



DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE WITHIN ESOL COMMUNITIES: A REVIEW OF NAVIGATING THE INTERCULTURAL CLASSROOM

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Lindholm, T., & Mednick Myles, J. (2019). *Navigating the intercultural classroom*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press. A focus in current language teaching curriculum is integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) into language, culture, and course content to foster intercultural sensitivity and global citizenship. However, translating ICC into practice is a struggle that many TESOL practitioners and other professionals face. Therefore, examining what Tuula Lindholm and Johanne Mednick Myles share in *Navigating the Intercultural Classroom* could deepen insights to how ICC frameworks and strategies can promote understanding diverse students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, interests, and experiences for effective cross-cultural interactions. The authors draw on their adult ESL teaching experiences to tackle complex challenges infusing ICC across training contexts and articulate instructional approaches that shift the position of the language learner to intercultural communicator and of the instructor to cultural strategist. They also acknowledge the value of cultural traits versus individuality and personal characteristics by inviting the reader to explore how observable and invisible aspects of culture, such as festivals and food as well as the concept of time and interpersonal relationships, have shaped their worldviews and understanding of intercultural communication (IC).



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The six chapters explore language-culture interdependence by connecting IC scholarship with pedagogical practices, real-life case studies, anecdotes, and further resources in appendixes. Each chapter begins with thought-provoking reflective questions, followed by insightful research and theoretical frameworks to complement the practicality of developing ICC. Activities and strategies are uniquely designed to introduce practical use of ICC theories in the contexts of academia, employment preparation, and technology.

The first chapter, "Intercultural Communication and Teaching Culturally Diverse Learners," introduces ICC-infused pedagogical models. Guided by the theories of intersectionality and third space, the authors first challenge binary notions of culture and identity. Then, using the model of cultural dimensions, they distinguish between culturally situated communication styles and learning practices. To ease students' cross-cultural adaptation, teachers can incorporate student narratives and case studies and discuss the invisible cultural aspects, such as body language, power distance, or time conventions across cultures, that may cause miscommunication.

Chapter 2, "The Role of ICC in Language Teaching and Learning," introduces the construct of intercultural pragmatic competence, or the ability to communicate and interpret intended meanings. The authors present the Canadian Language Benchmarks, the Massachusetts Adult Basic Education Curriculum, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the model of intercultural sensitivity, and the developmental model of linguaculture learning and ICC assessment instruments that include the Intercultural Development Inventory and the Prepare/Engage/Evaluate /Reflect model that can be implemented to help learners recognize forms of politeness, formality, and genres.

In Chapter 3, "Teacher as Cultural Informant and Classroom Strategist," the concepts discussed so far are expanded by emphasizing the roles of instructors as cultural mediators, ethnographers, role models, and trusted advisers to their learners. Instructors may advise their students to "live in" English, thinking this sort of advice is helpful to language acquisition, but as educators it is important to understand that our students in fact "do not live in English." The authors conceptualize language teaching as a relational and reflective process; to better address learners' needs and interaction behaviors, practitioners need to acquire sociocultural understanding and intercultural awareness by reflecting on their own cultural beliefs and biases, acknowledging students' cultural rituals and skills and exploring culturally appropriate communication. In addition to guiding students through reflective questions on how to navigate various roles, instructors must remember that language learners can also serve as cultural informants; often times both instructors and students take on learner roles to develop cultural awareness.

Chapter 4, "English for Academic Purposes Programs and Cultural Expectations," traces activities to socialize international students into higher education and enhance their connection to a global English-speaking audience. To bridge students' challenges in expressing their ideas in academic writing, instructors can incorporate contrastive rhetoric to explore how first language and culture influence second language writing and encourage knowledge expression through other multimodal forms, such as journalistic reports, blogging, or online discussion posts.

Chapter 5, "Employment Preparation Programs and Cultural Integration," focuses on work-related communication skill development that includes interviewing techniques, networking skills, and managing emotions. The chapter highlights that nonverbal skills are as important to cultural integration as verbal language development—a challenging, but necessary subject which must be addressed to prepare students for global employment. It also explores the notion that "though our working world may be global, workplace practices are usually anchored in local cultural customs" (p. 132), a concept often overlooked in classrooms. The authors argue that to become interculturally effective in the workforce, learners need to adapt communication, personal, and professional skills to industry culture. Using emotional intelligence to provide constructive feedback, modeling empathy, and engaging in small talk can increase students' awareness to workforce relationship management. Readers can follow tips on employment preparation and strengthen their understanding and ability to successfully interact with the target culture.

The final chapter, "Technology and Computer-Mediated Intercultural Communication," centers on computer-mediated interactions and multiliteracies to enhance cross-cultural competence. Though many learners in traditional classrooms struggle to negotiate their cultural and linguistic practices to acquire skills to gain access to various communities of practice, beyond the classroom they engage in online communication with global communities; they compose social media posts and design games and mobile applications, fusing verbal and nonverbal systems. To open classrooms to a global society, educators need to connect volunteers, preservice teachers, and local students with learners through telecollaborative chats, e-projects, and other pedagogical practices that equitably utilize students' life experiences, cultural-linguistic competences, and multiliteracies and that recognize the complexity of learning needs.

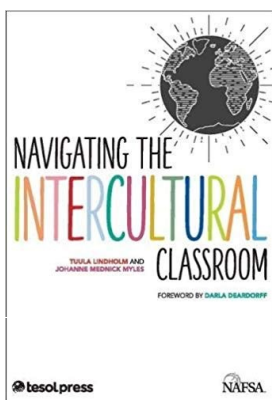
The book concludes with five appendixes that offer handy introductory resources of information on understanding cultural preferences, IC models, six principles of culture, observing and analyzing cultural behaviors, and communication in the workplace. These resources serve as a foundation to further probe the intricate theoretical components of IC.

Navigating the Intercultural Classroom expands on ICC theories and current scholarship and is packed with firsthand accounts and learning tasks that range from games, simulations, role-playing activities, vignettes, illustrations of concepts, and reflective practice that can be adapted to various academic and career development programs to enhance reciprocal cross-cultural awareness. It begins with a foreword by Darla K. Deardorff, a scholar in global leadership and intercultural learning and assessment from Duke University. Lindholm and Mednick Myles have bridged the theory-practice divide and made meaning of complex language-culture intersection research using numerous anecdotes adapted from publications and case studies from their teaching experiences in India, Canada, Indonesia, and the United States to support best ICC-infused practices. More importantly, the authors ask the reader to continuously reflect on the intricacies of culture with abundant resources, guidance, advice, pedagogical practices, and techniques to guide their ICC development. We found the combination of lived experiences, research, and learning tasks in this book compelling.

This well-crafted yet accessible and informative publication explores how culture is not static, but an ever-changing phenomenon shaped by verbal and nonverbal interactions. The authors contextualize mutual respect and intercultural awareness at the core of ICC and posit that teachers must “develop in themselves and their students a capacity to see cultural issues from multiple perspectives” (p. 18). They advise against the pitfalls of generalizing, oversimplifying, and stereotyping and emphasize the importance of active listening, strategic communication, respect, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and mindful communication. Furthermore, they illustrate the reality of cultural conflicts in classrooms and work spaces and acknowledge potential teacher/student, employer/employee dichotomies. For example, when a young female instructor’s authority might be challenged (Chapter 3), this can validate an instructor’s experience and deepen self-awareness of how students might perceive her.

Even though we would have liked to see ICC-infused teaching approaches with other ESOL learners (e.g., refugees, Generation Z learners) and learning contexts (e.g., religious and community-based classes and programs with limited access to technology and materials), throughout the book, the authors describe detailed teacher-guided learning tasks in virtual and face-to-face communities and English for academic purposes (Chapter 3) and workplace programs (Chapter 4) to illustrate how instructors can shift the focus from linguistic competence to ICC. For instance, to equip learners with 21st-century academic and workforce skills for a global environment and foster cultural adaptation, in Chapter 2, educators are encouraged to customize the frameworks of intercultural sensitivity and the degrees of cultural awareness to address their learners’ unique needs, incorporate student narratives, and invite guest speakers to discuss the (in)visible aspects of culture.

Another major strength of this work is that it investigates both verbal and nonverbal aspects of ICC. For instance, Chapter 6 explores the influence of technological advancements, social media, and multimodal literacies. To recognize the complexity of technology-mediated transnational language learning, educators should foster students’ ICC along with linguistic proficiency, writing conventions, and content knowledge development. Readers might use telecollaborative chats, e-projects, and other pedagogical practices in this section to guide their own ICC-infused tasks.



Overall, this book enriches the field of IC, offering a practice- and reflection-oriented lens to ICC that has been less covered in TESOL. Given the numerous insights on the benefits and challenges implementing ICC, for ESOL practitioners in nonacademic and postsecondary language learning, teacher education, refugee/community, and professional development programs and private language schools, this work is essential, if not crucial, to their professional development. Many of these programs employ instructors with little or no formal ESL/EFL training and language teaching experience who are in need of sustainable ICC practices to enhance their work with learners from diverse backgrounds. To comprehend the complexities of ICC, one must train, and develop their

skills over time—a fact the authors explore and elaborate quite well). *Navigating the Intercultural Classroom* can be used as a reference work by settlement workers, employers, graduate students, teacher trainers, curriculum designers, researchers, and practitioners who are interested in language-culture interdependence. The book, copublished by TESOL Press and NAFSA, can be purchased online from [the TESOL Bookstore](#).

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