

Preface to the Third Edition

I have been teaching intercultural communication courses and workshops for almost three decades and have often been disappointed by the literature in the field. This is because textbooks in intercultural communication are rarely populated by people like my students or myself. I have lived in several countries for extended periods, I speak a number of languages, and I have close relationships with people whose backgrounds and trajectories are very different from mine. The same is true of the students in my classes and the people around me, who hail from a wide variety of national, ethnic, linguistic, educational, class and gender backgrounds with many different trajectories, experiences and stories. My disappointment with much of the intercultural communication literature stems from the fact that ‘real people’ in all their diversity hardly ever seem to figure in that literature. It stems from the fact that the object of enquiry often does not seem ‘real’: intercultural communication in real life is embedded in economic, social and cultural globalisation, and transnational mobility resulting from forced or voluntary migration for work, study or tourism. The main challenges of intercultural communication are the linguistic challenges of language learning, the discursive challenges of stereotyping, and the social challenges of inclusion and justice.

The 2011 first edition of this book had therefore been motivated by my desire to introduce the study of intercultural communication in a way that was relevant to and reflective of real life. This motivation continued to be the driving force behind the revised and expanded 2017 second edition; it also underlies this third edition, again thoroughly revised and further expanded.

In our fast-changing world that is ever more characterised by global flows, systems and networks, intercultural communication is a dynamic field, and a lot has changed since the first edition of this book was published in 2011.

Where the revisions for the 2017 second edition focused on taking account of new developments in the field, this third edition comes after fundamental changes in the nature of intercultural communication itself. These fundamental changes have been brought about by the 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic and the ever-accelerating pace of the digitisation of communication. This new edition attempts to take account of these developments. In addition to updating and revising the existing text, a new chapter on intercultural communication in crises (Chapter 9) has been added, which takes stock of intercultural communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, explores the linguistic and cultural emergency response, and illuminates the lessons learned for future crisis communications.

The key pedagogical features of the book, such as chapter objectives, summaries, counterpoints, further reading suggestions and study activities, have been maintained. Counterpoint sections invite readers to go beyond what we know and pursue their own questions in intercultural communication. Activities sections enable readers to extend the content of each chapter through their own research projects. Many of these projects are designed for interaction and are linked to additional resources available through the sociolinguistics portal *Language on the Move* at <https://www.languageonthemove.org>, which is continuously being updated and which since 2024 also includes a podcast.

AIMS

It is the aim of this book to offer a comprehensive, up-to-date, critical introduction to the field of intercultural communication from a discourse-analytic and sociolinguistic perspective. Through increased global flows of people, media and goods, people from different backgrounds and with different trajectories and experiences are now more in contact than ever before. The ubiquity of cultural and linguistic contact, mergers and hybrids has resulted in a strong interest in intercultural communication, both inside and outside academia. This book provides an understanding of intercultural communication as communication where language learning and language proficiency on the one hand and stereotyping and the discursive construction of identity on the other intersect with social inclusion and justice.

The book makes two key contributions to the field. First, with its grounding in discourse analysis and anthropological linguistics, it treats cultural identity, difference and similarity as discursive constructions. Second, with its grounding in sociolinguistics, particularly multilingualism studies, it highlights the use of different languages and/or language

varieties as a central aspect of intercultural communication, and it illuminates the differential prestige of languages and language varieties, and the varying access that speakers have to them.

ORGANISATION

Since the 2011 first edition, this book has aimed to be engaging to a wide readership regardless of whether they have a background in linguistics or not, or whether English is their first language or not. This aim has not changed, and clarity and readability have been further improved following the extensive feedback from teachers, students and general readers I have received over the past fourteen years. The book adopts a recurring structure whereby the book itself, as well as each chapter and subsection, is organised in three steps:

- establishing common ground through a state-of-the-art review of the field;
- critiquing the common ground by posing new questions and exploring new connections; and
- opening up new perspectives by sketching out research projects that students at various levels can undertake.

Each chapter starts by setting out the chapter objectives. The main part of each chapter is arranged around a set of case studies that serve to exemplify the specific issues under examination. Each chapter closes with a summary of the key points, an invitation to critique those key points ('Counterpoint'), suggestions for further reading, and a set of suggested study and research activities.

