

## AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

*An Integrated Approach to Intercultural Communication*<sup>2</sup> explores communication, culture, and intercultural communication with an emphasis on promoting understanding of and appreciation for the rich and varied perspectives encountered in intercultural communication interactions.

Interdisciplinary in nature, the book focuses on the need to develop self-understanding as a first step to intercultural understanding. It also highlights the need for the intercultural state of mind to match the multicultural world, the difficulties inherent in the quest of such objective, the excitement of challenges on the way and the rewards of the success that are sputtering with new energy waiting to be discovered. Furthermore, the book represents an initial step in the process of building competencies that may facilitate effective communication in all types of cross-cultural settings. It gives a unique outlook of how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures.

Chapter 1 sets out the main theme through a detailed exploration of the concepts of communication and culture where the author discusses the beginnings of communication study, contemporary maxims about communication as well as misinterpretations that occur during the communication process. Author, then, seamlessly moves on to discuss culture, its elements, beliefs, values and norms, popular culture, Confucian cultural patterns, Hall's, Hofstede's, and Bond's taxonomies of cultural patterns, and cultural intelligence. Moreover, she explores the concept of cultural identity, and sheds new light on the notion of cultural diversity (or multiculturalism) which is in her view a broad way of looking at cultural groups at various levels, including assumptions, underlying values, social relations, and customs.

Chapter 2 focuses on the subject of intercultural communication that occupies the central position of the book. In this chapter, the author is keeping with the overall scope of the subject covering a wide array of topics within the field of intercultural communication encompassing overall characteristics of intercultural communication, meaning characteristics,

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<sup>2</sup> This book review is a slightly altered original Introduction to the book.

practicing intercultural process thinking, intercultural communication competence and different ways to improve intercultural communication skills. The author also glimpses on culture shock, stages of culture shock and acculturation. In the last pages of this chapter, she discusses factors influencing inter-cultural communication, intercultural communication barriers, and basic rules of intercultural effectiveness only to conclude with various intercultural training models.

In Chapter 3, the author turns to verbal and auditory intercultural communication and defines various styles of verbal communication: direct versus indirect style, elaborate versus succinct style, personal versus contextual, instrumental versus affective style, treats the subject of listening, describes the HURIER model and discusses the importance of effective listening across cultures.

Chapter 4 draws the readers in with the discussion of nonverbal intercultural communication that is, in the author's opinion, an indispensable and all-pervasive element in intercultural communication. She, then, moves to explore the importance of nonverbal communication in intercultural communication, the influence of nonverbal factors on intercultural communication and its classification.

Chapter 5 explores the significance of intercultural health communication that is very important if people are to interact with people coming from different cultures in the health care setting. The author debates that effective health care delivery is dependent upon clear and effective communication as an essential element in every form of medicine and health care between all of the individuals who are involved: patients, physicians, and other health care professionals. The author, also, discusses diverse health care belief systems, intercultural health care competence, and health care communication strategies.

Chapter 6 is the final piece of this intercultural communication puzzle where the author analyses main features of intercultural business communication. The focus is on the intercultural skills business people need to be effective in the business arena. This means managing people in an intercultural setting, negotiation, meetings, language and questions to consider when doing business internationally.

The final pages of the book comprise selected intercultural awareness situations, practice activities and discussion ideas that should serve as an intercultural awareness incentive. The author also provides cultural interpretations for each situation written immediately after a possible response. Cultural dos and don'ts across the globe in the end are a sweepstake for all globetrotters.

One of the reviewers, Professor Maria Sifianou from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Faculty of English Studies writes:

"The diversity and freshness of the ideas in the book stem from the unique blend of the most important aspects of intercultural communication to provide the reader with an understanding of the depth and breadth of intercultural communication theory and practice in a unique and interesting way. It serves as basis for the journey towards greater intercultural communication competence and understanding of how intercultural communication principles work that is crucial to the development of mutual understanding in the global world."

Conjointly, Professor Spyronikolas Hoidas from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Faculty of English Studies, who invited the author to join his team as a visiting scholar on the post-doctoral level, postulates:

"An Integrated Approach to Intercultural Communication investigates multi-faceted domain of intercultural communication with its multicultural focus and interdisciplinary

scope – featuring verbal, auditory, nonverbal, health care and business intercultural communication. Thus, this book is an invaluable resource for all scholars, students, sojourners, expatriates, and globetrotters exploring the broad and vast field of intercultural communication. In this important contribution to contemporary thinking about intercultural communication, the author brings together discourse from widely divergent theoretical fields to explore the arena of intercultural communication.”

Finally, Biljana Đorić Francuski, Associate professor from The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology says (in the Serbian language):

“Od ove godine studije kulture bogatije su za jednu izvanrednu naučnu monografiju, koju je pod nazivom *Integrirani pristup interkulturnoj komunikaciji* (An Integrated Approach to Intercultural Communication) početkom 2012. objavila renomirana britanska izdavačka kuća Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Za nas je to izdanje tim značajnije što je autorka monografije, dr Nataša Bakić-Mirić, naše gore list, te u ovoj knjizi često nailazimo i na primere vezane za Srbiju, što inače nije baš uvek slučaj u literaturi iz oblasti studija kulture, a naročito interkulture komunikacije. U današnje vreme, kada je u nekoliko multidisciplinarnih naučnih grana sve popularnija tematika razumevanja između pojedinaca iz različitih kultura – koji kao nosioci ponekad čak i suprotnih vrednosti i neusklađenih identiteta pri susretu neizostavno stupaju u interkulturnu komunikaciju, ova knjiga, koja predstavlja originalno naučno ostvarenje, nesumnjivo je nezaobilazan priručnik za svakoga ko se – bilo kao stručnjak ili student, bilo kao laik i iz privatnih razloga – bavi procesom sticanja kompetencija u cilju olakšavanja efikasne interkulture komunikacije u novoj multikulturnoj sredini.”

In conclusion, this book includes the most important aspects of intercultural communication necessary to provide the reader with an understanding of the depth and breadth of intercultural communication theory and practice and to further research in the field of intercultural communication in a unique and interesting way that is from the author’s point of view crucial to the development of mutual understanding in today’s global world.