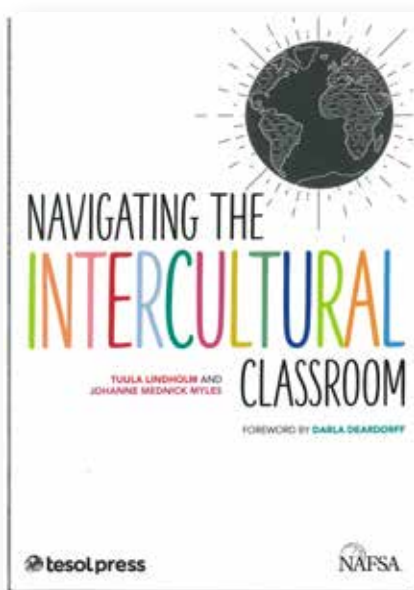


Book Reviews

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Navigating the intercultural classroom

Lindholm, Tuula and Mednick Myles, Johanne (2019).

Navigating the intercultural classroom
Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press
ISBN 978 1 945351 26 6 (pbk)
191 + xi pp

Reviewer

Marilyn Lewis
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We are not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but let's make an exception here. The innovative graphics include a map of the globe and a different colour for each letter in the word INTERCULTURAL. Well done, designer! Still on the topic of layout, the pages are attractively set out with print variety, and boxed highlights. 'Navigating' suggests skills that go beyond the more neutral 'teaching'. The book's purpose is to bring together language practice and intercultural goals based on the authors' belief that "theory informs practice" (p. 171). They draw on a range of experiences; Lindholm immigrated to Canada from Finland and Myles has taught in Zambia and Indonesia.

The first three chapters make points applicable to all classes, then Chapters 4-6 move to three specific contexts. There is no index but the many sub-headings make it easy to find topics of interest. Classroom activities are interwoven with summaries of theory and many international case studies, followed by quite lengthy reference lists. Also there are several appendices.

Chapters 1 to 3 flow smoothly from one to the other, the first examining communication within classes of culturally diverse learners, which would apply to community and EAP classes in New Zealand. Behaviours go beyond language, ranging from understanding societal ranks of importance to conventions about smiling! For more on this topic the fascinating three-page Appendix A explains cultural preferences under multiple headings. Because specific cultures are not named, teachers and students could try matching traits with groups they know. Chapter 2 introduces specifics such as suggestions about politeness, levels of formality, humour and implicit messages. Five of this chapter's 40 pages are references. Chapter 3 examines the teacher's "cultural beliefs and biases" (p. 83). Theoretical insights from some long familiar names (Canagarajah, Hinkel, Hofstede, Kramsch and Mackay) are joined by others newer to the field. Again, personal stories will resonate with many readers.

Teachers will probably turn next to chapters describing their own contexts but some messages seemed widely applicable. Chapter 4 about EAP classes refers to the growing number of international students at Canadian and U.S. universities. How do teachers respond? Specifically, four overlapping questions are addressed relating to diverse behaviours when students are invited to disagree with teachers, for example. By contrast, Chapter 5's pre-employment students are in the country long-term. They need to learn intercultural skills for job interviews, answering the telephone and email etiquette. Chapter 6 deals with "Technology and computer-mediated intercultural communication" and includes options for finding online buddies and for other forms of social media.

With its many discussion points and suggestions, this book lends itself to pre-service and in-service courses for teachers. However, there is no need for teachers to wait for one of these events to enjoy it.