

## BOOKS

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**RALUCA POP, *Modelarea competenței comunicative interculturale a studenților. Aplicații pentru formarea inițială la specializarea engleză [Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence. Applications in the Pre-Service Teacher Training Practice for the English Specialization]*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2015, 204 p.**

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*OTHER: Book-review*

*SOCIAL SCIENCES: education, psychology, communication studies*

Raluca Pop, Ph. D., is a Junior Lecturer with the Department of the Didactics of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. In her book *Modelarea competenței comunicative interculturale a studenților. Aplicații pentru formarea inițială la specializarea engleză [Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence. Applications in the Pre-Service Teacher Training Practice for the English Specialization]* she discusses the need to develop pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence during their teacher training practice. The arguments presented in the book are based on relevant current literature and one the author's own experience in teaching English, Norwegian and Swedish at BA level.



The book is structured into two main sections, a *Theoretical Background* and a *Research Project (The development of students' intercultural communicative*

*competence (English major) by using a system of instructional design practice focused on the integration of authentic teaching resources).* The first section is divided into

three chapters and the second comprises another five chapters. These are followed by twelve annexes containing different questionnaires and tasks for students, which are intended to help pre-service teachers to embrace a more culturally reflective teaching model.

The first chapter, *Current Stakes in Teaching Foreign Languages with the Purpose of Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence*, shows the novelty of Pop's research project by

contrasting the details of her research with other projects that have been carried out either in Romania or abroad. This chapter presents solid arguments regarding the need to emphasize the role of culture in the teaching of foreign languages and to integrate the intercultural perspective in the curriculum of teacher training programmes. The increasing mobility, technological advancements and internationalization of education place high demands on both teachers and students, who need to handle the intercultural contact in an effective manner. Therefore, the first chapter describes the intercultural skills, the intercultural attitudes and the intercultural knowledge that any teacher should demonstrate when teaching a foreign language.

*Exploring the Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the English Didactics Seminar*, the second chapter of the book, focuses on some constructivist perspectives in the field of pre-service teacher training practice, introduces new concepts related to the competence of an intercultural speaker and brings into discussion the issues of identity experienced by non-native speaker teachers. This chapter also advocates the use of authentic teaching resources in order to develop the students' and the pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence. Throughout this chapter, the author presents a more in-depth analysis of the intercultural communicative competence as it is reflected in the English Didactics seminar.

*The Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence* is the title of the third chapter, which aims to present some general and contextual challenges in evaluating the intercultural communicative competence. In order to exemplify

these, the author provides useful diagrams and descriptive examples.

The fourth chapter entitled *General Guidelines of the Research* is in fact the introductory chapter for the second section of the book. Its function is to offer a clear and brief overview of the research design. It presents various research methods and instruments, the sample group, the research hypotheses and the variables. Raluca Pop has used for her *intergroup experimental design* different research instruments: questionnaires, an interview guide, a focus group, a case study and an observation grid. In addition, having in mind the knowledge, skills and attitudes a foreign language teacher needs to demonstrate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century society, the author has formulated the following research hypothesis: "the use by the students in the second year of study (English specialization) of authentic teaching resources when designing teaching activities would contribute significantly to the development of their intercultural communicative competence in a formal context".

The fifth chapter, *The Pre-experimental Stage*, aims to identify pre-service teachers' knowledge of various concepts and their willingness to integrate an intercultural perspective in the teaching of English. In order to collect relevant information for her research the author used questionnaires that were interpreted either statistically or qualitatively.

The next step in Pop's research refers to the *Formative experiment* stage. In this chapter the author made use of her professional teaching experience and elaborated five formative teaching activities that were integrated in the English Didactics seminar.

The seventh chapter, *The Post-experimental Stage*, illustrates the impact

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of the formative teaching activities on the pre-service teachers' development of the three components of intercultural communicative competence: knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this chapter Raluca Pop analyses and interprets the data collected during the five formative teaching activities and the data from the case study, the focus group and other three questionnaires.

The last chapter presents the conclusions of the research and the impact of the formative teaching activities on developing pre-service teachers' intercultural skills, attitudes and knowledge. Other details are provided regarding the author's theoretical contribution to the research that was conducted. The last section of this chapter offers educational recommendations that constitute possible solutions for anchoring the pre-service teacher training programs in the current trends of teaching foreign languages and developing the intercultural communicative competence.

Raluca Pop's book provides useful information that facilitates the reader's understanding of the whole process of developing intercultural communicative competence. In addition, it emphasizes the need to integrate the intercultural communicative competence within the teaching of the four skills: listening, writing, reading and speaking. An impressive

number of tables and diagrams present the content of the book in a dynamic perspective. The author points out that learning a foreign language entails more than just learning its grammar rules or vocabulary. The teachers and the learners alike have to go beyond these aspects and try to become effective communicators when faced with an intercultural encounter.

In order to underline the strong relationship between culture and the process of learning a foreign language, the author points out that every teacher should use a set of *authentic teaching materials* such as poems, photos, videos, films, maps, electronic resources in order to provide learners with the opportunity to use the target language in concrete and real everyday situations. Overall, Raluca Pop's book brings a touch of novelty to the field of English Didactics taught with a view to enabling pre-service teachers to develop their intercultural communicative competence. The result of her laborious, attentive and pragmatic research, supported by an impressive bibliography in the field of teaching English, is an excellent book, *Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence. Applications in the Pre-Service Teacher Training Practice for the English Specialization*.

**RALUCA-DANIELA RĂDUȚ**  
raluca\_daniela\_radut@yahoo.com