Preface

PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Intercultural Studies is a relatively emerging field within Social Sciences whose object of interest is the interaction between cultural groups and individuals, both within and across societies. It examines how culture influences on who people are, how they interact, how they feel, how they think, speak, communicate, listen, and behave. It recognizes that while exposure to other cultures offers huge potential benefits to individuals and societies, there are also challenges to overcome as different value systems, along with differences in communication styles and behaviours, can result in miscommunication and conflict among human groups, locally, nationally, and globally. Therefore, the discipline of Intercultural Studies aims to provide individuals with both the knowledge to understand the complexities and dynamics of intercultural contact and the practical skills and perspectives to enable them to successfully engage with cultural diversity in the different communities where they live, work, and socialize. This reality motivated us to conceive Promoting Intercultural Communication Competencies in Higher Education in order to contribute to the much needed literature on research and practice of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) in Higher Education (HE).

Interaction between people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds has never been greater. Advances in technology, transportation, and intensified processes of social, cultural, and economic globalization are increasing physical and virtual human mobility worldwide. As a result, unprecedented levels of contact between groups and individuals are reshaping our understanding of cultural diversity within and across societies.

Although we have always been aware that the world is diverse due to the existence of many different cultures and languages, today’s social mobility has brought that distant world of diversity to our local communities causing both positive and negative reactions. On the positive side, people tend to appreciate the explicit layer of cultural differences, that is, “the observable reality of the language, food, buildings,
houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions, and art” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 29). However, it is the implicit layer of culture, or what Geert Hofstede has define throughout his work as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another” that is highly vulnerable to negative attitudes resulting in cultural conflict, prejudices, stereotypes, misunderstanding, and miscommunication, all of which, in the hand of dangerous leadership, can arise into ideological hate among people and even wars.

Higher education has not been free from the impacts of globalization. In fact, the most recent phenomenon that is rapidly shaping the culture of universities today is the internationalization of higher education, which, according to Beck (2012) “is a product of and even a response to globalization” (p. 134). While globalization is a process (or a series of processes) of global economic integration and of capital and social mobility, there is agreement that internationalization seems to be the process (or a series of processes) by which universities are coping with a number of challenges and opportunities that globalization has created within higher education. The International Association of Universities (IAU)³ has generated and published a series of documents on the issues of globalization and internationalization, and its research shows that higher education will need to play a key role in developing the ability to foster intercultural dialogue, which is an integral part of the internationalization of higher education (Knight, 2013).

Numerous universities worldwide have adopted some form of internationalization vision in their mission statements calling for their educational programs to provide graduates with global learning. Research shows that in order for graduates to develop intercultural competence they need opportunities to reflect on their intercultural skills, and received feedback on how these and other intercultural skills can better prepare them to take on global leadership roles (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Therefore, ICC needs to become a key competence in higher education to deal with social and ideological changes resulting from globalization. It is also a key competence for successful student mobility and effective integration in competitive job markers (Deardorff, 2006; Haigh, 2009; Merryfield & Subedi, 2001).

Although ICC and global learning are important outcomes of university education today, there is still lack of faculty training for facilitating intercultural learning or dialogue across cultures, even within those already involved in international education or study abroad initiatives (Paige and Goode, 2009). Moreover, those engaged with ICC teaching and learning tend to understand, interpret, and create solutions highly influenced by their academic disciplines, and though this is a step forward, it is also producing different and fragmented approaches to ICC in HE (Rojas-Primus, 2016). For example, in the field of language teaching and learning,
the main academic teaching discipline of the editors, we have seen an increasing interest among colleagues trying to understand what intercultural language teaching is and how it will look like within and outside the language classroom (Jackson, 2014; Bonvillain, 2013; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). However, much of the literature on ICC and language teaching and learning is descriptive and theorizes extensively, resulting in lack of concrete intercultural language activities and pedagogical applicability into specific target languages. As a result the following questions have come to our minds:

- How are different language disciplines integrating ICC into their curricula?
- How are other academic disciplines capitalizing on ICC to prepare students to live in a diverse and interconnected world?
- What are university leaders doing to facilitate the process of understanding the other?
- How are we unfolding the potential for collaboration in higher education to make intercultural dialogue, practices, research, and measurement an integral part of internationalization?

These questions have inspired us to believe that sharing knowledge of ICC practices in different disciplines of HE becomes essential for further identification of best ICC implementation and innovation in efforts of internationalization programs. Let us not forget that although the globalization trends (negative and positive) that directly affect higher education are largely inevitable in the contemporary world, the choices universities make to respond to these effects are not. It is our hope that university administrators, faculty, students and all sectors of academic governance, leadership, support, and service embrace these choices with democratic responsibility, collaboration, and a shared vision of intercultural or global programs that will establish, build and maintain successful intercultural relations and international programs.

In light of the above, *Promoting Intercultural Communication Competencies in Higher Education* aims to cross-examine current pedagogical research and practice of ICC in the curriculum of HE within both the discipline of language teaching and learning and other university disciplines. It envisions serving as an anchor for sharing ICC perspectives in higher education among institutions, researchers, educators, and trainers alike. The authors of the chapters in this book come from different post-secondary institutions and academic disciplines. They also come from a range of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds bringing to this book a sound understanding and integration of ICC into their field of expertise.
ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 11 chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 explores how the post-secondary educational landscape is slowly becoming a backdrop for an increasing number of examples of efforts being made to establish intercultural development and internationalization at the university and college levels. This chapter identifies four areas that are key to the process: buy-in from the Administration, support in the curricular arena, recognition for intercultural work of faculty members, and a more centralized mechanism and structure to help advance the internationalization agenda. Despite the progress made in Canada, these areas are still continuing to gain traction in higher education in other countries.

Chapter 2 examines different bodies of literature to pull together common principles for promoting culturally responsive pedagogy in U.S. higher education. Its purpose is to focus on teaching practices that go beyond inclusive intentions, and instead focus on pedagogy that is truly responsive to diverse groups of students, especially in terms of the most prominent cultural aspects, such as race, gender, nationality. Specifically, five principles are described and detailed:

1. Instructor awareness of epistemology,
2. Recognition of diverse knowledge systems,
3. Inquiry based instruction,
4. Incorporation of student choice, and
5. Expanded use of formative feedback.

Chapter 3 is a mixed methods study which seeks to understand the intercultural development of students (N=178) completing programs in culturally diverse, internationalized, regional institutions in British Columbia, Canada and to explore their perceptions (N=42) of how educational experiences influenced this learning. Statistical analysis of Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) scores together with student perceptions of the influences of curriculum and pedagogy, provide educators working in culturally diverse, internationalized institutions with data to consider enhancing strategies to prepare students to live and work effectively in multicultural, international, and global contexts.

Chapter 4 investigates the application of Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) by faculty across the disciplines at a Canadian research university. Based on focus group interviews with instructors in 18 disciplines, it provides concrete examples of how instructors mobilize intercultural teaching competence to navigate diverse classrooms, promote perspective taking and global learning goals among students, practice culturally relevant teaching, and validate different ways of knowing and
communicating among students through assessment practices. The implications of disciplinary differences in ITC are discussed for faculty development and curriculum support.

Chapter 5 draws on the authors’ experience with the design and delivery of an online intercultural skills course offered to undergraduate students enrolled in the co-operative education program at a Canadian university. Their goal was to contribute to the literature on intercultural skill development by discussing the course model and its implementation, student perceptions of their level of intercultural competence prior to and after the course and the challenges involved in the delivery of the course.

Chapter 6 discusses how instructors could use autoethnography as a course assignment to help students understand their cultural identities and build their intercultural communication competences in higher education classroom. It provides an overview of literature relevant to intercultural communication competences, social identity, and autoethnography and then describes the author’s use of autoethnography in an undergraduate course “Social and Cultural Foundations of Education” taught at a large public university in the United States.

Chapter 7 posits the Medicine Wheel, a teaching/learning framework that has widespread use in indigenous communities, for use in instructing intercultural communication. Bloom’s taxonomy of the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains, is missing the fourth quadrant of the Medicine Wheel, spiritual. Examples of the spiritual quadrant are offered.

Chapter 8 explores how students from different cultural backgrounds pursuing building related degrees in Spain increase their perception of gender awareness in relation to their capabilities as future male/female professionals. More particularly, the chapter analyzes the acquisition and development of competencies that go beyond the technical skills proper demanded by most companies in the building industries (i.e. project management, safety control, procurement, quality control, computer-aided design, among others). A survey including competency choices was completed by a population of 100 students: females, males, from Spanish and other ethnic backgrounds. Results seem to point out that gender gaps have been bridged in many cases, and argue that self-awareness, capabilities, shortcomings and skills are the first step toward a more gender equitable environment in the building industries.

Chapter 9 discusses The Philosopher’s Teahouse initiative which provides a forum for students across cultures, linguistic backgrounds and disciplines to dialogue on current social issues and learn from each other’s cultural perspectives, thereby, building relationships of inclusion and empowerment. It explores the research and theoretical framework that informed The Teahouse, including an explanation of critical multicultural language pedagogy, the connection between language and power and how critical multicultural language pedagogy addresses these issues. The
chapter ends with an analysis of the challenges and implications of The Teahouse in preparing students for equal and active participation in a pluralistic society.

Chapter 10 argues that learning a language must result in becoming competent in a new culture because accessing the culture language stands for and being able to share its cultural content requires learning the historical and social background of its vocabulary. The chapter deals with different concerns present in foreign language classrooms in Mexico, a space where language and intercultural competence must be developed. It describes some linguistic competence-related concerns (Section 1), then it deals with specific intercultural related aspects of grammar and perception which are part of the linguistic competence to be developed in class (Section 2) and it finishes with a general description of three basic ways used in the Spanish-as-second-language (SSL) classroom in order to teach language and culture so as to help students to develop intercultural competence (Section 3).

Chapter 11 concludes our book, and explores the importance of implementing the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Teacher Education. To support the development of ICC, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a validated tool, was used to assess the intercultural communication competence of second language pre-service teachers in Canada. The purpose of this discussion is to examine if teaching and learning about the CEFR in a Curriculum and Instruction course in the area of French as a second language can provide the necessary parameters to promote ICC of pre-service language teachers. In order to assess this, the IDI was administered during the fall semester of a one year, Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Education Certification Program.

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REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1 See Geert’s official website http://www.geerthofstede.nl/.
2 See International Association of Universities (IAU) at http://www.iau-aiu.net/content/association.