Book Review

INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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The analysis of language and culture has been long and widely made. To mention a few, Lies Sercu (2005) addresses this issue in *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence,* Soler and Jordan (ed, 2007) in *Intercultural language Use and Language Learning,* Nieto (2010) in *Language, Cultural and Teaching,* and Deardorff (2009) in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* . Nevertheless, most recently this topic has received more attention and become more important, as discussed by Dasep Suprijadi and Euis Rina Mulyani in their research based articles.

If the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction for sociocultural competence is part of communicative competence, besides linguistic competence, discourse competence, formulaic competence, and interactional competence, as proposed by Celce-Murcia (1995) in Soler and Jorda (2007). Sociocultural competence refers to the speaker's pragmatic knowledge, i.e. how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. This includes knowledge of language variation with reference to sociocultural norms of the target language. In fact a social or cultural blunder can be far more serious than a linguistic error when one is engaged in oral communication.

Intercultural language Teaching and Learning is written with the similar spirit as a number of books cited above. This book consists of 10 chapters beginning with introduction and concluding with evaluating language programs. In Chapter 1 or introduction, Liddicoat and Scarino seek to explain key concepts, such as language, culture, and language education. In addition, concept of method, critiques of method, and moving beyond method are addressed. Kramsch (2008) in this part, argues that in the teaching of any language the focus is not only on teaching a linguistic code but also on teaching meaning. The focus on meaning involves important shifts in understanding the fundamental concerns of language teaching and learning, which do not replace traditional foci, but add broadly to them. In particular it means engaging with broader ways of understanding the fundamental concepts involved in the theory and practice of language education: language, culture, and learning, and the relationships between them. To teach meaning is to actively engage with the processes involved in making and interpreting meaning. These go well beyond processes of comprehension of forms and structures, to consider meanings as subjective and intersubjective, growing out of not only the language in which meaning is communicated but also from the memories, emotions, perceptions, experiences, and life worlds of those who participate in the communication (pp 1-2).

Moreover, teaching meaning involves recognizing that as part of learning any additional language the learner inevitably brings more than one language and culture to the processes of meaning-making and interpretation. That is, there are inherent intercultural processes in language learning in which meanings are made and interpreted across and between languages and cultures and in which the linguistic and cultural repertoires of each individual exist in complex interrelationships. Languages and cultures in language learning are not independent of each other. Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) argue that: "The student of a language other than their own can be given an extraordinary opportunity to enter the language of others, to understand the complexity of the experience of others to enrich their own. That is, language learning, because languages and cultures are always in complex interrelationship, is both an act of learning about the other and about the self and of the relationships which exist between self and other.

In chapter 2 is described key concepts of language and culture. Language comprise several layers, such as language as a structural system, language as a communicative system, language as a social practice. Language as a structural system constitutes the formalization of a set of linguistic and usually literate norms, One dialect or variety of the language is chosen to serve as the basis for the standard language, reducing the amount of variation in the language to create a more regular and uniform linguistic structure. This standardized, regularized variety becomes *the* language and education focuses on the dissemination of this language to both native speakers and to new learners. The prescriptive tradition in linguistics and in language teaching has silenced linguistic variation. Language has been idealized as a set of structures that are acquired through education. This process creates a prestige variety of the language, often spoken only by a small elite group and used as a gate-keeping device.

Beyond the structural views of language, language is usually understood as a communicative system. This is a move from viewing language as forms to understanding its purposes. For Saussure (1916), language was the science of speech communication, and Davies (2005), for example, defines language as "the main human communication system" This view of languages as a communication system is not undisputed and Chomsky and his colleagues have argued that communication itself is incidental to grammar as an organizing principle. In fact, communication-oriented views of language may not differ much from structural views. The act of communication consisted of using combinations of linguistic structures to express the speaker's thought, produced by a psychophysical mechanism; that is, communication was the use of grammar to express thought.

It is apparent that the view of communication as the straightforward transfer of thoughts from one mind to another is limited. Communication is not simply a transmission of information, it is a creative, cultural act in its own right through which social groups constitute themselves. Moreover, it is a complex performance of identity in which the individual communicates not only information, but also a social persona that exists in the act of communication. Such complexities of communication have often been ignored in the theories of language that underlie language education, even those that have privileged communication. Communicative language teaching, for example, has typically reduced communication to the exchange of comprehensible and comprehended

messages, and has left aside issues of voice, identity, co-construction between participants, and the enactment of self through language. What is needed is a more interactionally grounded view of communication, where communication involves " participants' contingent, emergent and joint accomplishment" of meaning."

To understand language education as an intercultural endeavor, it is necessary to begin with an enlarged theory of language, seeing language as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal" and as encompassing the rich complexities of communication. This means that language variability is not something to be reduced through education, but rather it is a resource that education needs to develop in order to foster an experience of the world with which the language learning needs to engage. It is the variability within language that makes language creative and a living expression of self.

Language is not a thing to be studied but a way of seeing, understanding, and communicating about the world and each language user uses his or her language(s) differently to do this. Language is something that people enact in their daily lives and something they use to express, create, and interpret meanings and to establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships. It is an involvement in processes of meaning-making and interpretation with and for others. If language is viewed as a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation, then it is not enough for language learners just to know grammar and vocabulary. They also need to know how the language is used to create and represent meanings and how to communicate with others and to engage with the communication of others. This requires the development of awareness of the nature of language and its impact on the world. . If language learning focuses on the interpretation and creation of meaning, language is learned as a system of personal engagement with a new world, where learners necessarily engage with diversity at a personal level.

To conclude, understanding language as social practice does not mean replacing views of language as a structural system or as the communication of messages, as these are elements of the social practice of language use. Instead, the idea of language practice can be seen as an overarching view of languages in which structural system and communication are given meaning and relationship to lived experience. This means that the views of language presented here are not seen as alternates but as an integrated whole. Language is understood as social practice that integrates other understandings of language, the relationships of language to other aspects of human sociality, such as culture. Language therefore can be understood in terms of a number of layers as represented in Figure 1. The conceptualization of language for teaching and learning is integrated: linguistic structures provide elements for a communication system that, in turn, becomes the resource through which social practices are created and accomplished. Language teaching and learning therefore needs to engage within the entire spectrum of possibilities for language and each layer of language affords opportunities for intercultural learning.

Beyond language, in chapter 2 is addressed culture. Culture is understood as national attributes, societal norms, symbolic systems, and practices. Adding a language and culture to an individual's repertoire expands the complexity, generates new possibilities,

and creates a need for mediation between languages and cultures and the identities that they frame. This means that language learning involves the development of an intercultural competence that facilitates such meditation. Intercultural competence involves at least the following:

- accepting that one's practices are influenced by the cultures in which one participates
- and so are those of one's interlocutors;
- accepting that there is no one right way to do things;
- valuing one's own culture and other cultures;
- using language to explore culture;
- finding personal ways of engaging in intercultural interaction;
- using one's existing knowledge of cultures as a resource for learning about new cultures;
- finding a personal intercultural style and identity.(p 24)
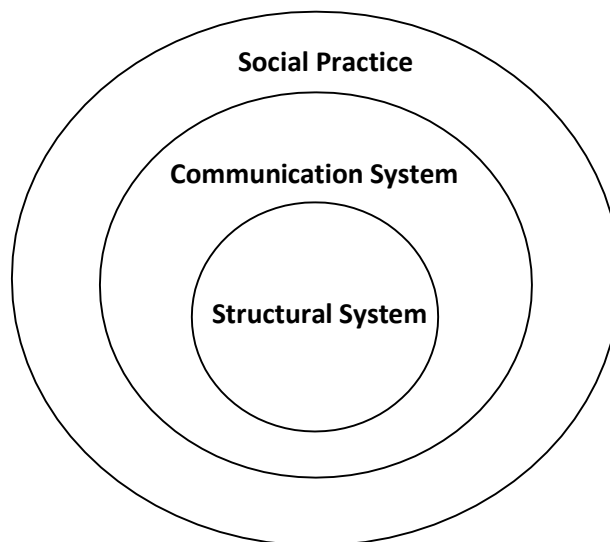
Figure 1
Layers of Language

Intercultural competence means being aware that cultures are relative. That is, being aware that there is no one "normal" way of doing things, but that all behaviors are culturally variable. Applied to a particular language it also involves knowing some of the common cultural conventions used by speakers of the language (Liddicoat, 2000). The emphasis here is on *some*. Given the volume, variability, and potential for change of the cultural conventions, it is impossible to learn them all and certainly well beyond the scope of any classroom acquisition. Because a learner can only ever acquire some of the cultural conventions, an important part of intercultural competence is having strategies for learning more about culture during the process of interaction in a cultural context.

Language education, because its focus is on language, will inevitably privilege language as the entry point to cultures. This is not to say that language and culture are coextensive but rather that areas of study structure ways of engagement with knowledge. The aim of intercultural language teaching and learning is not to displace

language as the core focus of language education but to ensure that language is integrated with culture in conceptualizing language learning. A core belief in new approaches to the teaching of culture is that language does not function independently from the context in which it is used. Language is always used to communicate something beyond itself and is at the same time affected by the context in which it is found. The cultural context therefore affects the ways in which language is shaped by participants in a particular interaction, at a particular time, and in a particular setting. People who share the same general set of cultural practices share an understanding of the meanings that are associated with language as it is used for communication, and their language use is shaped by these shared understandings.

As a process of developing intercultural understanding, learners need to be able to decenter from their own culture. In language learning, this decentering takes two forms: decentering from one's own language and culture in communicating with others and decentering in the processes of teaching and learning. This can happen only as the result of a deliberate process of teaching that brings to the students the sorts of exposure they need to begin the decentering process, and the skills and knowledge to understand and interpret these experiences in order to achieve decentering. The study of language exposes learners to another way of viewing the world as they develop flexibility and independence from a single linguistic and conceptual system through which to view the world.

Discerning the weaknesses of language teaching and learning, the writers suggest that rather than focusing only on communicative competence, it is also useful to consider the needs of language learners in terms of their development of "symbolic competence" Symbolic competence involves more than the ability to use language to engage in communication with others and recognizes the needs of language users to develop new contexts for participation: "Symbolic competence is the ability not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language is learned and used"

In chapter 3, Ellis (2010) presents a comparison of cognitive and social SLA which provides a useful framework for understanding the two diverse families of theories. He summarizes differences between these families in relation to nine key dimensions: language, mental representation, social context, learner identity, learner's linguistic background, input, interaction, language learning, and research methodology, as shown in Table 2 (p.34).

Table 2.
Comparison Of Cognitive and Social Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Dimensions	Cognitive SLA	Social SLA
Language	Language viewed as either a set of formalist rules (as in Chomskyan linguistics) or as a net-work of form–function mapping (as in functional models of grammar of the Hallidayan type)	Language viewed not just as a linguistic system but as "a diverse set of cultural practices, often best understood in the context of wider relations of power"
Mental Representa-	Two views: (i) as a set of rules that comprise the learner's	In some social theories representation is not considered at all.

tion	linguistic competence; (ii) as an elaborate network of connections between neural nodes	Vygotskyan approaches emphasize the semantic ("conceptual") rather than the formal properties of the language that learners internalize
Social context	A broad distinction is made between "second" and "foreign" language contexts. Social context is seen as influencing the rate of acquisition and ultimate level of proficiency achieved but not affecting the internal processes responsible for acquisition	The social context is seen as both determining L21 use and developmental outcomes (as in variationist studies) and as something that is jointly constructed by the participants. The social context is where learning takes place
Learner Identity	The learner is viewed as a "nonnative speaker". Learner identity is static	The learner is viewed as having multiple identities that afford different opportunities for language learning. Learner identity is dynamic
Learner's linguistic background	The learner has full linguistic competence in his/her L12	Learners may be multilingual and may display varying degrees of proficiency in their various languages
Input	Input is viewed as linguistic "data" that serves as a trigger for acquisition. Input is viewed as related to but distinguishable from "interaction"	Input is viewed as contextually constructed; it is both linguistic and nonlinguistic
Interaction	Interaction is viewed as a source of input	Interaction is viewed as a socially negotiated event and a means by which learners are socialized into the L2 culture. Input and interaction are viewed as a "sociocognitive whole"
Language Learning	L2 acquisition occurs inside the mind of the learner as a result of input that activates universal cognitive processes	L2 acquisition is "learning-in-action"; it is not a mental phenolmenon but a social and collaborative one. It is an "interactional phenolmenon that transcends contexts while being context dependent"
Research Methodology	Typically atomistic, quantitative, and confirmatory – aims to form generalizations about groups of learners	Holistic, qualitative, and interpretative – focuses on individual learner and specific interactional sequences

In chapter 4, many issues are addressed, one of which is the belief that the learner needs to engage with language and culture as elements of a meaning-making system that are mutually influencing and influenced. This means that language learning

becomes a process of exploring the ways language and culture relate to lived realities – the learners' as well as that of the target community.

Bryam and Zarate have articulated aspects of the interculturality involved in language learning through the notion of *savoirs*. *Savoir* (knowledge) refers to knowledge of self and others, of their products and practices and the general processes of interaction. *Savoir* constitutes a body of knowledge on which other operations can be performed. These further operations are described by Byram and Zarate as:

- *savoir être*: an attitudinal disposition towards intercultural engagement manifested in approaching intercultural learning with curiosity, openness, and reflexivity.
- *savoir comprendre*: learning how to interpret and explain texts, interactions, and cultural practices and to compare them with aspects of one's own culture.
- *savoir apprendre*: the ability to make discoveries through personal involvement in social interaction or in the use of texts.

Language teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective places the learner at the meeting point of languages, cultures, and learning. That is, intercultural understanding is not an abstract, but rather an embodied process. Such a focus on the learner recognizes the multiple roles of the language learner in the act of learning – roles that may not be realized in all learning contexts:

- **Language learner as learner.** The learner stands in relation to some unknown that must in some way become known, usually through interaction with a more knowledgeable other. As such, the learner is involved in a linguistic and cultural process of mediation of knowledge.
- **Language learner as language user.** This means understanding the learner as using and being able to use language for personal expression through which the learner has opportunities to develop a personal voice in the target language. This positioning of the learner as language user focuses attention more clearly on the learners themselves and on what each learner brings to the act of learning and what the learner needs to attend to as a user of a new language.
- **The learner as person.** The language learner is also positioned as an individual with a unique personality and identity, who is engaged in the act of learning a language. each learner brings to learning relationships with languages and cultures and a personal history formed through and in relation to languages and cultures.

Another interesting   issue in this chapter is **Principles for Teaching and Learning Languages from an Intercultural Perspective.** The discussion in this book so far gives rise to a particular set of principles that underlie an intercultural perspective of language teaching and learning. Five core principles can be considered as a base for language learning: active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection, and responsibility Let's discuss the principles.

- *Active construction* refers to a way of understanding how learning happens in language learning. The teacher creates opportunities through which learners come to make sense of their encounters with language and culture and how they relate to each other.

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- *Making connections* is a principle that acknowledges that languages and cultures are not acquired or experienced in isolation. In coming to engage with a new language and culture, a learner needs to connect the new to what is already known.
- *Social interaction* is a principle that recognizes both that learning is a fundamentally interactive act and that interaction with others is the fundamental purpose of language use.
- *Reflection* is fundamental to any teaching and learning process that focuses on interpretation. Learning from reflection arises from becoming aware of how we think, know, and learn about language (first and additional), culture, knowing, understanding, and their relationships, as well as concepts such as diversity, identity, experiences, and one's own intercultural thoughts and feelings.
- *Responsibility* is a principle that recognizes that learning depends on the learner's attitudes, dispositions, and values, developed over time; in communication this is evident in accepting responsibility for one's way of interacting with others within and across languages and for striving continuously to better understand self and others in the ongoing development of intercultural sensitivity.

Chapter 5 is concerned with **Designing Classroom Interaction and Experiences.** In this chapter is discussed tasks for teaching and learning. The concept of "tasks" is extended to focus on interactions and experiences. The nature of interaction in teaching and learning languages from an intercultural perspective is viewed as more than a means through which learners acquire linguistic form; rather it is seen as social, as personal, as the capability of "moving between" languages and cultures, and as interpretive at every turn. The focus on experiences, in the sense of both lived, real-life experience, and experiential learning complements, extends and reframes communication and learning to communicate.

The goal in language learning within an intercultural perspective is for learners to participate in communication to exchange meanings and to discover, in and through experiences of interacting in communication with others, the variability in meaning-making, the linguistic and cultural assumptions made in constructing knowledge and, ultimately, to develop self-awareness of their own interpretive system, as they make meaning of the world around them and share it with others, within and across languages and cultures.

Chapter 6 addresses **resources for intercultural language learning.** Resources, in whatever form they take, provide language learners with experiences of language and culture that then become available for learning. Traditionally the main resource for input has been the textbook, and this may be supplemented by authentic texts from a range of sources: written texts, video or audio texts, music, multimedia and so on. Traditional models of second language teaching and learning have treated resources as instances of language that present the learner with material to develop learning. They are a way of exposing learners to different modalities of language use (spoken, written, technologically mediated) and to different registers, and of broadening the input beyond the teacher. Resources may also be used as ways of promoting output, either verbal or written. Such resources form a starting point for language use and may be linguistic

(e.g. oral or written texts and websites) or nonlinguistic (e.g. artifacts, games, and images), and are used to prompt discussion and description. More recently, there have been a number of new technological resources that provide opportunities for both input and output by permitting interaction: e-mail, chat, and text messaging.

Chapter 7 deals with **technologies in intercultural language teaching and learning.** Technologies, whether used for information or social purposes, have the capacity to contribute to intercultural learning for language students. To maximize the affordances that technology provides for learning, it is important to design learning experiences so as to provide opportunities to use different technologies and to use them in different ways. In particular, technologies provide access to a wider world of experience of language and intensify opportunities for exposure to a greater diversity of contexts.

Assessing Intercultural Language Learning is addressed in Chapter 8. In this case, assessment can be depicted as a cyclical process of four interrelated macroprocesses: 1) conceptualizing (what to assess and its representation), 2) eliciting (how to gather evidence), 3) judging (how to appraise), and 4) validating (how to justify and assure the quality of the assessment process itself). These macroprocesses are mutually informing rather than linear. Conceptualizing language learning for the purposes of assessment guides the eliciting process. The judging process then incorporates a consideration of what it is important to assess (conceptualizing), giving due attention to whether the ways of eliciting have, in fact, canvassed the language use and learning that is of interest. Validating is the process of quality assurance in which the whole cycle is reconsidered and inferences are warranted; the quality of assessment cannot just be assumed, it needs to be demonstrated. (p 128).

It is not simple to assess in the context of intercultural language teaching and learning. Therefore, it is necessary to operationalize the construct for the purposes of assessment. In practice, the substance of assessment may include focuses on students' analysis and reflection of their:

- **performance** – interaction (in speaking or writing) in critical moments where they consider: How will I be perceived?
- **concepts and conceptualization** – exploration of personal, cultural, intercultural experiences through texts (print, visual, etc.) and how these concepts operate in different social and cultural contexts;
- **language** – exploration from diverse perspectives of naming, greetings, forms of address, politeness, and so on (p 131).

Chapter 9 is concerned with **programming and planning**. Developing an interculturally oriented language program requires particular consideration to ways of representing connections across the program as a whole. These connections need to be made at the local, short-term level and at the long-term level. Connections can and should be made at a number of different levels and in different ways:

- *Global-level connections* are connections between the overarching concepts and the topic or theme through which the concept is investigated. They organize and shape the overall experience of learners as they progress through their language learning.

- *Local-level connections* are connections between particular episodes of learning (units of work, lessons) and overarching concepts that relate each topic or theme to some larger learning. They are also the links between the individual episodes themselves as each builds on prior learning and provides a basis for new learning.
- *Personal connections* are connections that students will be able to make with the material presented by their learning experiences. They include issues such as how learners will come to see global and local connections, how learners will display the connections they make, and what space is available for making additional personal connections.

Evaluation is a process of systematic inquiry into the functioning and quality of the language program as a whole and of each of the aspects. In contrast to the process of assessment, it focuses on programs, not individuals. Its major purpose is to support ongoing improvement in the quality of the language program and, fundamentally, students' language learning. This description recognizes that evaluation is first and foremost a systematic process of inquiry that continues over time; there is no sense in which the effective functioning and quality of the program can be established once and for all. Inquiry implies a process of finding things out through gathering evidence, analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and acting upon the findings.

The evaluating of the program consists of several steps. The first step (*audience and goals*) involves identifying the multiple audiences (participants, "stakeholders"). This includes those responsible for the program, those interested in the program, and those who are participants in the program (students and teachers). The second step (*context inventory*) focuses on the details of the context. This includes time, group allocations, the availability of resources, program conditions, participants, program characteristics, theoretical, practical and philosophical influences, and sociopolitical and cultural aspects for a context inventory, and for sets of questions relevant to the context).

In step 3 (*preliminary thematic framework*) and as part of the development of the context inventory, themes relating to the evaluation goals will begin to emerge, including, for example, particular tensions, issues about levels of support available, relationships, and the status of the programs. This preliminary thematic framework will inform the design of the data collection.

At step 4 (*data collection design/system*), important decisions about the paradigm to be used for the design of the data collection come into play. These decisions about data collection also derive from the context and goals. Fundamentally (bearing in mind the scope: formative–summative, informal–formal, internal–external), the question to be addressed is: What type (nature and extent) of evidence will be needed to make a defensible argument? From the response to this question, data gathering processes can be developed to gather the necessary evidence. These may include various kinds of tests, surveys, questionnaires, observations, interview, portfolios, or diaries.

In step 5 (*data collection*), data are gathered according to the design for data collection. In step 6 (*analysis*), processes are established for undertaking the analysis. The nature of the analysis will depend on decisions about paradigms, previously informed by the audience, goals, and context. The nature and sufficiency of the evidence, the

defensibility of the interpretations made, and the conclusions reached are complex and critical considerations at this point.

The final step (*evaluation report*) is the preparation of the evaluation report. The report must be useful to the audiences and responsive to the goals. There are important considerations here for how to successfully communicate the findings to diverse audiences.

The seven steps provide a means for ensuring that the evaluation is: carefully planned; systematic; conducted with sensitivity to audiences, goals, and context; based on evidence gathered from multiple sources; and interrelated in a way that addresses the fundamental goals of improvement in learning while respecting the qualities of defensibility and ethicality. What is also important is the decision-making that follows an evaluation.

To conclude, language teaching and learning lies at the intersection of languages and cultures as it is language learners who need to be the locus at which languages and cultures meet. It is through making sense of languages and cultures as meaning and acknowledging the diversity of meanings that people make and interpret that the language learner becomes open to the realities and richness of human diversity. In fact, we see diversity as the central feature of language education. Each learner will encounter languages and cultures in individual ways and each language teacher will bring a unique experience and understanding of the languages and cultures in their teaching context.

Reading this book is intriguing and offers the extensive view of language in general and language teaching and learning in particular. So far language teachers have held a limited perspective on language, which is predominantly a structural system and a communicative system. This perspective in turn affects how teachers deliver teaching and learning activities restricted to only linguistic and communicative domains. Beyond that, as stated above, language should be seen as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal" and as encompassing the rich complexities of communication. This means that language variability is not something to be reduced through education, but rather it is a resource that education needs to develop in order to foster an experience of the world with which the language learning needs to engage.

Nevertheless, it is with deep regret that in practice intercultural competence which should receive a primary consideration and also confirm communicative competence as the objective in language teaching and learning, is difficult to achieve for a number reasons. Most teachers' limited view of (English) language is one of significant constraints. Another reason is that authentic resources are still far from teachers' access.

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