

Fremdsprachenunterricht: Ökologische Perspektiven

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Summary

This paper looks into second language socialization processes in intercultural communication contexts and tries to find its way through language and culture barriers with the help of an *ecological* approach to language data. These theoretical observations promote the notion of *symbolic competence* (Kramersch/Whiteside 2008) as an update of the traditional components of the *communicative competence* destined for language users in multilingual environments. Based on Kramersch's (2008) observations, that *symbolic competence* might be developed in a micro level, that is through foreign language education in institutional contexts, the paper takes the matter further and discusses *symbolic competence* in the field of oral proficiency testing. In order to achieve this goal the paper examines language data in intercultural testing contexts, using the principles of discourse analysis. This body of research leads to the categorization of manifestations of the interviewer's *symbolic competence* in two components: features of accommodation and features of control. The paper then comes to the conclusion that ratings of oral proficiency competence may be subject to both pragmatic and cultural phenomena.