

*Ilona Semrádová et al., Intercultural Inspirations for Language Education: Spaces for Understanding, Hradec Králové, University of Hradec Králové, 2012, 112 pp.*

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*Intercultural Inspirations for Language Education* is a monograph written by an international team of nine language teachers led by Ilona Semrádová. The book is divided into eight chapters discussing different aspects –both theoretical and applied– of language teaching and language study. The authors address different topics linked to intercultural issues.

The first chapter “Spaces for Understanding” by Ilona Semrádová represents, in its theoretical first part, philosophical views of language teaching, especially structuralist, phenomenological and hermeneutic ones. It claims that an intercultural approach to teaching languages is necessary as different languages provide different images of the world. Nevertheless, these differences should not hinder the intercultural dialogue. Philosophically based language education opens the plurality of values, traditions and lifestyles. This chapter discusses Gadamer’s hermeneutics emphasizing the content and purpose of communication and education. It also presents Byram’s concept of intercultural competences in language education and poses three important educational

questions, namely WHAT?, WHY?, HOW? The latter part of the first chapter is descriptive. It is a case study describing language teaching at the Faculty of Informatics and Management, University of Hradec Králové. The Department of Applied Linguistics, which provides language teaching here, applies the above mentioned philosophical views, creates textbook as well as electronic study material in online e-Learning courses.

The second chapter, written by Catherine Matsuo and titled “Intercultural Communicative Competence in a Globalizing World: Language as Positive Creativity at Dialogic Borderzones”, in accord with the first one, emphasizes human communication and makes a distinction between cross-cultural and intercultural communication. Based mainly on Bakhtin’s ideas, it shows that culture is of live and dynamic nature. “Bakhtin tells us that all of us, our whole lives, are engaged in the project of self-hood, and that this is intimately connected with, and achieved through, language” (33). Human communication is therefore the focal point of this theoretical chapter. Communication is basically intercultural in the language class. The teacher with their intercultural identity makes the student in the here-and-now situation an intercultural person.

Chapter three –“Current Trends in the Teaching of Foreign Languages” by Blanka Frydrychová Klímová– proves that theoretical knowledge can be beneficial to foreign language teachers’ practice. The author lists trends in language education and points out that the student is to be seen as an autonomous person who is at the same time capable of cooperation with both the teacher and other students. The student’s autonomy is supported with the use of ICT. The so-called blended learning involves both face-to-face and online teaching methods. A case study exemplifies how students create authentic article for Wikipedia. It shows that theory and practice may go hand in hand. The stress is on the creative potential of the student, their autonomy but also ability to cooperate and interact with other students.

The fourth chapter “Designing Writing Materials for the Business English Language Class” by Rosa Rabadán introduces a custom-made comparable corpus *Minutes\_C-ACTRES*, comprising original texts in both English and Spanish, which are used to show similarities and differences between the two languages and to teach students business interaction. It seems that similar corpora may provide ESP (i.e. language for specific purposes) students with much craved for material for learning and comparing how to use different languages in similar

situations. We think that it may prove to be a good tool for teaching languages as it enables the student to better understand foreign language structures.

Jana Králová's fifth chapter titled "Possibilities and Boundaries for Intercultural Communication" remembers Jiří Levý, a Czech theorist of translation, who –while studying translation– solved many problems of what we call intercultural communication. This part of the monograph focuses on the problems of text translations, mainly those texts that are related to the language itself. Translators have always had problems with the interference of the source language but these days they may benefit from new translational research using ICT. There are two types of corpora. Parallel corpora consist of texts and their translations whereas comparable corpora contain original texts of similar kind (style, topic, genre, etc.) in two or more languages. This chapter emphasizes the importance of high quality translation. We may agree with that as it facilitates intercultural understanding by introducing different cultures and views to the reader and at the same time it enriches the target language with neologisms.

Chapter six, "Translation as a Modern Tool for Language Teaching" by David Mraček, advocates the advantages of translation. The so-called Grammar Translation Method was abandoned in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, translation has enjoyed a comeback in recent years and teachers may use many types of exercises based on the purpose of translation. Alongside the four traditional skills, translation becomes the fifth one. Mraček believes that translation is suitable mainly for advanced language students and he provides information on how to use translation in the language class.

Karel Šebesta in chapter seven ("Learned Corpora and Czech Language") informs the reader about Czech corpus linguistics, which started to develop in the 1990s. In 2005 a project called Akviziční korpusy češtiny/Czech Language Acquisition Corpora (AKCES/CLAC) was launched. It is a loose complex of corpora helping to study language acquisition. Šebesta lists various types of corpora. They differ in terms of their size and data collection. In 2012 the learner corpus CzeSL, the first corpus of Czech produced by non-native speakers, was available to researchers. In general, learner corpora are useful in the study of second or foreign language acquisition as they include language performances produced by non-native speakers. They may be used by language teachers for didactic purposes.

The last chapter (“Issues of the Complexity of Czech in Teaching Foreign Students at FIM UHK” by Dita Golková) is a case study. It introduces experience with teaching Czech as a foreign language at the Faculty of Informatics and Management, University of Hradec Králové, the Czech Republic. Golková first lists and discusses common problems that students encounter and then she evaluates three textbooks of Czech for Foreigners. This chapter might be useful for those who want to introduce teaching Czech as a foreign language into their curricula.

The monograph covers different aspects of language study and language education. Philosophical bases of language teaching put the emphasis on the importance of dialogue as the central phenomenon of the world seen *sub specie communi(cati)onis*. Current trends in language education focus on the creative potential of the student, their autonomy as well as ability to cooperate with others. Language corpora may enable new insights into language education and provide learners, teachers as well as researchers with a lot of useful language material. There might be even more potential generated by the comeback of translation. It remains to be seen, though.

All in all, *Intercultural Inspirations for Language Education* is a topical contribution to the discussion about future trends in language education in the time of ICT and globalization when the problem of intercultural understanding is becoming ever more important. It shows how ICT might be used in order to improve language education. At the same time, it warns against unhindered reliance on it. The monograph also introduces a lot of interesting ideas, views as well as information. Therefore, it may be recommended to those interested in modern trends in language study and language teaching. Moreover, the reader finds out that mastering a language is not only of instrumental but also of humanizing nature. Those who can speak more languages are more aware of plurality of values and lifestyles, which is an important asset in the globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.