

Jackson, J. (Ed.). (2020). *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036210>

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The *Handbook* edited by Jane Jackson has been released in contemporary and transnational times where interculturality-related challenges continue to emerge. Some of these challenges include “the rise in populism, elevated fear of difference, and heightened anti-immigration sentiments” (Jackson, 2020, p. 1) and may, to varying degrees, influence individuals’ lives and well-being. To tackle these issues and foster greater equity, diversity, and inclusion in intercultural communication and research practices, the *Handbook* presents 34 chapters to introduce interdisciplinary studies of language and intercultural communication for senior undergraduate students, graduate students, and scholars from multidisciplinary backgrounds (e.g., language education, anthropology, sociology, business, tourism) who are interested in language and intercultural communication research. Each chapter not only critically assesses field-specific theories and research methods, but also discusses practical recommendations and future directions for conducting research.

The *Handbook* categorizes chapters into five parts. Part I, ‘Foundations of language and intercultural communication studies’, contains five chapters mainly reviewing the (re)conceptualizations of language and intercultural communication research, with a particular focus on historical developments across the globe (Chapter 1), culture and power (Chapter 2), identity and communication (Chapter 3), intercultural competence and citizenship (Chapter 4), and criticality and reflexivity (Chapter 5). Part II, ‘Core themes and issues’, shares a similar theoretical orientation with 14 chapters structured under three themes to discuss the relationships between language and other constructs such as culture, identity, and global citizenship education. Diverging slightly in focus, Part III, ‘Theory into practice: Towards intercultural (communicative) competence and citizenship’, looks at some important practices such as intercultural education for second language teachers (Chapter 20), intercultural responsibility and global critical citizenship (Chapter 21), digitally mediated development of intercultural competence (Chapter 22), equity- and diversity-focused global citizenship education (Chapter 23), and intercultural learning assessment (Chapter 24). Exemplifying interdisciplinary approaches, Part IV, ‘Language and intercultural communication in context’, provides diverse contexts in which intercultural communication takes place, such as international education (Chapters 25, 26, & 27), business education (Chapter 28), workplace (Chapters 29 & 30), health services (Chapter 31), legal discourse (Chapter 32), and tourism (Chapter 33). Finally, Part V, ‘New debates and future directions’, includes a closing chapter (i.e., Chapter 34) synthesizing ongoing debates and highlighting the need to strengthen socially just research and practical efforts so as to promote interculturality across public and private domains.

This edited volume possesses several strengths. An important aspect is that all chapters exhibit a high level of criticality and reflexivity. Chapter 5, for example, explains the interconnectedness between these two notions and increases the visibility

for researchers to engage in the knowing and doing of criticality and reflexivity in their research and beyond. In a similar vein, when discussing how to assess intercultural language learning in Chapter 24, Liddicoat and Scarino (2020) caution critically against the overuse of mainstream scales (e.g., the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) for assessing intercultural understanding and emphasize the need to plan different assessment tasks to comprehensively assess learners' performative, analytical, and reflexive facets of intercultural understanding. From a reader's perspective, these inspiring reads have increased my willingness to learn about non-Eurocentric (e.g., Indigenous) research philosophies and methodologies that have been underrepresented in academia, and reflect on commonly taken-for-granted, imbalanced power relations between researchers and the researched and between standardized and alternative assessment.

A second strength is that the *Handbook* offers global and interdisciplinary research perspectives. To present global viewpoints, several chapters (e.g., Chapters 1, 15, & 21) purposefully introduce language and intercultural communication research practices based in the Global South. Chapter 1, for example, reviews the historical impact of colonialism on academia in South Africa, Latin/South America, and other similar contexts and further reports on academic programs and research efforts now in place for marginalized Indigenous people to be heard. In terms of interdisciplinarity, nine chapters in Part IV provide discipline-specific syntheses of sociocultural factors (e.g., language, culture, power relations) in intercultural communication research. For instance, Chapter 33 explains three key tourism-focused approaches to understanding intercultural communication which prioritize tourism impacts, tourist talks, and tourism discourses, revealing the usefulness of sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis in interdisciplinary tourism studies. These aforementioned chapters show diversity in content and make it possible for readers from different backgrounds to read chapters of their own interest.

Thirdly, each chapter ends with topic-relevant key terms and suggested readings. While terms such as interculturality, language, communication, identity, education, and competence frequently appear across chapters, suggesting the essentialness of these topics, other terms such as linguaculture, third space, Othering, moral relativism, and posthumanism provide deeper insights into concepts that might not be readily understood. As for suggested readings, 134 publications are listed throughout the edited book, and the number of such suggestions per chapter ranges from two to six. To illustrate, near the end of Chapter 32, five seminal publications (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Eades, 2010) are listed and concisely introduced, so that readers are effectively informed before deciding what to read further. In short, these two resources constitute a valuable asset that allows readers to continue learning in greater breadth and depth.

The *Handbook*, however, is not without some perceived weaknesses. A possible weakness in my humble opinion has to do with the thematic organization of the chapters. In particular, there is some overlap between themes covered in Parts II and III (e.g., both focus on intercultural [communicative] competence and intercultural citizenship). A second aspect for improvement may be related to the inclusion and diversity of chapters. Although one of the key aims of the *Handbook* is to showcase

interdisciplinary research, the nine selected chapters in Part IV do not constitute a complete representation of intercultural communication in all settings (Jackson, 2020). Additionally, some chapters in the edited volume understand language and intercultural communication in predominantly linguistic (e.g., verbal, spoken) terms, with only a few exceptions touching upon multimodal online communication (e.g., Chapters 12 & 22) and translanguaging (e.g., Chapter 14) for overcoming the “lingual bias” (Block, 2014, p.56) that favors linguistic but excludes alternative and multimodal ways of meaning making in communicative practices.

To conclude, despite minor imperfections in this volume’s structure and content, the *Handbook* is an addition for students and researchers alike who are interested in language and intercultural communication studies. Other than its reader-friendly instrumental value, the *Handbook* offers culturally diverse and interdisciplinary perspectives that have been historically underrepresented in applied linguistics research. An equally important merit of the *Handbook* is the volume’s consistent emphasis on criticality and reflexivity, which can be usefully applicable to wide-ranging research settings. As Byrd Clark (2020) rightly points out, researchers of language and intercultural communication need to purposefully develop criticality and reflexivity to be able to reject unquestioned acceptance of “imposed singularities by discourses of modernity and Western science” (p. 88), engage with “multiple ways of knowing, being, doing, and engaging” (p. 88), and make well-informed ethical decisions in and outside language and intercultural communication research.

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