acquisition of a second culture. Both linguists and anthropologists bear ample testimony to this observation (Uber-Grosse, 2004; Schecter & Bayley, 2002; Littlewood, 2001; Dlaska, 2000; Hinenoya & Gatbonton, 2000; Matsumoto, 2000; Kubota, 1999; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

Some of those same researchers disagree on theoretical conceptualizations of the construct of culture (see Atkinson, 1999; Siegal, 2000; Sparrow, 2000; Atkinson, 2000; for an interesting debate). One of the hot spots in the debate centers on what Atkinson (1999) would like to call an "ecumenical" approach to culture—that is, viewing cultures not as oppositional or mutually exclusive, but rather somewhat as hues and colors covering a wide spectrum. At first blush, ecumenism appears to be an appropriate metaphor to serve as a foundation for a theory of culture. However, Atkinson's critics (Siegal, 2000; Sparrow, 2000) prefer to see culture framed more in constructivist terms, which would place greater emphasis on learners' socially constructed identities within learning communities and native cultural milieu. "The prospect of looking at culture as 'ecumenical' is a contradiction in terms," according to Sparrow (2000, p. 750), who goes on to say, "We should neither teach received views of culture nor place our profession in the quicksands of moral relativity." Atkinson's (2000) response puts the arguments into balance by noting, among other things, that his principles of culture outlined in the original article (Atkinson, 1999) were heavily imbued with notions of identity, community, and social interaction, with a hearty endorsement of qualitative, ethnographic approaches to cultural research for their "ability to capture some of the complex uniqueness characterizing every cultural scene" (p. 647).

This chapter attempts to highlight some of the important aspects of the relationship between learning a second language and learning the cultural context of the second language. Among topics to be covered are the problem of cultural stereotypes, attitudes, learning a second culture, sociopolitical considerations, and the relationship among language, thought, and culture.

STEREOTYPES OR GENERALIZATIONS?

Mark Twain gave us some delightful politically incorrect vignettes on other cultures and other languages in *The Innocents Abroad*. In reference to the French language, Twain commented that the French "always tangle up everything to that degree that when you start into a sentence you never know whether you are going to come out alive or not." In *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain noted that German is a most difficult language: "A gifted person ought to learn English (barring spelling and pronouncing) in 30 hours, French in 30 days, and German in 30 years." So he proposed to reform the German language, for "if it is to remain as it is, it ought to be gently and reverently set aside among the dead languages, for only the dead have time to learn it."

Twain, like all of us at times, expressed caricatures of linguistic and cultural stereotypes. In the bias of our own culture-bound **worldview**, we too often picture other cultures in an oversimplified manner, lumping cultural differences into exaggerated categories, and then view every person in a culture as possessing

stereotypical traits. Thus Americans are all rich, informal, materialistic, overly friendly, and drink coffee. Italians are passionate, demonstrative, great lovers, and drink red wine. Germans are stubborn, industrious, methodical, and drink beer. The British are stuffy, polite, thrifty, and drink tea. And Japanese are reserved, unemotional, take a lot of pictures, and also drink tea.

François Lierres, writing in the Paris newsmagazine *Le Point*, gave some tongue-in-cheek advice to French people on how to get along with Americans. "They are the Vikings of the world economy, descending upon it in their jets as the Vikings once did in their drakars. They have money, technology, and nerve … We would be wise to get acquainted with them." And he offered some *do*'s and *don't*'s. Among the *do*'s: Greet them, but after you have been introduced once, don't shake hands, merely emit a brief cluck of joy—"Hi." Speak without emotion and with self-assurance, giving the impression you have a command of the subject even if you haven't. Check the collar of your jacket—nothing is uglier in the eyes of an American than dandruff. Radiate congeniality and show a good disposition—a big smile and a warm expression are essential. Learn how to play golf. Among the *don't*'s: Don't tamper with your accent—Americans find French accents very romantic. And don't allow the slightest smell of perspiration to reach the offended nostrils of your American friends.

How do **stereotypes** form? Our cultural milieu shapes our worldview—our *Weltanschauung*—in such a way that reality is thought to be objectively perceived through our own cultural pattern, and a differing perception is seen as either false or "strange" and is thus oversimplified. If people recognize and understand differing worldviews, they will usually adopt a positive and open-minded attitude toward cross-cultural differences. A closed-minded view of such differences often results in the maintenance of a stereotype—an oversimplification and blanket assumption. A stereotype assigns group characteristics to individuals purely on the basis of their cultural membership.

The stereotype may be accurate in depicting the "typical" member of a culture, but it is inaccurate for describing a particular individual, simply because every person is unique and all of a person's behavioral characteristics cannot be accurately predicted on the basis of an overgeneralized median point along a continuum of cultural norms. To judge a single member of a culture by overall traits of the culture is both to prejudge and to misjudge that person. Worse, stereotypes have a way of potentially devaluing people from other cultures. Mark Twain's comments about the French and German languages, while written in a humorous vein and without malice, could be interpreted by some to be insulting.

Sometimes our oversimplified concepts of members of another culture are downright false. Americans sometimes think of Japanese as being unfriendly because of their cultural norms of respect and politeness. Asian students in the perception of American students in the United States are too often lumped together under the misguided notion that many countries and cultures in Asia share much in common. Even in the TESOL literature, according to Kumaravadivelu (2003), common stereotypes of Asian students are depicted: They (1) are obedient to authority, (2) lack critical thinking skills, and (3) do not participate in classroom interaction

(pp. 710–713). Such attitudes need to be replaced by "a critical awareness of the complex nature of cultural understanding" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 717).

While stereotyping or overgeneralizing people from other cultures should be avoided, cross-cultural research has shown that there are indeed characteristics of culture that make one culture different from another (Atkinson, 1999, 2002; Matsumoto, 2000). For example, Condon (1973) concluded from cross-cultural research that American, French, and Hispanic worldviews are quite different in their concepts of time and space. Americans tend to be dominated by a "psychomotor" view of time and space that is dynamic, diffuse, and nominalistic. French orientation is more "cognitive" with a static, centralized, and universalistic view. The Hispanic orientation is more "affectively" centered with a passive, relational, and intuitive worldview. We will see later in this chapter that cultures can also differ according to degrees of collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and gender role prescriptions.

Both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, to recognize openly that people are not all the same beneath the skin. Language classrooms can celebrate cultural differences, and even engage in a critical analysis of the use and origin of stereotypes (Abrams, 2002). As teachers and researchers we must strive to understand the *identities* of our learners in terms of their sociocultural background (Atkinson, 1999). When we are sensitively attuned to perceiving cultural identity, we can then perhaps turn perception into appreciation.

ATTITUDES

Stereotyping usually implies some type of attitude toward the culture or language in question. The following passage, an excerpt from an item on "Chinese literature" in the *New Standard Encyclopedia* published in 1940, is a shocking example of a negative attitude stemming from a stereotype:

> The Chinese Language is monosyllabic and uninflectional. . . . With a language so incapable of variation, a literature cannot be produced which possesses the qualities we look for and admire in literary works. Elegance, variety, beauty of imagery—these must all be lacking. A monotonous and wearisome language must give rise to a forced and formal literature lacking in originality and interesting in its subject matter only. Moreover, a conservative people . . . profoundly reverencing all that is old and formal, and hating innovation, must leave the impress of its own character upon its literature (vol. VI).

Fortunately such views would probably not be expressed in encyclopedias today. Such biased attitudes are based on insufficient knowledge, misinformed stereotyping, and extreme ethnocentric thinking.

Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes,

of contact with people who are "different" in any number of ways, and of inter-acting affective factors in the human experience. These attitudes form a part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living.

Gardner and Lambert's (1972) extensive studies were systematic attempts to examine the effect of attitudes on language learning. After studying the interrela-tionships of a number of different types of attitudes, they defined motivation as a con-struct made up of certain attitudes. The most important of these is group specific, the attitude learners have toward the members of the cultural group whose language they are learning. Thus, in Gardner and Lambert's model, an English-speaking Canadian's positive attitude toward French-Canadians—a desire to understand them and to empathize with them—will lead to an integrative orientation to learn French, which in the 1972 study was found to be a significant correlate of success.

John Oller and his colleagues (see Oller, Hudson, & Liu, 1977; Chihara & Oller, 1978; Oller, Baca, & Vigil, 1978) conducted several large-scale studies of the relationship between attitudes and language success. They looked at the relationship between Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican students' achievement in English and their attitudes toward self, the native language group, the target language group, their reasons for learning English, and their reasons for traveling to the United States. The researchers were able to identify a few meaningful clusters of attitudinal variables that correlated positively with attained proficiency. Each of the three studies yielded slightly different conclusions, but for the most part, positive attitudes toward self, the native language group, and the target language group enhanced proficiency. There were mixed results on the relative advantages and disadvantages of integrative and instrumental orientations. For example, in one study they found that better proficiency was attained by students who did not want to stay in the United States permanently.

It seems clear that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and, in all likelihood, because of decreased input and interaction, to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency. Yet the teacher needs to be aware that everyone has both positive and negative attitudes. The negative attitudes can be changed, often by exposure to reality—for example, by encounters with actual persons from other cultures. Negative attitudes usually emerge from one's indirect exposure to a culture or group through television, movies, news media, books, and other sources that may be less than reliable. Teachers can aid in dispelling what are often myths about other cultures, and replace those myths with an accurate understanding of the other culture as one that is different from one's own, yet to be respected and valued. Learners can thus move through the hierarchy of affectivity as described by Bloom in Chapter 6, through awareness and responding, to valuing, and finally to an organized and systematic understanding and appreciation of the foreign culture.

SECOND CULTURE ACQUISITION

Because learning a second language implies some degree of learning a second cul-ture, it is important to understand what we mean by the process of culture learning.