This book is a revisited version of the very influential book published in 1997 (*Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*). During the 24 years that have passed since then, the importance of communication and cooperation across the world has become ever more evident. Educational authorities, materials developers and teachers worldwide need tools for ensuring that learners – children, young people and adults – develop the necessary competences in intercultural communication: intercultural communicative competence. The present book is such a tool, and it is both highly useful and full of reflections.

For those who know the 1997 book, I can say that the core models have not changed in their structure: the well-known model of the five components of intercultural competence and the full model of the combination/integration of communicative and intercultural competence. What is new is a revised definition of some of the components and the introduction of a wealth of extra reflections and explanations, notes and codas which make clear how the models and the suggested implementations should be understood in the light of the complexities of the world today and of advances in the field of language and intercultural education. Furthermore, some misunderstandings of the original text are dealt with and clarified.

The focus in the book is on intercultural communicative competence in relation to language teaching, particularly foreign language teaching. Thus, the focus is on learners’ ability to relate to and communicate with people who speak a different language and live in a different country. However, as Michael Byram emphasises, most countries are multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual, and therefore foreign language teaching should also enable learners to relate to and communicate with people in their own country. This means that, although the practical examples in the book mainly relate to the field of foreign language teaching, the abstract models, and to some extent the detailed lists of objectives and methods of assessment, may be used in connection with all kinds of language teaching, including second language teaching (e.g. for immigrants) and in many different contexts. The importance of institutional and geopolitical contexts for the implementation of the framework is frequently underscored in the book.
Michael Byram occupies a central position in the field of language and intercultural education, and his concept of intercultural communicative competence has influenced curricula and teacher education in many parts of the world. Underlying this concept is a complex view of the language learner, including three interconnected facets:

- a person with an open mind;
- a person with the curiosity and courage of the ethnographer;
- a person with the engagement and responsibility of the citizen.

These three facets (or ideals) have always been present in his work (including the 1997 book), but the idea of the language learner as an engaged and responsible citizen has been emphasised more and more strongly throughout the years.

The first facet is very basic and rests on the conviction that learning a language is not just learning a set of skills but is an opportunity to develop as a person (cf. the German concept of *Bildung*). Teaching should be designed to offer learners opportunities to challenge their views of the target language and its users, to become aware of and reflect on possible stereotypes and prejudices concerning target-language countries and peoples and, if possible, to replace or supplement them with more valid knowledge, personal experiences and intercultural interaction in the target language.

The second facet derives from Michael Byram’s early inspiration from social anthropology and ethnographic practice: the language learner could be imagined as a person who is – or prepares to be – a kind of ethnographer. He or she observes people’s practices in a target-language community, tries to learn their language, participates in everyday life, interprets narratives and documents, reflects on norms, beliefs and values, and in the process learns something about him- or herself.

The third facet draws on the field of citizenship education – across subjects and including language teaching. In this perspective, the language learner is not only seen as a person with the curiosity and courage of the ethnographer but as an engaged and responsible citizen, in the classroom as well as in life after school. Learning a language is an opportunity to develop as a citizen with intercultural communicative competence, taking the vantage point of ‘the other’ to analyse one’s own country and people, with a view to changing it for the better. This was an important idea in the 1997 book since the central component of the intercultural competence model was ‘critical cultural awareness’. However, this part has been developed much more in the present book as a result of Byram’s extensive work with intercultural citizenship in the intervening years, including his contributions to the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2018).

The present book, then, takes intercultural competence in a more politically-oriented direction and with an emphasis on criticality.
I welcome this very much, and am reminded of Michael Byram’s and my collaboration in the 1990s on a joint English-Danish project on ‘Language Teachers’ Identity in the Process of European Integration’ (published as Byram & Risager: Language Teachers, Politics and Cultures, Multilingual Matters, 1999). That project had a clear political dimension as it investigated language teachers in Denmark and England with regard to their views of Europe and European integration, and how this was related to their actual teaching of the target languages (a project which is highly interesting to revisit today in the light of Brexit and related movements in other countries in the EU).

In his comments on models and implementations, Michael Byram mentions many different issues of the contemporary world and also warns against Eurocentrism. Indeed, the present book is part of a movement towards greater awareness of the cultural content of language education in terms of the problems and issues that are taken up, analysed with a critical mind and perhaps selected for active engagement inside and outside the school. Our world is packed with serious problems: climate change, inequality, poverty, racism, sexism, hunger, war, disease, etc. – problems that require collaboration across borders and across languages. Language subjects have a special role to play in the education of the global citizen with intercultural communicative competence. And with respect to Michael Byram’s own work, one can truly say that he has walked-the-talk, since collaboration across borders and across languages has always been his hallmark.

The book comes out in a time of growing global awareness of our world as the home of a multitude of different voices, interests and languages. Through social media and other channels, many people get their information about what is going on in other parts of the world and become aware of shared interests and visions. The recent worldwide mobilisations of not least young people in relation to global issues – e.g. Prides, the Occupy movement, Pussyhat Women’s March, School strike for climate, Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter, etc. – suggest that this is the time to acknowledge the importance of intercultural communicative competence for all, not just for travelling but for understanding, discussing and finding new ways of transnational collaboration and change.

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Roskilde
June 2020