LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN CONTEXT

Robert Godwin-Jones
Virginia Commonwealth University

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Robert Godwin-Jones

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Preface

In teaching intercultural communication in the past, I have used a standard North American textbook, Neuliep's *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach* (2012). At that time, a recent comment on amazon.com about this textbook was as follows:

> **A Jesus stomping good time!**
> By Gigs
>
> *I was looking for a book about stomping on Jesus, man this one really fit the bill. Sure, there are other books about stomping on Jesus, but this is really the authority on the matter. I was a little disappointed that there wasn't more coverage of stomping on Buddha, considering that the title of this book is "Intercultural Communication" so it loses one star for that.*

As a review of a commercial textbook, this is unusual; its tone, however, rich with sarcasm, reflects frequent language use on the Internet when a writer feels strongly about a topic. This is, in fact, one of many reviews posted on the textbook in response to media reports about a professor in Florida carrying out a suggested class activity in which students were asked to write "Jesus" on a slip of paper, step on it, and then discuss with classmates their reactions. The expectation in designing the activity is that most students will not step on the paper. What the exercise was intended to reveal to students was how central to many people's core values religion is and what power there is in symbolic actions. The public reaction in the US, as seen in the Amazon reviews was very different, namely that this was a denigration of Christianity. The episode is informative in a couple of ways:

- *It dramatizes how volatile and emotion-laden issues related to religious beliefs or spiritual views can be*, topics that inevitably arise in discussing communication across cultures. There are often knee-jerk reactions to perceived slights to religious beliefs. This is by no means limited to Christians, as the virulent reaction to Mohammed cartoons from Denmark in 2010 demonstrated. When we perceive our core values to be under attack, we don't reason or look to see in what context the incident occurred. This can quickly lead to misunderstandings and conflict, making any kind of reasoned communication unlikely.

Flag burning: A powerful symbolic act

In the United States there has been at times quite a bit of controversy over whether it is okay to burn the U.S. American flag… Many of the problems related to this controversy are due to the symbolic nature of what is done when a flag is burned. The flag represents the United States and the principles upon which the United States as a political entity is based. Thus, burning the flag, whether it is in the U.S. or in Iran, is not simply destroying a piece of cloth. It is making a statement about a way of life. Some argue that the burning itself is symbolic of the freedoms that exist in the United States and others feel that the burning represents an effort to destroy those freedoms. Thus, symbolic acts are open to great differences of interpretation.

-Hall, Covarrubias & Kirschbaum, 2017, p.

- *It demonstrates the power of symbols.* The name of Jesus written on a slip of paper is not in itself a religious document or statement of faith – rather it evokes the beliefs associated with that name. Symbols can have profound cultural significance. National flags, for example, may carry strong emotional power, so that defacing, burning, or disrespecting a flag may be taken as a rejection of the values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with that particular national culture (see sidebar). Language itself is a system made up of symbols (words point to meanings) and is a central mechanism for conveying elements of a culture.
- *It points to the misperception that intercultural communication competence is about giving up personal beliefs and values.* This is absolutely not the case. In fact, the exercise described above was designed to make students aware of the emotional intensity of their own religious beliefs. This can help build self-awareness as well as an appreciation of the fact that others' beliefs and values may be as crucially important in their lives. It can be safely assumed that in inter-religious groups, the reaction would be similar to the one cited above if students were asked to write down the word they used to refer to the God they worshipped as compared to 'Jesus'.
- *It illustrates how rapidly an event can go viral on the Internet.* Almost all comments on the incident echoed those of the commenter above. The kind of groupthink in evidence here is a common phenomenon on the Internet, which can sometimes function as a repeating amplifier, with the tendency for many people to interpret events or news in a way that confirms already-held beliefs.

The reaction to the suggested "step on Jesus" exercise illustrates something else, the importance of context in understanding and interpreting human actions and speech. The context in this case is a formal classroom environment in which an academic experiment is being carried out, designed as a learning and self-awareness experience. The Amazon reviews ignored this context,

instead viewing the incident as a direct attack on Christianity. This points to the fact that the very same words used or identical behaviors performed can have very different meanings and outcomes depending on when, where, and how they take place. Using slang, for example, is fine if among friends or family but may be unacceptable at work or in the classroom. Propping one's feet up to relax may be common in the US but might result in a reprimand if done on a German train (author's personal experience), or even be perceived as a personal insult in an Arab setting, should the soles of the shoes be facing out. This text takes a contextual approach to intercultural communication, meaning that the environments — physical, cultural, local, electronic, etc. — will be seen as key elements in considering the dynamics and significance of human encounters. That involves looking in all its complexity at the intersection of the individual(s) and the conversational context. Rather than trying to understand outcomes based on a person's background or status, interactions instead will be analyzed to understand their myriad dynamics. The goal is not to predict behaviors and outcomes but to describe and understand.

Neuliep's textbook (latest version 2017) is representative of many used in the US, in that it focuses on intercultural communication from the perspective of communication studies (see also Jandt, 2017; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2015; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Increasingly in recent years – and particularly outside the US – introductory textbooks tend to orient more towards applied linguistics with a greater emphasis on the role of language (Hua, 2014; Jackson, 2014: Piller, 2017). That includes texts emphsaizing conversation analysis (McConachy, 2017) and critical discourse analysis (Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2011). We are also seeing textbooks which embrace critical approaches to intercultural communication (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2017; Martin & Nakayama, 2018), social constructivist approaches (Kurylo, 2012), peace-building (Remland, Jones, Foeman, & Arévalo), and social justice (Sorrells, 2015). This textbook draws on concepts from all these approaches, referencing recent research in the field as broadly as possible. Those concepts include:

- *Complexity theory*. Originating from chaos theory and used initially in the natural sciences, complexity theory "sees the world as complex to the extent that it consists of always-changing, unstable and dynamic systems" (Ang, 2011, p. 781). We shall see that it is particularly helpful in gaining hold of the slippery concept of "culture," given its variety of sources, influences, and manifestations. It is also useful in untangling the fluid and complex dynamics of personal identity formation today (Godwin-Jones, 2018).
- *Cultural intelligence*, initially developed within Business Management Studies (Earley & Ang, 2003). This concept can be helpful in understanding the complexity of our globalized world through "strategic simplification", breaking down interactional difficulties based on contextual framing.
- *Critical realism.* The "critical turn" in social science research has led researchers in critical discourse analysis to look at how power and privilege inform and shape conversational dynamics (Gee, 2004; Van Dijk, 1993). The emergent outcomes, as they are affected by class, gender, place, and wealth are central concerns with scholars – most associated with sociology – using critical realism (Collier, 1994).
- *Global citizenship*. The concern with the social forces shaping discourses and the need not only to learn, but also to act point to the growing recognition within the field of second language acquisition that social justice needs to be an ultimate goal in intercultural communication, leading to a sense of global responsibility (Byram, Golubeva, Hui, & Wagner, 2017).

Common to these approaches is the prominence of context, leading to a view of human interactions as dynamic and changeable, given the complexity of language and culture, as human agents interact with their environments. This aligns with the principal approach used in this textbook, which is broadly ecological, looking at the multiple factors of individuality and context (including but not limited to national origin) that influence intercultural communication.

There is an attempt throughout the text to incorporate views on intercultural communication from a geographically diverse array of scholars, supplementing the author's North American perspective. How intercultural communication is envisioned as a discipline varies considerably from country to country. In many cases, intercultural communication is associated with professional areas such as business, education, healthcare, or hospitality services. These are all areas in which communication with those who represent different cultures and languages is crucially important, and where encounters between those representing different cultures is increasingly the norm. While in the US, intercultural communication is often associated with communication studies, in Europe and Australia, it is commonly seen as a field within applied linguistics. This text strives to incorporate findings and perspectives from many different approaches, but considers language, broadly conceived, as central to intercultural communication, and thus different dimensions of language use are woven into each unit. This is in contrast to most IC textbooks in which "language" is the topic in one of 10 or 12 chapters. Piller (2007) points out that surprising fact (from the perspective of linguists) "as if language and languages were a negligible or at best minor aspect of communication" (p. 215).

The text introduces some of the key concepts in intercultural communication as traditionally presented in (North American) courses and textbooks, namely the study of differences between cultures, as represented in the works and theories of Edward Hall (1959) and Geert Hofstede (1980). The perspective presented here is that, despite changes brought on by globalization, demographic shifts, and Internet communication, there still exist identifiable cultural characteristics associated with nation-states and particular social groups. However, the default norms and behaviors derived from being part of a national culture in no way determine an individual's cultural and personal identity, which increasingly is complex, derived from many different sources. Moreover, individuals may resist adopting certain values of the culture in which they were raised or they may be members of ethnic or regional groups which hold different values and exhibit contrasting behaviors from the majority. While distinctions such as individualism versus collectivism can be helpful in some contexts, they are less useful in describing or predicting individual behavior. National (or ethnic) characteristics and comparisons oversimplify the increasingly complex and fluid nature of identity formation today.

As the title of this text implies, the operating assumption throughout is that language and culture are inseparable and need to be understood contextually. Traditionally, culture and language have been treated as monolithic entities, comprised of discrete sets of knowledge and skills, which are enacted by an individual. As in other fields within the humanities and social sciences, that view has changed significantly in recent decades, with the so-called "social turn" in a variety of disciplines (Hawkins, 2013, pp. 1-2; Block, 2007, p. 31). Culture and language are increasingly seen from socially situated perspectives. That emphasis is maintained here, with an exploration of how people use language (and other means) to create, maintain, and change identities. Culture is treated as socially constructed, not as a set of fixed values and behaviors. Although some attention is paid to the mechanics of language, the principal emphasis is on language use in social settings. This includes areas of intersections of language and culture such as speech communities, social language codes, conversational analysis, speech acts, and cultural schemas.

Another key concern is the role of technology today in communication and identity formation. The availability of networked communication tools and services has changed dramatically how humans communicate and interact with each other. While traditional Internet access is not universally available, mobile devices are becoming ubiquitous almost everywhere, supplying the means for electronic messaging and information retrieval that affect all areas of human activity including commerce, education, health care, journalism, and social/political institutions of all kinds. The ease of communicating brings the possibility of connecting electronically with people in far-flung locations. This has enabled the rise of communities of interest which span geographically and culturally diverse communities. The potential for cooperation and shared endeavors is tremendous, but, given different communication styles and strategies, so is the potential for misunderstanding and conflict. This makes the need for intercultural communication competence all the more necessary.

Each of the text units concludes with a set of practical recommendations for implementing in personal use, both online and in face-to-face encounters, some of the concepts and behaviors presented. The recommendations attempt to highlight useful information in the three areas traditionally seen as constituting intercultural communicative competence, namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Following the "Intercultural Knowledge and Confidence Value Rubric," developed by the AACU, "knowledge" here references both cultural self-awareness and knowledge of other cultures, including their "history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices" (Rhodes, 2010). The position advocated in this text is that in fact intercultural learning is also a journey of self-discovery, about one's own cultural identity. The "skills" needed are first in the area of competence and proficiency in verbal and nonverbal communication. Speaking a second language provides a necessary, but not sufficient, entry into another culture. Beyond the linguistic knowledge, an understanding of the cultural enactments of language use is needed, i.e., an understanding of language pragmatics - how language is used in real, everyday situations. This can be seen as "cultural literacy", a familiarity with the rules and conventions of a culture and the ability to navigate among them appropriately.

An equally important skill is the ability to interpret intercultural experiences from an empathetic and thoughtful perspective, going beyond superficial stereotyping and looking at people as individuals, not types. This necessitates avoiding snap judgments and easy categorizations, and instead, critically examining one's own instincts and values. In terms of attitudes, a spirit of openness and curiosity is needed. Learning to be interculturally competent does not mean one has to give up personal beliefs and values, but it does necessitate accepting that others have the right to their own strongly-held perspectives and worldviews. Needed as well is a willingness to seek out and explore those other perspectives. That process can lead to greater acceptance of difference, while developing a sense of empathy and solidarity. In today’s world of extreme political partisanship and growing nationalism, however, it may be necessary to move beyond an attitude of tolerance. In the face of dire threats to the environment, mistreatment of minorities, and suspicion of democracy, intercultural competence should include today as well the need to engage actively (locally or globally) for social justice and for the health of our planet.

The chapters of this text are by no means exhaustive treatises on the topics covered. They are short introductions, with the hope that the student-reader will gain enough interest to follow up by seeking more information on the topics. There are recommended links included in each chapter for that purpose. One source which is referenced repeatedly deserves a brief note of explanation. A good number of TED talks are listed, as they often provide entertaining and informative explorations or illustrations of the concepts discussed. Moreover, they represent stable, reliable resources, likely to continue to be accessible (in contrast to many hyperlinks). They feature transcripts and subtitles provided in multiple languages, as well as low band-width versions. These are important considerations for a set of resources intended for use by students from a variety of countries. TED talks have been criticized for being slickly produced "edutainment", providing a platform for "experts" who may exaggerate the significance of findings, sometimes qualifying as innovative breakthroughs, what has long been known or has been debunked by others. They are suggested here as resources, not because they represent the most up-to-date or accurate research in a given field, but rather because they can stimulate discussions, including discoveries about alternative views to those presented.

In any course on intercultural communication, critical reception of media and ideas about culture, language, and technology (the content of many of the TED talks) should be an essential component. Another rationale for incorporating TED talks is the importance of storytelling in intercultural communication. Many of the talks focus on personal insights or developments around an epiphany of some kind. Along with other kinds of stories (for example, language autobiographies), the narratives presented in TED talks can be used to explore the nature of narration and the dynamics of identity formation.

I need to conclude this preface by thanking those who have contributed to this text. At the same time, the ultimate responsibility for the content rests with me. Comments and corrections are very welcome, addressed to rgjones@vcu.edu. Thanks go to Dorothy Chun, UC Barbara, for her encouragement, to the VCU Cabell Library for support, and especially to a team of reviewers that includes Mayda Topoushian and Jill Bowman, both of VCU, Antonie Alm (University of Otago), Aradhna Malik (Indian Institute of Technology), and Wen-Chuan Lin (Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Broadening Horizons

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Recognize the need for IC competence in today's increasingly diverse communities
- Develop balanced and informed views on the concepts of culture and communication
- Perceive patterns in cultural traditions/values but be alert to over-simplifications
- Recognize the ethnic issues in IC and the need for global citizenship
- Understand the role of media in framing cultural values

In this initial chapter we will be discussing some of the fundamental aspects of intercultural communication, including its importance in today's world, its history as an academic discipline, and the typical approaches to its instruction. There will also be discussion of the role of media in intercultural communication as well as its relationship to ethics. This chapter, as do each in this text, concludes with a section related to technology; in this case, dealing with the importance of digital and information literacy for intercultural communicative competence.

1.1: Introducing Intercultural Communication

What is Intercultural Communication?

Intercultural communication refers to the process of interacting with people who are different from oneself in fundamental ways related to appearance, language, **worldviews**, or a number of other categories. For many people this phenomenon is part of their everyday lives, for example, in multilingual, multicultural communities or in culturally diverse families. The majority of human societies deal with multiple cultures and multiple languages. The USA has traditionally been one of the few countries in which it is possible to be successful even if one speaks only one language, English (Nieto, 2010). The USA, however, is shifting demographically in ways that are likely to change dramatically attitudes towards language and culture. By the year 2042, demographers tell us, non-Hispanic whites will be in the minority (Roberts, 2008).

The USA is by no means unique in undergoing this process. The means of communication and transportation available today result in more mixing of cultures than ever before. This coincides with trends in commerce and trade in recent decades which have facilitated growing internationalization in all areas of business and economic activity. This process of **globalization** is facilitated by social media activities of people around the world. Communicating with others who are physically remote is possible through social networks such as *Facebook* or through online conversations via *Skype* or chat programs such as *WhatsApp*. At the same time, political and economic forces are causing large numbers of people to become asylum-seekers or economic refugees, creating more diverse cities and countries throughout the world. This process can also create conflict, sometimes due to concerns of foreigners taking jobs away or changing the character of a region, and sometimes due to fear arising from willful ignorance and **xenophobia** – the fear of foreigners.

In fact, globalization is by no means, as often portrayed a benign process, benefiting humanity universally. While many in developed countries enjoy international travel, increasing prosperity, and safe communities, those in other parts of the world continue to experience severe deprivations (food, water, housing), mass unemployment, and violent communities. These conditions, along with unequal access to education and healthcare, are often accompanied by corruption and political powerlessness. This has led to mass migrations and social instability. Within developed countries, there are sharp divisions based on geography, social class, and income. These disparities, along with changes in the global economy, have propelled populist and nationalistic leaders in many parts of the world to power.

The Need for Intercultural Communication Today

Given the demographical and globalizing trends of recent decades, in today's world one is likely to have more encounters (online or in person) with people from different cultures. Technological advances have played a major role in bringing people together. The Internet has reached the remotest corners of the world, as has satellite and online entertainment. People are able to see and appreciate differences in culture, way of life, and ways of interpreting the world at the click of a button. To add to this is the increasing ease of travel to different parts of the world for both work and pleasure (for the privileged). This has possibly resulted in a significant decrease in communication apprehension and a visible increase in the need and desire to be interculturally sensitive and competent. From that perspective, there is certainly a personal incentive for being interculturally sensitive. The openness and flexibility needed for successful cross-cultural exchanges offer benefits in personal and professional interactions of all kinds. Becoming knowledgeable about other cultures is also invaluable in gaining deeper insight into one's own culture. An experience living abroad or in close contact with those from another culture can lead to dramatically changed perspectives on the values and behavior patterns of one's native country.

Figure 1.1.1: UK International Development Secretary, Justine Greening, talking with Syrian chil-dren in the Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan

There is in addition a practical, utilitarian benefit, as companies are increasingly looking for employees who are flexible, tolerant, and able to work with others different from themselves. In virtually every business today, what happens in other countries can have a serious impact on its operations and viability. Communities and societies benefit as well, as understanding and tolerance reduce animosity and conflict. This is of increasing importance today, as we see a rise in nationalistic movements in many countries, often accompanied by growing calls for political isolation, economic nationalism, and stricter immigration controls. In part, this is a response to the fact that the forces of globalization have resulted in disadvantages for particular local populations in terms of job opportunities and economic well-being. These tendencies have unfortunate byproducts, namely the rise of prejudicial attitudes towards members of minority groups and a closing-off of minds and feelings towards those who act or look different.

It is of particular importance for future leaders to gain insight and empathy into other cultures. National or regional officeholders, heads of political parties, and others in the public eye (entertainers, writers, activists) function as role models. Their views, opinions, and behaviors can have a substantial public influence. Figures like Pope Francis, Malala Yousafzai, or Greta Thunberg have exerted positive influence, respectively, on views of minority rights, educational opportunities for girls, and the need for immediate action on global warming. Unfortunately, we have seen in recent years public figures advocating for ideas and policies which divide and inflame communities, such as white supremacy or rejection of equal rights for LBGTQ individuals. Messages of this kind — of hatred and bigotry— can fall on receptive ears, particularly if an individual or a community has not often encountered individuals different in ethnic background, religious belief, or language:

> *Many societies are deeply divided: the anger of rural and deindustrialised communities cut adrift by neoliberal globalization is readily harnessed against the more concrete scapegoat of minorities, particularly if people have little experience with diversity. Against this context, opportunities for everyday mundane connections that allow people to engage beyond the stereotypes can become a crucial means to overcoming division and exclusion (Piller, 2017, p. 203).*

Studies have shown that the geographical regions with the lowest number of immigrants or members of a minority tend to have the highest level of negative views of those groups. This is a clear indication that these views are not based on experience or evidence but on uninformed opinions based on slanted media or anecdotal information from friends or family. Piller (2017) provides a hopeful example, namely Sudanese immigrants in a virtually all-white Australian community becoming socially accepted by individuals and community leaders who reach out beyond stereotypes and their in-group bubbles.

Intercultural understanding is essential as well in gaining an informed and balanced appreciation of media, whether that be television reports focusing on other countries or blog posts from abroad. Today there is a vast amount of information freely available, through media channels and the Internet. Understanding the perspective from which others view the world can be very helpful in becoming informed consumers of news stories and social media. Given the importance of this topic, it will form a thread through many of the discussions in this textbook.

Culture: Central to our lives

Embedded in the term intercultural communication is the word **culture**. Culture is a slippery concept. In English, it has a number of different uses. Already in the 1950's, one article cited over 150 definitions of culture (Kluckhohn & Kroeber, 1952), while a more recent study analyzed over 300 definitions (Baldwin et al., 2006). One of those concepts is culture with a capital C, or high culture, namely literature and the arts. When we say in English that someone is cultured, this is the kind of culture we mean, someone with a good education, who perhaps goes on a regular basis to the theater or concerts, and reads books. We won't be talking much here about that kind of culture. Rather what's important for intercultural communication is the concept of culture related to the everyday pattern of life. Neuliep defines culture as "an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol systems" (2012, p. 19). We will use this as our initial working definition, refining it subsequently to embrace other concepts beyond that of national cultures, implied in this view. In this traditional description of culture, several ideas emerge as being of importance:

- *An accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors…*

  Individual cultural identities develop over time, with handed-down concepts and actions being reinforced through repetition in a gradual socialization process. Culture references a number of aspects of normal human existence, from weighty issues

such as our worldview and ethical–moral standards to more mundane matters such as how we greet each other or the kinds of food we like to eat.

- *…shared by an identifiable group of people…*

  These cultural norms represent fundamental, default values for individuals identified with that cultural group. That group may be small or large, fixed in a single location or dispersed among different **diaspora** communities (geographically separated). However, no matter where they may be, they share particular characteristics that make them a distinct group.

- *…with a common history…*

  How important historical memory is to members of a culture may vary. In some cases, as with Native Americans, or for other groups having been displaced or suffered acute social injustice, their history is likely to be well known and to play a significant role in determining cultural values as well as in shaping interactions with other groups. According to Rogers and Steinfatt (1999), "collective cultural consciousness," the embedded memories of historical events important to a particular cultural group, can act as a kind of "message filter", affecting significantly communication dynamics (p. 3).

- *…and (common) verbal and nonverbal symbol systems.*

  Language plays an oversized role in social cohesion and is the most important vehicle for transmission of cultural values. Nonverbal communication patterns are also a prominent constituent part of a group's identity and an easily identifiable marker for group membership. Both systems are based on symbols. Some see the use of symbols as the essence of a culture. For anthropologist Clifford Geertz, culture is a complex set of symbols used to create order and sense in our lives. According to Geertz, cultures "denote an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols" (Geertz, 1973, p. 89). As we saw from the example at the beginning of this chapter, while symbols may sometimes seem arbitrary (i.e., no inherent connection to their meaning), they nevertheless can be powerful, embodying deeply-held values and beliefs.

Figure 1.1.1: Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India at an Indian Diaspora event in London. Great Britain is home to many families originating in India or Pakistan.

Culture is not something we are born with, but rather it is learned, starting with our families, then moving on to our school experiences and friends. We often are not aware of the cultural values we embrace, even though many of those values and behaviors determine important aspects of our lives. They may only come to the surface when we encounter people who come from different cultures. In that sense, culture is often described as hidden (Hall, 1966). Culture is not fixed and immutable; culture does not exist in a vacuum, but is influenced by historical, social, political, and economic conditions. Cultural values are constructed from social dynamics in the countries or groups represented. Those values are not necessarily universally embraced.

In everyday life, cultures are often associated with nation-states, as assumed in Neuliep's definition. This can be traced back to the work of early 19th-century German scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was one of the first to equate nations with cultures (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). We often hear about French culture or Chinese culture. But within political boundaries, cultures are rarely monolithic. There tend to be many regional differences, as well as differences based on ethnicity, age, profession, social class, and other categories. National cultures change, whether it's a consequence of catastrophic events such as wars or natural disasters, or simply

through contact with a foreign culture. One could point to the spread of U.S. culture, for example, through the popularity of American movies and music, as well as through military interventions. In recent years we're seen South Korean popular culture develop a large following outside of Korea. K-pop, as it's called, has many fans worldwide, some of whom adapt aspects of the K-pop sub-culture such as dress, hair style, or mannerisms (Kim, 2013). The fact is that as individuals we don't necessarily fit the

mold of the national culture in which we were raised. Some scholars speak of culture as something often contested (see Jackson, 2010; Pillar, 2017). Hippies in the 1960's, for example, saw themselves in opposition to the cultural mainstream of many Western countries, in political views, in dress, and in attitudes towards work and leisure. In the end, culture is personal and fluid.

Figure 1.1.1: Korean group Girls' Generation, popular world-wide

With these perspectives on culture, we can return to our initial working definition and add some qualifiers. This traditional view of culture implies a static state, not the flexibility described above. It also includes a common history, but a dynamic vision of culture embraces the idea that cultures can be built on the fly, through individuals coming together due to commonalities of one kind or another, possibly even for a short duration of time. Finally sharing values, behaviors and languages may be true only in a restricted sense. It is useful to have knowledge of the traditional conception of culture, but at the same time understand new and different perspectives on what "culture" is. That is further explored in the next section.

Culture from the perspective of complexity theory

We live in a world that has become increasingly complex, with a host of problems both global and intractable:

> *Economic instability, the widening gap between rich and poor, climate change and the environmental crisis, the unstoppable transnational flow of refugees despite increasingly harsh regimes of border control, the threat of terrorist movements, rising geopolitical tensions as the hegemony of the West declines, urban gridlock and conflict in our hyper-diverse cities, the unsustainable costs of health care in times of population ageing, and the unsettling impact of rapid technological change – these are only a few of the large conundrums facing our globalized, interconnected world today (Ang, 2011, p. 779).*

One could easily add to the list a host of issues surrounding the Internet, from cyber security to the loss of privacy and addiction to social media. These problems are long-term and have a variety of causes. They have repercussions in human lives, both local and global. In recent years, the forces of globalization, mechanization, and mass migration have led to social divisions and political upheaval. Economic uncertainty and resentment towards immigrants have led to the growth of economic nationalism, populism, and isolationism across the globe. Common to these developments are ubiquity and complexity – the problems are interwoven in local and global contexts and evince multiple causes and unpredictable outcomes:

> *In short, everywhere in the world complexity is staring us in the face; its overwhelming impact – socially, economically, ecologically – is increasingly undeniable and inescapable. That the world is terribly complex is now a vital part of global cultural experience, a structure of feeling which has grown more pervasive in the twenty-first century (Ang, 2011, p. 779).*

One way of dealing with this increasingly complex world is to pretend the problems do not exist, to engage in willful ignorance, by, for example, disbelieving scientific evidence. Another option is to ignore what happens beyond one's neighborhood. Yet in the 21st-century it is virtually impossible in any part of the world to withdraw completely from interconnections and interdependencies which may be global in scale, but often local in effect. One path is to put forward short-term or partial measures. The danger in that approach is that it tends to lead to simplistic solutions, that may be popular, but in reality misrepresent both the issue and its

complexity. Complex problems are not solved by single, simple cause-and-effect explanations. There are typically multiple, changing variables at play, so that any problem-solving is likely to be both complicated and provisional. As conditions change, problem-solving approaches must adapt.

The first step is to recognize and accept the complexity of a problem and seek to understand its origins and developmental path. An approach that has gained currency in both natural and social sciences is **complexity theory** (CT), an ecological approach which stresses nonlinearity, unpredictability, and self-organization in how systems work. An expanded version of chaos theory, complexity theory looks to uncover a system's beginning (its “initial conditions”) and to trace development as variables and subsystems are added to combine and shape outcomes in ways that are unpredictable. Studies have shown the extent to which language and language learning can be understood as complex systems, given the variability of language use and the multiple factors which affect learning a second language (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). That approach has recently been used as well to analyze the dynamics of informal language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2018). In chapters three and four we will look at that topic in more detail. Another area within intercultural communication that invites a CT analysis is personal identity, a topic we will address in the next chapter.

Culture and intercultural communication competence from a CT perspective helps us understand that reducing culture to national origin is a simplistic misrepresentation of the dynamics of identity formation today, in which multiple influences – in person, online, and in the media – combine in unique ways that are varied and unforeseeable. Holliday (1999) uses the term “networked individual” to point to the myriad influences on individuals in our time. Culture from this perspective is fluid and dynamic, impacted by diverse, intersecting factors and not reducible to a single point of origin. The complexity of culture can also lead us to realign the typical approach in intercultural communication studies of focusing on similarities or differences. There are too many variables in play for contact between cultures to be understood in such binary terms. It is preferable to imagine instead a sliding scale, with both context and individual affecting interactions.

Communication: A Human Necessity

Communication occurs in many different contexts, and conversations will have different characteristics depending on who is speaking, where the exchange takes place, and what the purpose of the encounter is. Human conversation is highly contextual and infinitely variable. The linguist Noam Chomsky has made us aware of the fact that virtually every sentence we speak is something brand-new, combining a basic set of elements into endless combinations, a phenomenon known as **digital infinity** (Chomsky, 2005).

According to the popular conception of human speech, language is used primarily for the transmission of information. This familiar transmission model breaks communication down into a transmitter and a receiver, whose roles may be reversed in the course of a dialogue, but whose purpose in talking is to send a message of some kind. This is a concept derived from early work in electronic communication, such as that done by Bell Labs in the US in the 1040's and 1950s (see Shannon, 1948). In 1960, Berlo expanded the communication model to include factors such as the purpose and objectives of the message being transmitted, as well as nonverbal communication. His "SMCR" model breaks down communication into the Sender, Message, Channel, and Receiver, each of which is affected by a variety of factors. One of the important modifications in the model is emphasis on the channel's influence on message transmission. This was later popularized in the phrase, "the medium is the message," by Marshall McLuhan (1964), meaning that a message is tightly tied to the means of transmission. This is of particular relevance today, as digital media have provided multiple channels of communication — texting, email, *Facebook* messaging, tweets, *Instagram* posts, etc. – all of which have a shaping influence on how a message is received.

Figure 1.1.2: Conversing is often less about information transmission and more about building relationships

In the traditional model of communication, the major emphasis is on how a message is transmitted. Yet linguists, from observing and studying actual conversations, have learned that rarely does a conversation have only a **semantic** purpose, i.e., used to convey meaning. Instead, talking is often a social action, used to maintain relationships and convey feelings and emotions. Sometimes conversations are shaped by social status and function as a way to affirm or contest a hierarchical status quo (see Sorrells, 2013). Humans are social animals and the need to communicate is fundamental to our nature. Communication is what builds and maintains communities. Historically, the worst kind of human punishment has been exclusion from a community and enforced verbal isolation (see sidebar). Like culture, we take human communication for granted, and feel its importance only when it is lost.

The nature of human speech affects intercultural communication. If talking is essentially a socialization process, holding conversations has the potential to build relationships. But that also means that the language we need for engaging in normal conversation is not simply vocabulary useful for expressing meaning. We need, importantly, to know about the social dimensions of language, i.e. the appropriate way to greet others, how to express gratitude, or what topics are appropriate to introduce in a conversation. Communication is fundamentally cultural. To be effective, conversation partners need to be sensitive to a range of factors beyond verbal communication. That includes nonverbal actions, such as how close to stand to the other person or whether to maintain eye contact (see Hall, 1966).

No communication = no community

Throughout history, when societies wanted to severely punish someone for a social transgression, the harshest punishment was excommunication — banishment from the community. In Catholicism this means to cast out someone from the church. In ancient Rome the process was called ostracism, a ritual in which citizens used clay shards (ostraca) to vote for someone to be sent away from the community for 10 years. In modern Amish communities the practice is called shunning. The shunned person is allowed to physically remain in the community but is prohibited from any social interaction with others

Remland et al,, 2014. p. 9

Those kinds of considerations we need not think about if the conversation is with a person or a group with whom we are familiar (Hall, 1959). When we speak of intercultural communication, we are moving away from that comfort zone, engaging in exchanges with people representing different cultures, that is to say different sets of values, beliefs, and behaviors; a different historical memory; quite possibly a different language (or dialect). The individual may not, in fact, represent the mainstream culture. Thereby we construct and convey different meanings in unfamiliar contexts. That type of communication can be very different from encounters with those with whom we share a culture, in which the context is familiar. As a result, intra-cultural conversations tend to be more comfortable and routine. Even so, depending on the situation or context, we may experience conflict or **communication apprehension**. Speaking in front of a group, for example, can produce anxiety for many people. Conversing with strangers can bring on even more apprehension. This comes in large part from uncertainty. The less we know about the other person's background and intentions, the more uncertain and apprehensive we may be. We can combat these feelings through approaching encounters in a spirit of openness and discovery. That lessens the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict.

1.2: Cultures under study and in the media

Intercultural Communication as an academic discipline

There are a variety of approaches to study and research intercultural communication (see Leeds-Hurwitz, 2010; Rogers & Hart, 2002). As an academic discipline, it is often traced back to anthropologist Edward T. Hall and his book *The Silent Language* (1959). Hall was above all concerned with creating greater cultural awareness among employees of the US Department of State. He was striving to improve the ability of US technicians and diplomats to interact effectively with their foreign counterparts. Given that perspective, his approach was understandably more practical than theory-based. That pragmatism continues to be important in the field, as a central goal is to provide individuals with practical information that can be used in everyday encounters (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).

Much of the early development of intercultural communication occurred in North America, and North American scholars represented the principal contributors to scholarly activity in intercultural communication through most of the 20th century. However, beginning in the 1990s, the field became increasingly internationalized. European scholars have contributed important new insights and approaches to intercultural communication (Byram, 1997; Holliday, 2010; Hua, 2013; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), as have Australian and New Zealand scholars (Piller, 2017; Schirato & Yell, 2002). These scholars tend to focus more centrally on language issues than is the case for IC research in North America.

Through the contributions of researchers from Africa, China, Latin America, and India, there has been a growing recognition that Western approaches to intercultural communication need to be supplemented – and in some cases corrected – through the different life experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives offered by non-Western scholars. One example is the anthropocosmic perspective presented in a recent Chinese textbook on intercultural communication (Jia & Li, 2019), which is based on the concepts of *dao* (□, "the path", the way to enlightenment through cosmic harmony) and *ren* (□, "benevolence", empathy and responsibility for fellow humans). There have been in recent years more calls for indigenous perspectives on intercultural communication (Miike, 2007). Particularly welcome would be more insights from African scholars (Miller, 2005). In the latter part of the 20th century, there has been considerable interest in **critical intercultural communication**, which views intercultural communication within the context of power structures (see Jackson, 2010; Piller, 2017). That perspective will inform much of the discussion of IC in this textbook.

Since Hall's time, a great variety of disciplines have contributed to the field, including applied linguistics, business communication, social psychology, and international studies. In fact, intercultural communication is taught within a variety of academic units. Given the practical usefulness of easing communication among those representing different cultures and languages, it is logical that intercultural communication figures prominently in areas where such interactions are common and expected. In many countries, that will include tourism, medical care, and/or education. In the US, intercultural communication is taught most commonly within programs in communication studies, while in other Anglophone countries, it is considered a subdivision of applied linguistics. Professional organizations often bring together scholars from a variety of disciplines. Indeed, that is one of the enriching characteristics of the field, that it draws on knowledge and experience representing a great variety of academic fields. This textbook will incorporate aspects of research in intercultural communication as represented in a variety of disciplines. The disciplines use different research methodologies, have differing goals, and address issues from a variety of perspectives. Some use primarily quantitative data, others are more qualitatively oriented. In the end, these different approaches complement each other and together provide a more complete picture then would reliance on a single discipline (see Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

What it means to be a confident intercultural communicator differs depending on the disciplinary orientation. However, as an overall set of common denominators, we might break down the competencies in the following categories, following the rubric on *intercultural knowledge and competence* from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Rhodes, 2010):

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Cultural self-awareness	Empathy	Curiosity
Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks	Verbal and nonverbal communication	Openness

The more *knowledge* we have about other cultures the more likely it is that we will base initial judgments about representatives of those cultures on reliable information, rather than on stereotypes gleaned through popular culture or media reports. That knowledge may be in a variety of areas ranging from geography to religious beliefs. Having informed views of other cultures is likely to make encounters more successful. In learning about other cultures we inevitably *learn about ourselves*, as we draw comparisons between the values and behaviors of the target culture and our own.

A primary enabler of insights into another culture is *verbal language*. Language enables us to understand and express phenomena we may have found unfamiliar and for which we may not have had the vocabulary. Learning a new language on the one hand, widens our worldview, and on the other, opens a window of familiarity into the worlds of others who may have seemed unfamiliar earlier, thereby affording an opportunity for both to connect with each other. Depending on the context, the ability to converse in another language can be of central importance, determining whether effective communication is possible. *Nonverbal* clues – smiling, nodding, bowing — can send important messages, but will only take a conversation so far. It's also the case that learning a second language provides deeper and more complete access to the other culture. Language takes you into the heart of a culture, offering an **emic** (from inside the group) perspective, rather than an **etic** view (from outside). The possibility of participation in the target culture, rather than just observation, is likely to lead to greater understanding and appreciation of its values and behaviors, resulting in greater ***empathy***. That in turn is likely to lead to *curiosity* and a desire to learn more about that culture. For communication to be effective, both parties need to be motivated to communicate. If we go into an encounter with pre-formed negative views of the group we assume the other person represents, it's not likely that there will be a positive outcome. On the other hand, refraining from judgment and maintaining a spirit of openness create a positive atmosphere, making effective communication much more likely.

Some would argue that empathy, tolerance, and openness are helpful in personal encounters, but that a further aspect of intercultural competence beyond skills, knowledge, and attitudes, should be added: civic action. Given the widening socioeconomic inequities, the growth of nationalism, and the growing mistrust and mistreatment of minorities, collective action is needed beyond the individual. The concept of **global citizenship** points in that direction. This concept entails a call for action in the form of active civil engagement in society, starting with local action and service to the community (O'Dowd, 2019). Another framework in accord with this vision is **critical cosmopolitanism**, described as "a deep appreciation for difference, the willingness to engage with cultural Others and be transformed by such experiences, kindness towards strangers, and the labour of the imagination to envision a world that aspires towards peace, possibilities and intercultural respect for those near and far" (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p. 7). The concept of cosmopolitanism, originating in the field of sociology, has emerged as complementary to the concept of intercultural competence (Kennedy, Díaz, & Dasli, 2017).

Cultural taxonomies

In the academic study of intercultural communication, cultures are often characterized as belonging to particular categories, often referred to as taxonomies (i.e., a type of classification scheme). Many of the characteristics used go back to work done by Geert Hofstede in the 1970's, who studied the cultural dimensions of workers for IBM in a variety of countries (1980). The salient category often used to characterize and contrast cultures is **individualism** versus **collectivism**. Cultures labeled as individualistic (most often Western countries including those in North America and Northern Europe) are seen as emphasizing the rights of the individual to self-determination, with children being brought up to be assertive and distinctive. In contrast, collectivistic cultures (seen as prevalent in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East) emphasize group identity and conformity, with children expected to be obedient and respectful. While such distinctions can be useful in describing general cultural traditions and patterns of behavior, they are problematic when applied to individuals. Individual identities in today's world tend to be complex, constructed from a variety of sources. Individuals may belong to a ethnic group, whose worldview, values, and behavior are quite different from those represented by the mainstream culture. Political boundaries do not define who we are. One might consider in that regard groups which cross political boundaries, such as the Kurds, Romani, or Basques. In fact, in today's world the coherence of nation-states is increasingly porous, given changing demographics, wide-spread immigration, and the growth of social media.

Figure 1.2.1: Representatives of the Yi Minority in China

There are a number of other cultural dimensions often used in the field of intercultural communication, most of which derive from the work of Hall and Hofstede. The concept of **power distance** describes the importance attributed to hierarchies in a given culture, the extent to which individuals are grouped according to birth, status or position of power. This involves as well the perception within a culture regarding how easy one feels it is to communicate with or approach a person higher in hierarchy. The higher the power distance, the less more reluctant one may feel in approaching a person senior in hierarchy. Individualistic cultures are typically seen as having a small power distance, meaning that they strive for equality in society and within families. In contrast, in countries with a large power distance, inequality among people is seen as expected and desired.

Time orientation is another category often used. **Polychronic** ("P-time") cultures tend to be less concerned with being on time for events, and individuals deal comfortably with more than one task or person at a time. A **monochronic** orientation ("M-time"), on the other hand, shows a preference for being punctual and not having more than one task or person to focus on at a time. A third concept is **uncertainty avoidance**, the idea that some cultures are more comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty than others. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which members of a particular culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Those with a strong uncertainty avoidance prefer predictability and tend to have clear rules of behavior.

The Danger of Cultural Taxonomies

Contemporary scholars of intercultural communication urge caution in using these categories, as they tend to "present people's individual behavior as entirely defined and constrained by the culture in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are" (Holliday, 2010, p. 4). Critics like Holliday describe the use of Hofstede's categories as **essentialism**, that is, assuming that people and things have 'natural' characteristics that are inherent and unchanging. That may translate into defining the essence of individuals in terms of their national origins. If one is from Mexico (a culture designated as polychronic), for example, an essentialist view would be to assume that person will be late for meetings all the time, no matter the context. Inherent in such an assumption is that individuals are unable to adapt to others' norms of behavior. The term **reductionism** is used in similar fashion, referring to the tendency to explain an object by reducing it to a different, usually simpler, level. When dealing with people this means that identities are being reduced to a predetermined set of characteristics, associated with ethnic or cultural stereotypes. Defining individual characteristics through associations with national cultures denies individual free will. It assumes that we don't develop unique individual personalities as we grow. Many people living in a "monochronic" society are often habitually late. Entrepreneurs (and others) in China (a "high uncertainty avoidance" culture) often take risks to make their businesses successful. No matter what kind of culture we live in, we can probably all point to individuals in our culture who have the characteristics of "individualism" and others who tend towards "collectivism".

Holliday and others have pointed out that most of the cultural categories used in intercultural communication were created from a Western perspective and tend to skew accordingly the values attached to the different labels (Holliday, 1999; Piller, 2017). Individualism, for example, is seen as inherently positive, with attributes attributed to it which are valued in Western cultures, namely initiative, assertiveness, and ambition. Similarly, cultures with a large power distance are seen as undemocratic, hence inferior, and those with high uncertainty avoidance are regarded as adverse to risk-taking and, therefore, inhospitable to creativity and personal initiative. Holliday emphasizes the importance of allowing other cultures to define themselves, advocating a **decentered** perspective. One should be aware of conventional cultural descriptions, but in encountering someone put them aside to the extent possible and focus on the other as an individual, whose identity may be quite complex, derived from a variety of influences. He emphasizes "bracketing" away the cultural stereotypes, removing *a priori* assumptions, in order to be able to judge others individually. Of course, this necessitates on the one hand, being aware of one's own preconceptions. On the other hand, it contradicts the basic human tendency of putting unknowns into familiar categories.

Figure 1.2.2: Small cultures can arise from impromptu gatherings, as groups coalesce around common interests or values

Holliday advocates moving away from the traditional concept of "culture", identified with largely homogeneous nation-states to that of **small cultures**. He argues, as do others, that the commonly used characterizations of national cultures are a product of 19th century nationalism; as such, the concept is associated with colonialism and the devaluing of non-European cultures (see Jackson, 2010). Holiday also maintains that the "large culture" paradigm makes less sense in a world that is "becoming an increasingly cosmopolitan, multi-cultural place where cultures are less likely to appear as large coherent geographical entities" (1999, p. 244). Instead of the fixed and timeless concept of culture related to nation-states, small cultures are often formed on the fly, by organized or impromptu social groupings or work-related groups. They can easily cut across national borders.

In contrast to large cultures which are often presented as behavior-defining, small cultures represent only one aspect of an individual's identity. People align themselves to different cultures at different times (see sidebar). The small culture concept is similar to the idea of "community of interest" or "affinity spaces". It is clear that if we envision culture from the perspective of small cultures, the kind of broad-stroke comparison of differences among cultures, as often emphasized in undergraduate courses on intercultural communication, is problematic.

Small cultures form dynamically

> Small culture is thus a dynamic, ongoing group process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances. When a researcher looks at an unfamiliar social grouping, it can be said to have a small culture when there is a discernible set of behaviours and understandings connected with group cohesion. The dynamic aspect of small culture is central to its nature, having the capacity to exist, form and change as required.
>
> Kullman, Holliday & Hyde (2004), p. 64

One of the reasons identities are complex today is the pervasive influence of modern media, which crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. Participation in social media can be such a central aspect of one's life as to have a determining effect on worldview, values, and behaviors. Individuals can become members of online communities which acquire over time more importance than national characteristics, religious affiliations, or even families. Such relationships may be virtual, but they are just as real – and can be just as strong – as in-person relationships.

Ethics and intercultural communication

When we reference the widespread use of social media, we need to keep in mind the very real nature of the **digital divide** between those (predominately in developed countries) with easy access to *Facebook* and other online services and those (predominately in developing countries) who have no Internet connectivity, and possibly even no access to electricity. In fact, for many of our co-denizens of the 21st-century, daily routines do not involve reading *tweets*, posting *Facebook* updates, or checking *Instagram*, but rather seeking to fill basic human needs — food, water, shelter. About 50% of the world's population lives below the internationally recognized poverty line, living on less than $2.50 a day. The forces of globalization, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, have indeed brought the world closer together in terms of communication and commerce, but large numbers of people have been left out. That includes not only individuals from countries in Africa, Latin America or Southeast Asia, but also factory workers and others holding blue-collar jobs who have lost their livelihoods to outsourcing or to companies moving factories to lower wage economies. There has been in recent years a growing recognition of the inequality in the distribution of wealth, leading to phenomena such as the "Occupy" movement of 2011-2012, protesting against the elite 1% of the population, or the election of Donald Trump in the United States in 2016, who was elected in large part due to votes from those who feel left out of the 21st-century US economy.

Figure 1.2.3: Oakland (California) Occupy general strike in 2011

To be truly interculturally competent means not only being responsible and empathetic in our personal encounters, but extending that process more broadly. We need engaged global citizens, knowledgeable and caring about people and events outside our own backyards. Part of that process is being cognizant of the privileged position many of us enjoy. Important in that process is a willingness to break out of our regular routines of communication and information retrieval, occasionally stepping outside our social media bubble to encounter different voices and points of view. In that way, we are likely to be better informed about the complexities and fragmentations of global communities. This can lead to an enhanced recognition of the need for **social justice**, i.e. the struggle to confront discrimination and challenge inequities. We are both consumers and producers of culture and we all have a role in shaping the nature of the world in which we live. From that perspective, it is important not to think of culture as a fixed entity with a controlling influence on our lives. Cultures, as are all human affairs, are not immutable, but rather subject to change through a variety of forces.

There is a natural human tendency to want to be among those similar to ourselves, known as **homophily**. It takes some effort to overcome this normal human instinct. Part of that phenomenon makes us leery of those who look different, belong to different ethnic groups, or profess other worldviews. Those who seem different become the "**other**", rejected for being dissimilar and therefore considered inferior (see Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2011). This rejection of others who have different ethnic backgrounds or practice other religions has in human history led to multiple instances of civil strife and war, including in recent times conflicts in many parts of the world from Northern Ireland to South Sudan. In extreme cases, the result can be ethnic cleansing and genocide, as we have experienced in the 20th century in Armenia, Germany, and Rwanda. That process of **othering** is intensified if we feel threatened in our livelihood or security by new arrivals. This has been one of the unfortunate byproducts of the large wave of refugees beginning in 2015, principally to Europe, from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and north Africa.


Figure 1.2.4: Refugees from Syria on their way to Europe

As the number of immigrants has increased in countries like Great Britain, France, Germany, some feel that not only are jobs and security at risk, but also the very existence of their cultures. This has led to the rise of a number of new movements and political parties in Europe which promote xenophobia and economic nationalism. The vote in Great Britain in 2016 to leave the European Union was not just an assertion of national independence, but also a rejection of the influx of foreigners. We have witnessed similar shifts towards greater nationalism in a variety of countries including Turkey, Russia, India, and the United States. Unfortunately, the patriotism evident in these developments often translates into a kind of free license to discriminate against minorities, whether that be Muslims in India or Hispanics in the US. Political leaders play a crucial role here in setting the tone, thereby influencing

followers in terms not only of attitudes but also of behavior. This is one of the strongest reasons we need today worldwide more intercultural understanding, so that future leaders are acculturated to accept diversity and practice tolerance.

Countering the media echo chamber

The popular image of the "the world is flat" (Friedman, 2005) is that modern communication and transportation are leveling opportunities and bringing people together, breaking down barriers, and creating what Marshall McLuhan called the "global village" (McLuhan, 1962). The reality can be quite different. We may think that on the net we are all equal, but the major Internet companies – *Facebook* and *Google*, for instance – don't just serve up information in a neutral way. Rather they use an **algorithm** – a procedure or formula – to filter information or links depending on what they know about us. What that can mean in practice is that we are served up information that the algorithm has determined we want to have, based on the personal profile the system has built. That derives from the **filter bubble** created by what the system thinks our likes and preferences are. This is built on links we tend to click on in searching with *Google*, the people we follow on *Twitter*, or the interests represented by the friends we have in *Facebook*. The assumption is that we want information only on our expressed interests and established friends. That means we may have less opportunity to have contact with people outside our circle of friends and family. If we want to be competent intercultural communicators, we need to step outside of that comfort zone.

Figure 1.2.5: Chimamanda Adichie

We all have a personal narrative, a way we put the puzzle pieces of our lives together to make a coherent story out of the sometimes disparate elements and events. That narrative is built from our interpretations of personal experiences including family dynamics, religious practices, interactions with friends, or major life events. When we encounter new ideas, new people, new situations, we try to fit them into that narrative. Chimamanda Adichie, the Nigerian novelist, talks about the power of the single story. It's a natural human tendency to make order out of complexity by simplifying. We feel more comfortable if we can put people and ideas into already established categories.

In dealing with people, this can lead to stereotyping. We may not have enough knowledge of a person or of that person's culture to create an informed picture. In such cases we fall back on the little information we might have. If I've been to Africa or have learned about Africa, for example, I can distinguish between Nigerians, Ivoirians, Kenyans, South Africans, etc. But if I don't have that knowledge, I fall back on clichés and stereotypes. If I am a US citizen, I may make associations with Ebola, HIV, hunger, or refugees. Where do these impressions come from? It may be from our friends or family, or from school, but most likely it's from media reports. In most of the Western world, news is reported from Africa only if there are natural disasters, wars, epidemics, or other catastrophic events. This is why it is so important to be critical consumers of media, to find ways to enlarge not shrink our views. Traditional print media such as the *Economist*, the *New York Times*, or the *Guardian* (just to name a sampling of English-speaking media) often run substantial stories on international events, in contrast to most local television stations and newspapers. Many alternative new sources have become available online in recent years, such as Global Voices or Vice News.

Online media can also be a great source of information, but it doesn't come easily or automatically. Hearing directly from Africans, for example, has the potential for exploding our stereotypes and providing varied perspectives. That can be invaluable in maintaining open and receptive attitudes. We can't become experts in all parts of the world, but we can take advantage of opportunities that may arrive to gather first-hand knowledge from natives. Online media can supply those contacts. But it takes a willingness to move outside our regular social circle, to remain open and curious, and to seek out opportunities to encounter people different from ourselves.

One of the developments in recent years which has changed the media landscape has been the growth of **citizen journalism**. Individuals around the world are taking advantage of the ease of posting stories and sharing media – photos and videos – to report on stories or issues important to them. These are not trained, professional journalists, but rather everyday citizens who use their cell

phones and social media to report on stories traditional media outlets have ignored. That may be due to the absence of media correspondents in that location or because events have occurred suddenly. Citizen journalists have been particularly important in reporting events from natural disorders, sites of political upheaval, and war zones. Examples of events for which citizen journalism through social media, especially *Twitter*, has been important in getting information spread widely include the Cedar Revolution in 2005 (Lebanon), the Tunisian uprisings in 2010-11, or the Arab Spring in 2011. As with all media consumption, it's important to view citizen journalism also from a critical perspective. Citizen reporters may have a political agenda in their news accounts, leading to slanted perspectives. There may as well be technical or linguistic issues which interfere with this kind of public reporting. In some cases that has involved those holding political power shutting down the online services used by citizen journalists.

Figure 1.2.6: Citizen journalist Ryan Boyette, interviewing a Nuban refugee in the Yida camp, South Sudan

In reporting and writing of all kinds, knowing something about the writer and the purpose or context for the text can be important in being able to evaluate trustworthiness and objectivity. That can be of particular importance for reports not associated with a trusted media source or news provider, especially relevant in reporting about contentious social or political issues. One approach which aims to supply an objective analysis of both a prominent social problem and an implemented response is **solutions journalism**. Central to this type of reporting is the use of credible evidence, backed by reliable data, to explain an issue and profile a response that is working — or one that been tried and has proven ineffective. The Fixes column of the *New York Times* provides an example of this approach. Having carefully fact-checked stories about concrete projects to solve important social issues (education, poverty, unemployment) provides renewed credibility to news media, while enabling investigative reporting to contribute to the public good.

1.3: Technically speaking- Information literacy

One of the prerequisites for effective communication is information about our conversant. The knowledge we bring to a conversation about the other person's background and identity can be valuable in avoiding misplaced assumptions and false information, leading to possible miscommunication or potential conflict. Knowledge about the other's religious beliefs or worldviews may provide practical information about aspects of everyday life, such as greeting rituals, eating habits, or clothing choice. A Muslim woman, for example, may not choose to shake hands, may be skipping lunch because of Ramadan, and may be wearing a headscarf due to social and religious customs. Knowledge about important historical events, minority groups, social hierarchies, or the geo-political situation of the other person's home culture, all may be helpful in determining appropriate and inappropriate conversation topics.

We can't be knowledgeable about all cultures, but we can inform ourselves about particular cultures or groups in which we have a special interest or are likely to encounter. That might include countries in which the language spoken is one we are learning, or it might be cultures represented in one's living community, working environment, or university. Most people today are likely to search and find information on the Internet. That holds true as well for reading the news and keeping up with world affairs. As discussed in this chapter, online searches do not provide neutral, unbiased results. It's also not the case that all search results point to sites with accurate information. With the glut of information on the Internet today, it's more important than ever to be informed consumers of technology tools and services.

Being an informed consumer of Internet services

In assessing search results, there are a few important considerations. Typically, the sites linked first in a search (using *Google*) are "sponsored links", sites that have paid to have their links first in line. The next hits listed are those which *Google's* algorithm has determined are the most popular related to the topic searched. These sites, however, may be linked higher not due to real popularity – or to the usefulness of their information – but because of the effectiveness of their **search engine optimization** (SEO). SEO involves modifying a site's HTML code (Hypertext Markup Language – the underlying code of web pages) in order to include terms most likely to be used in particular searches. In some cases dummy websites are set up with back links to the main page to try to enhance the indexing process used by *Google* and other search engines. It's important for sites to be ranked high in search results, as online advertising income is based on the number of visitors to that site. So-called "clickbait" sites are set up to generate advertising revenue by relying on sensationalist headlines to attract click-throughs. Often, the destination site will have minimal information and will require additional click-throughs to try to find the information advertised.

In such an environment, it's important to be able to evaluate search results, to ascertain the likely reliability of the information provided. One indication is the nature of the website. Institutional sites associated with a university, research institute, professional organization, or institution of some kind (such as a museum) are likely to be more objective than personal sites or blogs. Most countries have government websites providing a wealth of information; sites for government agencies can be informative as well. Of particular trustworthiness are sites with resources which are curated, peer-reviewed, or annotated. Merlot, for example, is a curated collection of free online learning and teaching materials. Crowd-sourced sites such as *Wikipedia* can be good starting points for information gathering, particularly as they point to further resources and authoritative sources. The same cautions recommended here for written resources hold as well for video sites such as *YouTube*.

Digital literacy also means becoming an informed user of other kinds of online tools and services. There are, for example, a great number of options available today for working in other languages. That includes a variety of dual-language dictionaries, thesauri, and spellcheckers. There are also a number of services which offer online machine translation. Most of those, such as *Google Translate*, rely principally on dual-language corpora – collections of translated texts. This means that they are most accurate when there is a large number of texts available, as there are between English and other major European languages. It's likely that there are far fewer texts for other language combinations, say Arabic to Estonian, forcing the translation engine to rely on built-in grammar/language models. It's always good practice to back-translate machine translations, particularly using a different translation service. Such tools are especially useful for deciphering websites or other texts but less so for writing, as they do not have the flexibility to adjust for language register (i.e., degree of formality) or tone.

Cultures-of-use

In participating in online discussions, it's important to be aware of **netiquette** practices – that is, the social conventions attached to the use of particular forms of electronic communication. One should, for example, avoid writing in all capital letters, as that is perceived as shouting. In writing text messages and other short form electronic messaging, the convention is to ignore spelling and

grammar rules, including capitalization and punctuation, while making rich use of abbreviations. The potential for miscommunication in written online communication is increased by the absence of facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, constraining interpretation of communicative intent exclusively to the written language. Depending on the particular medium of communication, there may be as well a particular "**culture-of-use**", that is, a set of historically developed, socially accepted norms and behavior for participation. Steve Thorne discusses, as an example, French language learners participating in an Internet discussion forum for readers of the French newspaper *Le Monde* – see sidebar. Not being aware of localized cultures of use, such as exist in this case, can lead to miscommunication and frustration on all sides. Developing an awareness of the appropriate genres of language use and styles of communication can enable full engagement in multicultural online activities.

A practical lesson in cultures-of-use

In a recent study examining foreign language learning in open Internet environments, Hanna and de Nooy reported on the interactional and identity related activity of four students of French who participated in public Internet discussion fora associated with the Parisian newspaper *Le Monde*. Hanna and de Nooy's rationale for opting to use a public discussion forum was to move students entirely outside of the relative safety of explicitly educational interactions where participants occupy the institutionally bounded subject position of student or learner. *Le Monde* discussion fora, by contrast, exist to support argumentation and debate about mostly contemporary political and cultural issues. Hanna and de Nooy followed four students, two of whom opened with stand-alone messages that requested help to improve their French. They received a few cordial as well as abrupt replies, each of which suggested the need to take a position in the ongoing discussion. Neither did and both disappeared from the forum. In contrast, the other two students opened with a response to an existing message, directly entering the ongoing debates. One student primarily used English in his posts but still engaged members of the forum and garnered numerous responses to his contributions. With coaching and support from other participants, he was able to fully participate in the discussions, suggesting that "neither politeness nor linguistic accuracy is the measure of intercultural competence here" (Hanna and de Nooy 2003, p. 78). Rather, in the circumstances of this *Le Monde* discussion forum participation in the genre of debate was the minimum threshold for continued participation.

Thorne, 2013, pp. 200-201

Such conventions as illustrated here exist for most forms of Internet-based social activities such as multiplayer gaming. Many of these activities are likely to be global, with participation from users representing a variety of cultures and languages. New modes of online communication will inevitably develop new cultures-of-use. These will be learned informally, on the fly, through participating and observing. As in most areas of culture, here too we are socialized into acceptable norms and behaviors. Given the pace of development of services and activities on the Internet, this kind of socialization is not likely to take place in institutional settings, as John Seely Brown comments: "The unrelenting velocity of change means that many of our skills have a shorter shelf life, suggesting that much of our learning will need to take place outside of traditional school and university environments." (2008, p. xi). This translates into both a need for ongoing digital literacy and, as well, a high degree of learner autonomy, to be able to gain the necessary skills and knowledge in a self-directed environment.

For Discussion and Reflection...

1. Using the definition of culture presented in this unit, how would you describe your culture? Why are so many people afraid to communicate with people from cultures different from their own? Do you agree with the greater need for intercultural communication competence today? Why or why not?
2. To what extent have you experienced the media echo chamber and the filter bubble? What methods can help overcome the restrictions on connecting with others? How can greater digital literacy help?
3. After watching the Chimamanda Adichie TED talk ("The dangers of a single story"): What does she mean by a "single story"? What would be other ways to describe this phenomenon? Have you had personal experiences that parallel those of Adichie?
4. After watching the Alisa Miller TED talk ("How the news distorts our worldview"): Imagine a map which would represent the geographical areas that you read, hear,

1.4: Broadening Horizons (Summary)

From theory to practice…

- *Strive to encounter others in an attitude of openness and a spirit of curiosity*. Seek to understand rather than to predict. To the extent possible, suspend judgment for as long as you can, forming an image of the other person gradually through conversing. **Active listening** helps, i.e., focusing intently on the words and body language of the other person.
- *Don't apply culturally differentiating labels to individuals*. Generalizations about norms of behavior are misplaced when we are dealing one-on-one with an individual. Because they are widespread, it's good to know about the categories (i.e. “individualism” vs. “collectivism”) used to differentiate national cultures, but it's important to keep in mind that they represent broadstroke generalizations, which can in no way be applicable to every individual from that culture.
- *Beware of unexamined assumptions*. You are likely to have gleaned information about different cultures from local new sources or from friends or family or from what you may have learned in school. You should be cautious with such "received wisdom", which may rely on stereotypes and outdated information. It's important to learn what sources to trust – both in person and online. Equally important is a willingness to be open to different points of view.
- *Be alert to your personal filter bubble*. You should not assume that you are receiving neutral results from search requests or getting balanced views from online news providers. They may be feeding you what they assume you want, namely more of the same. Try using a different web browser or logging out of your Google or other accounts, to see if suggested links change.

Key Concepts

- **Active listening:** A communication technique that requires that the listener fully concentrate, understand, respond and then remember what is being said.
- **Algorithm:** A process or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem-solving operations, especially by a computer
- **Citizen journalism:** Ordinary citizens reporting through the Internet on events or issues of local importance, often using social media
- **Collectivism:** Cultural orientation where the group is the primary unit of culture; group goals take precedence over individual goals
- **Communication apprehension:** The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or group of persons
- **Complexity theory:** Also known as complex dynamic systems; a framework for understanding phenomena that are composed of many variables and subsystems
- **Cosmopolitanism:** Moral view of the individual as having an allegiances and personal responsibility to the world
- **Critical intercultural communication:** Approach to the field that focuses on issues of power, context, socio-economic relations and historical/structural forces as they play out in culture and intercultural communication encounters, relationships, and contexts
- **Culture:** An accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol system (from Jim Neuliep)
- **Culture-of-use**: A set of historically developed, socially accepted norms and behavior for participation in speech communities such as online discussion forums (from Steve Thorne)
- **Decentered:** Shifting from an established center or focus; especially to disconnect from practical or theoretical assumptions of origin, priority, or essence
- **Digital divide:** Inequalities related to the access and use of information and communication technologies
- **Digital infinity:** The idea that all human languages follow a simple logical principle, according to which a limited set of elements are combined to produce an infinite range of potentially meaningful expressions.
- **Diaspora:** A scattered population whose origin lies is in a smaller geographic area
- **Echo chamber:** In media, an echo chamber is a situation in which information, ideas, or beliefs are amplified or reinforced by transmission and repetition inside an 'enclosed' system, where different or competing views are censored, disallowed or otherwise underrepresented
- **Emic/Etic:** In anthropology and other social sciences, emic refers to characteristics derived from inside a social group (from the perspective of the subject) and etic from outside (from the perspective of the observer)

- **Empathy: T**he imaginary participation in another person's experience, including emotional and intellectual dimensions, by imagining his or her perspective (James Bennett)
- **Essentialism:** A belief that things have a set of characteristics that make them what they are; in intercultural communication, characterizing cultures by a set of contrasting features, such as individualism versus collectivism
- **Filter bubble:** Describes a personalized search in which a website algorithm selectively guesses what information a user would like to see based on information about the user
- **Global citizenship:** the idea that all people have rights and civic responsibilities that come with being a member of the world
- **Globalization:** A process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology
- **Groupthink:** When group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints by actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints, and by isolating themselves from outside influences
- **Homophily:** i.e., "love of the same", is the tendency of individuals to associate and bond with similar others
- **Individualism:** Cultural orientation where the individual is unique and individual goals are emphasized over group goals
- **Intercultural communication:** Two persons from different cultures or co-cultures exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages
- **Netiquette:** A set of social conventions that facilitate interaction over networks
- **Other:** Identifying and excluding a person from a social group, placing him or her at the margins of society, where social norms do not apply
- **Othering:** Describes the reductive action of labeling a person as someone who belongs to a subordinate social category
- **Power distance:** The extent to which members of a culture expect and accept that power is unequally distributed
- **Reductionism:** The practice of analyzing and describing a complex phenomenon in terms of phenomena that are held to represent a simpler or more fundamental level; in intercultural communication, refers to reducing individual identities to perceived national characteristics
- **Search engine optimization**: The process of maximizing the number of visitors to a particular website by ensuring that the site appears high on the list of results returned by a search engine
- **Semantic:** Pertaining to meaning
- **Small cultures**: Small social groupings or activities wherever there are cohesive behavior patterns and practice (from Adrian Holliday)
- **Social justice:** The equitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society
- **Solutions journalism**: An approach to news reporting that focuses on the responses to social issues as well as the problems themselves
- **Symbol:** An arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus representing something else
- **Taxonomy:** The practice and science of classification of things or concepts
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** The degree to which members of a particular culture feel threatened by unpredictable, uncertain, or unknown situations
- **Worldview:** The cognitive and affective lens through which people construe their experiences and make sense of the world around them (AACU)
- **Xenophobia**: Intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries

Recommended Resources

Books

- Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (1959), a classic, which many seen as the beginning of the field of intercultural communication
- Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (1991), standard in the field by one of the major scholars
- Adrian Holliday, *Intercultural communication & ideology* (2011), looks at intercultural communication against the backdrop of an unequal global politics in which ideology plays a major role
- Edward Said (1979). *Orientalism*. 1978. *New York: Vintage*, *1994*.
- Kathryn Sorrells, *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice* (2015)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Globalization

· Why the World Is Flat

Article from *Wired* about Thomas Friedman's well-known book on globalization

· Pankaj Ghemawat: Actually, the world isn't flat
Ghemawat offers counter-arguments to the conventional wisdom about globalization, the concept that, as Tom Friedman put it, the "world is flat". In particular he has interesting comments about Facebook.
TED description: "It may seem that we're living in a borderless world where ideas, goods and people flow freely from nation to nation. We're not even close, says Pankaj Ghemawat. With great data (and an eye-opening survey), he argues that there's a delta between perception and reality in a world that's maybe not so hyperconnected after all."

· Global Policy Forum: Globalization
From Global Policy Forum, with extensive links

Statistics on world demographics

· World Demographics Profile
From Index Mundi, includes demographic information on all countries

· Hari Kondabolu - 2042 & the White Minority
Humorous take on the demographic changes coming to the USA

Cultural dimensions and history of intercultural communication

· Edward T. Hall and The History of Intercultural Communication: The United States and Japan
Article tracing the role of anthropologist Edward T. Hall in founding the field of intercultural communication

· Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions
From Clearly Cultural

On broadening horizons and media

· Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story
Nigerian novelist speaking about her experiences growing up in Nigeria and studying in the USA
TED description: "Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice — and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding."

· Leslie Dodson: Don't misrepresent Africa
TED description: "Real narratives are complicated: Africa isn't a country, and it's not a disaster zone, says reporter and researcher Leslie Dodson. In her talk, she calls for journalists, researchers and NGOs to stop representing entire continents as one big tragedy."

· Alisa Miller: How the news distorts our worldview
World map dramatically illustrates the US media's reporting on world events (very limited)
TED description: "Alisa Miller, head of Public Radio International, talks about why — though we want to know more about the world than ever — the media is actually showing us less. Eye-opening stats and graphs."

Technology and the filter bubble

· Technology is creating a world without strangers
On the sharing economy

· How to Burst the "Filter Bubble" that Protects Us from Opposing Views
From the MIT Technology Review

· Eli Pariser: Beware online "filter bubbles"

Pariser's classic TED talk explains the concepts of echo chamber and filter bubble.
TED description: "As web companies strive to tailor their services (including news and search results) to our personal tastes, there's a dangerous unintended consequence: We get trapped in a 'filter bubble' and don't get exposed to information that could challenge or broaden our worldview. Eli Pariser argues powerfully that this will ultimately prove to be bad for us and bad for democracy."

· Ethan Zuckerman: Listening to global voices

Interesting comments on how to be more aware of what's happening in the rest of the world, such as "engineer serendipity" and "cultivate xenophiles". Discussion of Twitter from an international perspective.
TED description: "Sure, the web connects the globe, but most of us end up hearing mainly from people just like ourselves. Blogger

and technologist Ethan Zuckerman wants to help share the stories of the whole wide world. He talks about clever strategies to open up your Twitter world and read the news in languages you don't even know."

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Credits

Photos: Unless otherwise noted, the images used are from open sources

Horizon: Pixabay; pixabay.com/p-768759

Chimamanda Adichie: Slowking, GFDL 1.,; https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28638718

Sushma Swaraj: UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office; https://www.flickr.com/photos/foreignoffice/14937796423

Girls' Generation: Korea KPOP World Festival: https://www.flickr.com/photos/42438955@N05/11039813825/

Justine Greening: Peter Millett/British Embassy Jordan: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Justine_Greening_talking_with_Syrian_children_at_a_UK-funded_clinic_in_the_Zaatari_refugee_camp,_Jordan_(9712014008).jpg

Ryan Boyette: Enough Project: https://www.flickr.com/photos/enoughproject/6939045049

Yi ethic group: Bernd Gross; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/F...i-Minority.JPG

Small discussion group: Culture Republic; https://www.flickr.com/photos/getambition/4700594335

Oakland Occupy: Brian Sims;https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/F...cent_signs.jpg

Active listening: CCCE Teach-In-18, University of Washington Communication Department; https://www.flickr.com/photos/uwcomm/26826519792/

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Building Identities

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Discuss the dynamics of identity formation today
- Compare/contrast different kinds of groups and roles
- Define and discuss different kinds of stereotyping
- Be able to discuss ways to overcome prejudicial views and actions

2.1: How Identities are Built

The same factors that make intercultural communication competence today so relevant – increased human mobility and open, worldwide communication networks – also have led to the formation of personal identities that are more varied and dynamic than ever before. It is of course always been the case that as we grow, we evolve. From the narrow starting point of the family, we enter into ever wider social circles, as we attend school, make friends, start working, and find a partner. Added to this traditional model now is the increasing likelihood of exposure to individuals from different cultures. This modifies how we think, how we view the world, how we react to different situations, which, in turn, adds a variety of flavors to how others see us and how we see ourselves, i.e. our identity. Today, part of that process may well happen virtually, through online social networks and media. More exposure to different kinds of people does not necessarily mean acceptance of growing social diversity. Unfortunately, the result can be increased prejudice and intolerance. In this unit we will be looking at identity formation, the roles of ethnic and social groups, and issues surrounding stereotyping.

Laina Dawes: Identity assumptions sometimes go astray

Laina's identity comes from many different sources, growing up in a rural part of Canada where there were few if any other blacks, being adopted into a white family, and being a woman in love with heavy metal music. Her situation demonstrates that personal identity doesn't necessarily match expectations based on stereotypes, for example, that all black people prefer hip-hop.

Audio / Transcript of NPR story about Laina

Cultural identity

Our identities are formed in a variety of ways. As we grow, we develop characteristics and personality traits that set us apart as individuals. Some of those are biological, such as skin color, height, hair color, etc. We may be shy or outgoing, enjoy playing sports or prefer computer games. Each of us has a personal identity which develops and changes over time. Some of our individual characteristics we develop on our own, but many aspects of our personality and preferences develop through contact with others. The starting point is the family into which we are born. Our family typically supplies our initial **cultural identity** – the values, beliefs, and behaviors inherited from belonging to a particular culture or ethnic group. Cultural identities provide a default framework for how we interact with others. That doesn't mean that we continue to have this perspective throughout our lives.

Cultural identities are dynamic and can change with one's ongoing life experiences. This may be an individualized change or could reflect changes in views embraced by one of the cultural groups to which we belong. In the US, for example, a significant shift in attitudes towards Muslims occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Many US citizens developed a new, often negative opinion of anyone perceived to be Muslim or from an Arab country. Major shifts have occurred in recent years in many countries in regard to same-sex marriage. It is certainly not the case that all citizens of those countries have changed their attitudes; after all, individuals have free will and the ability to adopt differing views.

It may be also that one's views may differ from those of the cultural mainstream through the link one has to a particular subculture. This might be a traditionally identified minority group – based on ethnic, racial, or language characteristics – or might be a group we belong to out of personal interest or through other relationships such as employment. Minority groups – or **microcultures** – are traditionally characterized as being distinct in several different ways (Neuliep, 2012). There may be distinctive physical characteristics, such as skin color or dress. Sometimes, microcultures practice in-group marriage, known as **endogamy** (as opposed to **exogamy** – marrying outside your group). Often microcultures receive unequal treatment and face discrimination in a variety of areas, including housing and employment. The social status and rights of microcultures vary considerably depending on time and place. At one time in the US, Irish immigrants were discriminated against, but they (and other European immigrants) have long since become part of the mainstream white culture in the US.

To indicate that subgroups exist within and must interact with the majority cultures, some use the term **co-culture** (Orbe & Spellers, 2005). The term is frequently used in the context of the power discrepancy between co-cultures and the dominant culture, highlighting the marginalization and disenfranchisement of many minority groups. In using the terms majority and minority, we are referencing a group's relative influence and power within a society, rather than numerical superiority. In some societies, such as in colonized countries, the largest number of inhabitants may not hold the levers of power, which may be in the hands of a smaller, elite group. In apartheid South Africa (before 1994), for example, the overwhelming majority of inhabitants were black, but the government, economic institutions, and school systems were all under the control of the minority white South Africans. One could point as well to similar discrepancies between numerical superiority and access to political, social, and economic power in Saddam Hussain's Iraq (Sunni versus Shi'a) or the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria (Alawi versus Sunni).

Cultural identities tend to be constructed differently depending on whether an individual is a member of a co-culture or a representative of the mainstream. Often, those in the majority population lack the social consciousness that typically accompanies being part of a minority. Members of the dominant culture typically will be happy with the social status quo. They are likely never to have been led or forced to examine their position or role in society, seeing themselves as "normal" or "regular" citizens. In the documentary film, the Color of Fear (Wah, 1994), the white US Americans identify themselves as "Americans", while those representing minority groups use hyphenated terms such as African-American, Mexican-American, or Chinese-American; those men have much more to say than their white counterparts about their cultural backgrounds. This is typical of the mainstream in the US: "People who are white know that they are white, but this is often translated as being just American. They do not have any experience understanding race and how it shapes our lives. They typically don't think about their whiteness, nor do they think about the privilege bestowed on them because of their race" (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner & Schmitz, 2008, p. 29). In fact, white Americans may be reluctant to acknowledge that "white privilege" exists. Peggy McIntosh has put together a compelling list of examples of white privilege in the US (see sidebar). Unearned social and economic privilege is not unique to European-Americans; that phenomenon has parallels in many other countries, in which elite classes enjoy rights and advantages not available to all members of the society. Migrant workers in many countries are denied many of the benefits (education, housing, employment) afforded other sectors of society.

White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack

I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

[Note: the full text contains 50 items]

Members of a majority group may be unaware of the reality of life for minorities in their society. On the other hand, members of minority groups cannot ignore the dominant culture — they typically encounter aspects of that culture and its representatives on an everyday basis, as they go about their daily lives. The societal apparatus — education, housing, media, government, employment – is controlled by the mainstream population. Members of a minority are well aware of the situation and must adjust accordingly. It is likely, for instance, that in African-American families today, parents talk to their children (especially the boys) about how to interact with police officers. That is not likely to be a necessary conversation in white households. Members of a minority need to balance issues of adaptation and assimilation into the dominant culture with the need to retain identification with their own communities.

One of the issues with which microcultures often have to contend is language. The major institutions of a country – schools, government, industry – use predominantly or exclusively the language of the dominant culture. This means that members of a microculture who either speak a different language or use a dialectical variety of the standard language may be at a disadvantage. In fact, "**muted group theory**" suggests that those with less power in a society often have difficulty communicating effectively, as they must re-encode their thoughts to make them understood (Ardener, 1975). One response to this phenomenon is the creation of a

unique language. African American Vernacular English, or **Ebonics**, is an example of that (Perry & Delpit, 1998). **Spanglish** – **code-switching** between English and Spanish – is characteristic of many Latinos in the US (Stavans, 2004). In Germany *Kiezdeutsch* (also "kanaksprach") is a version of German that integrates Turkish terms (Freywald et al, 2011). Similar language hybrid phenomena can be observed in other cultures. We will be exploring issues around minority language use in chapter three.

Integration and Marginalization

To what extent microcultures remain separate or become integrated and eventually inseparable from the mainstream culture varies considerably. The metaphor popularly used for many years in the US was that of the melting pot, with the implication being that immigrant communities were to **assimilate**, or give up their cultural identities (and language) and adopt the mainstream European-American culture. In the US today there is increasing recognition of the right of minority groups to maintain aspects of their cultures of origin (Alba & Nee, 2009). This embrace of **pluralism** – with a more appropriate metaphor for the US being a garden salad or a mixed stew – is by no means universal. That is the case in other countries as well.

In the US, second and third generation immigrant families often have a quite different attitude toward their ethnic heritage than was the case for their parents or grandparents (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). They may express considerable interest and pride in that heritage, its customs, and language. The degree to which descendants of immigrant families or representatives of indigenous minorities are able to blend successfully their family/ethnic backgrounds into the dominant culture depends on the extent of social acceptance. Some groups have been systematically **marginalized**, that is, denied the same basic rights and privileges as granted to other populations. They may face discrimination in areas such as housing, access to education, or employment opportunities. Examples are the indigenous populations of North America or Australia, the Romani in Europe, the Palestinians in the Middle East, or the "Untouchables" (Lower Castes or *Dalit*) in India. There are as well counter-examples of societies, such as Canada, which have embraced multiculturalism, enabling newcomers to maintain their original cultural identities, as they adjust to the new Canadian environment (Peach, 2005).

Countries vary considerably in ethnic diversity. Japan and the Koreas, for example, are ethnically homogeneous, with small minority populations. That is characteristic as well of island nations, for understandable reasons. One of the main methodologies used to measure diversity is linguistic variation (Fearon, 2003). From that perspective, Papua New Guinea and South Africa rank particularly high in cultural diversity. That is the case as well for India, with 22 different languages and over 1500 officially recognized dialects. The cultural fabric of India (language, food habits, clothing, colors of houses, architecture, etc.) can vary tremendously from one region to another. The modern state of India, with its variety of cultures integrated into one political entity, is a byproduct of British colonialism. It was not uncommon for occupying colonial powers to construct arbitrary boundaries, determined by political and economic **hegemonic** interests rather than according to languages spoken or along traditional ethnic or tribal lines. This kind of forced political integration has led to conflict, as competing tribes or ethnic groups struggle for power, for example in Rwanda (1990-1994), Sudan (1955 to 1972), and Nigeria (1967-1970). Ethnic conflict is by no means limited to Africa. Tribal affiliations and religious differences have led to many conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Figure 2.1.1: Women in Japan: a largely homogeneous country

Although European countries have tended to be largely homogeneous, there are exceptions such as Switzerland or Belgium. While the Swiss have managed to create a common national identity, which has largely shielded the country from strife among the linguistically and culturally diverse cantons, Belgium has not been so successful in national integration. The Flemish and French parts of the country have had considerable trouble cooperating politically and economically. Conflict has arisen as well in Latin America, with struggles of indigenous populations in Guatemala, Mexico, Columbia, and other countries for equal rights. In some

cases, ethnic strife has led to countries breaking apart into separate entities, such as happened in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s or in Sudan in 2011. Separatist movements have arisen in a number of countries, such as Catalonia in Spain or Scotland in the UK.

Just because a country is ethnically homogeneous, it does not mean that it will remain that way. Germany, for example, has traditionally been relatively homogeneous, but has seen several large waves of immigration which have made the population much more diverse. So-called "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) were recruited in the 1950s and 1960s from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey to supply manpower for the growing post-war German economy (Herbert, 1990). Many of those workers and their families elected to resettle permanently in Germany. The large number of Turkish Germans has had a significant influence on German culture, with Germans of Turkish descent playing significant roles in politics, sports, entertainment and other areas. In 2015–2016, large numbers of refugees arrived in Germany, fleeing war, civil strife, and poverty in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Northern Africa. The substantial numbers of new arrivals placed stress on the ability of government agencies, churches, and citizen groups to provide sufficient services, such as housing and language training. As migrants are dispersed among different urban and rural areas in Germany, efforts to reach the different groups with information and training has been a challenge. One of the more successful methods that has been used is mobile technology (see sidebar). Not all Germans have welcomed the arrival of large numbers of refugees. Some refugee centers have been burned to the ground. Anti-immigrant movements such as PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the West) have attracted popular support among some parts of the German population (Vorländer, Herold, & Schäller, 2015). As is the case in neighboring countries, that has also lead to political changes, with a new anti-immigrant and anti-EU party, the Alternative for Germany (AFD), which in 2018 entered the German parliament. In France, the National Front has attracted large numbers of French voters unhappy with economic stagnation and with the perceived cultural changes in French society through the large numbers of immigrants from Northern Africa.

Smartphones and refugees

In Germany, the hoped-for destination of many refugees, a number of apps have been created tar-geting the immigrant population. The Goethe Insti-tute, along with federal agencies dealing with im-migration and employment, have created Ankommen (*Arrival*), available in Arabic, English, Farsi, French, and German. As do other such apps, it is designed with minimal technical requirements, so as to be usable on older phones. It features three branched areas: German language study, German asylum procedures, and tips on living in Germany. Integreat offers a similar service for refugees in Germany. It is available in five languages and fea-tures information specific to one of the 80 German cities targeted. Daheim (*At Home*) offers a meeting platform for new arrivals and German natives, designed for language learning and intercultural exchange.

Godwin-Jones, 2017, p. 11

The extent to which members of microcultures integrate into the mainstream culture may depend on how that particular group arrived in the new country. This may have happened in a number of different ways: forced repatriation – as in the case of slavery –, voluntary immigration, for instance those seeking better job opportunities, or through refugee status, seeking protection from political persecution or dangerous living conditions. The integration process also depends on the nature of the group, and how similar or dissimilar its customs, language, and worldviews are to the mainstream culture. One of the central issues affecting the reception of recent migrants to Europe is that most are Muslims, while European countries are majority Christian. The difference in religion affects not only worship practices and religious doctrines but also social views, such as the role of women in society. Visibly different skin color or dress are likely to make integration, or even acceptance, into the mainstream culture potentially problematic. Diaspora communities tend to keep many customs and rituals from their places of origin. Indian families who migrated to Southern Africa, and from there to the UK, the USA, or Canada, may have never visited India, but still marry according to Indian customs. Yet, they also integrate Western customs, such as holding speeches at the wedding reception (A. Malik, personal communication, June 25, 2017).

Figure 2.1.2: PEGIDA demonstration in Dresden, Germany

The degree to which particular groups maintain cultural ties to their family places of origin differs significantly according to both the group and the nature of the destination culture. In the US, for example, many people of European ancestry have largely integrated culturally into the mainstream, and have lost most of their association with their ancestral homeland and may not even be aware of their family backgrounds. They may not know about the stigma which used to be attached to immigrants to the US from countries such as Ireland, Italy, or Germany. Some white US Americans may have a **symbolic ethnicity**, a largely voluntary affiliation with a particular ethnic group which only surfaces in particular contexts, as in the celebration of a holiday such as St. Patrick's Day or Oktoberfest. While many microcultures become segregated due to prejudicial treatment by the mainstream culture, as has historically been the case with African-Americans, some microcultures choose to remain apart. The Amish community in the US live apart from the non-Amish, with their religious beliefs leading them to reject many aspects of contemporary US culture. They dress differently, speak a German dialect, and shun modern technology. Because living in an Amish community isolates individuals so completely from mainstream US culture, young people are given an opportunity to experience the "English", i.e. non-Amish, world through a tradition called *rumspringa*.

Rumspringa: Amish youth exploring the world

In many communities, *Rumspringa* is a period when some Amish youth, boys more than girls, experience greater freedom. They are no longer under the control of their parents on weekends and, because they are not baptized, they are not yet under the authority of the church. During this time, many Amish youth adhere to traditional Amish behavior. Others experiment with “worldly” activities—buying a car, going to movies, wearing non-Amish clothes, buying a television.

Kraybill, 2016

Figure 2.1.3: Amish family in New York farming

Social Identity

While our national origin and ethnic background typically contribute substantially towards forming our individual identities, they alone do not play a determining role in shaping who we are. There are likely to be a variety of groups we belong to, constructing what is commonly called our **social identity**. Some of these are involuntary, such as age, race, or family. Others are groups we choose to join, such as a club, church, or political party. There may be groups we do not belong to but with which we identify in some way, for example, a professional group we hope to join one day (i.e., physicians, lawyers, astronauts) or political action groups with whose views we agree. These are known as **reference groups** (Shibutani, 1955). There may be as well any number of impromptu, ad-hoc groups with which we identify, forging a variety of shifting small cultures and affinity groups. At least some of

those are likely to be mostly or exclusively online, such as our *Facebook* friends or those we follow or who follow us on *Twitter* or through other social media.

How we communicate with others may be strongly influenced by our group memberships. Some groups distinguish sharply between who is in and who is out. Members of the **in-group** may feel prejudiced against those in **out-groups**. Extreme nationalists, for example, may discriminate against or even harass immigrant communities. One way in which groups tend to shape individual behavior is through a phenomenon known as **in-group bias**, in which we as members of an in-group automatically favor other members of our group (Brewer, 1979). This is in contrast to **out-group negativity** in which we attribute automatically negative characteristics to those outside our group (Sherif et al., 1961). The same observed behavior might be judged quite differently depending on whether the other person belongs to our group.

Interactions and communication among group members may also be influenced by individuals' roles within groups. In some groups, roles may be formal and well-defined, with a strict hierarchy in place. This is the case in many working environments. In such cases, how we communicate is determined by our place in the hierarchy, with those at the top accorded a high measure of respect and being addressed in deferential language. Different cultures may see group roles quite differently, even within similar groups or organizations. In most university communities in the US, for example, there is a fairly relaxed, relatively egalitarian relationship between students and professors, with the language used informal and colloquial. In other countries, such as South Korea, the relationship is likely to be more hierarchical, with an accompanying shift in the language to a much more formal register.

An increasingly prevalent approach to addressing the nature of social identity is the "**communication theory of identity**", developed originally by communication scholar Michael Hecht (1998). The theory provides a model for describing how groups create an identity through communication. The idea is that identity is negotiated in particular contexts, either between individuals of the same identity groups or individuals of different groups. In this view, social identities are constructed and fluid. We express our identities through such things as choice of language, nonverbals like clothing or body language, or the degree to which we emphasize our group membership. Depending on the situation, we may express our identity in different ways. The theory is helpful in breaking down into separate categories how our communication and behavior as members of a group affects our sense of identity in particular contexts. Identity components include the following:

- *Scope* (how many people hold the identity)
- *Salience* (how important the identity is to a person at a given point in time)
- *Centrality* (how important the identity is usually to a person's self-esteem)
- *Intensity* (how vocal or expressive one is about an identity)
- *Changeability* (some aspects of identities change and others do not)

How this works in practice is demonstrated in the example of women in the Sahara (see the sidebar).

In addition, the theory proposes that identities have both a *content component* – norms of behavior associated with an identity – and a *relationship component*, i.e., how we feel about an identity. The content may be actions, behaviors, or language expected or accepted in particular contexts such as using formal language when addressing a superior. The relationship component (sometimes referred to as "regard") refers to different views on particular behaviors or attitudes associated with an identity, which may be seen differently depending on the individual. Baldwin (2013) provides this example, "Two people might see themselves as 'geeks.' Both may agree what the identity means as far as characteristics (content), but one might embrace the identity (positive regard) and the other might dislike the identity (negative regard)". This approach treats identity as context-dependent and emergent, rather than static and fixed. This is in accord with views on identify formation current in the social sciences generally and has been of particular interest in applied linguistics and second language acquisition. In this view, we negotiate our identities on the fly, through our use of language and other identity markers such as body language or dress. The dynamics of that kind of identify assertion are dependent on the environment and on the background and behavior of those with whom we are communicating.

Women in the Sahara

If we think of the identity of gender in the Sahara, we can state that:

- **Scope**: Sex has a much broader scope than, say, Jewish people
- **Salience**: A woman might be a professional, a student, a researcher, or a Muslim. In some contexts, one identity will be more relevant or in the front of her mind than others.
- **Centrality**: Because of the emphasis on gender in the Sahara, this identity is probably "salient" all or most of the time—thus, it has more centrality.

- **Intensity:** Women may express their identity either more or less vocally. By wearing a head-covering, especially when such is optional, as it is in some countries, the women is expressing identity more explicitly. She is “out” about her religious identity.
- **Changeability**: Clearly, as expressed in the photo above, gender identity in parts of the Saharan region is changing—but likely in other ways staying the same.

Baldwin (2013)

Worldviews and Religions

One of the groups many belong to is a religious community. The religion to which we adhere may have a substantial impact on how we communicate with others:

> *Religious differences have tremendous implications for intercultural communication. Religion is a powerful force in marking cultural differences, which can lead to both intercultural conflict and intercultural cooperation. Even when not explicitly noted, religion may influence our attitudes about right and wrong and may influence our own behavior. (Nakayama & Martin, 2002, p. 21).*

Religious beliefs often play a central role in a person's worldview, i.e., the set of values and beliefs about acceptable human behavior and about mankind's relationship to a supreme being and to the natural world. In some cases, religion and worldview are tightly connected. This is the case in what are deemed "sacred cultures", where there is a religious doctrine that plays a determining role in expected personal behavior, fundamental values, and appearance (Dodd, 1998). In some cultures, such as in Saudi Arabia, there may be a state religion which exerts this kind of controlling influence. In other cases, the connection between religion and worldview is not as clear-cut, as in the case of the Puritan influence in the US (see sidebar). Secular societies, such as the US, draw a sharp distinction between church and state. France has a long tradition of "*laïcité*" (secularity) which has been the expressed reason for controversial measures such as the banning of women wearing veils or headscarves in public schools (Caron, 2007). On the other hand, India, also a secular culture, has not banned religious symbols (Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr & Wegert, 2013).

Pervasive Puritanism

The influence of the Puritan settlers on US society can be seen in the fact that US Americans have rather conservative views about alcohol and nudity — something that many Europeans find rather prudish. This demonstrates the implicit influence of religion on worldview and perception — people in the United States who may not subscribe to Puritan or even Christian beliefs may still be influenced by that historical tradition and worldview.

Nakayama & Martin, 2002, p. 22

Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961) developed a set of "value orientations" to distinguish worldviews. The values taxonomy indicates what instructions are implicitly provided by a culture as guidelines for living and interacting with others. They address the questions of man's place in the cosmos, namely:

- *Character of human nature* (basically good – a mixture of good and evil – basically evil)
- *Relation of humans to nature* (humans dominate–harmony of the two–nature dominates)

- *Time orientation* (future-oriented - present-oriented - past-oriented)
- *Activity orientation* ("doing"/action – "growing"/spiritual growth – "being"/who you are)
- *Relationships between people* (individual - group-oriented – collateral)

If applied to mainstream US culture, the human–nature orientation is that mankind is essentially good, with humans considered to be rational beings who have control of their own destinies (the much vaunted but elusive US "equality of opportunity"). The mutable nature of human character in the US view is demonstrated by the popularity of self-help groups, self-improvement seminars, and "life coaches". US culture sees mankind as empowered to rule over nature, with faith in science to solve problems. In terms of activity orientation, the US tends to value pragmatism and efficiency; that applies to time as well, which tends to be future-oriented. In their relationships with others, US Americans are seen as individualistic, with few binding group memberships. They are more likely to be willing to relocate to entirely new regions for education or employment.

India offers a dramatically different profile. In this life, humans must accept restraints and limitations, but need to work towards enlightenment and perfection, but that may occur over successive lives. The human-nature relationship is seen quite differently, with an emphasis on harmony, not control, and a concern for the "welfare of all things" taking precedence over human concerns (Roa & Thombre, 2015, p. 67). Spiritual growth is highly valued and that may occur over successive reincarnations, so that both the past and the future are important and are not seen as distinctly different entities. From an Indian perspective, time is not linear but circular. Indians are "highly collectivistic in their local group, but are individualistic in dealing with outsiders" (Rao & Thombre, 2015, p. 81). Starkly different regional characteristics in language and customs tend to lead Indians to feel most comfortable living in their home regions, and less likely than North Americans to accept moving far from home for education or employment (Rao & Thombre, 2015).

As is always the case with such generalizations, these value orientations need to be seen as just that — generalities which may be useful as default categories but do not hold for all members of a culture. In the case of the characteristics for US culture, for example, there are significant differences among different co-cultures, for instance in Native Americans' view of the relationship to nature or in the importance of family relations in the African-American household. A similar variety of values orientations are evident in India, as in many other countries. There are shifting views on man's relationship to nature, which derive in part from global warming and other natural phenomena. In India, for example, the concept of *dharma* (loosely, the right way of living) leads to environmentalism being built into Indian culture, while environmental pollution is viewed as an expression of *karma* (just retribution; Roa & Thombre, 2015). There are likely generational differences too, for example, in time orientation, with younger North Americans or Indians being more present-oriented, with greater interest in quality-of-life concerns. Looking at the value orientations of other cultures is likely to show similar results, that is, some common default values, with many discrepancies depending on group memberships.

The forces of globalization and mass immigration which have increasingly mixed cultures together have also brought together different worldviews and religions. This can lead to greater religious diversity. This phenomenon is seen by some as a weakening or dilution of religious beliefs. In response, fundamentalist religious movements have arisen in different parts of the world, which strive to set boundaries and adhere to a perceived "pure" version of a religion. Often, this is also a reaction against particular social changes, such as equality between men and women or equal rights for **LGBTQ** communities (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning). Religion is often deeply tied to people's cultural identity and a disregard or perceived disrespect for a person's religious beliefs or rituals is seen as a personal attack. In such cases, communication may be shut down completely.

Intercultural Communication and Ideology

When we talk about worldviews, another term that frequently comes into play is **ideology**. Ideology is similar to worldview in that it references our conception of the order of the world and humans' role in society, but it places additional emphasis on what in an ideal world human relationships and behavior should be. This often involves political and socio-economic considerations, with a central concern being the individual or groups who exercise power and control. From that perspective, the question arises as to who controls culture – that is where do our values and mores come from. Italian theorist, Antonio Gramsci (1971, originally 1935), uses the concept of **cultural hegemony** to describe how those in power manipulate the value system of a society so as to co-op and control beliefs and behaviors among the population at large. In this way, the ruling class worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm and establishes and justifies a social, political, and economic status quo.

Adrian Holliday (2010) sees the concept of culture itself as a form of ideology. Under the guise of culture, we (especially in the West) tend to establish and perpetuate static images of particular groups. Edward Said (1978) has shown, for example, how the West exoticized images of people from the East, creating a stereotype of "Orientals", which helped promote Western superiority

and hence justify colonialism and subjugation. Holliday has shown that the terms of cultural differentiation often used in intercultural communication such as collectivism and individualism often in subtle ways denigrate particular cultures or peoples. For Holliday, the concept of culture, as usually understood, leads "easily and sometimes innocently to the reduction of the foreign Other as culturally deficient" (Holliday, 2010, ix).

Figure 2.1.4: Snake Charmer, example of image in the West of "Orientals"

If, in fact, as Holliday states, the world is governed by "unequal global politics in which ideology plays a major role" (2010, ix), that holds consequences for intercultural interactions. It makes it important to recognize our own ideological framework, both as individuals and groups. That includes a consideration of how our gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnic background affect our views of the world and of others. This critical self-awareness can enable us to view others and their cultural values and behaviors with a clearer appreciation of how forces beyond an individual's control contribute to identity formation and particular worldviews. Developing a knowledge of the interaction between culture and political institutions can help in finding avenues for change that are feasible, given societal constraints. We may see injustices which, given our own backgrounds, seem to be evidence of "backwards" beliefs or of a corrupt political culture. Rather than judge harshly an individual engaged in what we see as negative behavior, it is better to understand the constraints at work. Individuals do not always have the freedom to change aspects of behavior that are controlled by institutional forces. It is also the case, that as outsiders, we are not likely to have a full understanding of what may be a quite complex interplay of factors which determine individual behavior.

2.2: Judging and Treating Others Fairly

Categorization and stereotyping

When we encounter someone for the first time, we may not be aware of their cultural or social identities. If we do not have any prior knowledge, we tend to assign individuals to categories based on appearance, age, and the context in which the encounter takes place. This is normal human behavior, as we make sense of the world by putting objects and people into categories. We tend to categorize based on perceived similarities and differences. Obviously, our ability to make viable choices depends on our own degree of experience and knowledge. The less knowledge we have, the more likely we are to fall back on general information we may have acquired informally from friends, family, or media reports. Our mind tries to connect the dots in order to create a complete picture based on the information it already has, which may be scant or faulty. This can provide a very limited, narrowly focused, and potentially distorted impression of the other.

Relying on faulty information leads us to make generalizations that may be far removed from reality. We can overcome the distortion of the "single story", as Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie puts it, in a number of ways (Adichie, 2009). The most effective antidote is to gain greater real knowledge of other cultures through direct contact. That can come from travel, study abroad, service learning, online exchanges, or informal means of making contact. Following news reports on what's happening outside our immediate area can also be valuable, particularly if we seek out reliable, objective reporting. What can be helpful in that regard is to try to find multiple sources of information. Another way to gain insight into other cultures is through stories, told in novels, autobiographies, or movies. The more perspectives we have on a given culture, the less likely it is that we will extrapolate from a single experience to make generalizations about an entire group.

In addition to seeking out opportunities for gaining knowledge about other cultures, what is also needed is to engage with others in a spirit of openness and curiosity. An unwillingness to view others as individuals whose real identity is yet to be discovered, means that we are assuming that everyone in that perceived category is the same, with identical characteristics shared by all. **Stereotyping** can be positive or negative. There may be, for example, a perception that all members of a given community are smart and hard-working, as is sometimes said of Asian-American students. Indian immigrants to the US are often seen in that light, as a "**model minority**" (Lee, 2015). More common are negative stereotypes; in the US race and gender groups are often stereotyped. In other cultures, stereotypes may be attached to those from certain regions or who follow particular religions. Even positive stereotypes can be problematic, as they lead us to depersonalize people, treating them as members of a group, rather than as unique individuals. Stereotyping can lead to communication breakdowns, if ones stereotyping of a group is different from the view the group has of itself. We can distinguish between **ascribed identities** and **avowed identities**. The ascribed identity is one that we give to either people or groups. Ones avowed identity is the identity we claim as our own. Effective communication occurs when there is a match between the identity we ascribe to others and the identity they avow. Otherwise misunderstanding and conflict can arise.

Stereotyping in turn can lead to ethnocentric attitudes. **Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to place our own group above all others, while seeing out-groups negatively. Ethnocentrism can have positive effects, namely contributing toward solidarity and cooperation within a community and helping to build pride and patriotism. On the other hand, ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice and discrimination. In the most extreme cases, it can result in **racism**, which claims a biologically-based superiority for the in-group. While ethnocentrism is a universal and innate human behavior, racism is social and learned. We are more likely to see racism in difficult economic times, when out-groups such as immigrants become scapegoats. Modern science has shown that there is no biological basis for racial categories, as the genetic make-up among humans differs very little (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

Figure 2.2.1: Protest against racism in the UK

Related to racism is xenophobia, the fear of strangers. Some scholars say that xenophobia is universal and biological. Others point to the fact that xenophobia is often racialized – it can be a fear of only those strangers with a particular racial profile. In German-speaking countries, the German equivalent of xenophobia, *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*, is used to the exclusion of the term racism (*Rassismus*). That is likely tied to the Nazi-era appropriation of the latter term. Teun van Dijk's research on racism in Europe points to the fact that although Europeans do admit there is xenophobia in their countries, they see it as a general reaction against foreigners (1987). In practice the xenophobia mostly arises for selected foreigners, namely those with different skin color and religions. The relations among different groups that give rise to prejudice and animosity often have historical causes. The ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, for example, have roots in tribalism and colonialism (see sidebar).

Tribalism in the Middle East

The same north Arabian Bedouin tribes that accepted Islam and spread it by the sword also infused the region with a deeply tribal culture, impacting everything from family relations to governance and conflict. Tribal affiliation is based on descent from a common male ancestor; all descendants are deemed to share common interests and to have obligations of solidarity with one another. Descendants of other ancestors are deemed to have different interests and are seen to be opponents, sometimes enemies. The main principle of tribal life is absolute loyalty to one's lineage group visàvis other groups of the same order and scope: clan vs. clan, tribe vs. tribe, confederation vs. confederation, sect vs. sect, Muslim vs. infidels...Opposition, rivalry, and conflict are thus seen to be in the nature of social life. Success, power, wealth, and, above all, honour derives from triumphing over opposition groups. Failure to triumph means the loss of power, wealth, and, above all, honour.The pervasive and continuous conflict in the Middle East–between clans, tribes, sects, and religions–is a manifestation of this culture.

Salzman, 2016

Addressing prejudice and intolerance

Prejudice "involves making a prejudgment based on membership in a social category. While prejudice can be positive or negative, there is a tendency for most of us to think of it as negative" (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 134). We can be prejudiced in favor of a group or against. Prejudice is tied to group identification. We all tend to think of ourselves in terms of our group memberships, and it is natural to judge our own groups positively. The fact that prejudice is common and inborn is of course an explanation but not a justification. Prejudice can lead to **intolerance**, an active unwillingness to accept views or behavior different from one's own. Prejudice can take different forms. There is individual prejudice but also institutional prejudice, i.e. prejudice embedded in social policies or institutions. Today in the US we see less "overt prejudice", namely individuals expressing publically strong opinions against particular groups, and more "subtle prejudice", hidden in symbolic language, as when talking about gangs or welfare to really make racial comments. Hiding racism behind symbols or political attitudes is known as **symbolic racism** (Sears, 1988). Racism may be reflected in the language used by those in power, as in the repression of indigenous languages by colonial powers, for example, Arabic being suppressed in favor of French in Lebanon or in North Africa.

In recent years, there has also been attention paid to behaviors which may be unintended examples of prejudicial treatment, sometimes labeled **micro-aggressions** (Sue, 2010). Examples in the US context might include such questions as "Where are you from or where were you born?" or "You speak English very well." Yet, in different cultural contexts, a question as to the interlocutor's origins or affinities may be seen as normal and inoffensive. In a community-oriented culture, such as that of India, such questions may indicate rapport building or a search for common ground on which to base future communication (Malik, 2017). The appropriateness of origins questions depends on context and individuals. It may be evident through intonation or body language that the question is well-intentioned and is being asked in a spirit of openness, curiosity, and good will.

Where are you from? Sometimes not easy to answer

"Where are you from?" As someone who was born and grew up in China, who has spent the last 15 years working in British higher education and lived in Newcastle and London, I often found it difficult to answer the above question in small talk. I can never get it right. If I say that I'm from London, I can guarantee that the next question would be 'But where are you really from?'. People expect to hear that I am from China or somewhere in Asia. But I feel that I am misleading them if I just give them what they want to hear. I am Chinese, but that is not all. I am a Chinese living in London, a professor in a British university and have two children of school age who were born and grew up in England.

Zhu, 2014

Racism can be seen as an individual trait or as institutional and societal. How we frame the issue can be important in finding ways to address it. If racism is seen as individual, that tends to absolve the individual from personal responsibility in doing anything about it, such as encouraging societal changes (reallocation of resources, changing laws). If racism is seen in social terms, that makes society as a whole responsible, including ourselves. Many of the efforts used to address prejudice and intolerance involve education, that is, increasing intercultural awareness or sensitizing individuals to difference. However, intolerance is complex, involving not only a cognitive side, but also affective (emotional), behavioral, and structural/political components. One approach for addressing intolerance is **contact theory**, originally the "contact hypothesis," as developed by US psychologist Gordon Allport (1979). Allport suggested that direct contact between members of different groups – under certain conditions – could lead to reducing prejudice and conflict. The conditions for success he laid out, are that 1) there be equal status between the groups, 2) both groups have common goals for the encounter, 3) both groups focus on cooperation rather than competition, and finally 4) the process be supported by an authority of some kind, such as a government agency. This approach has been used effectively in such conflicts as the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and in the reconciliation talks between whites and blacks in post-apartheid South Africa. It is the underlying assumption for the benefits derived from school exchanges.

Research by Allport and others has shown that bringing groups together into contact with one another does not in itself provide a guarantee of improved attitudes or enlightened views vis-à-vis the other group. Allport's contact theory shows that the context and conditions of the encounter will shape success or failure. Even encounters when conducted under ideal and carefully supervised conditions may still have mixed results. That might include benefits for some students and adverse reactions from others, including reactions bordering on culture shock. A story in the public radio show *This American Life* reports on just such an experience, in which students from an inner-city New York City school, with predominantly Hispanic students from low-income families, visit an elite private school located nearby (see sidebar).

Three miles away and worlds apart

There's a program that brings together kids from two schools. One school is public and in the country's poorest congressional district. The other is private and costs $43,000/year...These two schools were three miles from each other, but the students basically needed a foreign exchange program to meet each other...Lisa, the public school teacher, says the moment her kids got off the bus at Fieldston, the private school, they had a dramatic reaction to what they saw: "They couldn't believe the campus. They felt like everyone was looking at them. And one of the students started screaming and crying. Like, this is unfair. This is--I don't want to be here. I'm leaving. I'm leaving right now. I'm going home."

Melanie [the upset student]: "I know I looked at it and I said, well, I know that we're only being taught to flip burgers in Burger King or McDonald's or to hold doors for students like them that will probably live in those buildings on Madison Avenue. And we'll be wearing the uniform servicing these people."

So that's what she found so upsetting. It seemed that the people around her must believe that this was the natural order of things. Melanie knew there was no innate difference between her and a kid born into wealth. She could see that this division we're all so inured to was not a reflection of her inferior worth or ability..

Glass, 2015

One of the ways that as individuals we can contribute to understanding and tolerance towards other cultures is to engage in **critical reflectivity**, (Prayer, 1993), a practice often used in education and workplace settings. The idea is to leverage the knowledge of one's own value system to build a secure sense of identity, enabling greater willingness to accept others. The first step is to examine the norms and behaviors rising from her own racial/ethnic background, gender, and socio-economic status:

The process highlights areas in which assumptions and interactions between oneself and others result in behaviors that perpetuate the marginalization of people who have been oppressed. This process reveals how power and privilege are understood or misunderstood, and how assumptions make a difference in determining whether interactions are productive, hurtful, or destructive (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner & Schmitz, 2008, p. 24).

A self-narrative on whiteness

The most influential, factor in my lack of process for self-examination regarding my whiteness was what I now call the “luxury of whiteness.” Because I have never been subject to discrimination on the basis of my race, I have the luxury of being able to easily disengage or distance myself from a discussion on race or racism. The logic of luxury was clear – because I had no race, I did not have to do the self-examining work on my racial identity. That is the ultimate luxury of whiteness: the ability to see myself as neutral and thus excuse myself from any responsibility for addressing racial issues in education, society in general, and most importantly, myself.

Gorski, 2000

Developing a strong sense of self allows us to approach others with more understanding and empathy. This is especially important for those with a privileged status in a society.

Language and Identity

One of the ways we can have more understanding and appreciation of those with different cultures is to learn their language. This provides a view "from inside" that is difficult to achieve without knowledge of the language. In recent years, there has been substantial scholarly work on the relationship between language – especially second language or L2 – and identity. The common perception is that being proficient in another language can add a new personal identity which inherits traits from the culture in which the language is spoken. We may acquire, along with linguistic skills, nonverbal behaviors (i.e. learning how to bow in learning Japanese), cultural preferences in areas such as food or music, as well as a fundamental worldview shared by native speakers of the language. However, we should be aware of the complex relationship between language and culture, which is not the same for all languages. Learning English, for example, a language which encompasses many different cultures, is quite different culturally from learning Japanese, closely associated with just one country.

Modern theories of language and identity have moved away from the focus on the individual psychological effect of second language acquisition to a greater concern with sociological and cultural dimensions. Contemporary scholars study how language learners construct identity depending on the time and place in which they are using the L2. David Block, one of the leading scholars in the area of language and identity, points out that issues of self-identity arise often when individuals move across socio-cultural and language borders. In this sense, says Block, identity can be seen as "contested in nature as the new and varied input provided to the individual serves to disturb taken-for-granted points of reference" (Block, 2007, p. 20). Block and Cameron (2002) used the term "critical experience" to refer to such periods in one's life:

> *By critical experiences, I mean periods of time during which prolonged contact with an L2 and a new and different cultural setting causes irreversible destabilization of the individual sense of self. There is, in a sense, an element of before and after in critical experiences as the individual's socio-historical, cultural and linguistic environment, once well defined and delimited, becomes relatively ill-defined and open-ended (Block & Cameron, 2002, p. 4).*

In such cases, argues Block, it's not a question of discarding one's identity and substituting something new. Rather the result is what has come to be known as "hybrid" or "third place" identities. This hybrid identity creates a subject position that provides insights into different linguistic and cultural worlds. However, it can also lead to feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence, in particular for

migrants, who strive to keep aspects of their home culture while learning a new language and adapting to a new way of life. In order to construct a coherent life narrative, we seek to resolve internal conflict and assuage feelings of ambivalence. In that sense, there is a recognition that as individuals we can make choices in terms of self-identity (see sidebar). We tend to take on different available identities depending on need and context. Block points out, however, that in contrast to the open choice of products in a supermarket, we are constrained in our choice of identity by factors such as social hierarchies, educational systems, or government policies. The language choices we make are influenced by a variety of factors. Socio-economic and historical contexts may play significant roles. In formally colonized nations, the language of the colonizer acquired a hegemony over the local languages, which continued even after the colonizer had left. This in turn left a significant impact on the identity that the speakers of the language of the colonizer assumed or were attributed. The speakers of the language of the colonizer were considered to be socially superior or higher up in society than speakers of the local language.

Shopping for identities at the "cultural supermarket"

The cultural anthropologist, Gordon Matthews, argues that identities are not entities into which one is "raised"; rather, one "assumes" an identity and then works on it. Identity is thus seen to develop in what Matthews calls the cultural supermarket: just as the modern supermarket offers foods from all over the world, in all shapes and sizes, so the international media and advanced technology together make available to individuals around the world a range of identities to be assumed.

Block, 2007, pp. 21-22

The dynamics of identity formation has led to an interest within applied linguistics in what is called the **imagined community** that language learners may aspire to join when they learn a new language (see Anderson, 1991). The imagined community may be a reconstruction of a past culture or a construct of the imagination, a desired community that offers a range of possible identities for the future. Often language learners are motivated by such imagined futures and may develop extensive fictional personae around these possible future selves: "An imagined community presupposes an imagined identity—one that offers an enhanced range of possibilities for the future" (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007, p. 598). Learners of French might envision a future in which they live in Paris and are fluent enough in French to converse in cafés and to read French poetry in the original. The "imagined self" available through a second language might involve personal growth (Dörnyei, 2009). Pavlenko & Norton (2007) cite research that has shown that "many young Japanese women consider English to be intrinsically linked to feminism and thus are motivated to learn it as a language of empowerment" (p. 597). In fact, in many parts of the world English has become the language which represents opportunities for personal growth and professional advancement (see Lin & Byram, 2016). At the same time, English may be seen as an instrument of colonialism and imperialism and as a repressive force on the development of indigenous cultures. The ambiguous attitude towards the social role of English is particularly evident in former colonial countries in Africa (see Miller, 1996).

Another intersection of language, place, and identity is represented in the concept of **linguistic landscapes**, the often multilingual urban signage now encountered in cities throughout the world (see Shohamy & Gorter, 2008). An analysis of signs in particular neighborhoods can reveal the dynamics of different language and ethnic communities. Examining the changes over time, as Dutch scholar Jan Blommaert has done for his neighborhood in Amsterdam, can show not only how neighborhoods change but also how they identify themselves linguistically (2013). This interest in signs is a branch of **semiotics**, the science of signs and their significance. Increasingly linguists are looking beyond traditional uses of language to "multimodal" understanding of how communication takes place and how identities are created through language use in context and in combination with other modes of communication.

Figure 2.2.2: Chinese sign and "Chinglish" translation

Food and Culture

Language offers an avenue for involvement in another culture. There are many other opportunities we have to gain insight into other cultures through observation or participation in cultural activities, artifacts, or practices common in these cultures. We might gain interest in learning more about Brazilian or Portuguese cultures, for example, by being fans of famous soccer (football) players such as Pele or Ronaldo. We might be led to want to learn Korean if we are immersed in the world of competitive video gaming. Listening to music from countries with rich musical traditions such as Mali or Argentina might be the path through which we become curious about other aspects of culture in those countries.

One of the things all cultures have in common is food. Eating has an important social function: "Food, like language, exists as a vehicle for expressing culture. It has the power of being both a biological necessity as well as a deeply symbolic cultural artifact, one that connects us to one another on several levels...Food is a mechanism for expressing identity that also has a social purpose" (Food & Identity, 2014). Our food choices are tied to our personal identities and our life trajectories: "The food choices made by people, either as individuals or as a group, can reveal views, passions, background knowledge, assumptions and personalities. Food choices tell stories of families, migrations, assimilation, resistance, changes over times, and personal as well as group identity. " (Almerico, 2014). Food studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field of study which examines the relationship among food, culture, and society from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (Hauck-Lawson, 2004).

Common culinary traditions can be an essential component of national or regional cultures. Familiar meals or dishes that one cannot find when abroad can be a major contributor to homesickness. On the other hand, adapting to the eating habits and food choices of the host country can also be stressful. Individuals vary of course and some people are more accepting and adventurous than others in trying new dishes. The extent to which food represents something more than necessary human sustenance varies among cultures. In the rest of the world, US eating habits are seen as centered on fast food, such as hamburgers at McDonald's. In fact, home cooking in the US is varied and regional specialties abound, such as North Carolina barbecue, Maine lobster, or New England clam chowder. Well-known is the regional richness of culinary traditions in countries such as China, India, France, or Italy. In some cultures, culinary practices are so highly valued, that they even make their way into institutional settings such as school cafeterias. School lunches, for example, tend to be rather simple and basic. In France, school lunches are different: "The variety on the menus is astonishing: no single meal is repeated over the 32 school days in the period, and every meal includes an hors d'oeuvre, salad, main course, cheese plate and dessert." (Walt, 2010). In France, as in other cultures, meals have a particular structure along with must-have components. In addition, there may be certain ritualistic behaviors expected. In Japanese tea ceremonies, for example, there are expected actions for both host and guests.

Figure 2.2.3: McDonalds, a frequent stand-in for US culture and food

In many parts of the world modern transportation and distribution have significantly changed the availability of foods. It used to be that fresh foods had limited distribution, restricted to particular times of the year or regions. It is not the case, however, that all have sufficient access to food even in prosperous countries. In the US and the UK, for example, "**food deserts**" exist in economically disadvantaged urban communities (and sometimes in isolated rural areas as well), where there is insufficient access to affordable and nutritious food sources (Walker, Keane & Burke, 2010). This tends to be in minority or immigrant communities and often leads to health and longevity issues, as inhabitants resort to unhealthy convenience foods or fast food meals. The TED talk by Mari Gallagher discusses the situation in the context of discrimination and social justice. The nutrition situation can be even more severe in areas of the world where drought or civil strife have led to significant increases in malnutrition and famine.

In many cultures, there are hybrid food dishes that are popular, created out of domestic remixing of a foreign dish or culinary traditions. In the US and India, for example, "Chinese" food is very popular, but differs markedly from what is found in China. The TED talk by Jennifer Lee, the Hunt for General Tso, recounts how Chinese food made its way into the US and how American inventions such as General Tso's chicken or fortune cookies are seen in the US as quintessentially Chinese. Another example is the popularity of Indian food in the UK. Then UK foreign minister Robin Cook extolled in a speech the multicultural significance of the Britons' fondness for chicken *tikka massala* (see sidebar). In Germany, the originally Turkish dish *doner kebab* has become one of the most popular street foods. Food can represent the kind of successful merging of cultures one hopes develop in communities as well.

"Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish"

> It isn't just our economy that has been enriched by the arrival of new communities. Our lifestyles and cultural horizons have also been broadened in the process. This point is perhaps more readily understood by young Britons, who are more open to new influences and more likely to have been educated in a multi-ethnic environment. But it reaches into every aspect of our national life. Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken Tikka is an Indian dish. The Massala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British people to have their meat served in gravy. Coming to terms with multiculturalism as a positive force for our economy and society will have significant implications for our understanding of Britishness.
>
> Muir (2013).

2.3: Technically Speaking - Online identities

One of the principal factors making personal identities complex today is the participation in online communities. For many people in developed economies, this is likely to be of substantial importance in their lives, with extensive time spent online, using computers or mobile devices, communicating with others. The mode of communication depends on individual preferences but also on the device used, the purpose of the message, and its length. Our group memberships and group roles will be determining factors as well. It is quite likely that an individual will belong to multiple real-life (RL) groups, each of which may be represented online through a particular service, website, or communication tool. For example, a university student may use telephone calls and email with her parents, text messaging and *Facebook* with her friends, text messaging and university-supplied services with classmates, email with professors, and letters to her grandparents. That last communication option may be questionable, as electronic communication becomes ubiquitous regardless of age.

With each of these relationships, the student is likely to use different communication tools or services, but also somewhat different language in terms of tone, grammar and vocabulary, being more informal and playful with friends, family, or classmates, while using more formal language with professors. The ability and appropriateness of mixing languages informally also vary with the context and individual. It is common today, to see code-switching in informal exchanges among friends. In India, it is common practice to use English script to converse in the local language online, as is using hybrid languages, e.g. *Kiddi sohni wind blowndi hai?* [Punjabi - How beautifully the wind is blowing]. The word 'blow' is combined with the Punjabi 'di' to make it a Punjabi-English hybrid word connoting 'blowing' (A. Malik, personal communication, August 1, 2017. In China, Pinyin is widely used in digital communications and many shorthand expressions have been invented such as 88 (pinyin: bābā) representing "bye bye" (English).

If the student is thinking about future employment, she may have a *LinkedIn* account, a popular service for jobseekers and employers. Her profile and interactions through *LinkedIn* will highlight her professional side, namely her academic preparation, work history, significant achievements, etc. In contrast, her *Facebook* profile and interactions will emphasize her personal interests and circle of friends/family and will likely include a rich exchange of photos and videos. In the process, she is constructing different identities corresponding with the different contexts.

For both *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*, there is likely to be a RL connection, that is, the student will be using her real name and authentic aspects of her personal life and history. If she also participates in an online dating service, that is likely to be the case as well. That might not be true, however, in other online communities in which she participates. She may, for example, be a regular player in multiplayer online games, such as *World of Warcraft*. In that environment she may have created a game persona as well as an avatar, perhaps representing her RL identity, or perhaps an imagined or desired self. This could be the case in a virtual worlds environment such as *Second Life* or in fantasy-related online environments. The identities assumed are likely to have an impact on the communication style and language use. They might also have a determining effect on social interactions within the online environment, determining with whom she associates and how she presents herself in terms of values and behaviors.

Identity repertoires online: Opportunities & constraints

> Having to write oneself into being means that on many forums, one can start from scratch, and write into being the kind of being one wants to be. Here we of course encounter differences between anonymous and nonymous sites for identity construction for instance a social network site such as Facebook is a nonymous site; users present themselves there, in many if not most cases, with their real name, with a picture of themselves attached to that name to further authenticate their ‘real’ identity. On anonymous sites we perhaps see more room for manoeuvring and identity play – we are for instance able to present ourselves with a self-invented user name.
>
> Varis, Wang & Du, 2011, p. 268)

One of the situations in which the subject position is likely to be quite different from the normal RL self is in participation in online communities in a second language. To what extent this is the case will depend in part on the mode of communication–whether written or audio/video–and on the level of language proficiency. In any case, there are likely to be restrictions in possible topics of conversation, depending on the context, cultural sensitivity, and available vocabulary. The likely linguistic handicaps and cultural differences may change how she presents herself, possibly leading to some tentativeness or timidity in areas such as suggesting topic changes or asserting opinions.

The opportunities afforded by the Internet for language learning and personal development have been a subject of considerable interest in applied linguistics in recent years. There have been a number of studies, for example, on language and culture learning through students' participation in online exchanges, often as part of class-to-class activities (Belz & Thorne, 2006). There is growing interest in activities which occur outside of institutional settings, as that is increasingly the case for many young people today. Eva Lam (2004), for example, studied the experiences of several immigrant youth participating in online discussion forums and in creating webpages on Japanese *anime*, to provide out of class language learning opportunities. These experiences were particularly valued by the students, as in school they were stigmatized as immigrants and poor language learners.Another study focused on the writing of "fanfiction" – original works of fiction based on popular media such as television, movies, or books. Rebecca Black (2006) describes the complex language and cultural situation of one young woman of Japanese descent ("Nanako") whose family settled in Canada. She became a successful fanfiction writer in English (see sidebar). The multilingual and multicultural dimensions of her experience with writing fanfiction is representative of many online Internet activities today. In this way, a second language enables more than just linguistic competence, as Ema Ushioda comments:

> *A foreign language is not simply something to add to our repertoire of skills, but a personalized tool that enables us to expand and express our identity or sense of self in new and interesting ways and with new kinds of people; to participate in a more diverse range of contexts and communities and so broaden our experiences and horizons; and to access and share new and alternative sources of information, entertainment or material that we need, value or enjoy. (2011, p. 204).*

Proficiency in a second language is not just an added skill. By broadening the range of activities in which we engage and the people with whom we interact, a new personal identity is created.

Active Fandom: Writing, re-mixing and learning

[Her] identity was negotiated, not only through English, but also through Nanako's pan-Asian linguistic and cultural knowledge and affiliations. Additionally, for Nanako's writing on Fanfiction.net she draws on a range of pop cultural resources from different countries, such as Japanese animation, music from the United Kingdom, and novels and motion pictures from the United States, to assist her in composing in English...these dialogic resources shifted over time as Nanako's facility with English as well as her comfort level in the online community increased...Nanako's participation in this online space helped her to develop confidence and motivation for continued writing and language learning in English; however, it also provided her with a sense of pride and a renewed emphasis on her linguistic background and ethnic identity as an Asian.

Black, 2006, p. 174

2.4: How identities are Built (Summary)

From theory to practice...

- *Explore your own cultural identity*. An awareness of your cultural heritage can help make you aware of the sources of the values and behaviors you may take for granted. Being able to articulate our own views – and their origins – can be helpful in intercultural encounters.
- *Consider the nature of your social identity*. Think about how the different groups you may belong to help constitute who you are – what you believe, how you behave, and how you interact with others.
- *Evaluate your personal identity*. To what extent do your individual tastes and preferences lead you in directions away from your family background, ethnic heritage, or group affiliations? Consider how you envision your future self.

For discussion and reflection...

1. Consider the number of groups to which you belong and the roles you play in each. How do the groups affect the way you think, feel, and act? By virtue of your membership in these groups, how are you treated by others? What are some of the groups to which you would like to belong but do not?

2. *After reading the article by Peggy McIntosh, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, and watching the selection from the documentary "Color of Fear":*

What's your reaction to McIntosh's essay and the excerpt from Color of Fear? To what extent do the views expressed reflect your own experiences? Is this type of conversation represented by the documentary useful? To what extent was the conversation affected by not including any women?

3. *After watching the TED talks on women and identity by Liza Donnelly, Caroline Casey and Lizzie Velasquez...*

How do you define who you are? What role does appearance have? Where do the rules for appearance and behavior come from? Are these rules universal? For women everywhere? Do you agree on the power of cartoons and humor?

4. *After watching the TED talk by Pico Iyer on multicultural identities:*

How typical do you think his personal experience with identity is? To what extent are we all "a work in progress"?

5. *After watching the TED talk on prejudice by Paul Bloom:*

Do you agree that our initial judgments about people tend to be accurate? What is your take on his recommendations for overcoming "bad" prejudice? Are there other approaches that might work?

6.. Get together in groups of two or three. Spend about two to three minues describing yourself to your group members. Now respond to the question: "Who am I?" Also respond to the question "Who is 'A' or 'B' where 'A' and 'B' and so on represent each of your group members. Compare your notes. The exercise may be modified for a discussion on biases and prejudices.

Key Concepts

- **Ascribed identity**: Identity given to a person by others
- **Assimilation**: Used here in the sense of cultural assimilation - the process by which a person or a group's language and/or culture come to resemble those of another group.
- **Avowed identity**: How a person perceives his or her own self
- **Categorization**: Classifying or sorting of perceived information into distinct groups
- **Co-culture**: A group of people that are not part of the dominant structure of society; use of the term emphasizes the lack of power and control in comparison to the mainstream culture
- **Code-switching**: Alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation
- **Communication theory of identity**: Theory developed by Michael Hecht that identities are constructed through social situations and communication
- **Contact theory**: Theory by Gordon Allport that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members
- **Critical reflectivity:** Willingness to examine in a serious way ones values and beliefs so as to be able to deal fairly and equitably with the values and beliefs of others

- **Cultural identity**: Identity based on cultural membership; one's identification with and perceived acceptance into a larger culture group
- **Ebonics**: Distinctive variety of English spoken by African Americans, which most linguists refer to as African American Vernacular English
- **Endogamy**: The practice of marrying only within one's local community, clan, or tribe
- **Ethnicity**: classification of people based on combinations of shared characteristics such as nationality, geographic origin, language, religion, ancestral customs, and tradition
- **Ethnocentrism**: Favoring the ethnic group you belong to over all others
- **Exogamy:** The practice of marrying outside of one's group or community
- **Hegemony:** Dominance, especially by one country or social group over others
- **Ideology:** A system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy
- **Imagined community**: Concept coined by Benedict Anderson referring to a community not based on face-to-face interactions; for example, Anderson believes that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group
- **In-group**: A group to which we belong
- **In-group bias**: A pattern of favoring members of one's in-group over out-group members
- **Intolerance**: Unwillingness to accept views, beliefs, or behavior that differ from one's own.
- **LGBTQ** Acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer; sometimes LGBT+ is used to encompass spectrums of sexuality and gender
- **Linguistic landscape**: The visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region
- **Marginalization:** The treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral
- **Microculture**: An identifiable group of people who share a set of values, beliefs, and behaviors and who possess a common history and a verbal and nonverbal symbol system that is similar to but systematically varies from the larger, often dominant cultural milieu
- **Minority group**: A subordinate group whose members have significantly less power and control over their own lives than do members of the dominant or majority group
- **Model minority:** A minority group whose members are perceived to achieve a higher degree of socioeconomic success than the population average
- **Muted groups**: Microcultures whose members are forced to express themselves (e.g., speak, write) within the dominant mode of expression
- **Out-group**: A group to which we do not belong and which we often treat differently from those in our in-group Pluralism: Used here in the sense of Cultural pluralism is a term used when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities, and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture
- **Out-group negativity**: Attributing negative characteristics to people not in your in-group
- **Pluralism:** Cultural pluralism refers to small groups within a larger society maintaining their unique cultural identities and having that accepted widely
- **Prejudice**: A rigid attitude based on group membership; involves making a prejudgment based on membership in a social category
- **Racism**: The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior to another race
- **Reference group**: A group to which we look for meanings and identity
- **Second language acquisition**: The process by which people learn a second language, often abbreviated to SLA; also refers to the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process
- **Social identity**: The total combination of one's group roles; a part of the individual's self-concept that is derived from the person's membership in groups
- **Spanglish**: A hybrid language combining words and idioms from both Spanish and English, especially Spanish speech that uses many English words and expressions.
- **Stereotype**: A set of characteristics that a group or individuals in that group are assumed to have; a generalization about what people are like; an exaggerated image of their characteristics, without regard to individual attributes
- **Symbolic racism**: Subtle and indirect form of racism, often expressed in US towards Blacks
- **White privilege**: Societal privileges that benefit white people in western countries beyond what is commonly experienced by non-white people under the same social, political, or economic circumstances

Learn more…

Books

- Adichie, C. (2013). *Americanah*. Novel examining blackness in America, Nigeria and Britain
- **Blee, K. (2002). *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate* Movement: Self-identities of women connect to the US racist organization, the Ku Klux Klan**
- ***Friend, T. (2010). Cheerful Money: Me, My Family, and the Last Days of Wasp Splendor: Provocative assessment of the role of WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) white privilege in US society***
- Lubrano, A. (2005). *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*: Personal account of growing up in a working-class, Italian-American community and working his way into the middle class
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Classic study discussing cultural representations that are the bases of "Orientalism", defined as the West's patronizing representations of "The East"
- Shaprio, J. (1994). *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*. Classic account on the rights of the disabled

Films

- *Afro-Punk* (2003): Documentary film exploring the roles of African-Americans within what was then a white punk scene

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fanQHFAxXH0

- *Babette's Feast* (1987, Danish title: *Babettes gæstebud*) celebration of the French culinary tradition
- *Bend It Like Beckham (2002). Story of an Indian girl in the UK who challenges norms and traditions of the Indian community to play soccer (football)*
- *Chocolat* (2000): French film illustrating the power of food to change identities
- *The Color of Fear* (1994). Documentary film showing eight North American men from different ethnic backgrounds, gathered for a dialog on race relations
- *Crash* (2004): Feature film featuring racial and social tensions in Los Angeles, exploring a verity of stereotypes
- *Witness* (1985). Crime thriller which features members of the Amish community

Online resources

- Ethnicity and microcultures

- Tiger Mom: Some cultural groups are superior
  Controversial take on why some minority groups succeed in the US, and others don't
- The Slants Frontman Fights Government To Register His Band's Name
  What would you think of a band called "The Slants" or "The Chinks"? What if the members of the band are all Asian?
- Trevor Noah Is A Quarter Jewish. Does That Make His Anti-Semitic Jokes OK?
  This is the South African comedian replacing Jon Stewart

- Conversations on race and prejudice

- Color of Fear - What it Means to be American
  Excerpt from the documentary
- White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack
  Influential essay by Peggy McIntosh
- A Conversation With White People on Race
  Short documentary featuring interviews with white people on the challenges of talking about race (NY Times)
- Is It An 'Uprising' Or A 'Riot'? Depends On Who's Watching
  Is it symbolic racism, or just objective reporting? The language used can be crucial. The reference is to the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in 2015
- Questioning The Black Male Experience In America
  How would you like to be remembered, in a word or two? That question was posed by a black man and answered by other black men in a multimedia art project called "Question Bridge: Black Males."
- Paul Bloom: Can prejudice ever be a good thing?
  About categorization, ethnocentrism and the dynamics of in-groups and out-groups
  TED description: "We often think of bias and prejudice as rooted in ignorance. But as psychologist Paul Bloom seeks to show,

prejudice is often natural, rational ... even moral. The key, says Bloom, is to understand how our own biases work — so we can take control when they go wrong."

- Vernā Myers: How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them
- TED description: “Our biases can be dangerous, even deadly — as we've seen in the cases of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner, in Staten Island, New York. Diversity advocate Vernā Myers looks closely at some of the subconscious attitudes we hold toward out-groups. She makes a plea to all people: Acknowledge your biases. Then move toward, not away from, the groups that make you uncomfortable. In a funny, impassioned, important talk, she shows us how.”

- TED talks on identity: Knowing yourself before judging others

- Liza Donnelly: Drawing on humor for change
  Interesting perspective on identity creation and appearance for women; humor as a powerful tool for self-actualization
  TED description: "New Yorker cartoonist Liza Donnelly shares a portfolio of her wise and funny cartoons about modern life — and talks about how humor can empower women to change the rules."
- Caroline Casey: Looking past limits
  On the importance of "being true to yourself" and overcoming what seem like unsurmountable barriers
  TED description: "Activist Caroline Casey tells the story of her extraordinary life, starting with a revelation (no spoilers). In a talk that challenges perceptions, Casey asks us all to move beyond the limits we may think we have."
- Lizzie Velasquez: How do you define yourself?
  TED description: "In a time when beauty is defined by supermodels, success is defined by wealth, and fame is deified by how many followers you have on social media, Lizzie Velasquez asks the question how do you define yourself? Once labeled, 'The Worlds Ugliest Woman,' Lizzie decided to turn things around and create her own definitions of what she defines as beauty and happiness."
- Pico Iyer: Where is home?
  On the multicultural identities today and how we all are a "work in progress"
  TED description: "More and more people worldwide are living in countries not considered their own. Writer Pico Iyer — who himself has three or four 'origins' — meditates on the meaning of home, the joy of traveling and the serenity of standing still."

- Humorous takes on issues of race, ethnicity, and nationality

- What Is A 'Good Muslim' Anyway? A Podcast Disrupts The Narrative
  Zahra Noorbakhsh and Tanzila "Taz" Ahmed host the podcast #GoodMuslimBadMuslim.
- Louis CK: I enjoy being white
  Different take on white privilege
- How to tell if you're American
  From zompist.com; includes humorous profiles of other nationalities as well

- Food and cultural identity

- Amy Choi: What Americans can learn from other food cultures

On different roles of food, including "food as identity"

- Jennifer 8. Lee: The hunt for General Tso

TED description: "Reporter Jennifer 8. Lee talks about her hunt for the origins of familiar Chinese-American dishes” exploring the hidden spots where these two cultures have (so tastily) combined to form a new cuisine."

- Who owns Chicken Tikka Masala?

Is it British or Indian?

- Robin Cook's chicken tikka masala speech

Extracts from a speech by the foreign secretary to the Social Market Foundation in London: "Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish"

- Regina Bernard-Carreno: The underlying racism of America's food system

TED description: "Dr. Bernard-Carreno has been actively researching and writing about the cultural performance of food, food access and food racism in low income neighborhoods in New York City and abroad. Along with researching and writing, Dr.

Bernard-Carreno has been designing scholarly projects and community products based on food access in poor NYC areas."

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www.forcedmigration.org/podcasts-videos-photos/photos/westernsahara

Laina Dawes: George Kelly

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Using Language

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Understand the complexity of how language relates to culture
- Appreciate how language use is embedded in social contexts
- Be able to discuss how languages are structured and how they vary
- Be knowledgable about approaches to language learning

3.1: Language and Culture

> *In 1915, Edmond Laforest, a prominent Haitian writer, stood upon a bridge, tied a French Larousse dictionary around his neck and leapt to his death. This symbolic, if fatal, grand gesture, dramatizes the relation of language and cultural identity (p. 65)*

The story of Laforest's death is told by Claire Kramsch in her landmark study of *Language and Culture* (1998). Writers have an intense and intimate relationship to language; it is the essential tool of their trade. But we all have a very real connection between the language we speak and how we see the world. It is likely that the importance of language in constituting essential parts of our selves and our worldviews is something most people have not considered. That is particularly the case for **monolinguals**, those who know only one language. Like culture, language is all around us and we may take it for granted, just as we do the values, beliefs, and behaviors that make up our cultural identity. This may be more the case for native speakers of English, a language whose worldwide prominence may lead to the sense that English is the default, neutral way of seeing and describing reality. Many people who have not thought about the nature of language are likely to assume there is a kind of natural and logical connection between the word "tree" and the big leafy object in their local park. But languages, including English, don't work that way – they are not an objective, culturally neutral way to describe the world. "Tree" is an arbitrary symbol, not connected logically in any way to the object it describes. In this unit we will be examining the nature of language and the crucial role it plays in intercultural communication. That will entail a discussion of the intersections of language and culture; the distinctions among world languages; the nature of language learning; and the role of English in today's world. We will continue our examination of language in the next chapter as well, looking at language usage in context.

Language: How we process the world around us

The Haitian writer Edmond Laforest, who drowned with a French dictionary around his neck, was making a symbolic gesture of his indenture to the French language, that is to say his dependence on that language for his writing. French was the language of the colonizers and oppressors, who had brought African slaves to the island, from whom Laforest was descended. There was for Laforest a tragic disconnect between the language he used to describe the world and to embody his literary imagination on the one hand and the social and racial reality of Haiti on the other. Laforest's linguistic identity was further complicated by the fact that his first language was not standard French, but Haitian Creole, a language based largely on 18th-century French with influence from Portuguese, Spanish, and West African languages.

Figure 3.1.1: Edmond Laforest

The existence of a hybrid language such as Haitian Creole is one indication of the significant link between language and culture. Languages are rarely used in their "pure", standard form. Speakers adapt linguistically to others around them. If we come often enough into contact in our everyday lives with groups of speakers of other languages, that is likely to have an influence on our own use of language. That may manifest itself in vocabulary. The English language has such a rich vocabulary because it has borrowed and incorporated words from many different languages over the centuries. In Germany today, the large number of Turkish immigrants has led to the common use of particular Turkish expressions such as *lan* for mate/man or *valla* for honestly in everyday speech in German. **Creoles** develop when there are significant numbers of speakers of different languages who interact on a regular basis. In the US state of Louisiana, the mix of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds created Louisiana Creole (*Kréyo La Lwizyàn*), a version of French mixed with elements of Spanish, African, and Native American languages.

Figure 3.1.2: Three Creole Girls, Louisiana, 1935

Such language hybrids have often developed through the process of colonialization, with the power inherent in the use of the colonizers' language leading to the indigenous population integrating elements of that language into their own speech. Evangelization has had a similar impact. In Nagaland, in Northeastern India, the spread of Christianity led to the development of a common Nagamese creole (also "Naga Pidgin") among the different 16 indigenous tribes. Creoles can be full-fledged languages, functioning as a mother tongue. **Pidgins**, on the other hand, are simplified versions of a language, used for special purposes, such as in trade. The existence of hybrid languages in many parts of the world provides evidence of how language use reflects cultural contexts, adapting as needed to accommodate the communication needs of everyday life.

Linguists and cultural anthropologists emphasize the importance of our native language on our view of the world. The link between language and culture was famously described in the work of Benjamin Whorf and Edward Sapir. The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** postulates that your native language has a profound influence on how you see the world, that you perceive reality in the context of the language you have available to describe it. According to Sapir (1929), "The 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. The world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached" (p. 162). From this perspective, all language use – from the words we use to describe objects to the way sentences are structured – is tied closely to the culture in which it is spoken. In 1940, Whorf wrote:

> *The background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for people's mental activity, for their analysis of impressions, for their synthesis of their mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar and differs, from slightly to greatly, among different grammars...We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages (p. 231).*

Whorf studied native American languages such as Hopi and was struck by differences to English which pointed to different ways of viewing the world, for example, in how time is expressed. Taken to its extreme, this kind of **linguistic determinism** would prevent native speakers of different languages from having the same thoughts or sharing a worldview. They would be, in a sense, captives of their native language, unable to gain different perspectives on reality. More widely accepted today is the concept of **linguistic relativity**, meaning that language shapes our views of the world but is not an absolute determiner of how or what we think. After all, translation is in fact possible, and bilingualism exists, both of which phenomena should be problematic in a strict interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It is also the case that many cultures are multilingual, with children growing up exposed to multiple languages without suffering culture shock when moving among languages.

> - Linguistic determinism: language controls thought in cul-ture.
> - Linguistic relativity: language influences thought in worldviews, and therefore differences among languages cause differences in the thoughts of their speakers.
>
> Hua (2014), p. 176

- Linguistic relativity: language *influences* thought in worldviews, and therefore differences among languages *cause* differences in the thoughts of their speakersLinguist Steven Pinker's (2007) research has shown that in fact language is not the only existing means of thought. It is possible for us to picture reality through mental images or shapes. In recent years, there have been a number of studies on the perception of colors related to available color words. Languages differ in this area. Some, for example, do not

have separate words for blue and green. In the Tarahumara indigenous language of Mexico, one single word, *siyoname*, is used for both colors (Kay & Kempton, 1984). Such studies, as well as similar examinations of concepts such as numbers, shapes, generally have shown that "language has some effect on perception, but it does not define perception." (Hua, 2014, p. 178). In fact, experiments have shown that in some cases, where specific terms for colors do not exist, that does not prevent color recognition: "although the Dani, a New Guinea tribe, use only two colour terms . . . it was found that they could recognize and distinguish between subtle shades of colours that their language had no names for (e.g. pale blue vs. turquoise)" (Holmes, 2001, p. 324). This is in line with current linguistic thought that there is a more complex, reciprocal relationship between language and culture.

Figure 3.1.3: Tarahumara women, Mexico

One of the reasons linguists have moved away from a strongly causal relationship between language and culture is due to the influence of Noam Chomsky's concept of **universal grammar**. Chomsky argued that there is a universality to human thought and that language is innate and biologically determined. According to Chomsky, every human is born with a "language acquisition device" in the brain, which enables us to construct the grammar of a language (Chomsky, 1965). Chomsky argued that children acquire linguistic generalizations that experience alone, i.e. contact with the language, could not teach them. The concept of **generative grammar**, as developed by Chomsky and others, states that from a basic set of rules (mostly dealing with word order) and a finite set of elements, a language can construct an infinite number of new sentences. Chomsky's ideas have been hugely influential in linguistics. However, in recent decades there has been renewed interest in the social aspects of language. While Chomsky downplayed environmental factors, "neo-Whorfian" linguists, influenced by new studies in psychology and linguistics – especially on multilingualism – have taken a fresh look at language use in social and environmental contexts. Daniel Everett, for example, studied the culture and language of the Pirahã people in Brazil (2009, 2012) and argued that language is a tool that evolves out of the human need to solve problems.

Another development that has changed linguists' views on the nature of human language has come through work examining actual language use, as recorded and transcribed. This has enabled the collection and analysis of large bodies of texts, both written and spoken, called a language corpus (Godwin-Jones, 2017b). Usage-based views of language have developed out of that research that show that language is based less on rules than it is on patterns – word groupings or set combinations of vocabulary and grammar (Tomasello, 2000).

How language reflects culture

No matter what linguistic theory one may hold to be valid, there is little argument that the vocabulary of a language does in fact reflect important aspects of everyday life. Linguist Anna Wierzbicka (2013) provides interesting examples of expressions from the Australian aboriginal language of Warlpiri:

- *japi* — "entrance to sugar ant's nest"
- *laja* — "hole or burrow of lizard"
- *kuyu* — "meat; meated animal" [including edible birds, but not other birds]
- *karnpi* — "fat under the skin of emu"
- *papapapa-ma* — "to make the sound of a male emu calling to its chicks"
- *yulu* — "limp, relaxed—of slain kangaroo whose hindleg have been broken (in preparation for cooking)"

From a Warlpiri speaker's point of view, these single words point to important features of the environment, as potential sources of shelter and food, but there are no corresponding words in European languages or in most other languages. Wierzbicka comments:

> *As these examples illustrate, the words of a language reflect the speakers' special interests. For the speakers of a particular language, their words "fit the world" as they*

> *see it—but how they see it depends, to some extent, on what they want to see and what they pay attention to. This is true also of European languages, and English is no exception, either. The conviction that the words of our native language fit the world as it really is, is deeply rooted in the thinking of many people, particularly those who have never been forced to move, existentially, from one language into another and to leave the certainties of their home language (p. 6).*

Learning a second language leads one early on to appreciate the fact that there may not be a one-to-one correspondence between words in one language and those in another. While the dictionary definitions (**denotation**) may be the same, the actual usage in any given context (**connotation**) may be quite different. The word *amigo* in Spanish is the equivalent of the word friend in English, but the relationships described by that word can be quite different. Even in English, a Facebook "friend" is quite different from a childhood "friend". The German word *Bier*, refers as does the English "beer", to an alcoholic drink made from barley, hops, and water. In a German context, the word is used to describe an everyday drink commonly consumed with meals or in other social situations. In the American English context, usage of the word, "beer," immediately brings to the fore its status as alcohol, thus a beverage that is strictly regulated and its consumption restricted.

Figure 3.1.4: Beer in Germany: a drink like any other

Differences in available words to describe everyday phenomena is immediately evident when one compares languages or examines vocabulary used in particular situations. That might include a specific small culture, such as dog lovers or sailing enthusiasts, for example, who use a much more extensive vocabulary to describe, respectively, dog breeds or parts of a ship, than would be familiar to most people, no matter whether they are native speakers of the language or not. Sometimes, a special language is developed by a group, sometimes labeled a **jargon**, which often references a specialized technical language. A related term is an **argot**, a kind of secret language designed to exclude outsiders, such as the language used by criminal gangs.

Less immediately evident than vocabulary differences in comparing languages are differences in grammatical structures. Some languages, for example, have no clear verb tense for the future. A TED talk by Keith Chen explains how that feature might be tied to social behavior by speakers of "futureless" languages. Another example explains what the absence of subjunctive verb forms in a language might mean in terms of human behavior and interactions (see resource list for more examples). Caution is called for in accepting without question the validity of such claims. Piller (2017) points out, for example, how some textbooks simplify the relationship between language and culture through drawing misleading connections between grammar and national characteristics such as communication styles. She cites an example from a textbook on intercultural business communication (Chaney & Martin, 2013); "In the German language, the verb often comes at the end of the sentence. In oral communication, Germans do not immediately get to the point" (cited in Piller, 2017, p. 45). This is incorrect in terms of grammar (the placement of the verb depends on the sentence structure) and makes the false assumption that the "point" of a sentence necessarily comes through word order (not through intonation or other means).

In any case, if we learn to speak a second language, it provides unique insights into what it is that is valued in that culture. Students of Korean, for example, learn early on in their studies that there is not just a distinction between familiar and formal "you", as exists in many languages, but that the code of respect and politeness of Korean culture dictates different vocabulary, intonation, and speech patterns depending on one's relationship to the addressee. This can extend to nonverbal conventions as well, such as bowing or expanding personal space.

Sociolinguistics: Studying Language in Use

From the beginning of the process, second language students learn that the target language likely has different verbal (and nonverbal) conventions for participating in aspects of everyday life such as greetings, leave-taking, apologizing, or making requests. Such **speech acts** were described and studied by John Searle and John Austin in the 1960's and 1970's (Austin, 1973; Searle, 1969). These are uses of language to perform actions or to generate specific activities, and they can vary substantially from language to language. The field of **sociolinguistics** deals with speech acts, as well as with other aspects of how language is used in social contexts. An important aspect of this field of study is the examination of variations in languages, such as dialects and regional differences. This can involve clear cultural distinctions such as the existence of **high prestige** and **low prestige** versions of a language. High prestige language varieties are those that mainstream societies consider correct and standard. Typically, dialects are seen as low prestige. The relative status of a language is determined by context, namely the audience and the situation (Eckert & Rickford, 2002). Linguists also study **language variation** related to age, gender, or occupation. Contact between cultures is another important area studied by sociolinguists. Such contact can bring about change, including new variations of a language, or even new languages, such as creoles. Linguists today do not believe that any language or language variety is more pure or superior to any other (Fasold & Connor-Linton, 2006).

Today, there is considerable interest in studying how language is used in and adapted to online environments, such as microblogging (Twitter), text messaging, and social networks. Phone-based messaging, for example, has been shown to be more like spoken than written language (see linguist John McWhorter's TED talk). Sociolinguists emphasize the changing nature of language, as it comes into contact with social reality and with new ways of communicating. As new language conventions and vocabulary become established, there are inevitably voices which decry language innovations as corruptions. Some speakers of a language might object to **neologisms** (newly coined words), different uses of existing words, or deviations from standard grammar. This is known as linguistic prescription or **prescriptionism**. Linguists, on the other hand, engage in a **descriptive** approach to language, observing and recording how language is actually used. Languages develop organically and in defiance of official rules. While there may be governmental or private group efforts to maintain a "pure" version of a language, it is not proven possible to restrict the natural evolution of language through rules or regulations.

The textbooks used in foreign language instruction rarely convey to students the dynamic character of language. Textbooks present standard language and do not often introduce variations in language patterns that reflect different social, regional, or situational contexts. This is done for practical, pedagogical reasons, with the goal of having students learn basic vocabulary and essential structural elements. Dialogues in textbooks typically present the speech of educated, well-behaved native speakers, who wait till their conversation partners are finished before speaking. These are idealized native speakers, intent on being agreeable, conversing in order to exchange information and to find consensus. Linguists know how far removed such exchanges are from real life. Actual dialogs are full of interruptions, false starts, and repetitions. Conversations rarely focus on transmitting information. Interactions may be contentious, with open conflict and raw emotions on display. In any case, the language used will likely not resemble the nicely cooperative and grammatically correct sentences in a textbook. The use of **discourse analysis** in linguistics – transcribing and analyzing recordings of real conversations – has shown how varied and spontaneous human speech really is (see Gee, 2014). A TED talk by Elizabeth Stokoe provides examples of how conversation analysis reveals not only how people actually talk, but also the significance of such frequent speech phenomena as hesitations, repetitions, or brief silences.

In many contexts today, another characteristic of real language use often emerges – **code-switching**, or the mixing of languages together within a conversation. This can be simply substituting an occasional word of another language or, in other cases, it can involve a back and forth between languages for the entire conversation. As globalization has increased international contact, more frequent travel has taken more people into unfamiliar cultures, and the explosion in the use of social networks has expanded exposure to multiple languages, code-switching is a phenomenon that increasing numbers of people are likely to experience. Claire Kramsch describes this phenomenon as 'language crossings' (1998). She provides examples which highlight complex manifestations of identity enactment; the sample conversations she analyzes show how choice of language within conversations can be clear markers of group membership or social distancing. Code switching can be used in a playful way or to express social solidarity. In some settings, language crossing may be used to contest or resist authority (see sidebar). Such language crossings are not limited to bilingual groups, but are particularly evident on the Internet, where discussion forums and social media frequently mix and match languages. The extensive and frequent mixing of languages online has led to the use of the term "translanguaging" to describe the fluid transition of languages in online use (García & Wei, 2014).

Language as resistance

English by Pakistani youngsters, native speakers of English, as a strategy to resist the authority of their Anglo teacher (BR) in a British school.

- BR: attention gents
- Asif: yeh alright
- Alan: alright
- Asif: yeh

In the typical language learning environment, it is not possible to expose learners to all the varieties of language use they might encounter. However, it certainly is possible to increase learners' awareness of socio-cultural issues. One of those is the existence of **language registers**, the idea that we adjust the language we use – in terms of formality, tone, and even vocabulary – in response to the context in which we find ourselves. Learners need to be aware of how language use could be adjusted in formal face-to-face settings, as in a work environment, to highly informal, online settings, such as Facebook postings. This involves looking beyond grammatical correctness to language in use. **Pragmatics**, another field of interest in sociolinguistics, deals with the nature of language as it occurs in actual social use. The meaning of what is said in conversation may be quite different from the literal meaning of the words used. A statement made in an ironic, sarcastic, or humorous tone may, in fact, have a meaning diametrically opposed to its surface meaning. Answering "oh, sure" in American English to a statement or question can be a positive affirmation or be intended to ridicule what the interlocutor has said. Such nuances are important for being able to function in the target culture. This kind of sociocultural competence is not easy to acquire, as pragmatics does not involve learning a fixed set of rules. Rather, inference and intuition play a major role, as can emotions as well. Being aware of the dynamics of language use in conversation can help one be a better informed and literate speaker of any language. **Pragmatic competence** is particularly important in online exchanges, in which the non-verbal cues signaling intent and attitude are not available.

In recent years there has been a growing recognition that culture and language cannot be separated, and that culture permeates all aspects of language. (Godwin-Jones, 2016). If, for example, a language has different personal pronouns for direct address, such as the informal *tu* in French and the formal *vous*, both meaning 'you', that distinction is a reflection of one aspect of the culture. It indicates that there is a built-in awareness and significance to social differentiation and that a more formal level of language use is available. Native speakers of English may have difficulty in learning how to use the different forms of address in French, or as they exist in other languages such as German or Spanish. Speakers of American English, in particular, are inclined towards informal modes of address, moving to a first-name basis as soon as possible. Using informal address inappropriately can cause considerable social friction. It takes a good deal of **language socialization** to acquire this kind of pragmatic ability, that is to say, sufficient exposure to the forms being used correctly. While native speakers of English may deplore the formality of *vous* or its equivalent in other languages, in cultures where these distinctions exist, they provide a valuable device for maintaining social distance when desired, for clearly distinguishing friends from acquaintances, and for preserving social harmony in institutional settings.

Typically in foreign language instruction, sociolinguistic knowledge is presented as standard and universal in a given culture, much as language is presented in the model of educated speakers using standardized, grammatically correct language forms. This can result in a somewhat unrealistic representation of the target culture. Foreign cultures are often viewed as monolithic and invariable, with distinctions based on age, occupation, or locality either glossed over or presented as intriguing, exotic outliers ('what a strange dialect'). The reality of identity creation in today's world is quite different, with globalizing economic trends and the spread of social media leading to multifaceted personal and cultural identities which may come to the fore at different times in different situations. The national culture in which a person is raised is an important factor in determining one's values, beliefs, and habits, but there are multiple additional influences, coming, for example, from membership in a minority group, gender identification, participation in online communities, the work/living environment, or a chosen free time activity.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism

The complex identities created through the forces of globalization, mass migration, and the growth of social media, have also resulted in linguistic complexity (Piller, 2017). Individuals are much more likely than in the past to be exposed, in person or online, to speakers of other languages. The plurality of languages may well happen within one's own family. As travel and migration have brought more people from different cultures together, there has been a growth in families in which parents have different mother tongues. Children in such households are likely to be brought up speaking both languages, becoming bilingual. Bilingualism may as well result from individuals or families migrating and continuing to speak the language of their home culture, while learning that

of the host country. Studies have shown that not only do bilinguals have the advantage of likely fluency in two languages, but that the process of growing up bilingual also has a positive effect on brain development (Albert & Obler, 1978).

Bilinguals may differ in their level of proficiency in the languages they speak. Normally a bilingual will have one dominant language (Grosjean, 2001). It may be, for example, that children speaking the language of their parents at home may not develop a good reading or writing ability in that language. Some schools and universities in which there are large numbers of such "heritage" speakers, often have specially designed courses which help such students develop full capabilities in those languages. People who know more than one language have been shown to be more adept at language learning (Kaushanskaya & Marian, 2009).

In most parts of the world today, most individuals have at least some capability in a second language: "The majority of the world's population uses more than one language on a regular basis and monolingualism is by and large a historical and Anglophone anomaly" (Piller, 2017, pp. 71-72). This is a matter of necessity in countries such as Luxembourg, Nigeria, or Indonesia in which there are multiple languages coexisting in geographically close quarters. Inhabitants of smaller countries, with their own national languages, such as Denmark, Estonia, or Nauru (an island country in Micronesia) will, due to economic and practical concerns, typically learn the language of larger neighboring countries. However, in this context as in others, political and nationalist issues may influence language learning choices.

Many countries have more than one officially recognized national language, including Canada (English and French), Switzerland (French, German, Italian, Romansch), South Africa (11 languages), and India (22 languages). It's not the case that in multilingual societies all speakers are necessarily multilingual. Particular languages may be spoken predominately in one region, as is the case for French in Canada or Italian in Switzerland. In other cases, language use may be distributed according to ethnic heritage, as can be seen in Singapore or Malaysia. In some countries, there may be different versions of a common language, as is the case in Switzerland with Swiss German and standard German. This phenomenon is known as **diglossia**, in which there is a common spoken vernacular language and a more formal version. This is the case for Arabic, with the "high" version being Modern Standard Arabic, used in writing and in formal speech, and the many regional, colloquial versions (Egyptian, Maghrebi, Peninsular, etc.). In some countries or regions, there may not be this kind of functional distinction in language choice, but rather a mix of languages spoken determined by the context in which the language is used. This phenomenon, known as **ambilingualism** is seen particularly in smaller countries (such as Luxembourg), border areas (such as Alsace, France) or in urban areas aggregating different communities (Johannesburg, South Africa).

Figure 3.1.5: Tamil, English and Hindi name board at the Tirusulam suburban railway station in Chennai.

World languages

Languages differ in a number of ways. Not all languages, for example, have a written form. Those that do use a variety of writing systems. Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, while Hindi uses Devanagari. Modern Korean offers a rare example of a successfully invented written language, Hangeul (see sidebar). Chinese has a particularly ancient and rich written language, with many thousands of pictographic characters. Because of the complexity and variety of Chinese characters, there is a simplified equivalent called Pinyin, which enables Chinese characters to be referenced using the Latin alphabet. This is of particular usefulness in electronic communication. The arrival of touch-enabled smartphones has been of great benefit to languages with alternative writing systems such as Chinese or Arabic (Godwin-Jones, 2017d). Smartphones and word processors can now support writing systems that write right to left such as Hebrew.

Sample text in Korean (Hangeul)

모든 인간은 태어날 때부터 자유로우며 그 존엄과 권리에 있어 동등하다. 인간은 천부적으로 이성과 양심을 부여받았으며 서로 형제애의 정신으로 행동하여야 한다.

Translation

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Languages evolve over time. **Historical linguists** trace these changes and describe how languages relate to one another. Language families group languages together, according to similarities in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Languages within a same family derive from a common ancestor, called a **proto-language** (Nowak & Krakauer, 1999). Membership in a given family is determined through **comparative linguistics**, i.e., studying and comparing the characteristics of the languages in question. Linguists use the metaphor of a family tree to depict the relationships among languages. One of the largest families is **Indo-European**, with more than 4000 languages or dialects represented. Indo-European languages include Spanish, English, Hindi/Urdu, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, and Punjabi, each with over 100 million speakers, followed by German, French and Persian. Nearly half the human population speaks an Indo-European language as a first language (Skirgård, 2017). How the languages are related can be shown in the similar terms for "mother" (see sidebar).

***Mother* in Indo-European languages**

- Sanskrit *matar*
- Greek *mater*

Some regions have particularly rich linguistic traditions, such as is the case for Africa and India. In India, there are not only Indo-European languages spoken (Hindi, Punjabi), but also languages from other families such as Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil), Austroasiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, and a few other minor language families. Papua/New Guinea has a particularly rich vareity of languages; with over 850 languages, it is the most linguistically diverse place on earth. In such cultures, most people are multilingual, often speaking 3 or more languages, along with a **lingua franca** - a common denominator -, such as Swahili in parts of Africa, English in India, or Tok Pisin, an English-based creole, in New Guinea.

There are languages which do not belong to families, known as **language isolates** (Campbell, 2010). Well-known examples include Basque, a language spoken in the border area between France and Spain, and Korean. Language isolates tend to develop in geographical isolation, separated from other regions, for example, through mountain ranges or the sea. In some cases, geographical features such as dense forests may result in different dialects or even languages spoken in areas which are actually quite close to one another. A **dialect** refers to a variety of a language that is used by particular group of speakers, defined normally regionally, but could be related to social class or ethnicity as well. Dialects are closely related to one another and normally mutually intelligible.

It is estimated that there are between 5000 and 7000 human languages. It is difficult to provide an exact count, as differentiating languages from dialects is often difficult. It is also the case that languages die, as the number of speakers dwindle. That is particularly the case with indigenous languages in the Americas and Asia. **Endangered languages** can become extinct, and today this is happening at an alarming rate, for multiple reasons; often cited are globalization and the rise of English as a world language. Several TED Talks highlight the work of **field linguists** (a branch of anthropology) to capture recordings of endangered languages in an effort at preservation (see resource list). Modern technology makes it much easier to document and archive language use. However, those same technological advances bring the outside world into formally isolated areas, inevitably favoring the spread of dominant languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and English.

Figure 3.1.6: Linguist Gregory Anderson interviews a Koro speaker in India

3.2: Second Language Learning

Approaches to Language Learning

For the many indigenous languages threatened with extinction, modern technology can provide an invaluable service, through recordings to capture high-quality audio and video of native speakers. This enables as well the preservation of cultural artifacts such as traditional stories, folklore, or information about the natural world. Field linguists use the recordings along with other information gathered to analyze the target language and culture, from which they develop dictionaries, grammars, and ethnographic studies. **Ethnography** – the study and description of the customs of a particular group – has been widely used in anthropology and linguistics, as it supplies authentic information about a culture. It's also a tool that can be used in conjunction with study abroad or community-based learning. Ethnographic studies typically entail conducting interviews with "informants", i.e. local inhabitants, collecting samples of language use and cultural information. Informal ethnographic studies can be done today by students through the use of inexpensive recording devices or mobile phones.

The language data collected by ethnographers can be a valuable resource for language learning. Dual-language dictionaries, grammar tutorials, and sample dialogs are typically digitized and made available online. Such resources are especially important for less commonly taught languages (Godwin-Jones, 2013). For many world languages, there may not be any locally available learning resources such as classroom instruction or native speakers. There may be few language textbooks or other print materials available as well. There are several sites which collect online resources for less commonly taught languages such as the University of Pittsburgh Less-commonly-taught Languages Center or the University of Arizona's Critical Languages Program.

While digital resources for language learning proliferate today, the traditional access to language learning materials is the textbook. Since the early 19th century textbooks have provided the essential structure and content for both teacher-led and self-taught language learning. The rich multimedia environment for language learners is a fairly recent phenomenon (see Otto, 2017). The use of audio for improving pronunciation and listening skills, and for exposing learners to more native speaker speech began with the advent of magnetic tape recorders in the 1950s and 1960s. This corresponded to the popularity of the audiovisual method of language learning, which stressed working closely, often memorizing, model dialogs. This **behaviorist approach** to language pedagogy, emphasizing rote learning of vocabulary and grammar through drills and repetition, continued to be used in the early stages of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in the 1960s and 1970s. A major breakthrough in CALL arrived with the incorporation of digital audio and video into personal computers in the 1980s. This enabled programmatically guided random access to recordings, allowing audio and video to be used in much more creative and pedagogically effective ways. Quite sophisticated multimedia learning programs were developed which featured authentic video, gaming elements, and branching storylines depending on learner actions (Godwin-Jones, 2017a).

Figure 3.2.1: Learning German at the Smarter Language Academy in Nigeria

Chomsky's concept of universal grammar led to theories of language instruction that postulated the existence of a "natural order of acquisition" (Krashen, 1982, p. 15), that is, that there is for all languages a set, optimal sequence of learning activities. This led to an emphasis in language learning on grammatical rules acquired through psycholinguistic/cognitive processes. However, research from Hymes (1972) and other linguistics scholars began to emphasize a different aspect of language, namely its social aspect. From this perspective language is not just an internal, psychologial process, but has a crucial socio-cultural role – it is the principal means we have to interact with others. We learn our first language from interactions with those around us, our families and peers. This dimension of language began to be increasingly recognized as important as well in second language learning. This has led to a decreased emphasis on purely cognitive approaches such as drill and practice exercises or memorization and more emphasis on

cultural aspects of language. This functional view of language puts more of a focus on social practices such as requesting and apologizing and the structure of conversations (i.e. turn-taking or set question-answer sequences). More emphasis is placed on learning language through use. That may mean, for example, learning new vocabulary incidentally through extensive reading or other language contact, not through memorizing word lists.

This **communicative approach** to language learning emphasizes the need to go beyond learning vocabulary and grammar, to develop practical and pragmatically appropriate speaking ability (Savignon, 1983). The emphasis is on use of functional language in real communicative contexts, often using a task-based approach. This involves having students use real world situations to practice language. There is a growing recognition that for most learners, functional ability in a second language should be the goal, that is, an ability to use the language appropriately in a broad range of contexts. That involves not just learning grammar, but cultural strategic knowledge and strategic competence as well, i.e., what's appropriate to say in a given context.

Most current theories of **Second Language Acquisition** (SLA) advocate a sociocognitive approach, combining cognitive-mechanical practice and socially-based learning (see Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Language and language learning are both such complex phenomenona, that there is not likely to be one "right" way or best approach to SLA (see Godwin-Jones, 2018). The diversity of learner backgrounds, available learning resources, and level of need/interest mean that no individual is likely to learn a new language in precisely the same way. This has led to a great deal of interest in how language development can be personalized to individual learners (see Godwin-Jones, 2017c; Ortega, 2017). That in turn points to the power of learning a second language to change individual lives: "A foreign language is not simply something to add to our repertoire of skills, but a personalized tool that enables us to expand and express our identity or sense of self in new and interesting ways and with new kinds of people" (Ushioda, 2011, p. 204). Learning a new language broadens our experiences and horizons, providing access to new sources of information and entertainment, and potentially a "transformation of self" (Larsen-Freeman, 2018, p. 62).

Understanding the nature of language

Learning a second language provides insight into how language works. Many monolinguals are likely to assume that the difference between languages is largely **semantic**, that is to say that moving from one language to another is simply a matter of substituting words. We have seen in the example of Warlpiri how far that can be from reality. In fact, the very same word equivalents can be put together in very different ways. Some languages such as Arabic make rich use of metaphorical language, for example. In all languages there are idioms and fixed expressions that have meaning beyond the literal denotations of constituent words. One of the ways words are used differently is in **collocations** – groupings of words that conventionally go together. In English, for example, we say "make your bed" but "do your homework", with the verbs not being interchangeable despite similarity in meaning. The **lexical approach** to language learning emphasizes the study of vocabulary in context, including collocations and idiomatic expressions (Lewis, 1993).

How sentences are put together can vary significantly by language. Learning German, for example, will expose learners to **syntax** (word order) that is quite different from the way sentences are put together in many languages, i.e. subject – verb – object (SVO). In German, that word order can be used, but it is common to have something other than the subject at the beginning of the sentence. At the beginning of newscasts on German television, it is common to hear the phrase, *Ihnen einen guten Abend*, literally "to you (formal you) a good evening". German indicates the role of a noun or pronoun in the sentence not by its placement but by its form or ending. These **morphological** variations – changes in endings – are crucial to understanding what a sentence says. German is not unique in this respect. Some languages add endings to the end of words (**suffixes**) as well as to the beginning (**prefixes**). Some Eskimo-Aleut languages build what are in other languages complex sentences by adding on many prefixes or suffixes to a root word (see example in sidebar).

Sample Inuit word (Eskimo-Aleut language)

ᑐᓵᑦᓯᐊᕈᓐᓇᙱᑦᑐᐊᓘᔪᖓ

Tusaatsiarunnanngittualuujunga

I can't hear very well.

This long word is composed of a root word *tusaa*- 'to hear' followed by five suffixes:

- -**tsiaq**- "well"
- -**junnaq**- "be able to"
- -**nngit**- negation

- **-tu(q)** indicative third-person singular
- **-alu(k)-:** augmentative ("very")
- **-u-**: "be"
- **-junga**: indicative first-person singular (itself composed of the indicative morpheme -ju- and the first person mark -nga)

Inuit grammar/Wikipedia

In some languages, learning sometimes subtle variations in pronunciation can be crucially important. In Mandarin Chinese, for example, there are four **tones** in which syllables are pronounced and the exact same **phoneme** (minimal unit of sound) can have four different meanings depending on the tone (high, low, rising, rising and falling). The syllable “ma” in Mandarin could be *mā* (mother), *má* (to bother), *mǎ* (horse), *mà* (to scold), or *ma* (neutral tone, used as an interrogative particle). One of the helpful tools linguists have created in the field of **phonetics** (the production of sounds) and **phonology** (how sounds are put together) is the **IPA**, the International Phonetic Alphabet (MacMahon, 1986). It allows an accurate representation of sounds in all human languages, including the variety of clicks in some African languages. In some cases, the IPA transcription is easy to understand, for example, “good” as [gud]. In other cases, symbols are used that are not part of the regular alphabet, for example, thicker as [θɪkə] or child as [tʃaɪld].

Learning a Second Language

The degree of difficulty in learning a second language can vary depending on a number of factors, such as motivation, time commitment, and innate ability to learn. Some learners are able to imitate very closely the sounds of a native speaker; others have great difficulty in that area, particularly if they start learning the language later in life. The **critical period hypothesis** claims that there is an ideal time window for acquiring language, namely as children or adolescents (Harley & Wang, 1997). This is particularly true for developing native-like pronunciation and fluent oral communication skills. Older learners, on the other hand, tend to do well with learning grammar and structure, the analytical aspect of language learning. The degree of difficulty is also dependent on the level of fluency and accuracy one hopes to attain. People learn languages for different reasons, and some learners may just need a reading ability.

Immigrants sometimes reach a level of ability that provides basic functionality in the language. At that point they may stop formal training or making conscious efforts to improve, their pronunciation and grammar becoming "**fossilized**" at the functional level achieved (Acton, 1984). In the field of SLA today, a major field within applied linguistics, it is recognized that language learners vary considerably in their goals and needs and that not every learner needs to develop native-like pronunciation or perfect grammar. The standard for most learners is likely to be intelligibility, being able to make oneself understood. In some cases, mispronunciation of individual sounds is less important for intelligibility then intonation or idiomatic word choice. Unfortunately, the public at large does not share the perspective of SLA, so that those who speak with a noticeable accent or use faulty grammar can face prejudice and discrimination, despite being eminently intelligible.

One of the other determiners of language learning ease or difficulty is the similarity or dissimilarity of the second language to one's native tongue. It is clearly much easier for a native English speaker to learn Spanish or German than to learn Arabic or Mandarin. For those languages, a completely different writing system must be learned. It's also the case that Spanish and German, like English, are members of the same language family of Indo-European, which means that they have similar genealogies. As a result, there are similarities in grammar and vocabulary. A high number of **cognates** – words which resemble each other – between the two languages can be very helpful, especially in the early stages of language learning.

Ultimately, if or how well learners acquire a second language depends on the individual. One's attitude is a crucial factor. If one is highly motivated to learn because of extrinsic factors, such as a migrant's need for functional ability in an adopted country, that can lead to more intense and faster learning. There may be compelling professional reasons for needing to learn a second language, such as being posted to a foreign country. Intrinsic motivating factors may play a role. Those might include a desire to learn more about another culture to maintain or establish a connection to one's ethnic heritage. **Polyglots**, speakers of multiple languages, are motivated to learn as many languages as possible (see resource list for examples).

Figure 3.2.2: Author JRR Tolkien knew many languages and invented lan-guages

In any case, maintaining a positive attitude is important in intercultural communication generally, and is of great benefit as well in language learning. A spirit of openness and curiosity is needed. If one is willing to use the language learned to engage in conversation with other learners or native speakers, faster progress is likely. The author of a well-known textbook on intercultural communication entitled one of the chapters "Language as a barrier" (Jandt, 2012). In fact, the opposite is true, learning a second language is a gateway into another culture, the most effective way to get an inside track on the perspective from which speakers of the language view the world.

English as a world language

Often there is a close and natural connection between the language one learns and the culture represented by that language. In fact, interest in the target culture may be the starting point for learning a new language. In some cases, there is a tighter connection to a single culture than for others. Learners of Japanese, for example, are in a different position from learners of Spanish in that there are fewer regional variations and only one nation-state where Japanese is spoken. From that perspective, English is even more diverse culturally than Spanish. That derives not just from the fact that English is the official language of a variety of countries, but that it also functions as the lingua franca for exchanges between people with different native languages. In fact, it's estimated that there are today a larger number of people worldwide who speak English as a second language than as a native language (Crystal, 2003). English is seen in many countries as an essential tool for social and economic advancement. At the same time, English is sometimes seen as an instrument of cultural imperialism, given the history of colonization, evangelization and, spread of US consumer/popular culture from the Anglophone world. The spread of English is often accompanied by Western, more specifically Anglo-Saxon cultural values.

The role that English as a language plays in a given culture may vary considerably. Given its history as a former English colony, Hong Kong, for example, is a city in which there are many people who speak English in their everyday lives. Hong Kongers use English "quite comfortably with one another when they are at school or in the office. It is considered strange, however, to use it in daily conversation" (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012, p. 6). This is in contrast to Singapore, India, or South Africa, where there may be speakers of a variety of other languages so that English is needed as a lingua franca. In Hong Kong, by contrast, English is not needed, as native Hong Kongers speak Cantonese. Scollon, Scollon & Jones (2012) point out that using English in Hong Kong outside of institutional settings carries with it social significance:

> *[This is] based partly on the groups of people that use it such as teachers and other authority figures as well as non-Cantonese speaking "foreigners," and so by appropriating English into casual conversation with another Cantonese speaker, one might be claiming a certain affiliation with those groups of people, or one might be thought by the people to whom one is talking to be claiming such an affiliation, to be "showing of ," or, at the very least, to be acting unduly formal (p. 6).*

The different social significance of speaking English across cultures points to the inherent cultural forces language embodies beyond serving as a means of communication. Language choice can be a way to position oneself socially. In many cultures, English may be an important component of individual identity and agency.

The interest in English has resulted in a boom in English classes in many countries. At the same time, there has been a shift in how English is taught as a second language. It is no longer the case that learning English is tied necessarily to learning as well about the culture of Great Britain or the USA. The kind of English taught may in fact not be either British English or North American English, but rather a version which adapts to a local variety of English or strives to model International or World English. The latter concept has evolved out of the desire to minimize cultural influences from North America and Great Britain in language learning, as well as to deal with differences in usage (spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation) among Englishes in Anglophone countries. There have even been attempts, such as Basic Global English, to create a kind of neutral, bare-bones version of the language (Grzega, 2006). On the other hand, there have been efforts locally to teach English within the context of a local culture. That has been the case, for example, in Vietnam (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996) and Pakistan (Malik, 1993).

Many people are learning English for highly utilitarian reasons, to advance socially or professionally. As a result, there is a lot of interest in "English for Special Purposes," English classes tailored to those with particular professional needs, such as business, tourism, or a highly technical field. This may lead to a limited proficiency in English within a narrow semantic field. An example is Aviation English, called *AirSpeak*, the version of English universally used by pilots and air traffic controllers (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2003). There have been some concerns expressed that pilots with *AirSpeak*-level English proficiency can deal very well with routine situations that occur in the air, but might have some difficulty describing unusual events in English. The example given in the sidebar illustrates potential issues with language, but also possibly with sociocultural factors, namely the possible reluctance of a pilot to admit ignorance.

Example: Airspeak

On August 2, 1976, a Boeing 707 cargo flight departed from Tehran to Seoul and collided with the mountain due to a wrong turn. The following is the conversation between Air Traffic Controller (ATC) and the pilot. Standard Instrument Departure (SID) is published flight procedure followed by aircraft immediately after takeoff from an airport

- ATC to Pilot: “Follow SID 11”
- Pilot to ATC: “What is SID 11?”
- ATC to Pilot: “Standard Instrument Departure 11”
- Pilot action: Silence

Hazrati & Touiserkani (2016)

In the early days of the Internet there was concern that English would crowd out all other languages. That has not, however, been the case. Statistics show much faster Internet growth in countries where English is not the dominant language (Internet World Stats, 2017). In 1996, more than 80 percent of Internet users were native English speakers. By 2010, that percentage had dropped to 27.3 percent. Online services are increasingly available in multiple languages, Wikipedia in 295 languages and Facebook in 101 (Ortega, 2017). However, it remains a reality that English growth may lead to the decline of other languages. In some countries, private universities have opened up in which the language of instruction is English. The popularity since 2012 of MOOCs (massively open online courses), which have predominantly been offered in English, from US universities, has led some to worry about that form of distance learning in English replacing local educational resources (Godwin-Jones, 2014). Whether the cause is or is not the spread of English, it does remain that a large number of the world's languages are today threatened with extinction (Choi, 2014). Given the close connection we have discussed here between language and culture, losing language communities also means a loss of human cultural capital, which is irreplaceable. For the majority of the world languages which do not have a written language, losing the last remaining speakers can mean the disappearance of the spoken stories and traditions. It can also mean a significant loss of knowledge of the natural world. Losing words for native plants can mean loss of knowledge of how that plant can be used for medicinal or other purposes. Ultimately, losing a language entails losing a unique view of our world.

3.3: Technically Speaking - Language Learning and Technology

Today online resources have become invaluable for all language learners. Language learners may be using online resources in conjunction with instructed language learning in a formal school setting, or they may be independently learning or maintaining a second language. For the latter, there are a variety of options available. There are online language learning services online such is DuoLingo or Mango Languages. These typically provide instruction in multiple languages and, in addition to basic language instruction, also offer access to other learners and/or native speakers. These are typically commercial services, which usually offer a free trial. They vary considerably in scope and effectiveness. A free alternative is to connect online with other language learners through a site such as the Mixxer. One of the methods that has been popular in recent years is tandem learning, in which two learners of each other's language serve as conversation partners and native informants, sharing equally in time spent practicing with each language (Brammerts, 1996).

Informal language learning through the Internet has become increasingly popular, as it offers just-in-time learning, anytime access, and low cost. Depending on the tool or service used, it also offers the possibility of creating relationships with other learners or native speakers. This can provide valuable venues for real language use. Often classroom language learning is preparation or practice for actual communication, but the Internet provides opportunities for authentic communication. It supplies both opportunities for language use in real contexts and the opportunity for cultural learning. Having real conversations with real people (face-to-face or online) can be a powerful learning motivator. Using and learning languages online has the potential to expose learners to both high volumes and diverse ranges of language. This is an ideal environment for language learning.

The current view of language has been shaped by research based on corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and related fields, which see language above all as a set of patterns and conventional word groupings (Godwin-Jones, 2017b). Studies examining real language exchanges show that language use is characterized by repetition, reuse, and re-purposing of chunks of language (Ellis, 2017). This construction-based view of language means that it is essential for the learner to have access to a sufficient volume of language in different contexts to be able to identify patterns, as well as to gain insight into how usage can vary accord-ing to formality or other contexts. The need is for exposure to real language in real and meaningful contexts. That, in fact, is the big advantage of informal language learning online: being able to engage in substantial communicative activities in authentic and meaningful contexts, supplying both more volume and more variety than is the case in instructed language learning. In this way, language is learned through meaningful experiences, and language structures emerge from repeated use (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

How one might use technology for language learning depends to a large extent on one's level of proficiency, time available, and the purpose for wanting to learn the language. For tourists, there are phrase books, virtual guided tours, and other language and cultural resources in electronic form. These are typically available as apps for mobile access (Godwin-Jones, 2017d). Also popular are flashcard programs for vocabulary learning as well as basic grammar tutorials. For those focused on learning to read in another language, dual-language and annotated texts are available, depending upon the L1 and L2 combination. Also possible are four-skill online courses or software programs for many languages. These include freely available Internet courses such as MOOCs or (paid) for-credit university classes.

Figure 3.3.1: Ad for Rosetta Stones promising social benefits

Among the self-directed language learning software packages, one of the better-known products is Rosetta Stone. It features a sequenced presentation of the target language, initially in phrases and short sentences, and then moving on gradually to larger language chunks. It incorporates listening practice as well as speaking, providing feedback through automatic speech recognition.

Rosetta Stone has been criticized for not incorporating a cultural component: the same generic sentences and stock illustrations are used for all languages. Moreover, it shares with other dedicated language learning software the disadvantage of not supplying opportunities for language use beyond simple phrases and sentences. One recent study of the use of Rosetta Stone in elementary Spanish found that students had gained considerable knowledge in the areas of vocabulary and grammar (Lord, 2015). However, they had considerable difficulty in conducting even a basic conversation in Spanish. They lacked **strategic competence**, the ability to negotiate conversations through rephrasing or asking for explanations or repetitions.

3.4: Language and Culture (Summary)

From theory to practice...

– *Don't expect your language learning progress to be linear*. The typical language learning experience is more like a spiral than a straight line, with lots of starts and stops. One often has the feeling of standing still or even moving 1 step forward and 2 steps back, particularly in the stages of advanced novice (CEFR level A2) and intermediate (B1 to B2). It can happen at the upper levels as well. This is normal, that progress comes through fits and starts. Often you are learning without realizing it, building up your store of language until it reaches a point where what you've accumulated starts to come together.

– *Textbook language is not real*. In real-life use, be prepared to encounter language differences from what's in language textbooks. This is one of the advantages of exploring L2 use through online exchanges, getting a taste of authentic language use in context.

– *Language in everyday use is culturally determined*. This means that how we carry out routine tasks such as exchanging greetings, asking for a favor, or expressing thanks can vary significantly from culture to culture. In these "speech acts" being grammatically correct is not nearly as important as being culturally appropriate.

– *Explore language learning on the Internet*. As described in this chapter, there are rich opportunities for language study, both learning and maintaining, on the Internet. Some may work for you better than others – there are many different tools and services, which use quite different approaches.

For discussion and reflection...

1. **Language and human behavior**

After watching the TED talks by Chen and Tran...

How do you judge the validity of the claims in the videos that the structure of a language (such as the presence or absence of a particular verb tense) can influence human behavior? When you are using a second language, do you feel you see the world differently?

2. **Words**

After watching the TED talks by Curzan and Shargaa and listening to (or reading the transcript of) the conversation with John McWhorter...

Do words matter? Is it a problem if someone uses a word incorrectly in a non-standard way? Are there particular contexts in which word usage is important? What's your view on the use of "awesome" and "thug", as discussed by Shargaa and McWhorter?

3. **Language learning and multilingualism**

After watching the TED talks by Doner and Lonsdale and reading the piece by Foer:

What have been for you the most effective approaches to language learning? What mechanisms have you found for maintaining your second language abilities? How would you judge the approaches advocated in these videos? If you have tried learning Chinese, what is your assessment of the "Chineasy" approach?

4. **English as a world language**

After watching the Ryan and Walker TED talks and reading the articles by Pullum and McWhorter...

Are we moving towards one language = English? What are the advantages and disadvantages if that were to be the case? Why English and not another language, particularly Chinese? What's your take on McWhorter's statement that "...if the Chinese rule the world, they will likely do so in English"? Is it a problem (culturally), that, as Pullum discusses, higher education in a number of non-English speaking countries is moving towards English as the language of instruction?

5. **Endangered languages and technology**

After watching the TED talks by Davis and Plotkin...

Is it important to preserve the world's languages? Isn't it crucially important for individual advancement in any country to speak English? Does it matter in that case that a native language disappears?

Key Concepts

- **Accent**: Version of language distinguished by pronunciation
- **Ambilingualism:** Situation when two are more languages are used interchangedly and seeminlgy randomly by an individual or in a community
- **Argot:** A secret language used by a group to prevent outsiders from understanding [from French *argot*, meaning slang]
- **Behaviorism:** Emphasizes the role of environmental factors in learning (rather than innate factors); learning involves conditioning through repeated stimulus and response
- **Cognate**: A word having the same linguistic derivation as another; from the same original word or root
- **Collocation**: The frequent juxtaposition of a particular word with another word or words with a frequency greater than chance
- **Communicative approach:** Languge learning pedagogy which stresses meaningful and real communication in interactions among learners and the use of authentic texts
- **Comparative linguistics:** Branch of historical linguistics concerned with comparing languages to establish their historical relatedness
- **Computational linguistics**: Branch of linguistics that includes automatic speech recognition, computer-assisted translation, and other uses associated with the use of computers to predict and interpret human communication
- **Connotation:** Commonly understood cultural association of a word, rather than its literal meaning (denotation)
- **Creole**: Full-fledged language that originated from a pidgin or combination of other languages
- **Denotation:** A word's explicit or literal meaning
- **Descriptive linguistics**: the study of the grammar, classification, and arrangement of the features of a language at a given time, without reference to the history of the language or comparison with other languages.
- **Dialect**: A language variety associated with a particular region or social group
- **Diglossia:** Situation in which two languages or dialects are regularly spoken in a community
- **Discourse analysis:** A general term for a number of approaches to analyze language use, usually involving breaking down conversations into individual units, which are studied for their meaning and context
- **Endangered language:** A language that is at risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to speaking another language
- **Ethnography**: The scientific description of the customs of individual peoples and cultures
- **Field linguistics**: An applied area that collects data on little-studied languages, particularly those with few speakers that are in danger of dying out
- **Fossilization**: Refers to the loss of progress in the acquisition of a L2 following a period where learning occurred, despite regular exposure to and interaction with the L2
- **Generative grammar:** A linguistic theory that sees grammar as a system of rules that generates combinations of words that form grammatical sentences in a given language (originated by Noam Chomsky)
- **Grammar**: The mental representation of a speakers' linguistic competence; what a speaker knows about a language.
- **Historical linguistics**: Study of the origins, development and relationships of various languages
- **Idioms**: Whole phrases that extended the meaning beyond the literal meaning of the words
- **Indo-European**: A large language family of related languages and dialects originating in Eurasia, with the most widely spoken languages being Spanish, English, Hindi, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, Persian, and Punjabi
- **IPA**: The international phonetic alphabet, a set of symbols and diacritics representing phonemes of the world's languages
- **Jargon**: A set of words/terms that are shared by those with a common profession or experience
- **Language**: A systematic set of sounds, combined with a set of rules, for the purpose of communicating
- **Language family**: A group of languages related through descent from a common ancestor
- **Language isolate:** Language with no known relationship with other languages or membership in a language family
- **Language socialization:** Gradual development of skills and behaviors in expected ways of speaking and acting through participation in social interactions
- **Language variety**: The way a particular group of people uses language
- **Lexical approach:** Method of teaching foreign language stressing the understanding and production of lexical phrases as chunks
- **Lingua franca**: Common language used by speakers of different languages
- **Linguistic determinism**: The hypothesis that the differences among languages are reflected in the differences in the worldviews of their speakers
- **Linguistic relativity**: Theory that the way one thinks is determined by the language one speaks

- **Linguistics**: The scientific study of language, specifically its structure, development, and relationship with other languages
- **Monolingual:** A person who speaks only one language
- **Morpheme**: In a language, the smallest unit that carries meaning; may be a word or a part of a word (such as a prefix)
- **Morphology**: Branch of linguistics with a focus on morphemes, the basic unit of meaning within a language
- **Mutual intelligibility**: The ability of two people to understand each other when speaking
- **Neologism:** A newly coined word or phrase
- **Noam Chomsky**: United States linguist whose theory of generative grammar redefined the field of linguistics (born 1928)
- **Phoneme**: Smallest unit of sound, as in a consonant or vowel
- **Phonetics**: Description and classification of sounds and the study of their production and perception.
- **Phonology**: Study of sound systems and sound change, usually within a particular language or family of languages.
- **Pidgin**: A simplified language that develops as a means of communication between two or more groups that do not have a language in common
- **Polyglot:** A person who knows and is able to use several languages
- **Pragmatics**: The study of how language is actually used and the effect that language has on human perceptions and behaviors
- **Pragmatic competence:** The ability to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate fashion
- **Prefix**: An affix that is attached to the beginning of a morpheme or stem
- **Prescriptive grammar**: Rules of grammar brought about by grammarians' attempts to legislate what speakers' grammatical rules should be, rather than what they are
- **Proto-language:** Hypothetical parent language from which actual languages are derived
- **Prestige**: In sociolinguistics, the level of respect normally accorded to a specific language or dialect within a particular speech community, relative to other languages or dialects
- **Register:** A variety of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting
- **Root**: The morpheme that remains when all affixes are stripped from a complex word
- **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**: The proposition that the structure of a language influences how its speakers perceive the world around them.
- **Semantics**: Systematic study of meaning in language, especially word and sentence meaning
- **SLA: Second Language Acquisition:** References both the process of learning a second language as well as the academic field dealing with that process
- **Sociolinguistics**: The study of how language is used in society, including its differences among cultures, age groups, genders, social class, etc.
- **Speech act**: An utterance that has performative function in language and communication
- **Strategic competence:** A speaker's ability to adapt use of language to compensate for communication problems caused by a lack of understanding
- **Suffix**: An affix that is attached to the end of a morpheme or word
- **Symbol**: Arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus representing something else
- **Syntax**: Systematic ways in which words combine to create phrases, clauses, and sentences
- **Tone**: The use of pitch in language to distinguish lexical or grammatical meaning – that is, to distinguish or to inflect words
- **Universal grammar**: Noam Chomsky's theory that all the world's languages share a common underlying structure
- **Variation**: A characteristic of language: there is more than one way of saying the same thing. Speakers may vary pronunciation, word choice, or morphology and syntax

Resources

Books: language autobiographies

- **Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: life and reality*. Harvard University Press.**
- Hoffman, E. (1998). *Lost in translation: A life in a new language*. Random House.
- Kaplan, A. (1994). *French lessons: A memoir*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rodriguez, R. (1983). *Hunger of memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez: An autobiography*. Bantam.

Movies involving language or linguists

- *Apocalypto*, 2006; filmed entirely in the Yucatec Maya language (with subtitles)
- *Arrival*, 2016; science fiction that centers on translation and interpretation, with a linguist as the main protagonist
- *Grammar of Happiness*, 2012; follows the story of Daniel Everett among the Amazonian Piraha tribe

- *Do you speak American?*, 2005; documentary about different versions of English in the US
- *Ghost Warrior,1984;* A deep-frozen 400-year-old samurai is shipped to Los Angeles, where he comes back to life, speaking an ancient Japanese dialect
- *Nell, 1994;* wild woodswoman in North Carolina who speaks a strange unknown language
- *Pontypool*, 2010; a virus spreads through a community and only a linguist can solve the mystery
- *The Interpreter*, 2005; political thriller about a UN interpreter (Nicole Kidman)
- *The Linguists*, 2008; documentary film about language extinction and documentation
- *The Terminal*, 2004; feature film (Tom Hanks) exploring learning a new language on the fly
- *Windtalkers*, 2002, on the use of the Navajo language as a secret code during World War II

Blogs on language

- Language Log Long-running, informative blog from the U. of Pennsylvania
- Lingua franca Associated with the Chronicle of Higher Education
- The World in words Podcast about language, from PRI's *The World*

The nature of language

- Keith Chen: Could your language affect your ability to save money?

TED description: "What can economists learn from linguists? Behavioral economist Keith Chen introduces a fascinating pattern from his research: that languages without a concept for the future — 'It rain tomorrow,' instead of 'It will rain tomorrow' — correlate strongly with high savings rates."

Can Your Language Influence Your Spending, Eating, and Smoking Habits? from the Atlantic largely supporting the claims as does the piece by David Berreby, Obese? Smoker? No Retirement Savings? Perhaps It's Because of the Language You Speak, while a post in LanguageLog, Keith Chen, Whorfian economist, expresses skepticism

- Phuc Tran: Grammar, Identity, and the Dark Side of the Subjunctive

TED description: "Phuc Tran grew up caught between two languages with opposing cultural perspectives: the indicative reality of Vietnamese and the power to image endless possibilities with English. In this personal talk, Tran explains how both shaped his identity."

Comments from reddit readers and on Quora (expressing skepticism)

Language in society

- Anne Curzan: What makes a word "real"?

TED description: "One could argue that slang words like ‘hangry,’ ‘defriend’ and ‘adorkable’ fill crucial meaning gaps in the English language, even if they don't appear in the dictionary. After all, who actually decides which words make it into those pages? Language historian Anne Curzan gives a charming look at the humans behind dictionaries, and the choices they make."

- Jill Shargaa: Please, please, people. Let's put the 'awe' back in 'awesome'

TED description: "Which of the following is awesome: your lunch or the Great Pyramid of Giza? Comedian Jill Shargaa sounds a hilarious call for us to save the word "awesome" for things that truly inspire awe."

- The Racially Charged Meaning Behind The Word 'Thug'

NPR's Melissa Block speaks to John McWhorter, associate professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, about the use of the word "thug" to describe Baltimore rioters.

Comments from NPR listeners on McWhorter's views on "thug"

Speaking multiple languages

- Mia Nacamulli: The benefits of a bilingual brain

It’s obvious that knowing more than one language can make certain things easier — like traveling or watching movies without subtitles. But are there other advantages to having a bilingual (or multilingual) brain? Mia Nacamulli details the three types of bilingual brains and shows how knowing more than one language keeps your brain healthy, complex and actively engaged.

- Patricia Kuhl: The linguistic genius of babies

TED description: "Patricia Kuhl shares astonishing findings about how babies learn one language over another — by listening to the humans around them and "taking statistics" on the sounds they need to know. Clever lab experiments (and brain scans) show how 6-month-old babies use sophisticated reasoning to understand their world."

- Tim Doner: Breaking the language barrier

Young polyglot talks about superficial view of language learning in the media; explains "method of loci" (memory palace) and experimenting with other methods; about language and culture

- Benny Lewis: Hacking language learning

Polyglot explains his method for language learning; about polyglots; emphasizes motivation TED description: "'Some people just don't have the language learning gene.' To prove that this statement is patently untrue is Benny Lewis's life mission. A monoglot till after leaving university, Benny now runs the World's most popular language learning blog and is learning Egyptian Arabic which will be language number twelve, or maybe thirteen. But who's counting?"

On language learning

- Sid Efromovich: 5 techniques to speak any language

Polyglot explains his approaches to language learning. His first rule: make sure you make mistakes

- ShaoLan: Learn to read Chinese ... with ease!

For foreigners, learning to speak Chinese is a hard task. But learning to read the beautiful, often complex characters of the Chinese written language may be less difficult. ShaoLan walks through a simple lesson in recognizing the ideas behind the characters and their meaning — building from a few simple forms to more complex concepts. Call it Chineasy.

Chineasy? Not Victor Mair (prominent Chinese language professor) on this approach (not a fan)

- Chris Lonsdale: How to learn any language in six months

How he became fluent in Chinese in 6 months

Victor Mair is skeptical: Fluency in six months

- How I learned a language in 22 hours

Article from the Guardian by Joshua Foer

It's not easy and it takes time. Comments on Joshua Foer's article

English as a world language

- What the World Will Speak in 2115

Article from the Wall Street Journal by John McWhorter

- Jay Walker: The world's English mania

TED description: "Jay Walker explains why two billion people around the world are trying to learn English. He shares photos and spine-tingling audio of Chinese students rehearsing English, 'the world's second language', by the thousands."

- Jamila Lyiscott: 3 ways to speak English

TED description: "Jamila Lyiscott is a 'tri-tongued orator;' in her powerful spoken-word essay "Broken English," she celebrates — and challenges — the three distinct flavors of English she speaks with her friends, in the classroom and with her parents. As she explores the complicated history and present-day identity that each language represents, she unpacks what it means to be 'articulate'."

- Patricia Ryan: Don't insist on English!

TED description: "In her talk, longtime English teacher Patricia Ryan asks a provocative question: Is the world's focus on English preventing the spread of great ideas in other languages? (For instance: what if Einstein had to pass the TOEFL?) It's a passionate defense of translating and sharing ideas."

- Suzanne Talhouk: Don't kill your language

TED description: "More and more, English is a global language; speaking it is perceived as a sign of being modern. But — what do we lose when we leave behind our mother tongues? Suzanne Talhouk makes an impassioned case to love your own language, and to cherish what it can express that no other language can. In Arabic with subtitles."

- There Was No Committee

Article by Geoffrey Pullum (from the Lingua Franca blog) on the rise of English in education world-wide

- The speech accent archive

Fascinating archive of American English accents

Playing with language and identity

- Trevor Noah - Live at the Apollo - London

The South African comedian on his identity and the role of languages

- Hetain Patel and Yuyu Rau: Who am I? Think again

TED description: "How do we decide who we are? Hetain Patel's surprising performance plays with identity, language and accent -- and challenges you to think deeper than surface appearances. A delightful meditation on self, with performer Yuyu Rau, and inspired by Bruce Lee."

TED talks on endangered languages

- Wade Davis: Dreams from endangered cultures

TED description: "With stunning photos and stories, National Geographic Explorer Wade Davis celebrates the extraordinary diversity of the world's indigenous cultures, which are disappearing from the planet at an alarming rate."

- Mark Plotkin: What the people of the Amazon know that you don't

TED description: "'The greatest and most endangered species in the Amazon rainforest is not the jaguar or the harpy eagle,' says Mark Plotkin, 'It's the isolated and uncontacted tribes.' In an energetic and sobering talk, the ethnobotanist brings us into the world of the forest's indigenous tribes and the incredible medicinal plants that their shamans use to heal. He outlines the challenges and perils that are endangering them — and their wisdom — and urges us to protect this irreplaceable repository of knowledge."

On the nature of TED talks

- Terry Moore: Why is 'x' the unknown?

Why is 'x' the symbol for an unknown? In this short and funny talk, Terry Moore gives the surprising answer.

Debunking Terry Moore's TED talk

- The Sound of TED: A Case for Distaste

The case for being skeptical of TED talks

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Conversing and Relating

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Gain insight into the complexity of language as related to human relationships
- Discuss different communication styles and issues of gender and language
- Know about theories related to communication accommodation
- Discuss different sources of miscommunication
- Understand the dynamics of language use in social contexts, including online

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4.1: Communication in Practice

> *Eden Jacobowitz is a student at the University of Pennsylvania. His studies were interrupted by a noisy crowd of students, many black and female. He yelled out his window, "Shut up, you water buffalo." He is now charged with racial harassment under the university's Code of Conduct. The school offered to dismiss the charge if he would apologize, attend a racial sensitivity seminar, agree to dormitory probation, and accept a temporary mark on his record which would brand him as guilty. He was told the term "water buffalo" could be interpreted as racist because a water buffalo is a dark primitive animal that lives in Africa. That is questionable semantics, dubious zoology, and incorrect geography. Water buffalo live in Asia, not in Africa. This from the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Jacobowitz is fighting back. The rest of us, however, are still in trouble. The language police are at work on the campuses of our better schools. The word cops are marching under the banner of political correctness. The culture of victimization is hunting for quarry. American English is in danger of losing its muscle and energy. That's what these bozos are doing to us. (Kors & Silverglate, 1999).*

This is a commentary by US news anchor John Chancellor on NBC news. A number of North American universities have explicit "speech codes" which seek to regulate what is perceived as harmful or hateful speech. These policies have been controversial, both in terms of the restrictions they place on individual freedom of speech and in how infractions are dealt with. Eden Jacobowitz defended his use of the term "water buffalo" as not intended to be a racial slur, but coming from Hebrew slang, *behema* (behemoth), used by Jews to refer to a loud, rowdy person. The charges against Jacobowitz were eventually dropped. The incident highlights the volatility of verbal exchanges and the opportunities for miscommunication and conflict, particularly between individuals from different ethnic or racial groups. In this unit we will be looking at language in the context of interpersonal and intergroup use. That will include gender-related communication patterns, as well as cultural and linguistic issues as they relate to friendships and romantic relationships. Conversational exchanges will be discussed from the larger linguistic context of speech communities and communication styles.

Figure 4.1.1: Free speech: Speaker in Hyde Park, London

Language and Eelationships

Human beings are social animals. We live in community with others and tend to see ourselves through the relationships we have. These relationships vary significantly in terms of importance, permanence, and roles. We have long-lasting relationships with family members and brief encounters with strangers; in between are friends, schoolmates, work colleagues, romantic partners, Facebook "friends", Twitter followers, and a host of other possible relationships. Cultures differ in how such relationships are established and how significant a role they play in an individual's life. Courtship practices and mate selection, for example, can be quite different. In the US, men and women "go on dates" and it's likely that many Americans assume this is a universal human concept. But in reality this practice – and the whole idea of "dating" as practiced in the US – may be foreign, even to close cultural neighbors, such as Western Europeans.

Figure 4.1.1: Courtship practices in Western Cultures

Michael Agar reports on his experience in this regard. There is a set ritual around "dating" in the US, which is different from how Western European Europeans establish male-female relationships, where mixed gender group outings are preferred over one-on-one visits to a restaurant, movie, or club. In other cultures, dating might be seen as an even more foreign concept, in countries where arranged marriages are the norm, for example. The term is tied so closely to specific cultural patterns in the US context that finding a precise equivalent in languages other than American English is a challenge.

But what is a date?

Recently an Austrian friend of mine came to Washington to teach and study at Georgetown University. She could tack through English grammar with the best of them and had a better vocabulary than most of the native-born undergraduates in my lecture class. After a couple of months I met her for dinner and asked her how everything was going. "Fine," she said, and then, after a moment's hesitation, "But what is a 'date'?" She knew how to use the word in a sentence – "I'm going on a date"; "How about a date?" She wasn't confused because the word also means a number on a calendar or a sweet piece of fruit. But none of that explained what a "date" was. I started to answer, and the more I talked the more lost I became in how Americans see men and women, how they see relationships, intimacy - a host of connected assumptions that I'd never put into words before. And I was only trying to handle straight dates. It was quite different from her Austrian understanding of men and women and what they are to each other. For a while she looked at me as if I'd just stepped out of a flying saucer, until she finally decided I was serious.

Agar, 1994, p. 16

The kind of language we use in communicating can vary as much as the nature of our relationship. We speak quite differently with family members, than we do with work colleagues. The informal language used in text messaging is far removed from the formal **register** (language level/tone) we might use in writing a letter applying for a job. Sociolinguists study how we use language to accomplish tasks and to negotiate relationships. The kind of language used in making requests or expressing gratitude – what linguists call speech acts – can reveal quite a lot about the nature of our relationships. Using conditional forms (i.e., "Could you please…") softens a request in a context where politeness is called for to express respect or to maintain social harmony. This tends to vary significantly across cultures. In some Asian cultures, for example, making extensive use of "please" and "thank you" within a family environment is seen as inappropriate, in that it creates distance and expresses a sense of obligation that is counter to an informal, caring human relationship (D'Souza, 1988). The role that language plays in social settings is complex. It not only conveys information, but it also serves to build and maintain relationships. It can also divide and antagonize, as in the example of the "water buffalo" incident.

We tend to think of communication as sending and receiving messages (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). Spoken messages, however, may not have the same degree of efficiency in transmission as written communications. A letter usually will have clearly understood content. In speaking, the message may not be received in the way we intend. There may be specific language issues which influence the reception of the message. These may be both on the speaker's end — talking too fast or too quietly, for example,– or on the listener's side – knowledge gaps in vocabulary or inattention, for instance. In speaking, we need to pay attention not only to the content of what we are saying, but also to how we are transmitting that content. That involves consideration of our mode of speaking, but also of the likely communicative abilities of our interlocutor. From that perspective, communicating effectively depends on our ability to establish a relationship with the other person:

Successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships. In this sense, the efficacy of communication depends upon using language to demonstrate one's

willingness to relate, which often involves the indirectness of politeness rather than the direct and ‘efficient’ choice of language full of information (Byram, 1997, p.3).

In other words, we need to take into account how our messages are likely to be received, based on the other person's communication style and on the conversation context.

Communication styles

Social scientists and linguists have been studying for some time how individuals and groups interact through language, both within the same language and between languages. They have sought to discover how and why language uses vary. One of the pioneers in this area was Basil Bernstein, who found through his research that "within the same society there can be different social groups or social classes whose communicative practices differ in important ways" (Philipsen & Albrecht, 1997, p. 122). In the US, for example, there are distinct differences in speech patterns between African-Americans and European-Americans. Bernstein (1964) described two essential patterns of speech, which he labeled **elaborated** and **restricted** codes. Elaborated code refers to contexts in which virtually all information is conveyed through the words spoken. Someone overhearing the conversation and not having any information about the interlocutor or the context would nevertheless be able to have a good understanding of the communication taking place. Restricted code, on the other hand, refers to conversations, if overheard, would not be understood because of a lack of background information and context.

These different modes of communication are often placed in relation to the distinction originally made by Edward Hall (1976) between **low-context** and **high-context** communications. In low-context messages, little (or "low") context is needed for comprehension because the essence of the communication is conveyed by the words used. That might at first blush seem to cover all human conversations. But in fact, there are interactions in which much of the message is conveyed by gestures (like bowing), body language (moving away from the speaker), or through the tone of voice (yelling). High-context messages refer to situations in which factors other than the actual words used may be vital to understanding. There can be conversations involving groups where silence is valued and in itself sends a message (in Native American cultures, for example) or where hierarchies dictate social behavior and interactions. While specific cultures are often identified as high or low context, it's more useful to apply such labels to individual speech in specific contexts.

High-context messages generally align with restricted speech codes in that a lot of verbiage is unnecessary and, in fact, what is not said may be as important as what is explicitly expressed. On the other hand, elaborated code is needed in low-context situations where little information is conveyed by nonverbal means. Restricted codes are most often associated with cultures labeled collectivistic, in which the status of the interactants dictates who says what to whom and how it is said. Restricted codes are also often found in "closed" communities such as the military or prison, but can also develop within any social group or individual who share social identifications, i.e. among spouses, coworkers, or fraternity brothers. People who spend a lot of time together in the same group inevitably develop shorthand ways of communicating. In some cases, such as in criminal gangs or religious cults, a specific verbal code may be developed to further group cohesion and exclude outsiders.

Interactions between conversants using opposing speech modes can lead to misunderstandings or conflict. Long pauses in a conversation may be normal and expected in some cultural contexts, but can be uncomfortable in others. A study by Stivers et al. (2009) compared ten languages in how long it took native speaker to respond to a yes/no question and found differences in the average gap before answering. Jumping into a conversation in order to end awkward pauses may limit the other person's ability to speak or to initiate conversational topics. Different cultural traditions may have different expectations in terms of **turn-taking** or the acceptability of interrupting. In Mediterranean countries, for example, it's common to hear overlapping utterances; in Northern European countries, there's a greater likelihood that conversational turns end before someone else speaks. North American linguist Deborah Tannen (1984) points to regional differences in turn-taking between New Yorkers and Californians during a dinner conversation. The former speak fast with no pauses:

> *The result is that the East Coast speakers continually take the floor, the West Coast participants waiting in vain for a pause they deem long enough for them to start talking. Whereas the ‘fast’ speakers think that the others have nothing to say, the ‘slow’ ones feel that they are not given a chance to talk (Günther, 2007, p. 132).*

The New Yorkers' turn-taking rules reflect their way of showing involvement in the conversation, while this is interpreted by the Californians as rudeness and a reluctance to let others speak.

Speech communities can also vary in how **direct** speakers are in expressing views. In some cultures, speakers may hide their real intent or personal opinion, by, for example, giving an ambiguous or misleading response to a request or to a yes-no question. This may occur out of feelings of respect, politeness, or wariness. This **indirect** verbal behavior is often associated with Asian cultures. The Japanese version of "yes" (*Hai* □□) does not necessarily mean "yes" in the sense of agreeing or accepting. It is used often to equivocate, to indicate to the speaker that you are listening, but not necessary expressing an affirmation. Other cultures prefer an explicit and overt verbal style. Germans, for example, are often given as an example of a direct speaking style, with a reputation of being blunt and to the point. An awareness of different conversational styles can be helpful in avoiding conversational faux-pas and hurt feelings. Caution is needed, however, in applying universally to individuals generic speech patterns. Individual speakers may have developed their own habits and preferences which differ from those of others in that particular cultural group:

> *We must be cautious and not assume that everyone in a particular part of the world behaves in certain ways. For example, not all Japanese favour indirect styles of communication, just as not all Germans have a very direct style of communication. Not all Chinese business executives prefer a formal style of communication in meetings, just as not all American executives adopt an informal style in their meetings. The degree of directness and formality may vary among individuals (Jackson, 2014, p. 95).*

It is also the case that in conversations with others individuals may well alter communication styles to adjust to conversation partners.

Figure 4.1.2: In the US there have been conflicts between Korean store-keepers and African-American customers

The conflicts in communication styles may derive from interactions among members of ethnic groups with different communication styles. In one study of an immigrant Korean shopkeeper and an African-American customer in Los Angeles, the clash of styles is evident (Bailey, 1997). In a conversation Bailey analyzes, the African-American customer uses a "high involvement style", featuring informal and emotional language, in an effort to establish a personal connection to the Korean shopkeeper. He uses swear words and volunteers personal information about himself. The shopkeeper, however, remains detached and impersonal, resulting in an unsatisfying conversation. This is not unusual in such encounters, as Bailey comments:

> *The seeming avoidance of involvement on the part of immigrant Koreans is frequently seen by African Americans as the disdain and arrogance of racism. The relative stress on interpersonal involvement among African Americans in service encounters is typically perceived by immigrant Korean retailers as a sign of selfishness, interpersonal imposition, or poor breeding (Bailey, 1997, p. 353).*

Such clashes are not infrequent in service encounters and in business transactions in many parts of the world. Conflicts may be related to different communication styles and expected behaviors in given situations. The extent to which one engages in **small talk** in such contexts, for example, varies significantly. Customers, such as in the example above, may engage in small talk as a way to establish a personal connection, but that may not be reciprocated.

Figure 4.1.3: Small talk plays different roles across cultures

In some contexts, such as at the workplace, small talk may involve a power negotiation. In conversations with subordinates, higher-ups in the company may decide to what extent engaging in small talk is acceptable or encouraged. Engaging in humor or telling jokes can be equally problematic across cultures. Humor depends on cultural context and knowledge, and relies considerably on the linguistic ability of a listener. As a result, jokes often do not work when transferred from one culture or language to another. Here again social or economic hierarchies may come into play, with those higher up the socio-economic ladder enjoying the privilege of making jokes, which may be inappropriate for subordinates (Dwyer, 1991).

Communication Contexts

Within the same society, there can be quite different speech patterns and verbal behaviors. In different situations and with different people, how we use language may vary considerably. How one speaks can also depend on one's gender. Gerry Philipsen's landmark study on speaking "like a man," in "Teamsterville" (his code name for a blue-collar, low income neighborhood in Chicago) illustrates that (1975). He discovered in his research that there were clearly defined patterns of communication in the community.

Figure 4.1.4: Talking like a man in Teamsterville

In his study, Philipsen describes the contexts in which high volumes of speech among men are expected, namely when congregated on street corners or at local bars. On the other hand, a high quantity of speaking is considered inappropriate in situations in which there is a hierarchical or social distance between the speakers. These include relationships with a wife, child, boss, outsider, or men of different ethnicity. In some situations, Teamsterville men's verbal code calls for no speaking at all, but rather silence, nonverbal behavior, or even violent actions (in response to personal insults, for example). The study demonstrates the different verbal styles assigned to different contexts and contrasts the speech patterns in the Chicago blue-color neighborhood with others in the US:

> *In Teamsterville, talk is negatively valued in many of the very situations for which other American communities most highly prize speaking strategies. Speaking is a culturally prized resource for male role enactment by black Americans in urban ghettos; the black man who speaks as a strategy for dealing with outsiders or females is enacting the male role appropriately according to the standards of his speech community. The white collar man who can "talk things through" with his wife, child, or boss is using speech in culturally sanctioned ways. (p. 21)*

This is a sampling of different speech communities just within the USA. Moving beyond the US borders, one can appreciate the immense diversity in speech behaviors worldwide, pointing to the rich opportunities for miscommunication.

Talking like a man in Teamsterville

Teamsterville's cultural (i.e., shared, tacit) understandings about the value of speaking are sharply defined and susceptible of discovery, although they are not written down in native treatises on effective communication, nor can native informants necessarily verbalize them. One manifestation of cultural outlook is the local view of the appropriateness of speaking versus other actional strategies (such as silence, violence, or non-verbal threats) in male role enactment or self-presentation. Whether and how well a man performs in a manly way is a principal criterion in Teamsterville for judging whether his behavior is appropriate and proper to the social identity, "male." Manliness is a theme of much neighborhood talk about self and others and a Teamsterville man is aware that his social performances will be judged frequently as to their manliness. To know how to perform, or present oneself, "like a man" in Teamsterville as elsewhere is to be privy to implicit understandings shared by members of the speech community, i.e., it is to have access to the culture.

Philipsen (1975), pp. 13-14.

Philipsen's study demonstrated how Teamsterville men adapted their communication style (amount of speech, emotional involvement, nonverbal behavior) to the context of the encounter (physical location, gender/age/ethnicity/social status of conversant). One is likely to be more aware of the necessity of making those kinds of adjustments if one is abroad. That may mean, of course, using a different language, but it could also mean, adjusting communicative habits. A Japanese woman who lived in Mexico for a number of years reported on changes she found to be necessary in her communication style (see sidebar). The changes described here can be challenging, both linguistically and emotionally. Part of the difficulty is that in such cases there are no written norms to go by. One learns through experience, making mistakes and reflecting on outcomes of conversations. One of the benefits of such an approach is that one comes to learn about one's own communication style, as the Japanese woman in this case became conscious of her "childish" speaking voice. That kind of awareness is crucial to the ability to make adjustments in intercultural encounters, which will make communication more effective and satisfying for both sides.

Speaking like a woman in Mexico

First thing I noticed in Mexico is the difference in the types of voice we use. In Japanese society, especially young women, use a relatively high pitch voice and tend to speak somehow 'childish'. 'Childish' behaviour of a woman, not only the type of voice but also her behaviour itself, is considered as something 'cute' or 'favourable', and very widely accepted in our society. In Mexican society, however, they use a lower and deeper tone of voice than in Japan; it is required for both men and women to speak and act as 'adult person', in every setting of life and naturally in business setting. In Mexican society, to use a childish voice, as many Japanese women do, could be a disadvantage, not something 'favourable', and doing so it is possible that you will not be treated properly. After a couple of month[s] of y living in Mexico I noticed about this fact and started to try using a different kind of voice, deeper and softer one, so that I am treated as an adult person.

Hua, 2014, p. 224

Communication Accommodation

In accommodating our communication style to our conversation partner, we tend to make adjustments automatically and naturally, in an unconscious effort to make ourselves better understood. Our efforts are likely to be most successful if we have some awareness of both our own culturally-influenced approach to communication and of the nature of the **speech community** of the person with whom we are interacting. Indeed, social scientists have studied ways in which speech communities differ, and they also have investigated common strategies for overcoming those differences. One of the approaches that is widely known is the **communication accommodation theory**, developed by Howard Giles (1973; Street & Giles, 1982). It describes the ways in which people adjust their speech, vocal patterns, and gestures to accommodate others. Giles and his colleagues found that people use a variety of changes, including rate of speech in speaking, patterns of pausing, length of utterances, and the use of gestures, facial expressions and body language. It assumes that such accommodation varies in its degree of appropriateness.

The theory postulates two main accommodation processes, **convergence** – adapting to the extent possible the other's communicative behaviors – and **divergence** – in which the differences are acknowledged and maintained. A third option, maintenance, involves not making any adjustments at all. In most instances of cross-cultural communication, convergence is recommended, i.e., listening actively for how the other person is communicating and adjusting our language use and nonverbal behavior accordingly. Speaking with a non-native speaker, for example, might involve reducing the use of slang, avoiding regionalisms or country-specific references, slowing the rate of speech, articulating clearly, and/or simplifying vocabulary. Helpful as well is the use of affirming nonverbal gestures such as nodding and smiling. Convergent behaviors are normally positively received by the interlocutor, which tends to make conversations run more smoothly and generate positive feelings on both sides. This can reduce social distance and contribute to a sense of solidarity (Jackson, 2014). The process of learning a second language aids development of the awareness and the importance of communication accommodation, as one experiences oneself the difficulty in communicating with more proficient speakers of the target language.

There are situations in which divergence is appropriate, for example, when there is a significant gap in social status or power relationship. Speaking with one's physician, for example, might be a context in which convergence is unlikely. An interview situation might also be such a case. In intercultural situations, the degree of power distance in the culture represented by one's conversation partner may play a role as well. In cultures in which social hierarchies are acknowledged and accepted, it is normal practice to engage in divergence, for example, using respectful language and nonverbal behavior with elders or socially highly-placed individuals

For the most part, people engage in convergence with good intentions, in order to facilitate communication across different communicative styles. However, it is possible to go too far in accommodating the other speaker, a process known as **overaccommodation** (Street & Giles, 1982). This might involve oversimplifying one's speech, exaggerating enunciation, or slowing excessively the rate of speech. One example is the kind of "baby talk" caregivers in nursing homes might use in talking with their elderly patients, sometimes labeled "elderspeak" (Kemper, 1994). Overaccommodation can be patronizing and demeaning and can detract from communicative effectiveness. There is also the phenomenon known as "intergroup overaccommodation", in which particular groups are treated based on general stereotypes, rather than members being treated as unique individuals (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005). That might involve adjusting one's speech in environments based on assumptions that everyone living there – in a US inner-city or in a French *banlieu*, for instance – is socially and educationally inferior.

Another perspective on communication accommodation is offered by New Zealand sociolinguist Alan Bell, who emphasizes the free agency of conversation partners:

> *We do not always speak in consistently the same way. In fact we are shifting the way we speak constantly as we move from one situation to another. On different occasions we talk in different ways. These different ways of speaking carry different social meanings. They represent our ability to take up different social positions, and they affect how we are perceived by others (Bell, 2007, p. 95).*

Bell's concept of **speech style** aligns with contemporary views on identity formation which emphasize the idea of "transportable identities," as we take on one of an array of social and linguistic subject positions according to the communication context (Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2012). At the same time, power and hierarchical relationships may limit the extent to which individuals can enact particular identity positions.

Accommodation will often be necessary for native speakers in conversation with non-native speakers. The extent of that accommodation depends on the context (type and purpose of conversation, location, respective social positions) as well as on the proficiency level of the speaker. In multilingual environments, or in a context in which non-native English speakers are conversing together in English, there may be different dynamics at work and subsequently different kinds of accommodations that occur. In such "lingua franca conversations", participants may will differ in their individual language proficiencies. Studies have shown that in these situations, there is typically a strong cooperative element (Meierkord, 2000), as participants use a variety of nonverbal means (smiling, gesturing) and **paralinguistic** devices (laughing, pausing frequently) to smooth over possible verbal miscues. The nature of such conversations stresses communicative efficiency over linguistic accuracy (Ehrenreich, 2010). These kinds of exchanges occur more frequently today, particularly among non-native speakers of English. They also occur increasingly in online environments.

Uncertainty management

When we encounter someone for the first time, we are likely to form opinions based on very little concrete information. In such situations, we tend to use what little knowledge we do have to place the person into a particular category, based on age, appearance, name, or other observable or known characteristics. Optimally, we approach the stranger with an open mind and an awareness that the stereotypes we have in our heads may not fit this particular individual. In any case, the paucity of information we have about the other person can lead to uncertainty on our part, possibly generating feelings of nervousness or anxiety, due to the unpredictability of the encounter. This is particularly the case when meeting someone from a different culture. Charles Bergen and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed an approach to communication called **uncertainty reduction theory**. Their fundamental assumption is that when strangers meet, our primary goal is to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability.

Figure 4.1.5: Anxiety is commonly associated with uncertain-ty

According to this theory, uncertainty reduction can be both proactive and retroactive. Proactively, we can take measures such as deciding to adjust our speech based on the expectation that the person may not be a native speaker of our language. In that case, we may elect to use a language register accessible to non-native speakers. Retroactively, we can analyze an encounter to explain unexpected behavior, based on information gained through the conversation or from external sources. If, for example, the other person avoided eye contact, that might be a result of personal shyness, but it could also be cultural, an intended signal of respect or recognition of social standing. One might also consider the fact that those from high-context cultures tend to be more cautious in what they talk about with strangers. Those individuals accustomed to high-context communication might also feel uncomfortable in not having the kind of information important to that communicative style, namely the social, educational, or economic status of the other person, as well as the family background. In contrast, if one is more used to low-context communication, it is more likely that one would have the tendency to ask a lot of questions to gain information, rather than focusing on nonverbal behavior or social identity.

Another researcher, William Gudykunst, developed this approach further through what he called **anxiety/uncertainty management** (1988). This theory incorporates the concept of mindfulness. **Mindfulness** refers to the extent to which we are conscious of our attitudes, behavior, and judgments. Rather than relying on automatic responses in terms of categorization and stereotyping, mindful behavior explicitly addresses the unique experience of an encounter and makes adjustments as appropriate. Gudykunst points out that to be mindful, people must recognize that strangers may have quite different perspectives and communicative approaches. We can't assume that our messages will necessarily be interpreted as we mean them to be. Instead, one needs to negotiate meaning with strangers, adjusting our perspective and language to what is needed for effective communication. If we maintain rigid and inflexible categorizations, our uncertainty and anxiety will increase and communication will break down.

Sources of miscommunication

Misunderstandings in conversations can derive from a wide variety of sources and situations. In cross-cultural encounters, having a fundamental knowledge of the language is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective communication. Learning vocabulary and grammar, as well as gaining proficiency in oral and written communication provide the basic tools for communicating. But what needs to accompany these essential building blocks is knowledge and skills in the ways in which language is used in cultural contexts in real-life situations. This is true even of speakers of the same language who speak different language varieties. Language **pragmatics** highlights the social contexts in which members of a community use language for specific communicative purposes. How one appropriately makes requests, issues invitations, or extends personal complements can vary significantly. There are large number of approaches for exploring what speakers "do" with words, what actions ensue, and how listeners respond. One of the challenges in this area is that, in contrast to linguistic fields such as syntax, phonology, or semantics, there are no hard-and-fast rules in the cultural dimensions of language use. Learning pragmatics happens through observation and participation. Children are socialized into appropriate language use, which becomes in large part a matter of implicit or unconscious knowledge, an awareness of a set of unwritten rules for a given community.

One of the issues that that can arise in intercultural communication is what is known as **pragmatic transfer**. Since pragmatic language use is deeply ingrained in individual behavior, speech acts and other manifestations of culture in language are regularly transferred by speakers from their native language into a second language. If we are used to seeing particular languages and/or behaviors in a given situation, our natural expectation is to see that repeated, even in different locales. That might involve something as routine as an offer of coffee after a meal, which, as in the example in the sidebar, might not have the expected significance. In this example of the offer of coffee, the difficulty does not lie in the linguistic meaning of the words, but rather with the cultural significance of the offer in the particular context of having a meal at a friend's home. The example points to the reasons for being aware of this kind of pragmatic transfer, as it can lead to awkwardness and miscommunication.

An offer of coffee: what does it really mean?

In some cultures an offer of coffee after a meal is generally recognized as a polite way to indicate to the guests that they ought to leave soon if they do not wish to outstay their welcome. In other cultures, an offer of coffee on a similar occasion is just an act of the host's kindness (or even an invitation to the guests to stay a little bit longer than they had intended). If interactants from different cultural backgrounds are unaware of the differences in their respective mental sets, misunderstandings are likely to occur. Misunderstandings of this sort involve the carryover of culture-specific knowledge from a situation of intra-cultural communication to a situation of intercultural communication.

Žegarac & Pennington, 2000, p. 169

Pragmatic failure often derives from errors which can be traced to the input of one's native language on the use of a second language. We may not be aware of the pragmatic or emotional value that roughly equivalent expressions carry in another language. Native speakers of Russian, for example, may use the expression "of course" in English in pragmatically inappropriate ways as, as in the following exchange between a native English speaker (A) and a native Russian speaker (B):

> A: Is it a good restaurant?
>
> B: Of course [Gloss (for Russian speaker): Yes, (indeed) it is. For English listener: what a stupid question!]
>
> Thomas, 1983, p. 102

The Russian word *konesco* (конечно) has the same dictionary definition as English "of course" and is used, as in English, to indicate agreement or acceptance. However, in particular contexts, the English phrase refers to something being obvious. The use of the phrase in the context above could be perceived as peremptory or possibly even insulting, which was certainly not the intent of the speaker.

Swearing in English

I very rarely swear in Finnish but ‘oh shit’ or ‘fuck’ can easily escape my mouth even in quite trivial occasions - they just do not feel that serious to my (or my hearers’) ears, even though I know they would sound quite horrible to a native speaker (milder English swear words like ‘damn’ for example do not even sound like swear words to me). If I would happen to hit myself with a hammer the words coming out of my mouth would definitely be in Finnish.

Dewaele, 2004, p. 213

An instance where caution is mandated is in the use of swearwords. These have a strong emotional value, which for non-native speakers may not transfer (see sidebar). Recent research on multilingualism (Paulenko, 2005; Dewaele, 2010) has shown that in many instances, multilingual speakers may make language choices and engage in code-switching based on the emotional import that expressions carry in a particular language.

In this area, as in all matters pertaining to cultural values and behaviors, care is needed to avoid overgeneralization. While there may be identifiable patterns of social behavior related to language within a community, that does not necessarily mean that a given behavior will be replicated by each member of the community. It is helpful to think of situations in which pragmatic transfer and the other cultural-linguistic awkwardness occurs as **rich points** of intercultural encounters, namely situations in which we do not initially understand the source of confusion or conflict (Agar, 1994). Such rich points can be explored for learning about social expectations and typical behaviors, but also for understanding individual perspectives and deviations. Rather than automatically characterizing incidents as culturally stereotypical, cultural anthropologists encourage the use of **thick description** of incidents, that is, going beyond the surface manifestations to discover deeper meanings and values and fleshing out the full cultural and personal contexts of what occurred (Bennett, 1998). The example often given is the significance of a wink:

> *The same physical act of someone "rapidly raising and lowering their right eyelid" could be a nervous twitch, a deliberate wink to attract attention or communicate with someone, or an imitation or mockery of someone else with a nervous twitch or winking. It all depends on the context, the aims of person the performing the action, and how these were understood by others (Knowles, 2011).*

A "thin description" would record only the physical act and thereby not be very informative. The idea is to look further than the stock, stereotypical interpretation and try to discover the true meaning of observed phenomena.

4.2: Language in society

Culturally Embedded Language

One of the tools for working out the cultural undercurrents present in verbal exchanges is **conversation analysis**. Scholars in this area look at real speech as recorded in audio and video, which is then transcribed. Examining transcribed conversations reveals how different actual speech is from the model dialogues supplied in language textbooks. Real-life language use is typically a complex set of stops and starts, not the orderly, logical back-and-forth exchange of information one might assume. Sets of transcribed conversations, such as represented in the British National Corpus and other language **corpora** (organized and analyzed collections of texts), have shown that real language use is "often messy and untidy and embedded deeply in cultural understanding of various kinds" (Carter, 1998, p. 48). Carter (1998) provides the example of a brief exchange in a fish and chips shop in Great Britain:

> [In a fish and chip shop]
>
> A: Can I have chips, beans, and a sausage?
>
> B: Chips, beans, and a sausage.
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> B: Wrapped up?
>
> A: Open, please (p. 48, taken from the British National Corpus)

Carter points to the cultural significance here of the word "open" in the last line, used in opposition to "wrapped up"; it "carries a specific cultural meaning of food being served in paper so that it can be eaten immediately, even perhaps while walking home" (p. 48). The exchange is short and to the point; it is transactional in nature, i.e. related to getting something concrete accomplished through language, namely buying dinner. Full sentences are not used, but rather abbreviated forms, called ellipsis or **elliptical constructions**. The evidence provided in language corpora show this to be very common in everyday conversations. Carter points out that this kind of barebones exchange is appropriate in this particular context as "anything more interactive and interpersonal would be out of place because there are normally long queues of hungry customers in the shop" (p. 49). However, in other service encounters — and in many everyday conversations – it is likely that interpersonal elements will play a significant role, moving beyond transactional language through the addition of personal and affective language.

Conversation analysis has also revealed that there tend to be repeating underlying patterns, namely certain combinations of turn taking or question and response. They have also identified **adjacency pairs** (also called "framing pairs") that generally occur together, such as compliment – response, invitation – acceptance, greeting – greeting. In English, the greeting "How are you" is normally followed by the formulaic "Fine, thanks", while a conversation ending is signaled by a pair of utterances, such as "I've got to go" and "OK, see you later". While there are likely to be many variations in terms of the specific language used, the pattern of supplying an answering response to the initiation of an adjacency pair is a social norm. Not doing so may cause awkwardness in the conversation or can even be considered rude. British philosopher of language Paul Grice (1975) identified such conversational practices as part of what he termed the "cooperative principle", that is, that in social practice individuals engage in speech which is cooperative and characterized by conventional usage.

While the patterns are typical across many languages, the specifics of such speech can be quite different. The field of cross-cultural pragmatics studies how that works out in practice across cultures and languages. The culturally embedded nature of language points to the importance in learning a second language of developing skills and knowledge that go beyond purely linguistic competence, i.e. grammar and vocabulary. **Pragmalinguistic competence** is needed, the ability to use language in culturally appropriate ways in particular contexts, such as in speech acts like requests and apologies (Grice, 1975). Also needed is **sociopragmatic competence**, knowing what is appropriate in a particular speech community. That might include issues such as politeness and respect for social conventions such as taboo topics (Gilmore, 2011).

Cultural schemas and scripts

A speech act such as a compliment may be received in a very different manner, depending on the cultural tradition or **cultural schema**, i.e., the expected language and behavior based on experience (Nishida, 1999). The cultural schema or cultural model (Quinn & Holland, 1987) provide guides to behavior in particular contexts. The conversation below between an Iranian student and an Australian teacher illustrates a mismatch in cultural schemas.

Lecturer: I heard you've won a prestigious award. Congratulations! This is fantastic.

Student: Thanks so much. I haven't done anything. It is the result of your effort and your knowledge. I owe it all to you.

Lecturer: Oh, No!!! Don't be ridiculous. It's all your work.

Sharifian, 2005, pp. 337-338

The professor sees the situation as an example of individual merit but according to the researcher, the Iranian student draws on the Persian tradition of *shekasteh-nafsi*, which "motivates the speakers to downplay their talents, skills, achievements, etc .... and also encourages the speakers to reassign the compliment to the giver of the compliment, a family member, a friend, or another associate" (Sharifian, 2005, p. 337). Giving and receiving compliments is an interaction which can unfold differently across cultures. It's not uncommon in non-Western cultures, for compliments to be deflected, rather than accepted.

Social situations which normally call forth normalized behavior using stock language practices are sometimes referred to as **cultural scripts** (Yule, 2008). One learns these "scripts" — ways of acting and speaking — through observation and experience. Jackson (2014) gives the example of the expected cultural script for visiting a public bath in Japan (see sidebar). One learns cultural scripts and norms associated with certain contexts through enculturation and socialization. This is a gradual process in ones own cultural upbringing is largely unconscious. While cultural scripts offer important insights into local practices, they should not be interpreted as prescriptive:

> *A cultural script is not intended as a description of actual behaviour, but as a depiction of shared assumptions about how people think about social interaction. Individuals may or may not follow the cultural guidelines; they may follow them in some situations but not in others; they may defy, subvert or play with them in various ways; but even those who reject or defy culturally endorsed modes of thinking and modes of action are nonetheless aware of them (Goddard, 2004, pp. 7-8).*

Visiting a bath house in Japan

In Tokyo, for example, a visit to a public bath house (sentō) might start with the payment of an entrance fee to the attendant, followed by disrobing in a change room that is reserved for members of one's sex. Then, one may sit on a stool near faucets where one washes oneself. It is only after one is thoroughly clean that one steps into the communal bath (same sex), which is usually quite hot. One may chat with other bathers or simply relax in silence. After soaking, one gets out of the water, rinses, dries off, gets dressed and heads home. Embedded in this schema are notions of what is proper in this context. For individuals who are new to the sentō and not used to public nudity, this may be a shocking event! A trip to a public bath house in other parts of the world (e.g. Finland, Germany, Hungary, South Korea, Turkey) would not be the same experience due, in part, to different 'event sequences' or procedures that stem from variations in etiquette (norms of politeness) and attitudes towards such aspects as sex, nudity, cleanliness and communication

Jackson (2014), p. 59

One may be aware of expected behaviors, or language used, but for personal, philosophical, political or religious reasons not act according to norms and expectations. Whether that is associated with any social sanctions will depend on the particular context (Mosby, 2009).

Gender and Communication

If, as the Teamsterville study demonstrated, there are speech habits identifiable for men in particular social and economic milieux, there are also patterns of communication often identified with women. It's frequently claimed that women, at least in the US, use language in a more deferential and self-effacing manner than is typically the case for male speech. The use of rising intonation at the end of sentences (not just questions) and adding "tag questions" (using "...don't you think?" or similar phrases) point in this direction. One of the phenomena frequently examined in recent years is the use of "vocal fry" by young women in the US, sometimes associated with the Kardashian clan (a family famous in the US for being in a reality TV show). This refers to the habit of pronouncing particular words or phrases, especially at the end of a sentence, in a kind of deep, guttural voice that's often described as "creaky". Distinctive speaking habits of women are often seen as symptomatic of women's awareness of their subordinate status in a male-dominated culture. Speech habits such as vocal fry, an overly deferential tone, or "valley speak" (Californian social dialect featuring exaggerated rising intonation), all associated with women, are often seen as holding women back professionally, as they are regarded as inappropriate in a formal business environment, where the tone and language codes are set by men.

Figure 4.2.1: Do men and women talk differently?

In fact, there are a variety of perspectives on the question of the distinctiveness of language use between men and women. According to Deborah Tannen (1990), "male-female conversation is cross-cultural communication" (p. 42) . In her view, there are clear differences between how men and women speak, namely that women tend to use language to build rapport and men to report information. Because men and women use language differently, Tannen suggests they are speaking different dialects, or what she calls "genderlects".

> *For most women, the language of conversation is primarily a language of rapport: a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships. Emphasis is placed on displaying similarities and matching experiences...For most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. This is done by exhibiting knowledge and skill, and by holding center stage through verbal performance such as story-telling, joking, or imparting information (1990, p. 16).*

This theory assumes that men and women subconsciously communicate in different ways, without being aware of how we differ. It suggests that both communication styles should be respected and that being mindful of the difference can make us more tolerant and understanding in conversations between genders.

Other scholars in this area emphasize how women's speech tends to be undervalued, due to a power structure favoring men. Deborah Cameron, for example, addresses this issue of why it is popularly assumed that women talk more than men (see sidebar). Another perspective is offered by "standpoint theory" which takes into consideration the power position of men in conversational interactions. Advocates of this view maintain that the standpoint of marginalized communities provides the perspective that should

be used in analyzing communication, rather than what is conventionally used, namely the perspective of privileged white males. In this view, marginalized people, including women, see the world differently. The difference between men and women is seen as largely the result of cultural expectations and the treatment each group receives from the other. This is in line with the muted group theory discussed in chapter two, with the idea being that women are a muted group, since language used in the public sphere does not reflect well their experience.

'Many women, many words; many geese, many turds'

If it does not reflect reality, why is the folk-belief that women talk more than men so persistent? The feminist Dale Spender once suggested an explanation: she said that people overestimate how much women talk because they think that, ideally, women would not talk at all. While that may be rather sweeping, it is true that belief in female loquacity is generally combined with disapproval of it. The statement 'women talk more than men' tends to imply the judgment 'women talk too much'. (As one old proverb charmingly puts it: 'Many women, many words; many geese, many turds.') The folk-belief that women talk more than men persists because it provides a justification for an ingrained social prejudice.

Cameron, 2007, Do women really talk more than men section, para. 7

These theories on gender-related communication deal for the most part with Western societies. The social position of women varies significantly across cultures. In many cultures, women's lower social position results in significantly fewer opportunities for expressing views or having opinions taken seriously. That is accompanied often by fewer educational or career opportunities, and in some cases, less choice in mate selection. Equally varied from culture to culture are attitudes towards homosexuality. In the US, gay marriage has become socially acceptable, but not in many parts of the world. An awareness of the existence of different views and expectations in male-female relationships and identities can be important in intercultural encounters.

Communication in Personal Relationships

We started this chapter stating that as social animals humans tend to build many different relationships. How we communicate in those relationships can vary a good deal, from intimate, familiar talk with friends and family to formal, arm's-length conversations with strangers. The language that we use depends as well on the context and purpose of the encounter. Since cultures vary in the nature of relationships, communication within those relationships differs as well.

Some cultures have traditions of welcoming strangers, while others view outsiders with suspicion. Religious beliefs as well as personal attitudes may play important role. In some cases, outsiders become accepted members of communities only after long periods of time and scrutiny. US Americans tend to be open and receptive to strangers, often divulging personal information much more so than in other cultures. One international student in the US observed:

> *One thing that was very different from what I was used to in Iceland was that people, even people that I didn't know at all, were telling me their whole life stories, or so it felt like. Even some women at the checkout line at the supermarket were talking about how many times they had been married or divorced or about the money they had, which, in my culture, we are not used to just telling anyone about (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 394).*

That openness and candor may not extend to all strangers; depending on the country of origin, the reception in the US may well be much more circumspect. In most cultures appropriate topics for conversations with strangers do not include personal histories or family relationships. In traditional cultures in the Arab world, for example, asking about a man's wife is taboo. In many cultures, religion and politics are subjects to avoid.

If relationships continue over time, some develop into friendships. Studies have shown, not surprisingly, that what draws people together is less demographic similarities of race, age, or class, but rather commonality of interests and values (Hammer, 1986). That seems to be accentuated in online relationships, in which we tend to construct "communities of practice" around those with similar interests, whether that be particular kinds of music, hobbies such as gardening, or political convictions. In those online communities, we care less — and are likely unaware of — factors such as race or ethnicity. Some lament the fact that online relationships, along with our growing obsession with connecting continuously with those communities, has weakened our face-to-face relationships (Turkle's *Alone Together*, 2011). In the US, this has been noted for some time, with the growth of social media, combining with other social and economic developments, to disengage many from their local communities. The book *Bowling*

Alone (Putnam, 2000) provides a metaphor for that loss of community in the US. Whether we lament or celebrate the rise of online communities, they seem unlikely to lose their importance anytime soon.

For many of us today, we are likely to have separate groups of online friends/communities and face-to-face relationships. As we do in all relationships, the respective degree of importance of each is likely to change over time. As individual personal relationships become closer, we are likely to engage in **self-disclosure** of private information, whether that be in person or online. The more we reveal about ourselves, the closer we are likely to grow to one another. The **social penetration theory** (Altman and Taylor, 1973) proposes that, as relationships develop, interpersonal communication moves from shallow, superficial topics to more personal and intimate subjects. In the process of forming deeper relationships, issues of diversity become less important. To what extent self-disclosure occurs depends on the individual as much as it does on cultural backgrounds.

Figure 4.2.2: Switching over to friendship in Germany

How friendship is understood varies as well. US Americans tend to have many "friends," but that relationship is not as intimate or strong as that term connotes in many other cultures. In Germany, for example, one tends to have few friends (*Freunde*) but many acquaintances (*Bekannte*). It would not be unusual in Germany for someone we have known for years to continue to be a *Bekannter*, not a *Freund*. Becoming a *Freund* might mean switching to the familiar you (*du*) and addressing each other by first names. Traditionally there is even a short ceremony (*Brüderschafttrinken*), involving having a drink together.

In many cultures, such as Germany, friends are those with whom we have a special emotional relationship. Collier (1996) investigated what friendship means for different groups within the US. She found that for Hispanics and African-Americans, it took considerably longer to develop a real friendship than was the case for European-Americans. She also found differences in what the groups considered to be important in friendships: "Latinos emphasized relational support, Asian Americans emphasized a caring, positive exchange of ideas, African Americans emphasized respect and acceptance and Anglo [European] Americans emphasized recognizing the needs of individuals" (p. 315). In Asian countries, friendships tend to take longer to develop and to be more long-lasting than in the US (Carrier, 1999). They also tend to involve obligations on one another.

In China, the concept of *guanxi* (□□) often plays in important role in friendships and in personal relationships (Yeung & Tung, 1996). *Guanxi* refers to the informal network of social connections built on shared identity such as kinship, place of origin, or profession. The system is particularly important in China for getting things done, such as access to the right school or neighborhood, or finding a good job. It's built on a non-reciprocal obligation system – someone always owes something to someone else (a favor, a connection). According to Jane Yum (1988), this kind of unequal balance helps maintain interpersonal connections in relationships. This is in contrast to the Western concept, common in the US, of short term and symmetrical reciprocity in relationships. From this perspective, if I owe something to someone (a favor, money), I am not comfortable until that debt is repaid, so that we are "even". In that way, each of us maintains the same independence in the relationship. This in inline with Collier's finding (1996) showing that white Americans' emphasis in friendships is on maintenance of individual needs.

Romancing across Cultures

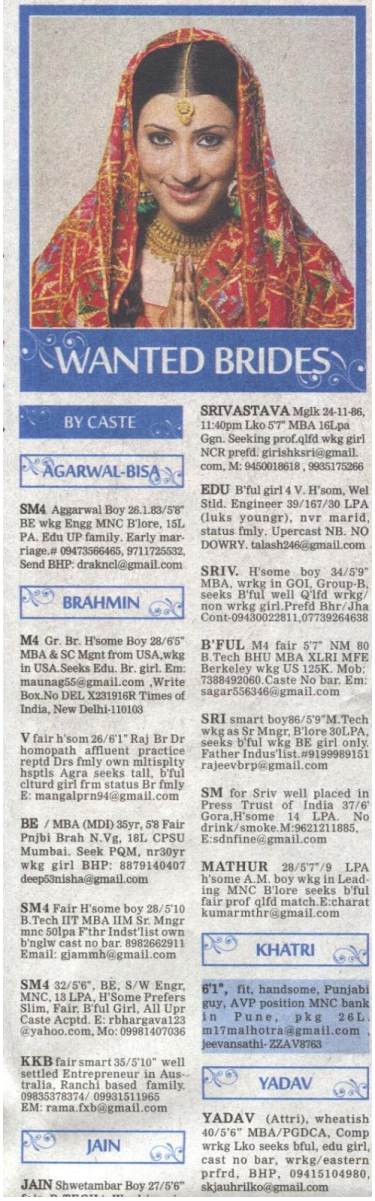
Some intimate friendships develop into something more, namely romantic relationships. How that develops varies. Some scholars suggest that there is a natural human tendency to find mates who are similar to us in some way. The **similarity-attraction hypothesis** (Byrne, 1971) explains that we are likely to seek partners within our in-groups. If we share beliefs and values, that provides **cognitive consistency**, coalescing around common views and experiences (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Deeply-held religious, political, or philosophical beliefs may come into play. In intercultural relationships, there may be a different dynamic at work. It may be the case that what we find attractive may be the differences, not the similarities.

They're so exotic

I think they're so exotic. Really, what concerns me about the girl is the eyes, and Asian women have beautiful eyes, the form and the shape of them. It's a plus for me. I had another Asian girl friend before. And I like their skin color, tannish, not just white, white, white. A girl with color. It's just different; it's more sexual, its not just like plain Jane.

"Talking About Race," 2000, p. 59

Standards of beauty tend to be largely cultural, defined often by images in media and advertising. In mainstream US culture, for example, the standard for female beauty tilts towards white women with blonde hair. One study showed that 90% of models in US magazines are white (Frith, Shaw & Cheung, 2005). At the same time, Asian and Asian-American women are often portrayed in the US as ideal mates. On the one hand, they are shown in Orientalist style as exotic and sexually available. On the other hand, they are seen as submissive and obedient (Uchida, 1998). This is how Asian women are characterized in the mail-order bride business which has experienced a boom in the Internet age. The following advertisement from such a site illustrates this imaging:



WANTED BRIDES

BY CASTE

AGARWAL-BISA

SM4 Aggarwal Boy 26.1.83/5'8" BE wkg Engg MNC B'lore, 15L PA. Edu UP family. Early marriage.# 09473566465, 9711725532, Send BHP: draknc1@gmail.com

BRAHMIN

M4 Gr. Br. H'some Boy 28/6'5" MBA & SC Mgnt from USA,wkg in USA.Seeks Edu. Br. girl. Em: maunag55@gmail.com ,Write Box.No DEL X231916R Times of India, New Delhi-110103

V fair h'som 26/6'1" Raj Br Dr homopath affluent practice reptd Drs fmly own mltisplty hsptls Agra seeks tall, b'ful clturd girl frm status Br fmly E: mangalprn94@gmail.com

BE / MBA (MDI) 35yr, 5'8 Fair Pnjbi Brah N.Vg, 18L CPSU Mumbai. Seek PQM, nr30yr wkg girl BHP: 8879140407 deep53nisha@gmail.com

SM4 Fair H'some boy 28/5'10 B.Tech IIT MBA IIM Sr. Mngr mnc 50lpa F'thr Indst'list own b'nglw cast no bar. 8982662911 Email: gjammh@gmail.com

SM4 32/5'6", BE, S/W Engr, MNC, 13 LPA, H'Some Prefers Slim, Fair, B'ful Girl, All Upr Caste Acptd. E: rbhargava123 @yahoo.com, Mo: 09981407036

KKB fair smart 35/5'10" well settled Entrepreneur in Australia, Ranchi based family. 09835378374/ 09931511965 EM: rama.fxb@gmail.com

JAIN

JAIN Shwetambar Boy 27/5'6"

SRIVASTAVA Mglk 24-11-86, 11:40pm Lko 5'7" MBA 16Lpa Ggn. Seeking prof.qlfd wkg girl NCR prefd. girlshksri@gmail.com, M: 9450018618 , 9935175266

EDU B'ful girl 4 V. H'som, Wel Stld. Engineer 39/167/30 LPA (luks youngr), nvr marid, status fmly. Upercast NB. NO DOWRY. talash246@gmail.com

SRIV. H'some boy 34/5'9" MBA, wrkg in GOI, Group-B, seeks B'ful well Q'lfd wrkg/ non wrkg girl.Prefd Bhr./Jha Cont-09430022811,07739264638

B'FUL M4 fair 5'7" NM 80 B.Tech BHU MBA XLRI MFE Berkeley wkg US 125K. Mob: 7388492060.Caste No bar. Em: sagar556346@gmail.com

SRI smart boy86/5'9"M.Tech wkg as Sr Mngr, B'lore 30LPA, seeks b'ful wkg BE girl only. Father Indus'list.#9199989151 rajeevbrp@gmail.com

SM for Sriv well placed in Press Trust of India 37/6' Gora,H'some 14 LPA No drink/smoke.M:9621211885, E:sdnfine@gmail.com

MATHUR 28/5'7"/9 LPA h'some A.M. boy wkg in Leading MNC B'lore seeks b'ful fair prof qlfd match.E:charat kumarmthr@gmail.com

KHATRI

6'1", fit, handsome, Punjabi guy, AVP position MNC bank in Pune, pkg 26L, m17malhotra@gmail.com , jeevansathi- ZZAV8763

YADAV

YADAV (Attri), wheatish 40/5'6" MBA/PGDCA, Comp wrkg Lko seeks bful, edu girl, cast no bar, wrkg/eastern prfrd, BHP, 09415104980, skjauhrilko@gmail.com

Why choose a Filipina? Women from the Philippines are noted for their beauty, grace, charm and loyalty. With their sweet nature and shy smiles, Filipina ladies possess an inner beauty that most men find irresistible. Filipina women are by their nature family-orientated, resourceful and devoted (Piller, 2011, p. 123)

In an ironic twist, Asian women often protect themselves from the sun, so as to have a paler complexion or, more radically, have eye surgery so as to look more Western (Frederick et al., 2016).

To what extent romantic love plays a determining role in the choice of a mate can vary. In many parts of the world, love and passion may play a much diminished role compared to socio-economic status, kinship/group membership, or religious beliefs. In China, for example, it is normal for couples to wait until regular jobs have been secured, as well as until appropriate housing becomes available (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). In India, although the caste system is officially no longer in place, many Indians, particularly in rural areas, marry only within their own caste (Uberoi, 1994). The bride wanted section from the Sunday Times of India (May 15, 2016) highlights the importance of caste in finding a mate. However, also listed as categories in the "Times Soulmate" section are professions, religion, and language. There's also a category of "caste no bar". Shaadi.com is a popular web site for finding an Indian mate and provides interesting insights into the process.

In many cultures, it is common to use a trusted intermediary to help find an appropriate mate (Ahuvia & Adelman, 1992). Parents or other relatives may play a role in arranging matches. Many in Western countries are likely to recoil at the idea of an arranged marriage. However, studies have shown that in fact love in arranged marriage tends to increase over time, but decreases in love matches (Gupta & Singh, 1982). Given the high percentage of divorces among free choice matches, one might question whether that form of mate selection is in fact optimal. On the other hand, arranged marriages may be problematic as well, particularly if one or other of the partners has no say in the match. The forced marriages of underage girls is unfortunately still a reality in some parts of the world (Ouattara, Sen & Thomson, 1998).

Until 1967 in the United States, marrying someone from a different racial group was illegal. In that year, laws outlawing that practice were declared void through the landmark case of *Loving vs. State of Virginia*. Today in the US, according to the Pew Foundation (Passel, Wang & Taylor, 2010), about one in seven new marriages in the US is interracial or interethnic. That does not mean that such unions are universally accepted, nor does their frequency indicate that they are inevitably successful. In fact, interracial marriages may be stressful, in part due to differences in value orientations or in group habits/traditions. One of the frequent sources of conflict can be one's family or friends, who may disapprove of the match. Foeman & Nance (2002) have shown that in many successful interracial or interethnic marriages the partners create a kind of **third culture**, blending together in a new hybrid their respective cultures.

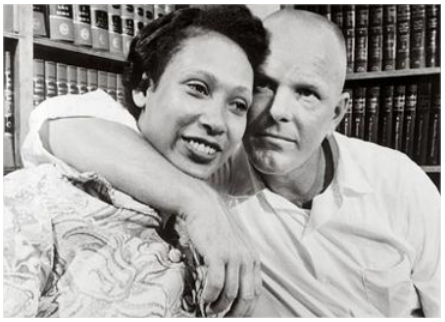


Figure 4.2.3: Mildred & Richard Loving

4.3: Technically Speaking - Conversing and Relating Online

In today's world the Internet is used extensively to build and maintain relationships. Social media such as Facebook play a central role in the lives of many people across the globe. Language use in electronic media varies with the medium, from very informal, abbreviated language in text messages to more grammatically correct and spellchecked writing in contributing to blogs or fanfiction sites. Linguists have pointed out that text messaging, considering its brevity and informality, is actually closer to spoken language in its essential characteristics (Choudhury et al, 2007).

Second-language learners can use online communication to develop language skills. Communicating with native speakers online provides opportunities for developing writing/reading skills and building vocabulary, but also for enhancing cultural knowledge. In such exchanges, there's an opportunity as well to view one's own culture from the perspective of those outside. This can be an eye-opening, and sometimes disturbing experience, but one that can lead us to reflect on our own cultural values and begin to question received wisdom. Studies of using collaborative projects for language learning reveal some of the issues that may arise due to cultural differences in language use and communicative conventions. A project involving French and US students, for example, saw conflicts arise due to the US students favoring of online exchanges to build relationships through small talk, and the French students' preference for serious discussion of the topics at hand. There were also differences in what mode or genre of writing the two groups used in communicating:

The French write in perfectly correct English, but without the social legitimation nor the trustworthiness of fellow native speakers of English. What happens is not a case of linguistic misunderstanding but a clash of cultural frames caused by the different resonances of the two languages for each group of speakers and their different understanding of appropriate genres. The French academic discourse expressed through the English language is perceived by the Americans not as having the ring of scientific truth, but as being unduly aggressive by displaying ‘nationalist reactions’. The American ingratiating personal discourse expressed through the French language is not perceived by the French as enhancing the trustworthiness of their authors, but as lacking scientific rigour (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002, pp. 94-5).

> *The French students used a form of discourse that aspires to be objective and scientific, while the US students struck a highly personal and sometimes emotional tone in their writing. Such conflicts in online exchanges are not uncommon and can arise through different perspectives on particular topics but also, as here, through clashes in rhetorical styles. Conflict can sometimes be uncomfortable for the participants, but how problems arise can also provide a valuable learning experience, provided the participants talk out the difficulties and approach the conversations with an open mind and tolerance for both differences of opinion and differences in communication styles.*

This interaction highlights the process of language socialization that can take place in online environments. The experience of the French learners provides an example of "legitimate peripheral participation" (Scollon, at al., 2012), namely how newcomers participate in online communities is initially peripheral i.e. more in an observer role, but legitimate, i.e. acceptable. If they remain in the community, they become socialized into the ins and outs of the community norms and processes. On the other hand, it's possible that novices will resist socialization, in particular if that conflicts with existing norms or beliefs. One way to resist or negotiate one's identity in a community is through language. Language learners tend to do this with language play (Cook, 2000). The sidebar provides an example, in which the teacher was trying to have students provide examples of collocations using the Chinese equivalent of to long for, to look forward to, □□ (*qīdài*).

Longing for Jennifer to moon-bathe with him

Context: a Mandarin class of 13-year-olds in Newcastle. T: female teacher in her forties. B: a boy.

T: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□

What can you say with qidai (longing for)? Longing for a united motherland; longing for family reunion; longing for peace and friendship.

B: xxx (name of another boy in the class) □□□□□□□□□□

xxx is longing for Jennifer to moon-bathe with him.

(All laugh)

Translation is something rarely used as a teaching tool, at least in instructed language learning in the United States, despite the insights it provides into deeper understanding of the target language and culture. Comparing results from Google Translate with other machine translators (or doing reverse look-ups based on the given translations) can provide surprising and informative results. Reading or translating samples from the great variety of user forums on the Web provides both interesting cultural insights as well as valuable linguistic learning. Sources might include YouTube comments, Amazon reviews, blog commentaries, or newspaper forums. A reader's post to an article in the French daily *Le Parisien* provides an interesting example. It's a comment about a news story concerning a four-year-old named Jihad (born on September 11th) who is sent to preschool wearing a shirt reading *Je suis une bombe* (literally meaning "I am a bomb" but colloquially in French, "I am fantastic"). The story itself is rich in cultural contexts: Muslims in France, French restrictions on traditional Muslim dress in public spheres, the French tradition of secularism (*laïcité*), freedom of speech as a universal value, the role of dress in cultural identity, among others. The letter offers even richer content:

> *Je m'appelle Jihad, j'ai fait des études et je n'ai aucun problème dans ma vie. Jihad n'est pas un prénom né le 11 septembre, vous êtes au courant? Il est donné depuis des millénaires. Le mot jihad à la base veut dire lutte contre ses péchés. (Le Parisien, Dec. 1, 2012)*
>
> *[My name is Jihad, I'm a university graduate and have never had any problems [with my name]. Jihad is not a name created by September 11th, did you know that? It's been used for millennia. The word jihad means to fight to overcome one's inadequacies.]*

The use of such forums designed for native speakers can be challenging for language learners, but they can be, as here, rich in colloquial language and in cultural content.

One of the sources for miscommunication online is the fact that communication and emails, blog post, or other written messaging formats exclude the expressive elements that come from gestures, body language, or tone of voice. Despite preparatory work, telecollaboration projects can result in misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and even reinforcement of negative stereotypes. The problems may arise from insufficient language skills, lack of knowledge of the other culture, or individual insensitivity. It's also the case that online speech lacks the paralanguage and nonverbal clues that can be vital to understanding speakers' real intent. There are conventions in online writing to compensate— punctuation (!), emoticons (sad face), netspeak (lol) or typing in all caps (I'M SHOUTING)—but they pale in comparison to the variety and power of human nonverbal communication.

One of the realities of online communication today is that many people may be communicating in a second language, not their mother tongue. In theory, computer-mediated communication (CMC) offers a "level playing field," in which everyone is seen and treated equally. It offers, for example, the opportunity for shy individuals to have their voices heard in a way that is unlikely in face-to-face conversation. Turn-taking is predictable and therefore less stressful, at least in written exchanges. In practice, CMC is not as neutral as it may seem. Pasfield-Neofitou points out (2013) that online exchange is affected by a number of factors, including language ability, social relationships, and computer dexterity/typing ability. If the software program or computer interface is unfamiliar or difficult to learn, that may put the novice user at a distinct disadvantage compared to more experienced users, something which can have a significant impact on communicative effectiveness.

Non-native speakers may prefer CMC over face-to-face encounters in that it provides an environment which allows for reflection and a slower pace of exchange. In spoken discourse, issues of accent such as pronunciation and intonation sometimes are problematic. Informal and grammatically incorrect language is generally more acceptable in online communication. On the other hand, non-native speakers may face communication issues in CMC related to cultural and pragmatic issues. They may not use, for example, the appropriate forms of address or language register. A study by Stroińska & Cecchetto (2013) provides an example of university students in Canada who are non-native English speakers. They often used unacceptable language in email exchanges with professors, not abiding by the expectations of politeness in written communication, namely use of polite forms of address, standard English, and respectful forms of request. Often, the foreign students used no formal greeting in their emails and made requests that were too direct. The authors of the study point out that learning appropriate language behavior for written communication can be important later in professional settings.

4.4: Conversing and Relating (Summary)

From theory to practice…

In efforts to avoid culture or gender bias, some of the strategies include the following:

- *Be a mindful listener, particularly when communicating with non-native speakers*. That includes listening actively and watching for nonverbal cues to assist in judging understanding and appropriateness. It's important to keep in mind possible different conventions regarding the role of silence or rules for turn-taking. In some cultures, interrupting is normal and expected; in others it's expected that one defer to elders or other members of the community.

- *Adjust your speech (rate and register) as appropriate*. This includes being able to rephrase in simpler terms and avoiding potentially culturally sensitive areas. Safe topics are typically food and music; problematic are often politics and religion. At the same time, one should be aware of the dangers of over-accommodating. Sensitivity is desirable; patronizing is not.

– *Discover your own speech mode*. Through encounters with others, both face-to-face and online, you can experience a wide variety of language use and verbal styles. This can provide insights into your own use of language. It's important to reflect on the extent to which you use typical male or female **subject positions** when speaking, or to what extent you are intentional in modifying your language register when encountering a non-native speaker.

Key Concepts

- **Adjacency pair:** A unit of conversation that contains an exchange of one turn each by two speakers
- **Anxiety/uncertainty management**: Theory by W. Gudykunst to define how humans effectively communicate based on their balance of anxiety and uncertainty in social situations
- **Cognitive consistency:** A psychological theory that proposes that humans are motivated by inconsistencies and a desire to change them
- **Communication accommodation theory**: Theory developed by H. Giles which explores the various reasons why individuals emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and nonverbal communication
- **Convergence**: The process through which an individual shifts his or her speech patterns in interaction so that they more closely resemble the speech patterns of speech partners
- **Corpus / corpora:** Collected sets of texts that are systematically collected and organized and linguistically tagged
- **Cultural schema:** The familiar and pre-acquainted knowledge one uses when entering a familiar situation in his/her own culture
- **Cultural script:** Particular set of behaviors and language used conventionally in a culture within a certain context
- **Direct style**: Manner of speaking where one employs overt expressions of intention
- **Divergence**: A linguistic strategy whereby a member of a speech community accentuates the linguistic differences between his or herself and his interlocutor
- **Elaborated code**: A cultural context wherein the speakers of a language have a variety of linguistic options open to them in order to explicitly communicate their intent via verbal messages
- **Ellipsis / elliptical construction:** The omission of one or more words from a clause without affecting the meaning
- **Genderlect**: A variety of speech or conversational style used by a particular gender (originated by D. Tannen)
- **High context**: Cultural orientation where meanings are gleaned from the physical, social, and psychological contexts
- **Indirect style**: Manner of speaking wherein the intentions of the speakers are hidden or only hinted at during interaction
- **Interlocutor**: Person with whom one speaks
- **Low context**: Cultural orientation where meanings are encoded in the verbal code
- **Mindfulness:** Being attentive, sensitively conscious, non-judgmental, ready to respond and interact appropriately (Ting-Toomey)
- **Overaccomodation**: Exaggerating accommodating someone else's verbal and nonverbal communication style
- **Paralinguistics:** Aspects of spoken communication that do not involve words, i.e., sighing, laughing, etc.
- **Pragmalinguistic competence**: The ability to perform speech acts such as apologies or requests appropriately using a range of linguistic expressions
- **Pragmatic failure**: The inability to understand the meaning of what is said

- **Pragmatic transfer**: The influence of learners' pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of l2 pragmatic information
- **Register**: A variety of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting
- **Restricted code**: A cultural context wherein the speakers of a language are limited as to what they can say or do verbally. a restricted code is a status-oriented system.
- **Rich point**: We realize that a culture is different from ours when we face some behaviors which we do not understand; rich points are those surprises, those departures from an outsider's expectations that signal a difference between source language/culture and target language/culture
- **Self-disclosure:** Process of communication by which one person reveals information about himself or herself to another person
- **Similarity-attraction hypothesis**: The idea that similarity leads to attraction
- **Sociopragmatic competence:** The ability to use correct linguistic forms within particular speech communities
- **Small talk:** Polite conversation about unimportant or uncontroversial matters, especially as engaged in on social occasions
- **Speech code**: Any rule or regulation that limits, restricts, or bans speech beyond the strict legal limitations upon freedom of speech or press found in the legal definitions of harassment, slander, and libel
- **Speech community**: A group of people who share a set of linguistic norms and expectations with regard to how their language should be used
- **Speech style:** A particular approach to how one expresses oneself
- **Standpoint theory**: Central concept is that an individual's own perspectives are shaped by his or her social and political experiences
- **Subject position:** The idea that participating in a particular discourse involves creating a particular perspective which allows full access to the discourse community
- **Thick description**: Description of a human behavior that explains not just the behavior, but its context as well, such that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider
- **Third culture:** Process of cultural adaptation in which representatives of different cultures merge together aspects of their cultures into a new hybrid (different from concept of "third culture kid", children raised in a culture other than their parents' for extended period of time
- **Turn-taking:** A type of organization in conversation and discourse where participants speak one at a time in alternating turns
- **Uncertainty**: The amount of predictability in a communication situation
- **Uncertainty reduction theory**: Theory whose major premise is that when strangers first meet, their primary goal is to reduce uncertain

Resources

Books

- Seth, Riva (2008), *First Comes Marriage: Modern Relationship Advice from the Wisdom of Arranged Marriages*. Simon & Schuster.
- Chua, Amy (2011). *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. Penguin Books.

Analyzing language use in context

- Steven Pinker: What our language habits reveal

TED description: "Linguist Steven Pinker looks at language and how it expresses what goes on in our minds - and how the words we choose communicate much more than we realize"

- Elizabeth Stokoe: The science of analyzing conversations, second by second

TED description: "Prof. Elizabeth Stokoe takes a run on what she terms the 'conversational racetrack' the daily race to understand each other when we speak—and explains how to avoid hurdles that trip us up and cause conflict. Stokoe developed the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM), an approach based on evidence about what sorts of problems and roadblocks can occur in conversation, as well as the techniques and strategies that best resolve these problems"

- - What a difference a word can make: How a single word can change your conversation

TED (essay) description: "British psychologist Elizabeth Stokoe studies the patterns in talk that most of us don't even notice. She explains how her research can be used to train people to interact more effectively."

- Culture in Conversation

Book chapter by Jessica Robles (From Kurylo, *Inter/Cultural Communication: Representation and Construction of Culture*) with nice examples of conversation analysis

- What It's Like to Work at the Waffle House for 24 Hours Straight

Interesting from the perspective of restricted codes

Using language in public

- Megan Washington: Why I live in mortal dread of public speaking

TED description: "Megan Washington is one of Australia's premier singer/songwriters. And, since childhood, she has had a stutter. In this bold and personal talk, she reveals how she copes with this speech impediment—from avoiding the letter combination “st” to tricking her brain by changing her words at the last minute to, yes, singing the things she has to say rather than speaking them."

- Susan Cain: The power of introverts

TED description: "In a culture where being social and outgoing are prized above all else, it can be difficult, even shameful, to be an introvert. But, as Susan Cain argues in this passionate talk, introverts bring extraordinary talents and abilities to the world, and should be encouraged and celebrated."

- Julian Treasure: 5 ways to listen better

TED description: "In our louder and louder world, says sound expert Julian Treasure, "We are losing our listening." In this short, fascinating talk, Treasure shares five ways to re-tune your ears for conscious listening — to other people and the world around you."

Gender and Language

- Who sounds gay?

About voice stereotypes, short film by David Thorpe (NY Times)

- Filmmaker And Speech Pathologist Weigh In On What It Means To 'Sound Gay' NPR interview with Terry Gross
- Open Letter to Terry Gross By Mark Liberman on Languagelog
- The Vocal Fry epidemic
- Vocal Fry May Hurt Women's Job Prospects
- Vocal fry probably doesn't harm your career prospects

Communicating and relating electronically

- John McWhorter: Txtng is killing language. JK!!!

TED description: "Does texting mean the death of good writing skills? John McWhorter posits that there’s much more to texting — linguistically, culturally — than it seems, and it’s all good news."

- Stefana Broadbent: How the Internet enables

On the "democratization of intimacy" - are we returning to an old pattern of how relationships were maintained while at work?
TED description: "We worry that IM, texting, Facebook are spoiling human intimacy, but Stefana Broadbent's research shows how communication tech is capable of cultivating deeper relationships, bringing love across barriers like distance and workplace rules."

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Communicating Nonverbally

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Compare and contrast verbal and non-verbal codes
- Discuss nonverbal communication and provide examples across cultures
- Discuss the meaning and use of semiotics

5.1: Body Language

In 2015, the "Boston bomber", Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, was sentenced to death. He and his brother had placed bombs near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries. At the trial, his involvement in setting the bombs was not at issue; he admitted his guilt. The question was if he would be sentenced to life in prison or to death. That decision rested with the jury and their perception of Tsarnaev. Character witnesses, family members, and bombing survivors testified. The defense tried to make the case that he was acting under the controlling influence of his older brother. The prosecution portrayed him as a heartless terrorist. A key factor for the jury was to evaluate Tsarnaev's character. His body language during the trial was not helpful to the defense. He seemed uninvolved and bored. He showed no emotional reaction to the horrific scenes and stories from the bombing shown and narrated in court. He didn't look at the jury or make eye contact with those on the witness stand. In mainstream US culture, an averted gaze could be interpreted as an admission of guilt and shame, while the lack of emotional response points to an absence of remorse. The jury was also shown a picture from a surveillance camera in jail in which Tsarnaev held up his middle finger in a gesture of defiance and hostility. The jury also was given the text of tweets Tsarnaev had sent, as well as the anti-US manifesto he had written on the side of the boat where he was captured. The messages no doubt condemned him in the eyes of the jury, but certainly his bearing in court contributed to the jury's ultimate decision. Nonverbal signals rarely decide life or death, but they do play a central role in human communication. In this unit we will be examining how that plays out in cross-cultural communication.

Figure 5.1.1: Tsarnaev, from a jail surveillance camera

The nature of nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication can take many different forms and can vary significantly in its manifestations and usage across cultures. Its relation to verbal communication is complex. Verbal language is based on abstract symbols, arbitrarily designated to represent objects or concepts. There's no inherent, logical connection between "cat" or (or the German *Katze* or Chinese□) and the feline animal. We learn the significance of the symbols over time. In contrast, much of nonverbal communication involves signs or signals that are natural and often involuntary. Smiling or frowning, for example, are not learned behaviors but naturally occurring human actions. This is not the case for on all nonverbal communication; gestures for greetings or insults, for example, are symbolic and cultural. Verbal language can be analyzed and described by a set of rules. For nonverbal communication there are unwritten rules and conventions but no formal grammar or syntax. The rules for nonverbal communication are learned informally through socialization.

Gestures or facial expressions can send messages independent of language. In fact, in some contexts, those messages (i.e., anger, joy) can be transmitted more effectively by nonverbal means. That includes vocal qualities, such as the tone of voice or actions such as crying or laughing. Often nonverbal communication accompanies speech. In such cases, the relationship between the two can vary. Body language can reinforce or emphasize the verbal message – smiling, for example, while complementing someone. Gestures can also substitute for speech – nodding or shaking the head for yes or no. On occasion, nonverbal gestures might repeat verbal messages, as in giving directions, through pointing to the way to go.

Figure 5.1.2: Sometimes words are not needed, as the body language here shows

Sometimes, a person's nonverbal message might contradict what is said. A person appearing downcast might respond "Oh, nothing," in response to the question "What's the matter?", but the body language may send a different signal. In such situations, the nonverbal action is likely to be perceived as the authentic message, not the stock verbal response. Nonverbal communication is seen as more honest and revealing in that it is often instinctive and unconscious. Recent research in nonverbal communication (Montepare 2003; Patterson, 2003) has demonstrated that some nonverbal behaviors fulfill universal human social needs and contribute to social cohesion and bonding. Widely used nonverbal behaviors can help identify in-group membership.

It is likely that most individuals would be surprised to learn how important nonverbal behavior is in conveying messages during conversations. The common perception is that what we are mostly paying attention to are the words being said. We tend to be unaware of the many other factors that can impact the nature of a verbal interaction. The relative importance of nonverbal codes varies with context and culture, but some estimates of what weight is conveyed by nonverbal versus verbal means gives a much higher percentage to nonverbal. Albert Mehrabian (1971) asserted that we develop our attitude towards the other person (like or dislike) overwhelmingly through nonverbal means. In fact, he claimed that 93% of that process happens nonverbally, through vocal tone and gestures (38% and 55% respectively), rather than through the literal meaning of the words (7%). The important role that nonverbals play in communicating across cultures is demonstrated in the fact that the study of intercultural communication originated with investigations into the "silent language" and "hidden dimensions" of time and space in communication (titles of seminal books by Edward Hall, 1959, 1966). One might question Mehrabian's formula as it applies to individual conversations and particular cultures. One can imagine conversations, for example, in a doctor's office or in a school, in which the essence of the communication and the affective impact are carried substantially by language. Given the importance and ubiquity of written digital messaging, contemporary communication is often electronically mediated and occurs with no nonverbal codes, except for emoji or embedded media.

Sending Signals without Words

There are a number of human interactions which occur largely without the use of language or in which language plays a clearly secondary role. That's the case in rituals, a clearly defined set of actions performed on particular occasions and having symbolic significance. Greetings and departures, for example, have rituals that are largely nonverbal, such as shaking hands or waving. These tend to vary across cultures. In Japan, for example, it is common to bow when greeting someone, with the nature of the bow (how deep and how long) being determined by the nature of the occasion and social connection of the persons involved. In some cultures, kissing on the cheek is the usual greeting, although how many times the kisses are exchanged and which sexes are included can vary. In other parts of the world there may be hugs and kisses, depending on the context and relationship. In Arab countries it is common to bow and touch the forehead and chest (the *salaam*) when meeting someone. The *Wai* is used in Thailand and in other Asian cultures, consisting of a bow with the palms pressed together. In other cultures, people rub noses, such as in the *hongi*, a traditional greeting of the Maori people in New Zealand. Knowledge of such rituals can be helpful in avoiding awkwardness in first encounters.

Figure 5.1.3*A*: The bow is common in Japan as a greeting and is used in other contexts, such as apologies

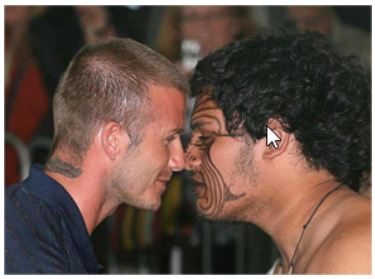

Figure 5.1.3*A*: David Beckham receives a *hongi*

Nonverbal signals come not just from body movements such as handshaking or bowing but also through the presence (or absence) of personal objects or artifacts. Those may be articles of clothing, jewelry or accessories we wear or hold, or might be physical items surrounding us. Signals may be sent by more intangible means such as smell or sound. There may be a complex array of nonverbal factors at play, as in this example of nonverbal behavior at a military checkpoint:

> *A Sunni driver coming up to a security post he believes is under Shia control should not only have the right ID to hand, but should also push in a tape playing Shia religious songs and turn up the volume. He should hang a picture of Imam Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and the most revered figure in the Shia faith, from the rear-view mirror. He might also slip on the large silver ring worn only by Shias, especially those considered to be descendants of the Prophet, and perhaps carry a "torba", the round piece of clay that Shias often place on their foreheads when they bow down in prayer. These and other handy tips are given on the Iraqi Rabita website, designed to advise Sunnis on how to get through Shia checkpoints (Checkpoints, 2007).*

The situation is not likely one most of us will ever encounter, but it dramatizes the importance of nonverbal codes in particular contexts. In such situations, nonverbals can play a significant role in easing tensions. On the other hand, inappropriate nonverbal behavior can easily have the opposite effect, exacerbating potential tensions and causing open conflict.

Gestures across Cultures

One of the areas in which there is considerable cultural variation is in the use of gestures and body movements. This area of communication is called **kinesics**, with the two main kinds of actions labeled **emblems** and **illustrators** (Ekman & Frieden, 1969). Emblems are hand gestures that have by themselves a direct meaning, such as insult gestures like the raised middle finger. Illustrators are hand or arm gestures that accompany speech and which accentuate or complement what is said. Pounding a podium with one's fist while giving a speech is an example of an illustrator. Emblems and illustrators are used for a variety of social functions, such as greeting, leave-taking, providing directions/commands, or issuing warnings. Being aware of cultural differences in this area can be important in cross-cultural encounters.

One of the richest array of gestures are for communicating insults and obscenities. Insult gestures tend to vary across cultures and are different as well in the extent to which they are used. In Greece, for example, the *mountza* (μούντζα) or *moutza* (μούτζα) is a commonly seen insult gesture. It consists of spreading the fingers (one hand or both) and trusting them outwards, towards the other person (as if flinging something unpleasant). In other cultures, the arm-thrust (*bras d'honneur*) is used, forging a fist and slapping it

upwards under the biceps of the arm. Such gestures can be highly offensive and are often considered obscene. Other gestures may convey skepticism or disbelief, such as the French *mon oeil* (my eye), using a finger to pull down the lower eyelid. The gesture is also used in Japan, known as the Akanbe (□□□□□).

Figure 5.1.4A: Moutza against the parliament by Greek protesters

Figure 5.1.4B: Akanbe gesture in Japan

The caution in using gestures extends to those which may be widespread in a culture, and which we may interpret as universal. The North American A-OK sign (circled thumb and pointer finger, with the other fingers spread out) is an obscene gesture in many European cultures. Likewise, the inverted peace sign – two fingers facing inwards is an insult in England and Australia. The thumbs-up gesture signals in North America well done; in Greece and other countries, it is equivalent to the insulting "Up yours!" (Cotton, 2013). US President George W. Bush famously used the *hook 'em horns* gesture of the Texas Longhorn football team to signal his approval of the marching band of the University of Texas. In Italy, that gesture is well-known, but it doesn't signal fan enthusiasm or let's rock. It is called *il cornuto*, indicating that the other person is a cuckold, that is, that his wife is cheating on him (Cotton, 2013).

Pointing with the forefinger is a gesture North Americans frequently use. Using that gesture to point at people is in some cultures extremely rude. Likewise, the beckoning gesture with palm turned upward and extending one finger or the whole hand is considered an insult in Japan and other countries. There are a variety of beckoning gestures, In Afghanistan and the Philippines, for example, one motions downward with the palm of the hand facing the ground (Cotton, 2013). Emblems have traditionally been culture-specific. However, the forces of globalization and technology have exposed people worldwide to gestures used in popular media (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). Through the greater availability globally of North American television shows and movies, as well as the popularity of social media such as Facebook and YouTube, some North American gestures, such as those for greeting and departure, have become familiar in many other cultures. (Jackson, 2014).

Figure 5.1.5A: Thumbs-up may be an insult

Figure 5.1.5B: US President George Bush

Another kind of gesture is an **adaptor**, a kinetic action used to satisfy a psychological or physical need, such as tapping one's feet or playing with a pen. Some are learned behaviors, such as covering one's mouth when sneezing, while others, such as scratching, are automatic or biological. Most do not affect communication, as they are not intended to send a message. However, some are considered rude in particular cultures; examples are: "never chew gum in public in France; whistling under any circumstances in India is considered impolite; pointing a finger in the Arab world is considered a rude gesture; and winking may be considered an insult or a sexual proposition in India and Pakistan" (Ting-Tooney, 1999, p. 126). Using adaptors in the wrong context or at the wrong time can be awkward or embarrassing.

The universality of facial expressions

Some cultures tend to be much more expressive and rich in their use of body language than others. Italians and Mediterraneans in general are normally placed in that category, while northern Europeans and Asians are seen as more restrained in their use of

gestures. It is often claimed that facial expressions – called **affects displays** – tend to be universal, the idea being that expressing basic emotions is an elemental, instinctive behavior common to all humans. This idea goes back to Charles Darwin (1872) who claimed all humans express emotion in the same way. This was later contradicted by anthropologists such as Margaret Mead (1975). It wasn't until the 1960s that so-called "universality studies" were conducted by Paul Ekman and others. In a series of experiments involving participants from a variety of cultures, they showed that there were six universal expressions — anger, disgust, fear, sadness, happiness, and surprise (Ekman, 1972). Later, a seventh expression, contempt, was added (Ekman & Heider, 1988). As the studies involved people from industrialized countries, who may have learned to interpret faces from mass media, other studies were conducted among tribal groups in New Guinea, which came to similar results (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). An interesting experiment conducted with blind athletes produced the same results as their sighted colleagues (Matsumoto & Willingham, 2009). Because the blind athletes could not have learned the behaviors, one can assume there is an innate capacity to display facial expressions.

Figure 5.1.6: Joy is expressed the same across cultures

What causes particular emotions and determines their intensity can be quite different, both personally and culturally. It is also the case that in many contexts we are able to assert control over our expressions. Codes of general conduct, politeness, or social harmony may influence the public display of emotions. This was shown in a cross-cultural experiment (Matsumoto & Ekman, 1989), which studied expressions of Japanese and US students while watching emotionally disturbing films. When both groups of young people were among themselves, they showed the same expressions. However, when the Japanese students were with an older, male observer, they displayed neutral expressions or even smiled, while the US students continued to display the same negative emotions. Ekman and Friesen (1969) coined the term **cultural display rules** to describe such cultural differences in facial expressions. The concept explains the difference in expressions of the Japanese students in the experiment, as due to the cultural mandate in Japan of managing and minimizing expressions of feelings in the presence of a third party. In Japan it is culturally appropriate to hide unhappiness by smiling or embarrassment by laughing. While weeping in public is considered in Japan to be inappropriate, in Middle Eastern or Latin American cultures it is normal to express one's emotions openly and visibly.

Using the concept of cultural display rules, Matsumoto (1990) developed a theory of the expression of emotions that incorporates Hofstede's taxonomies, particularly as they relate to individualism versus collectivism. According to the theory, because individualistic cultures encourage and reward self-expression, individuals in those cultures are free to express fully and instinctively their feelings, whether they be positive or negative. On the other hand, those in collectivistic cultures are bound by conventions of the collective good and social harmony to regulate their expression of emotion when not alone. Matsumoto also incorporates the concept of power distance:

> *High power-distance cultures endorse displays of emotion that reinforce hierarchical relations (i.e., status reminders), such as showing anger toward a low-status person or appeasing a high-status person (e.g., smiling). Low power-distance cultures embrace egalitarian values and teach the importance of treating people as equals. Thus, there is less pressure in these cultures for members to adjust displays of emotion according to the status of another person. (Remland et al., 2014)*

High power distance cultures tend also to be labeled collectivistic; that would include most Middle-Eastern, Latin American, African and southern European countries. Low power/individualistic cultures are considered to be South Africa, North America, Australia, and northern Europe (Hofstede, 1980). As always, in such broad-stroke generalizations, caution is needed in applying these labels to individuals. While dominant cultural forces may be powerful, they may be contradicted and potentially negated by values associated with group membership, whether those be ethnic, regional, or other. It is also the case that individual personalities play a significant role in the degree to which emotions are displayed or suppressed. The patterns we've identified in nonverbal

behavior should be seen as examples not as absolutes. Being aware of such potential variations can be helpful in adjusting expectations and suspending judgments.

Personal space

One of the actions which can affect the course of the conversation is for one or the other of the conversants to move closer or further away. Edward Hall (1966) pioneered the study of **proxemics**, the perception and use of physical space, including territoriality and **personal space**. **Territoriality** refers to the actual physical space, while personal space is perceptual or psychological – the kind of space bubble that we perceive around us. Following complaints from both Arab and US students in a North American university setting, O.M. Watson (1970) investigated the nonverbal behavior of the two groups. He found that the US students viewed the Arabs as pushy and rude, while the Arabs considered the US students to be distant and rude. He discovered that a substantial part of the problem were different conceptions of personal space, with the US students feeling the Arab students were invading their bubbles and the Arab students seeing the US students as unfriendly because they were keeping their distance. Hall (1966) developed a four-level classification of social distance. For the US, he defined intimate space, reserved for highly personal relationships, as 9 to 18 inches (23 to 45 cm), and personal distance ("arm's length") at 1.5 to 4 feet (.5 to 1.2 m), the normal spacing for conversations. Social distance he established at between 4 and 12 feet (1.2 to 3.6 m), the spacing normal in casual gathering and work environments. Public distance he defined as being 12 feet (3.6 m) or longer, used for public speaking or large gatherings. Researchers have identified particular cultures as "high contact", meaning that there is a preference for a closer proximity and a high degree of physical contact (Aiello, 1987). Examples frequently given are Arabs, Latin Americans, and southern Europeans, who all tend to use closer interaction distances then in so-called low contact cultures (USA, northern Europe, Australia). There are other factors besides regional culture which may affect personal distance, such as gender, age, ethnicity, or topic of conversation.

Figure 5.1.7: In some cultures, people like to keep their distance

Personal distance is sometimes associated with smell. The study of smell in humans is called **olfactics**. In some cultures (in Africa and the Middle East, for example) there's a preference for standing close enough to a person in conversation to be able to detect body odor. Odor is used in such cases to categorize people according to status, power, or social class. In many cultures wearing an expensive perfume or cologne can signal status and wealth. On the other hand, the smell of sweat or strong body odor is likely to suggest manual labor and lower social status. Some smells are associated with particular ethnic groups and may lead to prejudicial treatment. The smell of curry, linked to South Asians, has been used as a basis for discrimination, such as refusing to rent apartments to Indians or Pakistani (Jackson, 2014). Although some smells seem to be universally attractive (jasmine, lavender, roses) others may vary in how they are perceived across cultures. The smell of onions, for example, is considered unpleasant in many cultures, but the Dagon people of Mali find the smell attractive, even to the point of rubbing onions on their bodies (Neuliep, 2006).

Figure 5.1.8: The smell of roses seems universally positive

Physically interacting with others

There are also cultural conventions related to if and how the conversation partner should be touched. This area of nonverbal communication, tactile communication or the use of touch, is known as **haptics**. Touch conventions vary significantly across cultures and are dependent as well on age, gender, and relationship. In some Arab cultures, it is common for men to hold hands in particular situations. Some cultures have a taboo on touching the top of someone's head, as in patting a child, as the head is considered sacred. Another taboo, in India, the Middle East, and Africa, is the use of the left hand in certain social situations, such as eating. Cooper, Calloway-Thomas & Simonds (2007) provide a set of rules in relation to touch in Thai culture:

- Don't touch anyone's head for any reason. The head is the most important part of the body. It is the seat of the soul.
- Do not touch a female on any part of her body.
- The feet are considered the "dirtiest" part of the body. They are used only for walking. Thus, it is an insult to rest your feet on someone else's backrest, such as in the cinema or on a train.
- Women must never touch a monk or his robe. Even in a bus or train, Women cannot sit next to a monk.
- Always accept things with your right hand. The left hand is used to Wash the posterior and is therefore regarded as unclean (p. 138).

Being aware of such taboos in visiting another culture can make seemingly strange behavior understandable and help to avoid embarrassing faux-pas.

Eye contact is often included as a topic within proxemics as it tends to regulate interpersonal distance. Direct eye contact tends to shorten the sense of distance, while an averted gaze increases it. In many cultures, such as in many Asian countries, avoiding eye contact conveys respect. In some situations, making eye contact communicates that one is paying attention. Breaking off eye contact can be a signal of disinterest or even rudeness. Within the US, different ethnic groups have been found to follow different norms in the use of eye contact to regulate conversations. African-Americans maintain eye contact when speaking but avert their gaze when listening, but just the opposite is true for European Americans (LaFrance & Mayo, 1978). This distinction can lead to conflict:

> *Interethnic expectancy violations exist when African Americans expect the European Americans to look them in the eyes when speaking but instead receive "non-responsiveness" or "indifference" cues. European Americans, on the other hand, may view the direct eye gaze during speaking as "confrontational" or "aggressive" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.126).*

In both pluralistic societies and in cross-cultural encounters, being mindful of variations in this area is important. Nora Dresser's book, *Multicultural Matters* (2005), chronicles how Korean-American shopkeepers, who did not make eye contact with their customers, were perceived as disrespectful, something contributing to the open confrontation taking place in US urban centers between some Asians and African-Americans. In some contexts in the US, such as in urban areas among teens and young adults, looking directly at someone can be seen as a provocation, reflected in the term "mad-dogging" (Remland et al., 2015).

Figure 5.1.9: Groups may have different expectations in maintaining eye contact in conversations

5.2: Nonverbal Messaging

Paralanguage: Conveying meaning through ways of Speaking

Body language is important in sending signals during conversations. So-called **regulators** are nonverbal actions or behaviors which serve to direct or manage conversations. Of significant importance in cross-cultural communication are aspects of **paralanguage,** such as tone of voice, rate of speech, or loudness. Tone and intonation can have a determining effect on the message conveyed, turning a statement, for example, into a sarcastic comment. The volume, fluency, or rhythm of speech can transmit to the listener information such as degree of confidence, nervousness, or even perceived trustworthiness of the speaker. Our cultural backgrounds tend to lead us to make assumptions about another person's intentions or feelings based on paralinguistic clues. Harry Triandis (1994) provides a dramatic example of misinterpreting vocal clues:

> *In January, 1991, James Baker, then the United States Secretary of State, met with Tariq Aziz, the Foreign Minister of Iraq. They met in an effort to reach an agreement that would prevent a war. Also present in the room was the half-brother of Saddam Hussein, whose role included frequent calls to Hussein with updates on the talks. Baker stated, in his standard calm manner, that the US. would attack if Iraq did not move out of Kuwait. Hussein 's half-brother heard these words and reported that "The Americans will not attack. They are weak. They are calm. They are not angry. They are only talking." Six days later Iraq saw Desert Storm and the loss of about 175,000 of their citizens. Triandis argued that Iraqis attend to how something is said more than what is said. He further suggests that if Baker had pounded the table, yelled, and shown outward signs of anger, the outcome may have been entirely different (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 277).*

The voice qualities of a speaker can be as important in conveying a message as the semantic value of the words spoken. If someone is articulate and coherent, we tend to form a favorable impression, leading to an instinctive feeling that the person is trustworthy. If someone is hesitant and imprecise in speech, we may gain an unfavorable opinion, no matter what it is that the person says. Scholars who engage in conversation analysis have shown even slight modifications in voice tone or intonation can send a message to the listener. John Gumperz (1982), for example, provides a number of examples of misunderstanding between Indians speaking English and native Britons due to **prosody**, or the vocalic shaping of utterances, including pitch, volume, and tempo.

One of the phenomena that contributes to managing conversation are **vocalizations**, sounds that do not carry on their own any meaning. These might be fillers or vocalized pauses, such as "er" or "uh-huh" in English or "Este…" in Spanish. Often they are used as conversational backchannels, indicating to the speaker that we are listening. In some cases, vocal regulators may be misinterpreted in cross-cultural contexts. The Japanese filler *hai hai* is often used by natives in the meaning of "I hear you", but given that *hai* literally means "yes" there may be misunderstanding in a non-native assuming a positive affirmation, rather than merely an acknowledgement of having heard the speaker. Vocalizations may also provide guidance in turn-taking or indicate that a listener is ready to move on to another topic.

Managing Conversations

One of the role vocalizations play is to function as a backchannel in conversations, a way for a listener to send messages to the speaker (Yngve, 1970). This may consist in English o sounds such as "uh-huh" or "hmm", or words and phrases like "yes" or "go on". Backchannel responses play different roles; they may encourage the speaker to continue, indicate the extent of interest, or assess the speaker's statements, i.e., agreeing ("Right") or expressing doubt ("Do you really think so?"). There may be more than simple words or phrases involved, namely longer utterances completing the speaker's sentences, requesting clarification, or attempting to take the floor. Background communication occurs across cultures, but may vary in norms and expectations, which can cause confusion or awkwardness.

How conversations flow varies with culture and context. In situations in which a strict hierarchy is present or when the interaction is highly formal, there may be fixed patterns for managing a conversation and signaling when it is over. In such situations, interrupting a speaker may be inappropriate. There are conversational norms which may play a role. In particular cultures, it is

common, even expected, for others to interrupt a speaker frequently. In France, for example, this is seen as part of what constitutes a good conversation.

> *[Interruptions] signal interest in the other's remark, which merits a commentary, a word of appreciation, denial, protest, or laughter–in short, a reaction without which the remark would 'fall flat.' The ball is tossed to be caught and tossed back. Where there is no 'interruption,' when each person speaks sedately in turn (as in American conversation, according to the French), the conversation never 'takes off'; it remains polite, formal, cold (Carroll, 1988, p. 37).*

While this kind of spontaneity and frequent back-and-forth is seen by the French (and in other cultures) as stimulating, it may be seen by some as chaotic or rude.

Some paralinguistic behaviors are instinctive, others are learned. South Koreans, for example, are socialized into avoiding loud speaking or laughing in public. In some cultures, the use of silence can be an important aspect of communication. In the US, long pauses in conversations are awkward. In Finland and in some Asian cultures, silence is valued as offering time for thought or reflection, or as a sign of respect, allowing time for the interlocutor to finish. In his ethnographic study of the Western Apache Native American tribe, Keith Basso (1970) reported that silence was used for "unscripted" social situations, such as unforeseen encounters, talking with strangers, first dates, times of mourning, or greeting those who had been away for an extended period of time. Later, Charles Braithwaite (1999) expanded the study of the role of silence to a variety of cultures, in which silence tends to be part of the communicative pattern. He confirmed Basso's findings that silence is seen in communication situations in which there is uncertainty, ambiguity, or unpredictability. He also found that silence is often used in conversations in which the participants represent different positions of power or authority.

One of the aspects of speech which affect listener perception is the speaker's accent. Non-native accents can often stigmatize the speaker, evoking stereotypes associated with social class, ethnic background, economic status, or level of education. In some cases, a particular accent, such as a British accent in the US, is perceived positively. In most cases, however, accents are perceived negatively and may have real-world consequences for the speaker in terms of discrimination in personal encounters or institutional settings.

Physical appearance and dress

One of the important nonverbal signals all humans send comes through our appearance, i.e. how we dress, arrange our hair, or use body art. Many cultures have rules and conventions for dress and appearance, established through custom or religious beliefs. Women in Muslim countries, for example, dress so that their hair is covered and, in some cases, also their bodies and faces. In some cases, dress can provide information about social/economic position, marital status, or age. In Japan, women's *komodos* vary according to the time of year and occasion, but also based on marital status and age. For the Masai tribe in Kenya, earrings and necklaces designate the marital status of women, while men wear earrings and arm rings that show their social status, indicating whether they are elders or warriors (Vandehey, Buergh & Krueger, 1996). In rural northern India, the level of a woman's veil over her face can indicate romantic interest or disinterest (Lambert & Wood, 2005). Dress and physical appearance can be important identifiers for membership in particular groups. Members of motorcycle gangs wear black leather and heavy boots. Japanese businessmen ("salarymen") wear dark, conservative suits and plain ties. Japanese tourists often wear a resort hotel's *yukata* (a lightweight komodo) signaling to others in the town their role (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In this way, forms of dress serve as identity markers. Certain uniforms signal professions, as in the case of police officers or members of the military, while also conveying a sense of authority and power.

Figure 5.2.1: Woman wearing a niqab (veil)

Body piercings and tattoos, in bygone days, indicators of low-prestige socio-economic status (sailors, carnival workers), have become mainstream among young people in the US and elsewhere. Older people are likely to retain the images from the past and may have a negative view of heavily tattooed or pierced young people. One of the persistent stereotypes is in regards to women's dress and appearance. Young women in mini skirts and tank tops, especially if blonde, may be perceived as flighty and unintelligent. Muslim women wearing a *hijab* face prejudice and discrimination in many non-Muslim countries, which is even more pronounced for those wearing a whole body *burqua*. In some Western countries, wearing traditional Muslim female dress in public or in schools has been banned. In the US, hooded sweatshirts (*hoodies*) are often associated with young black men. In Florida, a young black man, Treyvon Martin, was wearing a hoodie when shot dead by a white "neighborhood watch" member as he was returning from a convenience store. The white man found Martin "suspicious", due to his skin color and attire.

Figure 5.2.2: Tattoos have become mainstream in many cultures

Appearance messages are generally the first nonverbal codes we process, sizing up the other person based on skin color, appearance, and clothing. The first impression might determine our attitude towards another person, helping to determine whether we want to get to know that person or not. Sometimes, some features of the other person's appearance might lead to specific pre-judgments. One of those might be the particular shade of skin. Black people with darker skin are sometimes viewed as somehow less attractive or having lower status than Blacks with lighter skin. Light-skinned Blacks may feel discriminated against as well (see sidebar). In South American countries such as Brazil, there is a rich mix of ethnicities and races, resulting in a wide range of skin colors and a complex social hierarchy, built in part on the particular shade of one's skin.

Different Shades of Black Identity

If you are a light-skinned Black person, you are looked upon as "uppity" or thinking that you're too good. This is something I have come across a lot. For my first year of college, I attended the first historically Black college, Lincoln University. It was my first time being around that many African Americans (the high school I attended was mostly Caucasian). I am naturally shy, so I would walk around not speaking to anyone. In many cases I would walk around looking at the ground or just with no expression on my face whatsoever. I was viewed as the "uppity" light-skinned girl who thought she was too good for everyone else. - Ami

Remland et al., 2014, p. 149.

In some cases, we are conscious of the distinctive views we may have towards those with a certain appearance. Many US Americans, for example, have heard so much since 2001 about Muslims and terrorism, that someone perceived to be Muslim by their appearance and dress likely triggers already well-established and self-acknowledged views on Muslims. The largely negative stereotypes can have tragic consequences, as the acts of violence towards Muslims in the US and elsewhere has shown. In some cases, the perceived target may not even represent the intended group. The first victim of revenge killing in the US following the September 11, 2001 attacks was not a Muslim, but a Sikh gas station manager in Arizona shot down by a man vowing to kill "towel heads" (Basu, 2016).

In many cases individuals may not be aware of the negative attitudes towards others. Humans naturally tend to categorize, and that process includes grouping together other humans. We likely do that with individuals we meet without being aware of this process of **implicit bias**. This is a phenomenon that scientists have been studying for some time, namely that even well-meaning people have hidden prejudices against those of other races. Studies have shown subtle biases are widespread in the US, especially against Blacks, and lead to discrimination in many areas, including in education, professional life, and housing (Yudkin at al., 2016). In the US recently, the issue has arisen in connection with white police officer's using violence against unarmed young black men. Studies have shown that "implicit bias can be overcome with rational deliberation" (Yadkin & Van Bavel, 2016). Many police departments in the US have begun the process of making police officers aware of their biases. Project Implicit from Harvard university provides an online process for analyzing one's possible biases in a number of areas, including attitudes towards race, skin tone, religion, sexuality, Arab/Muslims, age, disability, and weight. These are all areas in which implicit bias may be present in individuals in the US. Other cultures are likely to have some of the same biases, along with others. In recent years, corporations in North America have begun to offer training to employees to make them aware of hidden biases in an effort to treat their customers equitably, regardless of race or ethnicity. Whether such training is effective – particularly when offered in one-time short training seminars — is questionable (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

Nonverbal expectancy violation theory

As in other areas tied to cultural values and behaviors, people develop an expectation of conformity with the conventions of the culture, in this case with the unwritten rules of nonverbal behavior. In the US, we don't expect women to wear headscarves as normal everyday attire. We do expect to shake hands upon meeting someone for the first time, which may not happen if, as a non-related man, we are meeting a Muslim woman. Such occurrences are, in the formulation of Judee Burgoon (1978), violations of **nonverbal expectancy**. According to this theory, people have expectations about the appropriateness of nonverbal behavior, which is learned and culturally driven. When these expectations are violated, it produces a reaction she describes as "arousal", which can be physiological or cognitive, positive or negative. Our reaction depends on the severity of the violation, the nature of the person (such as attractiveness), and the implicit message associated with the violation. The context and the person will determine our reaction. If a person standing too close at a party (thereby violating personal space) is attractive and well groomed, the reaction is likely to be quite different than if that person is perceived as slovenly and unattractive.

Reactions to violations of nonverbal codes depend as well on the nature of our communicative and cultural environment. If we are accustomed to high-context communications, we may be more dependent on nonverbal messages and are therefore more adept at decoding nonverbal behavior. In that case, for example, silence might be evaluated positively and perceived quite differently than it is in cultures where periods of silence in a conversation run counter to expectations. In intercultural communication contexts, violations of expectations by a non-native could be seen as naïve/endearing or strange/rude depending on how we view that person. Using Hofstede's cultural categories, Burgoon points out that violating norms in high uncertainty avoidance cultures is likely to be less acceptable. On the other hand, countries with lower power distance may be more flexible in terms of rules about verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

In the South Asian countries, sitting with one’s back towards someone older in age or authority, or having the soles of one’s feet face someone older in age or stature or authority, or books – the source of knowledge, or the altar, is considered very rude (Malik, personal communication, September 18, 2017). That is the reason why one is unlikely to find book shelves or altars at the feet of the bed or against or on the wall facing the feet of the bed. It is also considered inappropriate to have an altar or, occasionaly, the photographs of one’s ancestors in a bedroom that is likely to be used as a conjugal bedroom.

One of the cultural norms that may lead to adverse reactions is the public display of affection. In most Western cultures, there has long been acceptance of heterosexual couples touching and kissing in public. The degree to which this occurs differs. Researchers have found that this is more common, for example, among French and Italian young couples than in the US (Field, 1999; DiBiase & Gunnoe, 2004). Acceptance of homosexual couples is widespread today in many Western countries, but not in many other parts of the world. In most Muslim cultures, the strict separation of unmarried people disallows even heterosexual contact in public. In

India, some public displays of affection are taboo. In 2007, US actor Richard Gere faced widespread condemnation in India, after kissing Indian actress Shilpa Shetty at a televised fund-raising event. A photo of the kiss made front-page news across India, and effigies and photos of both Gere and Shetty were burned. An Indian court issued an arrest warrant for Gere, as he had "transgressed all limits of vulgarity" (Indian Court, 2007).

Figure 5.2.3: Richard Gere kisses Shilpa Shetty

It is of course not possible to know all the ins and outs of nonverbal transgressions in every country. On the other hand, it is certainly possible to be informed about the cultural practices in countries which we plan to visit or among local communities with whom we are likely to have contact. To the extent possible, we should act in accordance with the cultural expectations. That might mean taking off shoes before entering a home, or dressing more modestly then we would normally. On the other hand, we may oppose particular practices for religious, political, or philosophical reasons, and consciously refuse to adapt to local customs. That might mean, for example, women not accepting the prescribed cultural role in behavior, bearing, or dress expected in a particular culture. In general, it is good practice to anticipate nonverbal expectations to the degree possible. Even if we don't know the specifics of expectations in a given culture, we can certainly observe and learn. Burgoon's theory suggests that if we are well-intentioned, yet unaware of specific practices, it is likely others will be lenient in overlooking transgressions. In fact, it may be that expectations for foreigners in this regard are different than they are for natives. Koreans, for example, would likely not expect foreigners be familiar with the intricacies of bowing as they interface with Korean social hierarchies.

Music: Another way to communicate nonverbally

Music is a "universal language" in that it is understood without the need for language. Music plays many different roles in human society – entertaining, comforting, inspiring, socializing, and more. It can bring people together (anthems, concert venues, singing together, celebratory music) or pull them apart (protest songs, generational differences in taste, distasteful/hateful lyrics). Two examples from Germany illustrate that contrast. The *Horst Wessel Lied* was the anthem of Nazi Germany, celebrating violence and hatred. Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* (the last movement of the 9th Symphony, based on a poem by Friedrich Schiller) has been adopted as the unofficial anthem of the European Union. It celebrates brotherhood and solidarity. Our interest here is in music as a marker of cultural identity and as a non-verbal form of contact and communication across cultures.

Ethnomusicology is the study of music in cultural context. Like intercultural communication, the field involves contributions from many different disciplines. From the beginning, a major focus has been on non-Western music, with many practitioners engaged in ethnographic fieldwork. That involves learning about and documenting the music, language, and cultural practices of underrepresented ethnic groups. One of the pioneers of this field was Alan Lomax, who recorded folk music in the US and Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. His work contributed to the folk music revival of that time. Today, there are efforts underway to preserve endangered indigenous music traditions, just as there are to save languages from extinction. Catherine Grant's book, *Music Endangerment* (2004) chronicles some of those efforts.

Figure 5.2.4: Recording Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief in 1916

In recent decades, ethnomusicologists have been particularly interested in the effects of globalization on music traditions worldwide. The popularity of rock 'n' roll music in the late 20th century, for example, spread not only the English language worldwide, but also particular values and practices of Anglo-American youth culture. Globalization has resulted in the development of many hybridized musical forms. Traditional folk music in many parts of the world, and among diaspora communities, is often mixed with modern musical genres, resulting in new musical and cultural mixes. Immigrant communities will often have complex music practices. Young people are likely to listen to mainstream popular music but also be exposed to traditional music of their culture by way of religious, celebratory, or family events. Older members of the community may try to maintain a "pure" musical tradition as a means to maintain their culture within an encompassing foreign culture with different values and language.

Fock (1997) examines the complexity of such an immigrant community in the case of Turks in Copenhagen, Denmark. She chronicles how Turkish music is viewed differently when heard in different locales. If played in a Turkish restaurant, for example, Turkish music is received favorably by Danes, as a contribution to an appropriately "exotic" atmosphere. However, hearing Turkish music played at a street kiosk may be perceived negatively, giving the "Danish customers the feeling of not belonging" (Fock, 1997, p.56). A third encounter might be even more irritating for Danes:

> *Out on the street again you might hear heavy Turkish pop from a car driving by. Again the result probably is irritation, but now combined with an interpretation in the direction of social rejection: 'They are giving the Danish society the finger'. Car-blasting is a normal phenomenon within youth culture, yet when it is performed by youngsters with Turkish background it is often interpreted in a special cultural and provocative way (p. 56).*

In fact, the young Turks are likely intent not on irritating Danes, but on attracting the attention of those of their own generation, especially girls.

Music has been a vital part of worldwide youth cultures since at least the 1950s. Today, musical genres easily cross political and linguistic boundaries. In some cases, imported musical genres are subsequently adapted to local conditions. That is the case for hip-hop or rap music. It originated in the Bronx section of New York City, soon moving to urban centers on both the east and west coast of the US, and then around the globe. Hip-hop involves not just music, but also socio-political narratives about poverty and street life. It is also associated with certain forms of dress – low hanging pants, gaudy jewelry, caps worn sidewise, dark glasses. From the beginning, hip-hop culture was linked to place, with DJ's (disc jockeys) having their own "territory" (Sorrells, 2015). It was also early associated with the use of gang-derived "tagging" (marking territory), transformed eventually into graffiti.

As hip-hop has found its way into other cultures, the local characteristics and concerns have been integrated. In Germany, for example, some of the best known rap music has been created by Turkish Germans and touches on issues of identity and integration. Similar trends are evident elsewhere:

> *While the communicative practices of hip hop cultures around the world are clearly linked to the African diasporic colonial experience, they also rework the qualities of flow, layering, and rupture in their place-based specificity as global forces converge with local forces...Hip hop culture and styles developing in France and Italy provide spaces to address local issues of racism and concerns over police brutality. In Sweden, the hip hop*

> *scene among ethnic minorities focuses on constructing a collective oppositional identity to resist the White skinhead youth culture...For Maoris in New Zealand, rap music groups speak out for the rights of indigenous groups around the world. Hip hop in Japan is often used as a means of identity distinction by youth who want to mark themselves as different from the mainstream culture (Sorrells, 2015, pp. 85–86).*

The use in other contexts of certain forms and practices originating in US black inner-city environments raises the issue of **cultural appropriation**. Some may find it disrespectful or inauthentic for white rappers to borrow and rework Black cultural practices, developed out of a struggle for recognition and identity in ghetto communities. Others may point out that in fact rap music is today a profit-making business and this commodification of an art form liberates it in some way from being bound to its origins. However that may be, rap has become so integrated into the music scene in so many countries as to make its origins mute. The music itself retains many critics, who may accept the music as supplying a voice to those on the fringes of society, but who still find that many rappers continue to perpetuate unfortunate stereotypes and prejudices around communities of color, violence, misogyny, and homophobia (Remland, 2014).

5.3: Technically Speaking - Semiotics and the Internet

One of the trends in linguistics in recent years is to view language in a larger context, incorporating not just the nature and structure of language, but how it is used in wider social contexts, sometimes referred to as **language ecology**. This is in line with an approach to culture and meaning known as **semiotics**, the study of how meaning is conveyed through signs. A "social semiotic" view of language has influenced the approach to language learning, viewing it as a social, dialogic process of meaning construction that includes different media, modes and symbols. Claire Kramsch explains:

> *Whereas folk notions of language learning see it as an incremental accumulation of atomistic structures that moves the learner from word to sentence, from sentence to paragraph, and from paragraph to text, a social semiotic approach considers language as a holistic network of various signs in the environment, including gestures, silences, body postures, graphic and other visual and acoustic symbols, which shape a context of meaning and invite us to respond to it. (2002)*

This multimodal approach to language is particularly apt given the nature of communication in the Internet age. With the enhanced multimedia capabilities of mobile phones, everyday communication increasingly incorporates nonverbal resources such as photos and videos. Mobile apps like *Instagram* are used to communicate through images and video clips. *Instagram* users in turn can connect their accounts to social network services such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, or *Flickr*. Increasingly, we are seeing multimodal communication mediated through networked devices and services. Users may initiate a conversation on a wearable device such as an Apple Watch (maybe sending a heartbeat), follow up with photos from a smartphone, and later continue the conversation on *Facebook* on their tablet or laptop.

Semioticians look not only at language use, but also examine the significance of cultural phenomena such as advertisements, films, or graffiti. One of the key figures in this field was Ferdinand de Saussure, who distinguished between a **signifier** (such as a word like "tree") and the **signified** (the natural object in the forest). The **sign** is the combination of the signified and signifier, establishing the relationship between the two. Semioticians point to the fact that different cultures might have different relationships between the signifier and the signified. One might, for example, show respect in one culture by averting ones gaze, while in another culture one conveys the same meaning by looking directly into someone's eyes.

Semoiticians today frequently use the concept of "symbiotic resources":

> *[I] define semiotic resources as the actions and artifacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically – with our vocal apparatus; with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc. – or by means of technologies – with pen, ink and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors and sewing machines, etc. Traditionally they were called 'signs'. For instance, a frown would be a sign of disapproval, the color red a sign of danger, and so on. Signs were said to be the union of a signifier – an observable form such as a certain facial expression, or a certain color – and a signified – a meaning such as disapproval or danger. The sign was considered the fundamental concept of semiotics...In social semiotics the term 'resource' is preferred, because it avoids the impression that 'what a sign stands for' is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3).*

This notion that signs are dynamic and change over time, and as used in different contexts, highlights the transformative nature of communication. On the Internet we are not just consumers but creators. From a symbiotic perspective, we are sign-makers who shape and combine semiotic resources to reflect our own interests. We might do mashups of *YouTube* videos (substituting our own soundtrack), write fanfiction transforming *anime* storylines, or use *Google Photos* to create instant image-based narratives to share. One of the online activities young people favor is playing multiplayer games, which bring together a variety of semiotic resources, including gaming history, eye-hand coordination, language ability (to chat with other gamers), strategic reasoning, and a host of other resources and skills.

Exploring the multiple dimensions in which cultures express meaning and identity is facilitated by the media capture capabilities now available on mobile devices. One can explore the increasingly rich cultural diversity of many urban "linguistic landscapes" through capturing and analyzing street signs, store displays, graffiti, billboards, posted personal ads, community bulletin boards, or restaurant menus. Such "realia" have long been a staple resource in language instruction, but they also offer rich fodder for cultural study. Scholars such as Jon Bloomeart have explored how the study of the variety of signs in a neighborhood can reveal its history, ethnic makeup, and intergroup dynamics (2013). Students of language and culture can go beyond capturing images and take advantage of the audio/video features of mobile devices to film street scenes and capture conversations. A particularly rich source of cultural and linguistic information are interviews with residents, which could be weaved into compelling digital stories. "Digital storytelling" is a powerful tool for exploring personal experiences and histories, incorporating photos and videos. In cross-cultural studies, this offers an opportunity to capture and reflect on "rich points", those experiences that are revelatory in terms of both the other culture or individual and one's own values and perspectives.

The built-in GPS capabilities of today's smart phones allows images and videos to be geo-tagged, enabling the creation of personalized maps, place-based photo stories, or narrated city tours. That capability has been used to create innovative mobile games for language and culture learning. The *ARIS* platform (for Augmented Reality and Interactive Storytelling) enables sophisticated mobile game creation featuring augmented reality, the ability to overlay textural or other information overviews captured by a phone camera (Holden & Sykes, 2011). The tool allows for creation of games with quite interesting features, that combine a virtual environment with real-world locations. QR (Quick Response) codes, for example, can be posted in designated areas, which, when scanned with a camera, provide information on that location or further game directions. Game players have access within the app to recording audio and video, and there is even an image matching functionality, which compares photos taken with those in the game, triggering possible game events. One game created with ARIS is *Mentira*, which combines virtual experiences with real-world visits to locations in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The object of the game is to solve a murder mystery and involves users gaining information from site visits and from conversations with non-playing characters in the game. Another game created with ARIS is *Chrono-Ops*. The game has an ecological theme: players are tasked with inventing sustainability projects to save the planet. Directions are given in one of three different languages. As part of the game process, users write texts, record audio, and shoot video, all of which can become assets for future players. All ARIS games can be downloaded from the project site.

Another aspect of language learning in which images can play in important role is in vocabulary development. It has been known for some time in second-language acquisition that for many learners associating words with pictures aids in learning. Using flashcards with pictures rather than L1 equivalents can be helpful in bypassing native language interference. One of the memory techniques that has proven to be highly successful is the use of images associated with words and meanings to create a "memory palace". It involves creating a walk-through of the rooms in a building with which one is well acquainted (or can imagine in detail) and associating each item in the room with a memorable image which in some way conjures the word and it is meaning. To recall an item, one walks back mentally through the rooms. One of the memory techniques psychologists have shown to be effective is known as "spaced repetition". The idea is that there is a particular optimal rhythm for reviewing items to be learned until they are committed to long-term memory. Instead of studying or testing one’s knowledge of a set of items every day, it is better to study them one day, wait perhaps 3 days to study them again, then wait another 7 days after that. Programs that incorporate spaced repetition are set up to keep records of working with sets of words and automatically prompting review at optimal times. There are a number of digital flashcard programs which include that functionality.

5.4: Communicating Nonverbally (Summary)

From theory to practice...

Here are some considerations in respect to nonverbal communication in intercultural encounters:

– *Be cautious in making assumptions based on nonverbal actions*. The same gestures may have quite different meanings in different cultures. We often tend to assume body language and gestures are universal, but that is not the case.

– *Try to understand the cultural values attached to nonverbal conventions*. In following the technique of "thick descriptions" of cultural phenomena, try to penetrate beneath the surface of the behavior. Consider as well whether the behavior may be personal and idiosyncratic, rather than cultural and typical.

– *Watch and imitate as appropriate*. In some cases, adopting the different nonverbal behavior might be easy and straightforward, for example, bowing in Japan. In other cases, divergence might be more appropriate, for example, refraining from kneeling along with Muslims in prayer services.

For discussion and reflection...

1. **Using nonverbal communication**

After watching the TED videos by Amy Cuddy and Ron Gutman, address the following:

In your view, what effect do nonverbal actions and behaviors, like smiling or body posture, have on relating with others? Are they important in work spaces, school, or family environments? What are, in your opinion the most effective nonverbal strategies in being effective in communicating, or being successful in work or school? Discuss any experiences you have had in this area.

2. **Violating non-verbal norms and conventions**

Using the "Non-verbal expectancy violation model" (see the section of the text with this title), describe some cultural or intercultural violation you have experienced or witnessed (as the one who violated others' expectations, or as the one whose expectations were violated).

- Does the violation bring "arousal"?
- How does the person perceiving the violation evaluate the action? The communicator?
- What is the person's response?
- What factors might lead to a positive or negative response to a violation?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the theory?

3. **Appearance and assumptions**

After reading the Salbi essay and watching the talk by Abdel-Magied..

Salbi and Abdel-Magied give examples of assumptions made about women wearing headscarves. What other clothing items or style of dress may lead to automatic judgments about the wearer? How about perceptions of those with significant body modifications (tattoos, piercings)? What role, if any, do perceptions vary based on age, gender, national origin, or other factors?

4. **Images and emotions in electronic communication** *After watching the talks by el Kaliouby and Uglow..*

What's your take on "emotionally intelligent technology"? The Apple Watch allows users to "share an intimate moment with a close friend or family member by sending them your heartbeat"; would you want to go further and send "emotion streams" from a smartwatch or other device? How important are images (photos and videos) in how you currently communicate electronically? To what extent can images (or emoji?) play the role of sharing emotions? Can you imagine additional kinds of media or devices beyond those described by Uglow that would allows us to access information and potentially also feelings?

Key terms

- **Adaptors**: Mostly unconscious nonverbal actions that satisfy physiological or psychological needs, such as scratching an itch
- **Affect displays**: Non-verbal presentations of emotion, primarily communicated through facial expressions
- **Cultural appropriation:** The adoption or use of the elements of one culture by members of another culture
- **Digital storytelling**: Short form of digital media production, typically depicting some aspect of someone's life story
- **Display rules:** A social group's informal norms about when, where, and how one should express emotions

- **Emblems**: Primarily hand gestures that have a direct verbal translation; can be used to repeat or to substitute for verbal communication
- **Ethnomusicology:** The study of music in its cultural context
- **Eye contact:** The act of looking directly into one another's eyes
- **Gesture**: A form of non-verbal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of, or in conjunction with, speech
- **Haptics**: Non-verbal communication through physical contact or touch
- **Illustrators**: Primarily hand and arm movements that function to accent or complement speech
- **Implicit bias:** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, especially in relation to other people
- **Kinesics**: General category of body motion, including emblems, illustrators, affect displays, and adaptors
- **Linguistic landscape**: Study of languages on public and commercial signs in a given area
- **Mashup**: Web resource that uses content from more than one source to create a single new service displayed in a single graphical interface
- **Prosody:** The patterns of stress and intonation in a language
- **Nonverbal expectancy violations theory**: Theory that posits that people hold expectations about the nonverbal behavior of others. When these expectations are violated, people evaluate the violation positively or negatively, depending on the source of the violation.
- **Olfactics**: The perception and use of smell, scent, and odor
- **Paralanguage**: Characteristics of the voice, such as pitch, rhythm, intensity, volume, and rate
- **Personal space:** The physical space immediately surrounding someone, into which any encroachment may feel threatening or uncomfortable
- **Proxemics**: The perception and use of space, including territoriality and personal space
- **Regulators**: Behaviors/actions that govern, direct, or manage conversations
- **Semiotics**: Study of signs, symbols, and signification; how meaning is created
- **Signal**: A sign naturally connected to its referent
- **Signifier**: A sign's physical form (such as a sound, printed word, or image) as distinct from its meaning
- **Signified**: the meaning or idea expressed by a sign, as distinct from the physical form in which it is expressed
- **Spaced repetition**: Learning technique that incorporates increasing intervals of time between subsequent review of previously learned material in order to exploit the psychological spacing effect
- **Symbol**: An arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus representing something else
- **Territoriality**: How people use space to communicate ownership/occupancy of areas and possessions
- **Vocalization**: Mostly involuntary vocal utterances such as laughing, crying, sighing

Resources

Books

- Carroll, R. (1988). *Cultural Misunderstandings. The French-American Experience*, U. of Chicago Press.
- Dresser, N. (2005). Multicultural Matters. John Wiley.
- Grant, C. (2014). *Music endangerment: How language maintenance can help*. Oxford University Press.

- Busting the Mehrabian Myth

"Can words really account for only 7 percent of the meaning of a spoken message? This short video animation puts 'Mehrabian's rule' under the magnifying glass."

- Mehrabian and nonverbal communication Is communication really mostly non-verbal?
- About Nonverbal Communications General introduction, with lists of types of behavior for each kind of action
- Exploring Nonverbal Communication Test how well you can interpret non-verbal behavior
- Comprehensive list of hand gestures From Wikipedia
- Nonverbal communication in China Multiple examples
- Spanish Culture and Nonverbal Communication
- The Finger Insult and other gestures across cultures
- Ron Gutman: The hidden power of smiling

TED description: "Ron Gutman reviews a raft of studies about smiling, and reveals some surprising results. Did you know your smile can be a predictor of how long you'll live - and that a simple smile has a measurable effect on your overall well-being? Prepare to flex a few facial muscles as you learn more about this evolutionarily contagious behavior."

- Pamela Meyer: How to spot a liar

TED description: "On any given day we're lied to from 10 to 200 times, and the clues to detect those lie can be subtle and counter-intuitive. Pamela Meyer, author of Liespotting, shows the manners and 'hotspots' used by those trained to recognize deception - and she argues honesty is a value worth preserving."

- Amy Cuddy: Your body language shapes who you are

TED description: "Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. Social psychologist Amy Cuddy shows how 'power posing' - standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident - can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain, and might even have an impact on our chances for success."

- How to kill your body language Frankenstein and inspire the villagers

TED talk by Scott Rouse

- Yassmin Abdel-Magied: What does my headscarf mean to you?

TED description: "What do you think when you look at this speaker? Well, think again. (And then again.) In this funny, honest, empathetic talk, Yassmin Abdel-Magied challenges us to look beyond our initial perceptions, and to open doors to new ways of supporting others."

- Zainab Salbi: The Stories of a Headscarf

TED essay: "Zainab Salbi argues that the global fixation with a Muslim woman's decision to wear a headscarf - or not - is overly simplistic - and irrelevant."

- Tom Uglow: An Internet without screens might look like this

Are there new and different - and more intimate and natural - ways for us to gather information?
TED description: "Designer Tom Uglow is creating a future in which humanity's love for natural solutions and simple tools can coexist with our need for information and the devices that provide us with it. 'Reality is richer than screens,' he says. 'We can have a happy place filled with the information we love that feels as natural as switching on lightbulb.'"

- Rana el Kaliouby: This app knows how you feel - from the look on your face

TED description: "Our emotions influence every aspect of our lives - how we learn, how we communicate, how we make decisions. Yet they're absent from our digital lives; the devices and apps we interact with have no way of knowing how we feel. Scientist Rana el Kaliouby aims to change that. She demos a powerful new technology that reads your facial expressions and matches them to corresponding emotions. This 'emotion engine' has big implications, she says, and could change not just how we interact with machines - but with each other."

- Semiotics for Beginners Good introduction to the topic
- (What) Are we learning from 'linguistic landscapes'? Interesting exploration of the topic
- Digital Storytelling for Language and Culture Learning Introduction to the concept
- How to build a "memory palace" Step by step instructions
- Learning by Spaced Repetition Explanation of the method

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Contextualizing Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Compare and contrast environments'seffects on speech
- Discuss issues of space and time orientation in different contexts
- Discuss the intercultural context of business/professions

6.1: Environmental Contexts

Wal-Mart is the largest and most successful retailer in the world. It offers low prices through economies of scale, an efficient purchasing and delivery system, and low employee wages. Its home base is in the US, but it operates in countries across the globe. In many of those markets, Wal-Mart has been successful, for example in Great Britain and South America. However, Wal-Mart has been less successful in Japan, Korea, and India. Given the location of those markets, one might be tempted to assign Wal-Mart's lack of success to differences in Asian cultures and in consumer preferences. However, Wal-Mart has been largely successful in China. Moreover, it has not been universally successful in cultures closer to that of the US. Germany provides the clearest example.

Figure 6.1.1: A closed Wal-mart store in Germany

There are many differences between Germany and the US, but they share a number of cultural traits including a strong work ethic, a generally individualistic orientation, a fundamentally egalitarian social and political structure, a monochronic time orientation, and a shared linguistic family (Germanic language group within the Indo-European family). However, it was in fact largely cultural issues that led to Wal-Mart's failure in the German market. The stores in Germany were run very much like those in the US, and that was the cause of many of the problems that arose. Here are the most important cultural factors:

> ***Consumers***. Wal-Mart stores had smiling "greeters" at their entrances. The company instructed cashiers to smile at customers. Germans do not tend to smile at strangers. German consumers found the personal greetings of the smiling greeters offensive – this kind of informal chatting with strangers is not the norm in Germany. The smiles from the cashiers were interpreted as mocking or flirtatious.
>
> ***Products***. The product line did not match the cultural habits and preferences of German consumers. Meats, for example, were prepackaged; many Germans prefer to have meat cut on demand. Products were in some cases packaged in large quantities. Storage in refrigerators and cupboards in Germany is much more limited than in the US; German consumers tend to buy smaller quantities and shop more often. Local or regional products were not offered. To achieve economies of scale, Wal-Mart tends to carry the same products across all stores. Germans often identify closely with their home region, which often will include specific food and beverage preferences (sausage or beer, for example). German consumers are used to putting purchased items into bags they themselves have brought to the store, and they found Wal-Mart's practice of bagging products for consumers into plastic bags unfamiliar and undesirable.
>
> ***Employees***. It's common practice at Wal-Mart's in the US to have employees engage in group chants before the store opens, designed to build store morale and company loyalty. This practice is not common in Germany, and was perceived negatively by Wal-Mart employees. Because of regional differences and family relationships, most Germans prefer to remain near the area in which they grew up. Wal-Mart expected employees – especially managers – to be willing to relocate based on company needs. In the US, it's not uncommon for someone to seek employment far from one's home base; that's less likely in Germany. The anti-union policy of Wal-Mart also ran up against the German tradition of strong trade unions. It's also the norm in German companies that there be institutionalized employee input into company decision-making. That was not the case at Wal-Mart Germany.

Culture loams large in international business; companies ignore cultural issues at their peril. The example of Wal-Mart in Germany demonstrates that a reliable model in one culture does not necessarily work world-wide. In this chapter we will be looking at issues which arise in intercultural communication in particular environmental and professional contexts. This will include some discussion of issues related to physical space, such as privacy and time orientation. Also discussed will be the role of translation/interpretation. We conclude the chapter with an examination of cross-cultural issues in education and an excursion into driving and car culture across cultures.

The impact of the Environment on Conversations

The nature of conversations is determined by the conversation partner, the purpose of the encounter, and the context in which it occurs. Germans who went to Wal-Mart were there to buy goods, not to engage in conversations with strangers. Those same Germans may have a quite different attitude towards talking with strangers if they happen to be sitting at the same table with tourists at a local beer garden. How they talk with those tourists will be quite different than a conversation over a beer with friends or co-workers. Where a conversation takes place can have a significant effect in terms of language used. In a beer garden, one may have to speak louder than normal and, because of the mixed clientele, be prepared to speak using a simplified version of one's native tongue or English. The language used will likely be quite different from that at the workplace, more informal, with quite different subjects discussed.

Quiet, isolated environments are likely to lead to different conversation dynamics than a crowded, noisy environment. Environmental psychologist Albert Mehrabian devised a theory in which he emphasizes the varying **information rates** in different environments (1977). Information rate is the amount of information contained or perceived per a certain unit of time; the more information available to process, the greater the information rate. An environment with a high information rate is said to have a **high load**. Examples would be a busy airport or popular restaurant at lunch time. Environments with a **low load** might be a library reading room or a Japanese garden. According to Mehrabian, the higher the information load, the higher the anxiety, leading to discomfort and possibly anxiety. Those feelings are exacerbated by the presence of people we don't know, particularly if they are from a different culture. It's likely that most people would avoid whenever possible high load situations. From that perspective, encounters with strangers work best if carefully managed, with small numbers of conversants in a quiet setting.

Figure 6.1.2A: Crowded airport in Zurich, with a high load

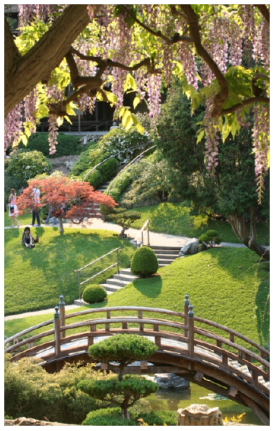

Figure 6.1.2B: Japanese garden, with a low load

Some cultures purposely create spaces with low information loads for particular purposes or cultural practices. Japanese gardens are intended to facilitate silent contemplation and meditation (Itoh, 1981). They feature carefully designed landscapes with flowing streams, rock formations, meandering walkways, and well-placed benches or other seating. The impression is one of informal natural beauty. In reality, everything in a Japanese garden is carefully planned out to create impressive views and perspectives. In contrast, the US "backyard" is a setting for socialization and sport. Typically, there will be an extensive lawn, well-maintained, allowing room for outdoor activities. This might be used for informal social gatherings, featuring meats cooked on the grill. The overall impression of an American backyard is of an environment created by man, while that of a Japanese garden is a harmonious blend of natural elements. There will clearly be a different dynamic at work in conversations held in an American backyard compared to a Japanese garden. In fact, a Japanese garden is more an invitation to silence (highly valued in that culture) than to conversation. The different spaces also point to contrasting views of the relationship between man and nature. Western culture tends to want to change and dominate nature. Asian cultures look to harmonize with nature.

Figure 6.1.3: A US backyard featuring games & socializing

Built environments and communication patterns

The design of **built environments**, such as private homes or office buildings also has a significant effect on communication. The traditional design of Japanese homes points to particular cultural norms and values, as well as typical communication patterns and practices in Japan. Because the Japanese believe in harmony with nature, traditionally Japanese homes are unobtrusively integrated into the landscape. The most important room, the sitting room, typically opens up onto the garden, with wide doors which can be opened to eliminate the barrier between house and garden. Often the garden offers its best views from the multiple open spaces along the outside of the house. One has the impression that the garden and the house flow into one another. The sitting room of a traditional Japanese family home is typically large and can be subdivided using semi-transparent screens called *shoji*. This allows considerable versatility, with divisions of the rooms easily changed. This modularity carries over to the traditional flooring of Japanese homes. Straw mats called *tatami* are used for sitting or sleeping. The flexibility in arranging living quarters accommodates the easy sub-division of space to allow for additional members of an extended family. It also enables creation of semi-private space as needed. In that way, it satisfies the need for social space for conversation as well as the possibility of withdrawal into silence and contemplation. Japanese society has changed significantly in recent decades, becoming less homogeneous and less traditional, under Westernizing influences. That has affected housing styles as well. Research has indicated however that the majority of Japanese still favor a traditional style (Ueda, 1998), with elements of traditional design typically incorporated into modern homes and office space whenever possible.

Figure 6.1.4: Japanese house in harmony with the surrounding garden

In contrast to the **semi-fixed featured space** of traditional Japanese homes, houses in Germany tend to favor **fixed-featured space** in which room divisions are permanent. These distinctions and terms were made by Edward Hall (1966) initially and are often used in descriptions of built environments. Germans tend to divide up space according to its function and to find and maintain an ordered space for all household objects and possessions. Important is that there be clear divisions, with the ability to close doors to

all rooms, secure windows with heavy shutters, and surround the garden with tall hedges, fences, or walls. The house design reflects cultural aspects of life in Germany. There tends to be a strong sense of orderliness in German society (reflecting the German saying *Ordnung muss sein* – order is a must), with a strict adherence to rules. In accordance with that respect for order, Germans expect commitments and promises to be kept. That includes agreements regarding appointments and meet-ups; Germans are punctual and expect others to be as well. That sense of order carries over to personal interactions. Germans seek clarity in relations with others, which is reflected in the careful differentiation of people with whom one uses a formal level of address (the formal you *Sie*) from those with whom one is informal (*du* form). In contrast to other cultures which also have formal and informal modes of address (French, Spanish), Germans tend to be more rigid and systematic in their use of those forms. It's not unusual for Germans to maintain the *Sie* form even with close work colleagues. The desire for clarity tends to lead Germans to use a very direct style of communication, with the reputation of being sometimes overly blunt, leading to charges of insensitivity.

Figure 6.1.5: Tall hedge surrounding house in Höfen, Germany

Greg Nees, in his cultural study of Germans (2000), draws a connection between the cultural theme of order and the design of space (see sidebar). These two examples illustrate the connection between environments and communication, but they by no means exhaust the options for living environments to be found in human cultures. Another option discussed by Hall is **informal space**, with no permanent divisions or walls. Informal space plays a major role in the everyday living experiences of people in Africa, parts of the Middle East, and rural areas world-wide, where outdoor space and non-permanent housing becomes an integral and vital aspect of work and family life. Living in a tent or in a communal space clearly can have a major impact on communication.

Close that door! You're in Germany

The mutual influences of clarity and order reinforce one another and help create a strong tendency toward com-partmentalization in all areas of their lives, for example, inside their dwellings. The open architecture typical of American houses and apartments in which the front door opens into the living room is not common. Walk into a traditional German home or apartment and you will usu-ally find yourself in a small, closed corridor, or Gang. This corridor provides access to the other rooms of the house or apartment, and the doors to these other rooms will gen-erally be closed. This configuration is considered order-ly...Doors remain closed in most German public and of-fice buildings, where a closed door does not mean a pri-vate meeting is taking place, but only that the door is closed as German notions of orderliness and clear bound-aries dictate (p. 48).

Privacy across Cultures

Although human beings are by nature social animals, we all also need time alone. The degree to which people seek and value solitude varies across cultures, as does the means and mechanisms for being alone. Knowing about norms and conventions regarding privacy can be important in encounters with others. The extent to which one's home is considered a private sphere, for example, can vary. In the US, guests invited over for a dinner party are likely to be given a "house tour" and be shown even intimate space such as a master bedroom. Guests will often congregate in the kitchen to converse while the host or hostess is preparing the meal. They are likely to be invited to help themselves to a drink from the family's refrigerator. The dinner party is likely to play out quite differently in other cultures. In the two environments discussed above, in Japan and Germany, guests are likely to see only the main rooms for guest entertaining. They will likely not be invited to roam freely throughout the house, or to use space designed for family use (except for the toilet). Guests are unlikely to socialize in the kitchen, which in both countries is a smaller space than is typical in the US. In both countries, that space is intended for the dedicated use of food preparation,

traditionally the domain of the housewife. The kitchen is not viewed in any case as an appropriate location for extended conversation. The informality of communication patterns in the US allows for great flexibility in where casual conversations can take place. In other cultures, more formal rules of etiquette and social interactions will limit the range of options. In Germany in particular, social space and interactions are carefully compartmentalized, with clear distinctions and divisions in place. Separating off one's garden with a hedge or fence, for example, signals that the space is reserved for family use.

Germany and Japan are densely populated countries in which privacy is particularly valued. There are different ways to achieve that privacy. Architectural scholar Jon Lang (1987) identified four types of privacy: a) **solitude**, in which one is free from observation by others; b) **intimacy**, or shared privacy; c) **anonymity**, going unnoticed by others especially in a crowd; and d) **reserve**, in which one uses psychological means to create imagined isolation. Living in Tokyo (or other large metropolitan areas), office workers on the morning commute are likely to seek "anonymity" in crowded buses or subway cars. Once at the office, they may use "reserve", the only means of achieving privacy in a cubicled office environment. Once back home, the office worker might seek "solitude" in a specifically Japanese cultural way, by retreating into the bathroom. In Japanese houses, the bathroom is separated from the toilet and typically consists of two distinct areas, one for bathing (using a shower and soap) and one for soaking (the tub). The space is kept absolutely clean and made as attractive as possible, with the soaking water often scented with flowers or lemons. It can be a place for private relaxation and meditation.

Figure 6.1.6: Wireless toilet control panel in Japan

The toilet offers the worker another opportunity for privacy, a valued commodity in a culture that places high value on social harmony, consensus building, and teamwork, all activities calling for contact with others. The toilet itself points to another key aspect of contemporary Japanese culture, the fascination with gadgets and electronics. Many Japanese toilets are high-tech, with a sophisticated control panel allowing for seat warming, massaging, and cleansing sprays. It may also play sounds and music. Soft music may help in relaxation and contemplation, while louder sounds may mask from others the personal activity occurring. That latter feature demonstrates that even in the search for privacy, Japanese tend to take into consideration those around them. Privacy in such a culture is fleeting, and therefore is all the more sought and cherished.

Naked? "This is Brazil. No one cares"

When I lived in Brazil, I was on the Amazon river...The environment clearly interacted with everyday life. Daily temperatures were usually in the 90s and 100s F. [35-40 C.], with a very high humidity. When you show up at someone’s home, they offer you a shower instead of a drink. You take off your clothes, hop in the shower to cool down (but never after eating, because faz mal [“it harms you”]), then put on the same clothes. One time, I went to the shared shower-shed between the houses in the housing area (a wooden shed with a garden hose hanging down). There was a wood plank missing. I went back and asked my host, “What do you wear to shower here?” He laughed and said, “Nothing, of course!” “But there’s a board missing,” I said. “John,” he replied—“this is Brazil. No one cares.” This leads to the notion that, because of climate and social factors, the notion of modesty was also quite different...Many of my friends thought nothing of using my cologne, my toothpaste., even my toothbrush...Because of crowdedness, especially among the working classes, privacy is conceptualized differently. If I stayed at

a friend’s house, I would expect to bring my own hammock and string it across the living room—often with other family members

Baldwin, 2008

Notions of privacy are related to the sense of private ownership, which can also differ markedly across cultures. In the US, with a strong tradition of individualism and private ownership rights, mainstream cultural norms include sharp divisions between one's own possessions and those of others, including in a family environment. In other cultures, there are traditions of sharing and communal ownership, such as in Native American co-cultures. John Baldwin, a US scholar of intercultural communication recounts his personal experiences of privacy and attitudes towards personal possessions while living in Brazil (see sidebar). Brazil has a great variety of living spaces, with immense differences between life in the Amazonian rain forest and in major metropolitan areas like Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo. One of the indigenous tribes are the Mehinaku Indians. They live in communal villages with no privacy. Their huts house families of ten or twelve people. They have no windows or internal walls, and have doors that open unto an open area that is in constant view. The family members sleep in hammocks, suspended from a common house pole. According to anthropologist, Thomas Gregor (1980), "Each individual's whereabouts and activities are generally known to his relatives and often to the community as a whole. A Mehinaku has little chance of staying out of the public eye for any length of time" (p. 67). To be alone, villagers have only one option, to leave the village.

Figure 6.1.7: Xavante villagers in Brazil

Cultural Spaces

There is clearly a connection between the spaces humans inhabit and the cultural practices which take place there. Living in an Amazonian village will dictate behaviors and communication patterns quite different from those in an urban environment such as Paris. Donald Carbaugh (1999) describes the practice of "listening" (silent contemplation and meditation) of the Native American Blackfeet tribe in sacred locations or inspired by certain sky conditions or landscapes. The practice illustrates the Indian sense of connectedness of humans and all of life with nature. Non-Indians are not likely to have the equivalent experiences in the same physical setting (see sidebar). Thus, individuals and groups may experience the same physical space very differently. Paris, for tourists, is a place of wonder and discovery. For inhabitants of the Parisian suburbs (*banlieux* in French), where many Muslim immigrants live in crime-ridden high-rise apartment buildings, Paris might have a very different meaning, suggesting a life of poverty and hopelessness. For business people, Paris represents a center of commerce and economic opportunity. In recent years, Paris has served as a place for terrorists to engage in brutal attacks for maximum visibility.

Don't eat lunch there – it's sacred

Recent discourse and culture studies have reminded us how intimately cultural worlds and discursive practices indeed are… Without knowing the place, we are unsure how to act. Discourses of place thus suggest cultural actions, yet any one place might suggest multiple cultural discourses. We may think we know something, through a discourse, get this knowing may be somewhat out of its cultural place, as when one ascends a small hill for lunch, only to find later that one's lunch site is a secret burial mound. In retrospect, we find our habitual action and cultural knowledge are somehow out of place.

Carbaugh, 1999, p.251

The example of Paris reminds us of the complexity of modern urban spaces. Villages and rural spaces tend to be monocultural, an environment in which strangers are infrequently encountered and can be ignored (see Rogers & Steinfatt, 1998). With the advent of the industrial age, beginning in 18th century England, there's been a major demographic shift in many countries, as rural inhabitants move to cities to find employment and more opportunities for themselves and their families. In the process, cities have absorbed groups representing a variety of cultural backgrounds. In the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ethnic or racial neighborhoods were created with inhabitants living largely separated from mainstream communities. These neighborhoods and ghettos were often created through segregation, not through the wishes of the group members. In San Francisco, for example, racial politics isolated Chinese immigrants within Chinatown:

> *The sense of being physically sealed within the boundaries of Chinatown was impressed on the few immigrants coming into the settlement by frequent stonings which occurred as they came up Washington or Clay Street from the piers. It was perpetuated by attacks of white toughs in the adjacent North Beach area and down- town around Union Square, who amused themselves by beating Chinese who came into these areas (Nee & Nee, 1974, p. 60).*

Patterns of discrimination and separation have persisted in the US, with African-Americans, Hispanics, and other cocultures concentrated in particular neighborhoods. That process occurs worldwide. In Europe, Turkish communities occupy particular districts in German cities, as do North Africans in French cities. This dynamic can vary with the particular ethnic group and city.

Martin and Nakayama (2010) discuss the concept of "postmodern cultural spaces" in which city neighborhoods and boundaries in many places are becoming more flexible and fluid (see sidebar). This kind of fluidity stands in contrast to the traditional notions of fixed space and time, just as online communities today, too, challenge notions of fixed terrestrial and temporal boundaries. In the process, identities have become more complex, as we navigate discourses in different locations and contexts, both physical and virtual.

Polish-Americans today in Phoenix, Arizona

The ideology of fixed spaces and categories is currently being challenged by postmodernist notions of space and location. Phoenix, for example, which became a city relatively recently, has no Chinatown, or Japantown, or Koreatown, no Irish district, or Polish neighborhood, or Italian area. Instead, people of Polish descent, for example, might live anywhere in the metropolitan area but congregate for special occasions or for specific reasons. On Sundays, the Polish Catholic Mass draws many people from throughout Phoenix. When people want to buy Polish breads and pastries, they can go to the Polish bakery and also speak Polish there. Ethnic identity is only one of several identities that these people negotiate. When they desire recognition and interaction based on their Polish heritage, they can meet that wish. When they seek other forms of identification, they can go to placs where they can be Phoenix Suns fans, or community volunteers, and so on. Ethnic identity is neither the sole factor nor necessarily the most important one at all times in their lives.

Martin and Nakayama (2010), p. 296

The cultural space we experience growing up typically has a marked influence on our personal identities. We all start somewhere and the local and regional characteristics of that locale imprint on us in profound ways. The regional accent or dialect will likely stay with us, even if just as a family or emotional linguistic resource. I never knew a colleague of mine was from Long Island, New York, until I heard him talk to members of his family, when the neutral US East Coast English yielded to a strong Long Island accent. That accent reappeared later when I overheard him in an angry conversation in his office. Our tastes in food and drink may be shaped by our initial home base, as are other values, habits, and preferences. The house or apartment in which we live initially is likely to leave cultural resonances which relate to privacy, orderliness, cleanliness, and personal space orientation. Many of these values relate to socio-economic class – how neatly we want (or can afford to) maintain the house/furniture/garden/car.

The initial cultural space makes a mark but does not define us – as we grow we encounter overlapping cultural spaces which provide different perspectives and subject positions. This will affect the language we use:

> *A cultural space is not simply a particular location that has culturally constructed meanings. It can also be a metaphorical place from which we communicate. We can speak from a number of social locations, marked on the 'map of society,' that give added*

> *meaning to our communication. Thus, we may speak as parents, children, colleagues, siblings, customers, Nebraskans, and a myriad of other 'places.' All of these are cultural spaces (Martin and Nakayama, 2010, p. 287).*

Today, the cyberspaces we visit or inhabit provide still another layer of space and discourse.

Car and Driving Behavior in a Cultural Context

When we talk about human living spaces today, one of those difficult to ignore is the automobile. Most of us spend large blocks of time driving or riding in the car. Anyone who has done much traveling outside one's home country has likely been struck by the difference in car cultures, driving behaviors, and traffic patterns. In the US and the UK, for example, drivers generally follow traffic rules and drive in an orderly and predictable way. In other countries, such as Nigeria, traffic regulations are largely ignored. In that country, as well as in others in Africa, cars must compete for space on the road with vehicles of all kinds in addition to pedestrians and street hawkers. In India, cows roam freely over roads, including on the Indian equivalent of major, divided highways.

As is the case in schools and businesses, driving behaviors often reflect aspects of national cultures. North American and German drivers, for example, will assume that they have the freedom and the individual right to claim the right-of-way if traffic rules allot it to them. They are likely to be upset if others do not respect that right and go out of turn or cut them off. The pattern of driving behavior in cultures deemed collectivistic is quite different. In China and India, for example, drivers behave in a very different fashion, allowing others to merge or turn, even if that goes counter to the right of way or to traffic regulations. For those used to Western patterns of driving, the seemly chaotic flow and merge of traffic in India may seem inexplicable and dangerous. Yet in India, it is a functional chaos which actually does have informal rules of order. Precedence is given by size of vehicle, with pedestrians yielding to bikes and carts, bikes and carts to cars, cars to buses, and buses to trucks.

Figure 6.1.8: Road traffic in India - functional chaos.

It's not just how we drive that may be different, but as well what it is we use our cars for. Europeans in general see cars as a dedicated means of transportation and when driving focus exclusively on that activity, with the goal of getting from A to B as quickly as possible. US Americans, on the other hand, see their cars as extensions of their personal living space and as an appropriate location in which to carry out all kinds of everyday activities, from eating/drinking to dating. In the US, drive-throughs are available for all kinds of activities, from picking up medications at a pharmacy to getting married (in Las Vegas). Edward Hall commented in *Hidden Dimensions* (1966) on the size of American automobiles, contrasting it with French cars:

> *The French automobile is designed in response to French needs. Its small size used to be attributed to a lower standard of living and higher costs of materials; and while there can be no doubt but that cost is a factor, it would be naive to assume that it was the major factor. The automobile is just as much an expression of the culture as is the language and, therefore, has its characteristic niche in the cultural biotope. Changes in the car will*

> *reflect and be reflected in changes elsewhere. If the French drove American cars, they would be forced to give up many ways of dealing with space which they hold quite dear. The traffic along the Champs-Elysées and around the Arc de Triomphe is a cross between the New Jersey Turnpike on a sunny Sunday afternoon and the Indianapolis Speedway. With American-size autos, it would be mass suicide (p. 145).*

Today, globalization has affected the automobile industry, as it has all others. The same kind of cars are sold and driven all over the world, and their national prominence is difficult to determine, as parts typically come from suppliers in multiple countries, with manufacturing plants also spread worldwide.

Time orientation

Cultures use and divide up space in different ways. This is true of time as well. The different perceptions of time, such as the importance of punctuality, can be a source of friction in intercultural encounters. Edward Hall (1959) distinguished between **monochronic** and **polychronic** orientations to time. In the former, time is carefully regulated and highly compartmentalized, with schedules and punctuality being stressed. So-called "M-time" (monochronic) oriented individuals prefer to perform one activity at a time and prioritize keeping to a schedule. Tardiness and missed appointments are a source of anxiety. Time is seen as a limited commodity. The needs of people are subservient to the demands of time. Plans are not easily changed. People live by an external clock.

Those growing up in a culture with a monochronic time orientation are likely to see this view of time as natural and universal. In fact, it is culturally determined and learned. In such cultures, like the US or Germany, children are taught early, at home and in school, the importance of time, scheduling, and promptness. In polychronic time oriented cultures, however, the attitudes towards time are very different. Representative cultures include southern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Schedules are less important, and punctuality is not considered an essential virtue. "P-timers" are used to having more than one activity or conversation going on at the same time. Individuals are more tolerant of interruptions and going beyond scheduled time. Time is bent to meet the needs of people, with the attitude that there is always more time. Consequently, plans are fluid. People live by an internal clock. Greater importance is placed on the natural progress of conversations than in keeping to a pre-arranged schedule. Life is lived in the moment, not in relation to a schedule. Because multiple activities and conversations going on simultaneously is an accepted part of P-time culture, space is often designed accordingly, with large common spaces. In M-time cultures, it's more likely that office or government buildings will be constructed with individual private offices. In those smaller spaces, more restricted conversations are likely.

6.2: Professional and Institutional Contexts

Business and organizational contexts

Different perceptions of time, in particular scheduling and punctuality, can be important factors in international business. Differences in time perception can also affect negotiations of agreements or contracts. Business people from M-time cultures are likely to have pre-determined deadlines, either fixed mentally or in writing. This may be problematic if dealing with a P-time culture in which negotiations are seen as taking whatever time is needed for completion. There are likely to be significant differences among business cultures in the framework for negotiating or building business relationships. In low-context cultures, like northern Europe, the businesses are likely to have a preference for beginning substantive conversations immediately. In other cultures, especially in high-context cultures, such as China, the Middle East, or Latin America, there may be a desire to establish first a personal relationship between the parties involved, before beginning serious business conversations. This might involve informal "small talk" unconnected to business or getting together socially, for a meal or drinks. Only after confidence in the other party, along with a certain degree of familiarity, are established will a business relationship be possible.

In general, business and other professional cultures mirror the values and behaviors of the mainstream culture of the country. In high power distance cultures, hierarchies are expected and accepted, with clear divisions and privileges accorded to individuals depending on their social rank, status, or background. This will typically be reflected in the business culture, which will be status conscious with top-down communications and decision-making. In contrast, in small power distance cultures, like the US, there's likely to be a more participatory style of management, with employees being asked their opinion on work-related issues. Communication styles used in business transactions mirror as well predominate patterns in the culture at large. Business people from India and the US, for example, are likely to use quite different verbal styles. The US representatives are likely to be direct, addressing issues forthrightly. If there is a problem or contentious issue, the Americans will expect an open and detailed discussion. Indians might well be more circumspect, preferring an indirect style in which disagreements are glossed over or postponed for discussion at a later time.

Within businesses or other organizations there is likely to be a system of shared values which determine how people behave within the organization. This "organizational culture" reflects the culture at large, but at the same time may vary depending on the type and size of the organization, the location of its home-office, and the type of activity business in which they engage. The organizational culture of a small NGO (non-governmental organization) will likely be quite different from that of a large multinational company. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) developed a framework for characterizing organizational cultures, based on a large-scale survey involving employees from 43 countries. The model of cultural differences they developed has five dimensions for how people interact, plus one dealing with time (sequential versus synchronic) and one dealing with the environment (interior versus exterior control):

Individualism versus communitarianism

Generally, communitarian organizations make decisions through group consensus, with more attention paid to teamwork and social cohesiveness. Organizations from individualistic cultures, on the other hand seek out and reward individual performance and high achievers.

Universalism versus particularism

Universalists deploy the same ideas and practices everywhere, while particularists adjust to context and circumstances. Organizational cultures with high particularism such as China place a greater emphasis on developing relationships.

Neutral versus emotional

Neutral cultures hold emotions in check (in Japan, for example), while high emotion cultures (Mexico, Israel) expect emotions to be displayed openly and fully, including in business contexts.

Specific versus diffuse

This dimension deals with the question of whether organizational roles and titles continue to play out on the outside (high-diffuse cultures) or whether individuals are treated differently in public and private spheres (specific cultures). See the sidebar for an example.

Achievement versus ascription

In ascription cultures, respect and success may be accorded based on birth or kinship, while in achievement cultures, the basis for judgment is hard work and individual success.

As always with such broad categories, these too need to be viewed as patterns, not absolutes. Organizations may well embrace different values from the surrounding cultures for a variety of reasons, such as marketing (counter-cultural hipness), the personal views of the owners (fundamentalist Christian values) or due to the size or diversity of the organizational members. The effects of globalization have had a varied impact on organizational cultures. In some instances national or regional organizational cultures have converged with Anglo-American practices, while in other cases forces of nationalism and independence (patriotism, historical traditions, economic self-sufficiency, political considerations) result in a rejection of imported organizational ideas and practices.

"Herr Professor Doktor Schmidt" or "Bob"?

An example of these specific and diffuse cultural dimensions is provided by the United States and Germany. A U.S. professor, such as Robert Smith, PhD, generally would be called “Doctor Smith” by students when at his U.S. university. When shopping, however, he might be referred to by the store clerk as “Bob,” and he might even ask the clerk’s advice regarding some of his intended purchases. When golfing, Bob might just be one of the guys, even to a golf partner who happens to be a graduate student in his department. The reason for these changes in status is that, with the specific U.S. cultural values, people have large public spaces and often conduct themselves differently depending on their public role. At the same time, however, Bob has private space that is off-limits to the students who must call him “Doctor Smith” in class. In high-diffuse cultures, on the other hand, a person’s public life and private life often are similar. Therefore, in Germany, Herr Professor Doktor Schmidt would be referred to that way at the university, local market, and bowling alley—and even his wife might address him formally in public.

Luthans & Doh (2012), pp. 126–127

Equity and ethics

An area where divergence is evident is in the role and treatment of women in professional settings. Some cultures, maintain the traditional roles of women as housewives and mothers, with women working predominantly in "nurturing" professions such as healthcare and education. Worldwide, women are underrepresented in leadership and management roles in both the business and political arenas. In some countries, this is recognized as a major problem, given the injustice of the situation and the practical result of eliminating half the population from consideration for playing important societal roles. Entrenched centers of power ("old boys networks") tend to perpetuate the status quo. In some European countries, this has led to legislation which institutes quotas for women in positions of authority, such as members of the legislature or on corporate governing boards.

Figure 6.2.1: Women in leadership roles is rarely seen in many cultures.

Some issues of equality and ethical behavior in professional interactions may be settled by law. Many more, however, are not legislated, but are the products of custom and tradition, and are regulated informally within communities. One practice which differs across cultures is gift giving in business settings. In many cultures, it is an accepted and expected behavior to offer or exchange gifts. This may be a token gift of little monetary value, such as a branded or traditional item or culinary specialty from one's home country or region. Difficulties might arise if items have unintended cultural values in the other's home culture, such as a symbolic value attached to a color, number, item of clothing, or food. Certain items may run counter to cultural taboos — a bottle of wine, for example, or a food item containing pork or beef. Including gifts for family members may be seen as a friendly attempt at building a relationship, but could run into difficulty if cultural norms see family members as a private sphere, not to be brought in to interactions with strangers.

Potentially more problematic are situations in which expectations go beyond simple gift giving to receiving bribes. In some parts of the world, giving and receiving bribes is a normal part of conducting business, as it is a fact of everyday life for inhabitants of that country. Foreign business people may run into difficulties in this area for a number of reasons. They may be personally and ethically opposed to bribery, seeing it as a form of corruption that rewards those already privileged in the society. Even if they want to pay, it may be difficult to negotiate a reasonable amount if one is not conversant with the local norms and practices. Payment of bribes may also not be permitted by company policy or may be forbidden by law. US business people, for example, must observe the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977.

On the other hand, large, powerful multinational corporation's may not act fairly when conducting business in foreign countries. US companies have been especially guilty of exploiting workers and resources in developing economies. While especially egregious cases occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries by fruit companies doing business in Latin America, today Western companies continue to exploit workers in garment, electronics, and other industries. The US government itself has been guilty of fostering projects that enrich the wealthy rather than helping the poor. Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) catalog how many USID projects of the 20th century fit that pattern. In fact, the recognition of the need for greater cross-cultural understanding on the part of employees of the US Department of State. Sustainable development projects can only be successful if they take into account local cultural values and social structures.

The Importance of Names

An important issue in establishing good relations cross-culturally is to use appropriate forms of address. This is as prominent an issue in business and professional settings as it is in personal relationships. In the US, informality guides modes of address. In university settings, sometimes students are invited to address their professors using first names. In business, it is not uncommon for subordinates to be on a first name basis with their bosses. In setting up new business relationships, US business people are likely to prefer moving to a first name basis as quickly as possible. That may be considered inappropriate and discourteous in other cultures. There may be an expectation not only to use a more formal mode of address, but also to include titles or honorifics, as appropriate. Mexicans, for example, make heavy use of honorific titles to show respect. New acquaintances met at a party are addressed as *señor*, *señora*, and *señorita*. In business, people address managers with titles like director, doctor, *ingeniero* (engineer), or *licienciado* (someone who has a higher education degree).

Pronouncing the counterpart's name correctly can be important as well. That might prove problematic depending on ones knowledge of the language involved. That's likely to be the case for honorifics as well, especially in cultures such as Korea. Getting the name right might be difficult in countries like Russia, where names are grammatically inflected, along with all nouns, and where patronymics are widely used. The knowledge of the language of one's business partner can of course be crucially important, depending on the linguistic ability of the partner, as well as the availability of a *lingua franca* such as English.

How one addresses counterparts and, in fact, how the relationship develops may relate to both the formality of a given culture and the degree of importance of social hierarchies, i.e. the extent to which it is a high power distance culture. In cultures that subscribe to a hierarchical view of social status, status is normally ascribed by birth, appointment, or age. Differences in status are made obvious through protocols that govern many interpersonal and organizational activities. In a business setting, problematic relations can quickly develop if the participants adhere to conflicting views on egalitarianism and hierarchy. The behaviors and actions of representatives from hierarchical cultures are frequently dictated by culture-bound rules relating to status. Recognizing the possible differences in this area can be crucially important in establishing effective relationships.

Communicative genres

The particular context and environment in which human speech occurs may determine parameters of what is said and how it is expressed. For particular occasions in a given location there may be culturally specific expectations for the language used, as well as for other actions, such as dress, affects displays, or body language. Günthner (2007) lists a number of such communicative genres in a range of situations from complaints and prayers to business negotiations and university lectures. In some contexts, there are conventional pre-patterned forms of language and behavior expected, which guide interactants' expectations. Communicative genres are “historically and culturally specific conventions and ideals according to which speakers compose talk or texts and recipients interpret it“ (Günthner, 2007, p. 129). They operate as orientation frames which limit the kind of speech used, helping speaker and audience by defining expectations and limiting interpretive possibilities. There may be situations which call for a particular genre. Kotthoff (1991) gives the example of toasts in Caucasian Georgia which use a limited canon of topics: "peace, the guests, the parents, the dead, the children, friendship, love, the women whose beauty embellishes the table" (p. 251). Foreigners unaware of the limited canon could cause in embarrassment to themselves and to their hosts by venturing outside that canon.

Communicative genres are particularly salient in professional and institutional settings. Miller (1994) discusses business meetings from this perspective. For US business people, meetings are "thought to be the appropriate place in which to persuade people or try to change their minds" (p. 224). This is the venue for making business decisions and closing deals. Miller points out that this is quite different for what Japanese business people consider to be the purpose of meetings. For them consensus is reached before the actual meeting, through informal discussions, often taking place at bars or cafes. The meeting's purpose is to express formal acceptance of the results of the negotiations, decided on beforehand. Similarly, Li (1999) found that frustration between Chinese and Western European business people derived from different approaches to the genre of conducting business negotiations. For the Chinese, developing good interpersonal relationships was vital, while for the Europeans moving quickly and directly to negotiations was central. Not being aware of the different repertoires and expectations for a given communicative genre can generate misunderstandings or conflict.

Aboriginals in court: An unfamiliar communicative genre

> Non-Aboriginal Australians are not familiar with the pronunciations, lexical and grammatical choices, and discourse and pragmatic conventions of Aboriginal Australians and the latter are unfamiliar with the conventions obtaining in mainstream institutions such as the court...The state imposes Standard English and there is a widely shared language ideology that Standard English is the ‘natural’ way of expressing oneself before a court. Coupled with Aboriginal people’s frequent ignorance of Standard English, this language ideology means that Aboriginal people before the law are oftentimes effectively barred from giving evidence, from presenting their character in a clear and detailed way, and generally from engaging in court proceedings as a meaningful interaction.
>
> Pillar (2017, p. 91)

Günthner (2007) points out that cultural differences in genre related knowledge can have particularly unfortunate consequences if they their occur in "gate-keeping" institutional settings, for example, in education, healthcare, or legal matters. Scollon and Scollon (1981) provide examples of courtroom interactions in Alaska in which jail sentences are considerably longer for Alaskan Natives that for Whites. In studying court testimony, the authors found that Native Alaskans failed — in contrast to white defendants — to speak of positive plans for the future. This, however, is an expected behavior in US courts, namely that defendants commit themselves to self-improvement and social betterment. Pillar (2017) found a similar situation in relation to aboriginals in Australia (see sidebar).

Translation and interpretation

Issues of intercultural communication are likely to be raised in all professional contexts. In health care and legal environments, effective communication between parties can be of life or death importance. In both of these areas, translators and interpreters play major roles. Interpreters are concerned with spoken language, translators focus on the written word. While **simultaneous interpreting** (translated in tandem with the speaker) is used widely in international meetings or conferences, more common in work environments is **sequential translation**. This involves short translations after the speaker pauses. This is what is used most commonly in law courts and hospitals. In some healthcare contacts, as well as in other environments, **chuchotage** may be used, in which the interpreter whispers simultaneous translation to a single client.

Figure 6.2.2: An interpreter for chess player Garry Kasparov using chuchotage

Interpreters and translators typically translate into their mother tongue. Even so, the process is complex and difficult. One must not only remain faithful in terms of content, but is expected as well to invoke the same emotional response. This is difficult for interpreters who are asked to work impartially for two parties. The goal is to provide **pragmatic equivalence** in which the utterance is re-created with all the nuances of the source. This might involve departing substantially from the literal wording of the original. It necessitates on the part of the interpreter significant knowledge of how both languages are used in real conversations, i.e. a good command of language pragmatics.

There are ethical issues that arise in interpreting, namely to the extent that one functions as an advocate for a given client. Although impartiality is expected of court interpreters, the power, language, and culture divisions between a non-native client and the justice system make it difficult to work objectively, and not to offer clarifying or justifying insertions or asides. This might be all the more an issue with clients who are poor and illiterate, therefore unlikely to be able to express themselves effectively, even in their native language.

Another temptation for interpreters is to serve in the role of **institutional gatekeepers**. This is especially the case in health care, where the interpreter might use his/her own judgment in not passing on to the physician all the information supplied by the client, viewing some statements as irrelevant. Professional training is needed to be able to carry out roles in legal and health care interpreting effectively. Unfortunately, in many cases the scarcity of professional interpreters leads to the use of untrained native speakers.

Education

In many countries, schools have become more diverse in their student populations, resulting in the need for intercultural communication competence among teachers and staff. Like business establishments, educational facilities reflect the cultures in which they are located. Prejudices and discrimination all too frequently follow children into the classroom. Children soak up cultural values around them and that includes the negative stereotypes they might hear from family members or other adults. The same kind of potential conflicts which may arise from mixing different ethnic, racial, religious groups in the culture at large can occur in schools as well. Since prejudices are formed early in life, it is important to counteract hatred and hostility in school environments.

In multicultural classrooms, there is likely to be a mix of learning styles. Among educational theorists it's well-known that each student may have a preferred learning style, whether that be visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Those learning styles may be culturally influenced. Particular characterizations are often associated with ethnic or national groups. Asian students, for example, are said to rely on rote memorization, exhibit passive behavior in the classroom, and be extrinsically motivated. Western learning, by contrast, tends to be learner-oriented, with an emphasis on the development of learner autonomy and on active, even assertive learning behaviors in the classroom. Often, these descriptions favor Western approaches to education and classroom behavior. Active learning is generally seen as preferable, with students pro-actively engaged in learning, through volunteering to answer questions or entering into dialogue with teacher and peers. Being quiet or reserved is seen as problematic (Hua, 2013). An additional dynamic in multicultural classrooms is the power differential between native and non-native speakers of the language of instruction. It is problematic to view generalizations about learning styles as applicable to every individual student. This results in students from minority/immigrant communities or non-native speakers being automatically relegated to an underachieving status and treated accordingly.

Figure 6.2.3: Multicultural school group in Paris

An example in which a perceived Western educational practice has become normative is Kaplan's description of rhetorical styles. His mapping of how different ethnic groups write essays looks like this:

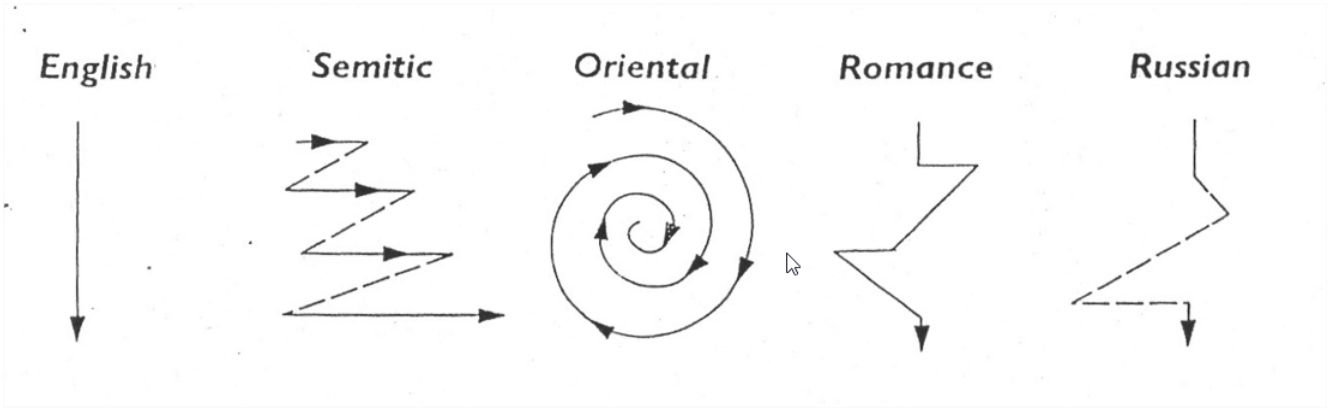

Figure 6.2.1: Kaplan's description of rhetorical styles. Kaplan (1966), p. 14

The Anglo-Saxon English approach is to get straight to the point, while Semitics zigzag, those from Romance and Russian languages go on tangents, and "Orientals" circle around the point. The characterizations are problematic for a variety of reasons, not just due to the inherent cultural caricatures. Kaplan draws his conclusions from essays written by ESL students in an academic setting, written in their second language. One analysis gives this summary:

> *[Kaplan's descriptions] implicitly reinforced an image of the superiority of English rhetoric and a deterministic view of second language (particularly English) learners as individuals who inevitably transfer rhetorical patterns of their L1 in L2 writing. Furthermore, the binary images of rhetoric constructed by the field, i.e., English is linear, direct, and logical whereas other languages are circular, digressive, or non-logical, parallel colonial dichotomies between the colonizer and the colonized (Pennycook, 1998), suggesting the hidden political or ideological nature of the conventional knowledge created by contrastive rhetoric (Kubota & Lehner, 2004, p. 9).*

It happens seemingly inevitably that theories on cultural difference originating with Western scholars favor explicitly or implicitly Western approaches and behaviors.

One of the conflicts which may arise in multicultural classrooms comes from parents of immigrant or minority communities who have views of teaching and learning different from the mainstream culture and therefore in conflict with how instruction is configured in schools. In some cases, there may be excessive pressure from parents for the children to achieve academically, with expectations that students spend all their free time studying, so as to perform well on exams. That behavior in the US is often associated with Asian-American families. At the other extreme are parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who themselves had scant or negative school experiences and who don't convey to their children the importance of doing well in school. Remland et al. (2015) gives the example of a Cambodian-American family in which the parents view the teacher as parental substitutes and therefore find it inappropriate for themselves to play an active role in school affairs. She mentions the role as well that religion may play in such a case. As Khmer Buddhists, the Cambodian family likely sees fate as a guiding principle in human development, thus making it superfluous for children to exert undue efforts to better themselves through study. In such a situation, teachers need to gain the knowledge and sensitivity to understand the issues arising and shape communicative strategies with the family accordingly.

6.3: Technically Speaking - Professional discourse and privacy online

The rapid rise of the Internet, with the new communication possibilities it enables, has wrought changes in how professional communication and business interactions occur. The ubiquitous availability of free or low-cost communication through the internet has in some areas leveled the playing field among competing businesses. It has also changed dramatically some branches of business and commerce. Physical music stores have gone out of business through the competition in price, selection, and convenience of digital music. A similar process is playing out with movies. Amazon has put many book stores out of business. The internet has also allowed all kinds of businesses to outsource their labor pool or their customer relations. The Internet changes not only how products and services are sold and provided, it also radically changes how companies communicate with their customers. The affordances of the Internet have led to the expectation of greater transparency on the part of companies. It also leads to the need for fast responses to developing situations. Bad reviews or negative news stories can spread rapidly, leading to the need for companies to keep tabs on social media and popular web sites, in order to have a rapid response to counteract bad publicity. Companies routinely have a presence on the web and in social media, in order to provide information, build customer relations, and provide a channel for their own take on reports and stories.

The important role that digital communications plays today in all branches of business and other professions has led to new job and advancement opportunities for those skilled in social media and online communication. It has also led to changes in the nature of business communication. Both internal and external communication is now done digitally. This change in communication mode has brought about a change in communication style. Communications on the internet tend to be more informal and unstructured than is the case with traditional business communications such as an exchange of letters. The dominant style on the internet is closer to the nature of oral rather than written communication. That style invites greater informality, along with a greater degree of freedom of expression. In some cultures, this might not signal a significant change, but it can mean a quite different dynamic in countries where communication tends to be more stylized and formal, with well-entrenched rules or traditions for personal and business interactions. Communication on the internet brings with it a sense of anonymity which tends to equalize social status. Junior executives may feel empowered through internet communications to bypass traditional approaches or barriers to communication with higher-ups. In some cases this could lead to a change not only in communication but also in corporate culture. In places like India the Internet may become a kind of equalizer since it is hard to assess a person’s status, rank, credibility, or caste membership online.

Just as the internet has made public much of what happens in corporations, it has done the same for individuals, namely making much of what happens in our lives knowable by anyone with internet access. This lack of privacy has become a serious issue in many parts of the world, in some countries more than in others. In has been a big concern in many European countries. There is an EU regulation that Europeans have the "right to be forgotten" on the Internet. This provides the opportunity for citizens to submit requests to operators of search engines (principally Google) to have items removed from searches. There is a similar regulation in Argentina. Many people are likely to have a lot of personal information show up in internet searches. That can come from a variety of sources, such as posts on social media, photos submitted to sharing sites, official transactions such as court proceedings or real estate transactions, reports on participation in clubs, sports or other free time activities, written assignments from school or university classes, etc. In some cases one would likely prefer to have some of that information not shared, especially in cases where we do not appear in the most flattering light. Employers are now often conducting a Google search on job applicants, so that internet rants or naked pics might prove problematic. It's good to be aware of the fact that your identity in today's world is increasingly being created by your online activities.

6.4: Contextualizing Intercultural Communication (Summary)

From theory to practice...

Here are some considerations in respect to communication in different environmental and professional contexts:

- *Adjust your language and communication style to the environment in which you are located.* In familiar settings, this is likely something you do automatically – speaking informally with friends over lunch, while using a more formal style in responding to a professor in the classroom. However, in unfamiliar settings, this may not come as easily. Heightened cultural sensitivity is especially needed in sites of significant cultural importance – places of worship, monuments. Speaking loud in a hallowed space, like the top of a holy mountain is inappropriate, as is snapping selfies of yourself naked.
- *Beware of pragmatic transfer in speaking in formal settings.* In most business and professional situations in many parts of the world, a more formal language register is expected. This means not only using formal modes of address and typical politeness formulas, but also watching out, if you are not speaking your native language, for keeping the formulation of "speech acts" (like greetings or leave-taking) in line with cultural norms. We often will instinctively translate word for word set phrases we use all the time, but that can sometimes cause miscommunication or awkwardness.

For discussion and reflection...

Time and speed in cultural contexts

After watching Honoré's "In praise of slowness" and Zimbardo's "Psychology of time"...

- What is your assessment of the concepts of time and speed presented in the videos? How does time effect your life (in terms of relationship building, work, school)? What do you make of the "slow" movement? Are you aware of schools or companies "slowing time" or enabling more free time? Comment on experiences you have had related to concepts/traditions of space and time across cultures

Alternative approaches to built spaces

After watching the videos on space and architecture by Kéré, Hardy, and Phillips...:

- Are we victims of "groupthink" and conformity in terms of housing design? How do you assess the importance of using traditional building materials? How does living in the communities discussed in the videos effect the way of life and cultural values and behaviors? How do you think the design of the 2 schools discussed, the "Green School" in Bali and the Gando school in Burkina Faso may effect learning experiences of students? What are your experiences, if any, with cultures having different kinds of living arrangements, housing, bathroom cultures?

International businesses

- Comment on experiences you have had related to international business, for example, different kinds of consumer practices, changes that US companies make in selling abroad (i.e., McDonalds, Wal-Mart)

Key terms

- **Built environment**: Adaptations to the terrestrial environment, including architecture, housing, lighting, and landscaping
- **Chuchotage**: Form of interpreting in which the interpreter stands or sits alongside a small target audience and whispers a simultaneous interpretation of what's being said; the term chuchotage is French for whispering
- **Consecutive interpreting**: Interpreters wait for the speaker to pause before interpreting; the interpreter may interpret after every sentence, or may take notes and then interpret several minutes of speech at once
- **Environmental context**: The geographical and psychological location of communication within some cultural context
- **Fixed-feature space**: Space bounded by immovable or permanent fixtures, such as walls
- **Gatekeeping:** The process through which information is filtered for transmission or dissemination
- **Guanxi**: Chinese for relationship or connection, refers to the importance of personalized networks of influence in the Chinese business community
- **High load**: A situation with a high information rate
- **Informal space**: Space defined by the movement of the interactants
- **Information rate**: The amount of information contained or perceived in the physical environment per some unit of time
- **Low load:** A situation with a low information rate

- **Monochronic time orientation**: Cultural temporal orientation that stresses the compartmentalization and segmentation of measurable units of time
- **Monochronic time orientation**: Time as linear, progressive, and being capable of being compartmentalized
- **Organizational culture**: An organized pattern of values, beliefs, behaviors, and communication channels held by the members of an organization
- **Polychronic time orientation**: Time as cyclical, people perform multiple tasks simultaneously
- **Pragmatic equivalence**: Refers to words in two languages having the same effect on the reader/listener in both languages
- **Semifixed-feature space**: Space bounded by movable objects, such as furniture
- **Simultaneous interpreting**: Process which allows people to communicate directly across language and cultural boundaries using specialized technology and professional interpreters who are trained to listen to one language while speaking simultaneously in another
- **Taiso**: Tai (body) + so (hardening) is a generic Japanese term for conditioning or exercising, a regular part of the daily routine in many Japanese factories

Resources

- Diébédo Francis Kéré: How to build with clay... and community

TED description: "Diébédo Francis Kéré knew exactly what he wanted to do when he got his degree in architecture… He wanted to go home to Gando in Burkina Faso, to help his neighbors reap the benefit of his education. In this charming talk, Kéré shows off some of the beautiful structures he's helped to build in his small village in the years since then, including an award-winning primary school made from clay by the entire community."

- Elora Hardy: Magical houses, made of bamboo

TED description: "You've never seen buildings like this. The stunning bamboo homes built by Elora Hardy and her team in Bali twist, curve and surprise at every turn. They defy convention because the bamboo itself is so enigmatic. No two poles of bamboo are alike, so every home, bridge and bathroom is exquisitely unique. In this beautiful, immersive talk, she shares the potential of bamboo, as both a sustainable resource and a spark for the imagination. 'We have had to invent our own rules,' she says."

- Dan Phillips: Creative houses from reclaimed stuff

TED description: "In this funny and insightful talk, builder Dan Phillips tours us through a dozen homes he's built in Texas using recycled and reclaimed materials in wildly creative ways. Brilliant, low-tech design details will refresh your own creative drive."

- Philip Zimbardo: The psychology of time

TED description: "Psychologist Philip Zimbardo says happiness and success are rooted in a trait most of us disregard: the way we orient toward the past, present and future. He suggests we calibrate our outlook on time as a first step to improving our lives."

- Carl Honoré: In praise of slowness

TED description: "Journalist Carl Honore believes the Western world's emphasis on speed erodes health, productivity and quality of life. But there's a backlash brewing, as everyday people start putting the brakes on their all-too-modern lives."

- Jennifer Golbeck: The curly fry conundrum: Why social media “likes” say more than you might think

TED description: "Do you like curly fries? Have you Liked them on Facebook? Watch this talk to find out the surprising things Facebook (and others) can guess about you from your random Likes and Shares. Computer scientist Jennifer Golbeck explains how this came about, how some applications of the technology are not so cute — and why she thinks we should return the control of information to its rightful owners."

- Juan Enriquez: Your online life, permanent as a tattoo

TED description: "What if Andy Warhol had it wrong, and instead of being famous for 15 minutes, we’re only anonymous for that long? In this short talk, Juan Enriquez looks at the surprisingly permanent effects of digital sharing on our personal privacy. He shares insight from the ancient Greeks to help us deal with our new 'digital tattoos.'

- More than words | Laura Burian, Miguel Garcia & Barry Olsen

TED description: "Can you distinguish language translation from language interpretation? In what may be the first ever tri-lingual TEDx talk, Laura Burian, Barry Olsen, and Miguel Garcia demonstrate the power of human cognition as they explain the subtle but important differences between professional translators and interpreters"

- Margaret Heffernan: Why it's time to forget the pecking order at work

TED description: "Organizations are often run according to “the superchicken model,” where the value is placed on star employees who outperform others. And yet, this isn’t what drives the most high-achieving teams. Business leader Margaret Heffernan observes that it is social cohesion — built every coffee break, every time one team member asks another for help — that leads over time to great results. It's a radical rethink of what drives us to do our best work, and what it means to be a leader. Because as Heffernan points out: 'Companies don’t have ideas. Only people do.'"

- Ricardo Semler: How to run a company with (almost) no rules

TED description: "What if your job didnâ€™t control your life? Brazilian CEO Ricardo Semler practices a radical form of corporate democracy, rethinking everything from board meetings to how workers report their vacation days (they donâ€™t have to). Itâ€™s a vision that rewards the wisdom of workers, promotes work-life balance â€” and leads to some deep insight on what work, and life, is really all about."

- Ernesto Sirolli: Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!

TED description: "When most well-intentioned aid workers hear of a problem they think they can fix, they go to work. This, Ernesto Sirolli suggests, is naÃ¯ve. In this funny and impassioned talk, he proposes that the first step is to listen to the people you're trying to help, and tap into their own entrepreneurial spirit. His advice on what works will help any entrepreneur."

- Country Profiles - Global Guide to Culture, Customs and Etiquette Free International Etiquette Guides from Kwintessential
- International Business Etiquette, Manners, & Culture From cyborlink.com

- Intercultural Consulting, LLC
- Cultural Awareness International (relocation services)
- Intercultural Success
- Intercultural Consulting
- Intercultural Training Institute Numerous presentations by IC comm scholars and others

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Encountering Other Cultures

Learning Objectives

Successful interaction with this and associated course content will enable students to…

- Understand the phenomenon of acculturation
- Explain the concept of "face"
- List and define different styles of conflict communication
- Define and name the stages of culture shock
- Discuss aspects of mediated cultural encounters

7.1: Communicating across Cultures

Communications professor John Baldwin (2015a) cites this story, emailed to him from a student participating in a study abroad experience:

> *I found your email to be most practical and helpful. I've kept in touch with my family [in the US] and like you said even in short emails I noticed I've become more aware of a sense of frustration with American waste, greed, materialism, consumerism. I can tell especially with my brother and sister I'm going to have a hard time telling them about my experiences and cultural differences that I've been exposed to. In one of the emails I sent to my brother I was telling him how it's amazing to see the value change between the US and Ireland. In his response to this he asked me 'Did you get to see the Superbowl?' I haven't spoken to my family, well at least my brother, after his question.*

Encounters with other cultures can be life-changing experiences. They can also lead to frustration, as here, when our friends or family don't understand or are unwilling to accept the changes we have undergone, such as acquiring new interests or points of view. Intercultural encounters vary in scope, context, and outcome. We may have contact with a single individual in a brief exchange, or we might live and work in a new culture for an extended period of time. We will be discussing in this unit the range of experiences, as well as potential outcomes, including personal conflicts and culture shock. We will also look at mediated intercultural encounters, through news reports, stories and the Internet.

Personal Encounters

We discussed in a previous unit that meeting people we don't know often results in uncertainty and anxiety. That uncertainty is increased when we know little about the other person and have to make assumptions. We may act or speak based on those assumptions. That may prove not to be a problem, particularly if we are open to changing our perceptions, work to accommodate the other person's communication style, and adjust our speech and behavior accordingly. But it's also possible that the encounter leads to miscommunication, bruised feelings, and arguments. Misunderstandings and conflict occur all the time when human beings are involved, even among people we know well or are related to. The opportunity for conflict is all the more plentiful when different languages and cultures are involved.

In cross-cultural encounters involving different languages, there may be quite different interpretations of commonly used words or phrases. The Cultura project, originating at the Massachusetts Institute of technology, connects students from different cultures with the aim of improving both language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding. The relationship between groups from different universities begins with the students completing on each side questionnaires in which they give their interpretations of particular expressions, such as "family" or "liberty". Some words have elicited quite different associations from groups in the US and in France. The word "individualism" (French, *individualisme*), for example, among the US students was associated with positive qualities of the individual being independent, free and unfettered in thought and action. The French understanding was someone different; the word was associated most commonly with egotism and isolation. This led to some interesting online discussions between the two groups of students (see Furstenberg et al., 2001). If we assume word meanings carry accurately across languages – a misperception common among monolinguals – this has the potential to result in misunderstandings.

Printemps 1999 Spring

Individualisme / individualism

• égoisme • négatif, solitaire • indépendance • égoisme • égoisme, triste, seul • négatif • seul, égoisme • seul, indépendant • solitude, égoiste • égoisme misanthrope méfiance • égoisme,solitude • solitude, autonomie, liberté • égocentrisme • seul, vide • solitude • égoisme misanthrope méfiance	• lonely, pride • front politcally correct • freedom, strength, will • whatever • attractive, Ayn Rand • desirable in reasonable quantities • freedom, diversity, thought • me freedom • creative, self-actualization • independence, strength • tolerance, creativity • originality, creativity, inventiveness • good, nesesity, • Hero • honor, self-respect • independence,nonconformist,comfortable • strange,punk • use 'I...' more than 1.000 times a day

Figure 7.1.1: Word associations of individualism in the Cultura project

In some cases, particular words may be associated with political orientations. The Republican Party in the US, for example, is likely to see "freedom" as a major component of the party's belief system, associated in their case especially with the ability to bear arms unencumbered by laws and with the absence of government interference in conducting business transactions. A quite divergent view of the word "freedom" was recounted in Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) in which a Vietnamese woman explained why she felt she could not live in the US:

The meaning of any value, including freedom, differs across cultures. An old woman in Saigon told one of the authors that she felt that she could not tolerate the lack of freedom in the United States. In Vietnam she was free to sell her vegetables on the sidewalk without being hassled by police or city authorities. She did not have to get a permit to fix the roof on her house. She had the freedom to vote for a communist candidate if she wanted to. She believed that in the United States, where her children lived, people were expected to tell others what they thought. In Vietnam she had the freedom to remain silent. Her perceptions determined her behavior; she refused to immigrate to the United States to join her children (p. 84).

Figure 7.1.2: Coal miner in West Virginia

Adhering rigidly to one's own interpretation of a word with strong social significance can be problematic. The symbolic value of certain phrases may be incorporated into our belief system and form an essential element of how we see the world. There are particular phrases which trigger strong positive or adverse reactions. Countering someone advocating a very different interpretation of such a phrase may be perceived as a personal attack, a denial of an aspect of the other's identity. A coal miner, for example, is likely to react quite differently to the phrase "global warming" than an environmental activist. Those views may center around potential unemployment, resulting in loss of income, family tension, and potentially a dramatic change in lifestyle. In such a situation, asserting the reality of global warming through environmental science, case studies, or climate statistics is likely to fall on deaf ears. Communication is likely to be impeded. As Alan Alda posits in a book on communication between scientists and the public (2017), one might in such circumstances try to find commonalities in other areas such as similarities in personal backgrounds, regional affiliation, or religion.

Conflicts and Language

Conflict can arise over differences of opinion regarding substantive issues such as global warming. On the other hand, they may derive from misunderstandings based on verbal or nonverbal communication tied to cultural norms and values. These can be minor – such as not performing a given greeting appropriately – or more serious – such as perceived rudeness based on how a request has been formulated. Missteps in most forms of nonverbal communication can typically be easily remedied (through observation and imitation) and normally do not pose major sources of conflict. Non-natives in most cases will not be expected to be familiar with established rituals. Most Japanese, for example, will not expect Westerners to have mastered the complexities of bowing behavior, which relies on perceptions of power/prestige differentials unlikely for a foreigner to perceive in the same way as native Japanese.

Similarly, non-natives will be forgiven making errors and speaking in areas of grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. Russians will not expect non-natives to have mastered the complex set of inflections that accompany different grammatical cases. Native Chinese will not expect a mastery of tones. Of course, if the errors interfere with intelligibility, there will be problems in communicative effectiveness. There may be, as we have discussed, some prejudice and possible discrimination against those who do not have full command of a language or who speak with a noticeable foreign accent. Conflict is less likely to come from language mechanics and more likely from mistakes in language pragmatics, most frequently in the area of speech acts, i.e. using language to perform certain actions or to have them performed by others. Native English speakers, for example, will typically qualify requests by prefacing them with verbs such as "would you" or "could you", as in the following:

> "Could I please have another cup of tea?"
>
> "Would you pass the ketchup when you're through with it?"

The use of the modal verb "could" or the conditional form "would" is not semantically necessary – they don't add anything to the meaning. They are included as part of the standard way polite requests are formulated in English. Asking the same questions more directly, i.e. "Bring me another cup of tea", would be perceived as abrupt and impolite. Yet, in many cultures, requests to strangers might well be formulated in such a direct way. Languages as different from one another as German and Chinese are both more direct in formulating requests. Non-native English speakers might will transfer those formulations from their native language word-for-word into English, leading to a possible perception of rudeness. This is known as pragmatic transfer, discussed in chapter four.

Confusion or conflict can arrive in some cases from differences in tone or intonation. Donal Carbaugh (2005) gives an example, based on work done by John Gumperz:

As East Asian workers in a cafeteria in London served English customers, they would ask the customers if they wanted "gravy" [sauce], but asked with falling rather than rising intonation. While this falling contour of sound signaled a question in Hindi, to English ears it sounded like a command. The servers thus were heard by British listeners to be rude and inappropriately bossy, when the server was simply trying to ask, albeit in a Hindi way, a question. In situations like these, one's habitual conversational practices can cue unwitting misunderstandings, yet those cues are typically beyond the scope of one's reflection. As a result, miscommunication is created, but in a way that is largely invisible to participants. Once known to them, communication can take a different form. (pp. 22-23)

This source of conflict, a misperception of another person's actions or intent, here attributing rudeness to a difference in communication style, is one of the more common occurrences in both everyday interactions and in cross-cultural encounters. How such conflicts are resolved varies in line with the context and individuals concerned. Communication scholars have identified patterns in conflict resolution, discussed in the next section.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution styles represent processes and outcomes based on the interests of the parties involved. These are often presented in the form of a grid, as in the following (Baldwin, 2015b):

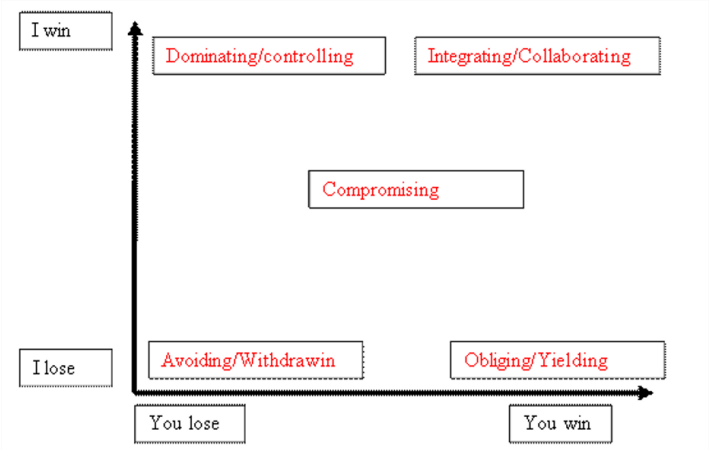

Figure 7.1.3: Conflict resolution styles

If I am intent on reaching my own goals in an encounter, I use what's called a **dominating** or **controlling** style. This is most often associated with cultures labeled individualistic, as it involves one individual's will winning over another's. On the other hand, if I am content to allow others to get their way, I use an **obliging** or **yielding** style. This is often related to cultures deemed collectivistic, as it favors harmony over outcome. Stella Ting-Toomey (2015) has been a leading scholar in this area, with explorations of how to predict a given conflict resolution style based on national cultures. But she cautions, as do others, how dependent individual behavior is on the specific context and on the willingness and ability of the parties to be flexible and compromising. Flexibility and openness might lead to the adoption of an **integrating** or **collaborating** approach, seeking to find a solution that satisfies both parties. A **compromising** approach provides a negotiated outcome which necessitates each party giving up something in order to reach a solution that provides partial gains on each side. **Avoidance** or **withdrawal** may be appropriate if no resolution is likely, or there is not enough time or information to resolve the conflict.

Examples of conflict resolution styles associated with different cultural orientations are given in Markus & Lin (1999). They point out that in the US the predominate perspective traditionally has been that represented by European-American views: "Having one's own ideas and the courage of one's convictions, making up one's own mind and charting one's own course are powerful public meanings inscribed in everyday social practices" (p. 307). That tends to translate into the importance of asserting one's position in a conflict, rather than seeking compromise or accommodation:

Within a world organized according to the tenets of individualism and animated by the web of associated understandings and practices, any perceived constraint on individual freedom is likely to pose immediate problems and require a response. Typically the most appropriate response in a conflict situation involves a direct or honest expression of one's ideas. Indeed, it is sometimes the individualist's moral imperative, the sign that one is being a "good" person, to disagree with and remain unmoved by the influence of others. The right to disagree, typically manifested by a direct statement of one's own views, can create social difficulties, but it is understood and experienced as a birthright (p. 308).

The authors point out that this perspective is far from being shared with the rest of the world, and in fact, is not universal within the US. Asian-American, African-American, and Hispanics are likely to have quite different views regarding conflict, identified by the author as an interdependent perspective: "From an interdependent perspective, the underlying goal of social behavior is not the preservation and manifestation of individual rights and attributes, but rather the preservation of relationships" (p. 311). In this approach, individual rights are superseded by group interest. Quick, decisive conflict resolution is not the ultimate goal, but rather an outcome that serves all parties and preserves harmony. In many communities that involves the use of mediators. In a study of "peaceful societies", Bonta (1996) describes how such figures play a key role in cultures in which violence is rare. As an effective approach for resolving conflict in cross-cultural situations, Markus & Lin (1999) advocate the use of face negotiation techniques, as outlined below.

The Concept of Face

Ting-Toomey has been in the forefront in the development of a theory often applied to intercultural conflict, called **face negotiation theory** (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi ,1998). This theory tries to explain conflict using the concept of **face**, often defined as a person's self-image or the amount of respect or accommodation a person expects to receive during interactions with others. Ting-Toomey actually differentiates among three different concepts of face:

- **Self-face**: The concern for one's image, the extent to which we feel valued and respected.
- **Other-face**: Our concern for the other's self-image, the extent to which we are concerned with the other's feelings
- **Mutual-face**: Concern for both parties' face and for a positive relationship developing out of the interaction

According to face negotiation theory, people in all cultures share the need to maintain and negotiate face. Some cultures – and individuals – tend to be more concerned with self-face, often associated with individualism. Conflict resolution in this case may become confrontational, leading potentially to a loss of face for the other party. Collectivists – cultures or individuals – tend to be more concerned with other-face and may use strategies such as avoidance, the use of intermediaries, or withdrawal. They may also engage in mutual **facework** (actions to uphold face) such as negotiating, following up in a private conversation, or apologizing.

Face concerns can appear in all kinds of interactions, but mostly come to the fore during conflicts of one kind or another. Ting-Toomey predicts that certain cultures will have a preference for a given conflict style based on face concerns. Individualistic cultures or individuals will prefer a direct way of addressing conflicts, according to the chart presented earlier, a dominating style or, optimally, a collaborating approach. The latter, however, requires that one address a conflict directly, something which particular cultures or people may prefer not to do. Collectivistic cultures or individuals may prefer an indirect approach, using subtle or unspoken means to deal with conflict (avoiding, withdrawing, compromising), so as not to challenge the face of the other.

Another way to view conflict styles resolution is through the **Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory** developed by Mitchell Hammer (2005). According to the theory behind the inventory, disagreements leading to conflict have two dimensions, an affective (emotional) and a cognitive (intellectual or analytical) side. According to Hammer, parties in a conflict experience an emotional response based on the disagreement, its perceived cause, and the threat they see it as posing. How the two parties interact he sees as dependent on how emotionally expressive they tend to be and how direct their communication styles are. This results in four different styles, **Discussion** (direct communication style while being emotionally reserved), **Engagement** (also direct but expressive emotionally), **Accommodating** (indirect communication style, emotionally relaxed) and **Dynamic** (indirect communication style, while emotionally involved). Hammer developed an instrument that measures these four styles and argues that being able to identify your own style and that of your counterpart can help better manage conflict.

One of the important ways to avoid conflict in personal encounters is to be attentive to what the other person is communicating, not just through the words spoken, but through body language and other nonverbal means. The process of active listening can be quite helpful. Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) outline some of the important factors in doing that:

> *Active listening consists of five steps: (1) hearing, or exposure to the message, (2) understanding, when we connect the message to what we already know, (3) remembering, so that we do not lose the message content, (4) evaluating, thinking about the message and deciding whether or not it is valid, and (5) responding, when we encode a return message based on what we have heard and what we think of it (p. 158).*

What is conflict good for?

Conflict has many positive functions. It prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity. It is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at. It is the root of personal and social change. And conflict is often part of the process of testing and assessing oneself. As such it may be highly enjoyable as one experiences the pleasure of the full nd active use of one's capacities. In addition, conflicts demarcate groups from one another and help establish group and personal identities.

-Deutsch, 1987, p. 38

Despite our best intentions as well as engaging in the techniques for optimizing cross-cultural encounters, conflict is sometimes unavoidable. Scholars of conflict resolution have in fact pointed to some positive aspects of personal conflict (see sidebar). Conflicts can illuminate key cultural differences and thus can offer "rich points" for understanding other cultures.

Cultural Schemas

When conflicts occur in personal encounters, an awareness of the dynamics of conflict resolution can be helpful in resolving issues. It is useful as well to have some awareness of the nature and origins of our social behavior. If we assume that the way our culture operates is the default human behavior worldwide, we are likely to reject alternatives as unnatural and inferior. In reality, what we experience as "common-sense" or "normal" behavior is socially constructed and learned. The kind of taken-for-granted knowledge of how things work becomes automatic, not requiring any conscious thought. We can think of such behavior as **cultural schemas** (set patterns of behavior and language) which are typically learned by observing others or performing an action once. Holliday, Hyde & Kullman (2004) describe how this works:

> *Knowing the cultural schema of events such as dancing a salsa or ordering a meal in McDonald's, is derived from empirical experience of that 'event'. It is reinforced each time that it serves as a useful guide for behaviour in that particular context or 'genre'. Of course the schemas of these different genres can be very different in different countries...The problem is that if we have a schema for an event already established in our national, regional or ethnic cultural milieu, we are likely to make the error of thinking that the event in the other culture should be the same – or similar. When expectations are upset one may experience a certain degree of shock that can perhaps translate into resentment, anger and perhaps negative judgement of the other culture. This is because expectations have not been fulfilled and one may therefore feel vulnerable and 'adrift' (pp. 197-8).*

In our everyday lives in our own cultures, we carry out tasks routinely and without thinking. This leads to a sense that such behavior is universal. Being confronted with alternative models can be upsetting. The authors give an example in the contrast between visiting a pub in Britain and a bar in Spain (see sidebar). The example shows that we have to rebuild our schemas in different cultures, in order to navigate our way successfully through new cultural situations.

Drinking in a Spanish bar or an English pub: not the same

In Spain the schema may be: enter the bar and greet the people there with a general 'Buenos dias', go to the bar; see if there are any friends around; offer to get them drinks; order the drinks at the bar; drink and accept any offers of other drinks from others; when you want to go ask how much you owe, often clarifying with the barman/woman which drinks you are responsible for; make sure you say goodbye to everyone you know and to those you don't with a general 'Hasta luego.' A Spanish man greeting strangers in a bar in England would probably be disappointed in the lack of reciprocity of his greeting. The locals would be suspicius or amused; the Spaniard would feel the locals are perhaps unfriendly. He may be seen as dishonest or evasive if he doesn't offer to pay for the first drink he asks for upon being served that drink. An Englishman entering a Spanish bar may be seen as a little odd or ingenuine if he uses 'please' and 'thank you' all the time. These terms tend to be reserved for asking favours and for having rendered a favour, and are thus not used so 'lightly'.

-Holliday, Hyde & Kullman (2004), p. 199

Sometimes the cultural schema relies on a sequence of actions, as in a British pub, or it may be primarily related to language use. Sharifian (2005) illustrates how a particular Persian cultural schema known as *sharmandegi* (sometimes translated as 'being ashamed') is rendered in a number of speech acts:

Expressing gratitude: *'You really make me ashamed'*

Offering goods and services: *'Please help yourself, I'm ashamed, it's not worthy of you.'*

Requesting goods and services: *'I'm ashamed, can I beg some minutes of your time.'*

Apologizing: *'I'm really ashamed that the noise from the kids didn't let you sleep.'*

(p. 125)

Sharifian suggests that in all cases, the *sharmandegi* schema "seems to encourage Iranians to consider the possibility that in the company of others they may be doing or have done something wrong or something not in accordance with the other party's dignity"

(p. 125). According to the analysis by Bowe and Martin's introduction to intercultural communication (2007):

Sharifian relates the sharmandegi schema to a higher level 'overarching' cultural schema which defines a core value of culture related to social relations that he calls "adab va ehteram", roughly glossed as 'courtesy and respect' in English. He suggests that '(t)his higher-level schema encourages Iranians to constantly place the presence of others at the centre of their conceptualizations and monitor their own ways of thinking and talking to make them harmonious with the esteem that they hold for others'. (p. 42)

Another way to formulate this is that one needs to learn the special **discourse** of the cultural event or action. Discourse often refers to specialized language use (as in the discourse of airline pilots) but in postmodern use it often is used to go beyond language. J.P. Gee (1999) describes discourse as "different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language 'stuff,' such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and at the right times so as to enact and recognize different identities and activities" (p. 13). According to Gee, discourses are embedded into social institutions and often involve the use of various "props" like books, tools, or technologies. One might need a whole host of resources in any given context to come up with an appropriate discourse strategy, involving use of an appropriate language register, expressing the correct politeness formulas, wearing the right clothing, using appropriate body language, etc.

Mediated Encounters

Experiencing other cultures can happen through personal encounters or travel, but it can also be a mediated experience, in which we are experiencing new cultures vicariously or virtually. This might be at a fairly superficial level, through reading or watching news reports dealing with other countries. Of course, news from abroad is highly selective, often focusing on dramatic or disastrous events, inevitably filtered through the lens of the reporter's own culture. We tend to gain little insight into day-to-day lives through the nightly news. More in-depth information may be supplied by longer written pieces in serious newspapers/magazines or the Internet, or through TV or documentaries. We can't travel everywhere or have the opportunity to meet an endless number of people from diverse cultures. From that perspective, the second-hand information we obtain from mass media can provide basic knowledge and starting points for serious study.

More informed views come from first-hand accounts of encounters or from personal cultural trajectories. Of particular interest are what are sometimes called language autobiographies, in which others recount their process of adapting linguistically and culturally to a new environment. An excellent example is Eva Hoffman's memoir *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989). She recounts her early life, moving with her family from Poland to the US when she was a child. One of the early significant cultural experiences she had was a change of her name and that of her sister from Ewa and Alina to "Eva" and "Elaine":

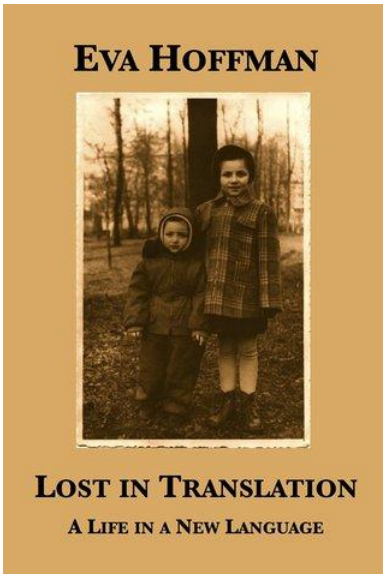

Figure 7.1.4: Eva Hoffman's memoir *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989)

> *Nothing much has happened, except a small, seismic mental shift. The twist in our names takes them a tiny distance from us – but it's a gap into which the infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can't yet pronounce, are not us.*

> *They are identification tags, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself…[They] make us strangers to ourselves. (p. 105)*

The change may seem a small matter, but for Hoffman it represents a separation from how she sees her place in the world. She has become someone unfamiliar to herself, with a name she cannot even pronounce correctly. Eventually, she finds herself in a kind of linguistic and psychological no-man's land, between two languages:

> *I wait for that spontaneous flow of inner language which used to be my nighttime talk with myself…Nothing comes. Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words don't apply to my new experiences, they're not coeval with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English, the words have not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private connection could proceed. (p. 107)*

She has difficulty ordering and making sense of the events of her life. Slowly she begins a reconstruction of herself in English. Initially, this comes through listening and imitating:

> *All around me, the Babel of American voices, hardy midwestern voices, sassy New York voices, quick youthful voices, voices arching under the pressure of various crosscurrents…Since I lack a voice of my own, the voices of others invade me as if I were a silent ventriloquist. They ricochet within me, carrying on conversations, lending me their modulations, intonations, rhythms. I do not yet possess them; they possess me. But some of them satisfy a need; some of them stick to my ribs… Eventually, the voices enter me; by assuming them, I gradually make them mine. (pp. 219-220)*

Step-by-step, Hoffman learns both the verbal and nonverbal codes, and can adapt to US cultural schemas:

> *This goddamn place is my home now…I know all the issues and all the codes here. I'm as alert as a bat to all subliminal signals sent by word, look, gesture. I know who is likely to think what about feminism and Nicaragua and psychoanalysis and Woody Allen…When I think of myself in cultural categories – which I do perhaps too often – I know that I'm a recognizable example of a species: a professional New York woman…I fit, and my surroundings fit me (pp. 169–170).*

An account like that of Hoffman's provides a detailed, insider's story of cultural adaptation. Both fiction and nonfiction can supply insights into individual lives, which puts a human face on the theories of cultural encounters. This is true of films as well. Life stories convey the emotional turmoil that often accompany cultural transitions, something we sometimes lose track of in scholarly studies.

7.2: Moving Among Cultures

Experiencing a Different Culture

Adjusting one's communication style and interactional behavior to a single individual or a small group from another culture can be stressful, but it pales in comparison to adjustments and difficulties one might encounter in spending an extended period of time living in a different culture. There are a variety of situations which might lead to such experiences. One might be an **immigrant**, moving permanently to another country, or a **refugee**, leaving one's home involuntarily due to adverse or dangerous conditions. **Asylum-seekers** leave their countries due to the threat of political or religious persecution. **Economic refugees** seek better working and living situations for themselves and their families. These situations all differ markedly from that of those who go abroad voluntarily to work or study with the expectation of returning home after a certain period of time. Those who stay for a longer time, such as 1 to 5 years, are often labeled **sojourners**. In comparison to those migrating involuntarily, sojourners tend to be wealthier and better educated and thus to be in a more privileged situation in the host culture. Sojourners will often associate willingly with compatriots, forming an **expatriate**, or ex-pat, community.

Figure 7.2.1: Japanese members of a tour group in Rome, an example of mass tourism

Sojourners have a different experience from short-term visitors or **tourists**, the latter generally having a filtered exposure to the other culture, while traveling in national groups largely isolated from native communities. Because of the short time frame and the lack of in-depth exposure to the new culture, tourists normally have an unproblematic relationship to the culture, often experiencing it in a positive light, if perhaps somewhat exoticized. On the other hand, some studies have shown that tourists may have ethnocentric views reinforced. That may occur because tourists, living in an "environmental bubble" (Cohen, 1972), see only selected aspects of a culture. The aspects of the culture encountered (food, dress, festivals) do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the culture as a whole, as they represent outward manifestations of the culture, not its hidden values and beliefs. The result can be that tourists and representatives of the host culture do not see each other in their entirety as human beings:

> *The mass tourist travels in a world of his own, surrounded by, but not integrated in, the host society. He meets the representatives of the tourist establishment — hotel managers, tourist agents, guides —but only seldom the natives. The natives, in turn, see the mass tourist as unreal. Neither has much of an opportunity to become an individual to the other (Cohen, 1972, p. 175).*

This applies to mass tourism. Cultural tourists, interested primarily in historical and artistic aspects of a country or region, may gain a fuller picture of the culture (Cohen, 1972). It's more likely in that case that the tourists will have prepared for the visit through some degree of study of the history and geography of the region. Optimally, that would include learning basics of the language as well.

Topless Zulu dancers: Only for tourists?

Naidu (2011a, 2011b) investigates the 'topless' dance tradition of Zulu girls in a cultural village in KwaZula Natal, South Africa, and perceptions of indigenous cultural bodies in tourism. In the cultural village reported in Naidu's study, a small number of Zulu-speaking girls took part in a Zulu dance as 'ethnic' performers. As unmarried virgins, they wear no tops, only beaded skirts and some jewellery when dancing.

Figure 7.2.2: The Reed Dance Festival 2006. (Public Domain; Amada44 via Wikipedia)

However, although 'topless' has been a tradition for Zulu girls, things are very different now. As reported by two girls interviewed by Naidu (2011b), girls nowadays do not have to dance 'topless' to show that they are unmarried. Instead, they only do it at home and when there is a special celebration. Nevertheless, the girls feel that this is what tourists want to see and dancing 'topless' is a business exchange, despite the fact that they find it somewhat awkward when dancing in front of and posing along with tourists.

Hua, 2013, p. 88

Stereotypical images of a culture may be perpetuated through a desire on the part of the host country to accommodate tourist expectations. That may in fact be a practical necessity, if the tourist industry constitutes a major contributor to a region's economy. Hua (2013) provides the example of how topless dancing, a traditional aspect of Zulu culture, has been affected by the tourist industry (see sidebar). Tourism may have a complex relationship to a host culture, sometimes reducing culture to a commodity. Some scholars have pointed to positive aspects of tourism (Jack & Phipps, 2005), as at least one widely available means for cross-cultural contact. The TED talk on tourism by Aziz Abu Sarah argues that tourism can play a positive role in peace-keeping. Tourism, in fact, may lead to activism. Baldwin et al. (2013) give the example of the founding of the TOMS One for One shoe company, which donates a pair of shoes to poor Latin-American families for each pair sold. The founder got the idea and incentive for the company while traveling through Argentina.

Cross-cultural adaptation

Those who have the day-to-day experience of living in the culture are likely to have a quite different experience from tourists. This might involve learning and using a second language, coping with bureaucracies, finding out how things get done in that culture, making new friends, and a host of other issues and potential difficulties that everyone living in that culture – native or foreigner – experiences. This process of adjustment is often referred to as **acculturation**, the learning and adapting of at least some of the values, norms, and behaviors of the new culture. This may be an easy process, or long and difficult. That depends on many factors, including one's age, educational level, familiarity with the language and culture, reasons for relocating, support structures available (friends, family, coworkers), and the degree of difference between one's home culture and that of the new residence. Acculturation can be fragmented; that is, one might adapt to some parts of a culture and not others. Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) distinguish between psychological adjustment (emotional well-being) and sociocultural adaptation (the ability to function day-to-day in the target culture). While psychological adjustment is largely dependent on personality and social support, "sociocultural adaptation, measured in relation to the amount of difficulty experienced in the performance of daily tasks, is more dependent on variables such as length of residence in the new culture, language ability, cultural distance, and the quantity of contact with host nationals" (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999, p. 424). While both forms of adjustment are present during initial contact with the new culture, normally sociocultural problems steadily decrease over time. Psychological adjustments are more variable.

The process of acculturation can vary as well depending on the purpose of the contact, such as colonization, trade, evangelism, or education. It can also depend on the length of time the contact lasts. A scholar who has studied acculturation extensively, John Berry, has identified four principal modes of acculturation (Berry & Sam, 1997). **Assimilation** is the loss of one's original cultural identity by acquiring a new identity in the host culture. The goal is to become indistinguishable from other people in that culture. Adapting to the host culture but maintaining the identity from one's native culture is **integration**. This kind of bicultural identity is likely to provide the most successful and satisfying acculturative experience. In some cases, individuals prefer no close contact with the host culture. In this mode, **separation**, the individual maintains his or her native identity with minimal adaptation to the host culture, although the individual may choose for practical reasons, such as employment, to adopt particular aspects of the host culture (speech, dress). The fourth mode of acculturation is **marginalization**, in which individuals have a weak identification with both host and native cultures. This can lead to alienation and a sense of abandonment. An additional mode of acculturation was identified by Richard Mendoza (1989). He labeled this **cultural transmutation**, in which an individual chooses to identify predominately with a third cultural group, such as youth culture or gay/lesbian groups.

At the opposite end of the travel spectrum from tourists are those who are forced to leave their home countries, whether that be because of adverse living conditions (famine, war, civil unrest) or due to the need to find gainful employment for oneself and one's family. The book *Global Woman* (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003) describes how millions of women migrate in order to support their families, moving from the global south (Philippines, Sri Lanka, India) to the north (North America, Europe and Middle East) to work as domestics:

> *Mexican and Latin American women are the domestics for U.S. women; Asian migrant women work in British homes; North African women work in French homes; Turkish women in German homes; Filipinas work in Spain, Italy, and Greece; and Filipino, Indian, and Sri Lankan women travel to Saudi Arabia to work (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 311).*

Such migrations raise many troubling issues. In addition to the main issue of social injustice and cultural loss, Ehrenreich & Hochschild point to the ironic fact that often women in such situations are forced to leave their own children in the care of others while they tend to the children of their employers.

Figure 7.2.3: Filipina nanny in Canada

Added to the emotional toll these women endure from being separated from their families and cultures, they may not find social acceptance in the host communities. Typically, domestic or manual migrant laborers are treated differently from intellectual workers or business professionals. Migrants from the same country might be treated differently in the host culture:

> *Class issues often enter into the picture. Sometimes immigrant workers are seen as necessary but are not really welcomed into the larger society because of their class (which is often fused with racial differences). And sometimes the discrimination and class issues result in conflict between recent migrants and emigrants from the same country who have been in the host country for a long time. (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 339).*

In the US, for example, Mexican workers who have achieved middle class status, and therefore some degree of acceptance in mainstream white US society, may take a dim view of the arrival of undocumented Mexicans, since their arrival may jeopardize

their own standing (see sidebar). A crucial factor that affects social acceptance is not just the identity and status of the migrants, but as well their numbers. The large influx of refugees to Europe from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern and some African countries in 2014 through 2016 contributed to the backlash against immigrants that led to protest movements and the rise of anti-immigrant political parties in Denmark, France, Germany and other countries.

Old & new immigrants: not always a good mix

> Mexicans have come in increasing numbers to work in the carpet plants in the Southeast [USA] and in the meatpacking plants in the Midwest. This has led to tension between those Latinos/as, who have worked hard to achieve harmony with whites and to attain middle-class status, and the newcomers, who are usually poor and have lower English proficiency. The older Latinos/as feel caught between the two—ridiculed by whites for not speaking English correctly and now by recently arrived Mexicans for mangling Spanish. This resentment between old and new immigrants has always been present in America—from the arrival of the first Europeans.
>
> Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 339

Refugees

In addition to those leaving their home country in order to better themselves and their families economically and socially, many migrants leave in order to escape regional or national danger or deprivation. Some leave to escape discrimination due to their ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. In some cases, migration may be limited to individuals, families, or small groups, as may be the case with political activists or members of small religious denominations. In other cases, there may be mass immigration due to extreme conditions of hardship or widespread political or religious persecution. In the 19th century, for example, large numbers of Irish families migrated to the US due to the potato famine, as did many Germans to escape political prosecution after the failed 1848 revolution. Discrimination towards minorities, leading in some instances to **ethnic cleansing**, can lead to mass migration. Large numbers of Rohingyas, Muslims from Rakhine State have left Myanmar (Burma) to escape mistreatment.

The Rohingyas have sought refuge in Bangladesh and Thailand, countries located nearby. This is the normal pattern for refugees, that they tend to relocate to areas close by their home countries. This is for practical reasons, namely ease of migration and likely cultural similarities. Many refugees prefer to stay close to home in the hope of repatriation after a short period away. In other cases, families may be separated and want to stay close to enable family reunification. Sadly, hopes that refugees' stay will be temporary are often disappointed. Many temporary refugee settlements become semi-permanent. Displaced Palestinians, for example, have lived in refugee settlements since the Six Days War in 1967. Long-term refugees can be found in many other regions, particularly in Africa. The quality of life in refugee camps varies considerably. Generally, however, available services will be significantly inferior to those available to permanent residents of the country. Schools may not be available, and there will often be substandard health care. Refugees are not usually permitted to work. Given the adverse conditions, it's not surprising that refugee settlements often become sites of strife and hopelessness.

Figure 7.2.4: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

The relationship between refugees and permanent residents is often problematic. The local populace may resent public resources being used to support groups of refugees. There may be fears that frustrated refugees well resort to crime. Occasionally, there are rumors about refugees bringing in diseases. In recent years, a new worry has emerged, namely that refugees are harboring terrorists

in their midst. In some cases, backlashes against refugees have led to local protests or discriminatory actions, such as not allowing refugee children to attend public schools. Sometimes, refugees are exploited as cheap labor, or women are tricked into working in the sex industry. In recent years there has been violence directed against refugees in some countries. In Germany, for example, built or designated refugee homes have been set on fire by arsonists.

Organized efforts to help refugees exist in many countries. In some cases, these are organized by national governments, often in cooperation with international groups such as the international Red Cross or the UN Refugee Agency. The help may come in the form of food, clothing, and housing. Occasionally, social and medical services may be offered. Educational and cultural resources are provided less often. As it is uncertain how long refugees will be present, there is often no long-term planning for their possible integration into the host country. At a minimum, one should expect to have schools available for all children. Ideally, training should be provided to enable future employment either in the host country, or wherever the refugee may end up living. Training in English, for example, is crucial in virtually any country, for use as a lingua franca in the host country, but also as an important factor in employability.

Some governments and NGOs have come up with innovative ways to provide language and cultural training. Today, phones provide a lifeline for many refugees. They provide a vital way to connect to families and friends in the home country as well as those in the host country or on their way. A report from the European Union Institute for Security Studies stated:

> *Migrants are linking up online to cross borders and meet their basic needs. They are using smartphones to share tips and geo-positional data as they cross North Africa. They rank and rate Afghan people-smugglers, trying to hold the criminals accountable for the safe transport of family members. On Google they share tips, such as to avoid exploitative Istanbul taxi drivers or evade new EU border controls. (Parkes, 2016, p. 1)*

The kind of device that migrants use will vary with the individual and place of origin. One account has shown that of young Syrian refugees, 86% owned a smartphone (Parkes, 2016). A number of mobile apps have been developed by NGOs and government agencies to help migrants in a variety of areas, including language learning, cultural integration, and practical day-to-day living. Some apps aid in the process of migrants making their way through intermediate countries to their final destination. InfoAid helps refugees in Hungary, while Gherbtna is aimed at Syrians newly arrived in Turkey. The Mobile Legal Info Source helps navigate Turkey's legal system. The Crisis Info Hub offers support for new arrivals in Greece.

Mobile devices can provide tools and services which can ease the transition into the culture, but they can only go so far in helping the adjustment process. Ultimately, the situation of refugees depends on the reception they receive in the host country, the living conditions provided, and on the opportunities available for living a healthy and meaningful existence. For refugees eventually granted asylum and permanent residence, the struggle is not necessarily over. Individuals will need to go through a process of transitioning into the new culture, not always a smooth, easy, or quick process.

Culture Shock

Some people tend to be more flexible and adaptable than others, able to suppress, at least temporarily, some aspects of their ego, developing a new way of thinking and behaving in accord with the other culture. Others, due to personality, attitude or contextual factors have a more difficult path to satisfactory acculturation. Those who have a difficult time with the adjustment process are said to be experiencing **culture shock**. This could manifest itself in different ways depending on the individual, but the common experience is a sense of disorientation, a feeling of loss of control over one's life, leading to sadness, grief, or anger, and in some cases even to psychosomatic or real disorders. The process of experiencing culture shock and eventually adjusting to the new environment has traditionally been described using the image of a U-curve, which suggests that travelers go through three distinct stages. This starts with a positive experience, at the top of the U, then a period of difficulty, representing the bottom of the U, before an ultimate period of adjustment and return to the top of the U. The initial period is often called the **honeymoon stage**, during which one is excited by the newness of the experience. The second period, often called the **crisis stage**, is when the newness has worn off and one is confronted by the difficulties of adjusting linguistically, socially, and psychologically to a new and different way of life. Assuming one is willing to stay the course, the **adjustment stage** follows eventually, with a growing confidence in one's ability to integrate into the new culture. Culture shock can be seen as a subcategory of experiences all humans encounter, namely life changes. Janet Bennett (1977) has suggested that culture shock and adaptation should be viewed in the context of other adult transitions such as going off to study, getting married, or moving to a different region of the country. As such, it can be viewed as a normal inevitable component of everyday life in all cultures

The U-model of culture shock corresponds to what many people tend to experience in terms of struggling to make adjustments to life in a new environment. Most experience stress, which can lead to feelings of alienation and frustration. The U-curve model also points to the reality that the adjustment often takes time and that it's not realistic to expect a quick and easy transition. At the same time, there are so many individual variations in situations that generalizations, including the U-curve model, will often be wrong. It may be that most travelers experience the range of experience represented by the model but not necessarily in the same order. Some scholars have suggested other models for describing the process. Young Yun Kim (2005) sees adjustments happening in a cyclical pattern of **stress – adaptation – growth**. She sees stress as useful for an individual's growth and prefers "cultural adjustment" over "culture shock". It's also the case that acculturation is not just within the power of the individual. It also depends on the willingness of the host culture to accept (or not) the individual. A physician or engineer from abroad coming into a new country will likely be given a much better reception than poor immigrants; this can have a significant impact on the adjustment process. It can be the case as well that the co-cultures in the new country may be welcoming to the new arrival, if there are similarities which make acculturation smoother, such as national origin, sexual orientation, or professional affiliations. Adjusting to a new culture is facilitated by the presence of linguistic or cultural resources linked to the home culture, such as food markets, schools, clubs. Hua (2013), citing Neuliep (2006), lists a number of strategies one might use to manage culture shock (see sidebar).

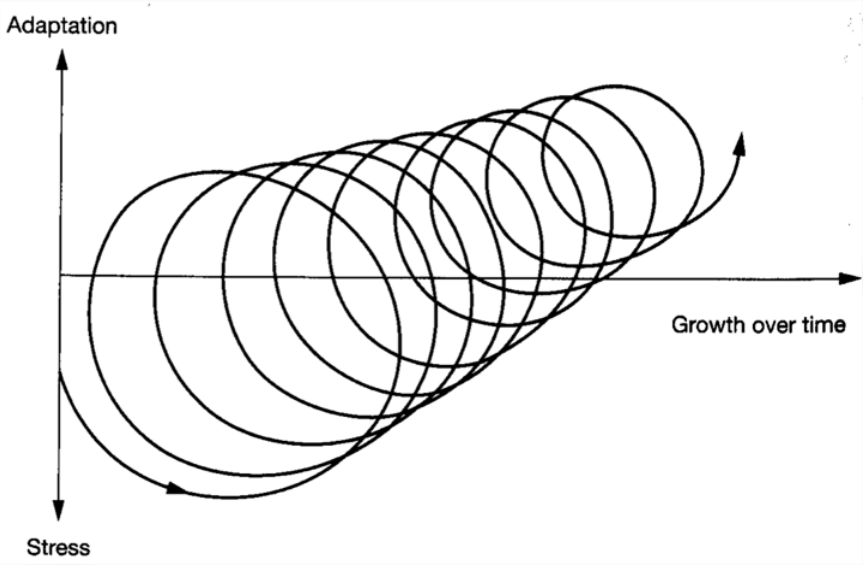

Figure 7.2.5: Diminishing stress-adaptation-growth over time; Kim, 2001, p. 59

The return to one's home culture is an experience many people will anticipate with high expectations, as did the student at the beginning of this chapter, looking forward to sharing one's experiences with those back home and demonstrating the personal growth one may have experienced during the stay. Sometimes those expectations are not realistic and may not be fulfilled, resulting in what's sometimes called **reentry culture shock**. In contrast to culture shock, which may be anticipated, reentry culture shock may come as a surprise. It may be as serious a problem of adjustment as was the experience abroad. Baldwin (2015a) points out that a large number of business professionals leave their companies within a year of returning from assignments abroad, given the difficulty of readjusting and the lack of appreciation and understanding of their experiences. The return home does not necessitate any kind of socio-cultural adjustment, as we are already familiar with the culture, but rather a psychological adjustment. Some have suggested that the return home is another U-curve experience, with a similar pattern of high expectations, followed by a feeling of being underappreciated and misunderstood, with a final period of readjustment. Sometimes the two U-curves are put together to form a W-curve, illustrating graphically the kind of roller coaster ride such experiences can prove to be.

Strategies for managing culture shock

- Study the host culture, including searching websites, and interviewing friends who have travelled or lived in the culture.
- Study the local environment and familiarize yourself with the new system.
- Learn basic verbal & non-verbal language skills.
- Develop intercultural friendships.
- Maintain your support network actively.
- Assume the principle of difference and be aware of your perceptual bias.
- Anticipate failure events and manage expectations

> Hua, 2013, p. 79

The concept of culture shock itself is not universally accepted. It rests on the assumption that individuals have a single "culture" and that the same holds true for the host country. It also involves a wholesale take-it-or-leave-it approach to cultural adaptation. In reality, individuals may well adopt certain elements of the culture, but not others. In some cases, individuals might choose to resist the new culture and maintain aspects of their home cultures. The situation becomes more complex for immigrants who represent established minorities in the new culture. Latinos migrating to the US, for example, will have different experiences depending on where they locate, the presence of family members, and the availability of resources for immigrants such as bilingual schools. In some cases, Latinos coming to the US may not be adjusting to mainstream US culture, but to Hispanic American culture, which has its own distinctiveness and multiple varieties, all different from the cultures of the home countries.

The concept of culture shock has been criticized for oversimplifying a complex situation. However, it is a widely known phenomenon and one, which as Ulf Hannerz points out (1999), has led to an industry devoted to helping travelers deal with cultural adaptation:

> *I mentioned above the concept of 'culture shock', diffusing widely in the late 20th century as a way of referring to the kind of emotional and intellectual unease that sometimes occurs in encounters with unfamiliar meanings and practices. Rather facetiously, I have also occasionally referred to the growth of a 'culture shock prevention industry'. The proper term for its practitioners, I should quickly note, is 'interculturalists' – a new profession of people working commercially as trainers and consultants, trying to teach sensitivity toward cultural diversity to various audiences through lectures, simulation games, videos, practical handbooks and some variety of other means. From an academic vantage point one may be critical of certain of the efforts – they may seem a bit trite, somewhat inclined toward stereotyping, occasionally given to exaggerating cultural differences perhaps as a way of positioning the interculturalists themselves as an indispensable profession. (p. 394).*

Much of this kind of training necessarily focuses on typical experiences, painting with a quite broad brush. In reality, individual case histories are much more nuanced and personal.

Study Abroad

Culture shock has been studied extensively in connection with study abroad programs (see Kinginger, 2008; Salisbury, An & Pascarella, 2013). Large numbers of students internationally go to study at a university in a different country for a time ranging from a short-term summer or winter program (4 to 6 weeks) to a semester or longer. Students may participate as part of a group, through an exchange program, or independently. The European Erasmus Exchange Program has enabled large numbers of students from European countries to study and receive university credit at other universities in Europe. The kind of experience one has through study abroad varies considerably depending on the manner in which it is organized. Going abroad with a group from one's own culture, and attending special university classes together, limits the exposure to the target culture and its language. Organizing independent study abroad experience is more difficult, as one must arrange oneself for university registration, selection of courses, and housing. In the process, however, one is likely to gain greater socio-cultural competence and more integration into the target culture and language. On the other hand, independent students lack the support system available to groups.

Figure 7.2.6: Erasmus exchange students in Sweden from 7 countries

Whether one engages in study abroad independently or as a member of a group, individual disposition/personality and the local context will determine the degree of success and personal satisfaction. Hua (2013) points out that many study abroad experiences result in an increase in oral proficiency in the target language and in intercultural understanding and competence. However, that varies tremendously depending on the individual. One might have the kind of limited exposure described here:

> *Her daily routine included attendance at required classes, after which she would go immediately to the study abroad center sponsored by her home university where she would stay until closing time, surfing the English language Internet and exchanging emails and Instant Messages with her friends and family in the U.S. Outside of service encounters, framed in various ways in her journal as threats to her well-being, she made little effort to engage speakers of French, limiting her use of the language to her courses. (Kinginger & Belz, 2005, p. 411)*

In fact, the issue of technology in study abroad is controversial. Some have advocated a restricted use of technology while abroad, so as to maximize real-life contact with the members of the target culture (Doerr, 2013). Some programs go so far as to forbid use of phones while participating in the program (Godwin-Jones, 2016). On the other hand, online access to home communities can be a tremendous help in psychological adjustment and in recovering from culture shock. Maintaining a blog, diary, or reflective journal provides a mechanism for sharing the experience and reflecting on what one discovers, as described in the last section of this chapter.

In addition to study abroad, there are other avenues for university-age students to have meaningful longer-term encounters with a foreign culture. There are opportunities to engage in volunteer services abroad, through government agencies, NGOs, or religious groups. One method that has a long history, particularly in Europe, is to serve as an "au pair", living with a host family and helping with childcare and other light domestic work. Working abroad in other capacities is possible as well, although finding appropriate jobs and obtaining necessary work permits, depending on the country, may be difficult. All these options carry with them the advantage over being a tourist or student that they tend to offer more complete integration into the everyday life in the foreign country. Living with a host family or entering into a working environment automatically supplies contacts with members of the culture. Particularly attractive are internships abroad, which, in addition to supplying cultural and work experience, offer the possibility of future employment.

Figure 7.2.7: Columbian working as an au pair

Achieving intercultural competence

Learning about how a different culture enacts and talks about habitual actions can ease communication. This can help significantly in being able to speak and act appropriately. According to Spitzberg & Cupach's work (1984) on developing intercultural competence, *appropriateness* is one of the two major components of intercultural communication competence, the other being *effectiveness* in communication, i.e., being able to understand and speak confidently and intelligibly. That does not mean just being able to speak a second language, but also how to relate to others through adjusting communication styles and nonverbal behaviors. One might be able to be effective in a job setting, for example, able to get the work done sufficiently, but not necessarily be doing it in a culturally appropriate manner.

Other researchers argue in favor of different components for intercultural communication competence. In some cases, this may be a quite extensive list. Spizberg (1994), for example, gives an example of intercultural skills, abilities, and attitudes containing 45 elements. Such long checklists may not be the most effective way to categorize competence, as Sptizberg (1994) comments:

> *While each study portrays a reasonable list of abilities or attitudes, there is no sense of integration or coherence across lists. It is impossible to tell which skills are most important in which situations, or even how such skills relate to each other (p. 380).*

Spitzberg suggests a more productive approach through an integrative model of intercultural competence that sees competence as an interconnected set of competences using the same three categories discussed in the initial chapter of this book:

- Knowledge (cognition)
- Skills (behavior)
- Motivation (emotion)

Knowledge involves not only having concrete information about the history, geography, worldview, and other components of a target culture and its representatives, but also how to go about locating new knowledge. That includes knowing which media and online services tend to supply reliable information. The knowledge needed is not just about others, but also about ourselves. Enhanced self-knowledge, and self-confidence, come from having a perspective outside of ourselves.

Skills involve the ability to speak a language intelligibly, as well as having achieved pragmatic and strategic competence – how to use appropriate expressions in different contexts and disentangle oneself from communication breakdowns and misunderstandings. That includes nonverbal behavior. Also important is the ability to build relationships; how to use the appropriate and effective verbal and nonverbal resources depending on both the individual and the circumstances.

Motivation means becoming empathetic as well as being open to new ideas and perspectives. Highly desirable is a willingness to engage in new experiences and relationships. That can translate at times into risk taking, or at least venturing outside of one's normal comfort zone. These experiences can be person-to-person or online. They might involve, as discussed in the next section, experiences mediated through personal stories.

Through encountering and adjusting to a new culture, we gain new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, adding a new second language/culture persona to our identity. That process in turn makes us more adaptable to future encounters with different cultures. This kind of intercultural transformation provides us with more life choices and opportunities.

7.3: Technically Speaking - Reflective writing

For Eva Hoffman, the diary she kept chronicling her new life in the US was a crucial factor in making sense of her experiences and in recovering her own voice. It's significant that she did this in written form; she expresses her new English self in this format. Writing provides her the opportunity to reflect on her experience, as she needs to put down in words what it is that she is experiencing. This can be a valuable tool for anyone struggling with identity issues or trying to make sense of life experiences. It can be of particular importance for those studying or working abroad, as there is often a need to explore the meaning of experiences, analyze how they fit in to previous experiences, and what they might mean for continuing to develop our cultural and linguistic repertoire.

In addition to writing for one's own self, it may be helpful to share one's thoughts with others. Today, the Internet supplies a host of options for doing that. Blogging about one's experience provides an easily accessible mechanism. Including pictures and videos can provide others with more concrete representations of one's experiences. Smartphones allow that to be done in any location and without the forethought and equipment that used to be necessary. Services like *Twitter* or *Instagram* offer those opportunities as well. Using online communication options can supply a continuous channel of contact between the sojourner and the friends and family back home. This can be instrumental in allowing others to share in one's personal development, thus potentially mitigating the sense on returning that no one can understand or appreciate what one has experienced and learned. In her model of cross-cultural adaptation, Young Yim Kim (2001) advocates continued communication with people from one's own culture, as they can serve as a bridge between the two worlds. She also stresses the importance of media, with one's own culture media serving also as a bridge and as a resource upon return to reduce reentry culture shock. Paying attention to host media can also help in the adjustment process.

If traveling abroad as a student, one might consider other ways to document one's experience abroad. One way to do that is to create an online portfolio in which one includes written reflections, as well as media and cultural artifacts. There is increasing interest in the academic and professional worlds in documenting not just formal learning from in-school experiences, but also informal learning. Maintaining a portfolio is one way of doing that. One of the available tools for that purpose is the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*, developed by the Council of Europe, which enables input from a variety of possible sources; it is in the process of adding a companion tool for incorporation of visual media. A portfolio has the benefit of showing development over time.

7.4: Encountering Other Cultures (Summary)

From theory to practice…

– *Practice active listening and mindful observation*. That includes watching out for tones, gestures, body language, and facial expressions. Pauses or silence may be sending a message. Hearing the other person out "gives face", showing that you respect that person and his/her views.

– *In intercultural encounters, be prepared and willing to have your ego bruised and your worldview challenged.* It's difficult for many people to be open to alternative views in particular areas, such as lifestyle, politics, or religion. Successful intercultural encounters do not require you to change your views and convictions, but they do require a willingness to accept that others have a right to different beliefs. It's helpful to keep in mind that worldviews are socially constructed.

– *Have realistic expectations of both traveling and returning home*. Imagined journeys often have little relationship to the lived experience. Knowing the language of the host culture can be a tremendous boost in adjusting, but it won't necessarily provide a seamless transition. You may well find that the language you learned in the classroom is quite different from what's spoken on the streets. Upon your return, you shouldn't expect friends and family to be as enthusiastic as you about aspects of the culture you have experienced. Be prepared for indifference.

– *Be as informed as possible about the host country (i.e. customs, geography, politics), but also about your own country*. When abroad, others will see you as an informant when it comes to your own culture and expect you to have knowledge about cultural institutions, politics, sports, etc. They may well expect you to have an opinion about current events they have read about or seen on the news. Before you leave, it's good to learn basic facts about the physical and cultural geography of the country you are visiting, such as largest cities, major transportation networks, regional differences.

For discussion and reflection...

On conflict...

After watching the video on intercultural conflict styles...

How would you describe your conflict communication style? Give an example of a conflict and what role you played in its resolution (or lack of resolution).

After reading the article, "Keeping face in China"...

How would you compare the importance of "face" in Asian cultures and in the U.S? Is respect (not getting "dissed") important to you? Is it important in your dealings with others?

Am I rootless or am I free?

After reading "Am I rootless, or am I free? 'Third culture kids' like me make it up as we go along"...
What are advantages and disadvantages of growing up as a "third-culture kid"? What different perspectives might one have growing up this way?

On acculturation...
Think about planning a trip to another country. What preparations would you make to ease the acculturation process? Have you ever experienced culture shock or reverse culture shock? Describe your experiences.

On mediated encounters and the Internet...

After watching the TED videos by Turkle and Edry...

Comment on the two different views on connecting with others through the Internet, and the notion of "I share, therefore I am". How do the views presented correspond to your experience using social media?

Key terms

- **Acculturation**: The process of cultural change that results from ongoing contact between two or more culturally different groups
- **Adjustment phase**: Third stage of culture shock, in which people actively seek out effective problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies

- **Assimilation**: Mode of acculturation in which an individual takes on the behaviors and language of the host culture while relinquishing ties with the native culture
- **Asylum seeker**: A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another
- **Conflict resolution**: Two or more parties seeking to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them
- **Cultural schema**: The familiar and pre-acquainted knowledge one uses when entering a familiar situation in his/her own culture
- **Culture shock**: The effects associated with the tension and anxiety of entering a new culture, combined with the sensations of loss, confusion, and powerlessness resulting from the forfeiture of cultural norms and social rituals
- **Discourse**: Conventionally, the use of words to exchange thoughts and ideas; in postmodern terms, a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts
- **Ethnic cleansing:** The systematic forced removal of ethnic or religious groups from a given territory by a majority group
- **Expatriate**: A person who lives outside their native country
- **Face negotiation theory**: Theory first postulated by stella ting-toomey to explain how different cultures manage conflict
- **Face**: Favorable social impression that a person wants others to have of him or her
- **Facework**: Behaviors or messages (verbal or non-verbal) that maintain, restore, or save face
- **Immigrant**: Person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country
- **Integration**: Mode of acculturation in which the individual develops a kind of bicultural orientation that successfully blends and synthesizes cultural dimensions from both groups while maintaining an identity in each group
- **Marginalization**: Mode of acculturation in which one belongs neither to the dominant culture nor wholly to one's native culture
- **Mutual-face**: Respect and dignity of the group as a whole (primary interest in collectivistic cultures)
- **Other-face**: Paying attention to the needs and desires of the other party in a conflict
- **Pragmatic transfer**: The influence of learners' pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of l2 pragmatic information
- **Reentry shock**: The effects associated with the tension and anxiety of returning to one's native culture after an extended stay in a foreign culture
- **Refugee**: A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster
- **Self-face**: Seeking one's own interest during conflict (primary interest in individualistic cultures)
- **Separation**: Mode of acculturation in which there is voluntary segregation in ethnic group from dominant culture
- **Sojourner**: Person staying for an extended period of time in a place as a traveler, student, or worker
- **Speech act**: An utterance that has performative function in language and communication

Resources

Books

- Alda, A. (2017). If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face? My Adventures in the Art and Science of Relating and Communicating. New York: Random House
- Everett,,D. (2008). Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle. Vintage Books
- Hoffman, E. (1989). *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.* London: Penguin Books.

Conflict resolution

- Intercultural Conflict Styles

Presentation by Jonathan Stuart of Hennepin Technical College, based on theories by Mitch Hammer

- Aicha el-Wafi + Phyllis Rodriguez: The mothers who found forgiveness, friendship

TED description: "Phyllis Rodriguez and Aicha el-Wafi have a powerful friendship born of unthinkable loss. Rodriguez' son was killed in the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001; el-Wafi's son Zacarias Moussaoui was convicted of a role in those attacks and is serving a life sentence. In hoping to find peace, these two moms have come to understand and respect one another.

- Anand Giridharadas: A tale of two Americas. And the mini-mart where they collided

TED description: "Ten days after 9/11, a shocking attack at a Texas mini-mart shattered the lives of two men: the victim and the attacker. In this stunning talk, Anand Giridharadas, author of "The True American," tells the story of what happened next. It's a parable about the two paths an American life can take, and a powerful call for reconciliation."

- Vincent Cochetel: I was held hostage for 317 days. Here's what I thought about…

TED description: "Vincent Cochetel was held hostage for 317 days in 1998, while working for the UN High Commissioner on Refugees in Chechnya. For the first time, he recounts the experience — from what it was like to live in a dark, underground chamber, chained to his bed, to the unexpected conversations he had with his captors. With lyricism and power, he explains why he continues his work today. Since 2000, attacks on humanitarian aid workers have tripled — and he wonders what that rise may signal to the world."

- Kailash Satyarthi: How to make peace? Get angry

TED description: ""How did a young man born into a high caste in India come to free 83,000 children from slavery? Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Kailash Satyarthi offers a surprising piece of advice to anyone who wants to change the world for the better: Get angry at injustice. In this powerful talk, he shows how a lifetime of peace-making sprang from a lifetime of outrage."

- Margaret Heffernan: Dare to disagree

TED description: "Most people instinctively avoid conflict, but as Margaret Heffernan shows us, good disagreement is central to progress. She illustrates (sometimes counterintuitively) how the best partners aren't echo chambers — and how great research teams, relationships and businesses allow people to deeply disagree."

Acculturation

- Aziz Abu Sarah: For more tolerance, we need more ... tourism?

TED description: "Aziz Abu Sarah is a Palestinian activist with an unusual approach to peace-keeping: Be a tourist. The TED Fellow shows how simple interactions with people in different cultures can erode decades of hate. He starts with Palestinians visiting Israelis and moves beyond."

- Melissa Fleming: Let's help refugees thrive, not just survive

TED description: "50 million people in the world today have been forcefully displaced from their home — a level not seen since WWII. Right now, more than 3 million Syrian refugees are seeking shelter in neighboring countries. In Lebanon, half of these refugees are children; only 20% are in school. Melissa Fleming of the UN's refugee agency calls on all of us to make sure that refugee camps are healing places where people can develop the skills they'll need to rebuild their hometowns."

On travel and culture shock

- Coping with Culture shock CNN article
- Traveler's Checklist U.S. Government tips for travelers abroad
- After Study Abroad: A toolkit for returning students From World Learning
- Using Diaries to deal with intercultural encounters From the "Interculture Project" at Lancaster University

Mediated encounters (journalism, books, Internet)

- Sherry Turkle: Connected, but alone?

TED description: "As we expect more from technology, do we expect less from each other? Sherry Turkle studies how our devices and online personas are redefining human connection and communication — and asks us to think deeply about the new kinds of connection we want to have."

- Lisa Bu: How books can open your mind

TED description: "What happens when a dream you've held since childhood … doesn't come true? As Lisa Bu adjusted to a new life in the United States, she turned to books to expand her mind and create a new path for herself. She shares her unique approach to reading in this lovely, personal talk about the magic of books."

- Maria Bezaitis: The surprising need for strangeness

TED description: "In our digital world, social relations have become mediated by data. Without even realizing it, we're barricading ourselves against strangeness — people and ideas that don't fit the patterns of who we already know, what we already like and where we've already been. A call for technology to deliver us to what and who we need, even if it's unfamiliar."

- Meera Vijayann: Find your voice against gender violence

TED description: "This talk begins with a personal story of sexual violence that may be difficult to listen to. But that's the point, says citizen journalist Meera Vijayann: Speaking out on tough, taboo topics is the spark for change. Vijayann uses digital media to speak honestly about her experience of gender violence in her home country of India — and calls on others to speak out too."

- Ronny Edry: Israel and Iran: A love story?

TED description: "When war between Israel and Iran seemed imminent, Israeli graphic designer Ronny Edry shared a poster on Facebook of himself and his daughter with a bold message: 'Iranians ... we [heart] you.' Other Israelis quickly created their own posters with the same message — and Iranians responded in kind. The simple act of communication inspired surprising Facebook communities like 'Israel loves Iran,' 'Iran loves Israel' and even 'Palestine loves Israel.'"

Personal stories

- The Making of Malala Yousafzai

The story of Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai told by The Times's Adam B. Ellick, who made a 2009 documentary about her before she was an international star.

- Jacqueline Novogratz: An escape from poverty

TED description: "Jacqueline Novogratz tells a moving story of an encounter in a Nairobi slum with Jane, a former prostitute, whose dreams of escaping poverty, of becoming a doctor and of getting married were fulfilled in an unexpected way."

- Zak Ebrahim: I am the son of a terrorist: Here's how I chose peace

TED description: "If you're raised on dogma and hate, can you choose a different path? Zak Ebrahim was just seven years old when his father helped plan the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. His story is shocking, powerful and, ultimately, inspiring."

- Nadia Al-Sakkaf: See Yemen through my eyes

TED description: "As political turmoil in Yemen continues, the editor of the Yemen Times, Nadia Al-Sakkaf, talks at TEDGlobal with host Pat Mitchell. Al-Sakkaf's independent, English-language paper is vital for sharing news — and for sharing a new vision of Yemen and of that country's women as equal partners in work and change."

- Asher Hasan: My message of peace from Pakistan

TED description: "One of a dozen Pakistanis who came to TEDIndia despite security hassles entering the country, TED Fellow Asher Hasan shows photos of ordinary Pakistanis that drive home a profound message for citizens of all nations: look beyond disputes, and see the humanity we share."

- Boyd Varty: What I learned from Nelson Mandela

TED description: "'In the cathedral of the wild, we get to see the best parts of ourselves reflected back to us.' Boyd Varty, a wildlife activist, shares stories of animals, humans and their interrelatedness, or 'ubuntu' — defined as, 'I am, because of you.' And he dedicates the talk to South African leader Nelson Mandela, the human embodiment of that same great-hearted, generous spirit."

- Amy Choi: How stories are told around the world

TED essay: "It's said there isn't anyone you couldn't learn to love, once you've heard their story. Dave Isay knows that. The ability to honor every human by listening to what they have to say about themselves is central to StoryCorps, the nonprofit he founded in 2003."

- Dave Isay: 10 Real-life Love stories

From storycorps recordings

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