

## Preface

This edited collection of theoretical papers, readings and students' projects entitled *Developing Intercultural Competence through English: Focus on Ukrainian and Polish Cultures*, in short DICE, is the outcome of a joint innovative project of two English University Departments: the English Philology Department of the Jagiellonian University (JU) in Kraków, Poland, and the English Philology Department of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (VSPNU) in Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislav, Stanislavov), Ukraine. The intended readers of the book are teachers and students of English, as well as anyone interested in intercultural competence and ways of developing it, in particular readers interested in the Ukrainian and Polish cultures.

The project aims at improving communicative competence in English as an international language and raising intercultural awareness among Ukrainian and Polish students of English. Our goal is to enable students of English in our countries, the population of which has greatly expanded since English has been recognized by educational authorities as a European *lingua franca*, to familiarize themselves with each other, with some aspects of our cultures, as well as with some contemporary social problems in our countries.

We also expect that our project and this volume as its outcome would be of interest to all those readers in other countries who because of their origin, field of studies or acquired taste would like to learn more about Ukrainian and Polish cultures. What may be interesting to those intended readers in countries other than Poland and Ukraine are different approaches to aspects of culture in Ukraine and in Poland.

The project started out of Polish initiative in 2009 and was readily taken up by the Ukrainian partners. Staff members of the English Philology Department of VSPNU agreed to write and compile a collection of texts in English with accompanying intercultural tasks. Since staff members of the English Philology Department of JU were less willing to write and select texts, a group of Jagiellonian University graduate students were encouraged to conduct intercultural projects in cooperation with MA students from the English Philology Department of VSPNU.

DICE is an innovative project in at least two ways. First, it is an intercultural Polish and Ukrainian project but the language it is written in is English. We believe that the medium of English as a language of international communication will make our students perceive their own and their neighbours' cultures in an intercultural perspective and, as a result, will contribute to raising their intercultural awareness and tolerance. All of us, except some of our international students, are users of

English as an Additional Language, and our daily professional activities are done in English. Consequently, we would also like to present to the wider public what we do in our local worlds.

Secondly, in consequence of the initial decisions, our text formats are varied. Chapters in Part I, *Theory and Application* (Chapters 1–4), give the prospective readers background knowledge on intercultural communication and intercultural competence development. Part II, *Practice* (Chapters 5–13), includes *Readings in Ukrainian Culture*, written and compiled by Ukrainian academic teachers (Chapters 5–9) and *Projects in Polish Culture*, written by Polish and international graduate students (Chapters 10–13).

This volume can be viewed as providing a snapshot of various aspects of life in both countries. Albeit subjective, the book reflects the discrete perspectives of the individual authors as it provides the reader with an overview of the themes relevant to the citizens of Ukraine and Poland living at the beginning of the 21st century. The collection of these chapters bears testimony to the historical moment captured in the texts, topics and issues found on the pages of this volume.

Also, the particular juxtaposition of the nations and their cultures offered here opens a new perspective of understanding Ukrainian and Polish mindsets. What is more, it may encourage readers to engage in conscious reflection on the aspects of their own, as well as other cultures. It also provides readers of Ukrainian, Polish, and possibly other nationalities, with a particular insight into their own and other traditions. Moreover, reflections stimulated by the texts which form the current volume might facilitate a better understanding and balanced evaluation of the future in which cross-cultural and cross-national encounters will require awareness of one's own and other cultural heritages.

Let us outline the book content. Part I, *Theory and Application*, includes four chapters, in which the first two focus on *intercultural communication* and the other two on *intercultural competence*.

Yakiv Bystrov and Anastasiya Yermolenko (VSPNU) in Chapter One introduce the main theoretical approaches to intercultural communication as well as more practical methods to study it. The readers are given the basic concepts first.

Chapter Two by Anna Nizegorodcew (JU) focuses on English as a language of intercultural communication. The chapter deals with the role of English in a multicultural world and the relationship between language and culture. In the concluding part, the author claims that one of the functions English plays in the contemporary world is to make one's own culture familiar to other English language users.

Ewa Bandura (JU) in Chapter Three outlines the conditions necessary for the development of intercultural competence: cultural self-awareness and knowledge. Further she addresses the question of integrating an intercultural approach with foreign language teaching and provides examples of activities stimulating intercultural communication.

Chapter Four by Marcin Kleban (JU) provides a theoretical background to the use of information and communication technology (ICT), as well as illustrates its strengths and limitations. In the final subchapter the author describes the Polish-Ukrainian ICT project, which was part of the DICE Project, leading to the texts included in Chapters 10–13 (*Projects in Polish Culture*) of this volume.

Part II, *Practice*, is divided into five chapters written by the authors from Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (*Readings in Ukrainian Culture*) and four chapters written by the authors from the Jagiellonian University (*Projects in Polish Culture*).

In Chapter Five, *Interpreting Fiction*, Olga Kulchytska and Yakiv Bystrov (VSPNU) present two different examples of literary genres: a Ukrainian folk tale and the contemporary postmodernist novel by Yuri Andrukhovych – *Perverzion*. Both literary pieces are accompanied by intercultural questions and tasks based on Ukrainian students' comments.

The authors of Chapter Six, Tetyana Pan'kova and Iryna Pavlyuk (VSPNU), exemplify *Customs and Traditions* divided into two sections: *Rites and Beliefs* and *Folk Arts* with a description of a traditional Ukrainian wedding, a description of Ivan Kupala Day and a text on Ukrainian embroidery and metalwork. The texts are accompanied by questions and tasks.

Chapter Seven, *Cultural Stereotypes and Lifestyle*, by Lesya Ikalyuk and Anastasiya Yermolenko (VSPNU) focuses on aspects of life in contemporary Ukraine. The authors present texts on *Gender Roles* and *Student Life* accompanied, as in the previous chapters, by questions and tasks.

Chapter Eight, *Tourism and Migration in Ukraine*, compiled by Oksana Petryna and Tetyana Skibitska (VSPNU), presents two different aspects of human mobility, recreational mobility and forced mobility, in the first part – *Tourism Trends in Ukraine*, in the second one – *Caught Between East and West: Ukraine Struggles with its Migration Policy* and *Loving and Leaving My Homeland*. Each text is accompanied by questions and tasks.

Chapter Nine, written by Nataliya Telegina and Ella Mintsyts (VSPNU), *A Glimpse of the Latest Developments in Social Life*, includes the texts with questions and tasks: *Adopting European Standards in Education* and *Changes in Cultural Life*.

Chapters Ten to Thirteen, written by Jagiellonian University MA students, are the projects completed as follow-up to the ICT mediated seminar described in Chapter Four, partly as answers to Ukrainian students' questions. Both the Ukrainian students' questions and the Polish and international students' answers give evidence of their awareness of moral, religious and racial problems. Each project is accompanied by questions.

In Chapter Ten, *Polish people's attitudes towards religion*, Roy Jones (JU), a student from Ireland, analyses Polish religious beliefs and attitudes towards other religions.

In Chapter Eleven, *Is Poland an anti-Semitic country?*, Agnieszka Krzykowska (JU), a Polish student, discusses Polish attitudes towards Jews.

Chapter Twelve, *Polish Standards of Politeness*, is based on a team study on standards of politeness in Poland. Its authors are three Polish students, Ewa Bieta, Katarzyna Biegaj and Marta Pająk (JU).

Finally, Chapter Thirteen, *Are Polish Students Dishonest?*, also based on team research, authored by Sarah Stinnisen, a Canadian student, Alexandra Balant, an American student, and two Polish students, Natalia Mól and Justyna Kula (JU), addresses the title question.

We sincerely believe that this volume has fulfilled at least some of our wishes to provide our students with interesting, varied and useful intercultural texts and tasks. It is our hope that our readers, both in Ukraine and in Poland, or elsewhere, will view their cultures as unexhausted sources of inspiration in intercultural contacts. We also perceive a positive role of English as a *lingua franca* in bridging the gaps of mutual prejudices and shedding more light on less known cultures.

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*Anna Nižegorodcew*

*Yakiv Bystrov*

*Marcin Kleban*