CHAPTER 1

Why study language and intercultural communication?

All of us are affected by the decisions and actions of people whose faces we may never see, whose language we may not speak, and whose names we would not recognize — and they, too, are affected by us. Our well-being, and in some cases, our survival, depends on recognizing this truth and taking responsibility as global citizens for it. 

(Gerzon 2010: xii)

The key to community is the acceptance, in fact, the celebration of our individual and cultural differences. It is also the key to world peace. 

(Peck 1978: 186)

learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1 define intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, and cross-cultural communication
2 identify and describe seven imperatives for studying language and intercultural communication today
3 explain how studying language and intercultural communication can lead to increased self-awareness and understanding of people who have a different linguistic and cultural background
4 describe the characteristics of an ethical intercultural communicator.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by introducing various understandings of the terms ‘intercultural communication’, ‘interpersonal communication’ and ‘cross-cultural communication’. We then examine seven imperatives for studying language and intercultural communication: globalization, internationalization, advances in transportation and communication technologies, changing demographics, conflict and peace, ethics and personal growth and responsibility. Finally, we review the characteristics of an ethical intercultural communicator.
DEFINITIONS

There are many definitions of intercultural communication. Each reflects the author's disciplinary roots and understandings of communication and culture, core elements that are explored in more detail in the next three chapters.

Intercultural and interpersonal communication

Rogers and Steinfatt (1999), communication specialists, define "intercultural communication" simply as 'the exchange of information between individuals who are unalike culturally' (p. 1). This is similar to Berry et al.’s (2011) conception. These social and cross-cultural psychologists refer to intercultural communication as the 'exchange of information (verbally or nonverbally) between members of different cultural populations' (Berry et al. 2011: 471).

For Müller-Jacquier (2004), an applied linguist, intercultural communication denotes 'a peculiar communication situation: the varied language and discourse strategies people from different cultural backgrounds use in direct, face-to-face situations' (p. 295). Zhu Hua offers a broader view, incorporating both cross-cultural and intercultural elements in her definition. For this applied linguist, intercultural communication refers to

a situation where people from different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other; or a subject of study that is concerned with interactions among people of different cultural and ethnic groups and comparative studies of communication patterns across cultures.

(Zhu Hua 2011: 422)

Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, speech communication specialists, provide a more detailed definition than most and, not surprisingly, they emphasize elements in the communication process: 'Intercultural communication involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event' (Samovar et al. 2010: 12). For Jandt (2007), who is also a speech communication scholar, intercultural communication 'generally refers to face-to-face interactions among people of diverse cultures' (p. 36). In a later edition, he states that intercultural communication refers 'not only to the communication between individuals of diverse cultural identities but also to the communication between diverse groups' (Jandt 2010: 18). The relationship between language, culture and identity is explored in Chapter 6.

While some definitions focus on 'the exchange of information' between individuals from different cultural groups, Jack and Phipps (2005) understand intercultural communication to be 'a participatory set of actions in the world', that is, 'dialogical and material exchanges between members of cultural groupings' (p. 181). Their definition acknowledges the interpersonal, dynamic nature of intercultural dialogue and interaction. For these applied linguists, cultural membership is 'marked variously by race, ethnicity, nationality, language, class, age and gender' (p. 181).

Critical intercultural communication scholars (Rona Halualani, Adrian Holliday, Dreama Moon, Thomas Nakayama and Kathryn Sorrells, among others) sharply criticize static notions of culture and cultural groups. These interculturalists advocate a broader, more flexible conceptualization of culture than is evident in depictions of 'culture as nation', whereby nations
or communities are viewed as homogeneous and the diversity within groups is largely ignored. We return to this contentious issue in later chapters.

For this text, **intercultural communication** generally refers to interpersonal communication between individuals or groups who are affiliated with different cultural groups and/or have been socialized in different cultural (and, in most cases, linguistic) environments. This includes such cultural differences as age, class, gender, ethnicity, language, race, nationality and physical/mental ability. **Interpersonal communication** is ‘a form of communication that involves a small number of individuals who are interacting exclusively with one another and who therefore have the ability both to adapt their messages specifically for those others and to obtain immediate interpretations from them’ (Lustig & Koester 2010: 19).

Nowadays, intercultural interaction may take place in face-to-face encounters, through written discourse or online (e.g. Skype, Facebook). Intercultural communication very often involves a second language, with either one or both interlocutors using a language that is not a mother tongue. Genuine intercultural communication goes beyond mere ‘information-sharing’ and narrow conceptions of cultural membership, whereby culture is reduced to nationality and variations **within** cultural groups are largely ignored. In conceptions of intercultural communication it is important to recognize the dynamic, interpersonal dimension inherent in relationship building between people from diverse backgrounds.

**The difference between cross-cultural and intercultural communication**

Although the terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ are sometimes used interchangeably, **cross-cultural communication** generally refers to the comparison of communication behaviours and patterns in two or more cultures, while **intercultural communication** involves interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst 2003). **Cross-cultural communication research** typically compares and contrasts native discourse and communication behaviours (or styles) in different cultures. For example, the politeness norms or conflict negotiation strategies in Japanese management meetings may be compared with those in Irish management meetings. In another cross-cultural communication study, one might examine the behaviour of business students in case discussions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and compare it with the behaviour of business students in case discussions in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In contrast, **intercultural communication research** involves an investigation of interpersonal interaction between individuals (or groups) from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The form of this intercultural contact varies. It may be face-to-face or involve communication through written discourse. With advances in technology, more researchers are paying attention to intercultural interaction that is taking place online (e.g. Skype calls, chat groups, email, second language classes with online intercultural exchange). Intercultural communication studies may focus on the verbal or nonverbal behaviour, attitudes or perceptions of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interacting with each other (e.g. face-to-face, online, through written discourse). The interlocutors may have a different first language and speak a second language that is common to all of them (e.g. an international language such as English). They may speak the native language of one of the participants or a combination of languages (e.g. code-mixing) as they interact with each other and build a relationship (Jenkins 2013; Mackenzie 2013).

An example of intercultural communication is a South Korean university student in Seoul interacting in English with an exchange student from Sweden. In this intercultural situation,
neither of the speakers are using their first language and both have been socialized in a
different linguistic and cultural environment. In another example, an American exchange
student in Oxford is conversing on Skype with an Australian friend in Brisbane. While both
speakers are using their first language, they are using different varieties of English and have
been socialized in different cultural contexts, so this, too, is an intercultural encounter. In
another scenario, an elderly Buddhist monk in Bangkok is conversing with a young, Thai
female who is a Christian. While they share the same nationality and ethnicity, the interactants
have a different religious background and also differ in terms of age, occupation and gender.
This is another example of intercultural communication.

From an intercultural perspective, one might observe classroom interactions involving
students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, at a university in the
Netherlands, one could investigate the communication behaviours and interaction of Chinese,
Dutch and French business majors in English-medium tutorials. An intercultural researcher
could focus on the language and intercultural learning experiences of students who move
temporarily from one educational and geographic setting to another (e.g. international
exchange students) or analyse the discourse of immigrants who are interacting with locals in
their new country of residence. Culture shock, adjustment/adaptation, social networks, inter-
cultural friendships/relations, identity shifts and culture/language-learning strategies in a
new environment are just some of the interests and concerns of interculturalists. All of these
topics (and many others) are explored in this text.

**REASONS TO STUDY LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

There are many imperatives for learning more about intercultural communication, and the
impact of language in intercultural relations. Because of globalizing forces, internationalization,
transportation and technological advances, changing demographics and conflict situations,
ethical intercultural communication is now more important than at any other time in the history
of our planet. We need to learn how to adapt and thrive in unfamiliar environments, and con-
tribute to our planet in a constructive, peaceful manner. Through interaction with people from
diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, we can learn more about ourselves and discover
respectful ways to build and nurture intercultural relationships.

**Globalization**

No matter where you live, you are impacted by globalizing forces. While the exchange of ideas,
goods and people is not new, in the last few decades we have been experiencing an unprece-
dented intensification of economic, cultural, political, linguistic and social ties (Fairclough
2006; Held et al. 1999). This phenomenon, **globalization**, involves ‘a process of removing
government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an
“open”, “borderless” world economy’ (Scholte 2000: 16). Rogers and Hart (2002: 12) charac-
terize globalization as ‘the degree to which the same set of economic rules applies everywhere
in an increasingly interdependent world’. Europe’s Maastricht Treaty and the North American
Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for example, were signed to reduce tariffs and barriers to
international trade among neighbouring countries.

Knight and deWit (1997: 6) offer a much broader conceptualization of globalization,
Defining it as ‘the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, [and] ideas . . .
across borders’, while Appadurai (1990) simply refers to it as ‘a dense and fluid network
of global flows’. Inda and Rosaldo’s (2006) understanding is particularly relevant to our study
of language and intercultural communication. Acknowledging the cultural dimension, these social
scientists characterize globalization as

spatial-temporal processes, operating on a global scale that rapidly cut across national
boundaries, drawing more and more of the world into webs of interconnection, integrating
and stretching cultures and communities across space and time, and compressing our
spatial and temporal horizons.

(Inda & Rosaldo 2006: 9)

Due to this ‘intensification of worldwide social relations’, Giddens (1990: 64) observes that
‘local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.’ Gerzon
(2010) concurs, noting that humans are affected by ‘the decisions and actions’ of people in
other parts of the world that they may never meet. As well as closer ties in trade and commerce,
globalizing forces are triggering profound changes in the social, cultural, political and linguistic
dimensions of communities across the globe. For example, this interdependence is influencing
language policies on all continents (e.g. the designation of English as the medium-of-
instruction in educational institutions in non-English-speaking countries). It is also altering
linguistic codes (e.g. increasing the mixing of English expressions with a local language, a
process that is referred to as ‘code-mixing’).

Due to colonialism and globalization, there are also more varieties of English in the world
today, which is why most scholars now refer to World Englishes, rather than ‘World English’. As
Sharifian (2012: 310) explains, ‘English has not *spread* as a monolithic code, but has become
a pluricentric language: many new varieties have developed, and are still being developed . . .’. Around the world, the number of localized or indigenized varieties of English (e.g. Cameroon English, Indian English, Malaysian English, Nigerian English) continues to grow.

Further, Ryan (2006: 28) argues that ‘globalization could not happen without its own
language, and that language is unquestionably English.’ According to David Crystal (2010),
an English-language expert, non-native speakers of English now outnumber native speakers
by three to one. In this age of rapid globalization, English has become a lingua franca in many
parts of the world, that is, it is ‘a language which is used in communication between speakers
who have no native language in common’ (Trudgill 2003: 80).

Globalizing forces are also creating more interest in other languages. For example, in the
late 1970s, China’s Open Door Policy and subsequent entry into the World Trade Organization
(WTO) in 2001 have had a significant impact on the number of non-Chinese studying Mandarin
(Putonghua) around the world. In 2004, the government of the People’s Republic of China
began establishing Confucius Institutes across the globe to encourage trade ties and promote
Chinese culture and language abroad. As of October 2010, there were 322 Confucius
Institutes and 337 Confucius Classrooms in 94 countries and regions (Xinhua 2010). China’s
Ministry of Education estimates that 100 million people overseas were learning Chinese in
2010; by 2020, the government aims to establish 1,000 Confucius Institutes worldwide so
one can expect the number of second language speakers of Chinese to continue to rise along
with China’s increasing global influence in other spheres (e.g. global politics, trade and
commerce, tourism).

When reflecting on the impact of globalization, McGrew (1992: 65) argues that these
‘patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the
world as a single social space' (e.g. global community). On a personal level, this means that events, behaviours and values from far away are affecting many aspects of our daily habits or 'ways of being' (e.g. the products we buy, the language and expressions we use in online chats, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the music we listen to, the television programmes we watch, the Internet sites we access).

While some view this growing interdependence of societies and cultures as 'an opportunity to be embraced, allowing people to break free from the stifling restrictions of nationality and tradition' (Ryan 2006: 26), for others, globalization is 'a threat, removing the security of familiar local networks and imposing an unwanted external uniformity' (p. 26). Opponents argue that the process of homogenization is leading to the loss of linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (e.g. the McDonaldization and Anglicization of the world). For some, the global domination of American culture is at the expense of traditional, localized diversity. In response, in some regions there is an intensification of localism, that is, a range of political philosophies have emerged that prioritize the local (e.g. the local production and consumption of goods, local control of government, promotion of local culture and local identity) (O'Riordan 2001).

Critics also point to the widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and argue that the historical legacy of colonization and globalizing forces have exacerbated inequality, that is, unequal access to power and resources (e.g. cultural, economic, educational, linguistic, political, social, technological). For Sorrells (2013: 32), globalization is characterized by 'a magnification of inequities based on flows of capital, labor, and access to education and

Plate 1.1 Tourism in China has increased in recent years and there has also been a dramatic rise in the number of Mainland Chinese who are visiting other parts of the world © Jane Jackson
technology, as well as the increasing power of multinational corporations and global financial institutions’.

As noted by Canagarajah (2006), McKay (2010) and many other applied linguists, differential opportunities to learn English can divide societies. With better schooling, proficient speakers of this international language may gain admission to more prestigious institutions of higher education. They may then be offered better-paying jobs and rise to much higher ranks in their careers (e.g. civil service, business, education). Conversely, in some parts of the world, those who do not have access to quality English language education are left behind.

When the World Trade Organization (WTO) meets, loud and sometimes violent protests erupt, providing an outlet for deeply-felt concerns about growing inequality and poverty among people who have not benefited from globalization. This tension also provides enormous challenges for intercultural relations.

Whether one’s conception of globalization is positive or negative it remains the most powerful force shaping our world today and in the foreseeable future. It is this interconnectedness that is bringing about more frequent intercultural contact. This, in turn, necessitates the development of effective intercultural communication skills as well as knowledge of more than one language, especially one with an international status. Whether your career path lies in applied linguistics, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), the civil service, business, international relations, health care or a completely different line of work, in

Plate 1.2 This McDonald’s restaurant is situated in the heart of Beijing. Critics of globalization fear that the ‘McDonaldization’ of the world is leading to a lack of cultural diversity. What do you think? © Jane Jackson
this new global world, intercultural understanding and skills are apt to be necessary for your future career as well as your personal life. In this highly competitive world, bilingualism or multilingualism is also a requirement for many and an advantage for most.

**Internationalization**

Accelerating globalization has resulted in increased investment in training for knowledge industries (organizations or industries dependent on a workforce with advanced scientific or technological knowledge and skills) and second or foreign language teaching. ELT (English language teaching), for example, has become a global industry. Higher levels of interconnectedness are also pushing educational institutions to devote more attention to international and intercultural dimensions of learning, teaching and research. There is now a high demand for well-educated, technologically advanced, bilingual or multilingual individuals who can interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and perform successfully in the competitive, global marketplace.

Sensitive to increasing global interdependency and the new challenges facing graduates in all disciplines, institutions of higher education around the world have been revisiting their mission and responsibilities. In the process, most have found themselves confronting a range of challenging questions, including: How can they best prepare their students to become...
global citizens and professionals in today’s diverse world? What steps can they take to help students become internationally knowledgeable, bilingual (or multilingual) and interculturally sensitive? How can they foster intercultural competence, that is, ‘the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (Deardorff 2006: 249)? How can institutions provide students with a transformative international education? What action is needed to attract students and faculty from other countries to their campus? What initiatives might help faculty develop an international, global perspective and enhance their intercultural competence?

Professional leaders in teacher education are asking how they can best ready pre-service teachers for classrooms with linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Those charged with the preparation of second language educators (e.g. TESOL professionals) seek the most effective ways to deal with the cultural and intercultural dimensions of language learning and teaching. Administrators in schools have also become more aware of the need for their staff to become interculturally competent. Whether in applied linguistics, general education, business, health care, law, science or other disciplines, educators are grappling with similar demands and issues.

The policy-based response of many tertiary institutions is internationalization, which Kälvermark and van der Wende (1997: 19) define as ‘any systematic sustained effort aimed at making higher education more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets’. More specifically, internationalization entails ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education’ (Knight 2004: 11). In many parts of the world, primary and secondary schools are also incorporating international, intercultural learning into their curricula, especially in contexts where there is a large immigrant population.

Internationalization at home (IaH)

The term internationalization at home (IaH) refers to ‘the embedding of international/intercultural perspectives into local educational settings’ (Turner & Robson 2008: 15) to raise the global awareness, cultural understanding and intercultural competence of faculty and students. In fact, you are likely using this text in an intercultural communication course that is designed to help meet the IaH aims of your institution, faculty or department.

To provide local students with more exposure to other languages and cultures, many institutions of higher education are taking steps to draw international students to their home campus (e.g. semester- or year-long exchange students, full-degree students) (Jenkins 2013; Rumbley et al. 2012). Whether motivated by economic necessity or the desire for a more diverse, multicultural environment, tertiary institutions in non-English-speaking countries are increasingly offering courses and even full degrees in this international language in order to attract students from abroad. In Europe, for example, between 2002 and 2007 the number of English-taught degree programmes tripled (from around 700 to nearly 2,400) (Wächter & Maiworm 2008). At my university in Hong Kong, which has a bilingual (Chinese-English) policy, more courses are now being offered in English to accommodate incoming semester- and year-long exchange students who are unfamiliar with Cantonese. International students also have the opportunity to study Chinese languages and cultures.

Educators and administrators are discovering that increasing the number of international students on campus does not ensure meaningful intercultural interaction with local students. With this in mind, more educators and administrators are designing a range of innovative
activities and events to encourage more interpersonal, intercultural contact (e.g. informal outings, social gatherings, international clubs, a ‘buddy system’ or mentorship scheme linking local and international students). On campus, administrators of student accommodation (e.g. hostels, dormitories) may also encourage local and international students to share rooms or common areas (e.g. lounges).

Ultimately, these IaH activities aim to prepare individuals for life in an interconnected world whereby interaction with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds is increasingly the norm.

Education abroad

As well as ‘internationalization at home’ (IaH) initiatives, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students who are gaining some form of education abroad, that is, education outside their home country (e.g. study abroad, internships, work, volunteering, directed travel with learning goals) (Forum on Education Abroad 2011). According to a 2012 report issued by the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 2010 at least 3.6 million students were enrolled in tertiary education abroad, up from two million in 2000.

At your institution, you may find a range of education abroad options to choose from. Perhaps you can join a year-abroad or semester-long exchange programme. If you have an advanced level of proficiency in the medium-of-instruction in the host institution you may study alongside host nationals in regular subject courses and then, with the necessary approval, transfer credits to your home institution.

Another option may be a language and cultural studies tour, an intensive summer language immersion programme, a regional or international conference for students (e.g. intercultural citizenship or global leadership forum, peace camp), or volunteering. You might also do a practicum or fieldwork abroad (e.g. anthropology, global health, language teacher education). More and more, university students are opting to take part in short-term sojourns, ranging from four to seven weeks, or micro-sojourns lasting three weeks or less (e.g. language enhancement programmes). If you have already participated in some form of education abroad, you can share your language and intercultural experiences with other students.

Following the emergence of English as the global language of internationalization, more non-English-speaking countries now offer study-abroad students exposure to local (and global) course content through English (Jackson 2012; Jenkins 2013; Rumbley et al. 2012). Business majors from Vietnam, for example, may take English-medium courses in management or marketing in Sweden or the Netherlands. In Hong Kong, incoming exchange students from Germany and Malaysia may do all of their coursework in English or, alternatively, study the local language (e.g. Cantonese) instead of or in addition to coursework in English. Whatever the language, intercultural interaction with host nationals or other international students (inside and outside the classroom) should be an important dimension of education abroad.

The amount of support provided to education abroad participants varies greatly. In faculty-led, short-term programmes, participants may receive pre-sojourn preparation, ongoing support during the sojourn (stay abroad) and guided debriefings when they return home. This level of support is not common, however, and longer-term sojourners usually receive even less guidance, if any. Most institutions offer only brief pre-departure orientation sessions for exchange students, which largely focus on logistics (e.g. the transfer of credits, safety and security). As educators and administrators become more familiar with recent education abroad
research, they recognize the need for more intensive, systematic programming. For example, intercultural communication courses, like the one you may be taking now, are increasingly being offered to students in all disciplines to help optimize the time spent in a foreign country. Courses of this nature can also help participants develop the (inter)cultural knowledge and skills that are essential for successful intercultural interaction in one’s home environment in all areas of life (e.g. academic, personal, professional). They can also help students to make sense of intercultural encounters that have not unfolded as expected.

As educational institutions play a central role in the formation of citizens and future professionals, intercultural education is vital to help prepare students for responsible intercultural citizenship in our global community, whether in the home setting or abroad. International, intercultural education and global citizenship are discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.

**Advances in transportation and communication technologies**

Recent developments in transportation and communication technologies now link the far corners of the globe, dramatically altering the world in which we live. By diminishing the physical barriers of time and distance, advances in both domains are greatly increasing the exchange of people, commodities, information and ideas. Today, modern transportation systems (e.g. air, rail, road, water, underground) facilitate movement of people and goods within countries, and from one country to another; vast geographic distances can be covered in far less time, with less cost, and with greater ease than in the past. Rapid trains, jet aircrafts, modern highways, high-speed ferries and other advanced forms of transport are all making it possible for travellers, services and products to move between countries and continents in record numbers. These transportation enhancements are bolstering economic growth, socio-political ties and intercultural contact (e.g. tourism, business, educational exchange).

This unprecedented population mobility is enabling more intercultural interaction both within nations and across borders. Technological developments in transport and communication are making it possible for people from diverse language and cultural backgrounds to interact more easily and frequently than ever before. Nowadays, we are in more contact with people from other cultural backgrounds than at any time in human history.

**Telecommunication** (e.g. communication through telephones, telegraphs, the Internet) and the mass media are also facilitating the dissemination and exchange of information over significant distances. Mass media refers to a message created by a person or a group of people sent through a transmitting device (a medium) to a large audience or market (e.g. books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, television, movies, the Internet) (Campbell et al. 2011). The mass media and rapid advances in digital communication technology have enabled more and more people to connect in virtual space. The escalation of intercultural interaction, in both domestic and international settings, is no longer necessarily face-to-face.

In 1962, Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian educator, philosopher and scholar, coined the term **global village** to refer to the way the world is ‘shrinking’, as people become increasingly interconnected through media and other communication advances. He predicted that the ease and speed of electronic technology would have a profound impact on global communication and he was certainly right! Today, people from different parts of the world can interact with each other through instant messaging, Facebook, email, blogs and websites on the Internet, as well as through older technology such as fax machines and voice mail.

**Information and communications technology (ICT)** refers to the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunication (e.g. wireless signals), computers,
### Table 1.1 World Internet users and population statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World regions</th>
<th>Population (2012 est.)</th>
<th>Internet users latest data</th>
<th>Penetration (% population)</th>
<th>Users % of table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,073,380,925</td>
<td>167,335,676</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>3,922,066,987</td>
<td>1,076,681,059</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>820,918,446</td>
<td>518,512,109</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>223,608,203</td>
<td>90,000,455</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>348,280,154</td>
<td>273,785,413</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America/Caribbean</td>
<td>593,688,638</td>
<td>254,915,745</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania/Australia</td>
<td>35,903,569</td>
<td>24,287,919</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORLD TOTAL</td>
<td>7,017,846,922</td>
<td>2,405,518,376</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm) (Accessed 15 April 2013)

### Table 1.2 Top ten languages on the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Millions of users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>536.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>444.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>153.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the rest</td>
<td>350.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm) (Accessed 17 August 2013)

Estimated Internet users are 1,966,514,816 on June 30, 2010

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middleware as well as necessary software, storage- and audio-visual systems, which allow users to create, access, store, transmit and manipulate information. ICT consists of information technology (IT) as well as telecommunication, broadcast media, all types of audio and video processing and transmission and network-based control and monitoring functions (Tuffley 2011).

In 2012 there were nearly 2.5 billion Internet users, more than 34 per cent of the world’s population (Internet World Statistics 2012). As Table 1.1 illustrates, the most users were in developed countries, with other regions lagging far behind.

Table 1.2 shows the top ten languages used on the Internet in 2010. English was used most frequently (with much of the use involving non-native speakers of the language), followed by Chinese, as the number of users in Mainland China has grown exponentially in recent years. Globally, the majority of international websites are still in English and this has implications for information-sharing and intercultural interaction online. Even with the emergence of more multilingual websites as well as those in Chinese, Arabic, French and many other languages, a large number of academic/professional international sites remain in English. People who have limited (or no) proficiency in English or another international language have fewer opportunities to access information or interact online. This, in turn, may somewhat limit their international, intercultural contact in cyber space.

More and more, advances in digital communication technology are playing a critical role in educational, professional, social and personal settings, especially in countries that have benefited economically from globalization. The emergence of a range of new technologies is providing more opportunities for social interaction and collaboration. Social media is defined as ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content’ (Kaplan & Haenlien 2010: 61). Web 2.0 refers to ‘the revolutionary new ways of creating, collaborating, editing and sharing user-generated content online. It’s also about ease of use’ (Discovery Education 2012). Recent computer-mediated interactive and social tools include Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Google Groups, Windows Online, blogs, Wikis, Skype, LinkedIn and multimedia (such as YouTube), among others.

As Table 1.3 reveals, there were over 835 million active Facebook users in 2012, with more than 200 million added in 2011. Nearly all major universities are now on Facebook.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>3,922,066,987</td>
<td>195,034,380</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,073,380,925</td>
<td>40,205,580</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>820,918,446</td>
<td>232,835,740</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>394,459,227</td>
<td>112,531,100</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>157,663,596</td>
<td>41,332,940</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>348,280,154</td>
<td>173,284,940</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>223,608,203</td>
<td>20,247,900</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Caribbean</td>
<td>41,566,815</td>
<td>6,355,320</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania/Australia</td>
<td>35,903,569</td>
<td>13,597,380</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORLD TOTAL</td>
<td>7,017,846,922</td>
<td>835,425,280</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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Source: Adapted from Internet World Stats (www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm) (Accessed 5 May 2013)
In 2011, over 48 per cent of young adults indicated that they relied on Facebook for news, and a similar number of people between the ages of 18 and 34 logged in as soon as they woke up (Digital Buzz Blog 2011). Increasingly, individuals are accessing Facebook through their mobile phones and, as technology becomes more affordable, more people in less affluent areas are gaining access to Facebook. In 2012, an average Facebook user had 130 ‘friends’ and ‘liked’ 80 pages. On a weekly basis, more than 3.5 billion pieces of content were shared (Digital Buzz Blog 2012).

Another trend is the growing reliance on Twitter for sharing information. This instant messaging system allows a person to send brief text messages up to 140 characters in length to a list of followers. In 2012, Twitter had 100 million active users, while LinkedIn, the world’s largest online professional network, had over 64 million users in North America alone (Digital Buzz Blog 2012).

Social networking sites are having a profound impact on contemporary social life and activity. With access to the Internet, mobile devices are enabling Facebook users and Twitter followers to continuously stay in touch with friends, family and other acquaintances wherever they are in the world. Interactive social tools are creating opportunities for the rapid dissemination and sharing of information and viewpoints both in one’s home country and with people in different parts of the world. As the ‘Arab Spring’ unfolded, for example, Twitter, Facebook and other social media (e.g. online conversation boards, blogs) quickly spread news about demonstrations not only within Middle Eastern countries but in the outside world. Social tools are affording the exchange of diverse views about local and global issues and, in some cases, these technological tools are being credited with changing history.

Web 2.0 applications have also greatly facilitated collaborative learning and intercultural interaction in educational settings and beyond (Shelly & Frydenberg 2010). Social media allows users to collaborate in the creation and development of content (e.g. wikis, podcasts, blogs); nowadays, people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can share knowledge, information and opinions online using web-based applications and tools. Social media tools have radically changed our perceptions and use of communication. Web 2.0 is revolutionizing the way we interact with each other and opening up more possibilities for intercultural connections in education and other domains (e.g. business, health care, government).

Increased intercultural contact, facilitated by technological advances in transportation and communication, underscores the necessity of intercultural competence and the benefits of acquiring proficiency in more than one language, especially an international one. Although we now live in a more highly interconnected world, economic disparity, unequal access to communication technology and efficient transportation systems, political control (e.g. censorship of websites) and lack of proficiency in an international language (e.g. English) are still serving as barriers to participation for many.

### Changing demographics

**Human migration** entails physical movement by people from one place to another, sometimes over long distances. While only a few groups have retained a nomadic lifestyle in modern times, various forms of migration have persisted and even increased in the last few decades. This movement of individuals, families or large groups is bringing about more diversity and, nowadays, all contemporary, urban societies are culturally plural. This is creating more opportunities for daily interaction with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
and another reason why intercultural communication knowledge and skills have become vital. (See Chapter 8 for more discussion on migration and intercultural transitions.)

Migration can take many forms. It may involve voluntary movement within one’s region, country or beyond, and be motivated by a range of aspirations (e.g. higher education opportunities, better job prospects, residence in a more peaceful environment, intercultural marriage, life in a warmer climate). Sometimes, however, migration is involuntary, such as in the case of ethnic cleansing (e.g. the violent removal of an ethnic or religious group by another) and human trafficking (the modern slave trade (the illegal trade of human beings for sexual exploitation or forced labour).

Individuals may be displaced by war, economic crises, religious persecution, natural disasters or other calamities. The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1966 Protocol, defines a refugee as an individual who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 1992/1979: 5)

Immigration, that is, moving from one’s home country to reside in another, is providing more possibilities for intercultural interaction in many parts of the world. As a consequence of economic instability and armed conflicts, more and more people are on the move. In their November 2010 report, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) noted that the number of international migrants rose from 150 million in 2000 to 214 million in 2010, with 57 per cent moving to high-income countries. If this trend continues, there could be 405 million international migrants in 2050. The report also states that there are now 20 cities with more than a million foreign-born residents, including nine in North America.

Several special migrant populations are also contributing to growing multicultural diversity in many parts of the world, such as the 26 million internally displaced persons (e.g. almost 20 per cent in Sudan), the nine million refugees (which rises to 15 million with people in ‘refugee-like’ situations) and health care migrants (almost 30 per cent of doctors and 10 per cent of nurses born in sub-Saharan Africa are abroad) (International Organization for Migration 2010). Because of poor economic conditions in some Asian countries (e.g. Indonesia, the Philippines), workers in many occupations (e.g. domestic helpers, nurses) are compelled to seek better wages in more affluent places (e.g. the Arabian Gulf countries, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore). Due to the financial crisis in Europe, university graduates and other workers in Greece, Spain and Italy are also on the move to more economically stable countries.

In 2010, most of the 57 million migrants in the Americas settled in the United States (43 million) and Canada (7.2 million); Argentina had 1.4 million migrants and Venezuela a million. Asia has about 60 per cent of the world’s population but only 30 per cent of the world’s migrants. The Asian countries with the most migrants and the highest share of migrants in their populations are the Arabian Gulf states (e.g. Bahrain, United Arab Emirates). Australia had almost five million migrants in 2010, and New Zealand almost a million (International Organization for Migration 2010).

In 2010, Europe’s 73 million migrants was a third of the global total, with 60 per cent in five countries: Russia, 12 million; Germany 11 million; and France, the UK and Spain about 6.5 million each. New policies in some countries (e.g. Russia, the UK) have been put in place
to reduce the influx of migrant workers, but return bonus programmes in the Czech Republic and Spain attracted few jobless migrants who agreed to leave and not return. ‘In today’s economic and war-torn climate, we can expect to see an increase in migrating populations as new markets are sought and as people leave their current home countries in search of work and/or safety’ (Moon 2010: 39).

As well as a long-term change in residence (e.g. immigrants, refugees), people flows may be transitory (e.g. tourist vacations, pilgrimages, education abroad sojourns). In 2009, for example, there were 3.4 million international students in the world, an increase of more than 75 per cent since 2000; a quarter were from China, India and South Korea, and a third were studying in the United States and the United Kingdom (UNESCO 2012). In some countries, international students are regarded as probationary immigrants and are allowed to stay and work after graduation if they get a job offer. This policy is also contributing to long-term linguistic and cultural diversity within receiving nations.

Current demographic trends are providing more opportunities for intercultural interaction in educational institutions, in the workplace, and in one’s personal life. With this growing migration comes an increased need for intercultural understanding and changes in the ways that people see themselves. For example, individuals who move to different cultural environments for long-term residence may develop hybrid identities, with ties to more than one cultural group. Others may feel more like citizens of the world.

‘With the world becoming more and more linked by immigration, communication, media, economy, and transportation,’ Kim (2010: 170) speculates that ‘cultural mixing is likely to further increase multiculturalism and within-culture variance in the future’. In some parts of the world, there is now greater social acceptance of romantic intercultural/interracial/interethnic relationships and, consequently, more children of mixed heritage, who may speak (or, at least, are exposed to) more than one language at home. These developments have implications for the development of multilingual, multicultural, hybrid identities, a subject that is explored in Chapter 6. Intercultural friendship, romance and marriage are discussed in Chapter 9.

**Conflict and peace**

The fault lines that divide us as peoples and nations have become deeper, more raw, and more lethal in our nuclear age. It is essential that we enhance our understanding of conflict and its terrain so that we can navigate the physical, psychological, and spiritual chasms that threaten to swallow us, creative potential and all.

(LeBaron & Pillay 2006: 12)

In some contexts, increasing diversity has been accompanied by rising intercultural and interracial tension and threats to stability and peace. As the world becomes more and more interdependent, the mutual understanding of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds becomes even more vital to peace, cooperation and stability. For Peck (1978), the key to community and world peace is ‘the acceptance, in fact, the celebration of our individual and cultural differences’.

Conflict is an unavoidable feature of human interaction. Whether in a family setting, among friends or colleagues, in educational or health institutions, the workforce (e.g. businesses), government bodies, international organizations or in regional/national/international negotiations, disagreements and disputes between individuals and groups may develop. As Scollon et al. (2012: xiii) explain,
Dramatic advances in information technology, especially the growth of the World Wide Web, and the rapid globalization of the world’s economy have in many ways brought people closer together, while at the same time, wars, terrorism, environmental devastation, and massive changes in the world economic order have resulted in greater political and social fragmentation.

**Global warming** (the rising of the temperature in the earth’s atmosphere and oceans), the dramatic increase in the earth’s population (already exceeding seven billion), globalizing forces, the global economic crisis, migration and fierce competition for limited natural resources are all contributing to increased contact, stress and conflict between culturally diverse people. Nowadays, it is imperative that all of us acquire the knowledge, respect and skills necessary to mediate intercultural disagreements in an effective, appropriate and peaceful manner.

**Intercultural conflict** is defined by Ting-Toomey (2012: 279) as ‘the perceived or actual incompatibility of cultural values, situational norms, goals, face orientations, scarce resources, styles/processes, and/or outcomes in a face-to-face (or mediated) context’. Divergent behaviours (e.g. unfamiliar communication styles, different expressions of politeness) can make intercultural negotiations more stressful and even more complicated when a second language is involved. In situations like this, van Meurs and Spencer-Oatey (2010: 59) warn that ‘conflict cannot be managed effectively without simultaneously considering both culture and communication’. Neuleip (2012: 41) further argues that

while the dream of a global village holds promise, the reality is that diverse people have diverse opinions, values, and beliefs that clash and too often result in violence. Only through intercultural communication can such conflict be managed and reduced.

Intercultural conflict frustrations may boil over if we do not know how to deal with culture- or language-based conflict communication issues in a competent manner: ‘The need to summon creativity and exercise the choice to cooperate has never been more urgent’ (LeBaron & Pillay 2006: 12).

If inappropriate or ineffective **conflict negotiation strategies** are continuously employed, misunderstandings can quickly evolve into a complicated and protracted intercultural conflict situation. Unfortunately, it is not difficult to identify long-standing domestic or international disputes that necessitate effective intercultural communication knowledge and skills to bring about a just, ethical resolution (e.g. the Palestinian-Israeli conflict). Consequently, Kim and Ebesu Hubbard (2007) argue that **intergroup relations** is arguably the most serious of all the problems confronting ‘humankind, and is the single most vital domain in which intercultural communication has important ideas, theories, and facts to contribute’ (p. 233).

In today’s globalized world, learning to manage intercultural conflicts appropriately and effectively is not just an imperative for world leaders. In our personal, academic and professional lives, it is becoming increasingly important for all of us to develop **intercultural conflict competence**, which entails ‘the mindful management of emotional frustrations and conflict interaction struggles due primarily to cultural, linguistic, or ethnic group membership differences’ (Ting-Toomey 2012: 279–80). To accomplish this, LeBaron and Pillay (2006) argue that we need both ‘**conflict fluency**’ and ‘**cultural fluency**’. The former means ‘recognizing conflict as a difference that offers us choices and growth’, while the latter entails recognizing that culture is ‘a series of underground rivers that profoundly shape not only who we are, but how we cooperate and engage conflict’ (LeBaron & Pillay 2006: 12). (See Chapter 10 for more discussion on intercultural conflict mediation and resolution.)
Significant global and regional problems of climate change and environmental degradation, poverty, disease, and war point to the necessity of meaningful communication across cultural boundaries. Addressing problems like these require decision makers to communicate ethically their concerns about what is right, good, or virtuous across cultural boundaries and to understand others who communicate their concerns in return.

(Tompkins 2011: 211)

The world we live in is increasingly interconnected and this means that individuals of different ages, genders, languages, socioeconomic status, races, religions and ethnicities must coexist on our planet. As well as opening up exciting possibilities for collaboration and enrichment, this contact can present challenging ethical issues and concerns in all areas of life (personal, legal, medical, political, professional, recreational, religious, business, etc.).

The word 'ethics' stems from the Greek 'ethos', which refers to the character and sentiment of the community. Ethics may be defined as principles of conduct that help govern the behaviour of individuals and groups, that is, they provide direction for how we live our life (Blackburn 2009; Johannesen et al. 2008). In essence, the moral or ethical environment in which we live determines what we find acceptable or unacceptable, admirable or contemptible. It determines our conception of when things are going well and when they are going badly. It determines our conception of what is due to us, and what is due from us, as we relate to others. It shapes our emotional responses, determining what is a cause of pride or shame or anger or gratitude, or what can be forgiven and what cannot. It gives us our standards — our standards of behavior.

(Blackburn 2009: 1)

A code of ethics consists of guidelines that spell out what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ behaviour in everyday life as well as in professional contexts (e.g. educational, business, health care, legal). These fundamental principles stem from core beliefs and the ancient wisdom of religion, as well as its teachers and traditions. We also continuously receive messages from our families, friends and co-workers about what constitutes ethical behaviour.

Throughout the world, religious codes of ethics serve as life guides for believers (Fasching et al. 2011). In Christianity, for example, the ‘Ten Commandments’ is a set of biblical principles. As well as instructions to worship only God, keep the Sabbath (the holy day) and honour one’s parents, the Commandments include prohibitions against idolatry (the worship of a physical object as a god), blasphemy (irreverence towards religious or holy persons or things), murder, theft, envy and adultery (sexual infidelity to one’s spouse). Jews are guided by ten Commandments that are similar to those adapted by Christians. The ‘Five Precepts of Buddhism’ (do not kill, steal, lie, misuse sex, consume alcohol or drugs) are somewhat similar to the second half of the Ten Commandments in Christianity, although they are considered recommendations not commandments.

Muslims are guided by the ‘Five Pillars of Islam’, which the Qur’an (holy book) presents as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to the faith. They include (1) the shahada (creed), the declaration of faith linked to the belief that the only purpose of life is to serve and obey God, which is achieved through the teachings and practices of the Last Prophet, Muhammad; (2) prayers five times a day (salat); (3) fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (sawm); (4) almsgiving to the poor (zakât) and (5) the pilgrimage to Mecca, a holy place in
Saudi Arabia, at least once in a lifetime (hajj). Believers recite prayers in Arabic, the language of the Qur’an. Although only 15 per cent of Muslims speak Arabic as a first language, all believers are expected to learn the basics to be able to say prayers and read the holy book (Begley 2009; Nurmilä 2009).

Hinduism also has a strict code of conduct that followers are expected to abide by in their daily lives. It consists of ten restrictions (yamas) (non-violence, truthfulness, no stealing, sexual moderation, patience, perseverance, compassion, honesty, moderation of the appetite, cleanliness) and ten observations (niyamas) (e.g. show remorse, be content, give wisely, worship) (Smith 2009).

In Sikhism, ‘Rahit’ refers to the precepts for pious moral, spiritual and ethical life. As well as prohibitions against the cutting of body hair, eating meat, using intoxicants and committing adultery, believers are required to meditate upon only one Waheguru (Naam Simran). Sikhs also must perform daily prayers (Namm Japna); earn an honest and truthful living (Kirat karni); share money, food, affection and time with the needy (Wand Chhakna); maintain special articles of clothing (the five Ks or Karars); respect all people including those from all religions and races; control their lust, anger, greed, ego and attachment to worldly goods (Singh 2011).

Followers of other religions or sects also have their own rules or codes to live by. For some devotees, 'ethics is not only tied up with religion, but is completely settled by it. Such people

Plate 1.4 Buddhist monks are guided by a code of ethics or precepts linked to their religious beliefs © Jane Jackson
Plate 1.5 Muslims perform salat, that is, they pray five times a day facing Mecca © Jane Jackson

Plate 1.6 The Hajj (Arabic Ḥajj) is one of the largest annually occurring pilgrimages in the world. One of the five pillars of Islam, it is a religious duty that must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his or her lifetime © Jane Jackson
do not need to think too much about ethics, because there is an authoritative code of instructions, a handbook of how to live’ (Blackburn 2009: 9). By contrast, other ‘believers’ may only observe some of the commandments or recommendations, and this may vary throughout their lifetime. Individuals who do not belong to any official religion or sect may consider themselves spiritual beings and follow their own code of ethics.

In truth, all of us are guided by ethical principles, whether religious in orientation or not. Atheists (non-believers in the existence of deities), for example, have beliefs that guide their daily life. While some ethical principles may be below our level of awareness, they are still giving us messages about what is appropriate or inappropriate. As noted by philosopher Carl Wellman,

An ethical system does not solve all one’s practical problems, but one cannot choose and act rationally without some explicit or implicit ethical system. An ethical theory does not tell a person what to do in any given situation, but neither is it completely silent; it tells one what to consider in making up one’s mind what to do. The practical function of an ethical system is primarily to direct our attention to the relevant considerations, the reasons that determine the rightness or wrongness of any act.

(Wellman 1988: 305)

Fundamental notions about what is right and wrong not only affect our behaviour in our personal and professional life (e.g. business/educational/legal/medical practices), they impact our attitudes towards those who have divergent beliefs and traditions. Uncomfortable with difference and feeling under threat, people may disrespect the preferred identities of others and resort to using unethical, harmful language that is racist or sexist. Fear of difference can lead to Otherization or Othering, that is, the labelling and degrading of people who are different from oneself (Dervin 2012; Holliday 2012). As noted by Jandt (2007: 42), the ‘collective pronouns us and them become powerful influences on perceptions’ and can lead to the use of oppressive language and racist, exclusionary behaviour. (See Chapter 7 for more discussion on racism and racist discourse.)

Personal growth and responsibility

Through the course of our lives, we have many opportunities to learn about others — their cultures, their ways of being in the world, and their diverse stories and meanings. We can choose to go toward these opportunities or move away from them. We can live amidst differences and ignore them, or notice the differences that divide us and plumb them for their richness.

(LeBaron and Pillay 2006: 11)

When we encounter individuals who have different ideas about what is right or wrong, we may be compelled to question our own beliefs, values and patterns of behaviour. While this can be very uncomfortable and even seem threatening at times, it can also be an opportunity for learning. As we become more aware of different codes of ethics and ways of being, we may think more deeply about our own beliefs, identities and position in society. Learning more about oneself is an important, necessary part of becoming an ethical intercultural communicator.

The study of language and intercultural communication offers significant possibilities for personal growth and expansion. As we encounter linguistic and cultural difference in our
personal, educational or professional life, whether on home soil or abroad, we are afforded opportunities to discover more about ourselves and people who have been socialized in a different environment. Exposure to different beliefs and practices coupled with critical reflection on our own intercultural attitudes and behaviours can gradually propel us to higher levels of intercultural competence if we are truly open to this possibility.

Enhancing our intercultural communication understanding and skills necessarily means building awareness of ourselves as well as learning more about individuals who speak a different first language and have different values and habits. As Rothman (2008: 15–16) states:

A commitment to intercultural competence is not only a commitment to learning more about other cultures and to the development of culturally appropriate communication skills. It also involves the commitment to personal awareness, to personal growth, to understanding, and to unlearning (as possible) any biases, stereotypes, or prejudices . . . the complete elimination of all biases within ourselves will remain an elusive, though always worthwhile, goal to pursue.

The acquisition of (inter)cultural knowledge and skills, accompanied by critical reflection on ‘real world’ intercultural interaction (e.g. face-to-face and online) can, ultimately, lead to a broadened sense of self and more satisfying intercultural relations. In the chapters that follow, we explore ways to cultivate an open mindset and more effective language and intercultural communication skills.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ETHICAL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATOR

A number of interculturalists (e.g. Chen & Starosta 1998; Hall 2005; Kale 1991) have proposed guidelines or principles for universal ethical intercultural communication. That is, they have suggested behaviour we can adopt in intercultural interactions to make the world a better, more equitable place.

An individual who is an ethical intercultural communicator:

1. regards people as equal, even when their beliefs or values differ;
2. actively seeks out and interacts with persons of diverse backgrounds (e.g. ethnic, religious, gender, linguistic, physically disabled, etc.);
3. listens attentively and refrains from making snap, negative judgments about the behaviours of people from a different cultural or linguistic background;
4. patiently asks questions to confirm the intended meaning;
5. recognizes that misunderstandings may arise due to linguistic and/or cultural differences;
6. seeks and provides (verbal and nonverbal) feedback to ensure that messages were received as intended;
7. makes a genuine effort to learn about the language and cultural practices of people who have been socialized in different cultural backgrounds;
8. works from the perspective that the behaviour of people from other cultural backgrounds is apt to be rational when understood in its situational and cultural context;
9. values intercultural cooperation and peaceful conflict mediation/resolution;
10. recognizes diversity within cultural groups and acknowledges that no individual can serve as a representative of an entire community or culture;
11 seeks to include all voices in intercultural interactions;
12 treats people of other cultures with respect and dignity.
(adapted from Chen & Starosta 1998)

With enhanced self-awareness and more profound understanding and acceptance of other worldviews and practices (e.g. cultural, linguistic), we have the potential to enrich ourselves, our families and the world around us. All of us can and should make a difference. Throughout the text, we explore ways to communicate in productive and ethically responsible ways across cultural differences of ethics, values and ways of being.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter we reviewed definitions of intercultural communication, interpersonal communication and cross-cultural communication. We then examined seven reasons why it is important to study language and intercultural communication today: globalization, internationalization, transportation and technological advances, changing demographics, conflict and peace, ethics and personal growth/responsibility. Finally we discussed ways to become more open, ethical intercultural communicators, a necessity in today's increasingly interconnected and multicultural world. In the chapters that follow we explore many of these issues in more depth.

**discussion questions**

1. What are some reasons why people might be reluctant to communicate with people who have a different linguistic and cultural background?
2. In what ways is the region where you live changing demographically? What do you think the population will be like in 20 years? In 50 years? Do you think the need for bi(multi)lingualism and intercultural competence is growing?
3. Besides the reasons mentioned in this chapter, identify and discuss three other imperatives for studying language and intercultural communication today.
4. Why are you interested in learning more about language and intercultural communication? What do you hope to gain by exploring the issues and themes in this text?
5. Review the propositions for ethical intercultural communication. Are there any that you disagree with? Which ones do you think would be the most difficult to follow? Why? Are there any propositions that should be added to the list?
further reading

This text explores the rich ethical traditions of the West and the East.

This undergraduate text includes a chapter devoted to ethics. The author also discusses the importance and benefits of studying intercultural communication.

This undergraduate reader includes four chapters on ethics and intercultural communication.

This book explores the essential elements and teachings of the world’s predominant faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the native traditions of Australia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas.

Following a social justice approach, this text examines intercultural communication within the geopolitical, economic and cultural context of globalization, and offers a dynamic and complex understanding of culture to help address challenges in modern life (e.g. discrimination, racial profiling, ethnic conflict, wealth disparities).