study of culture and respective theoretical concepts can be found in Chapter 2.

[15] In the original text, Bolten (2008) refers to intercultural interaction. The terms "intercultural communication" and "intercultural interaction" are closely linked, and the extent of their overlap depends on respective definitions. I will not elaborate on the interplay of these two definitions since it is irrelevant for my research. A detailed definition of the term "intercultural communication" for the purpose of this study can be found in Chapter 1.4.2.4.

The foregoing definitions of intercultural communication suggest that communication between cultures proceeds according to a general communication schema. However, the cultural backgrounds of communicating individuals or groups influence this process primarily on the relationship level through different expectations and interpretations, which may lead to ambiguity or non-understanding.

1.4.2.4 Definition of intercultural communication in this dissertation

Like the term "culture", "communication" – and therefore "international communication" – can be defined in many ways depending on the research goals and discipline. For the purpose of this research, the emphasis in the definition of "intercultural communication" is put on the relationship aspect of communication, or "meta-communication". Unfortunately, an all-encompassing definition of intercultural communication could not be found. Nevertheless, the reviewed definitions and concepts revealed some aspects that are deemed to be important to this dissertation. Thus, in this dissertation, intercultural communication:

- is the communication between individuals from different cultural or social groups;
- occurs both willingly and unwillingly;
- refers to interactions among individuals in a broader sense, i.e. including not only the communicative act itself but also other acts performed by the individuals; and
- stresses the relationship aspect of the communication process.

1.4.2.5 Interculture – a result of intercultural communication

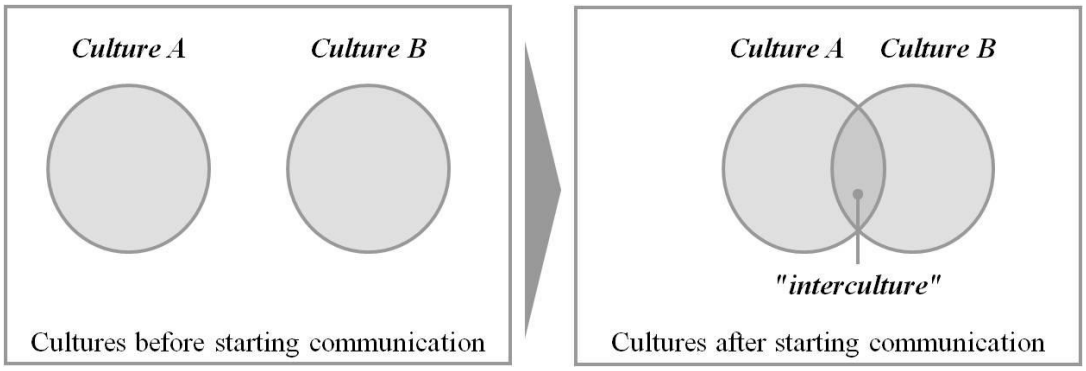
During the process of intercultural communication, members of both cultures develop specific approaches for acting in specific intercultural settings. As a result, communication rules and behavior patterns evolve that are specific to the communication process between two particular cultures. These specific rules and behavior patterns form what is called interculture: the result and consequences of intercultural communication processes (Bolten, 2007: 140; Lüsebrink, 2008: 14; Thomas et al., 2003: 43).

However, interculture involves more than the communication processes between the members of two different cultures. Lüsebrink (2008: 13-14) points out that interculture encompasses all phenomena that emerge from the contact of two cultures. Hence,

interculture includes, for example, the phenomena of mixing languages, combining different dressing styles, different music or art styles, and so on.

Figure 5 illustrates schematically the phenomenon of interculture. In this figure, the two circles represent two cultures, each with its own rules of communication. When these two cultures start to communicate with each other, they acquire new knowledge about one another. As a result, a new shared system of meanings – "interculture", in Bolten's terminology – is created. Due to the common meanings, this newly formed interculture shares a new set of communication rules that differs from those of the initial cultures (Bolten 2007: 140-141).

Figure 5. Interculture as a result of communication between cultures
Source: based on Bolten (2007: 140-141)



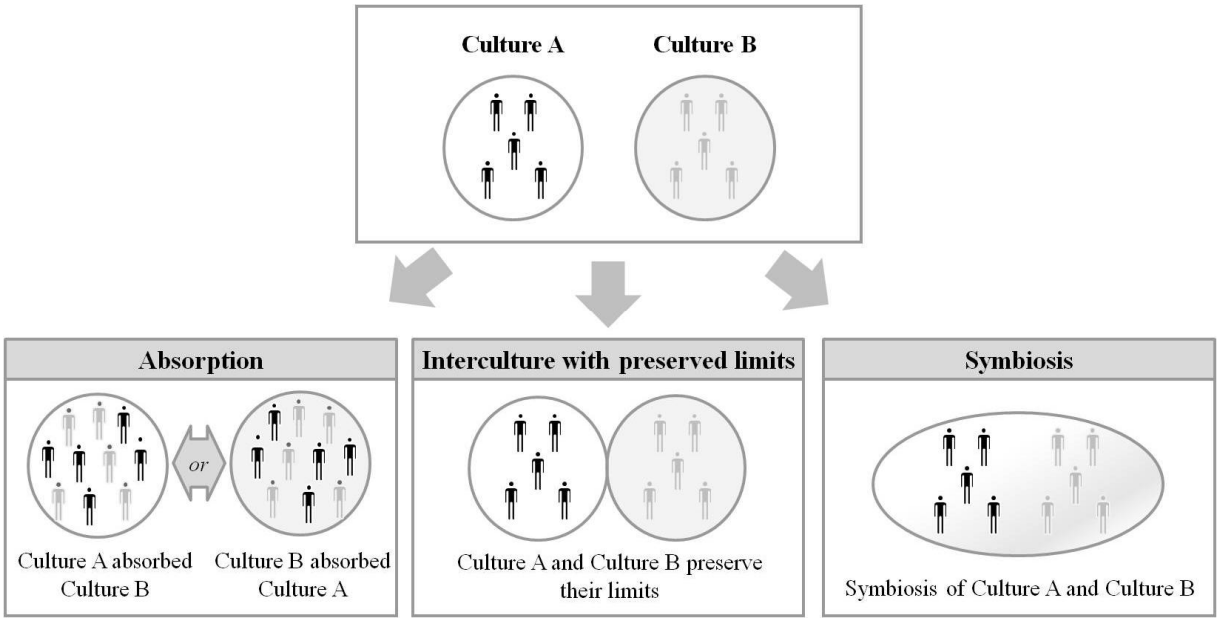
The foregoing definition of interculture represents an ideal form of interaction. It assumes the synthesis of two cultures, at least to some extent (Barmayer, 2010a: 53). However, the process of communication does not always result in the synthesis of cultural characteristics in the form of interculture. Based on the different types of approaches to integration of an acquired company[16], Guba (2011: 22-23) suggests three possible reactions: absorption, symbiosis, and interculture with preserved limits. In case of absorption, one culture absorbs the other; the interculture incorporates predominantly the characteristics of only one culture, whereas the characteristics of the other culture are left behind. In case of interculture with preserved limits, the two cultures do not learn from one another; they keep their circles closed from each other. According to Guba (2011: 22), this is the worst form of interculture. Finally, there is symbiosis, which corresponds

[16] In his definition of interculture, Guba (2011) draws a parallel to the approaches to integration during mergers and acquisitions as specified in Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991: 145-149).

to Bolten's definition of interculture. In the case of symbiosis, both cultures learn from each other, which according to Guba (2011: 22), is an ideal form of interculture. Figure 6 illustrates these three forms of interculture graphically.

Figure 6. Three forms of interculture

Source: based on Guba (2011: 23)



The empirical evidence of interculture in form of symbiosis can be demonstrated by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO), which was founded in Weimer in 1999. This orchestra was formed to serve as a counterpoint to the tensions between the Israeli and Palestinian governments. Young musicians, mainly from Israel, were invited to play in the orchestra. In their usual social environment, in Palestine or in Israel, the prevailing knowledge about each other's culture was loaded with emotions and had little constructive orientation. However, the orchestra's concerts were successful in many countries, which requires a great deal of coordinated effort and mutual endeavor. This success was possible due to the creation of a so-called "microcosmos" orchestra, or an interculture in the form of symbiosis, where the former perceptions that Israelis and Palestinians had about one another had lost their relevance. This shared "microcosmos" resulted from the communication process that was supported by supplemental discussions and workshops among the musicians (Koch, 2009: 6-8). Thus, the WEDO case offers empirical proof of the reciprocal influence of culture and relationships in intercultural communication.

The phenomenon of interculture can be observed not only in communication between limited groups of people, but also in a broader context. For example, Terkessidis (2010) discussed interculture in the context of countries and nations. On the example of Germany, he points out that the aspiration for interculture should replace the current efforts of politicians to integrate national minorities into German society. Relying on Bolten's definition of interculture as symbiosis, Terkessidis (2010) indicates that, because of its flexibility, shared interculture provides better conditions to enable individuals from different cultural backgrounds to unfold their personalities. The author advocates that Germany should not differentiate between the different national origins of its residents, but be more flexible towards the needs of different cultures. At the same time, however, Terkessidis does not address the potential reactions of the respective cultural minorities, leaving the discussion somewhat one-sided from the German point of view. Nevertheless, interculture is the product of the interactions between two cultures in which both cultures need to contribute to effective interactions.

In this dissertation, I investigate the interculture that results from the interactions between German and Russian employees within the Russian subsidiaries of large German enterprises – i.e., in the narrow sense as interaction between a limited number of people. Furthermore, I base my investigation on Guba's definition of interculture, which assumes different forms of potential interactions. This definition allows me to investigate the peculiarities of interculture better, which is the purpose of the current research.

1.4.2.6 Stereotypes as facilitators and obstacles in intercultural communication

The previous subsections have demonstrated that prior experiences and knowledge affect the process of intercultural communication. However, these experiences and knowledge are of a twofold character. On the one hand, the socialization process in one's native cultural environment influences their respective behavior, perception, and interpretation patterns. On the other hand, the individuals bring along previous experiences in an intercultural context and knowledge about the nature of intercultural communication. In contrast to knowledge and experiences in a native cultural environment, the knowledge about the other culture and previous intercultural interactions is rather fragmented and subjective, and therefore does not fully represent reality (Lüsebrink, 2008: 87). At the same time, these fragmented knowledge and experiences are extrapolated to all

representatives of a respective cultural environment or process of intercultural communication. This leads to the formation of stereotypes:

> *"Stereotypes are grossly overestimated and overgeneralized abstractions about groups of people and are usually highly inaccurate although they may contain a grain of truth"* (Peninngton, 1986: 90 in Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 139).

Etymologically, the term stereotype originates from two Greek words: "stereos," which means "firm, solid," and "typos," which means "impression." In the field of social psychology, the term stereotype was introduced by Walter Lippmann in the beginning of the twentieth century (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2010b: 177). Lippmann (1992) describes stereotypes as schematic images that display our environment in our brain (Bierhoff & Frey, 2006: 430). Nowadays, the term stereotype is widely used in the field of social psychology and refers to simplified patterns of perception and categorization (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2010b: 177; Bierhoff & Frey, 2006: 430; Lüsebrink, 2008: 87; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 139-140). Despite the general consensus regarding the core element of stereotypes, the researchers diverge in its definition over three major points: How accurate the stereotypes are in their portrayal of reality; weather stereotypes include only negative images or also positive images of reality; and weather stereotypes need to be shared among a group of people. Given the purpose of the current research, this dissertation relies on rather broad definition of stereotypes, according to which, stereotypes:

- are simplified patterns of perception and categorization that
- portray reality with different degrees of accuracy,
- include both positive and negative images, and
- can be individual as well as shared among a number of people.

In this context, the term "stereotype" should be distinguished from the interrelated but not equivalent term "prejudice." Smith and Bond (1998: 184-185) point out that prejudices refer to the attitudes and emotions towards the members of a particular group, whereas stereotypes describe beliefs about individuals who are members of this particular group. For example, the statement *"members of the group X are lazy"* refers to a stereotype, whereas the resulting attitude of *"I do not like the members of the group X"* is a prejudice (Jones, 2002: 4). Hence, a stereotype is a constituting part of a prejudice that features its

cognitive component (Bierhoff & Frey, 2006: 430); it provides a basis for prejudices, and for the formation of the affective component of prejudices (Kanning, 1999: 218-219).[17]

Stereotypes play an important role in intercultural communication; they facilitate interactions with individuals from other cultures by providing guidance for orientation in a less-known environment. Stereotypes help us to process and classify a large amount of information within a limited amount of time (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2010b: 177; Bolten, 2008: 128). Hence, stereotyping refers to a special case of more general and very useful cognitive methods of information processing,[18] especially in complex intercultural settings (Kanning, 1999: 219; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 144).

Stereotypes may also hinder the process of intercultural communication. Due to categorization and stereotyping, individuals are no longer regarded as independent entities, but are considered as members of a particular group. Therefore, the observed individual behavior is not considered typical for a particular individual, but as typical for a whole group. Similarly, an individual's characteristics are transferred to the whole group and all group members. As a result, the members of the group are no longer considered as individuals who act independently, but only as representatives of a respective group (Thomas, 2004: 165). Moreover, selected characteristics of the respective group tend to be emphasized. Thus, the homogeneity within one's own group and the heterogeneity of another group are exaggerated and accentuated, leading to an even bigger perceived gap between the two cultural groups (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2010b: 181-182). Nevertheless, increasing interactions between the members of different cultural groups may lead to changes in attitudes towards the group as a whole, as well as an increase in the complexity of intergroup perceptions and de-categorization. As a result, increasing interactions may reduce the negative effects of stereotyping (Bolten, 2008: 128; Brewer & Miller, 1988: 315-316).

[17] For further differentiation of the term "stereotype" form other associated terms, e.g. social types, categorization, mythos, etc., refer to Lüsebrink (2008: 87-92).

[18] The process of information processing, i.e. schema and attribution theories, is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.2.1 and Chapter 2.2.2.

2 General theoretical section

The field of intercultural communication has its roots in a wide variety of scientific disciplines. Because each discipline has developed its own specific theories, approaches, and models, the field of intercultural communication is characterized by a heterogeneity of approaches for studying and conceptualizing culture.[19] At the same time, these approaches are not completely disconnected from each other, but are interlinked. The extent of this interrelation depends on the proximity of the respective disciplines or origins and the underlying definition of culture.[20] As a result, the existing approaches to the study of culture can be classified into two groups: macro-analytical and micro-analytical approaches (Bolten, 2003: 128). Macro-analytical approaches assume culture as a given. They aim to elaborate the general universal description of culture by means of a restricted number of characteristics in order to facilitate the orientation of individuals in an unknown cultural environment (Moosmueller, 2004: 57). Macro-analytical approaches usually provide a basis for cross-cultural studies. In contrast, micro-analytical approaches define culture as a product of individual experiences and aim to describe individual cases of personal cultural experiences (Busch, 2007: 72). They provide a basis for intercultural studies.

Another classification of approaches, widely used in anthropology, is the differentiation between etic or culture-general and emic or culture-specific ways of studying culture. Both terms, etic and emic, originate from linguistics and are used to classify sounds. Etic characterizes sounds that are common for all languages, while emic refers to sounds that are specific to a particular language or language group (Gannon, 2009: 275).

An etic approach, like a macro-approach, aims at defining cultural categories that can be applied to the description of all cultures worldwide. It allows the study of one culture in comparison with another. In contrast, an emic approach is culture-specific, that is, bound to a particular culture. It assumes the non-comparability of two cultures and uses historical, economical, and political background to describe different phenomena.

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[19] An overview of the different disciplines that deal with issues of intercultural communication can be found in Thomas' (2007: 54) "angle of view model" (Blickwinkelmodell).

[20] Cf. Chapter 1.4.1.

However, the classification of macro- versus micro-analytical approaches and emic versus etic approaches does not overlap completely. Thus, it is possible to use emic approaches to derive cultural characteristics or dimensions on a national or macro level. For example, the micro-approach of lacuna model suggests constant change of emic and etic perspectives[21].

In this chapter, I will review selected macro- and micro-analytical frameworks used for the study of cultures. This review is, however, restricted to the frameworks that are relevant to the research questions and objectives of the current study.[22] The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the frameworks that will serve as a theoretical basis for the empirical study.

2.1 Macro-analytical and dimensional approaches to the study of culture

The macro-analytical approaches for the study of culture are often associated with dimensional approaches. Indeed, dimensional approaches are widespread in the field of intercultural communication among both researchers and practitioners. The five most popular dimensional frameworks are Hall's cultural categories, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Trompenaars's cultural dimensions, Schwartz's value framework, and the GLOBE study. These frameworks are reviewed in the following sections, which include an overview of the position of German and Russian cultures within these respective dimensions.

2.1.1 Hall's framework

American cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall is considered a pioneer in intercultural research. He made the early discovery of the cultural criteria that influence the behavior of people and may lead to misunderstandings and disorientation when people from different cultures interact (Barmeyer, 2010c: 88).

[21] A detailed description of etic and emic approaches can be found in Barmeyer & Genkova (2010a: 131-132) and Luesebrink (2008: 38-40).

[22] Koeppel (2003) provides an extensive overview of cultural models and approaches.

Hall and Hall (1990) describe culture along three dimensions: context, time, and use of space[23].

1. Context

"Context is the information that surrounds an event." (Hall & Hall, 1990: 6) Communication in all cultures can be compared on a scale from high to low:

> *"A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e. the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code."* (Hall, 1976: 91)

Germany, the USA, and Scandinavian countries are examples of low-context cultures, whereas China, Japan, and the Mediterranean countries represent high-context cultures (Hall &Hall, 1990: 6-7).

Miscommunication may occur when individuals from low-context cultures interact with those from high-context cultures. Thus, individuals from high-context cultures may become irritated when their colleagues from a low-context culture insist on giving them information they do not really need – and vice versa, the representatives of low-context cultures may be lost due to a lack of information provided to them by their colleagues from high-context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990: 8-10).

2. Space

Hall's second cultural category, space, refers to a series of invisible boundaries that separate individuals from their external environments. This series of invisible boundaries begins with personal space and terminates with a person's territory.

Like animals, individuals claim certain territories to be theirs and tend to protect them. Hall and Hall (1990: 10-11) point out that territoriality is particularly present in Germany and the USA, where the top floors of a building are reserved for high-ranking officials and managers.

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[23] Rothlauf (2009: 35) also distinguishes a fourth dimension: information flow. "The rate of information flow is measured by how long it takes a message intended to produce an action to travel from one part of an organization to another and for that message to release the desired response" (Hall & Hall, 1990: 22).I Information flow depends on the three other outlined dimensions, however, especially low- and high-context, and is therefore not considered here as a separate dimension.

Personal space is a form of territory and refers to the area around the individual which has to be respected by others. The size of personal space depends on the given situation and the relationship to the surrounding people. Undesired penetration into personal space may cause people to feel aggressive and uncomfortable. Like context, personal space varies across cultures: people from northern European countries require more personal space than people from Mediterranean countries (Hall & Hall, 1990: 11). Thus, Germans and Scandinavians may perceive their Greek colleagues' friendly touching in formal settings to be very embarrassing and disturbing.

3. Time

Hall's third and last cultural dimension is time. Hall differentiates between monochronic and polychronic time:

> *"Monochronic time means paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time. Polychronic time means with being involved with many things at once."* (Hall & Hall, 1990: 13)

Monochronic time dominates in the USA, Switzerland, Germany, and Scandinavian countries. Monochronic people tend to respect rules and commitments, adhere to plans, and not disturb others. Polychronic time is characteristic of Latin America and the Middle East. Polychronic people are more concerned with their families and friends than with rules and plans. The tendency of polychronic people to interrupt and change plans and commitments may insult their colleague from monochronic cultures and be interpreted as a lack of respect (Hall, 1976: 17-20; Hall & Hall, 1990: 13-15).

Conclusion

Hall was the first researcher to describe cultural differences according to multiple dimensions. Unlike the four subsequent frameworks, his research has an exclusively qualitative character and does not provide any data regarding the positions of cultures on these dimensions. The lack of empirical data regarding the number of investigated cultures (including, for example, the lack of any description of Russian cultural characteristics) and the relative positions of the cultures makes it difficult to compare societies that are considered to be culturally close (Dahl, 2003:7).

Hall makes no claim to describe all of the variety of cultural characteristics with these three dimensions; they simply should give a notion of the culturally-based behavioral

differences. Furthermore, his dimensions are not independent from one another: often a low-context orientation goes together with monochronic time (Rothlauf, 2009: 35).

2.1.2 Hofstede's five dimensions framework

Geert Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences* is the most-cited work in the field of intercultural communication (Taras & Steel, 2009: 40). Hofstede (1980, 1994) derived his cultural dimensions from an extensive survey among IBM employees around the world between 1967 and 1973, while he was working in the company as a researcher. He analyzed surveys of around 117,000 IBM employees from 66 different countries. By applying different statistical methods, he identified four fundamental dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1994: 39-40). Later, after the analysis of the Chinese Value Survey by Michael Bond, he added a fifth dimension to his framework: long-term versus short-term orientation.

1. Power distance

Power distance refers to the way people deal with inequality. It is defined as:

> *"the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."* (Hofstede, 1994: 28)

According to Hofstede (1994: 28-40), people start acquiring the notion of power distance already in their early childhood through socialization processes in the family and in school. In high power distance societies, children have to obey their parents. Later, as young professionals start working, they expect to be told what to do by their supervisors. Inequalities among people are both expected and desired. In contrast, children from small power distance societies are treated as equals. The opinions of the young professionals are consulted, and organizational hierarchy is regarded as a convenient means of role assignment among employees.

Malaysia, the Philippines, and Russia are examples of countries with high power distance, whereas Austria, Germany and Sweden are examples of countries with low power distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 54-56).

2. Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism versus collectivisms describes the role of a single individual and a group in the society:

> *"individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty."* (Hofstede, 1994: 51)

Thus, in individualistic societies, individual interests prevail over those of the group. The children in such societies quickly learn to think of themselves as "I", and the relationship between employees and the company should be based on a mutual advantage. In contrast, collectivistic societies emphasize the role of the group. The children learn to think of themselves as "we", and, similarly, the relationship of the employer to the company is expected to be like a family link (Hofstede, 1994: 57-68).

South East Asian countries and Latin American countries tend to be collectivistic, whereas the USA, Australia, and Great Britain are highly individualistic societies (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 100-102).

3. Masculinity versus Femininity

The third dimension refers to the clarity of role differentiation in a society. Hofstede defines it as follows:

> *"masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life); femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life)."* (Hofstede, 1994: 82-83)

Thus, in masculine societies, the roles are clearly differentiated. Men are supposed to be assertive and ambitious while women are supposed to be tender. Masculine societies stress competition, achievements, material success, and progress. In contrast, in feminine

societies, gender roles share commonalities: girls and boys study the same subjects; equity, solidarity, and quality of work life are prevailing values (Hofstede, 1994: 86-96).

Countries like Slovakia, Japan, and Austria have high scores on the masculinity dimension, whereas Scandinavian countries score the highest on the femininity dimension (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 157-159).

4. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is:

> *"the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations."* (Hofstede, 1994: 113)

Uncertainty avoidance does not refer to fear or anxiety about particular situations, but rather the need for predictability by means of written and unwritten rules. High uncertainty avoidance cultures fear ambiguous situations, accept only familiar risk, and seek structure and security. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures, on the contrary, are comfortable in ambiguous situations, curious about unknown things, and define rules only when it is strictly necessary (Hofstede, 1994: 113-126).

Countries like Denmark, Sweden, and China have low uncertainty avoidance whereas Greece, Portugal, and Russia show high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 220-222).

5. Long-term versus short-term orientation

This dimension refers to the extent to which people focus their efforts on the future or the present and past. According to Hofstede:

> *"Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth. […] They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results."* (Hofstede, n.d.)

Countries with a short-term orientation assume that the most important things in life happened in past or are happening right now. They prefer short-term profit and immediate social spending and consumption. In contrast, countries with a long-term

orientation believe that the most important things will happen in the future. They stress future market positions and profit while doing business and prefer saving and investing.

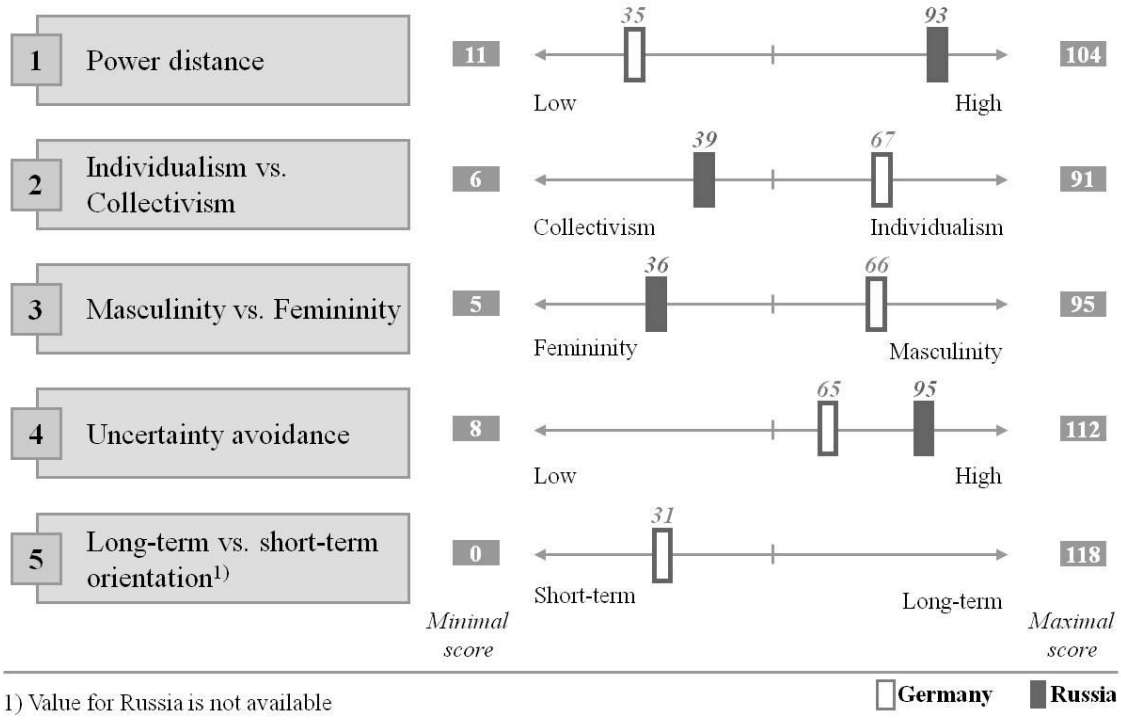
China, Hong Kong, and Japan are examples of long-term oriented nations, whereas most European countries, Great Britain, and the USA are short-term oriented (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 274-275).

Hofstede's empirical results for Germany and Russia

Figure 7 represents a summary of Hofstede's empirical findings for Germany and Russia in comparison with the worldwide maximal and minimal country scores on each dimension.

Figure 7. Hofstede's scores for Germany and Russia

Source: based on Hofstede & Hofstede (2011) and http://geert-hofstede.com.html



Conclusion

Hofstede's framework was the first extensive empirical study that provided a simple and understandable description of different cultures based on selected dimensions. In his research, Hofstede eliminated a major drawback of Hall's framework: the lack of a scale

system to order and compare the cultures. Thus, Hofstede's dimensions were adopted by many scholars, especially in the field of management and international business.

Not only scholars, but also practitioners widely utilized Hofstede's dimensions. His work is very favored in intercultural training sessions and seminars: the dimensions are simple to understand. Training participants can easily connect their previous personal intercultural experiences to Hofstede's dimensions. And finally, the extensive dataset evokes credibility and promotes the acceptance of findings.

As the most-cited framework, it has also drawn a great deal of criticism. The main weaknesses include:

- the generalizability and representativeness of data sample: the study was conducted only among IBM employees; in some countries the number of employees was less than 200, for example, the first survey in Pakistan comprised 37 IBM employees (McSweeney, 2002);
- the methodological approach: the four dimensions were derived by means of factor analysis; the survey was based on attitudinal questions from which values were derived (McSweeney, 2002);
- the application of culture-level averages to explain individual interactions (McSweeney, 2002); and
- sophisticated stereotyping: cultural characteristics are reduced to a number of fixed dimensions, prohibiting an understanding of the full variety of cultural peculiarities (Osland & Bird, 2000: 70).

2.1.3 Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's framework

Fons Trompenaars was Hofstede's student at the Wharton Business School and later built his cultural framework on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Having analyzed a sample of 30,000 completed questionnaires from 55 countries, Trompenaars (1994) discovered seven cultural dimensions: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, affective versus neutral, specific versus diffuse, achievement versus ascription, attitude towards time, and attitude towards nature. The first five dimensions relate to the relationship between people, while the last two refer to people's attitudes towards time and the environment.

1. Universalism versus Particularism

This dimension defines how societies judge people's behavior. Universalist societies are rule-based; the members of these societies follow rules that are accepted by a majority of the population and should be followed equally. Rule exceptions are not desirable because they weaken the rules and may lead to a collapse of the system. The USA and Switzerland are examples of universalist countries (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 33-42).

Particularist societies focus on relationships and circumstances while judging a situation. People are not treated as equal "citizens", but differentiated according to their relationship status as a friend, brother, child or an important person. Thus, relationships override rules and regulations. Venezuela, Serbia, and Russia are examples of particularist societies (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 33-42).

2. Individualism versus Communitarianism

This dimension refers to the conflict between the interests of an individual and the group. Individualist societies focus on the needs of individuals and emphasize the role of individual achievement and responsibility. In contrast, communitarian societies stress the importance of the group, its well-being, joint achievements, and responsibilities. In business, communitarian cultures prefer plural representation, look for consensus, and take their time in decision making. Nepal, China, India, and Brazil show the highest scores in communitarianism, whereas Romania, Canada, and the USA have high scores in individualism (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 50-60).

3. Affective versus Neutral

This dimension refers to the role that reason and emotion play in a society. Affective people willingly show their emotions by laughing, gesturing, and obvious facial expressions. In contrast, neutral societies control their feelings and thoughts. Their emotions are usually inhibited, but occasionally explode. Physical contact and facial expressions during meetings in neutral cultures are often taboos. Ethiopia and Japan score highest on the neutral orientation, while Kuwait, Egypt, and Spain are more affective (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 69-70, 79).

4. Specific versus Diffuse

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006) define this dimension as:

> *"the degree to which we engage others in specific areas of life and single levels of personality, or diffusely in multiple areas of our lives and at several levels of personality at the same time"* (p 81).

In specific cultures, people clearly differentiate between work, family, and friends. The discussion topics among friends and work colleagues are not the same. In business, specific societies prefer management by objectives; they are fair, direct, and precise in their statements and actions (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 81-100).

In diffuse-oriented societies, private and professional life mingles. Since private and public spaces are mixed, it takes much longer to establish contact with strangers. They "talk business" only after a "private space" relationship has been established. Diffuse-oriented societies are indirect and tactful; morality is highly personal and context-dependent (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 81-100).

Examples of specific-oriented cultures are the USA and the Great Britain, whereas China, Nepal, and Singapore are diffuse-oriented societies (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 81-88).

5. Achievement versus Ascription

The last interpersonal dimension deals with the question of how a society confers status. Though all societies signal that certain members should receive more attention by giving them a higher status, some societies give status based on achievements while other societies ascribe status according to age, class, gender, education, family, and so on – that is, to those who "naturally" evoke admiration. Achievement-oriented societies use their titles only if they are relevant to the performed task; they respect their superior in the hierarchy, who may be of any age or gender, for his or her knowledge and for what he or she has achieved for the organization. In contrast, ascription-oriented societies extensively use titles to show status. Their respect for the superior in the organization, who is usually male and middle-aged, symbolizes their commitment to the organization (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 102-118).

Australia, Scandinavian countries, and the USA represent achievement-oriented countries while Argentina, India, and Nepal are examples of ascription-oriented cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 102-107).

6. Attitude towards time

Just as members of societies relate to each other in different ways, so too do societies approach time differently. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006) differentiate between a sequential and a synchronic view of time. Whereas societies with a sequential view of time interpret it as a series of passing events, societies with synchronic time see past, present, and future as interrelated and inseparable from each other. A sequential time orientation is reflected in a prevalent tendency toward planning and the subsequent following of the initial plans, focusing on only one activity at a time, and adhering to a schedule. In contrast, a synchronic time orientation is characterized by a tendency to chase the end-goal rather than to follow the schedule, to do more than one activity at the same time, and to treat appointments as approximate (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 120-129, 139).

China shows a synchronic time orientation, whereas the USA and Turkey have a sequential one (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 120-129).

7. Attitude towards nature

The last dimension refers to the roles people assign to their natural environment. Regarding their attitudes towards nature, all cultures can be grouped into inner- or outer-directed. Inner-directed cultures think that nature could and should be controlled; such cultures have rather aggressive attitudes towards their environment, and they believe that they can optimize their lives by changing it. Outer-directed cultures, on the contrary, act with the environment, obeying its laws, directions, and forces. The individuals in such countries see themselves as products of nature; they look for harmony and are willing to compromise (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 141-145, 155).

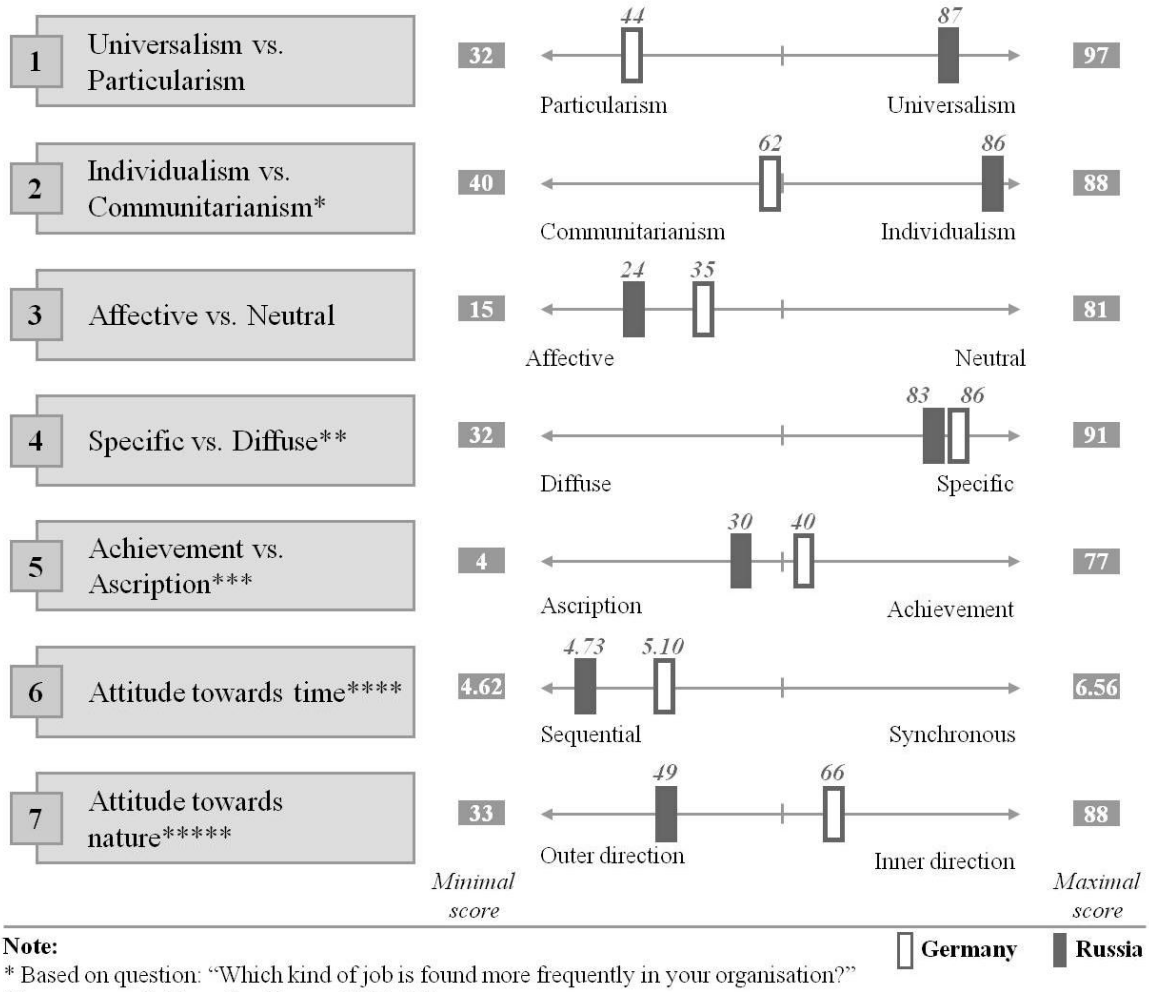
According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006: 142-145), Chinese, Japanese, and Russians believe that external factors influence their lives, whereas US-Americans believe themselves to be in charge of their lives.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's empirical results for Germany and Russia

Figure 8 represents a summary of Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's empirical findings for Germany and Russia in comparison with the worldwide maximal and minimal country scores on each dimension[24].

[24] Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2006) employed three questions for the assessment of each dimension, with the goal of covering different aspects of the respective dimension. However, the researchers did not aggregate the results within the respective dimensions. Thus, individual country scores may show opposite results on questions within one dimension. In order to reduce ambiguities, Figure 8 presents Russia's and Germany's scores on the questions that are mostly related to the working environment, leaving general questions out of the scope.

Figure 8. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's scores for Germany and Russia
Source: based on Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006)



Note:
* Based on question: "Which kind of job is found more frequently in your organisation?" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 54)
**Based on question: "Should the company provide housing?" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 93)
***Based on statement: "Acting as suits you even if nothing is achieved." (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 105)
****Based on average attitude towards past, present, and future: "Long- versus short-termism: time horizon." (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 128)
*****Based on statement: "I believe what happens to me is my own doing." (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 144)

Conclusion

Like Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner aimed at assessing culture according to fixed dimensions by analyzing data obtained from a large set of questionnaires. The difference is that Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006) derived their results from a wider sample of respondents. Furthermore, while Hofstede's questions had a general character, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006) used several, very concrete questions from everyday life. However, this approach has its drawbacks. As Dahl (2003:

9) points out, the values derived from such a limited amount of data might be wrong because of certain situational influences of the respondents. Furthermore, the researchers at times used several questions to measure one dimension without subsequent integration. Though this approach helped to capture different aspects of a single cultural dimension, it can also be misleading when a society demonstrates opposing scores on the same dimension.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's framework aimed to contribute to practitioners involved in international business. However, the researchers only partially succeeded in their task. Though the framework is highly favored by managers and intercultural trainers (Rothlauf, 2009: 52), their attempt to illustrate the cultural dimension by means of graphics was not very successful. Also, the names of their dimensions are rather complicated and difficult to remember.

2.1.4 Schwartz's value framework

Like Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Schwartz investigated the cultural dimensions along which countries can be compared. For this purpose he asked teachers and students from 67 different nations to rank 56 single values.

Schwartz (2008: 6-9) suggests that all nations need to address and resolve three main issues: the boundaries between the person and the group, a guarantee of social responsible behavior, and the relationship between people and the natural and social world. It is the alternative methods for resolving these issues that distinguish societies from one another, however, and they are reflected in three bipolar cultural dimensions: embeddedness versus intellectual autonomy and affective autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony.

1. Embeddedness versus Intellectual Autonomy and Affective Autonomy

The first dimension shows the extent to which people are autonomous or embedded into their groups. In cultures with a high level of embeddedness, individuals are regarded as members of social groups. They find meaning in life through their social relationships, participation in a shared way of life, and shared goals. In cultures with a high level of autonomy, people are viewed as unique, autonomous entities. Schwartz (2008) differentiates between two types of autonomy: intellectual and affective. Intellectual autonomy encourages people to pursue their own intellectual ideas independently. The important corresponding values are broadmindedness, curiosity, and creativity. Affective autonomy encourages people to pursue affectively positive experiences. The respective important values are pleasure, excitement, and a varied life (Schwartz, 2008: 6-7).

According to Schwartz, Malaysia and Singapore show high scores in embeddedness while France and West Germany have high levels of affective and intellectual autonomy (Schwartz, 1994: 112-113).

2. Hierarchy versus Egalitarianism

Schwartz's second cultural dimension shows how societies guarantee responsible behavior that preserves the social structure. Hierarchy and egalitarianism are two possible polar solutions. In societies with high levels of egalitarianism, people *"recognize one another as moral equals who share basic interests as human beings"* and emphasize such values as equality, social justice, and honesty. Hierarchical societies are characterized by an unequal distribution of power and roles. They stress social power, authority, and wealth as important values (Schwartz, 2008: 7-8).

For example, Singapore and Turkey emphasize hierarchy, whereas Italy and Denmark represent egalitarian commitment (Schwartz, 1994: 113-114).

3. Mastery versus Harmony

The third dimension addresses the issue of how societies describe their relationship to nature and the social world. Mastery *"encourages active self-assertion in order to master, direct, and change the natural and social environment to attain group or personal goals"*. It emphasizes such values as ambition, success, and competence. Harmony *"emphasizes fitting into the world as it is, trying to understand and appreciate rather than to change, direct, or to exploit"*. The corresponding values are unity with nature and protecting the environment (Schwartz, 2008: 8-9).

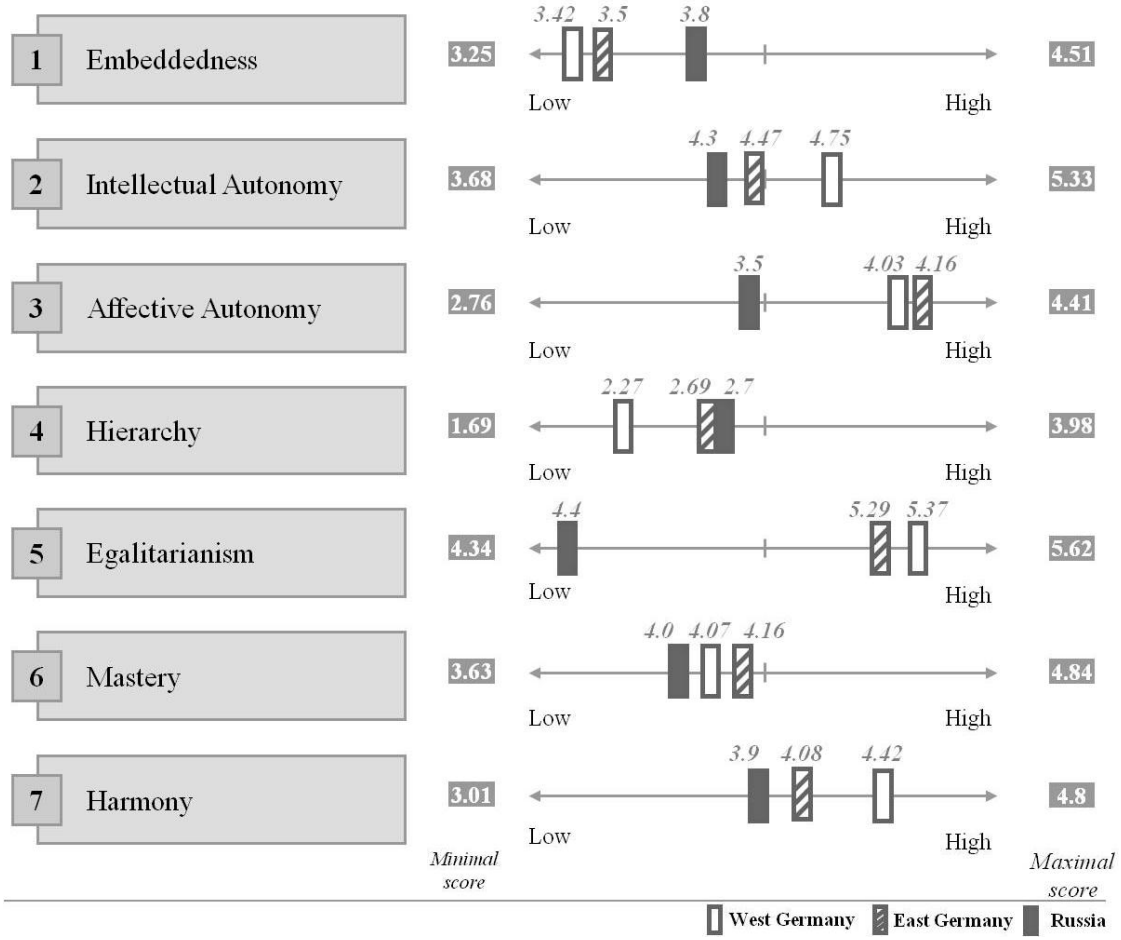
For example, mastery is highly emphasized in Zimbabwe, and harmony is highly stressed in Italy (Schwartz, 1994: 113-114).

Schwartz's empirical results for Germany and Russia

Figure 9 represents a summary of Schwartz's empirical findings for Germany and Russia in comparison with the worldwide maximal and minimal country scores on each dimension.

Figure 9. Schwartz's scores for Germany and Russia

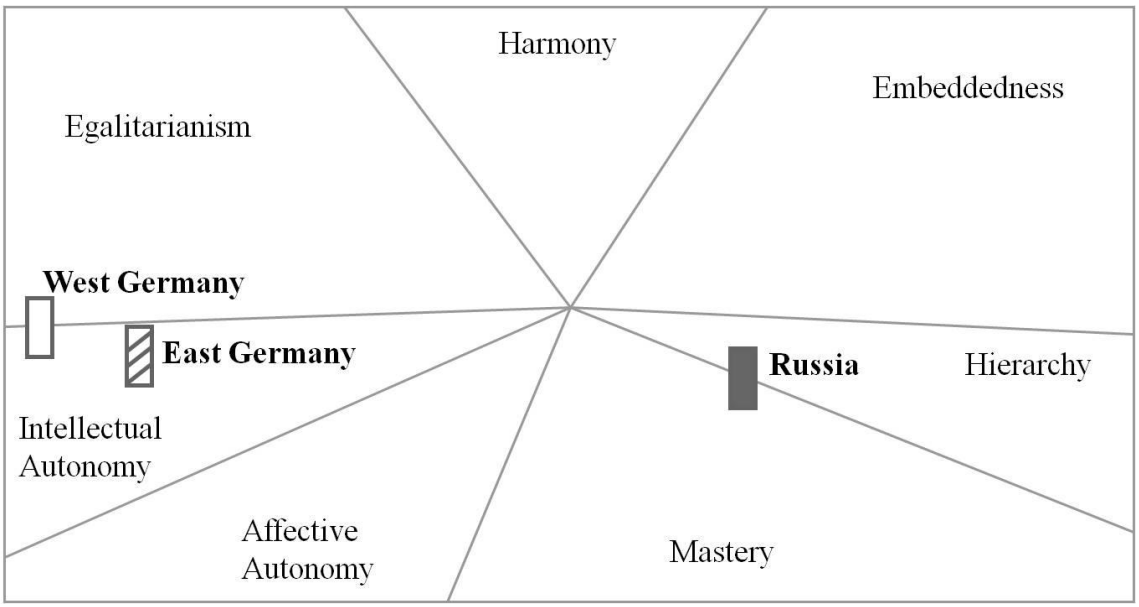
Source: based on Schwartz (1994: 112-114), Schwartz (2008: 18)



Unlike previous frameworks, Schwartz's value frameworks differentiate between West and East Germany due to differences in political and economic backgrounds during the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the values for both parts of Germany are quite close because of their long shared history, language, and traditions. Figure 10 reflects graphically the closeness of the two parts.

Figure 10. Position of East and West Germany and Russia according to Schwartz's value dimensions

Source: based on Schwartz (2008: 66-67)



Conclusion

Schwartz's framework is very popular in psychology, but less used in other disciplines (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 20). Like Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Schwartz studied cultural values on the macro level. In his research, he managed to address some of the criticisms raised against Hofstede's and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's work. Schwartz applied more rigorous research methods, such as the validation of meaning equivalence of chosen values across all cultures (Rothlauf, 2009:55). He asked about values rather than preferred behaviors and states, thus reducing the impact of situational influences on the respondents (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 20). Finally, his approach was broader and did not focus on just a few selected values (Schwartz, 1994: 87-89).

However, Schwartz's research has not reached the popularity of Hall's, Hofstede's, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's works. Despite valuable improvements, it shows some limitations; for example, asking precise questions about values may predispose respondents to name the values which are socially acceptable rather than those

representing their actual behavior. His sample consists exclusively of teachers and students, leading to a lack of representativeness.

Similarly, Schwartz's framework has not found wide acceptance among practitioners. His values are abstract and not easy to grasp immediately. From the business standpoint, his findings lack practical applicability and explanations. For this reason, Schwarz's framework is rarely applied in intercultural training programs.

2.1.5 The GLOBE study

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) research program investigated leadership and organizational practices in 62 different societies over a period of ten years. Based on the responses of about 17,000 managers from 951 organizations, the GLOBE study ranked all societies with respect to nine theoretically derived cultural dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and human orientation. The first six dimensions are slightly modified versions of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions. Future orientation was derived from the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) Past, Present and Future Orientation dimension. Performance orientation has its roots McClelland's (1961) work on the need for achievement. And human orientation is based on the work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), as well as on that of Putnam (1993) and McClelland (1985). (House et al., 2004: 3-13)

House et al. (2004: 11-13) gives the following definitions for the nine GLOBE dimensions that can be used both on societal and organizational levels:

1. Uncertainty avoidance

> *"is the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices."* (House et al., 2004: 11)

2. Power distance

> *"is the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at high levels of an organization and government."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

3. Institutional collectivism

> *"is the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

Institutional collectivism had not been studied before the GLOBE study. The term refers to the extent to which social practices encourage and reward collective actions. Institutional collectivism reflects whether individual goals and achievements prevail over those of a group, whether economic systems stresses the importance of collective interests, and how important it is to be accepted as a member of a group. While measuring institutional collectivism, the emphasis was put on groups other than family, children, and parents (House et al., 2004: 13, 463).

4. In-group collectivism

> *"is the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

In contrast, in-group collectivism focuses on family, children, and parents. It refers to the extent to which people express pride and loyalty in their families. In-group collectivism shows, for example, that children are proud of the achievements of their parents and that parents and their children share the same home until the latter get married (House et al., 2004: 463).

5. Gender egalitarianism

> *"is the degree to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

6. Assertiveness

> *"is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

Two previous dimensions, gender egalitarianism and assertiveness, are derived from Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity. Thus, gender egalitarianism describes cultural differences in the roles of the sexes, whereas assertiveness refers to the degree to which societies encourage dominant, tough, and assertive behavior (House et al., 2004: 12, 359, 406-408).

7. Future orientation

> *"is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behavior such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification."* (House et al., 2004: 12)

8. Performance orientation

> *"is the degree to which an organization or societies encourages and rewards members for performance improvement and excellence."* (House et al., 2004: 13)

In the context of the GLOBE study, performance orientation clearly relates to ambition and challenge. It reflects the degree to which people pursue performance improvements because they believe that such improvements lead to increased effectiveness (House et al., 2004: 266-267).

9. Human orientation

> *"is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others."* (House et al., 2004: 13)

House et al. (2004) assessed the nine dimensions in terms of their actual society practices (As Is) and in terms of their values (Should Be) – i.e. what the respondents believe should be the practices in their society (House et al., 2004: 21). Interestingly, for only one dimension, gender egalitarianism, the society practices and values are significantly and positively correlated. For seven dimensions, the correlation is significantly negative. Negative but insignificant correlation is observed for the practices and values on the dimension of in-group collectivism (House et al., 2004: 32). House et al. (2004: 307-308) explain this phenomenon for each dimension separately, partially drawing on socio-economic and political perspectives, but without going into details. For example, negative correlation between practices and values on the dimension of future orientation may be contributed to the desire of societies that lack future orientation practices to have more predictability and a more strategic perspective.

The GLOBE study's empirical results for Germany and Russia

The comparison of results for Russia and Germany is presented in Figure 11 and Figure 12, for actual society practice (As Is) and their values (Should Be), respectively. Like Schwarz, the GLOBE study differentiates between East and West Germany in order to

capture the differences in political and economic development during the second half of the twentieth century.

Figure 11. Position of East and West Germany and Russia according to GLOBE's society practices (As Is)

Source: based on House et al. (2004)

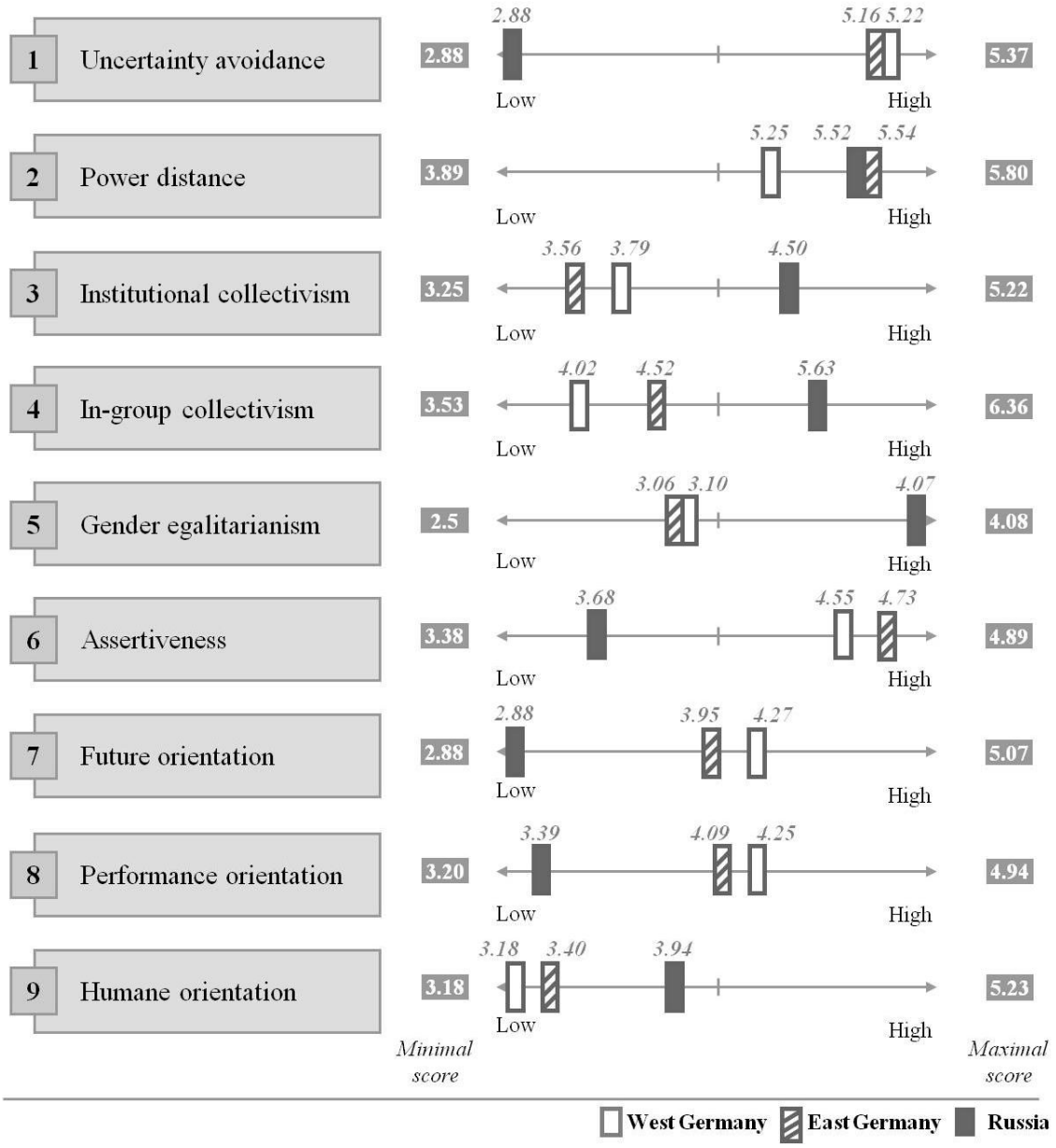
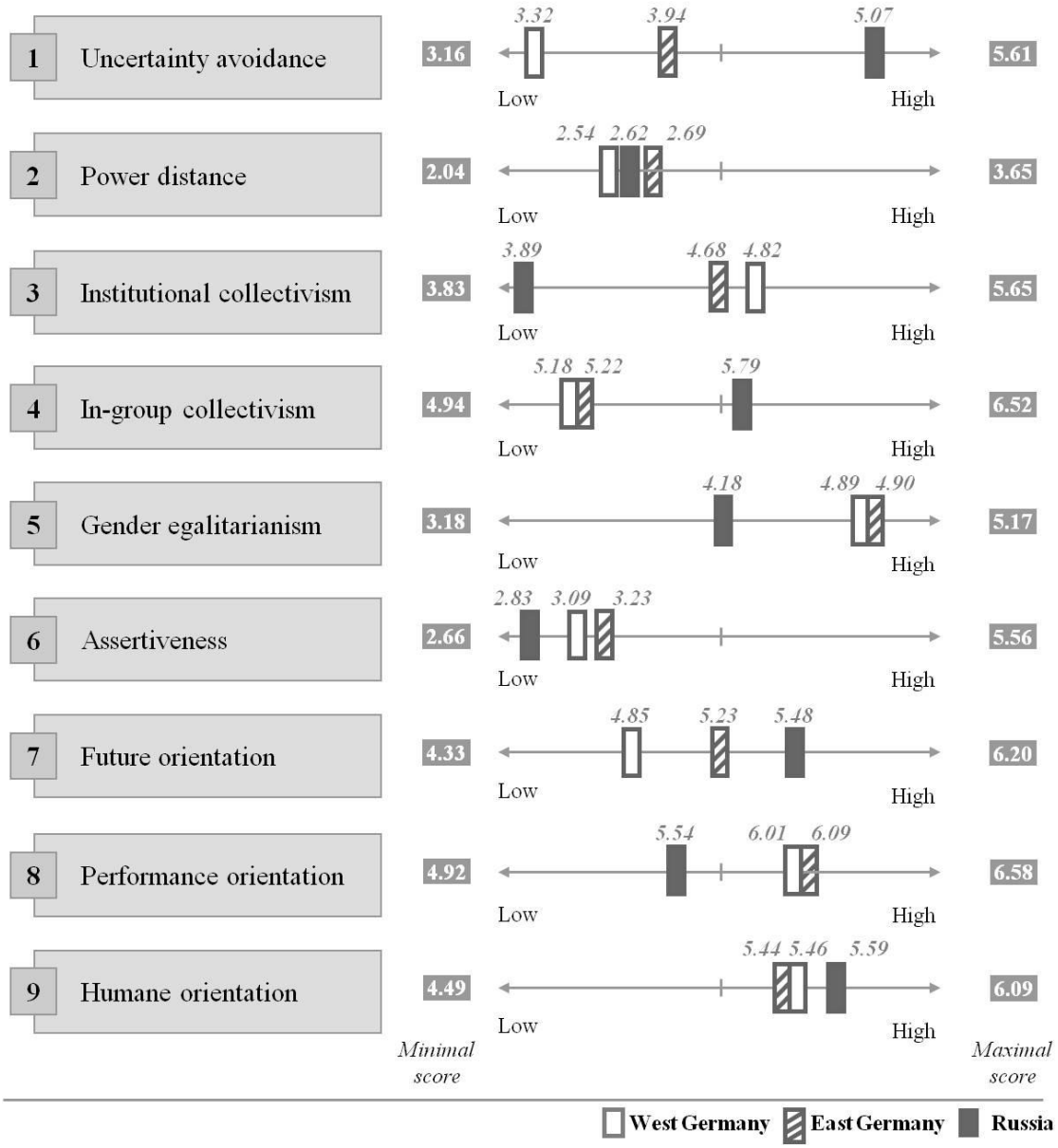


Figure 12. Position of East and West Germany and Russia according to GLOBE's society values (Should Be)

Source: based on House et al. (2004)



Conclusion

The GLOBE project is the most extensive study in the field of intercultural communication. It encompasses not only cultural differences between countries, but also the differences between cultural groups within one country, such as between French and German-speaking Switzerland, or East and West Germany (Rothlauf, 2009: 60). Other strengths of the GLOBE study include the integration of different theoretical frameworks,

the combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, and a high degree of rigor in data gathering and analysis. However, the GLOBE framework is rarely applied in practical training programs (Rothlauf, 2009: 63). A possible explanation for this might be that the dimensions are too similar to Hofstede's framework, but at the same time, they are more difficult and lack applicability to everyday business. Another possible explanation is that the study has not yet established itself among the cultural training community.

2.1.6 Summary and critical review of macro-analytical dimensional approaches

Dimensional approaches aim at describing culture based on a fixed number of cultural dimensions. Though the authors used different methodologies to derive their cultural dimensions, similar dimensions can be found in different frameworks. Major overlap can be seen in particular regarding collectivism versus individualism, power distance, and time orientation.[25] At the same time, the outlined frameworks yield diverging results on similar dimensions. For example, Hofstede's framework and the GLOBE study consider Russia as collectivistic society and Germany as rather individualistic society whereas Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's framework ranks Russia as strongly individualistic culture and Germany as moderate collectivistic (follow Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 11). These differences in country ranking result from the differences in the underlying questions that are used to conceptualize the respective dimensions.[26] Hence, the scholars should be careful during the selection of the framework for further research as well as in the interpretation of achieved findings.

The reviewed frameworks became popular in the field of international business because they provided both international business researchers and practitioners with a simple instrument for investigating cultural impact on different aspects of international business. Dimensional frameworks are also popular instruments in intercultural training programs and seminars (Rothlauf, 2009: 63). Nevertheless, the frameworks suffer from some methodological and practical drawbacks, including:

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[25] Though cultural dimension frameworks show some overlap regarding individual dimensions, the respective scores of Germany and Russia vary across different frameworks. This variation can be attributed to the differences in the underlying methodologies and will be discussed in detail in what follows.

[26] In this context, I leave out the matching of different dimensions from different frameworks. For the interested reader, such comparison can be found in, for example, Carr (2004: 24), House et al. (2004: 138-144), and Rothlauf (2009: 62).

- simplification of cultural aspects: all of the frameworks aimed at reducing cultural characteristics to a number of fixed bipolar dimensions, potentially neglecting other cultural characteristics that are not captured within the pre-defined dimensions;
- risk of stereotyping, arising from the results of a limited number of cultural dimensions;
- abstract character of the dimensions: dimensions represent "average values" and cannot be used to explain everyday intercultural interactions on the micro level (Bolten, 2003: 130);
- exclusively descriptive role of the dimensions: dimensions have a descriptive function, but lack explanatory power (Bolten, 2003: 130); and
- lack of practical applicability: dimensions are not always self-understandable and often lack practical applicability in everyday business life.

Taken together, dimensional approaches are useful instruments for comparing and to analyzing major cultural differences and similarities between different groups. Nevertheless, they should be considered in a specific cultural context in order to reduce the risk of stereotyping and to get a better understanding of concrete intercultural interactions.

2.2 Micro-analytical approaches to the study of culture

While the use of macro-analytical dimensional frameworks to study culture aims at describing the main cultural characteristics on the societal level, micro-analytical frameworks focus on a cultural microcosmos and describe intercultural interactions on the micro level – i.e. between individuals (Bolten, 2003: 131-132). A majority of the micro-analytical frameworks originate from the field of linguistics and cognitive psychology, and apply emic research approaches (Luesebrink, 2008: 45). While cultural frameworks from the field of linguistics give priority to the analysis of conversational sequences in intercultural communication (Luesebrink, 2008: 63), cultural approaches from cognitive psychology aim to explain causes of behavioral differences in intercultural interactions. In doing so, cultural approaches from cognitive psychology rely

on two main theories: schema theory and attribution theory. Based on these theories, Alexnader Thomas has developed cultural standards[27] – a framework that explains behavioral and interpretation differences in intercultural communication in a situational context.

Another micro-analytical framework discussed in this sub-chapter is the lacuna model. The lacuna model originates from the field of ethno-psycholinguistics. Though its original focus related to the linguistics aspect of intercultural communication and translation, the model can also be applied in the area of intercultural business studies, analyzing such aspects as intercultural differences in advertising (Grodzki, 2003), Russian-American business communication (Denisova-Schmidt, 2007), and recruiting and human resources management (Denisova-Schmidt & Dashidorzhieva, 2013).

The current discussion on micro-analytical frameworks is structured in five sections. The first and the second section, respectively, provide an overview of the main theoretical principles of schema and attribution theory, focusing on the main principles that are relevant for understanding cultural interactions. In addition, these sections make an explicit link between the general notions of schema and the attribution process in cognitive psychology and cultural schema and the culturally bound attribution process in intercultural communication. The third and the fourth sections outline two micro-analytical approaches to the study of culture: Thomas' cultural standards and the lacuna model, respectively[28]. Finally, the fifth section offers critical review of micro-analytical approaches in the field of intercultural communication.

2.2.1 Schema theory

This section provides an overview of the main principles of schema theory. It consists of three subsections: The first starts with the definition of schema and continues by indicating schema types and laying out the main principles of schema theory. The second

[27] Thomas' cultural standards are classified as macro-analytical approaches because they describe culture based on a limited number of dimension (see for example Lüsebrink, 2008: 44). However, Thomas derived his cultural standards from the analyses of intercultural interactions on a micro level. Due to this methodological approach, I present the outline of Thomas' framework together with the micro-analytical frameworks.

[28] This chapter provides an overview of the micro-analytical cultural frameworks that are relevant for the current research. Other micro-analytical approaches, such as Hotspots and Hotwords (Heringer, 2007), or the linguistic awareness of culture (Mueller-Jacquier, 2000), are very closely related to linguistics and therefore could not serve the purposes of this dissertation.

section introduces scripts as special type of schemas and establishes a link between schema and script concepts. Finally, the third section focuses on cultural schemas and cultural scripts.

2.2.1.1 Definition and structure of schemas

A schema can be defined as *"a cognitive structure that organizes related concepts and integrates past events"* (Kellogg, 2003: 211). Schemas help individuals to reduce the complexity of reality and to organize it in a structured manner (Kanning, 1999: 76). Schemas also provide general guidelines for behavior and action when individuals lack detailed information about the situation or time to process this information (Fiske & Taylor, 1991: 98). More specifically, schemas provide us with default knowledge and assumptions about the characteristics, relationships, and entailments of events and objects that enable us to behave and act rapidly and automatically in the situations of a daily routine (DiMaggio, 1997: 269).

The concept of the schema is not new in cognitive psychology. As early as the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant pointed out that individual experience is structured in the form of concepts. In the first half of the twentieth century, Jean Piaget investigated schemas in infants, and Frederic Bartlett worked on the remembrance aspects of schema (Matlin, 1989: 223). However, the schema concept has received much more attention in the past thirty years (following, for example, Nishida, 1999: 754-755), even beyond the boundaries of cognitive psychology.

In cognitive science, the term "schema" traditionally refers to any kind of generic knowledge. Thus, the concept of the schema does not represent any one distinct thing, but rather refers to a collection of elements that enable the processing of everyday information (Strauss & Quinn, 1997: 49). Though the schema concept encompasses a wide range of knowledge, Schwarz (1985: 271-274) points out a number of uniform characteristics for each schema, using the example of the restaurant schema. First, each schema contains abstract information and, therefore, differs from the memories of a concrete event or object. Second, each schema has variables or slots – pieces of rather imprecise information that characterize the object or event. In the case of the restaurant schema, variables or slots can refer to the menu, beverages, service, etc. However, these variables or slots do not mirror the precise individual characteristics of a menu, beverages, or service. Third, each variable or slot can be filled with an individual value;

the respective range of these values is limited by a number of meaningful options. This range of options or variable limitation defines what kind of values can be filled meaningfully in the respective slot or variable. In the case of the restaurant schema, the range of meaningful options for the variable "beverages" contains different kinds of juices, teas, coffees, wines, beers, etc. The variable limitation also defines what values are not suitable for the beverage slot: for example, the variable limitation suggests that fish would not be a meaningful value for this slot. Forth, each schema contains standard values that can be used in case no concrete information is available to fill in the slot with a respective value. Standard values enable the individuals to use schemas and fill in all slots even if the information is incomplete. In the case of missing information for a selected slot, the individuals refer to their experiences and memories of similar situations and fill in the slot with the value that is most likely in the respective situation. For example, one would assume the availability of wine, beer and other alcoholic beverages in a European bar without needing to look at a drink menu. Thus, the "beverages" slot is automatically filled with a standard value of "wine, beer, and other alcoholic beverages." In some cases, individuals can construct a prototype or typical situations by filling in all the slots with standard values. Fifth, the schema also describes the relationship of the variables to one another. The restaurant schema states, for example, that first you need to order and then you get the meal served. And finally, all schemas are organized hierarchically. Thus, the restaurant schema consists of several sub-schemas, such as "eat", "pay", etc., that can also be part of other schemas (Kanning, 1999: 78-79; Schwarz, 1985: 271-274).

Similarly, schemas function in a uniform manner. Turner (1994) describes how schemas guide our behavior in daily interactions by the means of his experiments on artificial intelligence. For this purpose, Turner (1994: 6-7) differentiates between three types of schema: procedural, contextual, and strategic schemas. Procedural schemas contain information about the sequence of steps to take, also in a hierarchical order. Contextual schemas contain information about the characteristics of the situation and the respective context-appropriate behavior. Strategic schemas contain information about possible problem-solving strategies. Using these three types of schemas, Turner (1994: 79-101) specifies the five steps necessary to generate a "behavior" in a given situation. First, when an individual is confronted with a specific situation, he or she tries to recognize the characteristics of the situation by referring to a contextual schema from a memory that

may reflect the characteristics or context of the situation. Second, the identified contextual schema provides information about a goal to pursue. Third, the contextual schema identifies an appropriate strategic schema to achieve the goal. Forth, the contextual schema suggests an appropriate procedural schema to achieve the goal with the selected strategy. Finally, an individual applies procedural schema by taking the respective actions. In turn, these actions lead to change of context or provide an individual with more precise information about the situation. Once additional information has been obtained, the individual repeats the five steps in order to adjust his or her behavior.

In addition to valuable assistance in everyday life, the schema concept incorporates a number of negative "byproducts." One such "byproduct" results from the selection process of the relevant schema for a particular situation. Fiske and Taylor (1991: 125-132) indicate that the individuals give priority to the schemas that are applied rather often, that have been recently used, or that have a more general character. Thus, an individual tends to use only a limited number of schemas. Moreover, the selection of the relevant schema is based on a limited amount of variables or context characteristics that are considered important; all other variables are subsequently filled in with standard values. Such a selection process, however, can potentially lead to an incorrect assessment of the situation and, subsequently, to inappropriate behavior.

Kanning (1999: 81-83) points out that problems associated with schemas are possible on three levels: the retention of information, the recollection of information, and reflection and evaluation. On the level of information retention, the potential problems may occur because individuals tend to emphasize and memorize information that is related to already available schemas. Thus, individuals tend to suppress information that may require an adjustment of already available schemas. A schema structure that is too rigid may lead to negative prejudice and stereotypes, however. On the recollection level, the potential problems come from the fact that individuals tend to recall better the information that is consistent with available schemas; "inconsistent" information may draw attention at the beginning, but tends to be forgotten after a while. Finally, the problems associated with the use of schema may occur on the level of reflection and evaluation. During the reflection and evaluation of a particular situation, an individual looks for a schema that resembles the respective reality of the situation in the best possible manner. After such a schema is identified, an individual fills in the variables or

empty spots with the information from reality. Similarly, an individual applies a standard value for the variables that are missing from the information from reality. However, if a standard value does not reflect the characteristics of a real situation, it leads to a misinterpretation of the situation, to reality-distorting stereotypes, and potentially to inappropriate behavior.

2.2.1.2 Scripts or event schemas

The concept of the script was initially developed by Robert Abelson and Robert Schank at Yale University in the 1970s. The two researchers studied how our brain organized the knowledge about our daily routine, as well as how this knowledge influenced our understanding and our behavior (Schwarz 1985: 274). Their work is reflected in the concept of the script: *"a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual involving him either as a participant or an observer"* (Abelson, 1976: 33) or "a hypothesized cognitive structure that when activated organizes comprehension of event-based situations" (Abelson 1981: 717).

In short, scripts can be defined as schemas for behavior; they describe events or sequences of events and behavior (Gioia & Poole, 1984: 450). Thus, scripts help us to understand a situation and determine an appropriate behavior (Gioia & Manz, 1985: 529; Gioia & Poole, 1984: 450). Schwarz (1985: 274) compares a cognitive script to a film script or a scenario that describes the sequence of events in habitual daily situations.

Since scripts are part of the broader concept of the schema, they have a similar structure to schemas. Scripts consist of variables and slots; they have standard values and hierarchical structures. Furthermore, a script consists of numerous scenes that are connected to one another to create a meaningful sequence of events from the point of view of each individual observer or participant in the event. Thus, scripts represent a chronological sequence of scenes or events (Schwarz, 1985: 274-275).

The sequential organization of scenes in scripts differentiates the concept of the script from the concept of the frame. Frames are also part of the broader concept of schema that references knowledge structures, but frames constitute knowledge structures of daily situations that do not require the chronological representation of events or scenes. Tannen (1993: 19) points out that a frame is *"a relational concept rather than a sequence of events; it refers to the dynamic relationship between people."* Similarly, Kellog (2003:

211) defines frames as *"schemas that represent the physical structure of the environment."* Describing the relationship between scripts and frames, Gioia and Poole (1984: 457) offer the metaphor of film. Thus, frames can be compared to a "snapshot" of a situation, while scripts depict the dynamics of the situation in form of a "motion picture."

Abelson (1981: 719) specifies three conditions that are necessary to activate scripted behavior. First, an individual should possess a cognitive representation of a particular script. Second, an individual should experience a context or the characteristics of a situation that evoke this particular script. Third, an individual should "enter" or "perform"[29] this script.

The first condition, the availability of cognitive representation of a script, assumes that an individual has already acquired the script. The acquisition of the script may proceed in a direct or an indirect manner. Direct acquisition of a script implies hands-on experiences and personal involvement in interactions with other people, events, and situations. Indirect script acquisition occurs through media communication or conversations with other people. Reading a book or watching television, for example, both contribute in an indirect manner to shaping our scripts (Gioia & Manz, 1985: 530; Gioia & Poole, 1984: 451). The possibility of script acquisition in both direct and indirect ways distinguishes the script concept from Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which is also known in the field of intercultural communication. Bourdieu (1990: 53) defines habitus as *"systems of durable, transposable dispositions [...] which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them."* Thus, habitus, like scripts, represents the structured knowledge of everyday activities. In contrast to the script concept, the knowledge structures of habitus can be obtained only in a direct manner, through experiences and active participation in everyday practices. Thus, learning by modeling and media do not contribute to the acquisition of habitus.[30] Figure 13 illustrates schematically the relationship between the concepts of schema, script, and habitus.

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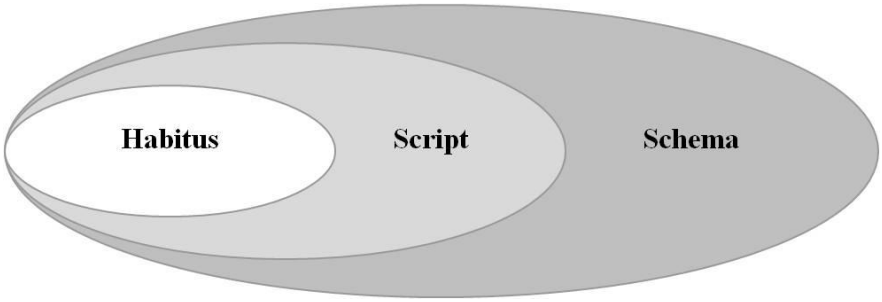
[29] In the original article, Abelson (1981) uses the term "enter" to describe the transition from cognitive structure to an observable behavior. On the other hand, Gioia & Poole (1984) suggest the term "perform" because it better captures the meaning of the behavioral dynamics associated with the execution of a script.

[30] Follow Strauss & Quinn (1997: 44-47) for critical discussion of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

Figure 13. Relationship between the concepts of schema, script, and habitus



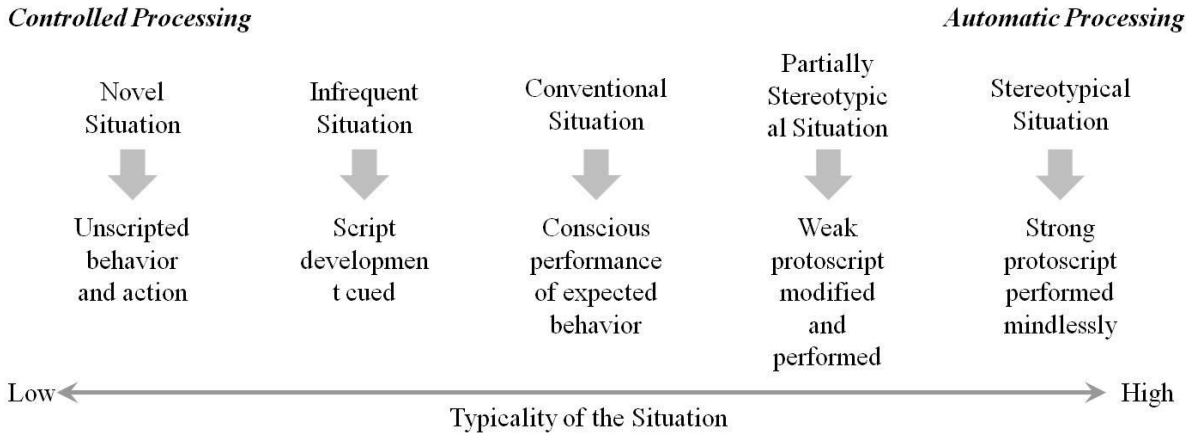
The second condition, evoking an appropriate script, implies a mental selection process. As in case of schemas, the choice of an appropriate script is based only on the limited number of relevant conditions, especially when an individual does not have the time and resources for a long decision process (Abelson, 1981: 719). Such script selection processes may lead to negative byproducts, as is the case in the schema concept: the misinterpretation of the situation and inappropriate behavior.

The third condition, performing the script, is the most critical, because it describes the transition from cognitive structure to concrete observable behavior (Gioia & Poole, 1984: 452). Abelson (1981) and Langer (1978) argue that the performance of scripts occurs more or less automatically or "mindlessly." In contrast, Gioia and Manz (1985) and Gioia and Poole (1984) indicate that our behavior is not always an automatic process, but can be consciously controlled and purposefully steered depending on the situation. Gioia and Poole (1984: 453-454) point out that the degree of conscious involvement in information processing depends on the typicality of the particular situation. Thus, a novel situation might require more processing effort than familiar and stereotypical situations. As the situation occurs more regularly and becomes familiar to an individual, the information processing requires less effort and proceeds in a more automatic manner. Finally, regularly occurring stereotypical situations are performed mindlessly. Gioia and Poole (1984) represent the intensity level of conscious information processing in the form of a continuum of script development. Figure 14 shows that scripted behavior is subject to continuous evolution. The continuum is limited by two extremes: unscripted, totally controlled behavior in novel situations and strongly proto-scripted, mindless behavior in stereotypical situations. Between these two extremes, the script development process goes through different stages. If a particular situation occurs irregularly, it would always require some effort from an individual to process. Likewise, the more regularly an

individual experiences a particular situation, the faster the respective behavior goes through the different stages of the continuum until a strong prototype automatically guides an individual through the situation. It is important to note that even strong proto-scripts do not represent rigid constructs, but are subject to change over time. This occurs when the context of a situation and an environment changes and an individual needs to modify his or her behavior to adapt to the new situation (Abelson, 1981: 722).

Figure 14. A Continuum of Script Development

Source: Gioia and Poole (1984: 454)



Applying this continuum to the context of organization, it can be suggested that numerous situations in a business environment have a (partially) stereotypical character. Thus, the longer an employee stays in a stable business environment and the more regularly he or she performs the same behavioral patterns, the stronger proto-scripts become, guiding his or her behavior in an automatic manner.

2.2.1.3 Cultural schemas and cultural scripts

The concepts of schema and script were also adopted to the field of intercultural communication. DiMaggio (1997: 269), Gudykunst (1991: 26-27), and Nishida (1999: 763), among others, indicate that acquisition of schemas occurs during the interaction of an individual with other members of society. Members of the same ethnic group or culture share common experiences; therefore, they possess similar or even almost identical schemas. In cases when an individual schema is shared by all members of an

ethnic group or culture, it becomes a cultural schema.[31] Thus, cultural schemas incorporate all of the characteristics of the schema concept as discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.1. Similarly, Strauss and Quinn (1997: 122) point out that *"cultural schemas differ not at all from other schemas learned from humanly mediated experiences, except in being shared. Schemas unique to individuals are built up from idiosyncratic experience, while those shared by individuals are built up from various kinds of common experiences."* Strauss and Quinn (1997: 122) add that the term "cultural schema" does not have any precise definition, but rather it is "a matter of taste" when a shared schema becomes cultural. It also appears to be obvious that the degree of schema's "sharedness" depends on the size of an ethnic group or a particular culture and the intensity of the interactions. The smaller the group and the more intensive the daily contact between the group members, the more identical the individual schemas become among the group members, particularly on lower hierarchical levels.

Similarly, cultural scripts can be defined as scripts that are shared by individuals from the same culture. Thus, cultural scripts incorporate all characteristics of the script concept discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.2. Due to the "sharedness" of cultural scripts, the individuals from the same cultural environment are able to understand and predict the behavior of one another correctly. In contrast, the cultural scripts of the individuals from different cultural environments can have great differences. This leads to difficulties in interpreting and predicting each other's behavior, and therefore to less efficient interactions or even to miscommunication.

In the field of intercultural business communication, the cultural schema concept is more common than the cultural script concept. For instance, using the schema concept as basic unit of analysis, researchers have investigated the cross-cultural adaptation processes of sojourners (e.g. Nishida, 1999), cultural particularities in motivation (e.g. D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992), and the use of the cultural schema concept in intercultural training and education (e.g. Bhugra, 2003 and Rentsch, Gunderson, Goodwin, & Abbe, 2007). In contrast, the script concept is common in organizational studies (e.g. Gioia & Poole, 1984; Lyles & Schwenk, 1992; Poole, Grey, & Gioia, 1990), but not in the field of intercultural business communication. Among the few researchers who have adopted the script concept in the field of intercultural communication is Anna Wierzbicka.

[31] Sometimes this is also called a cultural model (see for example Strauss & Quinn, 1997: 49).

Wierzbicka (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2002) and Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004) argue that the cultural script concept is appropriate to understand culture through the eyes of the insider. The researcher applies the concept of cultural scripts to describe Japanese, Polish, Russian, and Anglo-American cultural practices – but from a linguistic point of view. No research has been found that has applied the cultural script concept in the field of intercultural business communication.

Given the purpose of the current research and the focus of the research questions, the concept of the cultural script appears to be more appropriate than the concept of the cultural schema for two reasons. First, the cultural script concept better captures the dynamic character of knowledge structures in the form of chronological sequences of events. Second, cultural scripts also incorporate knowledge structures regarding the roles of individuals into these event sequences and in the context of events, thus fully reflecting the research focus of the current dissertation.

2.2.2 Attribution theory

This section sheds light on the main principles of attribution theory. It is composed of three subsections: The first outlines the basic principles of attribution theory. The second subsection discusses potential distortions in the attribution process that may hinder efficient communication. Finally, the third subsection addresses the role of culture in the attribution process, giving insights into the use of attribution theory in previous research in the field of intercultural communication.

2.2.2.1 Basic principles of attribution theory

Attribution theory aims to answer the "why" questions related to individual behavior. According to Kelley (1973: 107), *"attribution theory is a theory about how people make causal explanations, about how they answer questions beginning with 'why?' It deals with the information they use in making causal inferences, and with what they do with this information to answer causal questions."* This definition of attribution theory suggests two sides of attribution research: the antecedents side – the so-called attribution theories – and consequences side – the so-called attributional theories (Kelley & Michela, 1980: 458-459). The antecedents side deals with the question of how individuals derive the causes from observed behavior and its contexts. The consequences side, or attributional theories, describe the consequences that undertaken attributions have on

individual perception, behavior, and motivation. Given the aim of the current research to explain the perceptions and interpretations in German-Russian intercultural communication, the antecedents side or attribution theories form the theoretical basis for the research. Therefore, the focus of this subsection is to outline the main principles of the attribution theories that were laid out in the works of Fritz Heider (1958) and Harold Kelley (1967, 1973).

The beginning of attribution research in psychology is often associated with the name Fritz Heider, who is often described as the "father of attribution theory" (Sanderson, 2010: 112). In his book *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, Hieder (1958) sees each individual as a "naïve" and "intuitive" scientist who is constantly striving to explain and to predict the observed behavior of others. Heider (1958: 16) believes that individuals are not simply satisfied with the behavior they observe, but that they constantly strive to find an explanation and a meaning for this behavior. As a result, our perception of the social environment not only consists of observed events and behaviors, but is based on our interpretation of these situations and our attribution of these events and behaviors to respective causes. In addition to the descriptive characteristics of attribution process, Heider made a substantial contribution to attribution research by suggesting the fundamental distinction between internal attribution or "person" causes and external attribution or "situation" causes. Internal attribution assumes that individuals look for causes within a person, such as individual characteristics, abilities, or feelings. In contrast, external attribution suggests that an observed behavior or event is attributed to factors outside of a person, such as environmental constrains, situation circumstances, or other persons. To illustrate these two types of attribution processes, Kanning (1999: 92) offers an example of a person who has not been able to find a job for a year. Thus, in internal attribution, one would assume that this person cannot find a job because he or she did not put enough effort into the search. In external attribution, the potential cause for not finding a job would be the bad economic situation and small number of job offers.

Harold Kelley (1967, 1973) has extended and systematized Heider's work on attribution processes. Like Hieder, Kelley (1967, 1973) argued that whenever an individual observes a situation, he or she tries to explain this situation and determine the respective causes. In contrast to Heider (1958), Kelley (1973: 109) indicates three dimensions of potential causes for an event: persons, entities, and time. Kanning (1999: 97) specifies these three dimensions by means of an example in which a student passes an exam with a very good

score. The good result can be explained by the personal characteristics of the student that remain stable over time, such as a particularly strong long-term motivation. This would represent the "persons" dimension. Conversely, the student's good result may be attributed to the exam itself, i.e., the exam was particularly easy. This attribution represents the "entities" or "object" dimension: the characteristics of an object with which an individual has interacted. Finally, a very good score can be attributed to the exceptionally good preparation of the student for this particular exam. This would represent the "time" or "situation" dimension, encompassing a variety of circumstances or characteristics at the time point of the event.

Thus, each attribution process unfolds within the three dimensions – person, object, and situation – according to the so-called "covariation" principle. Kelley (1973: 108) defines the concept of the covariation principle as follows: *"An effect is attributed to one of its possible causes with which, over time, it covaries."* According to the covariation principle, each individual analyzes the available information about an event or a situation based on three criteria: consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness. Consensus refers to the covariation of behavior or action results across different individuals, i.e., it answers the question of whether other individuals achieve the same results or demonstrate the same behavior in a particular situation. In the example with a student, high consensus is available if other students also achieved good results. On the other hand, the fact that only one student succeeded in the exam would point to low consensus. The second criterion, consistency, refers to the covariation of behavior or action results over time, i.e., it answers the question of whether an individual behaves in the same manner or achieves the same result in similar situations repeating over time. Thus, the consistency is high if the student demonstrates high scores in other exams in the same subject. If the student cannot repeat his success in other exams of the same subject, he shows low consistency. The third criterion, distinctiveness, refers to the uniqueness of the result of the behavior or action in a particular situation, i.e., if it answers the question of whether the result of the behavior or action varies across situations. In the example with the student, the distinctiveness is high if the student demonstrates high scores only in one subject; and vice versa, the distinctiveness is low if the student also succeeds in exams in other subjects (Kanning, 1999: 97; Kelley, 1973: 112-113).

In cases when an individual has all the necessary information regarding behavior, a situation, or an event, Kelley (1967, 1973) points out exactly three cases in which this can

be exclusively attributed to one of the three dimensions. Table 2 provides an overview of these cases. The situation is attributed exclusively to the person when consensus and distinctiveness are low while consistency is high. In the example with the student, success in the exam can be attributed to the student himself if the student repeatedly, over time, succeeds in the subject of exam and in other subjects. The situation is attributed exclusively to the entity or the object if all three criteria – consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness – are high. In the example, the cause for success in the exam can be attributed to the stable characteristics of the exam if all students succeed regularly in the exam in this subject, but not in the exams in other subjects. Finally, an event, behavior, or situation can be exclusively attributed to the time or the circumstance if the distinctiveness is high while two other criteria – consensus and consistency – are low. This is the case if this student scores high in this particular exam only once and only in this particular subject, that is, the student might have used a crib sheet because the teacher did not pay enough attention on this day (Kanning, 1999: 98-99).

Table 2. Attribution processes according to Kelley (1967, 1973)
Source: adapted from Kanning (1999: 98)

Consensus	Consistency	Distinctiveness		Cause / Dimension
low	high	low	⇨	Person
high	high	high	⇨	Entity or Object
low	low	high	⇨	Time or Circumstance

In real life, however, it is rarely possible to attribute behavior, an event, or a situation entirely to one exclusive cause. First, the three cases as specified in Table 2 occur rather rarely in real life; any other combination of criteria would not lead to an exclusive attribution to only one cause. Second, the specified attribution process assumes the availability of complete information, but individuals often do not possess complete information when making sense of events (Gudykunst, 1991: 85; Kanning, 1999: 99).

Kelley (1973: 114-115) offers an explanation for a real-life attribution process in view of the incompleteness of available information or the lack of time for analysis. In his

explanations, Kelley (1973) resorts to the concept of the causal schema, defining it as *"the way a person thinks about plausible causes in the relation to a given effect"* (p. 114). Thus, the causal schema refers to knowledge constructs that enable individuals to ascribe causes to events in which only limited information is available.[32] Because the causal schema is part of the broader concept of the schema, it has the same structure and characteristics, including the so-called "byproducts" as discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.1. Further potential biases in attribution process are discussed in Chapter 2.2.2.2.

Whereas Heider (1958) and Kelley (1967, 1973) focused their research on the individual attribution process, Hewstone and Jaspars (1982, 1984) investigated intergroup or social attribution, that is, how the members of one social group explain the behavior of the members of another group. Explaining the nature of social attribution, Hewstone and Jaspars (1984: 379-380) formulate three propositions:

- *"Attribution is social in origin, (e.g. it may be created by, or strengthened through, social interaction, or it may be influenced by social information).*
- *Attribution is social in its reference or object (e.g. an attribution may be demanded for the behavior of an individual categorized as a member of a social group, rather than in purely individual terms; or for a social outcome, rather than any behavior as such).*
- *Attribution is social in that it is common to the members of a society or group (e.g. the members of different groups may hold different attributions for the same events)."*

Based on these propositions, Hewstone and Jaspars (1984: 398-399) argue that group members tend to enhance their group identity when they make social attributions. Furthermore, social attributions are based on social stereotypes that are shared by the group members. Like individual attributions, social attributions are not free from the biases (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone & Jaspars, 1984; Pettigrew, 1979) that might hinder efficient communication between the members of two groups; this is also true in intercultural settings. These biases are discussed in the next subsection.

[32] Kelley (1972) provides a detailed outline and classification for the concept of the causal schema. In this dissertation, I leave out a detailed discussion of casual schemata because it is less relevant for the purpose of the current research.

2.2.2.2 Biases in the attribution process

Both the individual and social attribution processes are marked by a number of biases, as has already been mentioned in the previous Chapter 2.2.2.1. The most important biases include the fundamental attribution error, the actor-observer effect, the self-serving bias, the self-centered bias, and the ultimate attribution error (Fiske & Taylor, 1991: 67-85; Fiske & Taylor, 2013: 169-173; Gudykunst, 1991: 85-88; Kanning, 1999: 100-105).

The fundamental attribution error, or correspondence bias, refers to the tendency to over-attribute behavior to the personal characteristics of an individual and under-evaluate the external, situational factors. The fundamental attribution error was already mentioned by Heider (1958), who explains its occurrence by the fact that we tend to pay more attention to individuals and their behavior – i.e. how individuals move, talk, or act – than to the background situational factors (Fiske & Taylor, 2013: 169; Kanning, 1999: 101). A different explanation for the occurrence of the fundamental attribution error can be found in the work of Gilbert (1991: 193), who argues that attribution proceeds in two steps: In the first step, we start with internal attribution, and only in the second step do we consider situational factors as potential causes of observed behaviors or events. Thus, the fundamental attribution error occurs when we stop the attribution process after the first step without going to the second one.

The actor-observer effect builds upon the fundamental attribution error, but it refers to the differences in the point of view of the actor (a person who performs an act) and the observer (a person who observes an act performed by others). The actor-observer effect was first mentioned by Jones & Nisbett (1972) who define it as follows: *"There is a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable personal dispositions"* (p. 80). The reason for the actor-observer effect can be explained by the presence of asymmetric information, since the actor and the observer perceive the same situation from different perspectives. Thus, the observer perceives an event as an outsider, focusing his attention on the actor. Taking into account the fundamental attribution error, the observer attributes the behavior to dispositional factors, such as the personal characteristics of the actor. In contrast, the actor pays more attention to the situational factors. This is especially the case when the actor does not have a lot of time to think

about his behavior, but needs to act immediately. Thus, the actor does not have the time and resources necessary to consider his personal motives or values (Kanning, 1999: 102).

The self-serving bias refers to the tendency of individuals to attribute successes to internal factors and failures to uncontrollable external factors. According to this bias, people tend to take responsibility for their successes, but deny responsibility for their failures. Only sometimes, if they can attribute a failure to some external factors and if they have future control over these factors, people might be willing to take responsibility for it. The reason for the self-serving bias can be explained by cognitive factors, like the need for people to protect their egos from assault. However, subsequent research has shown that both cognitive and motivational factors bear responsibility for the self-serving bias (Fiske & Taylor, 1991: 79-80).

Another bias related to the evaluation of one's own efforts and performance is called the self-centered bias. This bias describes the fact that individuals tend to take more than their share of credit for the achievements of a group. Fiske and Taylor (1991: 82) suggest that this bias also results from asymmetric information. Thus, the actor is more aware of his or her own efforts and performance than the observer of an action is. Furthermore, the actor tends to devote more attention to his or her own efforts; these efforts are better aligned with his or her own value system, and it is easier for the actor to remember his or her own efforts than those of others.

Finally, the ultimate attribution error, also known as group-serving bias, suggests that self-serving bias can be extended to the attribution of group behavior (Fiske & Taylor, 2013: 172; Gudykunst, 1991: 87). Pettigrew (1979: 464) defines ultimate attribution bias as *"a systematic patterning of intergroup misattribution shaped in part by prejudice."* In line with the previous biases, the ultimate attribution bias suggests that individuals tend to attribute the negative behavior of out-group members to their personal characteristics. In contrast, if the behavior of the out-group member is perceived as positive, it is considered to be an exceptional or special case, luck or unfair advantage, or even *"manipulable situational context"* (Pettigrew, 1979: 469). This tendency of the stereotypical attribution of the behavior of out-group members is even stronger when the individuals are aware of the actor's group membership (Pettigrew, 1976: 469-470). Similarly, the reverse tendency holds for the positive and negative behavior of in-group members (Fiske & Taylor, 2013: 172).

Taken together, the biases and distortions in the attribution process may lead to a misperception of events as well as a "wrong" reaction and miscommunication. The miscommunication potential is even greater in intercultural settings. On the one hand, it can be explained by potential differences in casual schemas that are responsible for the link between the cause and the effect.[33] On the other hand, a number of researchers have noticed culturally bound differences in the attribution process itself as will be discussed in the next subsection.

2.2.2.3 Role of culture in attribution process

As indicated in the foregoing subsections, the attribution process and the potential attribution biases are subject to individual experiences and values. Because individuals are not stand-alone units, but live in a society in intensive interaction with others, the members of a society tend to share experiences and values, at least to some extent. Therefore, societies also share similar attribution patterns and biases; thus, attribution patterns are subject to cultural differences. Attribution biases in particular have drawn the attention of researchers in the field of intercultural communication. These researchers aimed to verify whether the attribution biases were subject to cultural differences and, if so, to what extent. Their findings suggest that the previously described biases are universal for all cultures, worldwide, but the frequency and the magnitude in these biases is subject to cultural variations. This is particularly the case for the fundamental attribution bias. Similar West-East variations are also reported for the actor-observer effect and the self-serving bias.

Miller (1984) was among the first researchers to have investigated the impact of culture on attribution processes. In his study of everyday social explanations among Indian and American adults and children, Miller (1984) reports that Americans tend to attribute the observed behavior to the personal characteristics of the agent, i.e. to his or her personality, preferences, values, capabilities, feelings, etc. In contrast, Hindus pay more attention to the contextual variables while looking for the causes of observed behavior. The researcher explains the observed differences in the attribution among Americans and Indians to the different respective cultural environments. Thus, the Americans, the representatives of Western individualistic culture, emphasize an individual as unit of

[33] Cf. Chapter 2.2.2.1.

perception, separated from contextual factors. The Indians, who represent Asian collectivistic culture, devote more attention to the relationship aspects of interactions, thus putting the dispositional factors somewhat in the background.

Subsequently, other researchers have confirmed the cultural differences in the magnitude of the fundamental attribution error among Western and non-Western cultures (e.g. Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Lee, Hallahan, & Herzog, 1996; Morris & Peng, 1994). These differences are mainly linked to the cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism (see for example Fiske & Taylor, 2013: 171; Gudykunst & Gumbs, 1989: 215-217; Triandis, 1995: 68-71). Additionally, Ehrenhaus (1983) linked differences in the magnitude of the fundamental attribution error to Hall's dimension of low- and high-context. He argued that members of high-context cultures are more sensitive to contextual factors when explaining the behavior of others. On the contrary, members of low-context cultures tend to attribute the behavior to dispositional characteristics, such as personality. Regarding the cross-cultural differences in the fundamental attribution error, as well as the other biases discussed above, it is important to note that the outlined differences concern only the magnitude and the frequency of the fundamental attribution error; the error itself is universal and can be observed in all cultures (see Choi & Nisbett, 1998; Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004).

Similar cultural patterns of attribution also exist in the context of the actor-observer effect and the self-serving bias. Choi & Nisbett (1998) show that Korean respondents, who represented a collectivistic culture,[34] were less susceptible to the actor-observer effect than American respondents, who represented an individualistic culture: Korean respondents concentrated less on internal factors and were more likely to consider potential contextual factors when attributing the behavior of others. Similarly, self-serving bias is less pronounced in collectivistic cultures (see Anderson, 1999; Lee & Seligman, 1997). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that individualistic societies stress self-responsibility for one's own acts whereas the collectivistic societies emphasize membership in the group and, therefore, tend to share their successes with the other members of the group.

These cultural differences in the attribution process and in attribution biases advance a new stream of intercultural attribution research that aims to facilitate intercultural

[34] According to Hofstede; see http://geert-hofstede.com/south-korea.html, accessed on 28 March 2014.

communication process. The main idea of this research stream is that efficient intercultural communication occurs when communication parties have equal attributions, that is, in cases of so-called "isomorphic" attributions. Isomorphic attributions reflect the notion that *"if I had been raised in that culture and had had the kinds of experiences that he has had, I would do exactly what he did"* (Triandis, 1975: 41). In real life, however, intercultural communication tends to feature rather "ethnocentric" attribution, when the individual considers the characteristics of his or her own culture to be more important than those of other cultures (LeVine & Campbell, 1972: 8). Ethnocentric attribution is strongly interlinked with the ultimate attribution error, particularly in cases when the negative behavior of in-group members is externally attributed while the negative behavior of out-group members is attributed to their personal characteristics. The ethnocentrism leads to complementary negative attributions in intercultural communications,[35] hindering intercultural communication. Thus, the aim of this stream of intercultural research is to make ethnocentric attribution explicit, to explain its background, and to provide an effective framework to learn and to facilitate isomorphic attribution (Beneke, 2005: 46). The culture assimilator[36] is one such framework that is both theoretically grounded and well established in practice.

2.2.3 Thomas' cultural standards

The German psychologist Alexander Thomas bases his research in the field of intercultural communication on the argument that isomorphic attributions play a central role in the facilitation of intercultural communication. Using the argumentation of attribution theory, Thomas (1996: 111-115; 2004: 145-151) points out that individuals ascribe meanings to present events based on their individual experiences in the past, that is, by activating their schemas, scripts, and attributions. Because these experiences have an individual character, even the communication between the members of the same culture can lead to misunderstandings. Such misunderstandings rarely occur, however, and can be eliminated rather easily. In contrast, the misunderstandings between the

[35] For further details, see Beneke (2005).

[36] The concept of intercultural assimilator training was initially developed in the USA during the 1960s by L.M. Stolurow. In its original form, the culture assimilator is described in Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis (1971). In subsequent years, the culture assimilator concept has undergone further developments (e.g. Bhawuk, 2001; Triandis, 1984). In Germany, Alexander Thomas (1996) has contributed to the further development of culture assimilator concept.

members of different cultures have a much more regular and wide-reaching character. This occurs due to the differences in their cultural schemas, scripts, and attributions.

Outlining the role of culture in communication and the mutual understanding process, Thomas (2004: 147) stresses the central need of humans to be able to orient themselves in their environment and to control it – that is, to be able to predict and influence the events by means of appropriate actions. This need is satisfied in the indiiduals' habitual environment where they possess enough knowledge and experiences to predict and to control upcoming events. Thomas (1996, 2004) links this culture-specific knowledge and experience directly to the term "culture", defining it as an orientation system that helps individuals to act adequately within a respective society.[37] Thus, culture gives everyone an orientation regarding what behavior to choose in a variety of everyday life situations. In this context, Thomas investigates differences in behavioral patterns of individuals from different cultures in order to infer what aspects of their orientation systems influenced this kind of behavior. He argues that some behavioral patterns can be observed not only in a particular situation between particular individuals, but rather that those behavioral patterns are common for all individuals of a particular culture when they aim to solve complex problems, and are induced by the peculiarities of particular orientation systems (Thomas et al., 2003: 24-25). Thomas refers to those peculiarities as cultural standards and defines them on the basis of the following five indicators:

- *"Cultural standards are forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behavior as normal, typical and binding.*
- *Own and other unfamiliar behavior is directed, regulated and judged on the basis of this cultural standard.*
- *Cultural standards provide a regulatory function for mastering a given situation and dealing with people.*
- *The individual and group-specific way of applying cultural standards to adjust behavior can fluctuate within a range of tolerance.*
- *Forms of behavior that exceed this specific range are not accepted or sanctioned by the respective collective."* (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010: 22)

[37] Cf. Chapter 1.4.1.2.

Thomas derives country-specific cultural standards from semi-structured interviews with participants who have recently moved to a new host country. For this purpose, he asks the respondents to describe frequently occurring situations in which their colleagues and partners from the host country acted in unusual, unexpected ways. Then, Thomas analyzes the obtained set of critical incidents, looking for reasons that would explain the indicated behavior of representatives from the host country. As a result, he obtains a set of repeatedly occurring cultural standards that are valid for the culture of the host country, regardless of the respondents' nationality and background (Thomas, 1996: 118-122; Thomas et al., 2003: 25-26).

Applying this procedure, Thomas et al. (2010: 22) defines following German cultural standards:

- task orientation (people are less important than tasks),
- rules and regulations,
- directness / truth (low-context communication, strict differentiation between right and wrong),
- interpersonal distance (non-involvement in the affairs of the others),
- internalized control,
- time management (high importance of scheduling and planning), and
- separation of the personal and public domains.

Similarly, he defines eight Russian cultural standards (Thomas et al., 2003: 103-120):

- group orientation (individuals identify themselves as part of the group and strongly differentiate between those who are part of the group – "in-group" – and those who are not – "out-group"),
- high awareness of hierarchy,
- paternalism (professional life is not limited to task-related relationships among colleagues, but also includes emotional and personal aspects),
- recipient-focused communication (strong emphasis of communication on what others may think and expect),
- emotionality,

- situational polarity (individual reactions and judgments depend greatly on a particular situation and context),
- present-related process orientation (in their actions, individuals focus on the present and can switch easily among tasks if necessary), and
- pessimism / fatalism (life is considered to be subject to destiny).

Conclusion

Thomas' cultural standards describe the main characteristics of one culture in contrast to another culture – the culture of origin of the respective respondents. Though cultural standards describe the culture by means of only selected characteristics, as is the case in dimensional frameworks, they apply fundamentally different methodical procedures. In contrast to dimensional frameworks, cultural standards are derived by the comparison of two specific cultural systems; they are not determined by the researcher in advance. Culture standards reveal differences in bi-cultural comparison, i.e., they describe the orientation system of one culture in comparison to another, thus reflecting only those differences that are relevant for the culture of reference. Furthermore, culture standards are obtained from the analysis of intercultural interactions on the micro-level. The respective critical incidents capture multiple aspects of daily intercultural interactions, providing analyses of these incidents in their context. Moreover, critical incidents represent real-life examples of intercultural interactions that can be used in culture assimilator training.

However, the cultural standards method has several weaknesses. Like the dimensional approaches, the cultural standards reduce the complexity of cultures to a limited number of characteristics and promote the creation of stereotypes. They simplify reality and offer only an incomplete and generalized description, without taking contextual variables into account.

Another weakness of the cultural standards method is the sample of respondents. Thomas derived a set of cultural standards for Germany based on interviews with representatives from different countries – England, Spain, France, Japan, and others. However, Russian cultural standards, like those of many other countries, are derived from interviews with representatives from only one nation. Thus, the majority of the cultural standards sets can only be considered in relation to the culture of the interviewed respondents, and cannot be compared to any other cultures (Brueck & Kainzbauer, 2001).

Despite the fact that cultural standards are derived from narratives about real-life intercultural interactions, Thomas aggregated the results and presented them too generally, limiting their applicability for investigations of intercultural interactions.

Nevertheless, having gathered a set of critical incidents from interviews, the cultural standards model is favored as an intercultural training tool by managers and trainers.

2.2.4 Lacuna model

Another approach to study culture on the micro level is the lacuna model. The lacuna model originates from the field of Russian ethno-psycholinguistics. The lacunian approach has been generally utilized to analyze cultural texts and translations; it emphasizes the linguistic properties of a language. In the mid-1970s, the lacunian approach was introduced into the field of intercultural communication, and in 1991, Astrid Ertelt-Vieth introduced the lacuna model to German intercultural studies.

Though the lacuna model has its roots in the field of linguistics, the underlying assumptions of the model are similar to those of schema theory, attribution theory, and Thomas' cultural standards. The underlying assumption of the lacuna theory is that all intra- and intercultural communication represents a conflict between the individuals involved. This conflict occurs because of differences in the amount and structure of individual and social experiences (Sorokin, 1993: 167). The differences in individual and social experiences are more pronounced between the members of different cultural environments, leading to a higher number and amplitude of conflicts. The lacuna model helps to reduce these conflicts by making the differences explicit and transparent to the participants in the communication process.

The term "lacuna" refers to the gaps in understanding in intercultural communication (Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth, 2011: 170). It encompasses both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication.

Ertelt-Vieth (2005: 74-76) and Denisova-Schmidt and Ertelt-Vieth (2011: 172-173) provide the following description of the lacuna model:

- Lacunas arise from the elements (reality, processes, and conditions) of texts (in the broader sense, i.e. encompassing communication and interactions) that do not correspond to the experiences of individuals representing another culture. Lacunas

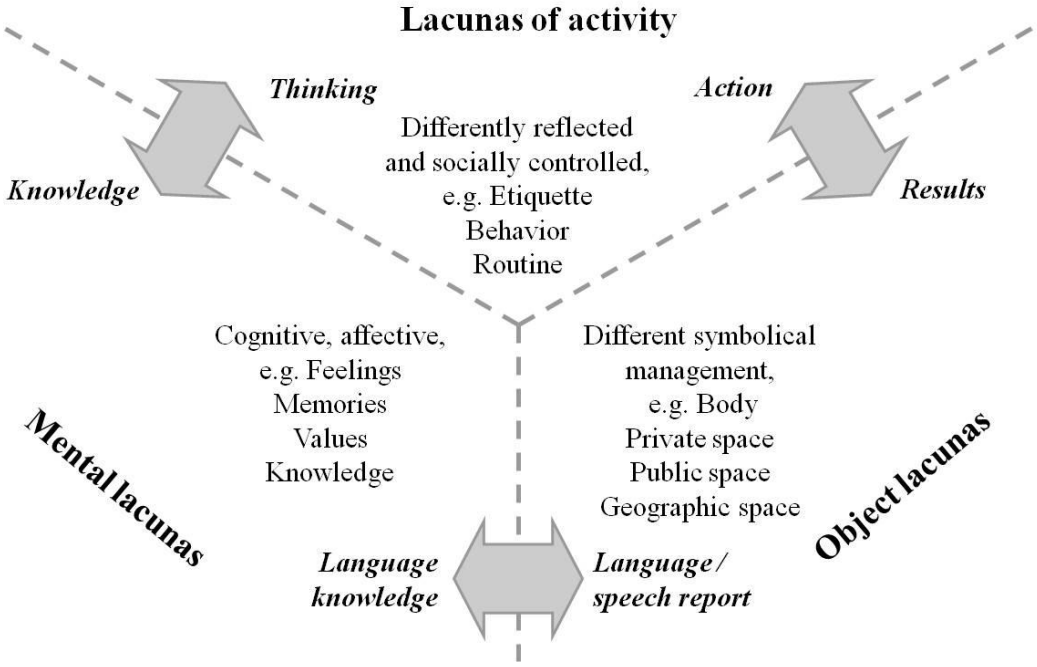
may hinder mutual understanding, but can also motivate the involved parties to search for and unlock missing elements that prohibit effective communication.

- Understanding texts (in broader sense) is an active, constructive, and perspective-bound process of meaning constitution, leading to the sense-making of the text on the part of the reader.
- Lacunas do not fix any stable meaning; they are subjective and context-bound. They depend on the perspective of a concrete participant in a concrete interaction. Thus, the meaning of the interaction can vary depending on the different individual and cultural perspectives involved, and can change over the course of time.
- Symbols are complementary elements, or the other side of lacunas. According to Geertz (1995: 49), symbols are defined as objects, actions, characteristics, and relationships – i.e. all the necessary means to express individual perceptions. These individual perceptions are the meanings of the symbols; interpreting the symbols requires an internal or emic perspective.
- Lacunas, or understanding gaps, result from an external or etic perspective. Lacunas come into existence when individuals lack the knowledge about the symbols and / or the context in which symbols are embedded.
- Lacuna analysis requires the continuous changing of perspectives. While detecting and analyzing lacunas, the researcher takes an external perspective to a culture. While explaining the symbols, the researcher takes an internal perspective.

The lacuna model consists of three major categories: mental lacunas, lacunas of communicative activity, and object lacunas. These categories are not clearly separated; rather, they interact and overlap (Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth, 2011: 173). The dynamism of the lacuna model is reflected in its Y-shaped model. Figure 15 provides a brief overview of Y-shaped lacuna model.

Figure 15. Lacuna model

Source: Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth (2011: 173)



Mental lacunas are gaps in understanding that result from differences in cognitive and affective states and models. Thus, mental lacunas refer to knowledge in the broader sense. This knowledge may have a past or a present character; it may be conscious and widely reflected, or unconscious and even labeled as a taboo. It includes experiences and common sense, expectations and fears (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005: 91).

The sub-groups of mental lacunas are (Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth, 2011: 174):

- Culture emotive lacunas: feelings and object-related attitudes, e.g. shame, pride, interest, disgust, and their intensity
- Lacunas of concentration: duration and intensity of concentration, e.g. during TV advertisements
- Fond lacunas: conceptual, role-related, status-related, space-related, individual-related knowledge
- Mnestic lacunas: memories, (unconsciously) suppressed experiences, (taboo) knowledge
- Language-related lacunas: lexical, phonetic, syntactical, and grammatical lacunas

The second category, lacunas of activity, refers to gaps in understanding that result from differences in thinking, talking, moving, and acting – or their avoidance. These lacunas have different levels of conscious or social control (Ertelt-Vieth, 2005: 92). Lacunas of activity can be divided in the following subgroups (Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth, 2011: 174):

- Lacunas of language usage: conversation openings, conversation topics and strategies, etc.
- Paralanguage lacunas: prosody, pauses, etc.
- Body-language lacunas: facial expressions, kinetics, positioning in a room, personal distance, etc.
- Lacunas of partially reflected or non-reflected daily routines in private, partially public, and public environments
- Lacunas of behavior: interpersonal, partially reflected, in private, partially public, and public environments
- Lacunas of etiquette: unwritten laws (also regarding communication) that bring about sanctions in case they are broken
- Lacunas of thinking: abstract-logic versus concrete-empirical; linear versus spiraling, etc.
- Lacunas of communicative means of identity acquiring: verbal, mimic, gestic, kinetic, spatial, self-presentation
- Lacunas of communicative means of identity ascription
- Lacunas of oral communication: informal texts (e.g. small talk, gossip, etc.), formal and codified texts (e.g. interviews, exams, seminar conversations, etc.), relatively codified texts (e.g. reports, discussions, debate, etc.), hierarchical communication (e.g. children / parents, students / teachers, official representatives / general public, etc.), or mass-media communication forms (news, talk shows, etc.)
- Lacunas of virtual texts and pictures: chats, newsgroups, e-mails, SMS messages, homepages, etc.

The last category, object lacunas, refers to differences in the structure and shape of the material world. They can be divided into the following subgroups (Denisova-Schmidt & Ertelt-Vieth, 2011: 175):

- Lacunas of recorded texts and images: letters, visiting cards, books, journals, packages, instruction manuals, advertisements, street signs, etc. The following should be considered: author, address, distribution, content, material, format, colors, quality of pictures, etc.
- Lacunas of subtexts: titles, text paragraphs, tables of contents, figures, footnotes, etc.
- Lacunas of environment: geographic environments (city / village, developed / undeveloped, cultivated forest / virgin forest, etc.); public environments: residential / industrial areas, internal / external circuits (buildings, streets, parks, bridges, etc.), public / private buildings, interior, working / living areas, etc.
- Lacunas of the human body: form and color (figure, skin, hair, face, lips, eyes, etc.), attributes (haircut, make-up, dresses, bags, etc.)
- Food lacunas: fish, meat, and fruit; dishes, beverages, spices, etc.

Denisova-Schmidt and Ertelt-Vieth (2011: 173) point out that the further classification of lacunas within each of the three subgroups is not fixed, but rather an open list of examples. These classifications are subject to further theoretical and empirical research and contributions from other disciplines, such as semiotics, psychology, and linguistics.

All three categories of lacunas discussed above – lacunas of activities, object lacunas, and mental lacunas – refer to the actions of situational actors that can be observed by the individual. Thus, the respective lacunas refer to the lack of knowledge about the environment of an individual and not to mental knowledge structures or schemas. Due to the observable character of these three categories of lacunas, I will refer to them as "visible lacunas."

In addition to the categorization of visible lacunas, Ertelt-Vieth (2005: 94) distinguishes a second dimension in the lacuna model: axiological lacunas. These refer to differences in the evaluation and interpretation of mental lacunas, object lacunas, and lacunas of activity, including those differences in interpretation that seemingly apply to similar or

identical phenomena. Ertelt-Vieth does not provide any further classifications or explanations regarding axiological lacunas, however.

Panasiuk (2006) has attempted to create an extensive classification of axiological lacunas, but his work has a distinctive focus on linguistics and translation, and he does not elaborate on the evaluative and interpretive aspects of axiological lacunas.

The lacuna model eliminates one of the most frequently voiced criticisms of Hofstede's theory: the unchanged character of culture (Leung et al., 2005; Shenkar, Luo, &Yeheskel, 2008; Taras & Steel, 2009). The lacuna model is dynamic, that is, lacunas can be produced, changed, or eliminated within the course of time and historical developments (Ertelt-Vieth, 1990: 112-113).

Conclusion

The lacuna model is a tool that helps to identify cultural differences by pointing out phenomena that are perceived as unusual and odd by non-members of a given culture. Focusing on the micro level of individual communication, the lacuna model emphasizes individual perceptions and communication contexts. It recognizes the dynamic character of culture and does not stipulate any fixed classifications or definitions. Furthermore, the lacuna model does not intend to overcome cultural differences; rather, it makes them explicit. Thus, the lacuna model contributes to better intercultural understanding by making the cultures of both communication partners more transparent.

However, the lacuna model has several drawbacks. One limitation of this approach is in its clear focus on the linguistic aspects of communication. Though Ertelt-Vieth (2005) has revised the model to adjust it to the needs of intercultural communication, it still emphasizes its original field – linguistics. Another limitation is the complexity of the model both in its usage and in its numerous categories and subgroups. Furthermore, the categorizing of lacunas is not an easy task; as Ertelt-Vieth (2005: 73- 79, 90) points out, the three major categories are not strictly separated. Thus, an "unusual" phenomenon can consist of several different lacunas. This complexity and ambiguity of the lacuna model might hinder its adoption by other researchers in general and practitioners in particular.

In the academic environment, the lacuna model has been adopted by a growing number of scholars aiming to unlock the cultural differences in interpersonal communication on a micro level. Still, the major application areas of the lacuna model are linguistics and communication media, especially advertising (Grodzki, 2003), journalism (Dellinger,

1995), foreign language acquisition (Turunen, 2005), and literary translation (Panasiuk, 2005). In international business communication research, the model is so far represented by few studies (e.g., Denisova-Schmidt, 2007).

2.2.5 Summary and critical review of micro-analytical approaches

Micro-analytical approaches enable the study of intercultural communication on a micro level. They emphasize the role of contextual variables and individual perceptions. The advantage of such approaches is in their proximity to real-life interactions and their ability to capture different aspects of such interactions in context, without limiting the concept of culture to a limited number of dimensions.

However, micro-analytical approaches have several drawbacks. Because micro-analytical approaches investigate individual interactions, highlighting the context of these interactions, generalizations and inferences regarding a whole cultural subgroup are not possible. Attempts to generalize the results of micro-level investigations lead to high-level aggregations and the subsequent inapplicability of aggregated findings to explain future interpersonal interactions (as is the case in Thomas' cultural standards). Similarly, any broad empirical validation of the results seems to be difficult, if not impossible, as it is not possible to reconstruct the same context in real-life intercultural interactions.

Another limitation of micro-analytical approaches is their capacity to analyze only two cultures at the same time. A broad cross-cultural comparison involving numerous cultural groups is not possible.

Finally, micro-analytical approaches have a limited applicability in international business studies because the majority of them originate from the field of linguistics or cognitive psychology. Thus, the frameworks from the field of linguistics tend to stress language-related differences, whereas the approaches from the field of cognitive psychology, such as schema, script, and attribution, appear to be too abstract and somewhat unclear in the definition of key terms (Schwarz, 1985: 286).

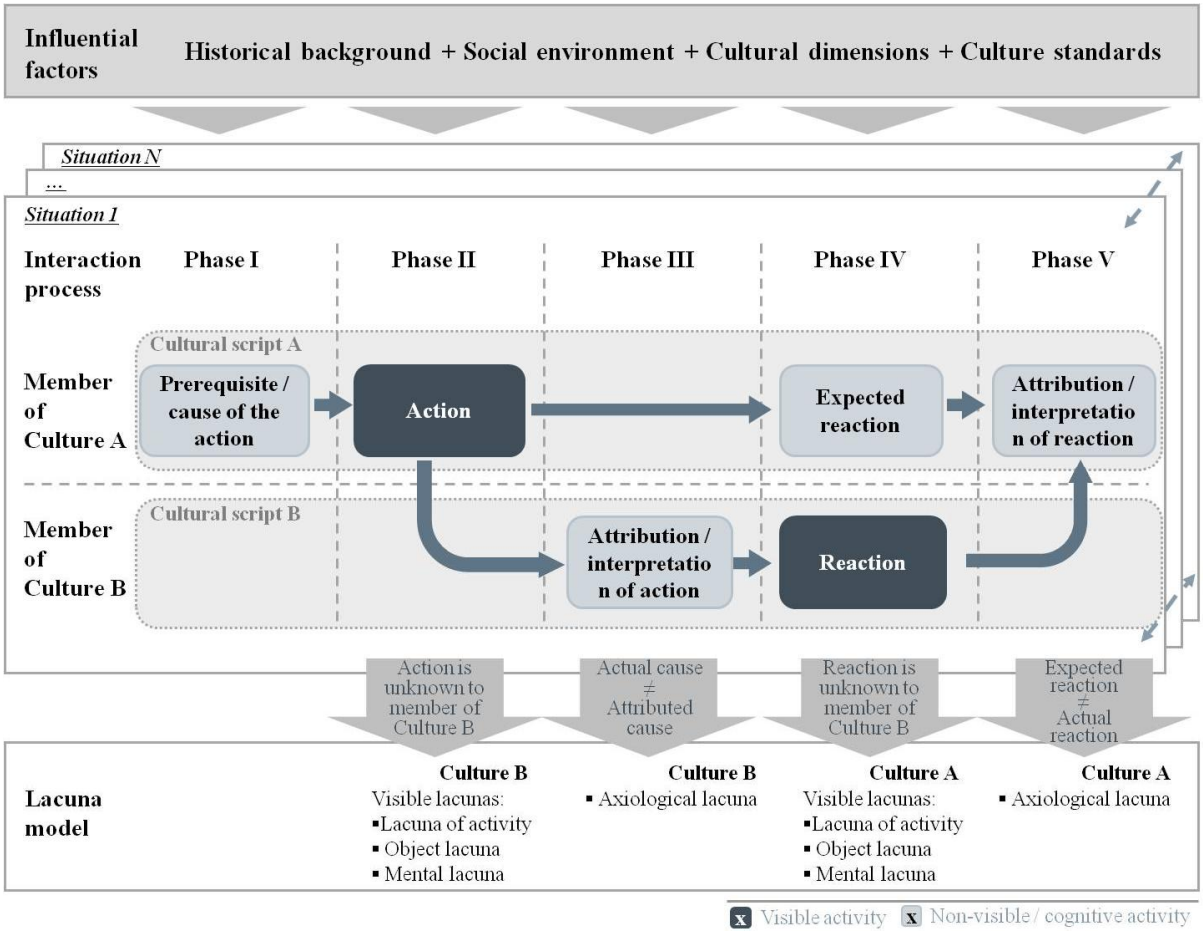
At the same time, micro-analytical frameworks have been widely adopted by the researchers and practitioners in the field of intercultural training because they provide strong empirical evidence of real-life intercultural interactions that can be used in culture-specific training programs, such as culture assimilator.

2.3 Synthesis of theoretical frameworks

The theoretical frameworks and models outlined in the preceding sections demonstrated different approaches to the conceptualization and study of culture. Macro-analytical dimensional frameworks conceptualize culture on a societal level by means of selected dimensions, whereas micro-analytical frameworks and models base their arguments on individual experiences and memories, which are shared to a certain degree by the members of the same society. Nevertheless, both macro-analytical and micro-analytical approaches emphasize the impact of culture on mutual understanding in the process of intercultural communication.

Macro-analytical and micro-analytical frameworks and models use different, sometimes even diametrically opposed approaches to conceptualize culture. Furthermore, both approaches are often considered to be parallel streams in the inter- and cross-cultural framework. However, both approaches contribute to our understanding of the concept of culture and should be regarded as mutually contributing rather than mutually exclusive. Figure 16 illustrates the process of intercultural communication, synthesizing the theoretical arguments of the different approaches discussed above.

Figure 16. Phase model of incongruent communication



The phase model of incongruent communication presented in Figure 16 suggests that the majority of communication processes – not just the processes of intercultural communication – go through five phases. In the first phase, a member of culture A, who initiates the interaction, perceives the need for an interaction with a member of culture B. In other words, a member of culture A mentally identifies a prerequisite or a cause for a subsequent action through the observation of his environment. In the phase II, the action itself follows. This kind of situation has a relatively regular character, which is usually the case in daily inter-company communication. Both phase I and phase II represent the scripted behavior of the member of culture A, i.e., his or her behavior follows cultural script A. The action performed in phase II normally aims to invite the counterpart into the interaction.

In the phase III, a member of culture B steps in into the interaction. Until now, he or she has been observing the action of the member of culture A in phase II without being

actively involved. However, the observed action of the member of culture A may have already resulted in visible lacunas. This is the case if the member of culture B perceives the action of the member of culture A as unusual or unknown within the given context. In phase III, the member of culture B tries to attribute the observed behavior to a potential cause. However, the attribution process relies on the observation of the action in phase II; the member of culture B normally does not know about the considerations of the member of culture A in phase I. This asymmetry of information may result in a diverging perception of the causes of the action in phase I. Thus, if the attributed cause in phase III differs from the initial cause perceived by the member from culture A in phase I, the member of culture B experiences an axiological lacuna.

In phase IV, the member of culture B reacts to the action of the member of culture A. Given the regular character of daily inter-company interactions, the behavior of the member of culture B follows the respective cultural script B. However, it is important to note that cultural script B was already utilized in phase III during the interpretation of the observed action and the identification of an appropriate behavior, which is subsequently performed in stage IV.

In phase IV, it is also important to turn our attention to the member of culture A. Though the member of culture A does not undertake active actions in this phase, he or she observes the behavior of the member of culture B and mentally compares it with the expected behavior that is suggested by the respective cultural script A. If the observed reaction of the member of culture B is unknown or does not correspond to the expectations of the member of culture A – i.e. when the cultural script B differs from the respective cultural script A – the member of culture A experiences visible lacunas. Furthermore, in this phase a potential misunderstanding becomes visible, but only for the member of culture A. The member of culture B would notice the potential misunderstanding only if the member of culture A responds with an action or communicates it proactively.[38]

Finally, in phase V, the member of culture A interprets the observed reaction from phase IV. The attribution process proceeds in a similar way as those described in phase III for the member of culture B. Thus, if the attributed cause in phase V differs from the cause

[38] This potential reaction of the member of culture A is not illustrated in Figure 16. This potential reaction could be represented in phase VI as a horizontally reflected phase IV.

attributed by the member from culture B in phase III, the member of culture A experiences an axiological lacuna.

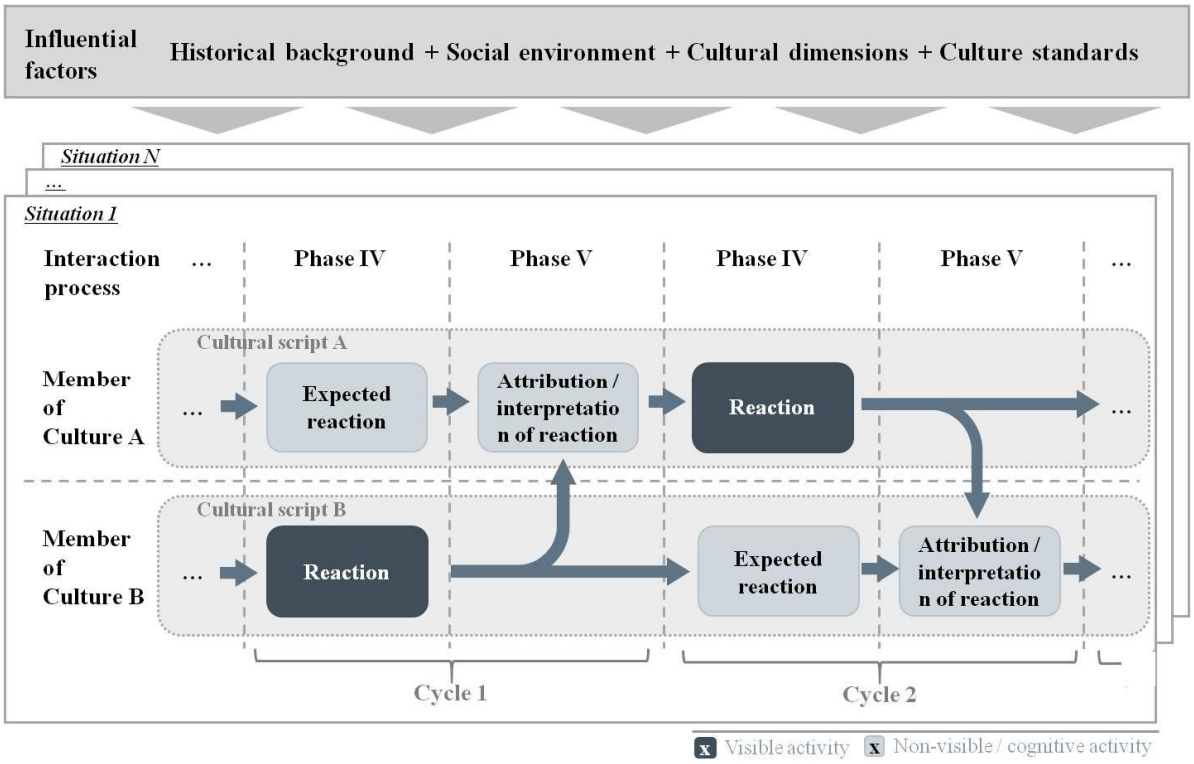
In addition to the context variables, the culturally bound behavior of the two counterparts in each interaction process is influenced by a number of factors on a macro level. These influential factors are historical background, the broader social environment, cultural dimensions or values, and cultural standards. All of these factors codetermine the particular cultural scripts and culturally bound attribution process that are applied in each situation.

Though the model suggests the influence of historical background, the broader social environment, cultural dimensions or values, and cultural standards in only one direction, the illustration captures only a short interaction process; it reflects only the short-term view. In the reality, our cultural scripts and attribution patterns undergo constant evolution and adaptation. This evolution and adaptation, however, does not result from only one particular interaction; it is rather a long process consisting of regular interactions. Similarly, the historical background, broader social environment, cultural dimensions or values, and cultural standards are subject to slow-pace change in a long-term perspective. Thus, recent events on a macro-level enrich the history, extending the historical background of the respective society. Likewise, daily interactions on a micro-level bring new perspectives to each individual of the society. This, in turn, impacts the broader social environment, cultural dimensions or values, and cultural standards of the respective society in a long-term perspective.

Just as historical background and other macro-level factors influence each situation and vice versa, all situations are interlinked to one another. This interconnection results from the hierarchical structure of cultural scripts. For example, when one of the elements of a cultural script that is normally used in situation 1 undergoes changes, it may influence other scripts that incorporate this particular element. Therefore, even slight changes in the scripted behavior in situation 1 may lead to changes in the scripted behavior in other situations.

The phase model presented here covers five phases of the interaction process that constitute a basis for each interaction. In real-life interactions, phases IV and V usually repeat themselves, with the perspectives of members of culture A and B being mirrored. Figure 17 shows the potential interaction cycle with repeating phases IV and V.

Figure 17. Interaction cycle – extract from the phase model of incongruent communication



The phase model for incongruent communication integrates the different frameworks and models discussed in Chapter 2. This model will serve as a basis for the presentation and the discussion of the results of empirical study in Chapter 3.

2.4 Conclusion from the general theoretical section

The theoretical section of this dissertation drew upon two main types of approaches in the field of intercultural communication: macro-analytical and micro-analytical. First, the chapter discussed the five most popular macro-analytical approaches or dimensional frameworks: Hall's cultural categories, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Trompenaars's cultural dimensions, Schwartz's value framework, and the GLOBE study. Each of these frameworks argues that culture is a given and can be described based on a fixed number of the characteristics. The main purpose of the dimensional framework is to facilitate the orientation of individuals in an unknown culture in a quick and simple manner. As result, the frameworks have become popular in the field of international business, and are

widely used in intercultural training sessions and seminars. Nevertheless, the frameworks should be treated with care. Because they simplify the culture by reducing it to several dimensions, the frameworks potentially neglect other cultural characteristics. Likewise, the frameworks are not able to capture all the potential facets of each dimension as the dimensions are usually drawn from several questions that focus on particular aspects. For example, the comparison of German and Russian cultures on the dimensions from the five frameworks shows, at first glance, contradictory results: The respective scores for Germany and Russia vary across different frameworks. A more detailed investigation, however, shows that this variation can be attributed to the differences in the underlying methodologies and questionnaires.

The theoretical section then proceeded with a review of selected micro-analytical approaches. In contrast to the macro-analytical approaches, micro-analytical frameworks focus on intercultural interaction on an individual level. In this dissertation, I reviewed three frameworks: schema theory, attribution theory and the cultural standards derived from it by Thomas, and the lacuna model. Schema theory and attribution theory both originate from the field of cognitive psychology and allow the causes of behavioral differences in intercultural interactions to be explained. The lacuna model, like the majority of the micro-analytical frameworks, represents the field of linguistics. Though the lacuna model originally focused on the linguistic aspects of intercultural communication and translation, the model has been reworked by Ertelt-Vieth (2005) and successfully applied in intercultural business studies (Grodzki, 2003; Denisova-Schmidt, 2007; Denisova-Schmidt and Dashidorzhieva, 2011). Though the three frameworks represent different fields of study, they have several attributes in common: an emphasis of the role of the context and individual perception, a proximity to real-life interactions, and an ability to capture different aspects of intercultural communication without limiting it to a few dimensions. Thus, these frameworks are especially suited to the study of intercultural interactions between individuals on the micro-level.

Having discussed the different macro- and micro-analytical approaches, the final part of the theoretical section attempted to synthesize the discussed approaches in the phase model of incongruent communication. This model describes the process of intercultural communication on an individual level. It uses the theoretical arguments of both macro-

and micro-analytical approaches, showing the complementarity of those approaches. The model will serve as basis for the empirical study in Chapter 3.5.

3 Specific empirical section

This chapter describes how the current research proceeded from the specification of the theoretical framework to the resulting empirical evidence. It starts by outlining the objectives of the current empirical study. Then, in a second subchapter, it lays out the research method, including the approach to data collection and the methodological limitations. A third sub-chapter describes in detail the sampling and data collection procedure. A fourth sub-chapter outlines how the data was analyzed. Finally, a fifth and last subchapter presents the findings of the study

3.1 Objectives of the empirical study

The objectives of the empirical study follow the research question presented in Chapter 1.3.2 and the overall research objectives outlined in Chapter 1.3.3. Thus, the empirical study had a threefold purpose. First, it identified and described the interactions that were perceived as interesting and unusual. Second, the study explained why these situations occurred and how the Russian and German employees interpreted and evaluated them. Third, the study described the patterns of German-Russian interculture. Thus, the first and the third objectives of this empirical study are of an exploratory nature, while the second objective is of an explanatory nature and draws on the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter.

Given the objectives of the empirical study and their nature, the empirical research inclines towards interpretivism and employs mainly an inductive approach. Thus, the current research aims to understand the individual point of view of humans involved in intercultural interaction without reducing the complexity of those interactions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009: 115-116). Undertaking an inductive approach for the purpose of this dissertation implies extending the existing theory from the gathered empirical data by recognizing common patterns or transferring existing data into concepts (Black, 1999: 9; Punch, 2005: 46). Hence, the research does not aim to test a hypothesis drawn from existing theories, but to come up with empirically grounded propositions that should be subsequently tested on a broader scale. According to Punch (2005: 46), an “open-ended” qualitative study serves the specified objectives and approach very well.

3.2 Research method

This dissertation follows a case study-design based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with employees dealing with German-Russian interactions in the Russian subsidiaries of large German industrial enterprises. The following paragraphs discuss the detailed outline of the case study research design, the data-gathering method, the rationale for their selection, and the potential limitations of the suggested research method.

3.2.1 Case study research design

The case study is an appropriate research method when the research aims to develop a possibly profound understanding of a phenomenon (Punch 2005: 144). Miles and Huberman (1994: 25) define the term "case" rather abstractly as *"a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context."* Yin (1994: 13) narrows the scope of the case study with the following definition: "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." Thus, the choice of a case study method is particularly appropriate under two conditions: the need to cover contextual conditions and the non-distinctiveness of the phenomenon and its context.

While determining an appropriate research strategy for the current empirical study, I considered the seven most popular research strategies as specified by Saunders et al. (2009). The rationale for choosing the case study strategy for the purpose of this dissertation is grounded in the characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation. Intercultural interactions and the behavior of individuals involved in such interactions cannot be separated from the specific contextual conditions in which the interactions take place. Moreover, the definitions of culture and intercultural communications as well as the theoretical frameworks guiding the empirical study emphasize the context as an integral part of the investigated intercultural interactions.

Furthermore, the nature of the underlying research questions also advocates for the use of the case study strategy. According to Yin (1994: 4-11), the research questions in the form of "how" and "why" lead to case studies. Though questions of "how" and "why" may also imply the utilization of histories and experiments (Yin 1994: 6), these research strategies do not comply with the objective of this dissertation to study the real,

contemporary behavior of individuals involved in interactions. In contrast, this objective is met by satisfying two further conditions for the use of the case study as stipulated by Yin (1994: 4): a focus on contemporary events and the lack of an ability or need to manipulate the subject's behavior.

Similarly, the survey strategy was also deemed a less appropriate research tool. The survey strategy is best suited if the research aims to describe the phenomenon in its breadth at a particular point in time (Denscombe, 2007: 8), and the research is usually of a predictive nature (Yin, 1994: 6). In terms of research philosophy and approach, the survey strategy is usually associated with positivist philosophical positioning and a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2009: 108). Thus, the survey strategy contradicts the objectives of the current dissertation.

Ethnography and grounded theory can be regarded as the next best alternative in light of the nature of the research questions and objectives. Both research strategies are in line with the selected research philosophy and approach, and aim at generating in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. However, they are less suitable in light of the limited resources and the practical purpose of the research. Indeed, ethnography is a very time and money consuming research strategy, because it implies that the researcher immerse herself or himself in the social world under investigation for an extended period of time (Saunders et al., 2009: 149). Grounded theory aims primarily at generating a thorough theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990: 5). The current research, however, does not purely seek to generate a new theory out of the data; instead, it aims to apply existing theories to intercultural interactions and subsequently to extend them.

After having determined the case study as a research strategy, it is necessary to specify the case study design for this project by defining the unit of analysis, determining the number of cases, and setting the level of analysis within each case (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 26), a unit of analysis in a case can be an individual in a defined context, a role, a small group, an organization, a community or "settlement," or a nation. For the purpose of the current dissertation, the case can be

defined as an individual participating in intercultural encounters that take place in the Russian subsidiary of a large German industrial enterprise.[39]

Case study research can rely on an in-depth investigation of only one case – a single-case study – or on several comparable cases – a multiple-case study. According to Yin (1994: 38-44), a single-case study design is justifiable under certain conditions: in a critical case – when the case represents a critical test of an existing theory; in an extreme or unique case – when the case concerns a rare or unique event; or in a revelatory case – when the case represents a phenomenon that was previously inaccessible to the investigation. A multiple-case study can be extended to several cases that describe the same phenomenon and follow a logic of replication. Because the research questions and objectives do not justify any of the three conditions for the use of a single-case study, and because the multiple-case study offers an even better understanding of the investigated phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 26), the current research employs a multiple-case study design. Moreover, multiple-case study design enhances the generalizability and external validity of the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994).

Finally, Yin (1994: 38) differentiates between two levels[40] of analysis in the design of case studies: embedded and holistic. The embedded study employs multiple levels of analysis, such as when a study includes the perspective of the industry or firm, or it concerns different attributes of the case, such as roles, locations, or meetings (Eisenhardt, 1989: 534; Yin, 1994: 41). The holistic multiple-case study design implies the pooling of gathered data across cases. Because the current research investigates intercultural interactions as a whole, the holistic level of analysis is more appropriate for this purpose.

Taken together, the current empirical research employs a case study strategy with a multiple case holistic design and uses individuals in the context of intercultural interactions as the unit of analysis.

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[39] Cf. Chapter 3.3.1 for a detailed description of the sampling procedure, determining more precisely the respective case boundaries.

[40] Instead of the term "level," Yin (1994: 38) uses the term "unit" of analysis to differentiate between holistic and embedded case studies. Because the term "unit" also refers to the description of the case itself, as in Eisenhardt (1989) and Miles & Huberman (1994), I use the term "level," as suggested by "Eisenhardt (1989: 534), to differentiate between a holistic and an embedded case study.

3.2.2 Data collection method

As the most important sources of evidence in the case study design, Yin (1994: 78) indicates documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Interviews will serve as the most appropriate data collection tool for this dissertation due to its focus on contemporary real-life intercultural encounters and the individual perception and interpretation of these encounters.

According to Flick (2009: 150) and Punch (2005: 168), interviews are one of the main data collection tools in qualitative research. Moreover, interviews – especially those of an open-ended nature – are one of the most important data sources of a case study. The most common classification of interviews is the differentiation between structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Structured or standardized interviews imply a set of pre-defined questions and pre-set responses to these questions, offering little room for variation, even though some open-ended questions may be used (Punch, 2005: 170). In contrast, unstructured and semi-structured interviews are non-standardized, open-ended, in-depth interviews, enabling the interviewer to understand the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. These types of interviews are very powerful research tools that require thorough planning and an experienced interviewer (Punch, 2005: 173; Saunders et al., 2009: 320-321).

The current research explores intercultural interactions in their full complexity and investigates individual perceptions and interpretations. Therefore, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, based on a list of themes and questions to be covered, would be considered the most appropriate tool. Furthermore, my professional background has allowed me to gather extensive experience conducting semi-structured interviews in intercultural business environment.

Among the variety of different semi-structured interview types (Fink, 2009), problem-centered interviews and the critical incidents technique are the most suitable data collection tools for this dissertation. According to Flick (2009: 162), problem-centered interviews are an appropriate tool for extracting information regarding relevant social problems. This approach involves asking open questions about subjective viewpoints regarding facts or socialization processes (Flick, 2009: 164).

Problem-centered interviews can be combined well with the critical incidents technique. According to Flanagan (1954: 327), the critical incidents technique is an appropriate tool

for collecting information about human behavior. It encourages the respondent to talk about unusual incidents in the organizational environment and does not require a pre-defined questionnaire.[41]

Thus, the combination of two data collection tools – problem-centered interviews and critical incidents techniques – will allow the gathering of information regarding the context of intercultural interactions as well as the subjective point of view of the respondents involved. Furthermore, my personal observation during the interviews as well as my personal experiences and knowledge of the intercultural background of both cultures constitute additional data sources for the purpose of the current research.

3.2.3 Limitations

The limitations of the selected research method follow from the selected research strategy and data collection method. One of the most frequently mentioned criticisms of the case study strategy is the lack of a basis for scientific generalization (Eisenhardt, 1989: 546; Flick, 2009: 134; Punch 2005: 146; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994: 10-11, 30-32), however, points out that the problem of generalization applies only to the "statistical generalization," that is, to the generalization of the findings for the population at large. The appropriate method of generalization in case studies is what is called "analytical generalization," or when the researcher uses previously developed theories as a template to compare results. In addition, if the research relies on a multiple-case study design, whereas selected cases support the same theory, it may also be replicated. Moreover, the issues of generalization and replication disappear when the researcher is clear about the objectives of the research and the expected outcome. The case study is deemed an appropriate research strategy and the issue of generalization no longer poses a problem if the following conditions are respected: First, the research does not intend to generalize the findings, but rather to understand the phenomenon in its complexity and context. Second, the research does not intend to come up with new, broadly applicable theories, but rather aims to develop a theoretical proposition about a specific phenomenon that relies on established theories (Eisenhardt, 1989: 547; Punch, 2005: 146-148). This corresponds to the intention of the current research.

[41] In general, the critical incident technique is a widely used tool in intercultural research on the micro-level (Heringer, 2004: 219). Similarly, Ertelt-Vieth and Denisova-Schmidt (2011: 177) also suggest the critical incidents technique as an appropriate tool for collecting data within the framework of lacuna research.

Another limitation of the current research design relates to the chosen data collection method. Though interviews are the most suitable data collection tool for the purpose of the current research, they do not allow the gathering of exhaustive information regarding all aspects of intercultural interactions.[42] This limitation could have been avoided by using multiple sources of evidence. Thus, it would have been advantageous if the current research had employed both direct and participant observations as additional data collection methods. This would have fully covered the context of the intercultural encounters and provided more complete insights into the interpersonal behavior (Yin, 1994: 80, 86-89). However, such observations are used much less in the field of management and business research (Saunders et al., 1999: 290) because enterprises are more reluctant to grant external researchers direct access to their daily business. Moreover, observations would require more time and money to gather the necessary data. Due to the limited possibilities for access as well as the time and financial constraints, I had to opt for a single source of evidence in the form of interviews. Nevertheless, I tried to minimize the aforementioned weaknesses of the interviews by posing clarifying questions and paraphrasing.

3.3 Data collection procedure

This sub-chapter sheds light on the procedure of data collection for the purpose of this study. It is structured in four sections: The first starts with a discussion of the sampling procedure; the second outlines the suggested interview procedure. The third section provides details on the pilot study that was conducted before the main fieldwork in order to pre-test the interview procedure. Finally, the fourth section describes how the main fieldwork was conducted.

3.3.1 Sampling

Sampling is not a stand-alone decision, but should be seen in combination with the respective research question, the objectives of the research and the research method (Flick, 2009: 125). This empirical study relies on combining three sampling strategies: a

[42] The respondents might leave out some important information regarding their experiences in intercultural interactions, because they consider it unimportant or they are not willing to share it. Furthermore, the respondents might have difficulties in recalling all of the relevant details of their reported intercultural interactions.

comparable case selection, a self-selection sampling strategy, and a snowball or chain strategy (Flick, 2009: 122-125; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 27-29; Saunders et al., 2009: 213-243). All these sampling strategies belong to what is called non-probability (Saunders et al, 2009: 213) or purposive (Flick, 2009: 122; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 27) sampling techniques, i.e., when the respondents are selected non-randomly. Thus, the sampling strategy of comparable case selection enables the selection of respondents and participants of the study based on the same relevant characteristics (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 28). The self-selection sampling strategy allows the individuals to express their desire to participate in the study (Saunders et al, 2009: 241). And the snowball or chain sampling strategy identifies further cases through from the previous interviews (Saunders et al, 2009: 240).

The three suggested sampling strategies were applied successively. First, by means of a comparable case selection strategy, I defined the boundaries of the cases under investigation. Following the research question and objectives, the respective target group should fulfill the following criteria:

- The workplace is a large industrial enterprise with its headquarters in Germany, operating in Russia in the form of a subsidiary or representative office;
- A large enterprise is defined according to European Law (§267 Handelsgesetzbuch [HGB], §221 Unternehmensgesetzbuch [UGB]), i.e., all enterprises with a minimum of 250 employees and more than 50 million EUR of revenue;
- The Russian subsidiary of a German enterprise must consist of no fewer than five employees at the time of the interview;
- The Russian subsidiary of a German enterprise must be located in Moscow;
- The ethnic nationality of the interviewee is German or Russian;
- The main part of their childhood socialization process took place in a German (for German respondents) or Russian (for Russian respondents) cultural environment;
- German respondents are currently on assignment in Russia or have recently (less than two years ago) finished their assignment in Russia;[43]

[43] German employees who had finished their assignments in Russia were contacted for the pilot study, which took place in Germany.

- Russian respondents are current on assignment in Russia or are currently delegated to Germany and their assignment in Russia was within the last two years;[44] and
- German-Russian intercultural interaction within the company is or was part of their daily working routine.

Then, the self-selection strategy was applied: After having identified the target group of my study, I contacted potential respondents with a letter that provided a short description of the study and invited the recipient to participate. Thus, the potential participants could choose to participate in the study.

Because it was difficult to identify a sufficient number of respondents by the means of the two previous sampling strategies, I also used a snowball or chain strategy. After having made an initial contact with the first wave of respondents, I asked them to identify other cases that would fit the criteria specified in the first step, during the comparable case selection procedure. Saunders et al. (2009: 240) point out that the snowball strategy has a huge problem of bias, because the initially contacted respondents tend to identify further potential respondents who are similar to themselves, resulting in a homogeneous sample. This problem, however, should not be considered "huge" within the framework of the current dissertation for two reasons: First, the research design encompassed a homogenous sample. Second, the first two steps of the sampling procedure have already ensured the intended heterogeneity of the sample through such attributes as age or hierarchical position.

After completing the third step of the sampling procedure, I intended to obtain a sample size of total 25-30 respondents. This number of interviews is in line with the suggestions of Creswell (2007: 157) and Saunders et al. (2009: 235) and corresponds to the common sample size of doctoral studies using qualitative approaches (Mason, 2010). Although Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006) claims that twelve interviews should be enough for the homogenous group, which is the case in the current research, I suggested a larger sample due to the fact that it includes both Russian and German employees. Finally, I conducted a total of 30 interviews.

[44] Russian employees who had finished their assignments in Russia and were delegated to Germany at the time of the pilot study were contacted.

3.3.2 Interview procedure

Thorough preparation is crucial for the success of the fieldwork. In addition to the formal elements of preparation, the interview guidelines, timeframes, and the logistics issues of scheduling and documenting, the interpersonal skills of the researcher play an important role in the process of data collection (Punch, 2005: 186-187; Saunders et al., 2009: 318-342; Yin, 1994: 54-59). As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3.2.1, I have already had the opportunity to learn and practice all the necessary skills for conducting an interview as suggested by Yin (1994: 56). During my professional career, I participated in interview trainings and have conducted numerous interviews with management in different hierarchical positions, both in Germany and Russia.

The preparation of the formal elements of the interviews included formulating the interview guidelines, defining the duration of the interview, drafting a confidentiality statement, determining the documentation, and managing the logistical and resource issues of the pilot and the main study.

Though the chosen data collection method of a semi-structured, in-depth, open-ended interview implies open inquiry into the phenomenon under investigation, preparing the relevant interview themes and questions is necessary to ensure a smooth flow. Thus, I developed an interview guideline that reflects the research question and objectives. The interview guideline consists of four sections: the introduction, warm-up section, main section, and concluding section. During the introduction section, I introduce myself and the topic of the research and clarify all of the organizational issues, such as confidentiality and documentation. In the warm-up section, I ask the respondents to provide an overview of their background, their international experience, and the characteristics of their current position. Besides exchanging information about each other's backgrounds, the first two sections should serve to establish a rapport between the researcher and the respondent to facilitate further conversation.

The focus of the main section is on the personal experiences and perceptions of the respondent. With open questions regarding her or his experiences, the respondent is invited to share any unusual and unexpected situations that have taken place in the German-Russian business environment. Detailing the questions and asking for examples should help to reveal the context of the situation and his or her perception and interpretation of a given situation.

In the concluding section, I ask the respondents whether all of the main aspects have been covered, and I explain how I will proceed further with my research. The respondent is also invited to clarify any questions she or he might have regarding the research. The complete interview guidance formula is presented in Appendix I.

The duration of each interview amounted to 45 to 90 minutes. On the one hand, this duration is consistent with other qualitative studies based on semi-structured interviews; on the other hand, the duration is perfectly acceptable in a business environment. The interviews were conducted individually and in person on the company premises of the respective respondent or, if this was not possible, in a neutral location. Only one interview was conducted over the phone. All interviews were conducted in German, if the respondent spoke German as his mother language, or in Russian, if the respondent's mother language was Russian.

The interviews were confidential, meaning that the company names as well as the names and positions of the respondents should not be mentioned at any time in the data analysis or any presentation of the results of the study. The respondents were ensured of the confidentiality of their responses during the initial invitation to participate in the study. Subsequently, during the introductory phase of the interview, I reminded the respondents about the confidentiality agreement and gave them a written declaration of confidentiality.[45]

In order to ensure proper documentation, the interviews were recorded if the respondents assented their agreement. Three respondents refused to be recorded, however. In these cases, I took notes during and immediately after the interviews. Furthermore, immediately after each interview, I documented my personal observations and impressions of the interview. All this served as a source of evidence for further analysis.

3.3.3 Pilot study

The pilot study was a final stage of preparation for the main fieldwork. It aimed to test the initial data collection plan and refine it if necessary (Yin, 1994: 74). The pilot cases were selected in compliance with the sampling procedure specified in Chapter 3.3.1,

[45] The written declaration of confidentiality was only used in the main study. In the pilot study, the respondents were orally informed about the confidentiality of the study. For the rationale of providing the written declaration of confidentiality during the main study, see the Chapter 3.3.3.

taking into account the accessibility and geographical proximity of the potential respondents. Therefore, for the purpose of the pilot study, I selected German respondents who have already completed their assignments with their Russian subsidiaries and who have returned to Germany, as well as Russian respondents who had been working at Russian subsidiaries in Moscow and were delegated to Germany at the time of the pilot study. Thus, the pilot sample consisted of four German and three Russian employees. Three of the seven respondents were my personal contacts from my professional career; the other four respondents were identified by means of the snowball technique.

The pilot study was conducted between November 2012 and February 2013. It followed the procedure described above, except that it lacked the written declaration of confidentiality. The respondents were ensured about the confidentiality of the study orally.

Overall, the pilot study proved the data collection plan and interview guideline to be successful. Nevertheless, the detail level of the responses of the German and Russian employees was subject to cultural variations. The German employees provided more details about the experienced intercultural encounters with their Russian colleagues and shared their personal interpretations of these encounters in a more critical manner. In contrast, the Russian respondents used more general descriptions and were unwilling to go into the details of particular situations. Sharing my own experiences and stopping the recording did not yield a higher level of details. The general character of the answers from the Russian respondents can be attributed to several causes: First, the Russian people did not develop an interviewing culture in the Soviet Union (Grachev et al., 2002: 11) and are not prepared for this kind of research (Denisova-Schmidt, 2007: 138). This affects interviews that require self-reflection from the respondents in particular, as is the case in the current research. Furthermore, the roots of this lack of self-reflection can be found in the educational system; in contrast to Germany, the Russian educational system does not require self-reflection from its students. In addition, the Russian colleagues might have been afraid of “espionage” (Denisova-Schmidt, 2007: 138), especially due to the fact that I was representing the corporate department of the German company that might have “ordered” the research.

Taking into account the results from the pilot study, I adapted the interview procedure slightly for the Russian respondents in the main study. Though I used the same interview guidelines, I devoted more time at the beginning of the interview to establish a rapport

and I did not insist on the details at the beginning of the interview. Furthermore, I prepared the written declaration of confidentiality to promote an atmosphere of trust in the interview. The written declaration was targeted for both the German and Russian respondents of the main study.

3.3.4 Main study

The main study was conducted in Moscow during March and April, 2013. During the main study, I conducted 23 interviews in total, encompassing sixteen interviews with German respondents and seven interviews with Russian respondents. The interviews followed the procedure described in Chapter 3.3.2, with incorporated adaptations from the pilot study.

Initially, the first contact with the respondents of the main study was established via the XING social network. In total, 33 XING members were contacted during January and February, 2013. They were selected via a screening of XING contacts according to the sampling criteria as specified in Chapter 3.3.1. However, only German respondents were contacted via XING because it was not possible to identify potential Russian respondents via XING who were working closely with their German counterparts delegated to Russia. The Russian respondents were accessed by means of snowball or chain sampling.

In total, fifteen German respondents answered the invitation letter and agreed to participate in the study. Two respondents had already finished their assignments in Moscow and moved out of Russia; they were excluded from the sample. Thus, after the second step of the sampling procedure, the sample for the purpose of the main study consisted of thirteen respondents. This was the sample status as of 1 March 2013, just before the beginning of the planned main study. Additional respondents were discovered by means of the snowball technique.

Though the sample of respondents was homogenous with regard to the criteria specified in the first step of the sampling procedure, the respondents were heterogeneous with regard to their age, gander, and hierarchical position, as well as the size and the industry of the company for which they work. Thus, majority of the respondents were between 35 and 45 years old (estimated), and one third of the respondents were women. Most of the

German respondents represented the upper and middle management[46] of the Russian subsidiary, whereas the Russian respondents were mainly office workers.[47] Such a distribution of hierarchical positions can be explained by the fact that international companies prefer to staff higher hierarchical positions with delegates from the headquarters due to the expected higher added value and the high cost associated with delegation. Appendix II provides an overview of the age, gender, and hierarchical position of the respondents who participated in both the main study as well as the pilot study. Appendix III offers an overview of the main characteristics of the companies that participated in the pilot study and the main study: the industry and the range of total employees for both the company and the respective Russian subsidiary. For confidentiality reasons, the names of the respondents have been changed, both in Appendix II and in the overview of the findings in Chapter 3.5. Similarly, the names of the companies are not disclosed.

3.4 Data analysis

In general, the data analysis in the current study followed the approach suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), who describes data analysis as the process of getting intimately familiar with the data and letting its unique patterns emerge (p. 540). The process of getting familiar with the data can be performed using a variety of data analysis methods, however. Given the intercultural character of the current research, the data analysis procedure relied on two approaches in particular: Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework, which enables the derivation of patterns underlying the social phenomenon under investigation, and lacuna analysis (Ertelt-Vieth & Denisova-Schmidt, 2011), which enables the intercultural aspects of the study to be addressed.

The framework of data analysis developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) incorporates three main components: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction occurs continuously throughout the process of analysis in different forms: writing summaries, coding, memoing, and finding themes and clusters.

[46] Upper management positions correspond to the head of the office or heads of a division in large subsidiaries. Middle management positions correspond to the heads of departments that are subordinate to the upper management.

[47] Office workers refer to the employees of the company without responsibilities of team management.

Data display enables the qualitative information to be presented in a structured manner that permits the subsequent drawing of conclusions. Drawing conclusions and verification is the process of the assigning meanings to the data and crosschecking these meanings with different pieces of information gathered during the fieldwork. Thus, the process of conclusion drawing and verification accompanies the data analysis from the very beginning, until the final conclusions can be drawn and presented in a structured and logic manner.

The lacuna analysis as suggested by Ertelt-Vieth and Denisova-Schmidt (2011) enables the analysis of specific intercultural encounters and events. The data analysis process within the framework of the lacuna method is an open-ended process that can be represented in the form of an "understanding spiral". This spiral consists of four major steps that may be repeated multiple times if necessary:

- Preliminary analysis and classification of individual lacunas and their positioning according to the lacuna model;
- Systematization of lacunas within each case or critical incident, such as in the form of a table. At this point, the researcher should change perspectives and proceed further with the interpretation of symbols;
- Contrasting of individual cases within the gathered empirical materials, i.e., the deepening of lacuna classification and the first generalization of lacuna types;
- Going beyond gathered empirical materials to other sources, including the intercultural background of the researcher.

Based on these two frameworks, the process of data analysis within the current study consisted of two main phases: First, the identification of the main patterns and themes in the data, and, second, a lacuna analysis of the exemplarily interaction within the themes identified in the first step.

The first phase of data analysis started during the fieldwork, as I documented my impressions and first thoughts from the interviews in a research diary. The more intense data analysis started during the transcription of the tape-recorded interviews, however. During this phase, I extensively used memoing to capture my first thoughts regarding the meanings and interpretation of the respective text parts. After all the interviews were transcribed, I transferred all the data, including the comments and memos, into NVivo 10 and started coding the data.

The overall coding process consisted of two main coding steps. In the first step, I used descriptive codes that summarize segments of text and provide a basis for pattern coding. Whereas the assigned codes had a rather descriptive character, the intense use of memoing and annotations helped to draw intermediary interpretations and conclusions. The use of links helped to establish the first connections between the codes, memos, and annotations and start the verification process. In the second step, pattern coding helped to reduce the data and structure it into more meaningful themes. During this step, I relied mainly on the mapping of codes by means of the modeling tool in NVivo 10. This visualization helped to group numerous descriptive codes from the first step into meaningful themes and establish the connections between them. Furthermore, during both steps of coding and reflecting on potential interpretations and patterns, I regularly referred to the existing theoretical literature in the intercultural field in order to establish the connection between the findings of this empirical study and existing theoretical frameworks (Bazeley, 2007: 59-131; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 55-76).

After the final themes were defined, I screened the data once again to identify exemplary interactions in each theme for in-depth analysis by means of the lacuna method. Thus, 25 examples were analyzed with the lacuna method as described above. Additionally, the elements of the lacuna method, such as a constant changing of perspective and contrasting of cases, were also applied to the primary meaning of the text in the main themes.

After a final verification of the results, the codes with the underlying text, memos, annotation, models, and examples provided a basis for writing up the research results and conclusions in Chapter 3.5 and 4 respectively.

3.5 Results of the empirical study

This subchapter presents the results of the empirical study; it is structured according to three major themes, which were identified during the course of the data analyses:

- attitude towards tasks;
- internal meetings; and
- human resource development and compensation.[48]

Each section is based on the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation and follows three main patterns. The sections start with sections that provide detailed analyses of theme-related intercultural interactions gathered in course of the empirical study. Then they go on to discuss how these intercultural interactions are reflected in different dimensional frameworks. Finally, a concluding section outlines the historical background of both countries that may have contributed to the behavior in intercultural interactions discussed in the early sections.

Each detailed analysis of theme-related intercultural interactions also follows a uniform structure. First, it starts with short introduction of the intercultural interactions in focus and a brief overview of the respondents' attitudes towards the discussed interactions. The outline of the attitudes of the respondents is supported with selected quotes from the interviews. The section continues with a general description of the theme-related German and Russian cultural scripts identified in course of empirical study. The subsequent examples aim to reveal further aspects of the described cultural scripts and to shed the light on the interpretation patterns of both the German and Russian employees involved in the intercultural interaction. Each example concludes with an overview of the respective lacunas for both the German and Russian sides. After the discussion of one or more examples of theme-related intercultural interactions, the section continues with an analysis of interpretation and attribution patterns. This analysis should contribute to a better understanding of axiological lacunas. Finally, the concluding part of subchapter

[48] In addition, the respondents also commented on general differences in doing business, referring to such conventional stereotypes as attitudes towards long-term planning, adherence to processes, leadership style, and doing business with friends. However, these comments had a rather general character and did not contribute to an understanding of German-Russian daily business interactions, which is the focus of this dissertation. In light of the research questions stipulated in Chapter 1, these topics remain out of scope and will not be discussed here.

discusses the features of the newly formed interculture by addressing the question of how similar situations are subsequently handled.

The sections analyzing theme-related intercultural interactions are followed by a section that discusses how the reported interactions are reflected in dimensional frameworks. The aim of this section is to connect micro and macro perspectives in the field of intercultural interactions and to identify what dimensions of the different frameworks contribute to an explanation of the reported intercultural interactions.

Finally, the concluding section of each subchapter discusses the aspects of the historical backgrounds of the German and Russian cultures that might have led to the observed cultural script. The aim of this section is not to give an exhaustive analysis of the role of historical context in the contemporary cultural scripts of German and Russian employees – this might be the topic of another dissertation. The aim of this section is rather to point out the main historical aspects that may have strongly contributed to the emergence of the reported cultural scripts. In doing so, I base my argumentation on historical developments starting from the early Middle Ages up to the end of the twentieth century. In my opinion, basing the line of argumentation line only on the events of twentieth century would have been wrong because those events also have their respective historical roots.[49] Moreover, a general reference to the Soviet Past can lead to further stereotyping and does not help to establish a holistic view of the issue.

3.5.1 Attitude towards tasks

Business tasks constitute the basis of the everyday work flow in any enterprise. The better these tasks are performed, the more successfully a company operates. However, the interviews with German and Russian employees have revealed that the definition of what is better in context of business tasks differs across the two cultures. This chapter discusses the diverging cultural scripts and attitudes of German and Russian employees towards six major characteristics pertaining to business tasks that were uncovered in course of this empirical study: scope of assigned tasks, responsibility for task assignment,

[49] For example, Berdiajew (1937) argues that even though the communist ideology seems to be far removed from the social and economic structures of the Russian Tsardom and the Russian Empire, it finds its roots in the historical past of the Russian Tsardom and Empire. Similarly, Keppler (2008) argues that the Soviet System was in fact a continuum of the leadership tradition of the Russian Tsardom and Empire.

task performance, monitoring of workload and task performance, dealing with mistakes, and responsibility for the task and related decision making.

3.5.1.1 Scope of assigned tasks

A majority of both German and Russian respondents report differences in attitudes towards the scope of business tasks. While German respondents, who usually hold higher hierarchical positions, complain about the lack of initiative, the need for clear instructions, and the lack of an overall picture, Russian respondents are positively surprised about the freedom and the absence of tight guidelines given by their German managers. The reason for this reaction is a culturally bound interpretation of different cultural scripts related to business tasks. Table 3 presents illustrative quotes[50] from the interviews that describe the respective Russian and German cultural scripts and provide insights into the attitude of German and Russian employees towards them. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 3. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards the scope of a task

Respondent	Quote
Susanne	People [Russian employees] have small tasks, and they do not know what they are doing it for, what the overall picture is.
Stefan	I have noticed different types of people [Russian employees]. There are people to whom you need to tell clearly, from step 1 to step 10, including all steps in-between, what they should do. And it will be done, they do it, but they do not look to the right or to the left. They do only what you have told them. And it is the majority of the colleagues who work this way.
Matthias	Especially employees who perform administrative tasks expect that the boss demands something in a direct manner. […]

[50] In this chapter, all quotes from the interviews have been translated into English (own translation).

Respondent	Quote
	I had an intern and I expected that, if I assigned a task, she would do a bit of thinking and finalize the task not only by doing what I have requested explicitly but also by thinking ahead. This was in the beginning [of my assignment]. And when I asked her why she did not do this and that, she answered that I had not asked.
Andreas	What is different in Russian environment is the tighter monitoring in the business environment, i.e., you really go and say: OK, this is your task list, these are my expectations from you. And then you really do it in a weekly routine.
Markus	It will be expected that the boss, he must say what should be done. He must give really clear instructions, and do not ask his/her employees how it should be done.
Wolfgang	It is expected from the boss that he sets the tone … and there is no question, I [manager] have to determine the daily work, I have to determine the volume of work, the pace of work, the content of work, and everything possible … it is requested from me. And this was completely new to me. I expected that they would be more independent.
Dmitriy	And what else I like … here is that the tasks … are not imposed on the person from above, as a kind of necessity that he/she needs to overcome. The person gets an objective, and overall planning is carried out by means of objectives. And when the person sees the objective, he/she should work out the means for achieving it on his/her own.
Maria	It has stoked me that there is really such an individual approach, a lot of things are based on trust; it is not based on everyday control and almost hourly schedule of tasks, but they [German bosses] give you an objective and you are free to choose the path which suits you best.

Respondent	Quote
Viktor	In terms of tasks, I have expected a somewhat more precise approach, but here I have a rather broad approach, i.e., it does not matter how the task is executed. It is most important that the task is executed. I would say that Russian managers plan more… Russian managers, strange as it may seem, keep the planning within their responsibilities and give rather concrete tasks. They divide the tasks more and keep the planning and gathering [of tasks] for themselves. And when German expatriate manager came, he split all the workload of the department in two, and everybody is responsible for his/her part.
Oleg	He [the German expatriate manager] also criticized people's work. Often, he criticized the lack of diligence, assiduity ("уситчивости, усердия"). He very often criticized the lack of a creative approach, a kind of unusual approach… I have also heard very often from my direct manager [also a German expatriate] that we lack some kind of pro-active approach, some kind of creative thinking. That you should do it not only according to the instruction – one, two, three, four, putting the checkmarks – but also to think from another perspective, somehow differently…

The German cultural script with regard to the scope of the assigned tasks finds its roots in the leadership approach of management by objectives, which became popular in Germany in the second half of the last century. According to this approach, the employee and the manager together define the specific objectives that should be accomplished within a pre-determined time. The employee has direct responsibility for the fulfillment of these objectives and is free to choose the means to achieve the goal in the best way possible. Andreas describes his experiences with the routine/regular assignment and performance of tasks in Germany: "With German colleagues, it was such that you have given them tasks, sometimes without any deadlines, and they [the tasks] were performed according to my expectations or partially even exceeding my expectations, without even explicitly mentioning my expectations."

The Russian cultural script with regard to the scope of the tasks stems from an authoritarian leadership style. The objectives are defined on the highest hierarchical level, usually by the owner of the company, and subsequently passed down to the lower hierarchical levels in form of concrete tasks. Thus, the employees on the lower echelons get clearly specified task packages as well as instructions for their fulfillment. In contrast, the role of the manager consists of splitting the task into small packages as well as integrating the fulfilled tasks into overall picture. Thus, the lower the hierarchical level of the employee, the more concrete tasks he/she gets. For example, Olga outlines her experiences in the Russian business environment: "I would say… [In Russia] it turns out that a person remains an apprentice ('остается в подмастерье'), i.e., he performs certain work quasi in pieces, possibly from different projects, without having an overall picture, and hands it over to a more experienced elder colleague who gathers this work. After having gathered the work from his new, usually younger, colleagues, he goes to the customers and higher management, usually without giving you any feedback… And if, heaven forbid, someone asks: you were working on this project, what was going on with this project? – you realize that you were doing only this piece of the work and have no idea about the rest … and how my piece of work fits into overall picture." German expatriate Marion experienced similar attitudes in another company: "In one of the departments, the head of this department let the younger employees to do all the preliminary work for him. And they have performed a certain job with a clearly defined scope of the task without having any possibility to look around and say, 'OK, I am responsible for a particular project XYZ.' On the contrary, they had a clear task assignment, i.e., you do calculations now, you do this now, and you do this. And in the end, the head of the department made all the decisions, gathered all the documents, performed all the work on her own."

Differences in the described cultural scripts lead to ambiguous interpretations of interactions, misunderstandings, and even conflicts. The following examples illustrate how the described cultural scripts manifest themselves in daily business life.

Example 1: Reporting

A young German professional works on developing a service function in the Russian subsidiary of her German company. In her daily work, she relies on the statistical data from other departments. One day, when she needs some data, she approaches one of her Russian colleagues, who deals with the respective data on a daily basis. Providing this

data should be no issue in the opinion of German employee, since all data is available in the software, which gives the required reporting with just one mouse click. However, the Russian colleagues, who have worked in their respective department for approximately two years, are not able to provide her with the requested report. The head of the department, who is usually responsible for such reports, is out of office, and the Russian employee neither had the data nor knew how to get the report from the system. After some attempts to obtain the required report from the system involving some other colleagues from the department, the German employee received some figures, but she was not sure whether they were the right ones.

This incident reflects differences in the cultural scripts for the scopes of tasks between German and Russian employees. As the German employee approaches her Russian colleague, she is sure to be able to obtain the requested report because this would be no problem in a German business environment. In Germany, this kind of task is one of the responsibilities of each employee in the department. Thus, the German employee is surprised that nobody in the department can provide her with the data; she perceives this situation as "extreme," totally out of place. On the other hand, her Russian colleagues might also be surprised by her attempts to obtain the data when the head of the department is out of the office. In Russia, one would wait until the head of the department is back in the office – or call her directly if the case is urgent. Thus, the Russian employees might perceive these additional attempts to get the report immediately as useless and a waste of time.

This incident reveals lacunas for both the German and the Russian employees. Table 4 provides an overview of these lacunas.

Table 4. Lacunas in Example 1: Reporting

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employees are not able to get the report	"Extreme," inefficient
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Attempts to get the report	Useless, waste of time

Besides the visible lacunas resulting from differences in the cultural scripts, the incidents also revealed axiological lacunas. In this example, the axiological lacunas for both sides show that the interpretation and evaluation process was based on the habitual behavioral patterns of their native cultural environment. Thus, the German employee could not imagine that such an incident would occur in Germany. She describes it as "extreme." From her point of view, it is inefficient to concentrate the responsibilities for reporting exclusively in the hands of the manager. On the other hand, the Russian employees perceive the attempts to obtain the report on their own as useless. Such behavior is considered a waste of time in the Russian cultural environment.

Example 2. Consistency of presentation slides

A German expatriate manager is responsible for a Business Development department in a Russian subsidiary. The preparation of different presentation slides is part of his daily routine within the department. Three Russian subordinates are responsible for preparing the presentations. The role of the German manger, among other things, is to review these presentations. The German manager, however, sees his responsibilities as focusing on the content of the presentations. He complains that his Russian employees would not perform any adjustments apart from those that were explicitly requested by the boss; his Russian subordinates would not check for consistency with the other slides after incorporating the requested changes, even though this goes without saying in his opinion. Thus, an important presentation might contain obsolete footnotes or inconsistent figures. He argues that it is misleading when neighboring pages of a presentation contain different figures on the same subject, in a different context, without establishing an explicit link between them.

At the beginning of his assignment, the German manager had to spend a lot of time reviewing and fine-tuning each presentation. It took him a long time to instill in his employees that this is also part of their responsibilities. He keeps having to convince his subordinates that they are one team and everyone on this team is responsible for the overall results – i.e. praise or blame for the work of the department is addressed to the whole team and not to the boss alone.

In this example, the expectations of the German manager are not consistent with the observed behavior of his Russian subordinates. Based on his experiences in the German business environment, the German manager assumed that his Russian colleagues would only need guiding input during the review without explicitly mentioning each individual

correction requirement. For him, it goes without saying that the overall presentation should be checked once again for consistency after each change. Furthermore, the German business environment requires consistence in the figures in the overall document. If several different figures are used for the same or similar content, the link between them should be stated explicitly.

From the Russian point of view, a manager should provide clear guidance. In this regard, Russian employees incorporated all the requested changes. They act on the assumption that if their boss had any other need for correction, he would request it. The Russian employees do not perceive the request of their German manager to make some changes as an implicit request to finalize the presentation, including a consistency check. In the end, he did not ask for it. Another lacuna refers to the consistency of the figures. The Russian business environment accepts different figures related to the same content but in different contexts. It is not unusual that the same matter can be seen from different angles. Making it explicit is not necessary. Similarly, neither Russian schools nor Russian universities demand strict consistency in figures and lines of argumentation, as is the case in the German education system.

This example reveals multiple lacunas for both German and Russian employees, presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Lacunas in Example 2: Consistency of presentation slides

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employee does not anticipate check for consistency **Lacuna of recorded text (object lacuna):** Different figures in presentation	Manifestation of Russian hierarchical leadership style; Different figures are not logical, misleading
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of recorded text (object lacuna):** Consistency of figures in presentation	Not necessary; it is clear without making it explicit

The incident in Example 2 caused two visible lacunas on the German side and only one on the Russian side. The reason for this is that the Russian employees do not perceive

their German manger's request for some changes as something unusual, or contrary to their previous experiences.

In this incident, both the Russian and German employees refer to habitual behavioral patterns of their native cultural environments in attributing the lack of or request for consistency of figures in the presentation. Additionally, the German manager attributes the fact that his Russian subordinates fulfill only explicitly mentioned tasks to the Soviet background of Russia, to the "military leadership style of the 90s." Thus, he appeals to the common stereotype of strict Russian hierarchy.

Example 3: Participation of Russian employees in the development of a new company structure

The role of the boss in the Russian business environment is not limited only to assigning clearly structured tasks. The role of the boss encompasses establishing a holistic view of the problem and making the strategic decisions for the future development of the company independently. Therefore, Russian employees were truly surprised when their German managers invited them to contribute to a restructuring program in a Russian subsidiary. Though the top management of the headquarters already had a very clear idea of what the new structure should look like, they decided to organize the workshop with the employees of the Russian subsidiary in order to "pursue the restructuring in a democratic way with the involvement of all employees." However, the two-day workshop ended in a "complete disaster": the Russian employees could not understand the purpose of the event, while the German top managers were astonished by the uncooperativeness of their Russian colleagues.

In this example, each culture acted according to its respective habitual cultural script. Following common practice of German business environment, German top management intended to involve their Russian colleagues into the decision-finding process so that, subsequently, Russian colleagues stay by the new structure and implement it more willingly. In contrast, Russian employees took the situation in a totally different way: why the German top management asks us, how the new structure should look like; after all, they are the managers, they should decide.

Similarly, the interpretation and evaluation of this incident is subject to one's own cultural script and stereotypes ascribing. Thus, observed behavior of Russian colleagues would be considered uncooperative in German business environment whereas the

German top management has shown lack of professionalism according to standards of Russian business environment.

This example reveals once more multiple lacunas that are summarized in the Table 6.

Table 6. Lacunas in Example 3: Participation of Russian employees in the development of a new company structure

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Only top management is responsible for strategic tasks **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Refusal of Russians to contribute to development of new structure	Russians are uncooperative, not caring about things
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Involvement of employees in strategic tasks **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Request for contribution into development of new structure	German managers are unprofessional; they should do their job.

The previous examples show that both Russian and German employees interpret and evaluate the respective cultural scripts of their colleagues from another culture rather negatively, i.e., as uncommon or even unacceptable behavior in their native cultural environment. While the majority of the German respondents share this negative attitude towards the typical scope of the task in the Russian business environment, in contrast, the Russian respondents show a rather positive attitude towards the German cultural script for the scope of the task and are rather negative towards the typical behavior in their own culture. One Russian employee describes her experiences in a Russian company: “We have a very pronounced dogmatic, scholarly approach (школярство), if not even hazing (дедовщина), i.e., people with quite a lot of working experience perceive new colleagues to have little experience among our Russian colleagues. Basically, if you do not have a strong presence, there is a chance that you will perform an assistant’s job your whole life

(‘так всю жизнь ключи подавать’).” Similarly, the quotes of the Russian employees presented in Table 3 show their positive attitude towards the management style of the German managers.

This rather contradictory attitude of the Russian employees to the management style of their German bosses may be explained in two ways. First, the analyzed incidents might reflect only initial phase of German-Russian interactions, i.e., at the beginning of the assignment of German expatriates in Russia. After getting to know one another, the Russians might better understand the requirements of their German managers and subsequently appreciate these requirements, since they offer the potential for growth and more independence. Second, the contradictory statement of the Russian respondent might be explained by the bias of the selection of interview partners. The majority of Russian respondents were suggested by their German colleagues, who were interviewed first. Thus, the German respondents could select the “best” employees, or those who have adopted the German cultural script.

Since the Russian respondents perceive the German attitude towards the scope of the task to be rather positive, and the German employees have a rather negative attitude towards the Russian leadership style, a logical assumption would be that newly formed interculture reflects the German cultural script for task assignment. However, the majority of the German respondents report that an adjustment from their side was necessary. Thus, as Stefan points out, “In Russia, I had to adopt a tighter management [style].” Volker describes similar experiences: “Finally, I have not managed to bring them into the mindset of holistic thinking.” Thus, German-Russian interculture related to the scope of the task demonstrates the features of the Russian cultural script. This phenomenon may be explained relatively well by the fact that the German expatriates started their assignments with high pressure to perform. Since the “reeducation” of their new employees requires time and effort, they lean towards the easier solution of tighter management. However, they still stick to their own cultural script when evaluating their employees. In this regard, Andreas points out, “In my department, I have six employees, but only one can be promoted further; he is able to comply with the Western working style.”

3.5.1.2 Responsibility for task assignment

Another issue that caused irritation among the German respondents is the defensive attitude of their Russian colleagues towards assigned tasks. The German respondents reported that their Russian colleagues leave some tasks aside, ask for the task request in writing as well as for prior coordination with their supervisor, or simply state that they do not know how to execute the assigned task. These experiences of the German respondents reflect the cultural differences regarding the responsibility for task assignment: While the German employees accept any task as long as its necessity is logically grounded, Russian employees do not welcome tasks from anyone other than their boss and require the approval of their direct supervisor. Table 7 represents quotes that describe this subject matter.

Table 7. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards the responsibility for task assignments

Respondent	Quote
Susanne	In Russia, if it [a task] comes from the boss, then it is performed. If you simply discuss something, it won't be done. Many [Russian employees] need it in written form. […] And then it will be done. Otherwise, I had situations when it is asked: "Is it okay [with the boss]?" They are afraid to take responsibility. I do not know, I have a feeling that the hierarchical levels stipulate it in such a way.
Stefan	It is typical for Russia that the boss decides; he tells me what to do and what to leave, and I have a feeling that these are the expectations of my colleagues. In Germany, it is so, in my opinion, that there is sphere of activity, there is an organizational chart, people have their positions in it, and people may act there – they act in a free zone. Here [In Russia], you need to say what to do. The hierarchies are different here.

Respondent	Quote
Markus	You can totally forget it [matrix organization] with Russian people. They do not understand it. Because it is typical for matrix organization that they report to multiple project leaders. It is just not essential who has disciplinary responsibility, but it is essential who has functional responsibility. And you cannot get it into their mind, you totally meet a brick wall. It is not possible to explain to people who have worked for some time in Russian hierarchies that they have, let's say, two functional reporting lines. […] They say, I have one boss, and I am not interested in what you tell me.

Following the German cultural script related to the scope of the task, German managers prefer a management style of leading by objectives. Thus, German employees receive an overall target without any clear instructions for how to reach this target. Moreover, the German employees themselves must identify all of the individual tasks leading to the target achievement.

Some targets may require the involvement of other stakeholders from another department. In this case, the employees may directly approach their colleagues from other departments, explain the subject to them, and request their support. The involvement of their respective supervisors is usually not necessary, unless some questionable issues evolve, such as the lack of capacity, or the rationale of the task.

Furthermore, large German enterprises introduce a matrix structure in order to facilitate the flow of information and skills across different departments. In matrix organization, an employee has two or more supervisors: one disciplinary supervisor and one or more functional supervisors. A division of functional and disciplinary reporting lines – that is, the existence of two or more supervisors – is common for companies with project-related business, even if the company does not have a matrix structure. Nowadays, having more than one supervisor is typical in large German industrial enterprises.

Following the Russian cultural script related to the scope of the task, it is within the responsibilities of the supervisor to divide the task into small packages and assign it to the employees. Therefore, employees expect that their supervisor will decide what tasks

are necessary and who should perform them, because it is the supervisor has the overall picture of the target – not the employees. Thus, the employees cannot judge the reasonability of the requests from other departments; coordination with the supervisor becomes necessary.

Moreover, the Russian hierarchy only takes into account the availability of one direct boss who assigns tasks and gives instructions. Under this condition, matrix structures do not work in Russia; even the "project" concept is new to the Russian business environment (Leonov, 2008). Thus, Western enterprises with a matrix structure face difficulties in explaining the concept of matrix organization to their employees (cf. the quote from Markus in Table 7). Under these circumstances, some companies have had to adapt their organizational structure to the Russian business environment. For example, IBM notably improved its financials in 2001 one year after the company abandoned the matrix structure in its Russian subsidiary.[51]

The following example illustrates how different cultural scripts related to the responsibility for task assignment, combined with the differences related to the scope of the task, affect German-Russian business interactions.

Example 4: Definition of tasks based on the minutes of a meeting

A German expatriate manager and his Russian colleague went on a business trip to the corporate headquarters. There, they met different colleagues and had some meetings. The outcomes of these meetings, as well as the next steps required from the Russian side, were recorded in the minutes of meetings. After returning to Russia, the German expatriate manager expected that his employee would work on the issues discussed with their colleagues in Germany. However, he was totally perplexed when his employee came to his office and told him that she did not know what to do: "Though everything was clear, though everything had been communicated, though the colleague had been in Germany, received all the information, and knew who the contact persons were – and then she tells me that she does not know what to do! And she tells it to me, I mean to the boss! Sorry, but there are telephone numbers, everything was discussed, there are minutes of meetings, and so on. […] It is really strange. I mean, it is good that she tells me, and is

[51] http://www.management.com.ua/cm/cm006.html, retrieved October 8, 2013.

not simply sitting around and doing nothing. But it is really astonishing; after all, there are contact persons."

This example shows that the German manager expected that his Russian employee would initiate the tasks discussed during their business trip in Germany independently. This expectation corresponds exactly to the German cultural script discussed earlier: the target is set, the required tasks are discussed and agreed upon, and the stakeholders know each other already.

On the other hand, the Russian employee expected her boss to give her the assignment. Though everything was discussed during the meetings, Russian employee was not sure who is doing what. In the end, she did not get any assignments from her boss. Moreover, her behavior follows the Russian cultural script: When she was not sure of her task, she asked her boss about her assignment and not any other contact person, because, in her opinion, only her boss is empowered to give her tasks.

This incident aroused the true astonishment of the German manager. He could not imagine such behavior in a German business environment and attributed it to barriers in communication with German colleagues, which, in his opinion, his Russian colleague faces. This attribution is based on the previous experiences of the German manager in Russia: In his opinion, Russian employees are not willing to communicate with their colleagues from other countries.[52] This attribution is partially true: Due to their lack of fluency in English compared to their colleagues at headquarters, Russian employees may try to avoid making contacts in English. However, the lack of fluency in English only partially contributes to the understanding of this incident; differences in the cultural scripts in the responsibility for task assignment play a more important role in this incident.

This incident revealed differences in the cultural scripts related to the responsibility for task assignment and uncovered lacunas for both the German and Russian sides. Table 8 summarizes these lacunas.

[52] The German respondent mentioned several times earlier in the interview that Russians have trouble communicating in English and try to avoid such communication. He also provided another example of a time when his Russian colleague (it was not clear if it was the same colleague in the incident of Example 4) did not perform the required analysis because she did not request the respective information from her German and Polish colleagues, without giving any reason for not requesting it.

Table 8. Lacunas in Example 4: Definition of tasks based on the minutes of a meeting

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Only the boss is responsible for task assignment **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Russian employee demands that the boss specify the task	Strange, astonishing; attributed to the barriers of communication in English
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employee takes initiative in task execution **Lacuna of behavior and daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Tasks are not explicitly assigned by the boss	Unusual, the boss may have forgotten to assign the task

The foregoing example and quotes presented in Table 7 show that the cultural script related to the responsibility for task assignment is strongly interlinked with the cultural script related to the scope of the task. Both cultural scripts find their roots in respective leadership style of German and Russian business environment. Similar to the cultural script for the scope of the task, German expatriates evaluate the Russian cultural script for the responsibility of task assignment rather negatively because it contradicts their cultural script habitual for German business environment.

Although the German respondents demonstrated a rather negative attitude towards the Russian cultural script related to task assignment, the respective German-Russian interculture incorporates characteristics of the Russian business environment: German respondents confirm that they need to coordinate tasks with the respective supervisors and assign tasks to their employees explicitly when the employees do not show any initiative. In contrast, the interculture related to the matrix organizational structure demonstrates characteristics of the German business environment. For example, Markus reports that his company “kicks out” those employees who do not understand the

principles of matrix organization, whereas Siemens Russia placed a job offer for a mid-level professional Business Development Specialist / Regional Development with the requirement of "experience in working in matrix organizations."[53]

Interestingly, the German-Russian interculture combines, at the first glance, two contradicting characteristics: the acceptance of only one supervisor and matrix organization. However, a more precise examination of the subject matter reveals that both characteristics can coexist in one enterprise, but at different hierarchical levels: While employees from lower hierarchical levels expect that their boss is responsible for task assignment, the employees from higher hierarchical levels are expected to function in a matrix structure – otherwise, they will be dismissed from the position.

Another interesting observation shows that none of the Russian respondents mentioned any differences related to the responsibility for task assignment. This indicates either that the Russian respondents do not perceive any noteworthy deviations from the Russian cultural script related to the responsibility for task assignment, or that the Russian respondents had been working in organizations with a matrix structure for sufficient time.[54] This fact also goes along with the respective German-Russian interculture.

3.5.1.3 Task performance: prioritization, planning, and interaction with task-related stakeholders

The process of task performance also encompasses cultural difference. German expatriates report that Russian employees tend to perform tasks just before the deadline; that they cannot plan; and that their working process lacks organization. Furthermore, a majority of the German respondents noted the lack of communication between different departments. Table 9 illustrates some quotes related to the cultural scripts and attitudes towards task planning, task prioritization, and horizontal communication with task-related stakeholders, respectively.

[53] Webpage "Carriers at Siemens, retrieved October 8, 2013
https://jobsearch.siemens.biz/career?_s.crb=llvLPQWz4KannxtyG4T%252fDtZy5eo%253d

[54] Indeed, the Russian respondents who hold management positions mentioned in their interviews that they have been working for Western companies for at least ten years.

Table 9. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards task planning, task prioritization and horizontal communication

Respondent	Quote
Planning of task performance and prioritization	
Georg	If you give them [the Russian employees] three weeks, you can be sure that 90% will have done nothing after three weeks.
Volker	Sometimes, nothing happened during three weeks. And then they finish everything in the last week, so that I myself was surprised with all the things that were possible.
Oliver	I believe that Russians live very much in the here and now, actually in everything that they do. Russians do not plan in advance, neither in terms of the job nor in terms of their plans for life. Thus, in terms of the job, there is this "will be" (будет) that summarizes somehow everything. […] It is also my experience that, despite all the adversities that you encounter in the process, everything is ready and finalized in the end. After all, it comes down mostly to a good result in the end. In the end, it works out with a lot of improvisation, interim steps, a lot of nerves.
Michael	There are some requirements, and they [the Russian employees] all jump at them and, indeed, do everything with a lot of effort and intensity, with great engagement. But a lot of it can be avoided if you plan and give some thought in advance, and bring a bit of structure into the whole thing.

Respondent	Quote
Sebastian	Nowadays, I report to a Russian manager, i.e., my boss is Russian. And it is different than in Germany. It is not like I get something [a task] and have time to work on it, but it is: "I [the Russian manager] need to present something tomorrow; could you please prepare a presentation or something?" It is really … I do not know whether my boss gets to know about it at the last moment or whether he realizes it a couple of hours before.
Prioritization of tasks	
Thomas	In difficulties, they [the Russian employees] forget to look to the right and to the left. And it is difficult to bring things forward when it concerns inter-departmental activities. […] It happens because one examines something in isolation from its context, because one hurls oneself into work without having comprehended everything in its context. However, you can work it out gradually.
Volker	In Germany, you are used to timing everything on your own, to saying: OK, I have received a task from my boss, and I know what to do. I have a feeling for what is necessary to do, what is important and what is not. In Russia, it was partially so that if something came to my mind, I addressed my employees and told them that I needed this and that. However, at that moment, I did not think about the things that they already have to do. So, the employees went back, put everything aside and accomplished the task that I had given to them just before. The prioritization is done in different way: he is the boss, he wants something, so he should get it now. […] She [a Russian employee] has said: "I do not know this, I have never learnt this. In Russia, there is no prioritization; everything that the boss says is performed."

Respondent	Quote
Horizontal communication among departments	
Thomas	In terms of the environment, it was difficult to get people [Russian employees] to look beyond the end of their own noses.
Matthias	It is said [in Russia] that it is not my task area, and so it is not done. Whereas I [a German employee] feel an overall responsibility to the project and, therefore, think about the interlinks between different task areas. Russian employees, however, regard these task areas as totally isolated from each other.
Georg	There [in the Russian office], an employee working on project A does not communicate with somebody working on project B.
Marion	We currently struggle with the problem that our [Russian] employees are almost too bureaucratic. It is about managing internal relationships, e.g., I [a Russian employee] have done my work, but have you talked to the colleague Ivanov or Petrov, to see if it fits together at all? Currently, we are still working on getting people to abandon the attitude of "this is my task and I fulfill only this task" and pursue this overall responsibility or this attitude of "I am part of the whole and I contribute to the whole with my task." We want to achieve this.

The German cultural script related to task performance follows the cultural script related to the scope of the task and the responsibility for task assignment. Because employees have objectives and relative leeway in task performance, they also get the responsibility for structuring, planning, and prioritizing tasks independently. These capabilities are essential not only in the German business environment, but in other aspects of life. From an early age, German children are encouraged to develop their individuality and fantasy – characteristics that contribute to the free development of the individual. Independence and autonomy are central objectives in the German educational system (Attias-Donfut, 1998: 187-190). For example, higher education in Germany offers a relatively free

curriculum that provides only targets regarding the number of credits and a few obligatory subjects. Thus, students learn self-organization already at universities by having choices and decision-making leeway.

Furthermore, management by objectives and the relative leeway in task performance stimulates horizontal communication between departments. Aiming at the best possible fulfillment of a target, employees are dependent on the advice and help of their colleagues, who might contribute to the task. Likewise, the German higher education system encourages students to show self-initiative in the educational process. For example, study-related information is not provided centrally; students only obtain information from their respective sources.

The Russian cultural script related to task performance also follows the cultural script related to the scope of the task and the responsibility for task assignment. Because the scope of an assigned task is rather narrow, the performance of such tasks does not take a lot of time. Thus, managers assign tasks to their employees on short notice, just before the respective deadlines. The prioritization and structuring of such packages is the responsibility of the boss. Similarly, the rather close management of students is practiced at Russian universities. Students have a standard curriculum; they get their tasks assignments on a weekly basis. Study-related organizational information is usually provided centrally via the group's monitor (староста), who fulfills the role of an intermediary between the dean's office or the teaching staff and the respective group of students. Like the business environment, employees at the lower hierarchical levels do not feel responsible for communicating with their colleagues from other departments – this is the responsibility of their boss. Moreover, the boss usually tailors tasks in such a way that communication with other departments is either not required to fulfill the task or it is mentioned explicitly during task assignment.

The Russian and German cultural scripts related to task performance reveal a fundamental difference in division of roles between an employee and a manager. In Russia, the boss is responsible for task structuring, task assignment, setting the deadlines, and communication with other departments. In Germany, on the contrary, employees are responsible for these activities within the scope of an assigned objective. The following examples illustrate German-Russian interactions related to the performance of tasks.

Example 5: Preparation for a top management meeting

The strategy department in Russian subsidiary, consisting of a German expatriate manager and three Russian employees, had to prepare for a top management meeting at the end of January. The CEO of the company and other members of the Board were supposed to participate in this meeting and discuss major strategic issues for the future of company development in Russia. In order to prepare for this meeting, the strategy department planned to conduct five workshops with the top managers of the company from both headquarters and the Russian subsidiary. The department planned six weeks of overall preparation time. However, these six weeks included three weeks of German and Russian Christmas holidays,[55] leaving only three weeks of effective preparation time. While the German manager was not optimistic that they would be able to manage the proper preparation of the top management meeting, his Russian team assured him that "everything will be fine" (все будет хорошо). Indeed, to the great surprise of the German manager, the Russian team managed to conduct all five workshops, analyze and aggregate the results of the workshops, and prepare the management meeting itself. The Russian team was very motivated by the fact that that the CEO himself was coming to Russia and put a lot of effort into the preparation and worked long hours in the office. As the German manager describes the preparation process: "First, we set up the process, determined all that we needed, put everything on the timeline, and so on. Then, we got started. And what I have taken from this situation is that, if they really want to, they can achieve something."

The German manager was surprised by the ability of the Russian employees to achieve the objective at the last moment, because it contradicts the typical German cultural script for accurate planning and gradual task execution and, therefore, should not lead to a successful result.

At the same time, the German supervisor reports that the "Russians found the whole atmosphere fantastic." There are three possible explanations for the positive feedback

[55] The differences in Christmas holidays result from different religious calendars: In Germany, both Catholic and Protestant Church follow Gregorian Calendar whereas Russian Orthodox Church follows Julian Calendar. Thus, Catholics and Protestants celebrate Christmas on 25 December. The German Christmas holidays typically begin shortly before the Catholic Christmas and end on 6 January, Epiphany (Tag der Heiligen Drei Könige). In contrast, the Russian Christmas holidays usually start on 31 December, continue over the Orthodox Christmas 7 January, and end around 14 January, so-called Old New Year (Старый Новый Год). Both in Germany and in Russia, many employees take a vacation during the Christmas holidays.

from the Russian employees. First, they acted in accordance with the Russian cultural script for task performance: Since the German manager fulfilled his responsibilities for task structuring, by dividing it into small packages and setting up a schedule, the Russian employees could perform pre-structured task packages on short notice. Consequently, they did not feel anything wrong about the situation. Second, the Russian employees and their German boss managed to establish a personal relationship during the long hours of meeting preparation, which is important for Russian employees.[56] Finally, the high motivation of the Russian employees during the preparation may be explained by the high management attention to the meeting. Thus, the Russian employees wanted to show themselves and their subsidiary in the best light and put a lot of effort into preparation.

This example has again revealed a number of lacunas from both the German and Russian sides. Table 10 provides an overview of these lacunas.

Table 10. Lacunas in Example 5: Preparation for a top management meeting

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Intense work by the Russian employees shortly before a deadline **Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Surprise at the achieved result **Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Importance of not losing face for the Russian employees	Surprising, Russians can work intensively
Russian perspective	**Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Unusually a good atmosphere during meeting preparation	Positively surprised by the warm atmosphere

Again, the interpretation of the incident follows the habitual cultural script. Thus, the Russian employees have the positive experiences of establishing a personal relationship

[56] Chapter 3.5.3.3 discusses the link between personal and working spheres in detail.

with their boss, which is considered important in the Russian business environment. The German expatriate is also positively surprised that the positive result could be achieved even though the whole preparation process contradicted the German habitual cultural script. At the same time, the German expatriate interpreted this incident as a contradiction to the stereotyped behavior of his Russian employees: Previously, he thought that Russians were generally lazy, but after this event, his opinion has changed.

Example 6: Communication between related departments

In one construction project, two related departments in a Russian subsidiary were responsible for wiring. One department was responsible for the electrical wiring, and the other was responsible for the instrumentation. Both departments needed to supply hundreds of meters of wire for a construction site. Though the material requirements for both the electrical and instrumental wiring were similar, the departments ordered wiring in two different qualities of steel. While reviewing the cost sheet, the client noticed the differences in the steel quality and asked the project coordinator from the German headquarters for an explanation. Indeed, it was possible to use the steel of the lower quality, and, therefore save money due to the lower price and additional quantity discount. When the German project coordinator asked his Russian colleagues why they did not agree upon the wire quality, they answered that they always do it in this way. Here, his interpretation of this incident was: "…because the departments want to be relatively autarkical. They do not want anyone looking over their shoulders. And perhaps it worked very well before, but when you do an international project, not only in Russia, because our Russian subsidiary[57] is also operating in Korea and so on, it does not work in this case; you cannot work like this."

This incident demonstrates the expectation of the German project coordinator, who was subsequently assigned to Russia, regarding horizontal communication between two departments. For him, it is unacceptable that two departments working on the same task do not align their actions, because such behavior contradicts his habitual German cultural script. On the other hand, his Russian colleagues were not responsible for alignment. In Russia, it is typically the task of the overall project manager to look for the synergies and to keep a holistic view on the project; the department heads are only responsible for the

[57] Here, the company name is omitted due to confidentiality agreements.

coordination of tasks within the scope of their respective department – in this case, electrical and instrumentation.

Moreover, the project manager was surprised by the answer of his Russian colleagues to his question regarding the lack of coordination between their departments. He expected some reasonable explanation. However, from the point of view of his Russian colleagues, it is the German project manager who did not fulfill his task. His Russian colleagues, however, could not reproach their boss openly, because the Russian cultural script forbids such practice.[58] Table 11 provides an overview of the lacunas that resulted once again from sticking to one's own habitual cultural script.

Table 11. Lacunas in Example 6: Communication between related departments

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** The overall manager is responsible for communication between departments **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** No communication between department heads, no clear answer to the supervisor	Fatal for the company, manifestation of autarkical leadership style in Russia
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Heads of respective departments are responsible for communication between their departments **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Heads of the departments do not coordinate with one another	Unprofessionalism on the part of the boss

An analysis of the interpretation and evaluation of this incident by the German and Russian employees reveals that both sides fell back on their habitual cultural scripts.

[58] This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.5.3.2 within the topic of upward feedback.

Additionally, the German manager attributes such behavior on the part of his Russian colleague to the autarkical leadership style of Russian bosses, thus opting for stereotypes. The German manager generalizes the Russian leadership style in following way: "There is 'nachalnik' [the boss] and he is in charge. He says what to do, and all the others do it. And this boss, if he is relatively strong, which is usually the case, allows relatively little bottom-up discussion as well as relatively little horizontal discussion with other departments. And this is fatal for an engineering company that is managed in a German manner."

Interestingly, none of the Russian respondents reported on the differences of the task performance described in foregoing paragraphs. Once more, this fact allows the conclusion that the Russian respondents do not perceive any noteworthy deviations from their habitual task performance process. This, in turn, leads to the assumption that the respective German-Russian interculture incorporates additional characteristics of the Russian cultural script.

Indeed, the German-Russian interculture of task performance has accumulated many characteristics of the Russian cultural script. A majority of the German respondents acknowledged the need to initiate the planning, to remind their employees to start in advance, to help with prioritization. At the same time, the German expatriate employees see the mission of their delegation as the "re-education" of their Russian employees according to "Western business standards." Thus, the German-Russian interculture of task performance is two-fold: On the one hand, it incorporates the majority characteristic of the Russian cultural script at the lower hierarchical level. On the other hand, it accumulates more characteristics of the German cultural script at the higher hierarchical level. An exception applies to horizontal communication: in many cases, it is the role of a higher-ranking manager.

3.5.1.4 Monitoring of workload and task performance

Much as German expatriate managers expect independence and initiative during task performance, they also expect pro-active communication of the status of task performance. However, to their great surprise, their Russian employees do not give pro-active feedback about the current status of their work, preferring to deliver the results on the last day or even after the deadline. Table 12 introduces the quotes illustrating this issue.

Table 12. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards the pro-active communication of task status

Respondent	Quote
Wolfgang	And it is really true: When a task is finished, I drop everything and, first, take a break. You should always pay attention for when the next task comes. I must have a feeling for when the next task is due. It was absolutely new for me […] I had to help them, control them, monitor them, support them, and coach them. And then the results came.
Stefan	There are some [Russian colleagues] who really need guidance in everything. But they try to drop it [a task] if you do not control them. […] I have colleagues who keep sitting around the whole day and do nothing if you do not tell them what to do next. […] I assume that they [Russian employees] believe that I do not see it or do not check it, and therefore they believe that they do not need to do it. I observe this very often. […] In particular, a lot of small things, which one usually forgets, are not done, i.e., things are not brought from A to B, or things are not ready on time. Thus, you need to control everything.
Andreas	It happens very often that employees just … disappear, i.e., it [a task] simply won't be finished. And only after the deadline did I approach them and ask how it looked. […] And they answered that they thought it was not so important because I did not make any inquiry in the meantime. And it was really an adjustment for me in terms of culture.
Oliver	It is a general issue. When German employees need to bring some topics to the CEO, they give you regular feedback regarding the status. And if you inquire of Russians, it comes nothing until the last day. And then it all comes on the last day before the deadline, everything that was not done before. It will work out somehow. Thus, it is silence until you inquire and ask what is going on.

The German cultural script related to the monitoring of workload and task performance does not require the active involvement of the manager. It is within the responsibility of the employee to provide regular feedback on status of the job, the next steps, and the finalization of a task. Moreover, such a division of roles between employees and their supervisor is in line with the German cultural script for the scope of the task and task performance. Being in charge of planning and structuring, employees have a much better overview of the status of their job and next steps than their supervisor has. Thus, employees can better estimate the timing of communication and supervisor involvement, especially if any support or decisions are required.

The Russian cultural script related to the monitoring of workload and task performance goes along with the requirements of a tight leadership style, as reported in the previous sections. Because the manager is in charge of task structuring, planning and assignment, he is also able to estimate how much time and effort are required to fulfill this task. In addition, tasks are structured in small work packages with short deadlines, making it easier for the boss to monitor performance status.

Once again, these two cultural scripts can lead to misunderstandings in German-Russian business communication. The following example describes an incident that occurred between a German expatriate manager and his Russian employee at the beginning of his assignment in Russia.

Example 7. Not wanting to disturb the boss

Whenever a Russian employee has completed her task, she would just stay at her desk silently, not telling her boss, who was working in the same office. When her German manger inquired about the reason why she would not tell him, she responded that it was his role to check. Furthermore, she did not want to disturb him, because he seemed to be overloaded with work and stressed out.

The German expatriate manager was completely perplexed by such an argument, because it totally contradicted his previous work experiences in Germany. He said: “when I am ready with a task, I go to the boss, present it, taking the initiative. And it is always the case: when I am ready, I ask what is next, or I look for the next task myself.” He could not find any explanation for the behavior of his colleague, nor did he accept such behavior. As solution, he demanded that the Russian employee write an e-mail when the

task was finished, but this did not bring quick results: “it lasted quite long time, and it required certain pressure” to change the behavior of his Russian employee.

This example reveals lacunas of behavior for both sides, as well as respective axiological lacunas. Table 13 provides an overview of these lacunas.

Table 13. Lacunas in Example 7: Not wanting to disturb the boss

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Supervisor regularly checks status of task performance **Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Role of boss to check status of task performance **Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Keeping silent in order not to disturb the boss	No initiative from the employee’s side
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Supervisor does not check on the task regularly **Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Role of the employee to communicate the status of task performance pro-actively	Tasks are not urgent or important for the boss

The previous example and quotes from Table 12 demonstrate perplexity of German expatriate managers when dealing with the Russian cultural script related to the monitoring of workload and task performance. German expatriates assess the behavior of their Russian colleagues based on their habitual cultural script in the German business environment. Because this kind of behavior leads to sanctions, such as the termination of a work contract, German expatriate mangers cannot understand this attitude towards work in Russia. In the beginning, they put a lot of effort in changing this attitude. But in the course of time, they switched to the closer monitoring of their employees. Thus, the

German-Russian business interculture incorporates more characteristics of the Russian cultural script related to the monitoring of workload and task performance. The lack of any comments from Russian respondents on this issue may only confirm this conclusion.

3.5.1.5 Dealing with mistakes

Nobody is perfect. While performing tasks, both German and Russian employees face difficulties and make mistakes. Whereas the difficulties and mistakes are comparable across these two cultures, the attitudes towards them differ. German employees consider mistakes to be learning experiences for themselves and others, as potential for personal development and improvement. In contrast, Russian employees avoid talking about their own mistakes and difficulties in public and have difficulties in admitting them. Table 14 presents quotes from the interviews illustrating the German and Russian attitudes towards difficulties and mistakes. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 14. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards difficulties and mistakes

Respondent	Quote
Frank	Germans are also not free from mistakes. If this occurs, you justify yourself: why did it happen, what was the matter, who else did something wrong? […] While in Russia, it happens often. Once the problem is uncovered and the critical question is posed: Why do we have such high inventory? Why have we apparently made a planning mistake? It cannot be due to a wrong sales forecast, because it was correct. Then, you hear nothing anymore, or they give you very hazy explanations, or they give you an explanation like "he is responsible."
Holger	They [Russians] handle problems in a different way from those that I am used to. There were some difficulties with the project, but it was not well regarded at all to address these problems and try to solve them, except only with the people directly involved.

Respondent	Quote
Georg	In general, I expect an engineer to start his work in the morning, and when in course of the day he faces the problem, technical or any other, in Germany, this engineer goes to his boss or to his colleague and says: 'I have a problem; I cannot advance; could you please help me or do you have any ideas?' In Russia, […] people keep sitting around and do not try to find a solution if it does not work within the limits of their experiences. They waste the first day, the second day, and this is precious money…
Alexander	I would say all people are used to covering their ass. If they did something wrong, they would ask you to sign the paper here and there, arguing that they need it. In Germany, this is not common. There is a saying: "he, who writes, remains" ("wer schreibt, der bleibt"). Here [in Russia], it is much more pronounced.
Dmitriy	[In a German company] you need to work and prevaricate as you do in some Russian companies: withholding something, keeping part of truth to yourself in order to put yourself in favorable light. Here, everything is honest and open. If you have any difficulties, you should not withhold them, but discuss them openly.

The German cultural script for dealing with mistakes encourages people to discuss any difficulties or mistakes openly in order to get some lessons for themselves and for others. Alexander, a Russian respondent who has a great deal of work experience in Germany, describes the attitudes of German employees towards mistakes: "In Germany, it is normal, if you say yes, I made a mistake. Nobody will cut your head off. Of course you should not make the same mistake twice. But in general, mistakes are not punished. Moreover, mistakes are welcome, e.g., if you have shown with a mistake that there is a deficiency, then it is possible to improve it." Moreover, open discussion of the mistake or problem with colleagues and the boss is encouraged, because it leads to a better solution and prevents others from making similar mistakes.

In this context, the German cultural script related to dealing with mistakes encourages employees to admit a mistake or difficulty in the performance of a task and ask for help. Thus, Frank confirms that he often says: “I have no idea. I can check and come to you later, but as for now I have no idea.” Similarly, Maria, who has some work experience in Germany, pointed out: “in Germany, managers do not think that you need to know everything. You have a certain specialization, or you have employees who know something better than you do. This is acceptable.” Thus, German managers and employees draw a clear line between personal capabilities and knowledge.

The Russian cultural script for dealing with mistakes and problems follows the opposite logic. As Alexander points out: “In Russia, it is common that mistakes are punished. And if one of the employees has made a mistake, he will do everything to conceal it. And it takes a lot of time and effort to understand what is going on. Someone has made a mistake and does not admit it and behaves in such a way…” Keeping quiet about a mistake aims at avoiding a negative reaction or punishment from the boss. The logic behind this is as follows: Because any mistake results in the negative reaction of the boss, withholding the truth decreases the likelihood of being punished. Similarly, requesting important decisions and instructions in writing aims at decreasing the chances of being punished in case something goes wrong.

Dealing with difficulties and mistakes openly is not common in the Russian business environment. Problems and mistakes are often considered to be personal failures because there is no strict differentiation between objective, fact-based argumentation and subjective, personal attitudes; objective facts and subjective attitudes are intertwined. Thus, problems and difficulties are discussed within close circle of entrusted people to avoid “losing face” in front of the others. In this context, initiating such a discussion in public may be perceived as bad intent aimed at damaging the reputation of the person facing these difficulties or problems. Holger describes typical behavior of Russian employees when he initiates open discussion of task-related difficulties: “If there are difficulties in a project […], if we have a problem, e.g., it takes too long; it does not work; or something else goes wrong, first, they [the Russian employees] reject everything, e.g., it cannot be true; we did everything right; it is not our fault at all; and so on. Then, they distort everything. But then they go into the matter, but only with the involved parties. And I had a lot of trust in their ability to solve difficult problems.”

Additionally, openly stating one's mistake or admitting difficulties in task performance in the Russian business environment may suggest that one lacks the capabilities necessary to perform a task properly. Thus, employees are rather unwilling to admit that they do not know something. Such behavior is especially widespread among the employees at higher hierarchical levels. Maria describes this issue as follows: "In Russia, the prevailing approach is that the boss should know everything. Even the employees expect that their boss knows everything." The personal capabilities and amount of knowledge are strongly correlated and are even considered synonyms.

The following two examples demonstrate how German and Russian employees deal with difficulties and mistakes in typical bi-cultural business interactions.

Example 8. Excluding a German expatriate manager from problem solving

This incident occurred at the beginning of the assignment of a German expatriate in Russia as the head of business unit. Some of the Russian employees of this unit were working on construction work together with their colleagues from the headquarters. The tasks were divided as follows: The Russian employees were responsible for the basic installations, while the employees from the headquarters took care of the high-end engineering. One day, the German expatriate manager received a warning from his colleagues from the headquarters that Russian side was facing some difficulties with the installation work, which could lead to a project delay and monetary penalties. The German expatriate manager was truly surprised to hear this news from his colleague from headquarters because the Russian project leader, his direct subordinate, did not mention any problems. As the German expatriate decided to talk about this issue with the Russian project leader, he was even more surprised with the reaction that followed: After the Russian project leader had listened to his boss's concern, he gathered his project team, they locked themselves in a meeting room and switched off their mobile phones. Thus, the German manager could not reach anybody from the project team that day. Once more, to the surprise of German manager, the problem was solved quickly. The issue was never discussed.

The German manager describes his attitude towards the incident as follows: "It was OK so far that they said: OK, we leave all our business aside, sit down together, and take care of this problem, totally focused. It was OK. But I found it very astonishing that they excluded me, their boss! If they had said "he cannot help us anyway, so we go upstairs and solve it," I would have understood it. But they have excluded me completely!"

This incident shows that the German expatriate expected his Russian colleague to act according to the German cultural script: discuss the problem and find the solution together. In the end, he merely wanted to support the Russian project leader. The behavior of the Russian project leader astonished the German manger. He felt excluded and redundant in this situation. Moreover, he interpreted the behavior of his Russian colleagues as if they do not want to accept him as their new boss, building a barrier between the Russian employees and himself. Such an interpretation confirms his Russia-related stereotype of a strong separation between an in-group and an out-group.

The behavior of the Russian employees encompasses two aspects. First, the Russian project leader may not have perceived any deviations from the plan to be a noteworthy issue. In contrast to Germany, the Russian business environment does not stick strictly to the schedule. Deviations from the timeline are routine, thus little deviations do not constitute a problem. Second, when the Russian project leader became aware of the problem, perceived as such by his German colleagues, he did not want to be seen in bad light in front of his new boss, the German expatriate manager, so he decided to solve the problem as soon as possible with his Russian team, keeping the boss out. While doing so, the Russian project leader acted according to his habitual Russian cultural script. Most likely, the German expatriate manager and the Russian project leader had not yet managed to establish trustful relationship with one another, because the incident occurred in the beginning of the assignment. Without having gotten to know each other well, the Russian project leader did not "dare" to ask his boss for help, because it would have been equivalent to admitting his personal failure in front of his boss and his team.

This incident revealed discrepancies between the German and Russian cultural scripts for dealing with mistakes. Table 15 summarizes the corresponding lacunas, focusing mostly on the German view of this incident.

Table 15. Lacunas in Example 8: Excluding the German expatriate manager from problem solving

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Deviations from the timeline **Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Complete exclusion of the boss from the problem solving process **Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Supervisor is considered more of a quality checker than a supporter of task performance	Astonishing; felt excluded, part of the out-group
Russian perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Deviations from the timeline are not acceptable	Not possible to implement in a Russian business environment

The second example in this section focuses on the Russian interpretation of a typical German cultural script for dealing with administrative mistakes.

Example 9. Open communication of a mistake

One Russian respondent reported similar astonishment regarding the open communication of mistakes made by German employees. When her colleague, a German expatriate manager, noticed an administrative mistake made by his Russian employee, "he has let on ('доносит'), I would say, or informed, to make it sound softer, about this mistake to the compliance department." The Russian respondent was even more surprised because the mistake fell within the area of responsibilities of her Russian colleague, who made the mistake. Moreover, it was not yet clear whether the mistake occurred due to the fault of the Russian employee or due to some external circumstances. Thus, the department should investigate the incident and identify the source of the mistake.

Such behavior on the part of the German manger caused immediate conflict between the German manager, on the one hand, and the Russian employee who made a mistake as

well as the Russian colleagues who were aware of the incident, on the other. “The Russian side perceived it to be an absolute betrayal when their boss let on about some information, which led to investigation with unpredictable results. It shows the unwillingness of the boss to take responsibility and to defend his employee.”

Similarly, the German manager was astonished by the reaction of his Russian colleagues; he did not understand what caused such irritation among his employees. He decided to open up a conversation and to explain to his Russian colleagues that he wanted to help them in such a way that even if something went wrong, he would be totally responsible for the mistake made by the Russian employee. However, his Russian employees did not believe him. The Russian employees were sure that he was merely shifting blame to the Russian colleague who made this mistake.

In the end, the conflict settled down gradually, but an “aftertaste” remained. Neither side could really understand the behavior of the other and, in the end, each gave other the benefit of the doubt. Thus, “the situation settled down, but was not resolved.”

This incident demonstrates very well the attitude of the Russian employees to the open communication of mistakes within the company. While the German employee merely intended to improve the rules and to prevent others from making the same mistake in the future, the Russian employees perceived it to be a betrayal. The Russian respondent summarized their general attitude towards the open communication of mistakes in the Russian business environment: “If you made a mistake in your job, and your colleague told somebody about it, it is nonsense; he is the betrayer according to an understanding of Russians. In Germany, as far as I understand, among Germans, this is one of the possible solutions.”

Interestingly, the behavior of the German manager in this incident does not represent any visible lacuna for the Russian employees because such behavior is possible in the Russian business environment. However, this behavior causes an intense axiological lacuna for the Russian employees. Table 16 summarizes the visible and axiological lacunas for both sides.

Table 16. Lacunas in Example 9: Open communication of a mistake

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Change in the behavior of employees who are aware of the incident: from friendly to hostile **Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Conflict and anger from the Russian employees in reaction to the incident	Astonishing, incomprehensible reaction from the Russian employees
Russian perspective		Betrayal

The previous examples and quotes from the Russian employees from Table 14 reveal their quite controversial attitudes towards the habitual German cultural script. While the examples showed the rather negative attitude of the Russian employees towards the open communication of mistakes and difficulties within the company, the quotes in the Table perceive such behavior to be positive. This inconsistency in attitude may be due to differences in their backgrounds and previous experiences. The Russian respondents quoted in Table 14 spent several years in Germany, studying and working exclusively in the German environment. In contrast, the intercultural interactions of the Russian employees from the examples are less intense; they include interactions with German expatriates and some business trips to Germany. This may lead to the conclusion that the attitude of the Russian employees towards the open communication of mistakes is in general negative. However, intense contact with German culture may change this attitude. One German expatriate succeeded in changing the attitudes of his Russian colleagues towards difficulties and mistakes, however. He used to say the following to his colleagues: "If something does not work, then it is not because of your [Russian employees'] bad intent, but because it adheres to other circumstances." Thus, trust on the part of the Russian employees is a pre-requisite to any change in attitude.

Similar contradictions characterize the German-Russian interculture of dealing with mistakes. It incorporates characteristics of both the Russian and German cultural scripts,

thus leading to numerous conflict situations. However, this interculture may change in course of time if the German expatriates show confidence in their Russian colleagues and manage to establish trustful relationships with them. The drifting of interculture in the other direction, towards the Russian cultural script, is rather unlikely.

3.5.1.6 Responsibility for the task and related decision making

Taking responsibility and decisions was mentioned already in previous sections regarding the responsibility for task assignment, task performance, and dealing with mistakes. The following paragraphs aim to describe the cultural scripts and attitudes related to taking responsibility and making task-related decisions. Table 17 presents the quotes of the German respondents regarding this subject.

Table 17. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards taking responsibility and making decisions

Respondent	Quote
Wolfgang	Often, no decisions are made, because decisions mean taking responsibility. And here [in Russia], I still have a feeling that there is fear to take responsibility because it is still somewhere deep inside that if you do something wrong, [your] head will be cut off or something similar. Therefore, you do exactly the things that are requested.
Paul	For a long time it was not required to be creative or to make decisions on one's own. I feel it even today.
Marion	Taking no responsibilities […] There is a proverb in Germany: "he, who does nothing does nothing wrong" (wer nichts macht, macht nichts falsch). It is a kind of fear that, if I make a decision, I take responsibility, but the decision might be wrong, and therefore, I may be punished.

According to the German cultural script for taking responsibility and making decisions, employees are encouraged to make decisions within the scope of their tasks. The role of the manager is to make decisions that go beyond the scope of a single task and to support

his employees if they ask for his advice pro-actively. In contrast with the cultural script for dealing with mistakes, employees are not punished if something goes wrong. It should instead be considered a learning experience.

According to the Russian cultural script for taking responsibility and making decisions, it is in general role of the boss to make decisions. Moreover, the higher the hierarchical level, the more decisions that should be made by the boss, and the more responsibility is granted to him. However, making more decisions brings a higher probability of making a mistake and leads to a negative reaction from the supervisor. Thus, employees prefer to shift the responsibility for decision making to the upper management. In this context, employees on the lower hierarchical levels make almost no decisions. As one German respondent has rightly observed, it was not only because they did not want to, but also because they were not allowed to. Because tasks are assigned in small packages, employees do not get any opportunity to make their own decision. It is duty of the boss.

When German and Russian employees interact, the differences in their cultural scripts for taking responsibility and making decisions may lead to three lacunas for both sides. First, there is a lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity) that reflects who is making decisions in everyday life. Second, there is a role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna) that relates to the division of roles between boss and employee in the decision-making process. Finally, both sides interpret each other's cultural script, leading to an axiological lacuna. The Russian employee, who expects the boss to make decisions, may be surprised by the lack of a reaction from the boss and may even question his professionalism. If a German manager insists that a Russian employee makes decisions and takes responsibility for his decisions, it might be taken as a sign of bad intent on the part of the boss, who wants to let his employees down if something were to wrong (similar to the axiological lacuna in Example 9). In contrast, the German employee does not attribute the behavior of the Russians according to their habitual cultural script, but rather turns to the historical background of the Russian employees: "If you look back into their past, you see the trauma of the Soviet regime, which led to massive repressions. It is so traumatic that it continues over multiple generations. It requires a lot of work to free their minds." Perceiving it to be traumatic, the German employees do not criticize the behavior of their Russian colleagues. They instead try to show understanding and encourage them to take responsibility.

Three factors contribute to formation of a Russian-German interculture of responsibility and decisions. First, Russian employees generally tend to act according to their habitual cultural script. Second, German employees show understanding for their Russian colleagues' cultural script and do not enforce their rules. Finally, German expatriate managers may adopt the Russian cultural script in order to achieve their business targets more quickly.

Thus, the respective Russian-German interculture incorporates mainly characteristics of the Russian cultural script for taking responsibility and decisions. However, this mainly concerns the lower hierarchical levels; at the higher hierarchical levels, the characteristics of both cultural scripts converge.

3.5.1.7 Reflection of the attitude towards tasks in dimension frameworks and Thomas' cultural standards

The demonstrated differences between the German and Russian cultural scripts related to the attitude towards tasks are associated with several dimensions from different dimension frameworks:

- power distance and uncertainty avoidance from Hofstede's five dimensions framework;
- power distance from the GLOBE study;
- egalitarianism and hierarchy from the Schwartz' value framework; and
- high awareness of hierarchy, group orientation, directness/truth, and internalized control from Thomas' cultural standards.

The intensity of the respective associations varies strongly, however. The dimension of power distance, as it is defined by Hofstede, demonstrates the main connotation with findings of this subchapter. Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 55) classify Russia as a country with high power distance, placing it sixth among 74 countries in his ranking; Germany, on the other hand, is lower on the scale of power distance, taking position 63/65 in the country ranking. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2011), a high power distance manifests itself in different leadership styles. The German business environment has adopted a leadership model that encourages the high initiative of subordinates during task performance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 354). In contrast, a high power distance

manifests itself in an unequal distribution of power between a supervisor and his subordinates. This leads to different division of responsibilities: It is solely the role of the boss to approach his employees, to specify in detail what they have to do, and to demand the status of task performance. Under these circumstances, management by objectives is not an effective approach; it leads only to the mutual frustration of the supervisor and his subordinates (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 71-72).

The presented findings also seem to be correlated with another dimension from Hofstede's framework: uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 221), Russia demonstrates a high uncertainty avoidance and is ranked number seven on the list of 74 countries. In contrast, Germany demonstrates moderate uncertainty avoidance, being ranked number 43. In this case, Russia should demonstrate a greater tendency to avoid ambiguities and strive for accuracy. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 240), this is manifest in the Russians' need for clear guidance in order to perform task correctly and in their avoidance of organization structures that allow more than one direct supervisor. The German and Russian cultural scripts related to the scope of the task and the responsibility for task assignment corroborate these statements.

Interestingly, the power distance dimension of the GLOBE study shows insufficient interrelation with German and Russian cultural scripts related to the attitude towards task, even though House et al. (2004: 543) reports a high correlation between Hofstede's measure of power distance and the GLOBE's power distance practices measure. Moreover, the positions of Germany and Russia in the GLOBE's country ranking are not far from one another; both countries can be classified as having rather high power distance practices (cf. Figure 11). This inconsistency may be due to the differences in the conceptualization and measure of power distance in Hofstede's and the GLOBE's study: While Hofstede investigated this dimension by means of three different questions, House addressed the issue with only one question that focused on the degree of obedience to the decisions of a supervisor. As a result, the power distance dimension as it is suggested by the GLOBE does not sufficiently reflect the differences in the cultural scripts related to task performance.

Similarly, Schwartz's values of egalitarianism and hierarchy do not provide strong support for the findings of the previous sections. The positioning of German and Russian cultures on both dimensions reflects a higher value for hierarchy and a correspondingly lower value for egalitarianism (cf. Figure 9) in Russia and supports the overall findings of

Hofstede and the GLOBE study. But Schwartz emphasizes the distribution of power and equality of treatment in society in general; such an approach has a limited relationship to the demonstrated differences in the attitudes towards tasks.

Finally, the findings are also consistent with some aspects of Thomas' cultural standards for the high awareness of hierarchy and group orientation in Russia, as well as the directness/truth and internalized control in Germany. Thomas et al. (2003: 105-106) point out the unwillingness of Russians to take responsibility, their fear of wrong decisions and mistakes, and their avoidance of open discussions of any mistakes they may have committed. In contrast, Schroll-Machl (2003: 105, 178) indicates the following aspects of dealing with mistakes in Germany: acknowledgement of a mistake, obligation to inform others about the mistake, thorough analysis of its causes, search for the best possible solution in open discussion with others, and definition and open communication of the lessons learned. These aspects of cultural standards are strongly associated with the findings on the Russian and German cultural scripts related to dealing with mistakes.

3.5.1.8 Historical background related to attitudes towards tasks

The roots of the reported attitudes of German and Russian employees towards tasks can be traced through the historical development of both countries. It is important to point out three main aspects that may have contributed to the present notion of task: power distribution, the development of cities, and religion. The following section addresses these three aspects in detail.

The history of Russia is characterized by the authoritarian leadership style of tsars, emperors, and the Soviet regime. Russian leaders of all epochs tended to take drastic measures to keep the broader population of Russia under control. The tsars, emperors, and Soviet leaders concentrated unlimited power in their own hands; the governmental bodies and codes of law were subordinate to their will. Under these conditions, the nobles had to obey to the will of the tsar or empire (later the head of the communist party in the USSR); any opponents or rebels were severely punished. Even though the nobles regularly tried to strengthen their role in the Russian empire, and even though the emperors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – particularly Peter I, Alexander, and Katharina II – continuously tried to introduce the liberal ideas of Western and Northern

Europe, these attempts did not and could not change the situation:[59] power remained in the hands of the empire, and the "Western innovations" only increased the gap between the social classes of Russian society (Galkin 2005: 53).

The tradition of tsarist autocracy remained under the USSR regime and, after its collapse, in the contemporary Russia. Though the Revolution of 1917 brought in a new political elite and a new state structure, the core elements of the authoritarian leadership style remained:[60] the concentration of power in the hands of one person (the head of the communist party), the personalization of authority, the dependence of the upper echelons of the communist party on the head of the party, and an increasingly passive society intimidated by Stalin's regime.[61] The collapse of the USSR seemed to have brought back the pre-revolutionary ideas of constitutionalism and to have opened Russian society to the democratic ideas of the West. This policy was not crowned with success, however. As a result, the political power returned to the traditional elements of Russian political culture, such as authoritarianism, centralism, lack of awareness of the law, and fear of confrontation. (Kappeler, 2008: 51-54). Similarly, these traditional elements of Russian political culture affect the cultural script of Russian employees in the business environment, particularly in their attitude towards the responsibility for task assignment, role distribution during task performance and decision making, and the attitudes towards mistakes.

In contrast, the history of modern Germany is characterized by the constant division of its territory into hundreds of independent areas, each with its own respective ruler, and the blurred recognition of emperor's authority (Craig, 1983: 20-21). The local rulers accepted the formal authority of the empire only because they needed to unite their forces to defend the local boundaries. However, each area enjoyed its own sovereignty and rules.

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[59] Bühler (n.d.) points out that the introduced reforms were ineffective due to two main reasons: the lack of a middle class and the constant wars with Russia's neighbors, which prevented the penetration of the introduced reforms (http://www.buehler-hd.de/gnet/neuzeit/russland/russland1.pdf).

[60] Berdiajew (1937: 128) even refers to the Bolsheviks as to the third emergence of Russian imperialism, as the logical continuation of the previous five centuries of Russian history.

[61] Ignatow's "Psychologie des Kommunismus" (1985) portrays in detail main characteristics of the communist leadership style in the former USSR, including the fear of mistakes, lack of initiative, personal responsibility for actions, avoiding decision making, full obedience to the orders of the superiors, etc. However, the reader should be careful while following Ignatow's outline of communist psychology: the author emphasizes the negative characteristics of the communist regime, leading to a biased display of Russia's historical background and, therefore, to potential stereotypes.

Under these circumstances, the local rulers needed to look for reasonable compromises with their neighbors or defend their sovereignty by means of war. The emperor did not have any decision power; all decisions regarding finance and external affairs needed the approval of the Reichstag and the electors (Kurfürsten) – the decision-makers in the empire (Bonvech, 2008a: 120). The internal affairs of each state were under the responsibility of the respective electors. Thus, German history is characterized by numerous wars and feudal disunity until the first tendencies of absolutism in the end of the eighteenth century, the strengthening of Prussia, and the establishment of German Empire in 1871.

However, the German empire of the second half of the nineteenth century did not constitute a centralized state. On the contrary, it continued the German tradition of a confederation of states, characterized by the rather high independence of individual states regarding their internal affairs and the constant consensus-seeking behavior in the united parliament. However, the German federalism of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries did not prove to be successful. First, the Weimar Republic demonstrated a stronger tendency towards centralization, which was reflected in Weimer Constitution of 1919 (Nipperdey, 1990: 96-106). Subsequently, a much stronger tendency towards centralization was demonstrated by the Third Reich. By means of ideology and propaganda, Hitler managed to consolidate German society, but the ideas of National Socialism lasted scarcely longer than a decade. After the end of World War II, German society was split into two parts: The Eastern part of Germany became the communist German Democratic Republic, ruled by the USSR, while the Western part, the Federal Republic of Germany, consisting of 11 states, followed the democratic path. Though the main democratic principles were introduced in West Germany immediately after World War II, the German chapter of authoritarianism in government was finally closed by the student movement of 1968. This movement brought a number of important changes, such as the liberalization of German society, flat hierarchies in families as well as in social and business lives, and an active and open discussion of Germany's terrible Nazi past and future (Bonvech 2008b: 216; Schroll-Machl, 2003: 191). These changes also manifested themselves in the business environment, especially in the widespread leadership approach of management by objectives, flat hierarchies, and openness in dealing with mistakes.

The different roles played by cities in Russian and German history have also contributed to the different attitudes of German and Russian employees towards tasks. The tradition of German cities dates back to the eleventh century, to the development of urban settlements as centers of trade and craftwork. Already in the thirteenth century, German cities and confederations of multiple neighboring cities enjoyed numerous privileges and rights. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, 10% of the population lived in cities; this share constantly increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cities enjoyed great autonomy; they had their own laws and governing structures and had an active political life. The urban population constituted the middle class of German society. They enjoyed personal freedom and took full responsibility for their own lives (Bonvech, 2008b; Nipperdey, 1990: 33). Thus, German cities facilitated the development of a democratic society and contributed to the establishment of self-initiative, independence in task performance, and responsibility for the performed tasks as the main elements of German business environment.

In contrast, Russian cities do not have an independent tradition. Though the cities of Kievan Rus were rather developed, the Tsardom of Russia took total control over the cities. Russian cities had neither their own laws nor local autonomy. The population of the cities had the same rights and duties as the population of the villages (Kappeler, 2008: 61). Even the industrial development of Russia in the nineteenth century and in increase of manufactories did not facilitate the evolution of a free labor market: The main workforce of the Russian manufactories consisted of bondsmen and was subject to high taxes. As a result, until the end of the nineteenth century, Russia lacked a middle class that could have facilitated the democratic development of Russian society, as was the case in Germany.

Differences in the religious views of orthodox and protestant churches may have also contributed to the different attitudes towards tasks on the part of German and Russian employees. The Russian church used to encourage the bondsmen, who constituted the prevailing majority of Russian population, to endure the misery and to make sacrifices in the name of faith (Berdiajew, 1937: 11, 20). Moreover, because in Russia the state authority was above the Orthodox Church, the Church supported the Russian tsars and emperors in gathering tributes and restraining the forwardness of local rulers (Munchaev, 1998: 75-83). Thus, the Russian population has a long tradition of “enduring” the task

given by the boss, which can manifest itself today in the lack of initiative or questioning the purpose of the task.

In contrast, German Protestantism advocates a somewhat different notion of task and work. According to the Protestant Church, work is actually a part of real life (Mensching, 1966: 261). The Protestant Church encourages people to take responsibility for their own lives, and to account for their individual actions (Nuss, 1993: 27). The Protestant tradition might manifest itself today in the pro-active approach of German employees towards tasks and their independence during task performance.

3.5.2 Internal meetings

Meetings play a major role in communication between individuals in business. Though this format of interaction is common for both the German and Russian business environments, the empirical investigation has identified a number of intercultural deviations concerning three subjects: attitude towards formal meetings, preparation for meetings, and meeting procedure. Each of these subjects will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

3.5.2.1 Attitude towards formal meetings

Meetings are very important in the German business environment. They serve many purposes, including sharing information, discussing ongoing business issues, exchanging experiences, making decisions, and solving problems. Furthermore, precise appointments and a clear statement the subject of the meetings help the German employees to structure their day and prioritize their tasks.

In the Russian business environment, meetings are also very important, and they serve similar purposes. The major differences can be observed in the attitude towards formal appointments. A brief discussion of ongoing issues among two or three participants does not require scheduling an appointment in Russia; the participants just meet and talk. Such practices usually irritate the German expatriates, who try to introduce a more structured approach. The merits of such a structured approach, however, are not fully appreciated by their Russian colleagues. Table 18 shows quotes from the interviews illustrating the attitudes of the German and Russian colleagues towards formal meetings. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 18. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards formal meetings

Respondent	Quote
Matthias	They talk the whole day in my office. […] As a result, efficiency decreases. In Germany, when you have phases of intense work, you need to have a quiet minute. It does not happen here. […] But I cannot follow everything. Sometimes they [the Russian employees] have very important discussions.
Georg	First of all, I created meetings […] and forced the department heads to conduct technical meetings with their employees every two weeks, so they can talk about daily business, so they can hear and discuss ongoing issues from current projects.
Michael	I have tried to establish regular meetings within my department, so they meet each other regularly. Depending on the requirements, the interval between the meetings may vary. It can be weekly or monthly. These meetings are necessary to review the ongoing tasks, what has already been done, and what is still necessary to do. However, it was not that easy. I always had a feeling that meetings were perceived as not useful and not purposeful. They prefer to talk directly to each other about certain things instead of organizing a meeting for this purpose. Thus, I believe that they prefer personal contact for certain topics instead of meetings with multiple participants.
Anna	I do not know if it is some kind of democracy: Let's now listen to the head of the department XYZ or something like this; let's meet once a week and let's inform everybody about your plans, about your achievements. For Russians, this kind of pointless talk (говорильня) is not typical.

The interviews revealed two major characteristics of the German cultural script related to formal meetings: the emphasis on appointments for any kind of discussion and the

availability of regular meetings, also known as “jour fixe.” Thus, German employees emphasize the importance of making an appointment for any kind of discussion, unless it involves a small clarification that can be made briefly on the phone or via e-mail. For example, Matthias describes the typical behavior in the German business environment as follows: “When you want to talk about something, first, you make an appointment (Termin) first, and then you hold a meeting (Besprechung). And in the meeting, you discuss project-related issues or anything else.” Similarly, employees may make an appointment for themselves, and block out some timeslot in their calendar if they need to concentrate on a particular task without being disturbed.

Furthermore, German employees see a great value in holding regular departmental meetings. Such meetings are usually scheduled as part of a series for several months or years; they take place at regular intervals, i.e., on a weekly, bi-weekly, or a monthly basis, on the same weekday at the same time. The purpose of these meetings is regular communication between employees of the same department or between employees working on the same project regarding ongoing, work-related issues, such as a presentation of current tasks, respective achievements, discussion of problems and potential solutions, or exchange of experiences. In the German business environment, regular meetings are part of the daily routine and are considered as “common sense.”

In contrast, the Russian cultural script related to formal meetings shows an affinity to personal communication among employees without making any appointments beforehand. According to Matthias’ perception, “here [in Russia], appointments and meetings do not exist, you talk right now, if necessary.” If employees need to discuss ongoing issues, they do not hesitate to speak to each other right away. If their counterpart is busy at that particular moment, he or she offers to come back later, suggesting an approximate time when he or she will be less busy. Usually, no formal appointment is arranged, and no particular time is specified; the initiator of the conversation simply comes back anytime during suggested timeslot. Moreover, there is no direct translation of German word “Termin” into the Russian language.

Furthermore, the more people know each other, the more they feel free to address each other at any time. Frank summarizes his observations in this regard as follows: “colleagues very often address other colleagues whom they already know well, without any hesitation. They approach your desk and keep waiting there whether you are talking on the phone, you are having a conversation with somebody else or small meeting at your

desk, or if you are just concentrated on something else. No problem at all, everybody can disturb you!" This phenomenon is particularly present in open-space offices, a very popular office concept among large German companies.

Though informal communication is widespread in Russian companies, formal meetings are also common. Usually, formal meetings are organized by the supervisor of the department or by the project leader, and aim to fulfil their respective management needs. Depending on the management need, Russian employees differentiate between three types of meetings: "planyerka" (планёрка), "operativka" (оперативка), and "soveshchaniye" (совещание). Planyerka refers to a short regular meeting, which take place on a weekly basis, for planning and assigning ongoing tasks to the employee of the department or project. Operativka implies discussion and solving problems related to daily routine. It is scheduled on short notice according to demand. Finally, soveshchaniye discusses strategic issues among management employees. This kind of meeting is typically related to a particular topic and is organized when required, rarely on a regular basis.[62]

These three types of formal meetings, together with informal spontaneous meetings, cover all of the needs for internal communication in the Russian business environment. In this light, Russian employees do not feel any need for regular meetings or jour fixes,[63] which are typical for the German cultural script. Moreover, the Russian cultural script for dealing with mistakes contradicts one of the main purposes of the German regular jour fixe: the open discussion of ongoing difficulties and problems. Thus, Russian employees tend to use the regular meetings arranged by German managers to present their achievements and show themselves in the best light in front of their German expatriate managers.

Two examples reveal further aspects of the attitude towards formal meetings in German-Russian business interactions.

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[62] Retrieved October 10, 2013, from http://delovoymir.biz/ru/articles/view/?did=5714

[63] This applies for the regular meetings between employees who hold positions up to middle management, because they have more time and opportunities for informal communication. In contrast, middle and top management tends to have a positive attitude towards holding regular meetings, because they have less time or opportunities for informal interactions. Such a meeting format, however, is not new for middle and top management, as it corresponds to the format of the "soveshchaniye," typical for the Russian environment.

Example 10. Delayed dial-in for an internal jour fixe

One German company introduced weekly and bi-weekly meetings to ensure internal communication between multiple stakeholders. The meetings were held in the form of telephone conferences, because the participants included managers from the German headquarters as well as Russian colleagues on business trips. However, these telephone conferences did not go smoothly; while the German colleagues and some Russian colleagues dialed in on time, some other Russian employees did not show the necessary discipline. The German expatriate manager of this company could not comprehend such behavior: "There are people who simply do not understand that you have to dial in on time, no matter where you are at the moment. And there are no excuses, even if you have a customer meeting, because the appointment [the telephone conference] is fixed, and everybody knows about this appointment, so it should be possible for everybody to plan his week. It is not difficult! However, some people do have difficulties – that is it."

This example shows that the German expatriate manager respects this appointment and requests the same from his employees. In general, any kind of appointment is respected in the German business environment; rescheduling of a jour fixe is not common unless something urgent suddenly comes up. Moreover, according to the German cultural script, German employees attach a lot of importance to regular communication, especially because managers from headquarters are participating in the call.

On the other hand, some Russian employees perceive these telephone conferences to be less important or even a waste of time. They do not understand why their participation is necessary: in the end, in light of the Russian cultural script for task performance,[64] it is the role of the boss to ensure communication between departments. Thus, the Russian employees do not take these calls seriously. As a result, they do not set a high value on timely dialing in or even participating at all if the call should overlap with a customer meeting, which is a valid excuse in the eyes of the Russian employees.

The German expatriate manager interprets such behavior on the part of his Russian colleagues to the lack of planning skills and punctuality. In his interpretation, he follows his habitual German cultural script related to formal meetings while attaching a lot of

[64] Cf. Chapter 3.5.1.3.

importance to the jour fixe. On the other hand, he opts for the established Russian stereotypes of unpunctuality and the inability to plan while attributing their behavior.

This incident revealed differences in the cultural scripts related to regular meetings and uncovered respective lacunas for both the German and Russian sides. Table 19 provides an overview of these lacunas.

Table 19. Lacunas in Example 10: Delayed dial-in for an internal jour fixe

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** It is role of the manager to ensure the sharing of information with other managers **Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Jour fixes bring no added value; there are other means of communication **Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Regular communication occurs in the form of informal meetings	Russian employees are unpunctual and lack planning skills.
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** An employee presents his task in front of the other managers without having his supervisor as an intermediary **Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Jour fixes facilitate internal interaction **Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Weekly jour fixes **Lacuna of etiquette (lacuna of activity):** Punctual dial-in and obligatory participation in the jour fixe	Participation in the jour fixe is a waste of time; it is better to use this time for something more important.

Example 11. Rejection of an initiative for informal meetings

At first glance, the incident described in this example seems to contradict the German and Russian cultural scripts related to formal meetings. One German expatriate manager, having recognized the importance of informal interactions, wanted to introduce weekly

informal meetings with the Russian engineers of his company so they "can have a chat over a cup of tea on Friday evening." Thus, he suggested his idea to the CEO of the local subsidiary, who is originally from Russia, with following argumentation: "A – we can practice English a bit and B – we can communicate a bit." However, the CEO immediately rejected this idea because, in his opinion, it would not work. According to the CEO, "you would need an agenda, a plan, a procedure to explain how this meeting would be conducted." This answer totally perplexed German expatriate manager. However, he had to accept it and give up his idea; in the end, the Russian CEO should know better how things work in Russia. In turn, the German employee attributed the need for an agenda and a definition of procedure to the characteristics of the Russian hierarchical leadership style. He summarized what he learned as follows: "it is almost impossible to succeed here without any guidance."

This example illustrates how incomplete knowledge about the cultural peculiarities of one's counterparts and the lack of explanations could even increase the gap in understanding. The German expatriate manager intended to use the informal meeting format to facilitate communication in the local office. At first glance, this intent is perfectly in line with the Russian cultural script related to formal meetings. However, the context of his intent encompassed two further circumstances that contradict the habitual Russian cultural script related to formal meetings, thus justifying the negative response of the Russian CEO. First, informal communication, which is typical for the Russian business environment, usually occurs among colleagues at the same hierarchical level. Informal communication between employees at different hierarchical levels is possible, but only if they have already managed to establish a trusting personal relationship among themselves. Second, informal communication in the Russian business environment envisages no appointments or enforced regularity. It occurs spontaneously, if it is necessary.

The intent of the German expatriate, however, does not fulfill the pre-requisites for informal communication that are habitual for the Russian business environment. First, the German expatriate manager and the involved engineers had different hierarchical positions, and his statement to the CEO clearly indicated that he did not have a strong personal relationship with the local engineers. Second, he intended to have regular meetings at pre-defined time. Indeed, if the Russian engineers had received an invitation for a meeting, organized by their supervisor, they would have tried to classify this

meeting according to three common meeting types in order to be able to prepare themselves accordingly. Thus, they would have needed additional information, as indicated by the Russian CEO in his reply.

Finally, another important aspect in this example concerns the suggested timing of the informal meetings. In the Russian business environment, it is not typical to organize any meetings for late afternoons on Friday because employees might leave the office earlier for the weekend, or, if they are physically present in the office, they may already be preparing mentally for the weekend.

Table 20 summarizes the lacunas that are revealed in this incident:

Table 20. Lacunas in Example 11: Rejection of initiative for informal meetings

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Informal communication occurs spontaneously among employees at the same hierarchical level **Lacuna of etiquette (lacuna of activity):** Scheduling meetings late in the afternoon on Friday	Russians are not flexible; they need clear guidelines, which is typical for a steep hierarchy
Russian perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Informal communication with manager from a higher hierarchical level; informal communication on regular basis **Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Meetings are possible at any time during official working hours	

The considerations of the preceding paragraphs suggest that the German-Russian interculture related to formal meetings mainly incorporates characteristics from the German cultural script. The evolution of this interculture may follow two paths, depending on the position of the German expatriate in the local company. One path is

followed by the expatriates in a lower hierarchical position, who have close interactions with their Russian team. This is usually the case in open offices. These expatriates notice the intensity of the informal communication and its positive and negative sides rather quickly. For example, Matthias commented on his attitude toward this phenomenon: "On the one hand, I enjoy this direct contact, […] on the other hand, there are no moments of silence or phases of focused working. Thus, you need to postpone concentrated work on projects to late evenings or your leisure time." After some time, the constant disturbance starts to irritate the German colleagues more and more, and they introduce weekly meetings "to summarize the topics that occurred during the week in a focused manner."

Another path is taken by German expatriates with higher hierarchical positions. They usually have separate offices; however, as a result, they lack the possibility to observe the intensity of the informal communication. Given this lack of internal communication, they introduce regular meetings, which had proved to be an efficient communication tool in their own usual business environment.

Russian employees demonstrate a rather reserved attitude towards such innovations because they do not understand their benefit. However, they obey the initiative of their German supervisors and take part in these meetings, often using them to present their achievements in front of their German expatriate managers. Such behavior has attracted the attention of Michael, who observed: "In such meetings, it often gets to the situation in which you can observe 'trench warfare' among the Russian employees. It often happens that they have to assert themselves, have to make their point. And it gets difficult if a lot of them want to do it at the same time." However, this German expatriate manager did not give up the idea of regular jour fixes, but he responded to the "urgent need of the Russian employees to present their achievements" by introducing regular individual meetings with his subordinates. Because such a communication format is known in the Russian business environment, and because it enables the establishment of a personal relationship between the supervisor and subordinate, which is very important in the Russian business environment,[65] Russian employees accept these one-on-one meetings very well.

[65] See Chapter 3.5.3.3 for further details regarding the importance of personal relationships.

3.5.2.2 Preparation for meetings

Once a meeting is scheduled, both the German and Russian respondents reported intercultural differences in the attitudes towards meeting preparation. German employees take the preparation process rather seriously, whereas Russian employees tend to invest less time into preparation and use the meeting itself for the development and discussion of different scenarios. Table 21 gives the quotes of the German and Russian respondents on this subject.

Table 21. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards the preparation of meetings

Respondent	Quote
Oliver	In our company, it is an aspect of company culture that responsible people prepare handouts for each meeting or for each agenda topic. Normally, they should be ready two days before the meeting so that the meeting participants can look at it and provide their questions. However, some of them are only delivered in the evening before the meeting.
Volker	We have prepared monthly reporting meetings, in which each division presents two pages. However, we needed to explain every month, again and again, what it is for, why they need to prepare it, etc.
Yelena	If they [the German employees] have a piece of paper, they can discuss it [the subject]. If they do not have a piece of paper, they cannot imagine it, so they do not talk about it. I do not know […] perhaps they have problems with imagination or abstract thinking.

According to the German cultural script for meeting preparation, each meeting with top or middle management requires thorough preparation. Usually, such meetings aim at discussing the current situation and potential scenarios for future development with subsequent decision making. Thus, it is the role of the employees to prepare everything in advance and lead the discussion on the pros and cons of potential scenarios. Regarding the required amount of preparation for a meeting with German expatriate managers,

Yelena observes: “First of all, you need to come to the meeting so well prepared that you should know the subject in the form of direct answers, but you should also know its background and several possible scenarios for further development. You should also prepare a couple of facts, just in case.”

It is also common to prepare some handouts for a management meeting and distribute them to the participants in advance. Thus, every participant has all the necessary background information beforehand and is able to carry on a focused discussion in the meeting.

At the same time, the German cultural script for meeting preparation also allows for less thorough preparation for particular types meetings, such as daily meetings among employees of the similar hierarchical level, or brainstorming. In these cases, employees spend much less or even no time for preparation, relying on their knowledge and previous experiences.

According to the Russian cultural script, preparation for meetings generally takes much less time. Anna describes it as follows: “[for] Russian companies, their approach is ‘let’s talk.’ Generally, everyone comes to the meeting not prepared at all, relying on their communication skills and experience, hoping that they can provide some examples or convince with their personality.”

Similarly, Russian employees put less effort into preparing for management jour fixes aiming at providing a status update. It is not common in the Russian business environment to prepare some slides in advance and fill in any pre-defined templates about the current status of work; the employees prefer to summarize the relevant information on the spot during the meeting and do not invest time preparing slides in advance.

On the other hand, meetings for the discussion of important strategic issues or initiatives require more thorough preparation. In this case, the responsible persons would also prepare some handouts and present their proposal during the meeting. The circle of participants at such meetings usually includes top managers or other decision-makers. In this case, the Russian cultural script for meeting preparation matches the German one.

The following two examples illustrate additional interactions between the German and Russian cultural scripts.

Example 12. Preparation for a weekly jour fixe

A German expatriate manager, the head of the strategy department in a Russian subsidiary, was responsible for preparing and conducting weekly jour fixes among the heads of the divisions and other supporting departments. The jour fixes took place every Monday morning and aimed at ensuring communication regarding ongoing tasks and their status between these departments. The jour fixes required some preparation from the involved departments and the head of the strategy department. The heads of the departments had to submit two slides with department-related information to the strategy department by noon on Friday. After this, the strategy head had to aggregate all the information and check it for consistency. Though the departments received a weekly reminder on Thursday evening to provide slides by noon on Friday, the information was rarely submitted on time or even submitted at all. Thus, the strategy department did not have enough time to aggregate the information and distribute the slides. As a result, the CEO, who was also a German expatriate, and the CFO rarely received the slides prior to the meeting.

After some vain efforts to get the slides from the responsible persons on time, the head of the strategy department decided to make some adjustments to the preparation process. From that time on, he requested the heads of the respective departments to provide just the relevant information, which he filled into the templates on his own. Thus, he took on greater responsibilities and made it possible for the CEO and CFO to receive their slides in advance on more regular basis.

This incident shows that German expatriates try to introduce the processes that have proven to be efficient in German headquarters into the Russian business environment. However, Russian employees did not fully accept these processes. Though they participated in the meetings and even gave positive feedback regarding value of these meetings,[66] they did not understand the need for filling in some templates in advance. From their point of view, it was a waste of time, because they were communicating the same information orally during the meeting.

This incident also reveals another aspect of German-Russian business communication: differences in the cultural scripts related to the responsibility for task assignment. The

[66] In this example, participants of the meeting represent middle and top management.

person responsible for preparing the meeting has no supervisory role over the heads of the divisions and related functional departments. As a result, the division heads tend to assign a rather low priority to the task and do not care if they deliver it after the deadline.

Finally, this incident shows once again that both Germans and Russians interpret and evaluate the behavior of their respective counterparts based on their own habitual cultural scripts, ascribing said behavior to established stereotypes. Thus, German expatriates see in this incident confirmation of the Russian stereotypes of a lack of punctuality and obligingness, whereas Russian employees attribute this urge for thorough preparation to the stereotypes of sticking to the processes and a lack of imaginative thinking. The respective axiological and visible lacunas are presented in Table 22.

Table 22. Lacunas in Example 12: Preparation for a weekly jour fixe

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Only the boss is responsible for task assignment **Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Status update handouts are not required	Russians lack punctuality and obligingness
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Preparation of status update handouts **Lacuna of recorded text (object lacuna):** Pre-defined templates for status update	Waste of time; Germans stick to the processes too much and lack imaginative thinking

This example demonstrates that German employees tend to spend more time on meeting preparation. However, such an attitude cannot be generalized. The incident described in the next example shows the inverse attitude towards meeting preparation.

Example 13. Preparation for a meeting with Russian officials

One Russian respondent reported about an incident that occurred repeatedly both in his current company and in his previous workplace (both companies are Russian subsidiaries

of large German industrial companies). Regularly, the top management of the company, composed of German employees, expressed their wish to meet some officials from the Russian Federation or the city of Moscow[67] without proposing a concrete topic for discussion. The Russian employees were surprised by such an attitude on the part of the top management, because you need to have a concrete proposition to make an appointment with public officials – otherwise you may not even get an appointment. The Russian respondents said that it took a lot of time to explain and to convince the top management that you need to have concrete proposal if you want to meet with any officials.

This example shows that German and Russian employees have diverging notions regarding initial meetings with officials. The German top management wanted to have an open discussion with the Russian officials regarding potential collaboration. In their view, such a meeting should take on a brainstorming format, which does not require any thorough preparations. Following their experiences in the German business environment, they did not want to present any concrete proposals, because such proposals could narrow the scope of discussion, forcing them to miss other opportunities.

On the other hand, the Russian cultural script stipulates that discussions with officials require concrete business proposals. Brainstorming as a meeting format is not widespread in the political realm. Thus, officials may consider such a meeting to be a waste of time or as an indication of lacking lack of professionalism. At the same time, the presentation of a concrete business proposal does not mean a limitation in the scope of discussion to the Russians. On the contrary, new ideas may emerge during the discussion of an initial proposal, leading to even more business opportunities.

While interpreting this incident, the Russian respondent refers to his habitual cultural script as well as to his previous experiences with German expatriates who tried to introduce their "German" way of doing things in Russian subsidiaries. He interprets the top management's idea as another wish to go against the norms of the Russian business environment, perceiving some kind of superiority in this behavior. Following similar interpretation patterns, the German managers may attribute the arguments of their Russian colleagues to the lack of flexibility in Russian hierarchical structures.

[67] Because politics and business are interlinked in Russia, it is common to discuss major initiatives, such as localization or large public tenders for infrastructure-related initiatives, first with the political representatives.

This incident revealed further differences in the cultural scripts related to meeting preparation and uncovered respective lacunas for both the German and Russian sides. Table 23 summarizes these lacunas.

Table 23. Lacunas in Example 13: Preparation for a meeting with Russian officials

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Preparation of a concrete proposal for a meeting with officials	Lack of flexibility in Russian hierarchical structures
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of communication form (lacuna of activity):** Brainstorming as a meeting format with officials	Germans do not respect our way of doing things

The examples and quotes presented in Table 21 demonstrate that the German-Russian interculture of meeting preparation primarily contains characteristics of the German cultural script. German expatriate managers tend to introduce elements of the preparation process that are typical for German headquarters, such as preparation of handouts and distribution of materials beforehand. Furthermore, German expatriate managers require their employees to have prepare thoroughly for the meeting, as is common in the German business environment. Russian employees adapt their behavior to these requirements.

3.5.2.3 Meeting procedure

Both German and Russian respondents repeatedly reported differences in the procedure for meetings. While the overall meeting structure remained the same, the observed differences refer to the length of the introductory phase, the lines of argumentation, adherence to the main topic of the meeting, overall discipline in the meeting, and the significance of the conclusion. Table 24 summarizes the quotes illustrating perceived differences during the meeting itself as well as the respondents' attitudes towards these differences.

Table 24. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards meeting procedure

Respondent	Quote
Anna	Before the Germans proceed to the discussion of the topic itself, the Russians will have already lost their motivation. […] This is 100 per cent the difference, i.e., this sticking to the procedure (процедурщина); its degree is different.
Michael	Group dynamics would be different [in Germany], I would say, less on an emotional level, but more on a factual level, where it is easier to manage the discussion. It is almost impossible to manage an emotional discussion, at least for me, with my experiences. […] And when many people are talking simultaneously, it is difficult to intervene.
Yelena	In any communication, and in business communication, they [the German employees] do not cross the line, i.e., when we discuss job candidates or somebody's promotion, we never engage in personalities (не переходим на личности), as we would say in Russia; we never discuss some of the personal characteristics of this person. We discuss with a very pragmatic approach towards the skills and experiences that a person has or does not have to perform certain task.
Olga	I believe that it is more common for us [the Russian employees] to be loud in meetings, to defend our point of view, going over to shouting or becoming personal. […] I have never heard them [the German employees] losing their temper in the meeting. Perhaps, the most that I have observed is when a pen was dropped on the table…
Anna	Generally, a German manager cannot afford to show his negative emotions. He keeps his temper more often than a Russian manager does. As I understand it, it is indecent in Germany. They do not show their true emotions.

Respondent	Quote
Alexander	All Russians are short-tempered; they start to shout quickly, engage in personalities very often. The German colleagues demonstrate these [traits] very rarely. Very rarely have I observed the German colleagues engage in personalities. In Germany you will very rarely hear somebody telling you to your face that you are fool (дурак). In Russia, it is common.
Frank	Regarding meeting culture, in Germany, we hold a meeting, take half an hour, and then it is over. In Russia, they bring some coffee first, make phone calls, play with their Blackberries, and write e-mails during the meeting. […] It is not a problem at all, everybody can disturb you. Actually, in Germany, if you know your colleague well, you would say "oh, you are in a meeting right now, I'll come back later." In Russia, they interrupt meetings without asking.

The quotes presented in Table 24 show that the German cultural script for meeting procedure incorporates three main distinguishing characteristics:[68] a clear structure for the discussion, fact-based argumentation, and adherence to the topic of the meeting. Thus, each meeting undergoes three main phases: introduction, discussion of the initial topic, and conclusion. In the introductory phase, the organizer of the meeting outlines the purpose and structure of the meeting. Depending on the number of participants in the meeting, and the extent to which they know each other, the introductory phase can be longer or shorter. Generally, the larger the circle of participants and the less the participants know each other, the longer the introductory phase lasts.

After the introductory phase, the discussion of the initial topic begins. This discussion follows the structure defined during the preparation of the meeting. Handouts prepared in advance or an electronic presentation projected during the meeting aim at supporting this structure as well as avoiding any deviations from the discussion of the initial topic. If the

[68] These characteristics are identified by contrasting the German cultural script with the Russian cultural script for meeting procedure. Thus, some other characteristics may be revealed by contrasting this script with that of any other culture.

need for discussing any other issues arises, it is common to make a new appointment or to postpone these issues until the end of the meeting, provided the discussion of the initial topic is finished beforehand and all meeting participants agree to discuss these new issues. Similarly, any distractions, such as phone calls or e-mails, during the meeting are not common, except in some urgent cases. A person expecting such an interruption is supposed to warn the meeting participants about any possible inconveniences and apologize for them during the introductory phase of the meeting.

During the discussion, German employees argue with fact-based arguments. Personal attacks or the demonstration of any emotions – especially negative emotions – are not common in the German business environment. As Yelena observes: "They are very reserved. I have not seen any German who would have shouted. […] He [the German expatriate manager] simply states that he does not like how this discussion is proceeding and suggests either that we come back to the initial topic of the discussion and take respective decisions or that I leave the meeting right now and we make another appointment. 'I cannot spend so much time for nothing' he states in a rather harsh tone, i.e., he says it in a calm way; he does not shout; he does not scold: he does not use rude words; but still he says it in a rather harsh tone."

Finally, the concluding phase of the meeting aims to ensure a mutual understanding of the discussed issues and defining definition of any future work on the topic. During the final minutes of the meeting, the major points and decisions made during the meeting are summarized once again; the next steps are defined, and the responsible persons are assigned. Thus, every participant knows his or her tasks until the next meeting.

According to the Russian cultural script for meeting procedure, each meeting consists of the same three phases: introduction, discussion of the initial topic, and conclusion. However, the length and the major characteristics of each phase differ from those of the German cultural script.

The introductory phase is rather short in the Russian business environment. It consists of a brief statement of the purpose of the meeting and a rough outline of its structure. Even when the meeting involves participants who do not know each other well, the round of introductions is not obligatory if the organizer of the meeting, who usually has a higher hierarchical position, knows all the participants.

The initial discussion starts almost immediately. It follows a rough structure, usually presented in the form of agenda topics or meeting purposes. Deviations from the initial topic of the meeting are common. Viktor describes the behavior of the Russian employees during a meeting: "If it is a meeting between Russian colleagues, people diverge more from the initial topic. [...]. It is kind of a particularity in the meetings between Russian employees: If something happens, they need to share it, to talk about it. [...] If something happened, it is important for them to show their point of view, to state their opinion and suggestion, and to push these suggestions through." Such behavior enables them to discuss the recent issues immediately, without waiting for a new appointment, and to share relevant information in very quick manner. At the same time, the initiator of the meeting, who usually has a higher hierarchical position, can easily stop such discussion by assertive interference if he considers it to be necessary.

Just as Russian employees accept deviations from the main topic of the meeting, they also do not mind disturbances in form of phone calls. When a phone is ringing, it is common to answer with short response, such as "I am currently in a meeting – call you back later" or "please call me back later." If a meeting is considered less important, a slightly longer conversation on the phone is possible. For example, during my interview with one Russian respondent, he answered two phone calls from his family members. The conversations lasted several minutes, and they discussed their plans for the evening without him leaving the meeting room.

The show of emotions in public is inherent in the Russian business environment in general, and in the Russian cultural script for meeting procedure in particular. Russian employees do not hide their emotions during meetings. This applies to employees at all hierarchical levels. Anna comments on this: "For a Russian person, there are no restraining factors in the culture. If you are furious, you show it."

Similarly, the discussion of business-related topics in a meeting is not free of emotions. Facts are not considered the only means of argumentation; it is common to argue with "gut feelings" or even to make personal attacks. Olga observes: "It is common for us [Russian employees], when the arguments are over but they have not yet convinced their counterpart, our employees would say: 'I have worked so many years, I know this, that is why I say so.' […] German employees never do so."

Finally, the concluding phase of the meeting, like the introductory phase, is rather short. It is confined to thanking the participants for their participation and to a rough planning

of the next steps, e.g., the approximate timing of the next meeting and the main targets until then. Anna summed up the typical concluding phase as follows: “And we go out of the room without a clearly defined plan of action, without any decisions on who is responsible for what. This is typical practice in Russian companies.” Such a way of doing things, however, is in line with the Russian cultural script related to the responsibility for task assignment. It is the responsibility of the boss to structure the overall target agreed upon in the meeting, structure the respective task packages, and subsequently assign them to his subordinates.[69]

The following three examples illustrate how the German and Russian cultural scripts manifest themselves in daily business interactions, and how the involved counterparts interpret these situations.

Example 14. Procedure for a cross-functional meeting

A German expatriate manager recently started his assignment with a Russian subsidiary in the position of a division head. Together with an external partner, his division initiated work on a study relevant for this department. So far, all of the major cornerstones of the study have been defined and agreed with the management of both companies. The next step was to detail the concept of the study. For this purpose, the German manager decided to organize a cross-functional meeting, so other departments can contribute their input in the conceptual phase and have more added value from this study for their departments as well.

The company has already conducted a number of similar studies, so the overall process was well described and structured. They had a list of guiding questions and the necessary templates. Thus, the German manager started preparing for the meeting “from a German point of view.” He took the templates, the list of open questions from the previous meeting, and the input from the partner company. He imagined “that they will go systematically through all the items and develop a concept together.”

The meeting, however, took a totally different course. First, the Russian employees raised “fundamental questions” regarding the points that were already agreed upon in the previous management meetings. Thus, “a vivid discussion” on these points began among the participants. The German manager tried to stop this discussion, indicating that these

[69] See Chapter 3.5.1.3 for further details

points have been agreed upon already. However, this led to an even more emotional discussion, with multiple persons talking at the same time. This perplexed the German manager even more. He had no idea how to manage this discussion and decided to wait until his Russian colleagues got exhausted. Indeed, the discussion was very emotional, but eventually it settled down. At that moment, the German manager decided to interfere once more and summarize the main points from the discussion. This time his interference was more successful: "all of the employees were exhausted and nodded." Afterwards, the discussion of the planned items could start.

The German manager said that he was truly surprised by such behavior on the part of his Russian colleagues at that moment. He discussed this issue with his Russian friends and got confirmation that this was completely normal behavior. Today, the German manager no longer considers such behavior to be surprising. Moreover, he accepts such behavior on the part of his Russian colleagues: "When it happens, you need to allow room for the discussion, to get involved with it. And eventually, it is over. And you can bring your own agenda points and even reach some agreements."

This incident reveals several aspects of the German and Russian cultural scripts. The German employee prepared a structured meeting and was hoping for a constructive discussion with his colleagues, following his habitual German cultural scripts of meeting preparation and meeting procedure. However, it is not common in German business environment to take a lot of time for discussing already agreed points. Moreover, it is not typical to lead an emotional discussion. In his first attempt, he decided to act once more according to his habitual cultural script, appealing to the initial topic of the discussion and offering factual argumentation. When it did not succeed, his previous experiences – i.e., the German cultural script – could not suggest any other solution to this previously unknown situation. So he decided to leave the German cultural script aside and simply wait. In this case, patient waiting proved to be an efficient solution; it subsequently extended his individual cultural script in similar situations.

The Russian employees also acted according to their habitual cultural script for meeting procedure, which allows diverging from the main topic as well as leading an emotional discussion. Furthermore, they might have perceived the initial interference of the German manager as not insistent enough and interpreted it as a kind of authorization for further discussion. Generally, the meeting followed its habitual path in the opinion of the Russian employees.

As a result, the German manager experienced more deviation from his habitual cultural script for meeting procedure than his Russian colleagues did. Thus, the number of lacunas uncovered in this incident is not equal for both sides. Table 25 provides an overview of the respective lacunas.

Table 25. Lacunas in Example 14: Procedure for a cross-functional meeting

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Showing emotions in a meeting; talking simultaneously **Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Showing emotions during a meeting **Lacunas of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Extensive questioning of already agreed points; several persons talking simultaneously	German manager is surprised and bewildered; he does not know how to react
Russian perspective		German manager "authorized" the discussion

Example 15. Lecturing an employee during a meeting

A German expatriate was assigned to Russia with the objective of building up a new function in the local organization. In her role, she was responsible for the development of the respective concept under the supervision of the Russian manager of the local organization. The process of conceptual development consisted of multiple milestones that the German employee had to prepare and that the Russian manager had to approve. Once the German employee had elaborated one of the milestones, she needed a decision from her supervisor to be able to move forward. Thus, she presented her work to her supervisor, and other colleagues involved in the topic, during a meeting. The meeting was conducted mainly in English because the German employee did not yet feel secure in communicating in Russian. After the German employee had finished her presentation, it

was time for the Russian manager to make a decision. However, instead of making a decision, the Russian manager suddenly started to explain to German employee the proper way to address Russian people: by their first name and patronymic (before, she had addressed him by his first name and the polite form of "Vy" (Вы), which corresponds to the German "Sie"). The German employee turned this comment into a joke, transferring the Russian form of address to her German name.

However, she was very worried about this comment afterwards: what if she is too impatient in her behavior, and what if she lacked cultural sensitivity? Her major problem was that she could not remember such long Russian names that consisted of a first name and a patronymic. Fortunately, her Russian colleagues managed to calm her down and suggested that she did not take this incident seriously. She continued to address people by their first names.

This incident reveals two diverging aspects of German-Russian business interactions: the common form of address and the interruption of a meeting to explain cultural issues in front of all of the other participants.

The common form of address in Germany consists of "Herr" or "Frau" and the last name. However, in cross-cultural meetings, which are usually conducted in English, German employees adopt the American form of address that consists only of the first name. Thus, the German employee in the example above was acting according to her habitual cultural script.

In Russia, the traditional polite form of address consists of the first name and the patronymic. This form is used in the business environment to address colleagues with a higher hierarchical position, elder or less-known colleagues. Colleagues who know each other very well and have the same hierarchical position usually use their short names. However, it should be noted that the increasing amount of cross-cultural contact is bringing similar changes as in Germany: Addressing colleagues by their full first name is becoming more and more common in cross-cultural communities, especially among younger employees.

The second aspect of this incident concerns the fact that the Russian manager interrupted the discussion of the subject of the meeting and started to explain to the German employee the common way of addressing people in Russia in front of all of her other

Russian colleagues. This surprised the German subordinate very much, because it contradicts her habitual cultural script for meeting procedure.

However, as the German employee was reflecting on this incident during our interview, she admitted that she "might have been too pushy, because [she] needed this decision to be able to move forward." On the other hand, the Russian manager was apparently not ready to make this decision at that moment. Thus, there are two potential explanations for his behavior: First, it is not common in the Russian business environment for the boss to admit openly that he is not ready to make a decision. It may undermine his reputation in front of his subordinates.[70] Second, the Russian manager, indeed, might have perceived the behavior of his subordinate as "too pushy" and decided to "teach her a lesson," making clear the differences between their roles.

Thus, this incident revealed further lacunas for both the German and Russian sides. Table 26 provides an overview of these lacunas.

Table 26. Lacunas in Example 15. Lecturing an employee during a meeting

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employees do not "demand" decisions from their supervisors **Language usage lacuna (lacuna of activity):** Form of address **Lacunas of etiquette (lacuna of activity):** Comments regarding one's own knowledge are possible during the meeting and in front of other colleagues	Surprised, undermined in her competencies, not respected

[70] This aspect is part of the Russian cultural script for dealing with mistakes. For further details, see Chapter 3.5.1.5.

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employees may ask for decisions; boss may admit a lack of knowledge **Language usage lacuna (lacuna of activity):** Form of address	Attacked in his position; German employee exceeded her authority

This example shows that both the Russian and German employees interpreted this incident based on their respective habitual cultural scripts. For the German employee, such a comment from her supervisor meant a serious questioning of her competencies, though her Russian colleagues did not take it so seriously. Similarly, the Russian manager interpreted the behavior of his subordinate as impertinent and reacted according to the script common in the Russian business environment.

Example 16. Turning off cell phones during conferences

One German respondent, who held a rather lower hierarchical position in the local subsidiary, was surprised by the habit of his Russian colleagues to answer the phone whenever it rings, especially if their supervisor is calling. One of his most striking experiences was during an important conference organized for his colleagues at the Russian office. At the beginning of the conference, the moderator requested all participants to switch off their cell phones. This policy had been authorized beforehand by the head of Russian subsidiary. However, to the great surprise of the German respondent, one of his Russian colleagues nevertheless did not follow the request and left the conference room during the discussion to answer his cell phone.

Though the German respondent was not sure who was calling his Russian colleague, he assumed that it was his boss. In the opinion of the German respondent, this example confirms the fact that "hierarchy and power drive business in Russia" and that "you never contradict your chef." Furthermore, he described his attitude towards this situation: "From my side, I can switch off my cell phone without any hesitation, also during vacations or weekends. It [the behavior of his Russian colleagues] is a kind of servitude."

This incident reveals differences in the attitudes towards the request of switching off cell phones during an important meeting. Following his habitual cultural script, the German employee took this request seriously and switched off his phone without any hesitation. For him, this conference is his most important appointment at that point of time; other things can wait. For him, only one action can have the highest priority at one time. Moreover, disregarding the request of the moderator and answering the phone would denote a lack of respect from his side.

His Russian colleague also acted according to his habitual cultural script for meeting procedure, which is "less strict" about phone calls during the meeting. The Russian business environment assumes fast reactions. Thus, Russian employees cannot allow themselves to switch off their phones for some time, especially if they expect that something important should happen. In such situations, it is common for Russian employees to disregard the request to switch off their phones and put them only on mute so that the call does not disturb others. At the same time, they are able to react quickly and enable others to move forward.

Just as both sides acted according to their habitual cultural scripts, they also interpret the behavior of one another according to their own cultural norms and their stereotypes about other cultures. Thus, the German respondent perceives the behavior of his Russian colleague to be disrespectful and attributes it to particularities of the Russian hierarchical leadership style, whereas the Russian employees may view the behavior of their German colleague to be a confirmation of the stereotype of firm adherence to regulations.

Table 27 summarizes the visible and axiological lacunas for both sides.

Table 27. Lacunas in Example 16: Turning off cell phones during conferences

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Request to switch off cell phones is ignored	Disrespectful behavior, manifestation of Russian hierarchical leadership style
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of etiquette (lacuna of activity):** Request to switch off cell phones is obligatory	Adhering too strictly to the rules

The major cornerstones of a meeting procedure have been described in the preceding quotes and examples. They reveal that the German-Russian interculture of meeting procedure incorporates characteristics of both cultural scripts. However, a dominance of the German cultural script can be observed.

Thus, a Russian employee may adapt to the "German way" of organizing introductory and concluding sections of meeting. Interestingly, they perceive such concluding sections to be positive and efficient, whereas the process-oriented introductory section is considered "long and boring." As Anna says in this regard: "It makes the majority [of the Russian employees] mad. But people act according to the rules of politeness; they simply think their own thoughts, play some games furtively. They simply got used to it."

In contrast, the discussion in German-Russian meetings follows the Russian cultural script. Although the German employees perceive it to be distracting, and "it makes them absolutely mad," they tolerate such behavior on the part of their Russian colleagues. Even if the Russian employees willingly accept when the boss interferes in a discussion and stops it, German managers prefer not to resort to such measures because "it is not nice, because everybody feels aggrieved, as though one has not been heard and appreciated" – i.e., because it contradicts the German cultural script. In such cases, German managers prefer to step back and let the discussion go, or leave the meeting and schedule another one. Conversely, because German employees do not react in an assertive manner, Russian employees do not fully understand how much it disturbs their German managers. As Yelena comments: "On the one hand, they [the Russian employees] do not have any

motivation. […] On the other hand, it does not have any consequences. So what if the meeting is postponed!? These polite Germans will not summon you up in their office and say 'you know, if you behave like this, we will have a serious discussion.' They cannot afford it."

Similarly, emotions remain a part of German-Russian meetings, but only from the side of the Russian employees. While German employees keep their emotions in check during meetings, and in business life in general, Russian employees cannot imagine their life without emotions. At the same time, Russian employees favor German managers for not showing their negative emotions. Anna said: "Emotions are very familiar to me. I do not like emotionless people. And I am myself an emotional person, but I am in favor of constructive and positive emotions, for example, if managers show positive emotions, it is important for me, and I want it; but if a manager has negative emotions for some reason, I do not like when he shows them in public. I want him to control them, to show them, but in a constructive manner." Like divergence from a topic, German employees tolerate emotional discussions, but only if they do not go over to engaging in personal conflicts. In these cases, the German employees interfere and suggest going back to the fact-based discussion.

Finally, German employees try to minimize the interruptions in German-Russian meetings. But it applies mainly for the German employees in management positions, because they are able "to introduce their rules." In contrast, German employees in lower hierarchical positions adapt to the Russian cultural script.

3.5.2.4 Reflection of the attitude towards and behavior in meetings in the dimension frameworks and Thomas' cultural standards

The demonstrated differences between the German and Russian cultural scripts related to meetings are associated with several dimensions from different dimension frameworks:

- uncertainty avoidance from the GLOBE study;
- task orientation and (partially) present-related process orientation and emotionality from Thomas' cultural standards; and
- time and context from Hall's framework.

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance from the GLOBE study correlates the closest to the German and Russian cultural scripts related to meetings. According to House et al.

(2004: 618), countries that score lower on uncertainty avoidance tend to favor informal interactions, are less concerned with orderliness in the meetings and during preparation, and show more tolerance for breaking the rules. In contrast, countries that score higher on uncertainty avoidance tend to formalize their interactions, are orderly in meetings, stick to the rules and procedures, and strive to establish rules that enhance the predictability of meeting behavior. These tendencies are reflected in the scores of Russia and Germany on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance practices: Russia has the lowest ranking among 62 societies whereas West and East Germany are ranked number five and seven respectively (House et al., 2008: 622-623).

Interestingly, the scores for Russia and Germany on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance values are reversed: Russian culture has strong values for uncertainty avoidance whereas West and East Germany report uncertainty avoidance only modestly in their values. Thus, this negative correlation between uncertainty avoidance values and practices in Russia and Germany suggests that Russian employees should evaluate German cultural script related to meetings positively, and that German employees should appreciate the respective Russian cultural script. However, the findings of the empirical study show contradictory results: Respondents from both cultures evaluate the behavior of their counterparts rather negatively; they follow their habitual cultural scripts – i.e., practices – when attributing the behavior of their counterpart.

It is interesting to note that Hofstede's framework also includes uncertainty avoidance as one of its five dimensions. Moreover, the GLOBE dimension of uncertainty avoidance has its origin in Hofstede's framework (House et al., 2004: 13). But the two studies show diverging results: Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 221) rank Russia at number seven and Germany number 43 among 74 cultures on the scale of uncertainty avoidance. Although Hofstede offers a similar description of cultures with different levels of uncertainty avoidance, his ranking of Russia and Germany contradicts that of House as well as the results of the empirical study. House et al. (2004: 626) admits difficulties in comparing the rankings from the two studies, indicating that Hofstede's measure of uncertainty avoidance is different from that of the GLOBE study. In light of these deviations, the very careful employment of dimensions frameworks is recommended.

The findings of this study regarding the German cultural script related to meetings are also consistent with Thomas' cultural standard of Task orientation. Schroll-Machl (2003: 47-48) describes Germans "as being goal oriented and as people who support their

discussion contributions and arguments with facts." German employees prefer structured discussion to informal chatting with one another. In addition, they come to a meeting well prepared and expect the same from their colleagues (Schroll-Machl, 2003: 50-58). The respective Russian cultural script related to meetings is associated with some aspects of at least two Russian cultural standards: present-related process orientation and emotionality. According to Thomas et al. (2003: 111-112), Russian employees easily change between planned and spontaneous activities in their business environment. They emphasize their relationships with other people and put a higher priority on making time for friends and guests. They show their feelings willingly. Thomas et al. (2003: 107-108, 111), however, associate the emotionality of Russians with their open demonstration of sympathy or antipathy towards colleagues or other involved people, but not with emotionality in discussions related to a respective topic, as was reported in the empirical study. It is also somewhat surprising that the German cultural standard of the separation of the personal and public domains anticipates that German show their emotions, mostly in a negative sense (Schroll-Machl, 2003: 139). The findings of the current study do not support this statement.

The dimensions of time and context from Hall's framework can be associated to certain extent with the findings of this study. The German cultural script related to meeting procedure correlates with the monochronic notion of time and low-context communication from Hall's framework. Thus, German employees prefer to do only one thing at a time without any interruptions and to gather detailed background information before each interaction (Hall & Hall 1990: 7, 13). In contrast, the Russian cultural script related to meeting procedure exhibits the characteristics of polychronic time and high context dimensions: Russian employees do not mind interruptions, and they switch plans rather easily. Surprisingly, Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's framework does not reflect this deviation in attitude towards time. Though the researchers use a similar definition of attitude towards time, both Russia and Germany show sequential attitudes towards time and are placed rather closely together on this dimension (see Figure 8).

Finally, it is important to note that the findings of the current research do not support the position of Russia and Germany on Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's dimension of affective versus neutral. Though the respondents have repeatedly reported differences in the attitude towards showing emotion, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner rank both countries next to each other as neutral.

3.5.2.5 Historical background related to attitudes towards and behavior in meetings

Differences in the attitudes towards meetings as well as the different behavior of German and Russian employees in the meetings may be based on a diverging perception of state power: While the German political authorities used to rely on rules and regulations while exercising their power, Russian authorities equated political and personal will.

Laws, regulations, and numerous governmental structures played an important role in the history of the Holy Roman Empire and the subsequent German Empire. Because both Empires represented a confederation of numerous independent principalities, governmental structures and clear regulations were necessary to find a consensus among the numerous electors, the rulers of these independent principalities. Additionally, the strong and independent status of German cities contributed to the preservation and further development of decentralized governing structures in the Holy Roman and German Empires. (Bonvech, 2008b)

The Reformation and the German Peasants' War in the early sixteenth century also contributed to the prevalence of rules and laws in German society. Thus, Luther's translation of the Bible from Latin to the German enabled German population direct access to the "Law of the God" and eliminated the influence of the priests. Moreover, the German reformation reduced the emotional and interpretational elements of the faith and brought the facts stated in the Bible into the foreground. Subsequently, the German Reformation led to the peasants' revolts against the established hierarchy in their struggle for greater social equality, as proclaimed in Luther's doctrine "Universal Priesthood." Although the German Peasant's War failed due to the intense opposition of the aristocracy, the spirit of the Reformation left its mark on the mindset of the peasants: they started to appeal to the Bible and to the legal confirmation of their rights and their claims for these rights. (Bonvech, 2008b). This historical tradition of reliance on written laws and facts manifests itself in the German cultural script related to meeting form and procedure reflected in preceding paragraphs.

In contrast, the Russian tradition of exercising state power used to rely on the personal will of the tsar or emperor as well as on the personal relationship of the Russian nobility to the tsar's or emperor's family. Though legal rules and governmental structures existed in both the Tsardom of Russia and the Russian Empire, as well as in the USSR, the personal will of the ruler prevailed over the legislation. Personal relationships also played

an important role. Thus, the minions of Empresses Katharina I and Anna enjoyed numerous privileges and gained power due to their good personal relationship (Bühler, n.d.), and Katharina II came to power following the assassination of her husband, Peter III. Similarly, personal relationships prevailed in the Communist party, and the extensive propaganda, censorship, and lack of reliable public information during the Soviet era triggered a growth in the importance of informal communication. As a result, this historically developed tradition of informal communication, personal relationships, and the equation of state authority with personal power manifests itself today in the preference of Russian employees for informal communication as well as in the emotional and personal arguments in meetings.

3.5.3 Human resource development and compensation

The employees of a company are one of its most important assets, contributing to its overall performance. Thus, every company attaches great importance to human resource development and compensation. However, the development of personnel and aspects of compensation do not comply with uniform rules; they are also subject to cultural specificities. In this empirical study, five diverging aspects of personnel development and compensation in German-Russian interactions emerged: the sharing of professional knowledge, upward and downward feedback, motivation, turnover, and compensation. The following sections discuss these respective aspects in detail.

3.5.3.1 Sharing of professional knowledge

The sharing of professional knowledge is an important element in the development of younger and less-experienced employees. However, both Russian and German respondents observe differences in the willingness of the older and more experienced generation to share their knowledge with their younger colleagues. Table 28 summarizes the quotes illustrating this subject; further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 28. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards the imparting of professional knowledge

Respondent	Quote
Marion	We have a problem with the lack of decent management among our older generations: they do not give any chance for our younger generation to grow.
Georg	When someone has reached a management position, I have experienced this to be true here, he is then not very interested in the development of people below him because it could endanger his position, i.e., the knowledge advantage that the boss achieves through his position is held up, and this is bad.
Alexander	In Russia, this professional approach of personnel management is lacking, I have not observed it. The managers are rarely prepared psychologically for their job. They are experts in their topic, they know the technology, perhaps some financial peculiars, but they cannot work with a staff at all.
Olga	Perhaps it has been distinct in our society to keep all information to yourself since Soviet times, perhaps due to fear of competition. In contrast, this has never happened with the German colleagues.
Dmitriy	The new generation grows up, with new creative ideas, but the elder generation does not want to give up its positions, there is no rotation. […] And this leading echelon starts to slow down the young colleagues.

According to the German cultural script, the further development of employees is an essential element of personnel management, but also a clear expectation for the younger generations. In the German business environment, personnel development skills are a pre-requisite for promotion into leading positions; it is not enough to demonstrate profound knowledge of a subject and show good results to get a leadership position. Moreover, a good manager does not need to be the most knowledgeable expert in the

department; a good manager merely needs to have a good overview of his area of responsibilities, but also has to be able to manage his team effectively, i.e., to ensure good performance and the fulfillment of employee expectations, including personnel development. Frank describes "a good manager" according to the German cultural script as: "If I am the boss, I exaggerate a bit, I do my best to develop my employees, because if my employees shine, I shine myself, too, as a manager. Consequently, if they can do more, I can relax and go home earlier." Thus, good leadership implies sharing the knowledge required for independent work and the responsibilities of decision making in their respective work area.

According to the Russian cultural script, personnel development is the responsibility of the employees themselves; the role of the boss is to ensure good performance. Proactive personnel development, as part of a manager's responsibilities, is relatively new phenomenon in the Russian business environment. It came after the fall of USSR, as Western companies started to enter the Russian market. In Russian companies, the decision to promote someone to a management position used to be linked to the profound knowledge of the candidate and his ability to fulfill tasks correctly; leadership skills were not considered. Thus, the only differentiation between the manager and his employees was in the amount of knowledge and their respective experiences. Under these circumstances, managers do not have any incentives to share knowledge with their subordinates, because if the subordinates reach the same level, the managers become redundant and may be replaced by a cheaper worker among his subordinates. Additionally, Russian labor law provides fewer benefits for the employees in terms of termination conditions and subsequent payments. However, such attitude applies mainly to the older generations; the new generations of young professionals show higher awareness about the personnel management issues that are common in Western business environment. Thus, the gradual convergence of the Russian and the German cultural scripts related to sharing professional knowledge can be observed.

Nowadays, differences in attitudes towards the sharing of professional knowledge are still present, because companies still depend on the knowledge and experience of the older generations. The following two examples should help to uncover further aspects of knowledge sharing and personnel development in German-Russian interactions.

Example 17. Not sharing the intermediate results

A German expatriate manager observed that her employees do not share work in progress with their other colleagues. They do not store the documents on which they are currently working on the shared hard drive, and they lock their folders in the cupboard. When the German manager asked her colleagues why they did not share the current state of their work with others, they answered that it was because it is not finalized. German manager tried numerous times to convince them to store their intermediate work on the shared drive, arguing that if they do not, no one else could take over the task if the employee were absent. Still, the employees regularly refuse to share their documents.

The German manager attributes this unwillingness to share work in progress to two factors: a striving for perfectionism and a fear of becoming redundant. Indeed, both factors contribute to the explanation of this recurring incident. The second factor, fear of becoming redundant, is indeed a manifestation of the Russian cultural script related to the sharing of professional knowledge. Nonetheless, the first factor, which the German manager calls perfectionism, has slightly different origin. It is not only the desire to perform the task in the best possible way, but it is rather the lack of a habit to share work in progress. Neither in school nor in university is teamwork – and therefore the need for sharing a work in progress with your teammates – common. On the contrary, only the end result is required. Thus, Russian employees may be worried that their unfinished task will be judged as finished work. Furthermore, because the Russian employees have not been educated to share their work in progress with others, they have not learned to document their work in progress in such a way that it is easily understandable by others. This may cause some difficulties for their German colleagues should they take it over spontaneously.

In the German business environment, it is common to share work in progress with all other colleges related to the subject. Thus, anyone can take over the task in an urgent case. Such an attitude reflects the principle of substitutability in German companies, which is necessary to ensure the timely achievement of the company's obligations towards customers. Therefore, the German manager considers the behavior of the Russian employees to be inefficient, leading potentially to delays in fulfilling the company's obligations.

Table 29 summarizes the visible and axiological lacunas for both sides.

Table 29. Lacunas in Example 17: Not sharing the intermediate results

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Sharing of end results only **Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Fear of sharing a work in progress	Inefficient, may endanger the reputation of the company
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of daily routine (lacuna of activity):** Regular storage of work in progress on the shared drive	It may lead to one's redundancy or even termination.

The following example demonstrates how a German expatriate fulfills his responsibility of personnel development by encouraging his employees in their independent decision making, and how this is perceived by his Russian colleagues.

Example 18. Motivation interpreted as offence

While encouraging his Russian employees to develop and to take greater responsibility for decisions within the scope of their tasks, a German expatriate manager regularly resorts to the following motivating – from his point of view – question: "If I am no longer here one day, what would you do?" To his great surprise, whenever he asks this question, he observes the same reaction: "a dead silence." According to the German manager, "in Germany, it would be probably the opposite: In the end, he is not here anymore, and the position is open!"

Interestingly, in another interview, a Russian respondent, who works for another company, described similar behavior from his German manager, as well as his own attitude towards it. During a discussion of the professional development of new employees, the German managers asked an older Russian employee: "If we do not educate your substitute, what shall we do when you die?" This question, which was meant to motivate the more experienced Russian to share his knowledge with his younger colleagues, caused the opposite reaction: the older Russian employee took offence to it. The Russian respondent commented on this incident as follows: "In the Russian language, this is an absolute taboo; […] Such a phrase would not even come to the mind

of a Russian. […] The reaction [of the older Russian employee] was that it turns out that they are waiting until I die, even though he has been working for this company for 11 years."

Thus, the first incident reveals that the German expatriate manager interprets the silence of his Russian colleagues as an unwillingness to develop and a lack of initiative. He refers to common behavior in the German business environment to make his judgments, falling into stereotypes.

The second incident reveals that Russian people take such phrases as "what would you do if I die or I am not here anymore" literally, i.e., a person were to die or have to leave his job due to some unpleasant circumstances. In Russia, it is not common to talk publicly about health issues or problems if the concerned person may hear it. The concerned person may consider it a deliberate personal insult. Thus, the attempt at motivating the German employee is interpreted as an insult. Likewise, it is not common to talk about someone else's potential problems or health issues, because Russians are superstitious.

Table 30 summarizes the visible and axiological lacunas for both sides.

Table 30. Lacunas in Example 18: Motivation interpreted as offence

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Culture emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Silence in response to the question **Lacuna of language usage (lacuna of activity):** Talking about potential health issues or troubles related to oneself or in front of the concerned person	Unwilling to develop and lacking initiative
Russian perspective	**Cultural emotive lacuna (mental lacuna):** Lack of sensitivity/emotion	Intended personal insult

The previous examples as well as the illustrative quotes show that German expatriate managers often try to facilitate personnel development in local subsidiaries. Besides leading convincing discussions with their Russian employees, as shown in the Example 18, German expatriate managers also resort to more drastic measures, including

restructuring, changes in the division of functional tasks, and changes of department heads. While the majority of the older employees remain hostile to such changes, the younger generations accept them very willingly, because it enables their professional development. Furthermore, German expatriate managers favor younger university graduates over employees with experience in Russian companies in order to be able to "educate them correctly." All this leads to the conclusion that the German-Russian interculture related to the sharing of professional knowledge features more characteristics of the German cultural script.

3.5.3.2 Upward and downward feedback

Whereas feedback is considered an efficient instrument of personnel development in the German business environment, Russian employees became acquainted with this instrument rather recently, after the fall of the USSR, and only face it in Western companies today. Thus, German employees are surprised by the lack of feedback acceptance among Russian employees, while Russian employees are truly astonished with the desire of their German colleagues to hear negative information about themselves. Table 31 presents quotes illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards feedback. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 31. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards feedback

Respondent	Quote
Thomas	It is still very difficult for Russian employees to communicate criticism openly as well as to accept criticism.
Frank	Feedback is only possible if the fundamental trust is there.

Respondent	Quote
Michael	I can readily observe that it is very difficult to deal with criticism here, even if you wrap it up, even if you try, of course, to present it in a constructive and impersonal manner. It should not necessarily be a criticism, but rather I have made some observations: something happened, but I would have done so and so in such a situation because it has such and such impact upon the involved parties. A typical feedback situation, which one finds today. Often, I see wet eyes very quickly; and this is in situations in which I would have never expected.
Anna	You should not be uncomfortable with giving a feedback to a German. It is normal, it is part of their culture, in contrast to Russians. Among Russians, feedback is less common.

The German cultural script related to feedback envisages the open discussion of past events in order to derive lessons for the future. The feedback discussion enables the employees to become aware of their strengths and their areas in need of improvement, and to identify actions that can facilitate their further development. Depending on the position of the person who gives or who receives feedback, three types of feedback can be distinguished: downward feedback, from employees of a higher level to those of a lower hierarchical position; upward feedback, from employees of lower level to those of a higher hierarchical position; and horizontal feedback, among employees of the same hierarchical position. Each type of feedback proceeds as a one-on-one conversation, similar to a one-on-one meeting, or sometimes in a wider circle of involved employees, such as in a conference. It is always based on facts and direct observations, which lead to observable results. Employees try to draw a clear line between personal abilities and skills, and to discuss only the latter; otherwise, it is considered an insult. Thus, the German cultural script related to feedback is similar to those related to dealing with mistakes: It is fact-based and aims at improving one's skills, without taking any sanctions. Thomas describes the attitude towards feedback that prevails in the German business environment as follows: "I believe that today there is a strong feedback culture in Germany. Regardless of the position, either as top-down or as bottom-up feedback. But

if there are some things that you do not like or you are irritated with, you ask for a conversation and try to clarify them and to alleviate them as soon as possible. […] And it is very important when people understand why it so or not so, because if they do not talk and keep it inside, it bothers them, and they start to play with their imagination, but things remain unclarified."

The Russian cultural script related to feedback is also similar to the script related to dealing with mistakes. Feedback is considered as criticism, as something followed by sanctions. Anna describes how Russian employees perceive feedback: "It is considered something negative. Russian people do not want so much to hear negative information about themselves as German people do. A German person would be grateful to you for this, because it is a way for his further constructiveness, for his comprehensive development. For a Russian, in a majority of cases, negative information is an offense, and it is understandable. It all relates to our complexes."

Whereas the German cultural script demonstrates an equal procedure and attitude towards all three types of feedback, considering it a great learning instrument, the Russian cultural script tends to differentiate between these three types. Thus, downward feedback is considered an evaluation of employees by their supervisors. If it is positive, Russian employees consider it a praise of their work, which should be recognized by the boss also in form of monetary or other benefits. If it is negative, it is considered as a criticism of one's own abilities, followed by respective sanctions. Because Russian employees do not make a clear distinction between facts and personal attitudes, even very careful, fact-based feedback is considered as a personal criticism. This may result in strong personal offence if the supervisor has already managed to establish a strong personal relationship with his employees. Dmitriy, a Russian manager, describes his approach to communicating feedback: "After a performance evaluation I, as a manager, always have a conversation with my employees. And it is subject to fine feeling how to communicate this or that evaluation. Here, you need to take into account the inner particularities of each personality: One needs to be criticized openly and in public so he recognizes this criticism; for the other, it would kill all his initiative and any further dynamics in his development. It is out of the question – you need an individual approach."

Upward feedback in the Russian business environment takes place in the form of careful suggestions and is subject to a trusting relationship between the supervisor and his subordinates. Thus, upward feedback is not always perceived as such by German

employees, who are used to direct, open feedback in formal settings. Moreover, open feedback in formal settings, as is common in the German business environment, is not possible in the Russian business environment because it contradicts the notion of the position of the boss. Since the boss is considered the most knowledgeable and most experienced person in the team, his employees do not see themselves in a position to give him any advice, because the boss should know better. Thus, direct upward feedback may be interpreted as questioning the skills and experiences of the boss – i.e., as crossing the border of impertinence. Similarly, openly positive feedback may be interpreted as flattering, intended at establishing a good relationship with the boss and subsequently exploiting the situation.

Understanding the difficulties of the German expatriates in adapting to local particularities, Russian employees willingly offer their suggestion in this regard. Oleg summarizes the attitude of the Russian employees as follows: "According to my observations, in the beginning, people actually try to explain to the Germans what is going on, why they have concerns, what may happen, and to offer some examples. But if they do not see any understanding, they lose their motivation to explain in the future, because they see that the person did not understand after all. But it depends on the personality of the expatriate." Furthermore, such suggestions are made casually, when the issue arises, on the spot, and not in the form of a feedback meeting scheduled beforehand. This way of providing upward feedback explains the contradicting testimonials of the German respondents. For example, Thomas says: "There is no way to bring people to criticize themselves or their boss. It is done very carefully and, perhaps, with a fear of being disadvantaged." Another German expatriate, Michael, states his contradicting point of view: "It [upward feedback] works, it works surprisingly well. Of course, it varies from person to person -- it varies extremely; I have the whole range somehow, but in general I believe that if there are some wishes or certain observations, they are communicated."

Just like upward feedback, horizontal feedback among employees of the same hierarchical level is subject to a trustful relationship. It is communicated occasionally, maybe even in private settings, and can be communicated in a direct form. Such feedback is taken as friendly advice and is greatly appreciated.

Overall, feedback in the Russian business environment is subject to a relationship based on trust. Because Russian employees do not draw a clear distinction between their

personal and business lives, it is interesting to draw a parallel to the attitude towards criticism in the private life of Russians. Frank says following in this regard: “In Russia you can find real friends: people who say directly what they think, in a critical manner, and put all the truth on the table. […] In Germany, it is in such a way … there is more whitewashing (es ist weichgespülter).”

The following examples demonstrate how different aspects of the German and Russian cultural scripts manifest themselves in German-Russian business interactions, and how they are perceived by both sides.

Example 19. Upward feedback during conferences

While describing the lack of feedback in the Russian business environment, two German respondents gave an example of a conference. The first respondent draws a comparison between the behavior of the Russian and German employees in a meeting of sales representatives: “When we have a sales representatives meeting, and when I ask sales representatives to lay all the critical issues ‘on the table,’ […] at first, you have dead silence in the room for five minutes, then you make couple of ‘ice breakers’ so that somebody steps in … And now try to do the same with sales representatives in Germany: You will not even manage to ask what is going wrong! From the very start, you will be confronted and pressured that somebody needs to do this and that, that they did not agree to the decision regarding bonuses. And if somebody does not have courage, he sends the working council. But you get transparency there very quickly.”

Another German respondent describes similar observations in a conference in his local office. After he finished his speech, he asked the audience – the employees of the local office – for feedback. He received dead silence in response. Then, he tried some probing questions, e.g., “whether the speech was amusing; whether it was boring; whether there were too many slides.” Now, there was only one young engineer who spoke out, saying that he liked the speech in general, and asking if the speaker could send the participants a list of questions so they can give feedback. The German manager did not expect such behavior and was truly surprised. He perceived the young engineer’s demand for a list of question as follows: “They would have ideally had it in writing how they should behave in such a situation.”

These two incidents show that both Russian and German employees (re-)act according to their cultural scripts. However, the interpretation of the incident by the German

employees differs: In the first situation, the German manager regrets the lack of transparency in the Russian office. He attributes such behavior on the part of the Russian sales representatives to their fear of being punished for criticizing their boss, which finds it roots in the Soviet past. In the second incident, the German employee ignores the lack of feedback and focuses on the demand for a list of questions, attributing it to the urge of Russian employees to get instructions in all that they do – i.e., to the stereotype of an army-like command management system. However, it is important to highlight that Russians are in general not used to being asked for their opinion openly; they prefer to fill in a written form.[71]

Table 32 summarizes the difference in the cultural scripts as well as in their interpretation in the form of the respective lacunas for both sides:

Table 32. Lacunas in Example 19: Upward feedback during a conference

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of communicative means (lacuna of activity):** Russian employees prefer an opinion survey in written form, anonymously **Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** No open criticism of the boss	Lack of transparency; manifestation of a highly hierarchical leadership style and consequences of the Soviet past
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of communicative means (lacuna of activity):** Opinion survey in form of open communication **Lacuna of oral communication (mental lacuna):** Quick feedback after the presentation **Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Open criticism of the boss	Strange that German managers ask for open criticism

[71] As I addressed Russian employees with the invitation to participate in this empirical study, several Russian respondents asked me to send them a list of questions and were truly surprised when I answered that there are no questions and the interview itself has the form of an "open" discussion.

Example 19 demonstrates that German employees are trying to introduce a feedback culture and encourage Russian employees to give feedback because they lack transparency, especially in a new business environment. Nonetheless, one German respondent managed to ensure upward feedback in his organization. Example 20 illustrates his solution.

Example 20. Workers' council as facilitator for upward feedback

A German expatriate complained about the lack of pro-active feedback from his employees. He would have preferred that his employees proactively approach him and suggest what else he should think about, what he did wrong, and how his decisions were accepted by the employees. After a number of vain attempts to encourage his employees to give feedback, he decided to introduce a kind of workers' council in his local office. He appointed a group of local employees to gather all the critical issues and complains from the employees and pass them through in an aggregated and anonymous form to the German expatriate head of the local office in regular jour fixes. Similarly, he used the workers' council as an intermediary while explaining his decisions and strategic initiatives in detail. In this way, the German manager managed to establish more open communication.

This example shows another possibility for ensuring upward feedback that does not require building a trust relationship with the employees. By establishing a workers' council, the German manager adapted the German framework of upward feedback to Russian particularities: It was anonymous to him, but the employees were able to talk to local people with whom they have already established a trusting relationship. Furthermore, because the suggestions communicated to the worker's council were transmitted to the German manager and subsequently implemented, the employees felt "heard" and, therefore, were more willing to accept the decisions and initiatives from the boss. The informal means of communication between the worker's council and the employees facilitated their acceptance. On the other hand, the German manager had no need to diverge greatly from his habitual German cultural script related to feedback: It was offered in rather formal settings, on regular basis, with respective explanations; he did not need to keep his ears open to the occasional subtle suggestions from his Russian colleagues. Thus, the establishment of a workers' council contributed to the closing of potential lacunas for both sides.

Such innovative solutions for ensuring upward feedback are rather rare, however. It is more common for the two cultural scripts to coexist side by side. The following example shows how a Russian employee offered upward feedback to a German expatriate manager, and how the German manager perceived and interpreted it.

Example 21. Newsletters against the wishes of the Russian employees

A German expatriate suggested that his Russian colleagues introduce a new communication channel with one of their targeted customer groups, physicians. He suggested sending regular e-mails to the physicians with the latest news about current developments in their respective area of practice. The purpose of this newsletter was not to offer product descriptions or to advertise the company's new solutions, but to offer a new source of professional information that would supplement the usual customer visits and help the physicians to remain informed. Such communication channels had been already introduced in Germany and received positive feedback from the customers. Thus, the German manager intended to transfer one of the best practices to Russia in order to strengthen customer relationships.

However, the German manager's idea did not find support from his Russian colleagues. The Russian employees stated that it would not work in the Russian business environment, bringing a number of arguments. The German manager, though, did not take his colleagues' arguments seriously, and his suggestion was implemented. He interpreted the defensive reaction of his Russian colleagues to his idea as follows: "It is an unwillingness to deviate from the norms. It is too demanding for them, and they suddenly start to discuss all possible things and raise some objections."

This example shows how simple arguing against some new ideas may be attributed to the stereotype of the lack of cooperativeness and even the laziness of Russian employees. Though something works well in another country, it does not mean that the same instruments may be transferred without any adaptation to the new country. Indeed, whereas every medical practice in Germany has an internet connection, and German physicians can read such e-mails during the working day, in Russia, the working conditions of physicians differ. By far, not every medical practice in the rural areas has an internet connection, and even if an internet connection is available, not every physician has access to it or has enough time to read his e-mails. Similarly, not every household in the Russian provinces has internet access, so the physicians may not receive

e-mail at home. Under these circumstances, a printed newsletter may be more applicable to the Russian business environment.

The Russian employees tried to talk their German manager out of introducing e-mails to the physicians. From their point of view, they offered feedback to their German manager regarding his idea. Nevertheless, this feedback was not perceived as such and was interpreted as "unwillingness to try something new." Table 33 summarizes the respective lacunas uncovered in this incident.

Table 33. Lacunas in Example 21: Newsletters against the wishes of the Russian employees

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Active contradiction to the suggested idea	Unwillingness of Russian employees to change
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of communicative means (lacuna of activity):** Communication in form of e-mail	Not applicable in Russia

The incidents and quotes in Table 31 demonstrate that the characteristics of both the German and Russian cultural scripts coexist in the German-Russian interculture related to downward and upward feedback. German expatriate managers try to adhere to "golden rules" of downward feedback, doing it in one-on-one meetings and sticking to the facts. Nevertheless, Russian employees perceive it as personal criticism that may lead to a decrease in motivation among the Russian employees and a negative attitude towards their supervisor. Having recognized the distractive effect of criticism on her Russian employees, Daniela, for example, regularly stated to her Russian colleagues her appreciation of their work and expertise, and asked for their advice. She says: "If you appreciate their job and praise it, it works very well. In general, first – praise and then say that possibly you could improve something. […] They are the local experts and, if they get their respective appreciation, if the foreigner says that you are an expert in the subject, then it was rather pleasant to work with them."

Similarly, the German-Russian interculture related to upward feedback incorporates the characteristics of both the German and Russian cultural scripts. While German expatriate managers encourage open feedback in their habitual manner, as they were used to in the German business environment, Russian employees stick to their habitual cultural script and try to offer their opinions and suggestions during the discussion of the matter and not afterwards. Whether this feedback is "heard" depends on the openness of the German expatriates and their ability to listen to and trust their Russian colleagues.

3.5.3.3 Motivation

There is no doubt that carefully chosen and applied instruments for work motivation can contribute to increases in both employee work satisfaction and company performance. While a great body of research has investigated the effectiveness of different approaches to employee motivation and their cultural particularities (e.g., Carr, 2004; Fey, 2005; Hofstede, 1980), the aim of this section is to discuss the firsthand observations of the German and Russian respondents. Once more, these observations have a contradictory character: some respondents report a lack of motivation and interest in work among the Russian employees, while others describe the Russian employees, or themselves, as hard-working and highly motivated. Table 34 presents quotes illustrating the observations of the Russian and German employees in this regard. Further evidence from the interviews aims to uncover the main differences between the German and Russian cultural scripts related to work motivation.

Table 34. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards motivation

Respondent	Quote
Wolfgang	I have noticed that everyone is very pushy to go to work in the morning and to go back home in the evening, but not at work – i.e., nobody hurries to get the work done.
Susanne	People drop their pens at six sharp; work is over. […] Even if they have issues that need to be finalized, they go home anyway at six sharp. They do not stay longer.

Respondent	Quote
Andreas	Having a loyal mentality, Russians try to do many things at the same time, and really try to achieve everything, partially even at their own expenses, i.e., even with overtime hours, and soon.
Oleg	Everything depends on how they [the Russian employees] like their job, how much they are involved in the process. For example, if you want them to do something more than what is stated formally, according to some procedures, to go an extra mile, you need to ensure motivation. Motivation, in turn, depends on the personality, on the good personality of the supervisor as well as the expatriate.
Viktor	The job takes a major part of the life of a Russian person, whereas it plays a secondary role among our German colleagues. I do not take into account management, who works around the clock. But among Russians, there is a higher share of employees who are constantly online and check their e-mail in the morning and in the evening, before and after work, and they may answer and will not mind if you call them in non-working hours.

The German cultural script related to motivation suggests that the German working environment is more "contractual,"[72] that is, the expectations and commitments are discussed with the employee beforehand and usually reinforced by means of written company regulations, job descriptions, and working contracts. Thus, employees know exactly what kind of work they need to do and what kind of compensation and recognition they may expect in return. In this context, fair evaluation and appreciation of performance are major motivating factors. The recognition of a good job takes the form of bonuses and promotions. Due to its contractual character, the motivation system in Germany minimizes the human factor. Moreover, German employees tend to draw a clear

[72] "2013 Edenred-Ipsos Barometer on the well-being and motivation of European employees," retrieved November 18, 2013, from http://www.edenred.com/fr/press/documents/barometreipsos_juin13/cp_barometreedenredipsos130612_en.pdf

line between the working environment and private life, and do not let personal relationships affect the quality of work performance.

According to the Russian cultural script related to motivation, Russian employees also put a high importance on appreciation of their job and achievements as well as monetary recognition. However, personal relationships may become a very important motivating or demotivating factor. As Andreas observes: "Another experience that I had in this [Russian] environment and that is totally different from other cultures, is the personal relationship. If an employee likes the supervisor, he does more, he is more willing to go the extra mile than if you offer him a bonus or something. This is something that I do not know at all from the German or American environment. Though you also go out together in the evening there and spend an evening playing bowling or the like, but here, it is really such that, if you do something for your employees, it is appreciated very much. And when I walk through the office in the evening at 7 p.m. or 7:30 p.m., whereas our working hours are from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and tell people to go home, they tell me that they want to finish their work, for me; i.e., it is explicitly attached to a person. It is really strange, because I think that we are in a professional and not a personal relationship."

It is not common to separate private and professional life in the Russian business environment. If employees and their supervisor have managed to establish a trusting personal relationship, they consider each other friends. Thus, they are willing to go an extra mile and work overtime. Similarly, the boss shows his involvement and interest in the employees' well-being by being flexible on personal issues. For example, it is common to organize events, to celebrate anniversaries with colleagues, to extend a business trip abroad into a personal vacation, etc. In return, the employees tend to be more engaged in their work and go the extra mile at the expense of their personal time.

The following two examples illustrate how the German and Russian cultural scripts manifest themselves in daily business interactions, and how the German and Russian counterparts perceive and interpret the behavior of one another.

Example 22. Additional day off for a business trip abroad

One Russian employee had to participate in a seminar abroad. The seminar lasted four days, from Tuesday to Friday. Planning her trip, she asked her supervisor, a German expatriate, for permission to extend her trip and to leave Moscow on Saturday so she could visit the city. However, the employee did not mention in her conversation with the

boss explicitly that the seminar started on Tuesday and not on Monday, and that she would like to have a day off. When the German expatriate manager found out that she had kept quiet about it, he dismissed the Russian employee. In fact, he was very surprised about her behavior, because she used to be a good employee, delivering everything on time, and it would have been no problem to cover this day off with her overtime hours.

This incident shows that both the Russian employee and the German manager acting according to their habitual cultural scripts. The Russian employee obtained permission from her manager to take a weekend. By not mentioning explicitly that she was going to take Monday off, she might have assumed that the German manager was aware of it. Even if he was not aware, it was not a big deal, from her point of view: In the end, she did her job correctly and there was nothing wrong with taking a day off, especially if there were no urgent tasks at that moment.

From the point of view of the German manager, the Russian employee lied to him and broke the rules. According to the German cultural script, she should be punished regardless of her previous performance. Thus, the Russian employee was dismissed.

Both parties attribute and evaluate the behavior of one another based on their own cultural scripts: They consider the behavior of the other to have been inappropriate in this situation. While the German manager expected explicit communication of all details, the Russian employee likely considered dismissal to have been a severe reaction. Table 35 provides an overview of the respective lacunas, reflecting these behavioral differences and their interpretation.

Table 35. Lacunas in Example 22: Additional day off for a business trip abroad

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Doing personal things during working hours	Breaking the rules
Russian perspective	**Lacuna of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Dismissal as punishment for not mentioning taking Monday as a day off	Too severe a punishment, inhumane

Example 23. Changing attitude towards working hours

A German expatriate manager was working intensively with his team to prepare for an important workshop. For this purpose, they rented a suite in one of the hotels in the center of Moscow and transformed it into the team room for the preparation time. The preparation went well, and the German manager and his Russian employees managed to establish good team spirit in the department. Sometime later, during the annual evaluation process, the German expatriate manager asked one of his Russian employees to give feedback on the collaboration during the previous year. In his feedback, the Russian employee mentioned their preparation for the workshop in the hotel suite, but in what the German manager considered a surprising context. The Russian employee would have wished that the German manager had offered his team the possibility to stay in the hotel room overnight instead of going home. However, none of the Russian colleagues mentioned this wish as they were working in the hotel; the Russian employees had expected that their German manager would have offered it pro-actively. The German manager recognized that it would have been a nice incentive for his employees and apologized for his lack of attention. He also stated once more that he appreciated very much their contribution and commitment during the preparation, as well as the team spirit that was established.

Furthermore, the German expatriate noticed a change in the attitude towards working hours among his subordinates. He said: “Previously, they said that they finish their work at 5:30 p.m. because it is stipulated in their contract. Afterwards, however, they said that they could stay longer, if necessary. Then, I also told them that they might leave earlier if they wished, that it was important for me to see the job done, and that they might stay home if there is nothing to do. This was also perceived very positively.”

This incident reveals several aspects of the German and Russian cultural scripts. First, there is the change of attitude towards working hours on the part of the Russian colleagues, i.e. greater motivation to perform their job, after they have established a trusting relationship with their German manager. Second, there is the offer of upward feedback, once more due to the establishment of a trusting, friendship-like relationship. Third, there is the offer of a possibility to stay in the hotel room overnight as a work incentive. According to the German business environment, it is not common to use working facilities for the personal use. Therefore, the German manager did not think about this possibility. However, the Russian colleagues do not have many opportunities

to stay in a four- or five-star hotel on personal trips, because it is rather expensive. Finally, Russian employees expected the initiative to come from their boss, whereas the German manager was surprised that they did not ask him pro-actively. Like the cultural script related to the responsibility for task assignment, Russian employees consider it to be the role of the supervisor to offer some recognition for their work pro-actively, whereas the German manager expected his employees to be pro-active. Table 36 summarizes the lacunas that were perceived[73] by both the German and Russian sides.

Table 36. Lacunas in Example 23: Changing attitude towards working hours

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Culture emotive lacunas (mental lacunas):** Greater commitment to work after a trusting relationship is established; opportunity to stay in hotel room as incentive **Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Role of the boss to offer the opportunity to stay in the hotel	Positive surprise at the change of attitude towards work; recognition of the need for non-monetary incentives
Russian perspective	**Role-related fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Employees should have asked pro-actively for the opportunity to stay in the hotel overnight	Lack of recognition of a contribution

The preceding examples and quotes suggest two possible scenarios for the formation of a German-Russian interculture related to motivation. According to the first scenario, the characteristics of both the Russian and German cultural scripts coexist: German employees act according to their contractual obligations, complaining about the lack of commitment on the part of the Russian employees, whereas Russian employees do not perceive any personal bond with their supervisor, and are not willing to go the extra mile.

[73] Not all aspects of this incident were perceived as lacunas. Thus, the provision of upward feedback is not considered as something unusual for both sides, even though it was possible only due to the existence of a trust relationship.

According to the second scenario, German expatriates who show true interest in the private lives of their colleagues can establish a trusting relationship with them. In this case, the German-Russian interculture related to motivation incorporates mainly the characteristics of the Russian cultural script.

The interviews with the German and Russian respondents suggest that the formation of an interculture according to the first scenario can be observed slightly more often than according to the second scenario. Oleg reported similar observations: "I would say it is a 60:40 split. 60% of 'Western' expatriates (западников) [those who stick to German cultural scripts, unwilling to accept any Russian particularities] and 40% of rather open people."

3.5.3.4 Turnover factors

The Moscow labor market is known for its high dynamics due to the demand for a well-educated workforce. Many German respondents complained that they face a great challenge in retaining their employees. They named two main reasons for their high turnover rates: the search for better compensation and desire for faster carrier advancement. They also observed a lack of commitment to the company for which they work. In contrast, some Russian employees refer to their workplace as a "home" and a "family" and complain about the lack of growth opportunities within the company. Table 37 presents quotes illustrating how Russian and German employees perceive job turnover and how they justify it. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 37. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards turnover and its reasons

Respondent	Quote
Marion	It is a problem with young employees, with their integration. I exaggerate a bit, however; nobody wants to do a job, but everybody wants to have a management position immediately.

Respondent	Quote
Richard	In Germany, it has a bit to do with the old mentality that a lot of employees stay in one company for years or even for decades. This is changing gradually in Germany, but in Russia, it is extremely in the other direction.
Volker	It is a general issue, I would say that the commitment to the company is not there. When a new boss comes, the employees should look around for a new job.
Andreas	After all, I am only an expatriate here, and I will leave the company [the Russian office] in the near future, but it is said sometimes: "I do not know if I will stay on after you leave."
Alexander	I have rather young employees and almost all of them have worked from the beginning [of their careers]. We do not have turnover, nobody has left on his own. I have made a great deal of effort to select the staff carefully; I take it very seriously.
Yaroslav	Perhaps it is due to our business model in our company: it is not fast, the duration of the projects is rather long, i.e., it is common for the projects in this industry to last two or three years, or even longer. Therefore, the opportunities for growth within the company are rather limited. In order to grow, you need to step aside.
Maria	In Germany, our company is one of the main employers that dictate its conditions. The people who are working there stay in the company for 20-30 years, i.e., the employees are loyal. In contrast, you can compare Russia with a Chinese market: if you work in a company for more than two years, it is not considered to be good; i.e., if you want to grow, you need to move.

The German cultural script related to job turnover exhibits lower turnover rates for several reasons. First, there are multiple opportunities for growth within the company. The German headquarters are larger in size and in the number of possible growth opportunities, both horizontal and vertical. Thus, the employees have a greater chance to obtain a new position within their company in Germany. Second, the German labor market is more specialized. After an employee has started her or his carrier in a particular industry, it becomes very difficult to change the industry due to a lack of knowledge and experience in the targeted domain. Third, the decision regarding the promotion to a new position is based on the skills that were demonstrated in previous positions. Therefore, an employee usually needs to stay some time in one position to be able to learn and subsequently demonstrate his new skills. Finally, the labor market is more distributed across the country, with multiple hubs. Often, a change of company requires high geographical mobility. Though mobility is in general higher in Germany, not all employees are ready for a regular change of living location.

In contrast, the Russian business environment offers more opportunities for cross-company mobility. One of the incentives for this higher turnover is the desire for professional growth. Russian subsidiaries of German enterprises are usually not large enough to offer sufficient opportunities for intra-company growth. Maria commented on this: “Many employees leave the company simply because nothing has changed, let’s say during the last three years. Whereas at headquarters there is the possibility to change something, you have fewer opportunities to be promoted in the local office.” Furthermore, the business model of the target companies in this study as well as their products are rather complex; thus, it requires a longer stay in one position in order to learn all aspects of the subject. This fact often contradicts the carrier expectations of young professionals.

Another possible explanation for the higher turnover rates in Moscow is the high concentration of the job market and the possibility for a quick change of specialization. Thus, due to the high geographical concentration of the overall job market in Moscow, people do not need to change their residence when they change their workplace. Similarly, previous experience in the targeted industry is not a must-have because an employee’s personal abilities are valued more than acquired skills.

Finally, another important reason to change jobs is a change in the employee’s direct supervisor. While the German business environment is based on contracts and

regulations, trying to minimize the human factor, working relationships in the Russian business environment depend on personal relationships. Thus, it is common to follow a "good" boss if the latter changes companies or, on the other hand, to forego the possibility of salary raise in favor of good relationships with the colleagues at a workplace. Olga says: "Otherwise I would not have worked so many years [7 years] in the company. Even if it sounds sentimental, it is for me like a family, […] like a home." Another Russian manager, Alexander, gives a suggestion to German expatriate managers: "If you hire a good manager, he brings also a number of good employees, i.e., you should recruit wisely. If you hire an incompetent one, he brings nobody. This is a very quick indicator: If you are looking for somebody for a managing position, ask whether he knows somebody who would fit into other vacant positions. A good one knows everybody, he may organize everything. […] And if he [a good manager] leaves the company, he will invite his colleagues to go with him, and they will all follow. This is unthinkable in Germany." Thus, personal relationships are a very important factor in turnover. The following example details this topic further.

Example 24. Turnover in a department due to a change of department head

When one German expatriate manager started his assignment in a Russian subsidiary, he discovered that two of the four employees in his new department had just left: One employee changed to another department along with the supervisor with whom he had been working closely; another trainee left the company, justifying his decision by the insufficient conditions that were offered to him. Thus, the German manger had to look for new employees before he could really start his assignment.

A similar situation happened when another German manager was finishing his assignment. He said: "I was handing over the work to my successor. […] And then I noticed that the employees were becoming nervous. They got used to me, and now a new boss came, he was Russian, with another leadership style. So they asked me, and the employees of the other departments also asked me, how things will be in our department. This is typically Russian."

This incident clearly demonstrates that Russian employees are bound more to the person than to their company. Though they work in a German company with a strong regulatory framework, they keep acting according to their habitual Russian cultural script. From their point of view, the change of supervisor brings along great uncertainty because he might have new requirements or a new working style, or he might rearrange

responsibilities and tasks. They do not rely on contractual job descriptions; they need to build trusting relationships again with a new boss. In the German business environment, the change of supervisor also brings some changes to the department, but these are not so significant. Employees rely more on the contractual regulations of their jobs. Moreover, because there is clear separation of business and personal life, German employees do not feel an urge to build up a trusting relationship with their new supervisor; they simply need to fulfill their task correctly.

Once again, German expatriates evaluate the behavior of Russian employees according to their habitual cultural scripts. Thus, they consider the nervousness of their Russian colleagues exaggerated and redundant in this situation. On the other hand, Russian employees might have wished for some kind of reassurance from their German manager that there would be no changes, in a pro-active manner. The lack of pro-active reassurance might be interpreted as a lack of interest in their professional future or even as a betrayal from the German expatriate towards his Russian employees, as they had very trusting relationship. Table 38 provides an overview of the respective lacunas.

Table 38. Lacunas in Example 24: Turnover in a department due to a change of department head

	Visible lacunas	**Axiological lacunas**
German perspective	**Conceptual fond lacuna (mental lacuna):** Strong feeling of insecurity due to a change of supervisor **Lacunas of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Department employees change jobs because the head of the department leaves; employees ask how things will be	Exaggerated reaction; it is just a change of supervisor
Russian perspective	**Lacunas of behavior (lacuna of activity):** Lack of engagement in their future in case of a strong personal relationship	Betrayal from the boss

The preceding example and the quotes presented in Table 37 illustrate that the German-Russian interculture related to turnover contains mainly the characteristics of the Russian

cultural script. Russian employees tend to change jobs more regularly in order to ensure their professional development and faster carrier advancement. If a pay raise had been a decisive factor in the change of company previously, this plays rather secondary role among highly educated young professionals today. Another characteristic of the Russian cultural script that may influence the turnover rate in both directions is the personal bond between employees and their direct supervisor. If this bond is established, the employees would be more loyal. However, if the supervisor decides to leave the company, the employees might follow their supervisor.

3.5.3.5 Compensation

Both the German and Russian business environments agree on performance-linked compensation for the work performed. However, the approach towards performance evaluation as well as notion of fair remuneration is subject to cultural differences. Table 39 presents quotes illustrating these differences and the attitudes of the Russian and German respondents towards them. Further evidence from the interviews is presented in following paragraphs.

Table 39. Evidence from the data illustrating the cultural scripts and attitudes towards compensation

Respondent	Quote
Holger	He [the Russian employee] had the spirit of 'why should I care about the result of the department? I am incentivized by my own results; what I can achieve myself? The others have nothing to do with my contribution.' From my point of view, it was excessive.
Volker	If person A is responsible for slide deck B, which was prepared by person B, and if this slide deck has a mistake, they consider it extra work; it was not discussed as such.

Respondent	Quote
Richard	Russians discuss their salaries openly. So if I have an employee here and tell him about a salary increase for whatever reason, you can be sure that he will go out of my office, place himself in the middle of the department and say that he has got his salary increased by this amount. Although it is stipulated in their contracts that they are not allowed to do so. So Russians love to talk about their salaries.
Dmitriy	It is a very careful attitude towards you as an employee. I do not like to show off in front of management, saying I did this and that, so please increase my salary or offer me better position. In German companies, it is very well organized: You do not need to think about anything; my work is noticed whether I want it or not. And if you show good results, you are praised with a raise in salary and a promotion.

The quotes presented in Table 39 reveal several aspects of the German and Russian cultural scripts related to compensation. Generally, large German enterprises have a clearly defined process of performance evaluation and compensation, which depends on the number of objective achievements and the quality of the work performed. One of the most important objectives in this regard is the overall performance of a department or a project. Setting overall departmental or project targets for the employees aims at ensuring their collaboration and mutual support. Thus, it is common to incorporate departmental targets or company targets as variable part of the salary. Holger comments on this: "There should be collective targets. You need something to encourage team spirit because our business does not work with 'lone fighters.' It is true that the project only does well if sales, commercial managers, engineers, purchasing managers, all work closely together. If someone does not perform, the whole project encounters difficulties."

Furthermore, according to the German cultural script related to compensation, German employees do not discuss their salaries or other elements of compensation with each other. The open discussion of salaries may even be prohibited by the contract. Similarly, the German education system ensures the privacy of individual notes; they are not

communicated openly in front of others. Thus, individual performance is considered a taboo topic in the German business environment.

The Russian cultural script related to compensation is subject to fewer regulations and pre-defined processes; compensation depends to a greater extent on the personal decision of the top management. Furthermore, in the Russian business environment, the individual performance of an employee determines his compensation. It is the role of the boss to decide to which extent the employee contributed to the overall performance of the company. Under these circumstances, collective targets become redundant. Moreover, this approach towards compensation is in line with the Russian cultural script for task performance,[74] according to which it is the role of the boss to ensure the communication and collaboration between departments. Similarly, the Russian educational system does not envisage the evaluation of group performance: group assignments are rather rare, and if there are any, the role of the teacher is to evaluate the individual performance of each team member according to his or her respective contributions.

Salaries and individual performance are not considered private issues. Just as the teacher communicates the notes openly in front of all pupils, and just as the pupils do not hesitate to discuss them openly, Russian employees share information about their performance and salaries with one another. Therefore, the German expatriate managers face difficulties in trying to convince their Russian colleagues to keep information about their salaries private.

Both the German and Russian cultural scripts related to compensation emphasize fairness in compensation, but the notion of fairness varies across cultures. Besides the diverging attitudes towards collective targets, Russian and German employees vary in their notion of the importance of the performed task. The following example illustrates another aspect of this topic.

Example 25. Wife's salary exceeds that of her husband

A Russian subsidiary of a German enterprise employed a Russian married couple. The husband worked in the company training center, which also serves as an exhibition room for customer presentations, whereas the wife occupied the position of office manager, taking care of all the legal formalities related to the delegation of German expatriate

[74] See Chapter 3.5.1.3 for further details.

managers. During the annual salary discussions, the management of the company decided to acknowledge the great work of their office manager with a substantial salary increase. With this increase, the salary of the wife would have exceeded those of her husband. This fact, however, caused resistance from the Russian management. Russian managers argued that it was impossible for a husband to earn less than his wife because their marriage might break up; they also argued that she has only a support function, and that they can easily find a replacement for her even with a lower salary. The German managers were truly surprised with this reaction. They were working with her on daily base and were always satisfied with her work. Moreover, she had taken good care of all the legal issues so the company never received any problems or penalties, whereas a German company can easily become trapped in all the tiny details of the Russian legislation. In the end, the case was escalated to the management in Germany, and the suggested salary increase was finally approved.

This incident demonstrates that both parties aimed to establish "fair" compensation for the office manager, but from the point of view of their own habitual cultural script related to compensation. Thus, the German managers appreciated the work of their office manager greatly, because otherwise the company might have had problems with legislation and unnecessary expenses for lawyers and penalties. From their point of view, her job was of more value than her husband's, therefore it deserved higher compensation. In contrast, the Russian business environment does not attach great importance to the job of office manager; it is considered to be a task for students or recent graduates. In this context, the Russian managers could not understand how the same company could praise the job of office manager, an employee of the back office, more than the job of an employee of the training center, who has daily contact with the customers, especially if they are a married couple. As a result, both parties evaluate the behavior of each other according to their own habitual cultural script and perceive it as "unfair" and "inappropriate" under the given circumstances. Table 40 illustrates the corresponding lacunas reflecting the differences between the German and Russian cultural scripts.

Table 40. Lacunas in Example 25: Wife's salary exceeds that of her husband

	Visible lacunas	Axiological lacunas
German perspective	**Conceptual and role-related fond lacunas (mental lacuna):** Job of office manager is not of high value; consideration of personal issues in job	Unfair treatment
Russian perspective	**Conceptual and role-related fond lacunas (mental lacuna):** Job of office manager is of high value; separation between personal and work-related issues	Unfair treatment, ignorance of German colleagues

Because issues of compensation in local Russian offices are subject to uniform processes and regulations, which are defined by the German headquarters, the German-Russian interculture related to compensation resembles the German cultural script in this regard. Example 25 also demonstrates that in cases of escalations, the final decision is made by the German manager in accordance with German cultural script. The exception, however, is the attitude towards open discussion of salaries among employees. In this regard, the German-Russian interculture resembles the Russian cultural script related to compensation.

3.5.3.6 Reflection of personnel development and compensation in dimension frameworks and in Thomas' cultural standards

The demonstrated differences between the German and Russian cultural scripts related to personnel development and compensation are associated with multiple dimensions from different dimension frameworks:

- paternalism, recipient-focused communication, directness/truth, and separation of the personal and public domains from Thomas' cultural standards;
- human orientation, performance orientation, and uncertainty avoidance from the GLOBE study;

- individualism versus collectivism and power distance from Hofstede's five dimensions framework; and
- individualism versus communitarianism, and to a certain extant universalism versus particularism and specific versus diffuse from Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's framework.

The Russian cultural script related to motivation and turnover is strongly related to the Russian cultural standard of paternalism. According to Thomas et al. (2003: 106-107), the interactions between the supervisor and his subordinates are based on personal and emotional relationships, and the role of the supervisor is to support these relationships and take care of each individual employee. In contrast, the respective German cultural script is supported by the German cultural standard of the separation of the personal and the public domains. In line with this cultural standard, Germans make a clear separation between professional and personal, rational and emotional, role and person, and formal and informal (Schroll-Machl, 2003: 135).

Furthermore, the Russian cultural standard of recipient-focused communication and the German cultural standard of directness/truth reflect the differences in the cultural scripts related to feedback. Thus, the Russian cultural standard of recipient-focused communication suggests the avoidance of direct criticism or a direct statement of one's opinion. Because the relationship among colleagues focuses on people and emotions, Thomas et al. (2003: 107) suggest to "gift-wrap" as much as possible and to sympathize with one's colleagues. In contrast, the German cultural standard of directness/truth encourages the open and direct statement of one's own opinion. According to Schroll-Machl (2003: 176), German employees "do not shy from criticism, but express criticism relatively openly and honestly." They believe that criticism is not directed against a person, but that it only has the aim of improving and learning.

The Russian and German cultural scripts related to motivation and turnover are also strongly related to the societal practice of human orientation from the GLOBE study. According to House et al. (2004: 573), Russia has a moderate score on this dimension, whereas both West and East Germany have very low scores. Thus, Russian employees tend to promote more paternalistic norms and patronage relationships and consider the need for belonging and affiliation to be motivating instruments (House et al., 2004: 570). Interestingly, both societies have rather high scores on the dimension of human orientation values, leading to the assumption that German expatriates would understand

and adopt willingly the Russian cultural scripts related to motivation and turnover. The findings of the current study, however, could not confirm this assumption.

Furthermore, the dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and performance orientation support the findings regarding the Russian and German cultural scripts related to feedback. According to House et al. (2004: 245, 604), cultures with high uncertainty avoidance and high performance orientation seek more feedback because it reduces uncertainty. West and East Germany are two societies that score high on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance practices and moderate on the dimension of performance orientation practices; Russia, in contrast, has very low rankings on both dimensions. At the same time, Russia's high ranking on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance values may suggest the willingness of Russian employees to introduce an open feedback culture. However, the findings of the current study instead show the contradicting reactions of the Russian employees.

The findings regarding the Russian and German cultural scripts related to feedback are also associated with the dimension of individualism versus collectivism from Hofstede's framework. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 101, 132-135), Russia is a rather collectivistic country. Therefore, an open discussion of performance with Russian employees may disturb the harmonious atmosphere in the department and be perceived as a "loss of face."

The dimensions of individualism versus collectivism and power distance from Hofstede's framework also correlate with the German and Russian cultural scripts related to motivation. Thus, German employees, who are members of an individualistic society, consider the employer-employee relationship solely as a contractual agreement. In contrast, Russian employees, who are members of a collectivistic society, value personal relationships in the working environment (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 134). Furthermore, the emotional character of the employer-employee relationship in Russia is also reflected in its high ranking on the dimension of power distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 55, 71).

Interestingly, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006: 55) rank Russia as a very individualist society, whereas Germany has a moderate ranking on this dimension. Thus, Russian employees prefer working and taking responsibility individually, whereas German employees emphasize working in a team and taking team responsibility (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2006: 54-57). This assumption is supported by the

findings of the current research regarding the German and Russian cultural scripts for compensation.

Two further dimensions from Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's framework, universalism versus particularism and specific versus diffuse, are associated to a certain extent with the findings of the study regarding the Russian and German cultural scripts related to motivation and compensation. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2006: 33-42), Russia, being a particularist society, emphasizes relationships and circumstances while judging people, whereas in Germany, as in a universalist society, rules prevail over the relationship. Furthermore, Russian employees prefer a diffuse management style, which means that the supervisor should take care of his subordinates. In contrast, the German business environment differentiates between the working and the private spheres, and the employer-employee relationship is solely task-oriented.

It is important to note that the findings of the current study regarding knowledge sharing are reflected neither in the dimension frameworks nor in Thomas' cultural standard. Furthermore, the findings of this study on the cultural scripts related to turnover and compensation do not support the position of Russia and Germany and/or the characteristics of the following dimensions:

- institutional and in-group collectivism as well as performance orientation from the GLOBE study;
- individualism versus collectivism and uncertainty avoidance from Hofstede's five dimensions framework; and
- group orientation from Thomas' cultural standards.

Thus, House et al. (2004: 468-469) ranks Russia as a rather collectivistic culture on both dimensions: institutional and in-group collectivism. Member of collectivistic societies, according to House et al. (2004: 446), "view themselves as highly interdependent with the organization," so the organization would become a part of an employee's identity. However, the results of the current study reveal that employees build up stronger connections to their supervisors and other colleagues, but not to the organization itself. Furthermore, House et al. (2004: 454) points out that in collectivistic societies, such as Russia, group goals prevail over individual goals, and the societies that score lower on the dimension of performance orientation, such as Russia, value a performance appraisal system that emphasizes cooperative spirit. Similarly, Hofstede and Hofstede (2011: 131-

132) points out that individualistic societies, such as Germany, prefer a compensation system that is focused on individual performance, whereas collectivistic societies, like Russia, emphasize the necessity of appraising team performance. Thomas' cultural standard of group orientation also stipulates that group needs and group targets prevail over individual ones in Russia (Thomas et al., 2003: 104). The findings from the current study, however, instead demonstrate the opposite attitude on the part of Russian employees.

Finally, the findings of the current study also contradict the characteristic of uncertainty avoidance from Hofstede's framework, according to which Russian employees should be less reluctant to change their employer because Russia has higher ranking in this dimension than Germany (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011: 240, 248).

3.5.3.7 Historical background related to personnel development and compensation

The German and Russian cultural scripts related to personnel development and compensation also find their roots in the historical backgrounds of both countries. Among the most influential factors are the distribution of the power in the state, the separation or fusion of public commitments and personal needs, and religious teachings.

In Russia, power was concentrated in the hands of one person: the tsar or emperor as the representative of overall power, and the nobility as representatives of local power. On the other hand, the vast majority of the urban population and the peasants did not have any rights and were strongly dependent on their landlords. Thus, the dependent urban population and bondsmen did not and could not have a habit of taking personal care of their own futures; instead, this was the role of the respective landlords. A similar distribution of responsibilities remained in the USSR: The communist party and the state system took care of the education and the employment of the Soviet citizens, ensuring the fulfillment of their basic needs. Furthermore, the concentration of power in one person's hands, the lack of differentiation between official positions in governmental structures and in personal life, and the insufficient legislative system promoted the importance of personal relationships to gain a better position and, with it, better living standards. During the Soviet era, membership in the higher echelons of the communist party opened up better carrier prospects as well as access to better goods and food products. Thus, personal relationships played an important role both in the private and the public spheres (Galkin, 2005; Kappeler, 2008). As a result, the Russian tradition of being taken care of

and the importance of personal relationships manifest themselves in the contemporary business environment in the tendency towards paternalistic relationships between employees and their supervisors and in the high importance of personal relationships in the working environment.

In contrast, German society is accustomed to relying on rules and separating the private and working spheres of their lives. The roots of such an attitude may be traced back to the stronger regulatory and governmental system, the independent status of cities in the Holy Roman and German Empires, and the religious teachings of the Protestant Church. The Protestant Church appealed to individual responsibility for one's own deeds, and Luther's reform separated the Church and the State, the private and the public (Nuss, 1993: 27). Protestantism brought rationality and intellectual thought into the foreground while relegating emotions and irrational thinking to the background (Schroll-Machl, 2003: 188). More recently, the movement of 1968 contributed to openness and brought further focus on objectivism in the business environment (Schroll-Machl, 2003: 66-67, 191). As a result, German employees do not mix the private and public spheres of their lives and appreciate constructive feedback in the contemporary business environment.

Another interesting element of the historical backgrounds of both countries relates to the notion of collectivism and individualism. Chapter 3.5.3.6 discussed the diverging scores of Russia and Germany on the dimension of individualism and collectivism within different dimensional frameworks and described cultural scripts of Russian and German employees during the empirical study. It concluded that the country score is subject to the emphasized aspect of individualism and collectivism in the underlying question. From the historical perspective, for example, Goryanin (2001, 2007) indicates that collectivism was an enforced way of living for peasants because the state preferred to deal not with individual households but with a community that consisted of number of households. Therefore, Russian egalitarianism is the result of state policy and not the genuine will of the people. On the contrary, many peasants tried to escape from this egalitarian community and became private owners. Bühler (n.d.) points out that even though the land was collectively owned and used, each peasant was responsible for his own work and results. Such a working tradition manifests itself today in the insistence of Russian employees on individual compensation for work.

In contrast, German society, which is considered individualistic, promotes collective targets in the contemporary business environment. At the first glance, such an attitude

contradicts the teachings of the Protestant Church regarding self-responsibility. At the same time, however, the German population is accustomed to aligning their forces for the sake of mutual targets: The numerous principalities and independent cities needed to align their forces to resist their enemies. Similarly, contemporary German society consists of numerous unions (Vereine) whose members unite their forces for the achievement of a mutual goal.

3.6 Conclusion from the specific empirical section

The theoretical section began by outlining the specific objectives of the empirical study and specifying the selected research method. Given that the purpose of the empirical study is to describe intercultural interactions and explain individual perceptions and interpretations of these interactions, I selected a case study strategy with a multiple-case holistic design and interviews as the most appropriate data selection tool. Relying on the selected research method, I have conducted 30 in-person interviews with German expatriates and their Russian colleagues. All the interviews were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework and lacuna analysis. While the former framework enabled me to derive patterns in German-Russian business interactions, lacuna analysis addressed the cultural aspects of these interactions.

The empirical study identified three major themes in German-Russian business interactions: attitude towards tasks, internal meetings, and human resource development and compensation. The first theme, attitude towards tasks, revealed that German and Russian employees have different understandings of the role of the supervisor and the division of responsibility between a supervisor and his/her employees. The second theme, internal meetings, indicated that Russian and German employees have different views on meeting procedures and diverging preferences with regard to formal and informal communication. The third chapter, human resource development and compensation, addressed the differences in knowledge sharing, feedback culture, motivation, turnover issues, and compensation principles.

The analysis of the individual perception and interpretation mechanisms showed that individuals tended to rely on their previous experiences while judging the behavior of their counterparts. The unusual behavior of the colleagues from the other culture was typically evaluated as negative, in line with the group-serving bias (Pettigrew, 1979).

Furthermore, the respondents mainly saw the roots of the observed unusual behavior of their counterparts from the other culture in his/her individual characteristics or the historical background of his/her country of origin. As result, a majority of respondents opted for stereotypes while explaining and interpreting the unusual behavior of their colleagues from the other culture. Only a few respondents directed the search for an explanation of the unusual behavior toward themselves or the historical background of their own country of origin.

The empirical study also showed that contemporary, culturally bound experiences are interlinked with the historical background of the respective national culture. Thus, the reported divergence of the contemporary Russian and German cultural scripts may be traced back to the historical differences in power distribution within the country, the importance of laws and regulations, the separation or fusion of public commitments and personal needs, the development of cities, and religious teachings.

The unusual behavior reported on the individual level was also reflected on the macro level in several of the dimensional frameworks discussed in Chapter 2. A detailed analysis showed that a large number of interactions can be explained by the different scores for Russian and German cultures on the cultural dimension. Nevertheless, many interactions could not be supported or even contradicted by the position of German and Russian cultures on their respective dimensions. Such contradictions could be explained by the framework-specific measures of the respective dimension, which often remain unknown to the reader and the end-user of dimension frameworks. In this light, I suggest a very careful employment of dimensional frameworks.

The final chapter of this dissertation restates my conclusions and discusses the implications of the key findings for both theory and praxis in the areas of intercultural communication.

4 Conclusions and implications

4.1 Summary and discussion of findings

The aim of this research was threefold. First, it aimed at identifying German-Russian interactions that are perceived as unusual and interesting by both sides. Second, it sought to analyze how German and Russian employees interpreted and evaluated these situations. Finally, this study aimed at exploring the patterns of German-Russian interculture that result from these interactions.

Previous investigations have provided some insight into the field of German-Russian business communication. The scholars mainly examined the position of Russia within the dimension frameworks (e.g. Bollinger, 1994; Fernandez et al., 1997; Gratchev et al., 2002; Naumov & Puffer, 2000) or the impact of cultural characteristics on different aspects of doing business (e.g. Husted & Michailova, 2002; May et al., 2005; Michailova & Worm, 2003; Puffer, 1994) and compared it to the situation in Western Europe and the USA. Thus, the majority of the studies related to Russia had a cross-cultural character and were based on macro-level analysis. Perhaps the only study that covers the issues of German-Russian business communication on the micro level is the study by Yoosefi and Thomas (2003). Though this study offers important insights into the daily problems of German-Russian business communication, it tends to focus on the explanation of Russian behavior, leaving the standpoint of German employees out of the scope.

Building on the existing research, the current study intended to contribute to the field of intercultural research in the following ways:

- by investigating German-Russian business interactions in a holistic manner, considering the standpoints of both the German and Russian employees;
- by adopting both approaches to study cultural interactions and uniting them under one framework; and
- by developing the lacuna model further in the field of intercultural communication, with a particular focus on axiological lacunas.

To address the aim of this dissertation, a semi-structured approach was chosen for the empirical investigation. The empirical field was entered with open questions on personal experiences and perceptions of German-Russian business interactions in order to

maintain the explorative and interpretive character of this study. Subsequently, the interview transcripts were coded and analyzed in three rounds until three coherent areas of interactions were obtained. These areas included attitudes towards tasks, attitudes and behavior in meetings, and personnel development and compensation.

An analysis of the attitudes towards tasks showed that Russian and German employees had different notions regarding the roles of the supervisor and his subordinates. While Russian employees expect tight leadership and clear guidance from their supervisor, German managers expect self-initiative and independence during task performance as well as the pro-active upward and horizontal communication of task status and potential difficulties.

An analysis of attitudes and behavior in meetings revealed intercultural differences in the perception of meetings and meeting structure. Whereas Russian employees prefer informal communication and do not invest much time into preparing for meetings, German employees show a more formalized attitude towards business communication that requires thorough preparation. Furthermore, Russian employees tend to deviate from the initial subject of a meeting and lead a more emotional discussion. In contrast, German employees tend to keep to the pre-defined agenda and to build their arguments exclusively on the basis of facts.

The area of personnel development and compensation is characterized by differences in knowledge sharing, feedback culture, motivation tools, turnover, and compensation principles. Thus, Russian employees are rather reluctant to share professional knowledge with younger colleagues, they consider feedback as deliberate criticism, they emphasize relationship-based motivation, they do not separate private and working domains, and they prefer individual compensation. In contrast, German employees consider the professional development of younger employees to be one of the main responsibilities of a manager, they place a high value on feedback as an instrument of personnel development, they draw a clear line between working and private life, and they emphasize collective goals as a facilitator of teamwork.

After the three major areas of interactions were identified, subsequent analyses aimed at extrapolating the interpretation patterns and characteristics of German-Russian interculture within these areas. The results showed that German and Russian employees opt for stereotypes when attributing the unusual behavior of their counterparts, and that

the resulting interculture can be described as a continuous confrontation between the two cultural scripts. The following sections summarize the findings on these dimensions.

4.1.1 Stereotypes as self-fulfilling prophecies

The analysis of processes of interpretation and evaluation revealed three possible attribution patterns:

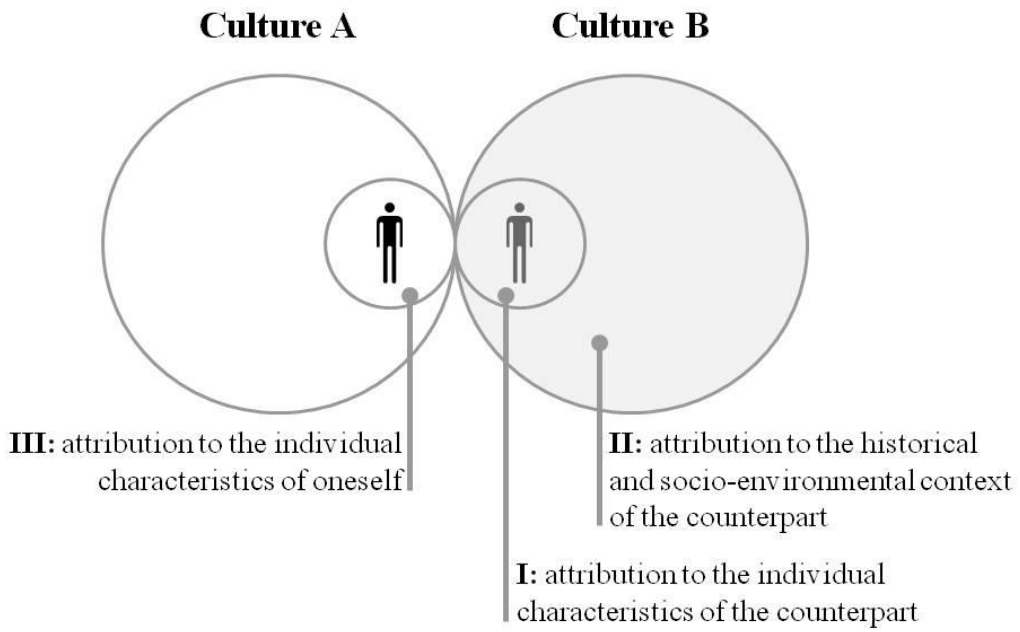
I: unusual behavior is attributed to the individual characteristics of the counterpart;

II: unusual behavior is attributed to the historical and socio-environmental context of the counterpart;

III: unusual behavior is attributed to the individual characteristics of oneself.

Figure 18 illustrates these three possible patterns of attribution. The schematic diagram shows two outer circles, which represent two interacting cultures A and B, and two inner circles, which represent two individuals from cultures A and B who are involved in an intercultural encounter. The outer circle encompasses the culture-specific historical and socio-environmental contexts. The inner circle represents an individual – a "carrier" of a respective culture. The following paragraphs take the perspective of the individual from culture A to describe three possible attribution patterns for the purpose of simplification. The individual from culture B features the same patterns.

Figure 18. Overview of attribution patterns in German-Russian interactions



According to the first attribution pattern (I), the individual from culture A attributes the perceived unusualness of the interaction to the individual characteristics of his counterpart from culture B; this corresponds to the inner circle of culture B in the Figure 18. However, the individual from culture A interprets and evaluates the "strange" behavior of the individual from culture B based on the common cultural scripts of his own culture A. Thus, the individual from culture A interprets the behavior of his counterpart from the culture B and evaluates him by applying the behavior "standards" and values of his native culture; figuratively speaking, the individual from culture A is looking at his counterpart through the glasses of culture A. Such interpretations and evaluations often result in individual-related stereotypes, i.e., personal characteristics such as laziness, inefficiency, or emotionlessness.

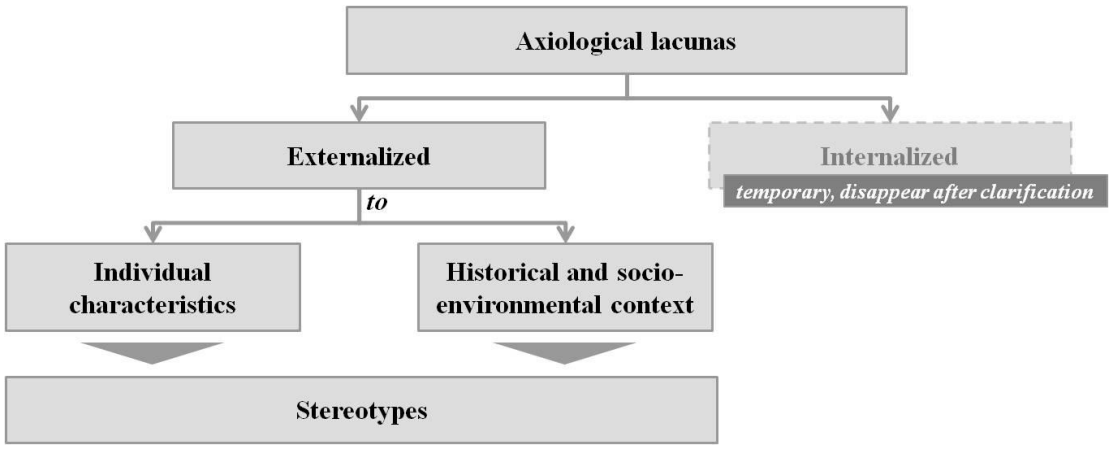
According to the second attribution pattern (II), the individual from culture A attributes the perceived unusualness of the interaction to the historical and socio-environmental context of culture B; this corresponds to the outer circle of culture B in the Figure 18. However, the interpretation and evaluation process follows the logic of first attribution pattern: The individual from culture A interprets and evaluates the historical context of culture B as well as its "strange" socio-environmental context based on the common cultural scripts of his own culture A. Once again, the individual from culture A is

utilizing the glasses of his own culture to view culture B. Moreover, the individual from culture A often lacks a profound knowledge of the historical background and socio-environmental factors of the other culture. Thus, the biased interpretation and lack of knowledge result in stereotypes for culture B, such as exaggeration of rules and punctuality or a military leadership style.

According to the third attribution pattern (III), the individual from culture A attributes the perceived unusualness of the interaction to his own individual characteristics; this corresponds to the inner circle of culture A in the Figure 18. Thus, when the individual from culture A observes unusual behavior or reaction of the counterpart from culture B, he looks for potential explanations within himself, trying to understand what he did wrong. In contrast to attribution patterns I and II, attribution pattern III suggests that the individual from culture A is trying to apply the cultural scripts of culture B to interpret and evaluate the interaction. The individual from culture A is trying to put on the glasses of culture B. This attitude manifests itself in the pro-active addressing of the representatives of culture B, not only those directly involved in the interaction, aiming at inquiring about the common cultural scripts of culture B in such situations. By doing so, the individual from culture A gains profound knowledge of culture B and avoids stereotyping.

Based on the identified attribution patterns, I can suggest the classification of axiological lacunas in two groups – externalized and internalized – with the subsequent sub-division of externalized lacunas into individual related characteristics and historical and socio-environmental contexts. The externalized lacunas lead to stereotyping, whereas the internalized lacunas have a temporary character – after a clarification of the situation, this axiological lacuna disappears. Figure 19 illustrates this suggested classification.

Figure 19. Suggested classification of axiological lacunas



Comparing the attribution patterns of the Russian and German respondents, it can be seen that the Russian respondents tend to use mainly externalized attributions based on individual characteristics, whereas the German respondents reveal both types of externalized lacunas rather equally; internalized attribution could be observed only in a few examples. This result can be explained by the fact that the German employees are more intensively exposed to Russian culture and have a better knowledge of the socio-environmental context of the host country. In contrast, the Russian employees' contact with German culture is limited to the interactions in the office and occasional trips abroad. Furthermore, the prevalence of externalized axiological lacunas shows that a majority of the respondents tends to interpret and evaluate intercultural interactions by employing their own culture.

Comparing the attribution patterns across the three interaction areas identified in the study – attitude towards tasks, attitude and behavior in meetings, and personnel development and compensation – it can be observed that externalized attribution to historical and socio-environmental characteristics prevails within the interaction area related to attitude towards tasks. Thus, a majority of the German respondents mentioned the Russian Soviet background when they were asked for potential explanations for their observed task-related behavior. Therefore, the differences of attribution among the three interactions areas may be explained by the fact that the Soviet background and the characteristics of Soviet leadership style are well-known facts, and it seems to be easy to draw a parallel between task-related behavior and the particularities of the Soviet leadership style. In contrast, it seems to be more difficult to find appropriate historical or

socio-environmental reasoning for the differences in cultural scripts related to meetings or personnel development and compensation. As a result, German employees resort to German cultural scripts, attributing the behavior of their Russian counterparts to their individual characteristics.

The results of this study are only partially in line with the findings of the previous research. The findings of the current research support the idea that ethnocentric attribution leads to complementary negative attributions from both the German and Russian sides (cf. Beneke, 2005; Triandis, 1975). However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research on cross-cultural differences in the magnitude and frequency of fundamental attribution errors (see Chapter 2.2.2.3). In contrast, the respondents from the rather individualistic German culture explained the behavior of their Russian colleagues more often according to external factors, such as the historical context, whereas the Russian respondents, representative of a more collectivistic culture, attributed the "strange" behavior of their German colleagues primarily to their personal characteristics. In this light, the suggested explanation of asymmetric knowledge regarding the cultural background of the counterpart seems to be an appropriate explanation. Interestingly, that interpretation of the findings with regard to the dimension of individualism versus collectivism depends on the selected cultural framework. According to Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's framework, Russia is an individualistic society, while Germany has a moderate score. Based on this framework, the findings of this study corroborate with the previous research. Therefore, the researchers should be careful in linking the attribution patterns to any dimensions, or should clearly specify the respective framework. Finally, the suggested classification of attribution patterns into three groups has not been discussed so far. Whereas the previous research (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Kelley, 1973) has already indicated the differentiation of attribution patterns into individual characteristics and historical and socio-environmental contexts, the attribution of the counterpart's behavior to the individual characteristics of oneself has not been discussed in the literature in this context thus far. Since the design of this study does not allow for a generalization of findings, further research might be able to investigate this attribution pattern in a broader sample.

4.1.2 Interculture as a constant clash of cultures

The preceding discussion of attribution patterns also manifests itself in the formation of a German-Russian interculture. Because a majority of both the German and Russian employees demonstrate externalized attribution patterns, neither the German nor the Russian side can fully accept the cultural scripts of their counterpart. Thus, the interculture in form of absorption and symbiosis, as suggested by Guba (2011: 22-23),[75] has a temporary character: The counterpart tolerates the behavior of the other, but would like or even continuously attempts to put his own habitual cultural scripts through. For example, German managers have to adjust to the Russian cultural scripts related to tasks, but at the same time, they keep encouraging their Russian employees to act according to the German cultural scripts. Similarly, Russian employees tolerate the German notion of meetings and meeting procedure when their German counterparts are present; otherwise, they opt for their habitual Russian cultural scripts. As a result, the temporary interculture may take the form of absorption and symbiosis on the surface, but its true nature is characterized by the continuous confrontation of the two cultures.

While the interculture in form of absorption and symbiosis incorporates a tacit conflict, the interculture with the preserved limits of each culture, as suggested by Guba (2011: 22-23),[76] leads to an open conflict whenever the representatives of the two cultures interact. In this case, neither the Russian nor the German employees are willing to accept or tolerate the cultural scripts of their counterpart. An example of such an interculture can be observed in the German-Russian encounters while dealing with mistakes.[77] This form of interculture occurs rather rarely, however.

Taken together, the German-Russian interculture has the form of a continuous clash of culture. In a majority of cases, this conflict of cultures is of a tacit nature. In some cases, however, it becomes visible. Figure 20 illustrates the findings of this study regarding the German-Russian interculture in form of a generalized schematic diagram.

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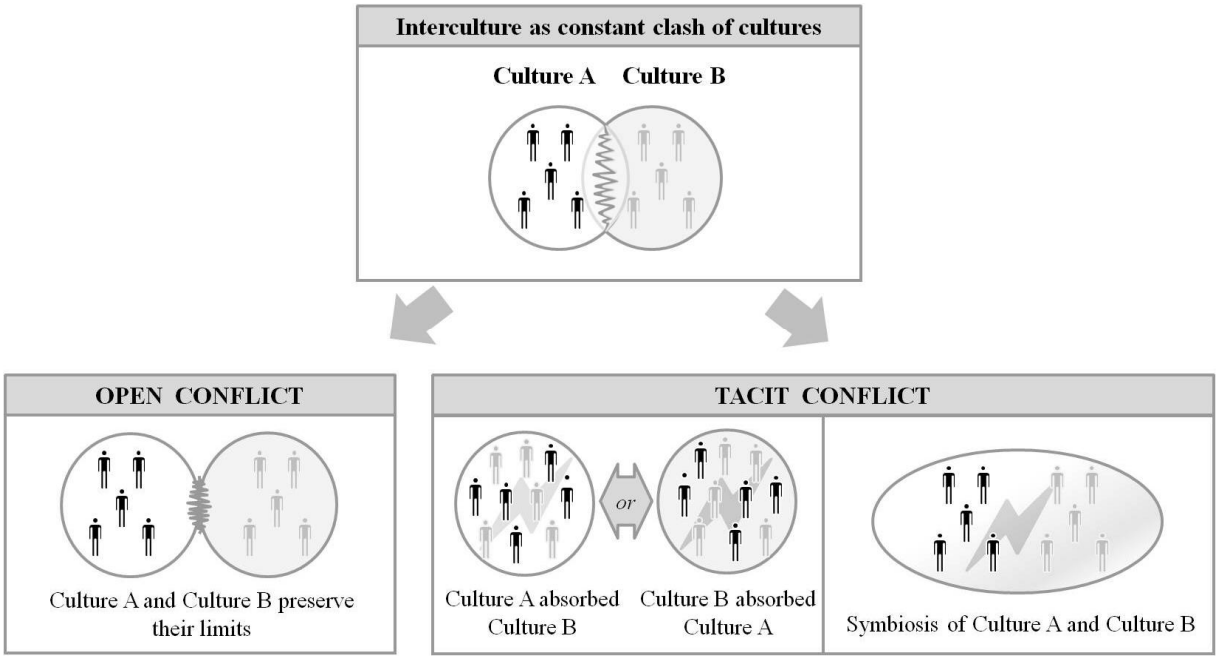
[75] See also Figure 6 in Chapter 1.4.2.5.

[76] See also Figure 6 in Chapter 1.4.2.5.

[77] Cf. Chapter 3.5.1.5.

Figure 20. Interculture as a constant clash of cultures



4.2 Implications for international business practice

This research has several implications for international business practitioners, as detailed in the following three sections.

4.2.1 Major lessons learned for German and Russian employees regarding collaboration

The results of this study show that German-Russian business interactions are determined by the interplay of the respective German and Russian cultural scripts. In the course of this interplay, one of the parties tends either to adjust its habitual cultural scripts to the particularities of the cultural scripts of the counterpart from the other culture, or to tolerate them. Open conflicts occur rather rarely. However, such a tendency towards adjustment or tolerance of the counterpart's behavior refers only to the visible part of the interaction. The invisible part – interpretation and evaluation – follows the "standards" of one's own habitual cultural script.

In this context, giving some guidance regarding "appropriate" behavior in German-Russian business interactions may, in the best case, solve the problem on the surface. In the worst case, such advice may even damage the collaboration, because each situation is

unique and should be considered in its own context. Thus, the analyzed interactions in Chapter 3.5 aim at increasing the awareness of both the German and Russian employees in their daily interactions by offering them insights into how they usually behave and why they do so.

In addition to the numerous insights into the cultural scripts of the German and Russian employees, this study has an important implication with respect to the interpretation and evaluation of intercultural encounters. Both German and Russian employees are advised to avoid immediate evaluation of the situation and to take their time to understand the ultimate causes for the observed behavior of their counterpart. This can be done by asking oneself a question "what did I do wrong?" instead of blaming the counterpart or the circumstances. Such questioning, however, has two pre-requisites. First, it implies a mutual respect between the counterparts. Thus, German employees are advised to keep in mind that their Russian counterparts are the local experts, and Russian employees are advised to value the knowledge, experiences, and networks of the German employees from the headquarters. Second, it needs to go along with a constant dialog between trusted counterparts from the foreign cultural environment. In this case, time invested into the profound understanding of one another in the beginning results in closer collaboration and better overall performance.

4.2.2 Role of the expatriate: bridging the cultures

The results of this research show that German-Russian interculture has the form of a continuous clash of culture. This occurs because each side interprets and evaluates the behavior of the other according to its own habitual cultural scripts. Thus, the practitioners involved in intercultural interactions should seek out a mediator who is able to explain and "interpret" the behavior of each side. The role of a mediator may be fulfilled by either an external cultural mediator or an experienced expatriate. If the company opts for an external cultural mediator, it is advised to select an expert who has mastered not only coaching and conflict mediation techniques, but who also has a profound expertise in business issues and the cultural particularities of both sides. However, this option has two drawbacks. First, such experts are rather rare in the field of intercultural communication. Second, even if such an expert can be found, he typically lacks the knowledge of the company's internal structure and corporate culture.

In this light, the companies are advised to use their own in-house expertise. Thus, the expatriates should assume the role of an intercultural mediator within the company. Instead of imposing the headquarters' "standards" of doing business and trying to "conquer" the local culture, the expatriates should be responsible for bridging the local culture and the headquarters culture, continuously explaining to each side the cultural background for their respective business practices. This, however, requires the regular training and coaching of the expatriates in order to enhance their skills in intercultural communication as well as to gain a profound knowledge about the historical and socio-environmental background of the local culture.

4.2.3 Intercultural training for both delegates and local employees

The findings of this study demonstrate that it is not only the German expatriates who lack knowledge of the local culture; the Russian colleagues also face difficulties of an intercultural nature. Moreover, due to a lack of exposure to German culture, both in the personal and the working environment, Russian employees usually have fewer opportunities to gain substantial experience in the area of intercultural interactions. Thus, the companies are advised to offer the intercultural training and coaching, not only to the expatriates in preparation for their assignment abroad, but also to the employees of the local office. Moreover, these training and coaching sessions should have a regular character to avoid falling back to stereotypes and to enhance the learning effect.

4.3 Implications for intercultural business communication research

This sub-chapter discusses the major implications of the current study for the field of international business research. It consists of three sections: The first summarizes the major scientific insights resulting from the study. The second section discusses the limitations of the current research. Finally, the third section makes recommendations for further inquiries into the field of intercultural business communication research.

4.3.1 Major scientific insights

This dissertation contributes to the field of intercultural business communication research in three ways. First, it considered the perspective of both the German and Russian sides.

Second, it aligned macro and micro approaches to the study of culture. Third, it refined the lacuna model.

The current research highlighted the perspective of both the German and Russian sides in German-Russian business interactions. In order to gain a profound understanding of intercultural interactions, this study deployed the continuous change of perspectives, as suggested by Ertelt-Vieth (2005). Thus, the focus of the study was set on the interaction itself, and not the specific characteristics of one of the cultures in focus. This made it possible to step away from the pitfall of stereotyping and to gain a holistic view of intercultural interaction, taking into account the context of the interaction and the perspective of each side.

Furthermore, this research adopted several frameworks enabling the analysis of a culture from different perspectives: etic and emic, macro and micro, as well as from the perspective of different disciplines. Thus, the study has shown that the approaches utilized, i.e., the dimension frameworks, Thomas' cultural standards, the lacuna model, cultural scripts, attribution theory, and historical background, do not contradict each other, but, on the contrary, complement each other. This study also suggests the complementarity of dimension frameworks: Depending on the research angle, each framework contributes in its own way to an understanding of cultural differences. Thus, instead of opting for one framework, it is advantageous to study carefully the background of each dimension according to different frameworks and, if necessary, to select the relevant dimensions from different frameworks that best fulfill the purpose of the investigation.

Finally, the study contributed to the advancement of the lacuna model in two ways. First, it has proven the applicability of the lacuna model in the field of intercultural business communication. Second, the study enhanced our understanding of patterns of attribution in intercultural communication and suggested a respective classification of axiological lacunas. The findings of this study have shown that the participants in intercultural encounters interpret and evaluate intercultural interactions based on their own habitual cultural scripts. Thus, the study contributes important evidence to the influence of societal practices over values, as it was hypothesized in Chapter 2, in the evaluation of intercultural interactions.

4.3.2 Limitations of the research

Several limitations need to be noted regarding the present study. The most important limitation lies in the sampling procedure of the Russian respondents for the empirical investigations. Access to the Russian respondents was gained mainly through the preceding interviews with German respondents, who suggested their Russian colleagues for participation in the study. In other words, the sampling procedure of the Russian respondents was to a certain extent dependent on the suggestion of the German respondents. Hence, although the Russian respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the current research, the validity of the sampling procedure could have been increased by the direct selection of Russian respondents without any intermediaries.

Another limitation of the current research concerns the method of data gathering. Whereas problem-centered interviews and critical incidents proved to be appropriate instruments for the interviews with German respondents, these methods turned out to be less than ideal for the Russian respondents. Although the study managed to obtain valuable insights from the Russian respondents, it would have been more useful to adapt data gathering methods to the cultural particularities of the Russian respondents, for example, by asking more precise questions. Furthermore, although the interviews with the Russian respondents covered all of the major areas of interaction in scope of this study, the enlargement of the sample size of Russian respondents might have expanded the insights from the Russian perspective.

Finally, this study focused on the subsidiaries of German industrial enterprises located in Moscow, leaving other regions of Russia out of the scope. Thus, the findings of the study have limited transferability to German-Russian business interactions occurring in locations other than Moscow. Expanding the geographical limits of the current research is generally a valid piece of advice.

4.3.3 Future research

This research revealed several questions in need of further investigation. First, it would be interesting to address the limitation of the current research. The direct selection of Russian respondents, adjustment of interview guidelines for cultural particularities, and extension of the investigation geographically to other regions of Russia would be beneficial. More specifically, future research may conduct the case study in different

regions and organize the data gathering procedure in a two-step approach: first, identifying the focus areas by means of questionnaires, and subsequently obtaining in-depth insights in personal interviews.

In addition, further research is necessary to test the theoretical propositions of the current study in a broader sample. Due to its explorative character, the results of the current research have stipulated theoretical propositions regarding the three possible attribution patterns and the respective classification of axiological lacunas as well as the formation of a German-Russian interculture. Thus, further research should test the generalization of the stipulated theoretical proposition in the intercultural interactions among the representatives of other cultures as well as in other contexts, such as in intercultural interactions between the headquarters and the local offices, in intercultural negotiations, or in intercultural communication during post-merger integration and subsequent collaboration.

Further research is also needed to determine whether the identified interpretation patterns are subject to changes over time and whether the temporary adopted behavioral patterns persist over time. This research direction requires a longitudinal study within a stable sample over multiple years. It would be interesting to investigate how the cultural scripts of Russian and German employees change over time, provided the employees remain in their place of work, change their position within the initial company, or change their current place of work in favor of another German company operating in Russia or another Russian employer.

Furthermore, future research should extend the theoretical framework of the current study in order to obtain an even more holistic picture and a more fundamental understanding of intercultural interactions. More specifically, I suggest incorporating an eco-cultural perspective as proposed by Berry (1975) and providing more details on the historical backgrounds of both nations. A cross-disciplinary project team is strongly recommended for the implementation of such a holistic approach.

Finally, a number of future studies using a similar research setup and approach are apparent for the investigation of intercultural interactions among the representatives of two or more different cultures. It would be interesting to explore the intercultural interactions among the cultures that score similarly within the dimension frameworks. For example, future research may investigate the intercultural interactions among the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe. In addition, it would be interesting to transfer

this research design to other areas of social life, such as political interactions, and subsequently, to compare the findings from different areas.

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Appendix I: Interview guidelines with German respondents[78]

Warm up section

1. What is your position within the company?
2. How big is your company in Russia?
3. Why did you decide to work Russia?
4. What is your experience in working internationally / in international teams (school / university exchange, work experience, including work in Germany with international teams)?
5. In particular what is your experience in working in Russia / with Russians (duration, tasks)?
6. What kind of business contacts with Russians do you usually have (company internal / external, hierarchical level, concerning which topics)?

Main section

7. What do you perceive to be different (new, interesting) in your dealings with your Russian colleagues within the company? Can you give particular examples?

   Potential clarifying questions (optional):

   7.1. Please briefly describe the situation.

   7.2. Who was involved?

   7.3. What did you do?

   7.4. What did your Russian colleagues do?

   7.5. What did your Russian colleagues say and to whom?

   7.6. What did you say and to whom?

[78] These questions refer to an interview with German expatriates. For the interviews with Russians, the set of questions will be adjusted, i.e. redirected towards Russian experiences in interactions with their German colleagues. Furthermore, it is not necessary to ask all the questions from the suggested list: the sole purpose of the questionnaire is to support the interviewer during the conversation.

7.7. What was the result?

7.8. In your opinion, why did they do/say this?

7.9. What would you have done differently in this situation?

Concluding Section

8. Are there any additional aspects of your business relationship with your Russian colleagues you would like to describe?
9. What recommendations would you like to give to any other German employees who might be planning to relocate to Russia?
10. Could you recommend any other German expatriates or Russian colleagues for further interviews?
11. Description of the next steps in the research and promise to send the results.
12. Thanking for their participation

Appendix II: Overview of respondent in the empirical study

#	Name	Nationality	Gender*	Age**	Hierarchical position***
1	Alexander	RUS / GER****	m	35-45	upper management
2	Andreas	GER	m	35-45	middle management
3	Anna	RUS	f	45-55	middle management
4	Daniela	GER	f	35-45	middle management
5	Dmitriy	RUS	m	45-55	middle management
6	Frank	GER	m	25-35	lower management
7	Georg	GER	m	45-55	middle management
8	Helmut	GER	m	35-45	middle management
9	Holger	GER	m	35-45	middle management
10	Maria	RUS	f	35-45	lower management
11	Marion	GER	f	45-55	upper management
12	Markus	GER	m	45-55	upper management
13	Martin	GER	m	45-55	upper management
14	Matthias	GER	m	35-45	middle management
15	Michael	GER	m	45-55	upper management
16	Natalya	RUS	f	35-45	office worker
17	Oleg	RUS	m	25-35	office worker
18	Olga	RUS	f	25-35	office worker

#	Name	Nationality	Gender*	Age**	Hierarchical position***
19	Oliver	GER	m	35-45	upper management
20	Richard	GER	m	45-55	upper management
21	Sebastian	GER	m	35-45	middle management
22	Stefan	GER	m	35-45	lower management
23	Susanne	GER	f	25-35	lower management
24	Thomas	GER	m	45-55	upper management
25	Vadim	RUS	m	35-45	upper management
26	Viktor	RUS	m	25-35	office worker
27	Volker	GER	m	35-45	middle management
28	Wolfgang	GER	m	45-55	upper management
29	Yaroslav	RUS	f	35-45	office worker
30	Yelena	RUS	f	35-45	middle management

Notes:

* Gender: m: male; f: female

** Age is estimated at the time point of the interview

*** Hierarchical position includes four categories:

1. Upper management position corresponds to the head of the office or heads of the division in big subsidiaries;
2. Middle management position corresponds to the head of departments that are subordinate to the upper management;
3. Lower management corresponds to the head of the small department that reports to the middle management; and
4. Office workers refer the employees of the company without responsibilities of team management.

**** Respondent who has originally Russian nationality, but is partially grown up in Germany.

Appendix III: Overview of companies in the empirical study

Company	Industry	Total number of employees*	Number of employees in Russia*
Company 1	Automotive technologies	> 100,000	> 1,000
Company 2	Electronics and electrical engineering	> 100,000	> 1,000
Company 3	Pharmaceutical	> 100,000	> 1,000
Company 4	Personal care	50,000 - 100,000	> 1,000
Company 5	Personal care	50,000 - 100,000	500 - 1,000
Company 6	Pharmaceutical	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1,000
Company 7	Polymer	10,000 - 50,000	500 - 1,000
Company 8	Automotive technologies	1,000 - 10,000	50 - 500
Company 9	Machine Tools / Automotive	1,000 - 10,000	< 50
Company 10	Sanitary fittings	1,000 - 10,000	50 - 500
Company 11	Furniture manufacturing	500 - 1,000	50 - 500
Company 12	Plant engineering	500 - 1,000	< 50

Note:

* Based on figures of fiscal year 2012 from company web-sites or information provided by the respondents in the interviews.

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Working experience	
05/2014 – now	Strategy and Business Development, Siemens Gas Turbines
11/2008 – 04/2014	Consultant / Senior Consultant, Siemens Management Consulting, Munich
05/2008 – 07/2008	Internship, Siemens Management Consulting, Munich
03/2007 – 06/2007	Internship T-Mobile International, Strategic Pricing, Bonn
03/2004 – 05/2004	Internship, Volkswagen AG, Logistics, Kassel
09/2004 – 11/2004	Internship, Volkswagen AG, Logistics, Kassel
Education	
2012 – now	PhD, University of St. Gallen, International Business
2003 – 2008	Master, University of Passau, Business Administration
2000 – 2005	Bachelor, Vadym Hetman Kyiv National Economics University / National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv (Ukraine), Business Administration
2000	Lyceum # 208, major in physics and mathematics, Kyiv (Ukraine)
Languages	
Ukrainian	mother tongue
Russian	mother tongue
English	fluent
German	fluent
French	very good
Honors	
2006 – 2008	Scholarship from Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung
2003 – 2004	DAAD- Scholarship
2000	Honored as „best graduate“ of 2000 of Lyceum # 208