

Review:
Grażyna Kiliańska Przybyło, 2017.
The Anatomy of Intercultural Encounters.
A Sociolinguistic Cross- Cultural Study
(Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego)

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The monographic volume entitled *The Anatomy of Intercultural Encounters. A Sociolinguistic Cross-Cultural Study* by Grażyna Kiliańska Przybyło presents the theoretical basis for, as well as the empirical project devoted to, so-called *intercultural encounters*, in other words, intercultural interaction between different nationals and their perspective on them. The author interprets these encounters as *critical incidents*. The term critical incident refers to any episode that in a significant way affects the results of this episode, here an interactive act. The intercultural encounters described by the author come from the narrative texts of multilingual language users, university students representing two very distinct contexts, both geographically and culturally: Poland and Turkey.

The book consists of six chapters covering 196 pages, as well as an extensive bibliography of almost five hundred entries and seven appendices (50 pages). The book starts with chapter 1: 'Intercultural encounters' and is followed by chapter 2: 'Narrative Inquiry - Background', chapter 3: 'The scheme of the research study', chapter 4: 'Narratives - Data presentation and analysis' and chapter 5: 'Questionnaires and scales' and finishes with chapter 6: 'Conclusions'.

Chapter 1: 'Intercultural encounters' (pp. 17-60) is meant to introduce an over-view of theoretical issues, defining the constructs and models of intercultural interaction between different nationals, so common in present day times of migration, travelling within and beyond national borders and generally, our great love of mobility and its promotion in different contexts, professional, educational and personal. In this book, the context

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in question is academic and its participants are students; it is therefore a bit surprising that in the overview of studies, the author makes no reference to the study-abroad context which is naturally a very fast growing area of research. A great part of it embraces work on the effects of student mobility within Erasmus and Erasmus+ European projects. The chapter introduces a definition of an intercultural encounter (on the basis of Ting-Toomey 1999, Glaser et al. 2007 and Bystrov and Yermolenko 2011, among others) and discusses its role in developing one's identity in the process of communication and negotiation of meaning in different acts of interaction. The author also looks at the concept of an inter-cultural encounter and how it functions in a foreign language lesson (Mouse et al. 2003, Kribernegg et al. 2014). Numerous sources cited here put emphasis on the role of language in these intercultural encounters, pointing out the significance of communicative competence, understood as grammatical, discourse, socio-linguistic and strategic competences (Byram and Zarate 1995, Glaser et al. 2007, Niżegorodcew 2011). But above all, the author elaborates on the concept of intercultural pragmatics, which attributes effectiveness or possible communication problems and breakdowns to cultural differences and the non-native participants' lack of awareness of them. (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2005). As intercultural encounters always have to be perceived as highly emotional episodes, this dimension is also discussed here on the basis of research by MacIntyre (2002), Kumar (2004) or Salo-Lee (2007), just to mention a few from a long list of the cited sources. Specific aspects of affectivity and emotions that are rightly assumed by the author to be especially significant in this context are empathy (Lewicka 2008), willingness to communicate and communication apprehension (McCroskey 1982, MacIntyre et al. 1998, Gałajda 2012). The author could also not fail to comment on the issues of stereotyping and culture shock, which are fundamental to intercultural communication. Following Glaser et al. (2007), the author introduces the three-dimensional concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), i.e. cognitive, motivational and behavioural. This model has been enriched here with the classical model of intercultural competence presented by Byram (2000, 2007) and accepted in numerous studies (e.g. Niżegorodcew 2011, Bandura 2011). This elaborate and multidimensional interpretation of intercultural encounters most obviously leads the author to pointing out the challenges they generate and illustrates them with an overview

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of internationally conducted research projects demonstrating them in practice (for example, LARA, HERA or INCOPROMO). This overview not only focuses on the thematic issues of the studies but importantly, elaborates on the methodology used by the researchers. Perhaps a tabular presentation of the above would have made the text more coherent and reader-friendly. Unfortunately, it is only in the case of narrative texts that the author decided to use a tabular form of presentation. However, in terms of its general theoretical introduction to the empirical study presented in the book, it is thorough, fairly coherent and sufficient in the choice of constructs and themes discussed, as well as in the sources cited.

Chapter 2: 'Narrative enquiry - Background' (pp. 61-80) relates directly to the empirical part presented in the chapters to follow, as it describes the main method of data collection used by the author in her project, i.e. a narrative text produced by each participant. Narrative texts have been adopted and adapted from literary and social sciences into language studies fairly recently, which most obviously was determined by the interest in qualitative methods, in an individual and his/her identity, perceptions, preferences, values etc. The chapter starts with a diachronic overview of narration as a method of research, in which the author emphasises that narrative texts have their roots in postmodernism, in which an individual is the creator and interpreter of his life-story and experiences. The author is mostly interested in postmodern ideas in the educational contexts; thus, the names of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Pavlenko (2002, 2007) or Woods (2012) are cited here. The author believes that narration constitutes the basis for interaction, going so far as to say that there exists such a thing as narrative competence. This in fact is a belief first introduced by Bruner (1996) and elaborated on by Bell (2003), who points to the two-sided dimension of the concept. On the one hand, narrative competence plays a different role in different cultures and on the other, it is an expression of a given culture. Written narratives give shape to our experience and allow us to reflect for example on our identity, to monitor our behaviour and/or emotions. The chapter also offers different models of narrative text analysis, which are mostly based on one of the first advocates of narrative text use in language and education studies, Aneta Pavlenko. However, the author also uses other sources to comment on the cultural issues raised by means of narrative texts (Labov

1972, Maley 1989, McCarthy 1998, Hufeisen and Neuner 2004), The reader will also find here the characteristics of a narrative text, the steps to take when analysing it, as well as a discussion of positive and negative aspects of narrative as a research method. Also in this chapter, Kiliańska-Przybyło introduces the concept of a *critical incident*, which is fundamental to her empirical study. The critical incident is defined from different perspectives, but focusing here on the possibilities it offers in studying intercultural communication. The value of a critical incident has to be seen in its sole focus on an individual experience (encounter) and an either positive or negative appraisal in the act of interaction. This method has been successfully used in biographical studies of, for example Spencer-Oatey (2014) and Spencer-Oatey and Harch (2016). Chapter 2 offers an exhaustive presentation and discussion of the narrative text as used in qualitative studies of general and specifically intercultural communication and is appropriately narrowed down to focus on critical incidents as constitutive factors in researching individual experiences in encounters between representatives of different cultures, as well as idiosyncratic experiences of an individual in those acts of interaction. Chapter 2 concludes the theoretical part of the book. It demonstrates that the author is familiar with very many sources in the area of her interest both in terms of content and research methodology and she is able to select those which directly apply to her own research. I have only two critical comments here. The first relates to the content (as was pointed out earlier): no comment on study abroad research, which is increasingly important in investigating intercultural encounters. The other criticism relates to the form of presentation in bullet points in some parts, which can be a bit irritating in an academic text.

Chapter 3: 'The scheme of the study' (pp. 81-102) opens the empirical part of the monograph. It is a detailed presentation of the nine objectives of the study, a profile of the sample selection, a description of the research methods and instruments used in the process of data collection. The objectives quoted by the author define the project as a descriptive as well as a diagnostic study, designed using a mixed paradigm of qualitative-quantitative methodology. The objectives are formulated clearly and coherently. The author focuses both on individual perceptions of intercultural competence, as expressed by the Polish and Turkish university students, and in relation to their group profile (languages known, cultural background). The aim

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of the study is to describe, analyse and interpret intercultural encounters narrated by the subjects. It can be observed that the author's main interest lies in the didactic dimension of the topic, as her aim seems to be the development of the cultural sensitivities of multilingual language users/learners in different contexts of international (intercultural) communication. It is also an important factor in the professional development of future teachers of a foreign language (which the subjects in this study intend to be). A series of mini-lectures and practical classes carried out in the form of pre-prepared scenarios implemented by Kiliańska-Przybyło in her treatment period of the study, make very interesting material for FL teachers and teacher trainers (some of them are included in the appendices). As mentioned earlier, the subjects participating in the project were all university students of English departments studying to be FL teachers. It is clear from the description that both groups received a similar professional training in terms of theoretical courses, practical methodology in EFL classes and school placements; however, there is no mention made of their language instruction and possible differences in language competence, which seems important as the data collection was done in English (a foreign language for both groups). So we can only assume that the students are fairly homogenous in terms of their language competence. in English. A more extensive analysis is carried out here in the case of Polish students, as unfortunately the author did not manage to recruit Turkish M.A. students to be a part of this interesting study. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the participation of the Turkish students has to be praised, as it sets a good example of academic cooperation, here between Polish and Turkish academics. Kiliańska-Przybyło uses a mixed-method approach in her study, in which the adapted version of *Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory* was employed alongside narrative texts on the subjects' selected experiences of intercultural encounters seen as critical incidents. The analyses are both qualitative and quantitative, by means of the statistical tool (LIWC), which is described in great details in this part of the book. Thus, it may serve as a good source of information for other researchers interested in quantitative types of research in educational/language contexts. The project design is quite elaborate, thus the coherent step-by-step description offered here allows the reader to follow the execution stage of the data collection. Unfortunately, some parts of the study were not commented on in this description (e.g. the pilot study

or the theoretical training). Nevertheless, the chapter offers sufficient information on the context, content, objectives, methodology and procedures implemented in the study.

In the first empirical chapter 4: 'Narratives – Data presentation and analysis' (pp. 103–138), Kiliańska-Przybyło focuses solely on the analysis of the collected data from the narrative texts produced by the students from all three groups of subjects. These analyses constitute the most interesting part of the book. They open with statistical data based on the language used by the students and its possible influence on intercultural encounters and the psychological, cognitive and perceptual processes involved. The data demonstrates visible differences between Polish and Turkish subjects, where for example the former were diagnosed as more confident, whereas the latter were found to be more inclusive. In relation to culture and identity, it was observed that Turkish subjects were more prone to take an emic view (from the subject's own perspective), whereas Poles took an etic one (the observer's perspective). The differences are discussed in more detail in this part of this book, however, they can only be treated as tendencies since individual differences will always play a role in communication and interaction encounters. In the second stage of narrative analysis, the author looks at them from a qualitative perspective, focusing among other things on the content of the critical episodes ('the most memorable encounter') reported in the narratives and found to be mostly based on communication issues, culture, development of knowledge and the affectivity involved in such an episode (presented in detail in Table 7). The aim of the study was not only diagnostic but also pragmatic: to develop students' ability to reflect critically on their own contextualised experiences with the view to eradicating (or more realistically diminishing) the power of stereotyping in intercultural contacts and this worked very well for the subjects in the study. The author also presents here a structural analysis of the narrative materials; however it is not altogether clear what the purpose of this analysis is.

The aim of the data collected in the study and derived from the student questionnaires are presented in chapter 5: 'Questionnaires and scales – Data presentation and analysis' (pp. 139–172). The first stage of the study was to establish individual intercultural profiles of the students. This part of the analysis seems to be most interesting as it makes use of the explicit

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metaphors (similes) coined by the subjects in response to the stimulus: *Meeting a foreigner is like...* The metaphoric perceptions uncovered via similes are enriched with the results of the *Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI)*, categorising intercultural behaviour in relation to four traits: emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perceptual acuity and personal autonomy. Using thorough statistical analysis, the author established correlations (or their lack) between those traits within each of the groups of subjects and across the groups. The conclusions from the analysis are included in the final chapter of the book.

The closing chapter 6: 'Conclusions' (pp. 173–196) is a succinct overview of findings as it mainly succeeds in answering the research questions by synthesising numerous, extensive and detailed data from the earlier chapters. Thus, the reader will find here summarised differences between the two nationality groups, Polish and Turkish, which are, according to the author, determined by the socio-cultural context, age differences (B.A. versus M.A. students), language competence or straightforwardly, by the idiosyncratic features of every individual. In relation to perceptions of intercultural competence, the subjects demonstrate an inability to define the concept by going beyond pure factual and schematic knowledge. When comparing Polish and Turkish students' perceptions of their experiences in intercultural encounters, she observes that the texts produced by Poles are more reflective than those written by Turks. In the case of Polish students, intercultural encounters were seen more as a way of developing communicative and general language competence (younger subjects), culture awareness (older learners) and in the case of Turkish subjects, this focus was more on developing cultural awareness and uncovering stereotypes. The study also demonstrates certain discrepancies between interpretations of qualitative versus quantitative data, which according to the author requires a closer look for the purposes of future research. An important benefit of this study, irrespective of its results and conclusions, is that all the participants certainly left it much more aware of the issues involved in making intercultural encounters successful on a personal level, as well as in the context of foreign language instruction and the need to focus on such issues when teaching a FL. The reader will be able to find many more interesting observations derived from this project in the concluding chapter. Therefore, not to anticipate

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the discovery of the findings, I will not comment here in more details on the conclusions of this engrossing project.

To sum up my review, the following is what I find most valuable in this work. First of all, it is the very choice and timeliness of the topic – so important both for our individual well-being and success in intercultural encounters and in the educational context of a foreign language formal instruction, pronounced as the need for critical reflection on intercultural awareness issues. Secondly, the presentation of the theoretical background and overview of the studies in the area has allowed Kilianska-Przybylo to design an exciting and very complex mixed-method study. Thirdly, the book promotes qualitative methods, which reflect well the present-day trend in educational research worldwide. This project makes a great contribution to it. Fourthly, the project presented in this book is an excellent example of international cooperation between scholars working in similar areas. As to the form and structure, the book is written in good academic discourse, with only few language slips and stylistically awkward structures. The text is coherent and its arguments are presented logically and fully. However, occasionally, the reader will find some repetitiveness in the text (occasionally, the tabular and textual information and commentary overlap) and may object to a bullet-point presentation, style in this type of text. Two things seem to be missing and would be of great added value to the book and these are author and subject indexes. Other critical remarks were already expressed above.

I can recommend this book to researchers working in the area of intercultural competence, awareness and reflective approaches in educational contexts. This book is in my view valuable for any multilingual language user. But, most of all, I believe it is a good source of knowledge and stimulus for reflection for all teachers of foreign languages, irrespective of the stage of their professional career, be it in-service or pre-service.