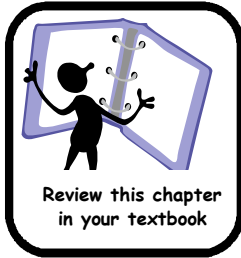


## CHAPTER TWO: The Impact of Culture on Communication

### Chapter Summary



This chapter provides several definitions of culture, as well as the concept of collective and individualist cultures which provides a framework for considering two primary world views. Cultural influences on interpersonal behaviors and communication are discussed, including such norms as attention-getting and attention-maintaining techniques, appropriate eye contact and volume of speech/physical distance when communicating.

### To Focus Your Study

As you study this chapter, pay particular attention to the following ideas and information.

1. What is the meaning of culture?
2. How does culture influence behavior and communication?
3. What do interpreters need to know about cultures in order to be a competent practitioner?

### Learning Activities

#### *In Your Own Words*



Record key terms and concepts that are new to you, noting why they are important to your journey of learning.

#### *Culture*

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY #1: Defining Culture

Write our own definition of CULTURE using your own words. When finished, review the definitions in Chapter 2 to see if there are any significant elements of the definition you forgot to include in your definition.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY #2: Applying Cultural Characteristics to Your Experiences

Working with your learning partner, review Fig. 2-1 in the textbook. Develop specific examples from your collective experience or studies for six of the sixteen areas described on this chart, noting which culture you are drawing from in your example.



(EXAMPLE: Status – drawing from Anne’s description of Kenyan culture (collectivist) — status of her Deaf uncle comes from his ability to farm and raise a productive family; drawing from Liz’s description of business culture (individualist) — status comes from her personal accomplishments in the work place).

### ***Culture in Your Life***

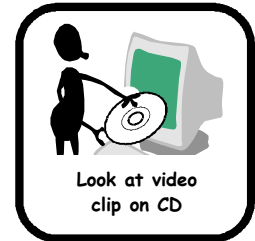
#### **LEARNING ACTIVITY #1: Cultural Identity**



Review the segment titled “Culture In My Life: Cultural Identity” and “Culturally-Linked Language Samples” on the companion CD for Chapter 2. Note the kinds of influences and experiences that have led each expert to define their cultural identity in the way they do. In your journal, reflect on your own cultural identity — who are you in terms of cultural identity and why?

#### **LEARNING ACTIVITY #2: Communication Norms**

Now look at the CD segment titled “Culture in My Life: Communication Norms” and “Culture in My Life: Conflict Resolution.” After viewing these comments, write in your journal about the communication rules and/or norms you have been exposed to in your own life or those that you have observed in people around you, including approaches to conflict resolution. Be sure to note the cultural influences that have resulted in these norms. Identify any of those “rules” or norms that you might want to change in order to be a more effective communicator.



### ***Cultural Sojourners***



As sign language interpreters, you will be journeying among new cultures, exposed to different norms, traditions and expectations. This can be an exciting, but sometimes frustrating experience. Listen to some other cultural sojourners describe their experiences of crossing cultural borders (CD: Chapter 2 — “Cultural Sojourners”). Identify comments that surprised you and those that sound similar to your own. In your journal, record four “lessons” you want to take with you on your journey into the world of professional cultural mediator as a sign language interpreter.





### Study Questions

1. CULTURE includes ... (circle all that apply):
  - (a) Values and beliefs
  - (b) Art forms (poems, paintings, plays, etc.)
  - (c) Language
  - (d) Rules of behavior and social interaction
  - (e) Traditions and habits
  
2. Philip divides culture into three subsets. Beside each of the following examples and definitions, put an "m" for material, "b" for behavioral, and "c" for cognitive.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Actions that are considered rude or polite  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Greetings, including shaking hands, hugging, bowing, etc.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chopsticks, kimonos, sushi  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ The way one treats elders in the community/society  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ The role of men at work and home  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Children's games
  
3. Culture ... (circle all that apply):
  - (a) Is subjective and cannot really be taught
  - (b) Evolves over time
  - (c) Is universal
  - (d) Specifies gender roles, norms and expectations
  - (e) Includes values, rules of behavior and traditions
  - (f) Does not include religion or spirituality
  - (g) Provides a frame or schema for living within a specified group of people

4. Culture and \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be separated (circle all that apply):
- (a) Communication
  - (b) Roles
  - (c) Expectations
  - (d) Language
  - (e) World view
5. Collectivist cultures ... (circle all that apply):
- (a) Are centered on the individual rather than the group
  - (b) Make up approximately 70% of world cultures
  - (c) Tend to focus on process rather than product
  - (d) Place less value on clock time than individualist cultures
  - (e) Have identical norms and expectations world-wide
6. Individualist cultures ... (circle all that apply):
- (a) Place greater value on individual accomplishment rather than the group accomplishment
  - (b) Make up approximately 50% of world cultures
  - (c) Tend to focus on process rather than product
  - (d) Place greater value on clock time than collectivist cultures
  - (e) Have identical norms and expectations world-wide
7. Cultural identity ... (circle all that apply):
- (a) Usually includes more than just one's culture of origin
  - (b) Is based partially on individual choice
  - (c) May include things such as religion, gender, and recreational interests
  - (d) Influences one's communication
  - (e) Is assigned by one's family

8. Culture influences such things as ... (circle all that apply):
  - (a) The distance one sits/stands when communicating
  - (b) Norms for eye contact
  - (c) One's physical wellness
  - (d) Expectations regarding conflict resolution
  - (e) What holidays will be celebrated
  
9. Give three reasons interpreters need to understand the impact of culture on communication.