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## *English across Cultures; Cultures across English: A Reader in Cross-cultural Communication*

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ENGLISH ACROSS CULTURES; CULTURES ACROSS ENGLISH: A READER IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION. Ofelia García and Ricardo Otheguy, Eds. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1989. Number 53 in *Contributions to the Sociology of Language*, Joshua Fishman, Series Editor. Pp. xvi + 492. Deutsche marks: 178.

*English across Cultures; Cultures across English* is a collection of twenty-two articles with a single overriding theme: the spread of English has resulted in interactions between interlocutors who share the same language (as a native, foreign, second or newly indigenized language) but who often do not share cultural or communicative norms. Such interactions are often problematic. To explore the problems that arise in communication between such speakers, Garcia and Otheguy have assembled a volume of papers by authors of many different nationalities, with a focus on language situations as diverse as the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the Caribbean, India, and several areas of Africa, the Pacific, and the Far East.

A number of articles in the book are especially relevant to teachers of ESL/EFL, including papers dealing specifically with classroom interaction by Saviile-Troike and Kleifgen ("Culture and

language in classroom communication"), Cazden ("English for academic purposes: a hidden curriculum in ways of speaking"), Malcolm ("Invisible culture in the classroom: minority pupils and the principle of adaptation"), and those dealing with larger societal concerns and their relationship to educational contexts, such as the papers by Fernando ("English as problem and resource in Sri Lankan universities"), Christie ("Questions of standards and intraregional differences in Caribbean examinations") and Edwards ("Patois and the politics of protest: Black English in British classrooms").

Other articles do not deal directly with classroom teaching but are of inherent interest to teachers and anyone concerned with the comparative study of culture. In an interesting article dealing with routine speech formulas in Singapore ("Cultural congruence and conflict in the acquisition of formulae in a second language"), Kuiper and Lin argue that although many people in Singapore are bilingual, having grown up speaking both Singapore English and Singapore Hokkien, they are not bicultural, because their two languages code essentially the same Singapore Chinese culture. John Algeo, a well-known dialectologist, presents a taxonomy of British-American lexical differences which may not be of direct relevance to most teachers of ESL/EFL but which is interesting on its own merits to all who



simply enjoy the English language. Jeff Verschueren presents an analysis of international diplomatic misunderstandings that could have been averted had those who spoke English realized that speaking the same language does not always mean saying the same thing.

A major shortcoming of the book is the lack of a satisfactory framework for organizing the articles into a coherent framework. The organization presented by the editors (four sections with very long and very similar sounding titles) is not well motivated, and at least half of the articles could have been assigned to a section other than the one they are located in. Several other devices for organizing material are easily imaginable, for example by geography (Europe, Asia, etc.), by interlocutor types (native-native,

native-nonnative, or nonnative-nonnative interaction) or by situational domains (classroom interaction, business transactions, workplace relations, politics and diplomacy, translation, etc.). Not all the articles are of equal quality, and the price of the book, 178 Deutsche marks (approx. U.S. \$118), is too high to recommend the book to teachers for personal purchase. This volume should be part of every library's reference collection, however, and should be consulted by scholars of language and culture and those seeking cultural information concerning areas of the world of particular personal interest.

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