

The key contribution of Ingrid Piller's book, in my view, is in the fact that it changes the terms of engagement in discussion of intercultural communication (IC), a subject that is commonly trivialized and oversimplified, and offers a much more nuanced and complex treatment of culture as an ideological construct, created and recreated through discursive practices, and of language as a commodity that could be marketed and sold. This added complexity does not result in a denser prose – Piller's treatment of the subject is engaging, lively and down-to-earth. Yet this compelling treatment is not without its cost, for textbooks often require their authors to sacrifice complexity for the sake of brevity, clarity, or readability. Piller's choices raise interesting questions regarding our communication with general audiences, including our own students.

These choices begin with foundational concepts. While the book makes a compelling argument that both 'culture' and IC are discursive constructs, the same argument regarding 'language' is much more muted. The differential treatment of 'culture' and 'language' is particularly visible in Chapter 10, where 'languages' are first presented as 'truncated repertoires' rather than 'clearly bounded autonomous systems' (p. 145) yet then are discussed as 'English', 'Japanese', 'German' or 'Swiss German'. This inconsistency reflects the tension experienced by any author who has ever tried to maintain important theoretical distinctions while speaking in ways that are comprehensible and relevant to larger audiences. But can we have our cake and eat it too? The discrepancy between linguists' understanding of 'languages' as fuzzy concepts, discursive constructs, artificial products of standardization etc. and lay people's understandings shaped by institutionalized practices creates a dilemma for the field: How do we talk about languages in ways that are consistent with the standards of our own field and yet are accessible, meaningful, and relevant to the lay audience? Can – and should – we operationalize 'language proficiency' and 'language choice' while simultaneously acknowledging that 'languages' and 'proficiencies' are discursive constructs and a matter of performance and perception? Do our theoretical assumptions undermine our best intentions?

Another tension in the chapter involves the relationship between 'language' and 'culture'. Highlighting the importance of language choice – frequently rendered invisible in traditional IC literature – Piller makes an important step towards bringing 'language' back into the study of IC. But how do we go about distinguishing between 'language problems' from 'cultural problems' (p. 157) in ways that do not signal to our students that the two are independent of each other? And how do we go about moving to the next level of complexity, where we acknowledge that neither construct is really that simple and that courtroom communication, for instance, requires domain expertise, rather than general language proficiency, or general cultural knowledge?

In both her textbook and on her website, *Language on the Move*, Ingrid Piller has made important advances in translating and popularizing cutting-edge sociolinguistic research. I deeply believe that there is a lot to be learned from looking closely at the choices she made.

Aneta Pavlenko,
Temple University