

BOOK REVIEW: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXTS. 6thED.

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Introduction

The book reviewed, Intercultural Communications in Context, is a prescribed book for a course; Intercultural Communications in Health Sciences at the University of South Africa. The book discusses the philosophical, sociological dynamics, cultural diversities, paradigms related to communication development and processes. The book, published in the United States of America, is intended for use by international students outside USA. Its content is presented in 12 chapters and divided into three parts. Part 1 constitutes 4 chapters; Part 2 has three chapters while part 2 has 5 chapters. Intercultural communication in Contexts was authored by professors from the United States of America; Professors Judith N. Martin, a social scientist, and Tom Nakayama, a critical rhetorician who views intercultural communication in a social context. Both authors were educated in the USA and France and Professor Martin worked in Algeria.

Summary of the content

Chapter one, based on “Foundations of Intercultural Communication,” explains the importance of studying Intercultural Communications and presents various approaches to this area of study including many humanities. It further focuses on the dynamics of social life, global conditions and importance of social justice and engagement with communities like the home-less. It then shades light on the impact of globalization and immigration on intercultural encounters. In chapter two, the authors introduce the history of intercultural communication as an area of study as well as the three paradigms that inform people’s knowledge about intercultural interactions. They establish the notion of a dialectical approach so that students can start making connections and form relations among the paradigms.

The four basic intercultural communication components; culture, communication, context and power are introduced in chapter three. The authors included examples of cultural struggles in political contexts and interpretive research describing the performance of ethnic identity. Chapter four focuses on the importance of history forces in shaping contemporary intercultural interactions. This chapter also provides additional information and examples of family histories and expands the notion of hidden histories. Chapter 5 is the beginning of Part

2; "Intercultural Communication Processes." The chapter extends coverage of religious identity, multi-cultural identity and sexual identity including discussions on trans gender, intolerance and how one's sexuality contributes to development of ethics and cultural identity. On the other hand, chapter 6 addresses the language barrier issues to intercultural communication that include slang, humour and different types of communication styles.

Chapter seven focuses on non-verbal codes and cultural spaces-variations in non-verbal behaviour, physical appearance and attractiveness.

Part3; "Intercultural communication processes" starts with chapter 8 which addresses intercultural transitions that include migrants host relationships to emphasis differences among assimilation, separation and segregation. In chapter 9, the focus is on popular and folk culture and their impact on intercultural communications. It also looks at how culture influences body images of men and women in various cultural contexts. In chapter ten, the authors explore intercultural relationships and expand on sexuality and intimate relationships in multicultural environments, as well as new material on online relationships. In chapter eleven, the authors eliminate the emphasis on two distinct orientations to conflict and instead emphasize an integrated approach to intercultural conflict using the recent riots in London and Paris as case studies. Finally, chapter twelve brings on board community coalition building and continues to emphasize practical experiences in striving for intercultural competence in every day encounters.

Analysis and evaluation of the book

The book reveals that it is of benefit to study because it makes one understand the self awareness imperatives involved in increasing the understanding of our own location in large social, political and historical contexts. It adds rich and beneficial information, on current trends and commonalities found across the globe which makes it an international version suitable for everyone. The book shares important aspects as authors give perceptions and world views of various schools and how these views have led to the emergency of three contemporary approaches of social science, interpretive and critical approaches-very important for the global stage.

Anyone who reads this book would most likely buy the view that this is a must read book as it discusses culture learned patterns of group related perceptions, contextual symbol patterns of meaning and heterogeneous dynamic contestations. The intercultural communication processes, factors that contribute to the dynamics of intercultural

communication; identity, language and non-verbal codes are all crucial and very important. Chapter five is well articulated and befits the aspects of dialectical view of identity as being both dynamic and static; identity being multiple and reflects gender, sexuality, age, race ethnicity, religion, class, nationality and other significant aspects. This information is inclusive of the diversity that makes a complete human being. The content and style of presentation are relevant and crucial in this digital era as it enlightens on the social science approach and individual aspects of language.

In addition, the interpretive approach focuses on contextual aspects of language while the critical approach dwells on the role of power or language use which is critical in our modern lives. The aspects shared here are very educative because non-verbal communication is more unconscious and learned implicitly. It further reinforces, substitutes or contradicts verbal communication. The authors could not have done much better than this as this information educates a lot on dialectical perspective on transitions and reveals the tension between the individual and societal adaptations. This book is vital in view of globalization and changing times that we live in. The content in chapter 10 helps in understanding that through relationships; we acquire specific and general knowledge, break stereotypes and acquire new skills which we all need to call on in the new emerging world that demands ones' responsiveness.

Chapter 11 updated the discussion on conflict styles incorporating Hammer (2005) frame work of intercultural conflict styles. The varied scenarios used throughout the book, bring in a global spectra of the happenings of the world which supports cultural comparisons.

Conclusion

The book presents vital information on intercultural communications and its development. It dwelt on the history of intercultural communications, culture, context and power. The content is superb and of great benefit, more so that the authors have continuously been updating the information with every new edition. Most of the examples too, are really balanced continentally. Suffice to note that UNISA is a global institution and the book exposes readers to real life situations of assimilations, separation and segregation in our integration of culture and communication.

Note:

The first author is a former UNISA student and is now a student at the University of Botswana where this piece of work was part of an assignment. The second author helped with conceptualization and editions.