

○ **J. LEIGH AND E. LOO (EDITORS), *OUTER LIMITS: A READER IN COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES***

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As announced by its title, this volume contains fifteen essays in the broad area of communication which have been edited by two academics working in very distant contexts: James Leigh, from the higher education institution Intercollege in Cyprus, and Eric Loo, from the Faculty of Creative Arts at Wollongong University. Indeed it is a main feature of the volume that it brings together contributions from both academics and non academics operating in very different geographical (e.g. Asia, Australia, USA, UK) and cultural (universities as well as the business sector) settings, and who are involved in a wide range of fields. It is not surprising, therefore, that the chapters are quite different in content and approach, some being more theoretical, others more empirical, although they are all loosely connected by their focus on intercultural issues. A further commonality is the provision in most essays of activities or study questions which can be useful in teaching or in cross-cultural training. For its breadth of topics, as specified by the editors, the volume targets undergraduate and postgraduate students in such diverse courses as international business and communication, journalism, cultural studies and the social sciences.

In the introductory chapter the scene is set by one of the editors, James Leigh, who looks at language and behaviour at the universal and local (or 'parochial') level, and provides case studies of effective intercultural communication. The following chapters fall into the broad areas of language, culture and media studies, or deal with professional issues.

Of more interest to ARAL readers may be the articles focusing on linguistic issues, by Economidou-Kogetsidis and Michailidis, both from Cyprus, and by Kohonen, based on her doctoral thesis completed in the UK. Economidou-Kogetsidis analyses the speech act of request as performed in their first language by Greek and British English native speakers, and then in English by Greek learners. The higher degree of directness among the latter compared to English native speakers is attributed to the greater directness in their first language, thus confirming findings from other studies concerning similar differences between for example, Australian English and Argentinian Spanish speakers (as in the classic Blum-Kulka 1989). The acculturative stress experienced by international students in Cyprus universities is the topic of Michailidis' chapter, who finds that, interestingly, contrary to previous research, men experience more stress than women. Kohonen

explores turn taking in French conversation, focusing on overlapping talk and showing that her category of ‘interruption’ is much less frequent compared with more cooperative forms of overlapping. Dealing with broader educational and language policy issues, Sripathy presents an interesting discussion of the limitations of imported pedagogic approaches to literacy in teaching English in Singapore, and advocates a cross-cultural perspective on literacy; and Papadima-Sophocleous, from Cyprus, argues for the inclusion of peace education in second language learning, bringing examples from language teaching materials specifically developed for Australian high school students.

The contributions on cultural issues come from very different geographical contexts. Focusing on the language-culture relationship, the joint article by Aw, from the USA, Kam, from Macau, and Tan, from Singapore, provides an in-depth account of the Chinese notion of *guanxi*, broadly translated in English as ‘relation’ or ‘relationship’, exploring the complex role and the different connotations that *guanxi* can take in public relations in Singapore’s Chinese business community. Sharifian examines the notion of ‘cultural schema’ as conceptual structures developing at the cultural level of cognition within a cultural group, and, bringing examples from Persian-English encounters, shows how lack of familiarity with particular schemas may lead to miscommunication. Mirbagheri, from Cyprus, provides a reflection upon current relations between Islamic countries and the West, advocating greater dialogue between the two as a way to circumvent reciprocal cultural threats.

Two chapters deal with issues in professional contexts. In the field of public health Jeeawody, who works in Australia in the area of mental health, contributes a theoretical piece which argues for the need of a ‘therapeutic self’ for public health service practitioners working in multicultural societies in order to be able to better meet the needs of individual clients. Moving to the business area, Mark Loo examines in detail the differences in negotiation approaches by the three main groups living in Malaysia, the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians, based on the findings of a research project carried out with 600 different business practitioners.

Of particular interest is the group of essays in media studies, which open with the work by Berggreen, from Colorado, and Lutsyik, from Auckland, who explore in detail the distorted representation of minority groups in three popular films by Disney (*Pocahontas*, *Aladdin* and *Mulan*) and report on the negative comments expressed in their interviews by members of the minority groups concerned. The two authors argue for the need to maintain cultural integrity and historical accuracy in the films and to make young people aware of hidden messages. Along similar lines, Meadows, from Brisbane, gives a very insightful discussion of the representation of Indigenous people in Australian

media from colonial to present times. He denounces the overall absence of Indigenous voices in mainstream media and suggests that media practices in Australia should change, shifting to a more ethnographic approach where journalists learn from people rather than study them. Still connected to media studies is the chapter by Lee, from Hong Kong, who reports on a quantitative study of stereotypes of the Japanese and South Koreans held by people in Hong Kong, and points to the impact of media, together with personal experiences, contacts and historical events, as possible sources of stereotypes about others. This section, as well as the whole volume, concludes with a thought provoking chapter by the editor Eric Loo, in which he exposes the lack of cultural sensitivity in Australian mainstream media and advocates instruction in cross-cultural reporting in tertiary courses in journalism, bringing examples of such training from his own teaching. Central to the discussion is his argument that journalists operating in a multicultural society need to have a diversity of worldviews and adopt a community-oriented approach in order to be able to provide readers with a contextual understanding of the cross-cultural issues arising in a multicultural society.

As is clear from this account, the rich and varied content of this volume makes it an interesting publication. The editors are certainly to be commended for putting together such diverse contributions which can appeal to readers keen to learn about cross-cultural issues in fields that are outside their immediate concern.

It must be said however that overall this book would have benefited from better editing, in terms of both content and form. The quality of the contributions varies a great deal, with excellent essays next to essays that are rather repetitive, excessively abstract, or insufficiently researched. Unfortunately the volume is also littered with omissions (e.g. missing references), inaccuracies (e.g. inconsistencies in authors' affiliation in the chapter and in the final notes) and typographical errors.

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REFERENCES

- Blum-Kulka, S. 1989. 'Playing it safe: The role of conventionality in indirectness'. In *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, edited by Blum-Kulka, S.; House, J.; Kasper, G. Norwood (New Jersey): Ablex.