

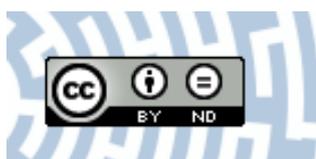


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GRAŻYNA KILIAŃSKA-PRZYBYŁO

*THE ANATOMY OF INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS.
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY*

Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 246 pp.

Keywords: interculturalism, intercultural encounters, intercultural dialogue, English as a foreign language

Słowa kluczowe: międzykulturowość, spotkania interkulturowe, dialog interkulturowy, język angielski jako obcy

The book written by Grażyna Kiliańska-Przybyło constitutes an interesting contribution filling the gap in publications on mutual relationships and intercultural encounters experienced by Polish and Turkish learners of English as a FL. What is at issue here is the broadly-understood dialogue the representatives of other cultures engage in and/ or disengage from when using the target language.

The first, theoretical, chapter, defines the term *intercultural encounter* in a very accessible way, comparing it to the art of mediation and negotiation. Next, the linguistic and psycholinguistic aspect of intercultural dialogue is elaborated on, with special attention being given to the factors which constitute the nature and course of the encounters and conversations. These include, among others, the level of empathy and intercultural sensitivity to other people, the sense of identity, as well as the level of communication apprehension and degree of culture shock being experienced.

Further on the author presents the role of intercultural encounters in the world today, and their strong influence on individuals who are in touch with representatives of other languages and cultures. The changes being observed in language users concern cultural behaviours and attitudes, e.g. getting to know a new culture, confirming or rejecting existing stereotypes, developing language awareness or a widely-understood reflection.

Accordingly, we learn that these and other factors are determined by the type of cultural intelligence that each person who enters into an interlinguistic and intercultural discourse with a culturally-distant social group is equipped with, and, in turn, by intercultural competence, composed above all, of our knowledge of and attitude towards socio-cultural communities, the ability to interpret and explore the unknown, as well as interaction and cultural awareness. And it is these components as the author underlines, that are to a large extent responsible for intercultural learning.

Intercultural barriers to be found in the social norms typical of a given country, such as greetings or body language in general, presented in the section which follows, may be the source of misunderstanding, understatement and the frequently-experienced language faux pas. In order to investigate the frequency of communication success and communication failure, their causes and consequences, the author designs an extremely interesting study, searching for intercultural experiences in groups of Polish and Turkish learners of English as a FL. To be more specific, the data, in the form of personal narratives, were collected from a group of Polish BA and MA students attending English Philology classes at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland (50 respondents in each group respectively), and a group of Turks studying English Philology at the Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey (50 informants altogether).

The study started from awareness-raising and training sessions, aimed at familiarizing students with the notion of intercultural communication, followed by questionnaires which measured the intercultural sensitivity of the subjects, and narrative writing, devoted to describing the most memorable encounter with foreigners each study participant experienced. In addition to the stages of the project, a very precise description of data arrangement and presentation is provided. This covers a detailed qualitative and statistical analysis of students' personal narratives, which was conducted by means of the LIWC programme.

Chapter four is organized around analysis of the narratives. As the findings show, the texts prepared by all three groups of students differ as to the level of spontaneity, emotionality, the number of references made, as well as the fragmentary nature of the text produced. The differences stem from cultural diversity, the place in which a given encounter was experienced, and the level of students' language proficiency. Aside from the means of expression,

the author analyses an intercultural encounter as experience in itself, and classifies it as an experience which raises students' language awareness irrespective of their nationality, and as the possibility to engage in a dialogue in a foreign language, a lesson which touches upon the culture of a given target language community. It also provides food for thought after the lesson, which is a communication encounter.

In chapter five, the author outlines the intercultural profile of the subjects, based on questionnaire data (e.g. the factors perceived by students as influencing intercultural encounters, intercultural competence and, in consequence, conversation), and an intercultural sensitivity scale, which defines, emotional resilience, flexibility and openness to other cultures, among others.

Summing up, in chapter six, the author gives answers to the research questions formulated beforehand, and evaluates the research procedures. We learn about differences in the subjects' narratives. These include different metaphors of intercultural encounters and descriptions of foreigners, to name a few. When it comes to similarities, on the other hand, the students define intercultural competence along the same lines, restricting themselves to providing facts about a given culture. The better they know the target language, the more descriptions and examples of intercultural encounters they offer. Irrespective of the level of language competence, however, each respondent is able to give information on benefits brought by such intercultural encounters and communication with representatives of other cultures. As a result, *The Anatomy of Intercultural Encounters. A Sociolinguistic Cross-Cultural Study* becomes an interesting and thought-provoking comparative study, providing an up-dated and more complete version of the picture of permeating cultures, languages and their users to the one offered by Lewis (2006). The quality makes the book a valuable contribution to socio-cultural studies, and is highly recommended for all students and teachers of English, as well as EFL teacher trainees and their instructors. Having read the publication, they will not only develop their own cultural and language awareness, but also verify stereotypes about other cultures, and, thus, will be ready for an intercultural encounter, no matter what educational centre, professional path, and, most of all, language and culture, they are related to.

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