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PREFACE



When we, Tuula and Johanne, came together to write this book, both of us recognized that we would face challenges in how to write about the complex connections between intercultural communication and language teaching. We realized that, in many ways, we had been writing parts of this book in our heads throughout our second language teaching careers. On the surface, practitioners in English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), English as a second language (ESL)/English language development (ELD), bilingual, and dual language programs (referred to in this book as “ESOL programs” for brevity) know that language is infused with culture because language conveys meanings that are inseparable from the cultural context in which it is used. When we are English language teachers in the classroom, we are also cultural informants to our students; the resources we use and our interactions with the students convey meanings that are both linguistic and cultural. As authors, we acknowledge that the study of intercultural competencies in communication stands alone as a separate discipline and is not commonly associated with the study of second language acquisition or with the training of ESL/ELD, bilingual, and dual language teachers (subsequently referred to as “English language teachers,” for brevity).

The objective of the book is to explore the connections between two disciplines: English language teaching in ESOL programs *and* intercultural competence and training. Though we are not experts in the field of intercultural communication, we are experienced teachers and curriculum writers who have been thinking, researching, and discussing this topic with our colleagues for decades. We would prefer not to see culture and intercultural communication remain an elephant in the classroom. Instead, we hope to contribute to the body of work that seeks to develop both the consciousness and the practical skills required of teachers to navigate the increasingly intercultural English learning classroom. We, as English language educators, have the responsibility to inform our students and to address the myriad needs they have to adjust and adapt to a new culture.

Culture is commonly associated with nationality, ethnicity, and race. The current research and understanding of culture is, however, much broader. To paraphrase one of the researchers in this field, culture is viewed as a dynamic, elastic concept that is changing and subject to multiple interpretations by various sociocultural groups (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Any English language teacher who has taught in ESOL programs knows how to correct the speech and writing errors associated with speakers of Arabic, Mandarin, and other languages used in their context. What these educators may not be as

familiar with is how every aspect of their identity—of both the teachers and students—is influenced by the region or city they live and/or grew up in and their families, education, socioeconomic background, faith, age, gender, and sexual orientation, among other factors. Culture, in its broader meaning, is therefore a framework of values, attitudes, traditions, beliefs, and standards of behavior that regulate social groups and individuals.

What does it mean, then, to become an effective communicator and to develop intercultural communication competencies? We claim that it requires awareness and knowledge about cultures and cultural practices and customs. Because language is the conveyor of culture, language teaching provides a great platform to explore and understand intercultural communication. We are not suggesting that English language teaching and classroom practices shift the focus away from language teaching but that we, as teachers, curriculum developers, and practitioners, begin to incorporate and address the intercultural dimensions of communication that the students need to know to become successful communicators.

Here are a few main principles to keep in mind in designing curriculum and intercultural communication activities. They are adapted from *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* developed by TESOL International Association (2018). Educators need to

- respect, affirm, and promote students’ home languages, cultural knowledge, and experiences;
- learn about students’ cultural and geographic backgrounds and seek to understand how their backgrounds have influenced their cultural beliefs and behaviors;
- be mindful of situations that require an intercultural perspective to fully understand the message;
- celebrate multilingualism, multiculturalism, and diversity; and
- guide students to be “interculturalists” and global citizens.

We are including ourselves and our teaching experiences in the chapters with examples that illustrate the ongoing learning that continues to be part of our communication across cultural divides with our students. The overall contexts most familiar to us are North American adult education ESOL, English for academic purposes programs, and other specialized English programs at the postsecondary level. Though we have both taught in ESOL programs, our focus here is to explore intercultural communication and the development of these competencies in contexts in which the students are international students in U.S. and Canadian institutions, and immigrants and newcomers who are settling in and becoming integrated in their communities and the local workforce. These communities include those in Australia, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and other countries in which English is the dominant language spoken in social, educational, and workplace cultural contexts.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Because the terms *intercultural competence* (IC) and *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC) are often used interchangeably and as abstract concepts, their meanings are very much related, and readers may be confused about their meaning and use. Arasaratnam (2016) points out that “the multiplicity in nomenclature of intercultural competence has been one of the factors that have irked researchers who seek conceptual clarity” (p. 3).

To be brief, IC is a broad area of research and practice that has evolved and grown quickly in our increasingly globalized world. IC is the term commonly used in intercultural training programs for exchange and study abroad students, as well as research in the fields of social psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. As a result, models and definitions of IC are highly diverse and dependent on a particular discipline and frame of reference. However, a commonly referenced definition is the one by Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009), who define IC as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world” (p. 7). In other words, IC can be defined as “complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini, 2009, p. 458). For our purposes, the *effective* part refers to the view of the ESOL learner’s performance in their new cultural setting, and the *appropriate* part refers to how native English speakers perceive this performance.

For many years, communicative competence in English has been the primary goal of ESOL education. Although there are different but closely related definitions of communicative competence, to put it simply, communicative competence can be defined as what a speaker needs to know to communicate in socially appropriate ways within a particular context and speech community. Richard-Amato (2010) explains Canale’s 1983 model of communicative competence as consisting of four interrelated competencies: grammatical, sociocultural, discourse and strategic. Despite understanding and applying components of communicative competence and recognizing its formidable influence on communicative language teaching, Byram (2009, 2013) claims that ICC more effectively recognizes the importance of language *and* culture in second and foreign language acquisition. He argues that given the rise of globalization, new technologies, and large-scale immigration, both teachers and learners now need to be acutely aware of other people’s cultures as well as their own. As such, the introduction of IC to complement communicative competence in the form of ICC has more accurately refined the notion of what it means to be a competent communicator (Byram, 2013).

According to Byram (2009), ICC consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. IC, however, consists of three components (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and is supplemented by five competences: (1) intercultural attitudes/curiosity/openness, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating,

(4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) critical cultural awareness. He also emphasizes that although these five competences are strongly interrelated, it is the first competence, the *attitude* of the person communicating with people of another culture that is the basic competence. In other words, without attention to attitude, the four other competences cannot in actual fact be developed. In short, ICC incorporates both an understanding of the nature of communication across cultures and the development of communicative competence. Byram (2009) highlights that the development of ICC includes a combination of communicative competence and IC, a claim that is particularly relevant to the focus of our book.

We refer to IC when presenting research that specifically addresses IC and to ICC when the focus is English language acquisition; therefore, in our book we wish to draw attention to the formidable place of culture learning in the ESOL classroom.

Each chapter of this book begins with a section on Theoretical Perspectives, which outlines current theory and research in the field. The Classroom Best Practices section includes examples of activities and approaches that we have found helpful in teaching. We have also included examples of intercultural activities that teachers can use and modify for their student and classroom contexts to provide more focused practice. The Case in Point section presents case studies related to a particular pedagogical issue in which culture has played a significant role.

The Appendixes contain additional resources for educators to consult as further background information about ICC. For example, Appendix A is a chart of key cultural dimensions that illustrate a spectrum of preferences that all of us have learned as part of our own cultural socialization. The challenges English language teachers face is to learn to understand the preferences of others who do not share the same cultural background.

Whether you are an English language classroom teacher in an ESOL program, an administrator, or a curriculum developer, we are convinced you will find this book to be engaging and informative. It will provide you with theoretical knowledge and practical classroom strategies that will help you to facilitate learners' acculturation process and optimize their ICC. You will also be made aware of your own cultural orientation through tools that foster experiential learning and self-reflection. Most important, this book bridges the gap between the field of intercultural communication and training and the field of adult English language teaching and learning.

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