Intercultural Perspectives. Images of Germany in Education and the Media

Edited by Reinhard Tenberg

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A recurring feature of the popular perception of relations between Britain and Germany in the l990s is the dominance of negative factors and hostile stereotypes. This theme has been the subject of comment and analysis in a number of publications over recent years and it is a welcome feature of this book that this ground is not extensively revisited. Rather, it takes as its starting-point the analysis of the media discourse surrounding the representation of Germany and its significance in terms of intercultural approaches to language teaching. The bulk of the book is devoted to this latter area and as such it represents a useful interdisciplinary attempt to increase understanding and awareness and to provide practical assistance for use in the classroom. The book includes some reflections on the contribution of the period of residence abroad to students' perceptions of Germany and the Germans and concludes with a summary of the key features of the Franco-German relationship where these might provide a model for Britain.

The opening chapters cover the issue of media representations of Germany from both British and German perspectives. Jürgen Krönig and Reinhard Tenberg are each concerned with Germanophobia in the media as an expression of a British inability to overcome the past. Krönig links this with a broader anti-Europeanism, a theme explored in greater detail by John Theobald. Using a case-study approach, Theobald argues that the principal characteristics associated with Germanophobia have been translated by the media into Europhobia. Concluding this section and also acting as a counterweight to these generally pessimistic views as well as a bridge to the intercultural teaching section, David Head identifies some favourite animate and inanimate Germans whose popularity, he believes, can be exploited in the classroom in order to enhance Anglo-German understanding.

The following five chapters deal with a wide range of strategies, using intercultural approaches, designed to overcome the astonishing ignorance of Germany among the younger generation and to develop critical awareness and understanding of the messages the media present. Michael Byram emphasises the importance of context in language learning and the

need for knowledge of the dominant culture in a society. Developing these themes further he argues that the knowledge gained should be linked to learners' own experience of their culture and society and amplified by exposure to the views of others of that society. While Byram is not context-specific, Christopher Hall opens his contribution with references to intercultural communication in a business context, and argues for the transfer of many of the skills and knowledge areas covered to more general language teaching applications at under-graduate level. Christian Fandrych analyses the potential of intercultural and contrastive approaches in the context of the teaching of *Landeskunde*, and offers an interesting case-study of linguistic aspects of the reporting of the *Wende* to demonstrate this. Jacquie Hope and Alison Phipps both demonstrate the versatility of the theme of ecology as a vehicle for overcoming negative stereotypes in the minds of students across a wide range of language learning interests. Phipps locates her contribution within the framework of 'reverse ethnography', describing how students 'were forced to begin to see themselves and their cultural behaviour in ways that became increasingly objective'.

Phipps' students were drawing, in part, on their experience of residence in Germany in achieving these insights. Susan Price and Jim Coleman both focus on residence abroad with Price taking as her starting-point Coleman's 1996 finding that 'Residence abroad … may actually reinforce them [national stereotypes]'. Price's conclusions, based, as she herself says, on evidence that is 'both limited and anecdotal', are generally pessimistic. Coleman's own piece seeks to identify the steps necessary to ensure that the objectives of residence abroad are achieved. Phipps' work, as presented here, provides an excellent example of his conclusion that an affective component to the learning experience is necessary if learning is to take place.

Jean-Marc Trouille brings this collection to a close with a useful summary of the key features of the Franco-German relationship and asks whether this could be a model for relations between Britain and Germany. He reminds us of the role of individuals in promoting friendship and better understanding between nations, thus providing an appropriate, if succinct, description of the key theme of this collection.

This is a genuinely useful book which combines scholarly analysis, critical reflection and practical advice. Highly recommended.