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Review of *Intercultural Communication and Language Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice*



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Review of *Intercultural Communication and Language Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice*, by Zsuzsanna Ittész Abrams, Cambridge University Press, 2020, 373pp., \$99.99 (Hardback) \$34.99 (Paperback) \$34.99 (eBook). ISBN 9781108748230.

In second or foreign language (L2) research and education, learners' development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is of prime importance. This importance stems in part from the assumption of a close relationship between language and culture in the sense that language puts cultural reality into words and is dynamically shaped by culture (Kramsch, 1998; Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013; McConachy, 2022; Risager, 2006). However, abstract discussions of the language-culture relationship are often difficult to connect with the realities of classroom pedagogy. *Intercultural Communication and Language Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice* is a book which aims to respond to Byram and Masuhara's (2013) call to make the language-intercultural communication link explicit by reviewing research on intercultural communication and presenting potential applications of theory to L2 pedagogical practice (p. 4). This book uses interdisciplinary research from applied linguistics and intercultural communication to suggest teaching activities that can be readily implemented in the language classroom. The chapters introduce various perspectives on culture, intercultural communicative competence, analyzing authentic language data, teaching foreign/second languages with an intercultural communication orientation, the intercultural journey, the language-culture-identity connection, as well as resolving miscommunication and cultural conflict.

In terms of structure, an introduction is followed by 13 chapters, which are organized into three sections, respectively focusing on theoretical and methodological foundations, pedagogical implementation, and intercultural communication and the personal journey. Part I (Chapters 1-3) presents theoretical and methodological concepts in intercultural communication, underscoring that it is layered and shaped by both cultural and interpersonal forces. Chapter 1 establishes a shared understanding of how key concepts such as culture and communication are used in the book by introducing readers to basic concepts in intercultural communication. Additionally, this chapter highlights the nature of culture as layered, and of communication as dynamically co-constructed by participants and the social context in which their interaction takes place. Finally, the discussion turns to prominent models of intercultural communication from a social-scientific perspective, which offer fruitful points of analysis in lan-

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guage pedagogy as well. Chapter 2 offers a brief review of key developments in language pedagogy, from the grammar translation method to the communicative approach and beyond. This review lays the groundwork for teaching languages with an intercultural communication orientation, as discussed in the second half of this chapter and explored in depth in the pedagogical chapters later in the book. Chapter 3 presents three models for analyzing communication as a culturally situated process: the ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics, and multimodal analysis. The chapter also proposes a number of possible data sources: conversations that learners can observe directly, interviews with members of the in-group and more knowledgeable members of the out-group, as well as a range of authentic materials that can serve as valuable resources for modeling L2/Lx use.

Part II (Chapters 4–10) focuses on pedagogical practices towards intercultural communication, including chapters on teaching vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, paralinguistics, nonverbal communication and cultural knowledge respectively. After briefly reviewing relevant research regarding the development of the L2/Lx lexicon, specifically findings that are most relevant for promoting intercultural communicative competence, Chapter 4 discusses issues in language variation and communication strategies that L2/Lx users might draw on, when they lack the necessary vocabulary to convey their intended meaning. This chapter concludes with a proposal of connecting L2/Lx research on the lexicon to concepts in intercultural communicative competence, including two sets of language teaching activities. Chapter 5 explores the relationships between grammar and intercultural communicative competence. Specifically, it discusses what we mean by grammar, recent scholarship regarding the nature of L2 grammatical development, and key concepts in teaching L2 grammar. This discussion is followed by a reevaluation of the native speaker ideal, morphosyntactic language variation, the local situatedness of grammar, and deploying grammar for creating social meaning. The chapter concludes with practical suggestions for teaching L2/Lx grammar with an intercultural communication orientation. Chapter 6 lays out existing and potential further connections between pragmatics and intercultural communication by focusing on various aspects of pragmatics including speech acts, conventional expressions, politeness, and humor. It concludes with a synthesis suggesting how intercultural communication-oriented pedagogy might foster the development of pragmatic competence.

Chapter 7 looks at paralinguistic features in the four categories set forth—voice quality, prosody, conversational management, and accent, followed by a discussion of affect in electronic communication. Afterwards, these concepts are connected to an intercultural communication-oriented pedagogy. Chapter 8 lays out explicitly the existing and potential connections between nonverbal communication and intercultural communication, in terms of the guidelines presented in Chapter 2 and the concepts discussed in Chapter 1. As knowledge about a culture is as important for intercultural communication as training in skills, behaviors, and attitudes, Chapter 9 examines models of cultural knowledge and explores the connection between its components and learners' communicative objectives. Chapter 10 reviews several theoretical concepts in L2/Lx assessment, relating them to intercultural communicative competence and illustrating them with several case studies.

Part III (Chapter 11–13) centers on the personal journey in intercultural communication, including transitions across cultures, possible shifts in identity, intercultural conflict, and perspectives on how language learning can foster successful intercultural communication. Chapter 11 examines the process of cultural transitions, the change from one's old self to an intercultural one, to understand the diversity of personal journeys. This chapter also offers strategies that can help individuals prepare for life in new cultural contexts, enjoy it more fully during their sojourn, and then reenter their original culture more smoothly, with a newly developed ability to act situationally in multiple cultural contexts. To delve into the relationship between cultures and identities, Chapter 12 first examines identity as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, and then considers the relationship between language and identity. This chapter also discusses teaching about identity in the L2/Lx classroom both from the learners' perspective and from that of the instructor. Chapter 13 examines communication accommodation for managing miscommunication, causes of conflict, and possible paths towards resolving it. The discussion closes with an examination of what it means to become a more effective intercultural communicator. As in other chapters, pedagogical ideas for teaching conflict resolution and ICC in the L2/Lx classroom are provided.

Taken together, several distinctive features make the book an excellent resource for pre- and in-service instructors of second and foreign languages. Particularly useful is the inclusion of a “Discussion Questions and Activities” part in all chapters and “Sample Teaching Activities” part in most of them. Suggestions and pedagogical ideas included in these parts offer step-by-step guidance on conducting intercultural communication orientated L2/Lx teaching, which should be helpful for novice and advanced teachers alike.

The volume also makes a valuable theoretical and pedagogical contribution to the literature on intercultural language teaching based on an interdisciplinary stance. Theoretically, the author book explores a broad range of influential theories, including prominent models of intercultural communication from a social-scientific perspective (Chapter 2) and key developments in language pedagogy within cognitive, sociocultural, and sociocognitive frameworks (Chapter 3). These varied theoretical perspectives, which are presented in a way that is accessible for language teachers, offer fruitful points of analysis and lay the groundwork for teaching languages with an intercultural communication orientation. Methodologically, this book is a practical “how to” guide, offering concrete tools for teaching intercultural communicative competence in the L2/Lx classroom, especially the pedagogical implementation section in which concrete teaching activities and a four-year curricular plan for the pedagogical components (Chapter 10) have been offered. Diverse language examples are used throughout the book to illustrate theoretical concepts, making them accessible to language teachers at all skill levels. Such use of illustration is likely to help readers see more concrete possibilities for embarking on their own teaching activities with the practical guidelines offered by this book.

There are some aspects of the book that can be critiqued. Firstly, there could have been deeper engagement with theoretical and pedagogical literature that has already explored linguistic dimensions of intercultural communication in the context of language teaching and learning, including work which emphasises the role of language awareness and intercultural mediation in intercultural learning (e.g., Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; Diaz, 2013; Ishihara & Cohen, 2022; Liddicoat, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; McConachy, 2018). Another weakness is that chapters in part II that address different features of language do not make necessarily the intercultural dimension explicit, but mostly assume that the language-culture relationship is evident. Nevertheless, this volume is a valuable and comprehensive resource for students, teachers, and researchers interested in intercultural communication, applied linguistics, and second/foreign language education.

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