Reviews

Intercultural Competence in Business English

by Rudi Camerer & Judith Mader
Series Editor: Eric Baber
Cornelsen 2012
978-3065-20079-0

Essentially, this book is about how business English trainers can help their learners avoid breakdowns in communication resulting from cultural *faux pas* and, should one occur, teach them strategies to smooth things over.
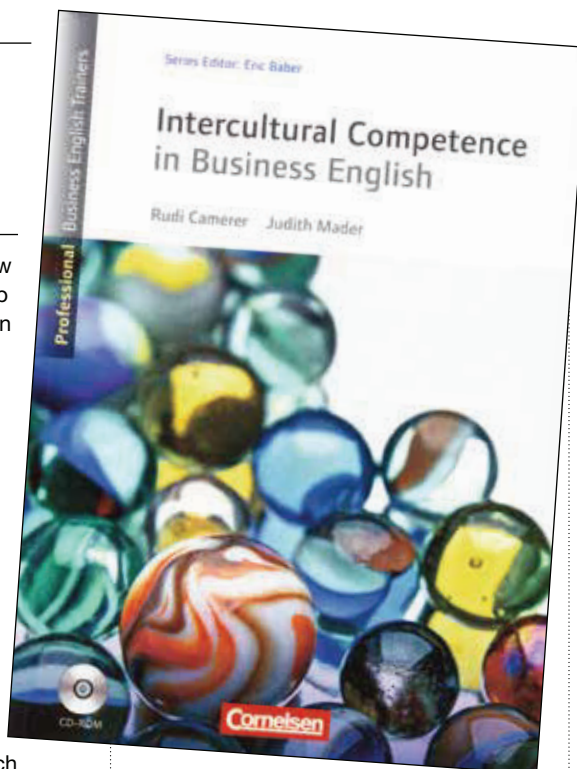
The book contains sections on the background of intercultural aspects of business English, lesson content considerations, reference pages – eg a glossary – and a CD-ROM. It is assumed that trainers will be working with adults and that they will not be pre-service business students.

The first seven chapters, which make up Part 1 (*Preparing the background*), provide a theoretical overview, answering such questions as *What is culture?* and examining issues such as intercultural theory, the CEFR and intercultural competence, and corporate cultures.

As the authors point out, all this replaces the necessity to read a large number of books. I found the 'margin boxes' particularly useful. These fulfil a number of functions, having titles such as *Did you know? What is it?* and *Remember*.

These seven chapters, although primarily looking at the theoretical aspects of intercultural competence, also have activity boxes, with suggestions for things that trainers can do with their learners, thus providing practical reinforcement for both trainers and learners. Each chapter ends with a 'To think about' box, allowing for further reinforcement, as well as an opportunity for reflection.

The examples that are used to illustrate points or set the scene for exploring 'culture' are well chosen; they relate to current issues and have a global spread. The book is quite text heavy, but pictures and diagrams have been used to illustrate the examples and summarise concepts and theories. For instance, they are used to compare the work of Edward T Hall, Geert Hofstede and Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner.

Part 2 of the book is composed of eight chapters. It follows the same format as Part 1, but where the focus of Part 1 is theoretical, Part 2 (*Teaching intercultural competence*) has a practical focus. There are chapters on teaching self-awareness, country specifics and communicative competence, and also on assessing and testing intercultural competence.

I had expected plenty of practical teaching ideas in this part of the book. Instead, I found it to be more along the lines of describing the features that should be included in a lesson on an intercultural competence course. These features were very interesting and, indeed, would equip learners to be more effective communicators in business situations. Where actual activities to use in lessons were suggested, I felt they could be very engaging. However, I found it rather frustrating that the teacher's notes are only available on the CD-ROM. I would have appreciated having them at the end of each chapter within the book itself. Nevertheless, I will be including some of these activities in my future business English lessons.

The glossary is well laid-out, with good comprehensible definitions. For those wishing to do further reading, there is also a comprehensive 'Further information' reading list (laid out per chapter). The CD-ROM provides further resource material.

The authors say: *'We hope we have been able to contribute in some way to improving intercultural communication for BE trainers and their learners!'* In response to this, I would say that they have. This book is a mix of theory and practical pointers that I will certainly be referring to in the future, with the aim of improving both my learners' intercultural competence and my own.

Julie Allen
Exeter, UK

Mind the App!

by Thomas Strasser
Helbling 2012
978-3-85272-556-7

This title in the Helbling Languages The Resourceful Teacher Series should be of interest to teachers who wish to integrate more online materials, apps and tools into their lessons. The author, Thomas Strasser, has successfully created a winning collection of activities to use in tandem with these online resources.

The book's introduction gives a satisfactory overview of Web 2.0, and lists many advantages of the internet and social media for language teachers and learners. It also mentions some concerns, such as privacy, plagiarism and copyright. The introduction concludes with a brief overview of the book.

The remainder of the book is divided into five sections. Section 1, *Teacher Tools*, focuses on a few apps that teachers can use. These include websites for creating online quizzes and sharing *PowerPoint* presentations on the web. Section 2, *Visualisation*, covers activities using some of the websites that allow students to manipulate images. Two examples are 'I have a dream' (using *Wordle* to create a word cloud) and 'Glogster it!' (using *Glogster* to create an interactive desktop). Section 3, *Collaboration*, provides a number of activities that get students to work together on projects such as brainstorming, collaborative writing and generating feedback on a

lesson online. Section 4, *Audio*, concentrates on music, voice and sound effects. Activities here show how to create podcasts and audio stories. Finally, Section 5, *Writing*, lists several activities for helping students write online, such as producing online binders and diaries.

One of the strengths of this book is the clear presentation of the activities. Each activity contains information on how to register on the relevant website and start using the applications. The in-class activities are explained well, with lead-in, online and follow-up steps, as well as suggestions for homework. The author also provides some interesting variations on most of the activities.

Another useful feature of this book is the quick reference guide found near the back. All the activities are presented in chart form, so one can easily find things to do, based on level, age, focus or available lesson time.

The website accompanying the book (part of the Helbling Languages website) is well worth mentioning here. It contains several professionally-made instructional videos that show clearly how to navigate one's way through these applications. In addition, there is a list of over 40 websites that are related to learning technologies and TEFL.

One problem I had with the book was that the number of activities in each chapter was a little unbalanced. For example, Chapter 2 features 13 activities for visualisation, while Chapter 4 presents a mere four activities that involve audio.

However, overall, I was highly impressed with the range of apps introduced in this book. In fact, I saw several that I want to explore next semester. In my view, it is an excellent book for any teacher wanting to use more online resources.

Hall Houston
Luzhu, Taiwan

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on this book. Go to the ET*p* website and quote ETPQRO314 at the checkout.

Meaningful Action: Earl Stevick's influence on language teaching

Edited by Jane Arnold and Tim Murphey
Cambridge University Press 2013
978-1107610439

This book was published in May 2013, just before Earl Stevick's death in August. It is a celebration of a great educator and the profound influence he had on language teaching. Many successful teachers and teacher trainers have found reading Stevick's *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways* a career-changing, if not a life-changing experience. Indeed, Scott Thornbury acknowledges on his popular blog that Stevick's book marked a milestone in his own professional development. This tribute to Stevick includes contributions from 19 ELT authors and academics who have all been influenced in some way by his work.

The title, *Meaningful Action*, is a reference to Stevick's exploration of how individual learners can engage with activities that appeal to their sensory and cognitive processes, resulting in the construction of meaning according to the learner's own characteristics, together with their relationship with the teacher and other learners in the class. The book is divided into three parts, each of which explores a different aspect of meaningful action.
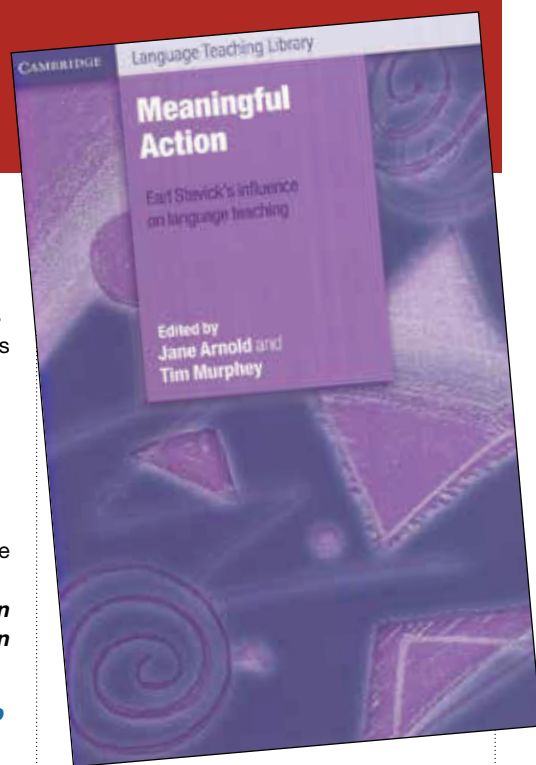
Part A (*Meaning-making inside and between the people in the classroom*) looks at the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of learning, and includes chapters by Jane Arnold, Scott Thornbury, David Nunan, Herbert Puchta and Carolyn Kristjánsson. Kristjánsson, for example, demonstrates how support from teachers can aid the development of identity, agency and community among the students in a class, while Herbert Puchta looks at what ELT can learn from neuroscience and educational theory in general.

Part B (*Meaningful classroom activity*) considers ways of moving classroom activity away from that which is unproductive towards that which will result in real learning. Contributors in this section are Zoltán Dörnyei, Penny Ur, Diane Larsen-Freeman, Tim Murphey and Alan Maley.

In Part C (*Frameworks for meaningful language learning*), attention turns to the structures and conditions that support the language learning process. Here, there are chapters by Leo van Lier, Donald Freeman and Madeline Ehrman.

The book ends, appropriately, with an Epilogue by Carolyn Kristjánsson which assesses the influence of Earl Stevick and his contribution to the field of ELT, and a series of tributes to him by those who found his work inspirational.

Phil Dangerfield
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