

Review of Navigating the Intercultural Classroom

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I purchased and read this book because I know one of the authors, Tuula Lindholm. I am not an ESOL teacher, so I knew when reading the book that I wasn't the target audience, but nevertheless I enjoyed the read and learned a lot that is valuable to me as a person.

This is a book that I have recommended to two of my sisters who teach ESOL in Europe. To me this is leading edge research in practice, and I believe their teaching practice will be strengthened by this book.

I found the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competencies very exciting and really appreciated how the authors explanation of the concept and examples given helped name for me practices that we employ in everyday life as native English speakers that we just take for granted and have no name for. I especially loved the descriptors for teachers; intercultural communicators and speakers; cultural informants; classroom strategists; and trusted advisors.

Content

Two experienced and knowledgeable authors collaborated in writing this book and through reflective practice share their wisdom and advice. They set out to shine light on how to integrate Intercultural Communicative Competencies (ICC) into ESOL teaching practice and in my opinion they succeed in this goal. Tuula and Johanne walk their talk through their research and insight evidenced in shared concrete examples of when they learned through a teaching moment and when applied practice was successful for them. The voice of the text in the book is warm through use of the authors names as well as in the directness in speaking to their target audience – teachers speaking to teachers.

The book has six topical chapters and five supporting appendices. Topics include intercultural communication and teaching culturally diverse learners, the role of ICC in teaching and learning, teacher as cultural informant and classroom strategist, English for academic purposes, employment preparation programs and cultural integration and technology and computer-mediated intercultural communication. The appendices include charts, models, principles and schematics that support the concepts and practices presented in the book.

Covers and Size

The size of the book at 193 pages and the front and back cover designs would entice me to pick up this book. I love the amount of white space on the front cover, the globe as a sun icon, the coloured letters of the word Intercultural and the authors names. I was impressed by the endorsement of TESOL Press and NAFSA on the front. I just love the look and feel of the cover – it invited me to pick up the book and consider its content.

The back cover is equally as impressive to me. Divided into four coloured sections it provides a concise content and context summary, photos of the authors, a short endorsement and again the TESOL Press and NAFSA logos. The titles on the back cover match the font and upper case presentation of the key formatting within the book – and I really appreciated this continuity of design from cover to content. Subtle for many perhaps but very classy to me!

Layout and Readability

In terms of layout, all the elements that I appreciate as a reader are there. The six chapters of the book follow a consistent format of Overview; Thinking About the Topic; Theoretical Perspectives; Topical Content; Classroom Best Practices; Case in Point and References. I love this because if I just want to read the theory I can easily do that, or if I just want to read through best practices I can do that from chapter to chapter. I love having the references at the end of each chapter, including at the end of the Forward! I love the Table of Contents page where the chapter and appendices numbers are bolded and in a larger and different font from the chapter titles, a small thing but for me makes it easier to use the Table of Contents when looking for a specific chapter or appendix.

I love that the footers include the Chapter number and topical title on each page, so thoughtful an inclusion for the reader and for readability because you easily know where you are in the book. Within the formatting there is clear consistent titling in a regular bolded font as well as darkened inset blocks of focused content and examples – they pop out and offer yet another way of reviewing the topics in the book and reinforce the concepts presented. Very effective.

The globe as sun icon prominent on the book cover is repeated throughout the book as chapter numbering at the start of each chapter and appendix, but then also used very effectively throughout the text when referencing other sections of the book that relate, again making it really easy for the reader to flip through and find those references. Finally, on layout, I really like the use of bulleting in the book, not overwhelming but just enough to aid the reader, especially in areas where tips for good practice are shared.