CHAPTER 8

Intercultural transitions

From language and culture shock to adaptation

> I met a lot of people in Europe. I even encountered myself.
>
> (James Baldwin 1924–87, quoted in Rains 2011)

> Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.
>
> (Maya Angelou, quote on Maya Angelou Quotes, online, n.d.)

> If you reject the food, ignore the customs, fear the religion and avoid the people, you might better stay home.
>
> (James A. Michener 1907–97, quoted in Safir and Safire 1982)

learning objectives

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

1. identify and describe types and dimensions of boundary crossers
2. define and describe the process of acculturation and second language socialization
3. describe four patterns of acculturation in immigrants
4. identify factors that facilitate or hinder acculturation and second language socialization
5. define transition shock and identify five types
6. describe the causes and symptoms of language and culture shock
7. describe the positive and negative effects of language and culture shock
8. identify and describe the stages in the U-curve and W-curve adjustment models
9. describe the causes and symptoms of reverse (reentry) culture shock
10. identify weaknesses in the curve models of adjustment
11. describe the core elements in the integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation
12. discuss the role of language in cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation
13. identify and discuss strategies to enhance intercultural transitions (e.g. cope with language and culture shock).

INTRODUCTION

Each year, millions of people cross borders to study, work, perform military duties, represent their government, conduct business, do volunteer work, take part in peace missions or engage in tourism. Some choose to make another territory or country their new home; others are forced to seek temporary or permanent refuge in a foreign land. When people leave all that is familiar and enter a region that is new to them, they naturally come into contact with groups and individuals who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the process, newcomers may be exposed to unfamiliar languages or dialects, values, norms, beliefs and behaviours (e.g. verbal, nonverbal), which may be both exhilarating and confounding. A myriad of internal and external factors can impact on the transition to a new environment.

This chapter begins by describing and contrasting several types and dimensions of boundary crossers. The next section focuses on the long-term acculturation and adaptation of immigrants and other settlers before our attention shifts to the short-term adjustment and adaptation of sojourners. After describing several types of transition shock, discussion centres on language and culture shock (causes, symptoms, degree of difficulty and potential benefits). Several of the most well-known models of sojourner adjustment (e.g. the U- and W-curve adjustment models) are then reviewed and critiqued. Next, Kim's (2001, 2005, 2012) integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation, which relates to both long-term and short-term boundary crossers, is explained. The chapter concludes with practical, research-inspired suggestions to optimize intercultural transitions.

TYPES AND DIMENSIONS OF BOUNDARY CROSSERS

All over the world, more and more people are on the move, leaving behind the familiarity and security of their home environment for new, unchartered terrain. Among these boundary crossers we may find tourists, student sojourners (e.g. international exchange students), business people, expatriate workers and their families, military personnel, diplomats, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, indigenous peoples, third culture kids (TCKs) and many other individuals or groups. Before we examine the psychological, cultural, linguistic, physiological and social impact of crossing cultures, it is helpful to be familiar with the following basic dimensions that differentiate boundary crossers: 'voluntary-involuntary' and 'permanent-temporary' (Berry 1990; Sam & Berry 2006; Ward *et al.* 2001).

Voluntary–involuntary

Nowadays, people venture abroad with diverse motives, e.g. for adventure, pleasure, work, economic necessity/benefits, family unification, a better quality of life, a safer environment, etc. As noted in Chapter 1, some individuals or groups opt to travel or move abroad of their own free will, whereas others are compelled to do so, often because of circumstances that are well beyond their control. Whether the move is voluntary or involuntary can have a profound impact on the nature and quality of the transition to the new environment.

Voluntary transitions

Voluntary migrants are those who willingly chose to travel abroad: 'In voluntary cases, one makes contact with another (others), driven by one's interest in a cultural Other (e.g. travel) or the needs of social life and survival (e.g. trade)' (Kramsch & Uryu 2012: 212). Typically, this category includes tourists, travellers or other temporary visitors, student sojourners, business people, expatriates, missionaries and immigrants. Among these groups, tourists are the most numerous.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines **tourism** as 'a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes' (http://media.unwto.org/en/content/understanding-tourism-basic-glossary). In 2011, there were 983 million international tourist arrivals worldwide, with a growth of 4.6 per cent as compared to 940 million in 2010 (UNWTO n.d.).

The number of secondary school pupils and university students who opt to undertake part of their studies in another country is also on the rise. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated that there were more than 3.6 million students being educated at the tertiary level outside their home country in 2010, up from an estimated

Plate 8.1 In many regions, tourism has become a major industry boosting the local economy and bringing people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds into contact with one another © Jane Jackson

1.7 million in 2000. By 2025, nearly eight million students are expected to be educated transnationally (Atlas of Student Mobility, n.d.).

Some students voluntarily travel abroad to improve their second language skills and cultural understanding; others seek to enhance their subject matter knowledge and job prospects. **International education** refers to 'the knowledge and skills resulting from conducting a portion of one's education in another country' or, more generally, 'international activity that occurs at any level of education (K-12, undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate)' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 11). **Education abroad** denotes 'education that occurs outside the participant's home country. Besides study abroad, this term ecompasses such international experiences as work, volunteering, non-credit internships, and directed travel, as long as these programmes are driven to a significant degree by learning goals' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 11). In North America, **study abroad** is considered 'a subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 11). This typically includes such activities as classroom study, research, internships and **service learning**. A service-learning programme is 'a subtype of field study program in which the pedagogical focus is a placement in an activity that serves the needs of a community' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 15). For example, a group of American university students may participate in a semester-long service-learning project in Guatemala, in which they work with the homeless, tutor EFL students, volunteer in an orphanage or assist human rights workers under the supervision of a faculty member.

Individuals may also choose to work abroad temporarily. Others migrate to another country to seek a better life (e.g. earn more money, procure more educational, professional and social opportunities for themselves and their families, join family members who have immigrated earlier). Immigrants are a very diverse group (e.g. differing aspirations and expectations for their new life, disparate levels of education and linguistic competence). The majority voluntarily move to a country where host nationals speak a different language and have customs, worldviews and habits that differ from what they are accustomed to in their country of origin.

Involuntary transitions

Not all migration is voluntary. For a variety of reasons, individuals or groups may become **involuntary migrants**, that is, they may be compelled to move to a different region or country.

> in involuntary cases, intercultural contacts are often driven by rather negative elements such as power struggles between different ethnic or cultural groups (e.g. war) or a powerful group's political, economic, ideological, and cultural imposition and domination of the less powerful Other (e.g. colonization).
>
> (Kramsch & Uryu 2012: 212)

As noted in Chapter 1, migration is sometimes forced on individuals or groups such as refugees. At the beginning of 2011, there were approximately 10.5 million refugees under the auspices of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees); more than half were in Asia and around 20 per cent in Africa (UNHCR n.d.). 4.8 million Palestinian refugees were also in camps overseen by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), an organization that was established in 1949 to care for displaced Palestinians (UNHCR n.d.). Due to humanitarian crises and unstable

political situations, the number of refugees is escalating and many are not included in the UNHCR statistics.

Refugees and asylum seekers involuntarily, and often quite suddenly, find themselves in an alien environment in order to escape wars, abuse, political/sexual/religious/ethnic persecution, famine, earthquakes and other natural disasters and oppression in their homeland. Whereas the term **refugee** refers to a person who has been granted protection in a country outside his or her homeland, an **asylum seeker** is seeking protection as a refugee and is waiting for his or her claim to be assessed by a country that has signed the Geneva Convention on Refugees (UNESCO). If successful, permission may be granted to settle in the new country. Those who are denied the right of abode, even after multiple appeals, are usually repatriated or sent to another country. The review process can be very protracted and the outcome uncertain.

Not surprisingly, unlike voluntary migrants, refugees may have more conflicted emotions about being in a foreign land, and face more stress and uncertainty about what lies ahead. As noted by Berry *et al.* (2011: 311), 'most of them live with the knowledge that "push factors" (rather than "pull factors") led them to flee their homeland and settle in their new society; and, of course, most have experienced traumatic events, and most have lost their material possessions'. Instead of carefully planning their new life abroad, some have fled their home country in great haste without a clear vision of their future. They may have entered a refugee camp without knowing if, when or where they will be relocated. Reluctant to leave their homeland, some refugees spend much of the remainder of their life in their new country dreaming of a return home, which may never be possible. While some migrants voluntarily cross borders and come into contact with people from the host culture, this is not the case for refugees. All of these elements play a role in the transition to a new way of life (e.g. the quality of one's adjustment).

Temporary–permanent

Boundary crossers may also be distinguished by the length of their stay in the new environment as well as the nature and purpose of their visit. For example, tourists and travellers typically visit for only a few days or weeks and have little interaction with host nationals, whereas international students and expatriates may stay for a longer period of time (e.g. many months or years) before returning to their home country, going on to another destination, or deciding to apply for permanent residency in the host country. Immigrants or refugees may remain in the receiving country for the rest of their life.

Temporary

A **sojourn** refers to 'a period of time spent living in a cultural setting different from one's own' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 15). **Sojourners** are individuals who are in the new environment temporarily for a specific purpose (e.g. study, work, business) and often for a specific length of time (e.g. several days, months, or years). When they arrive in the new environment, they already plan to return to their home country or go on to another destination at some point. The term 'sojourner' includes many sub-categories, such as tourists, international students, 'third culture kids' (TCKs) or global nomads, business executives and other expatriate workers, international civil servants or diplomats, aid workers, missionaries, military personnel and guest workers.

Plate 8.2 Tourists usually stay abroad for a short time to sight-see and have varying degrees of exposure to the local language and culture © Jane Jackson

Tourists are the most numerous group of sojourners. They usually stay abroad for only a short time (e.g. a few days to several weeks or months) to sight-see, enjoy themselves and get a taste of a different linguistic and cultural environment. Several sub-groups of tourists have focused aims, such as eco-tourists (those who travel to explore nature) and travellers (e.g. backpackers who travel for an extended period and seek out interactions with locals). Thus, while tourists are temporary visitors, they may differ in terms of their motivation, expectations, activities and degree of contact with host nationals.

Expatriates are individuals who are engaged in employment abroad (e.g. EFL teachers from Australia in Malaysia, American bankers who work for a multinational firm in Tokyo, British surveyors employed in Libya). Expatriate workers may or may not be accompanied by family members and the amount of contact they have with host nationals varies considerably. Some expatriates reside and work in a compound that is segregated from the local population (e.g. American engineers in Saudi Arabia), whereas others live, work and spend most of their free time with host nationals.

As noted in Chapter 1, with the advent of globalization, more and more institutions of higher education (and secondary schools) have officially or informally adopted an internationalization policy that has created more opportunities for young people (and teachers) to travel abroad (Kälvermark & van der Wende 1997; Knight 2004, 2008). Some students join 'year abroad' or semester-long exchange programmes; an even greater number are taking part in short-term sojourns, ranging from four to seven weeks, or micro-sojourns lasting three weeks

Plate 8.3 The majority of students who study abroad do so in a second language and in many cases that language is English, the de facto language of internationalization and globalization © Jane Jackson

or less (Forum on Education Abroad 2011; Spencer & Tuma 2008). Students may also decide to do their full undergraduate or graduate degrees at institutions outside their home country. The majority of international students study in a second language, and as the de facto language of internationalization is English many non-English speaking countries now offer full-degree programmes in this language (Jenkins 2013; Knight 2008; Knight & Lee 2012).

Permanent

Whereas sojourners are only temporarily in the host environment, immigrants and refugees may settle in a country that is not their place of birth. Immigration is not a new phenomenon but the number of people who are leaving their home country to permanently reside in another has never been greater (van Oudenhoven 2006). Whether due to 'push' or 'pull' factors, these boundary crossers end up calling another nation their home. Some become permanent residents and eventually gain citizenship in their adopted country. While some immigrants are able to hold dual or multiple citizenship, others are required to renounce their original citizenship if they officially change their nationality.

The multidimensional nature of boundary crossings

To understand the process and impact of intercultural transitions, we must consider the motivation for boundary crossings (e.g. forced or voluntary), the duration of the stay (e.g. short-term or long-term), the nature of the move (e.g. tourism, study, work) and the frequency of crossings (e.g. habitual crossings, degree of exposure to other languages and cultures, first-timers). Differences in status, power, size of the group, rights and resources (e.g. economic, political, social) influence how newcomers perceive and interact in the new environment. Individual characteristics or attributes such as attitudes, motives, values, personality and abilities (e.g. proficiency in the host language) also play a role in determining how newcomers respond to their new environment and host nationals.

Individuals (e.g. student sojourners, expatriates) may also change their status from temporary sojourners to permanent residents or immigrants. For example, international exchange students may remain abroad to work after their studies are finished. This life-changing decision would impact on their perceptions of their adopted land (and home country), as well as their intercultural relationships and self-identities. Nonetheless, in this chapter, we keep the distinction between these groups to better understand the nature of transitions.

TRANSITIONING TO A NEW CULTURE: LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM ADAPTATION

Exposure to an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environment can have a profound, long-lasting impact on both temporary and permanent boundary crossers. In the last few decades, educators and researchers from a variety of fields have devoted considerable attention to the linguistic, sociocultural, psychological and physical challenges that newcomers face in a foreign land. Early theories and explorations tended to focus on long-term settlers (e.g. immigrants and refugees); however, with an increase in temporary stays in another culture there is now considerable interest in the intercultural contact and transitions of sojourners.

Long-term adaptation: immigrants and other settlers

For many decades, social psychologists, communication specialists, applied linguists and other scholars have studied the adaptation of immigrants and refugees who settle in a new cultural environment more or less permanently, either voluntarily or due to circumstances beyond their control. Their work has drawn attention to variations in attitudes towards linguistic and cultural difference, the quality and degree of contact with people in the host environment, second language and culture-learning strategies, differences in the desire or ability of settlers to 'fit into' the new environment and variations in the attitudes of host nationals towards newcomers.

Acculturation and second language socialization

In Chapter 3, we explored **enculturation**, the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills (e.g. language, communication), attitudes and values necessary to become functioning members of their culture. In contrast, **acculturation** is the term used to refer to the changes that take place after contact between individuals or groups with different cultural

Plate 8.4 This street painting offers insight into the daily life of early Chinese immigrants in North America © Jane Jackson

backgrounds. One of the most widely quoted definitions was put forward by Redfield *et al.* (1936: 149–52):

> those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups . . . under this definition acculturation is to be distinguished from cultural change, of which it is be one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation.

More recently, acculturation is defined by Berry *et al.* (2011: 464) as 'changes in a cultural group or individuals as a result of contact with another cultural group'. This contact may bring about cultural changes in both parties (e.g. immigrants as well as host nationals).

Closely tied to acculturation, **second language socialization** refers to the process by which novices in an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural context gain intercultural communicative

competence by acquiring linguistic conventions, sociopragmatic norms, cultural scripts and other behaviours that are associated with the new culture (Duff 2010; Ochs & Schieffelin 1984). This transformation entails knowledge gains in social, cultural and linguistic domains and is closely tied to the notion of identity reconstruction or expansion that was described in Chapter 6. For example, in a new environment one can gain a deeper understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses, as noted by James Baldwin, an American civil rights activist who travelled abroad: 'I met a lot of people in Europe. I even encountered myself'. Ultimately, this knowledge can eventually lead to personal transformation, an aspect that is explored further in this chapter when we examine Kim's (2001) integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation.

Acculturation patterns

Researchers have discovered that the ways in which individuals and groups respond to intercultural contact and the process of acculturation can differ significantly. This is partly attributed to the tension between the desire to develop a sense of belonging in the new culture (acquire a local identity, master the host language, make friends with host nationals) and the desire to maintain one's own culture and language (e.g. cultural identity, traditions, values, practices). **Cultural maintenance** refers to the effort to sustain elements of one's culture or heritage by preserving core values, traditions, ways of being, etc. especially when faced with pressure to adopt a more dominant culture (e.g. the majority culture) (Berry 2006); **language maintenance** refers to 'the preservation of a language or language variety in a context where there is considerable pressure for speakers to shift towards the more prestigious or politically dominant language' (Swann *et al.* (2004: 172). The ways that individuals and ethnocultural groups respond to the process of acculturation are referred to as **acculturation strategies**.

John Berry (1974, 1997, 2003), a cross-cultural psychologist, developed an acculturation theory to illustrate the cultural and psychological dimensions of acculturation and variations in the retention or reshaping of cultural identities. In his framework, he identifies four different strategies or modes of acculturation that long-term settlers may adopt in the new environment: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization.

Assimilation occurs when individuals do not retain their original cultural identity and link to their heritage/culture; instead, they seek close interaction with the host culture, and adopt the cultural values, norms and traditions of the new society. People who assimilate into the new culture are apt to focus on mastering the host language and rarely use their first language. When they have children, they may use their second language at home and their children may grow up knowing very little about their heritage and the first language of their parents and grandparents.

Integration occurs when people take steps to maintain their cultural heritage and original cultural identity while developing harmonious relationships with other cultures (e.g. host nationals). In countries that have a large multilingual and multicultural population, immigrants may continue to use their first language at home and among members of their ethnic community but also master the primary language of their new country and interact with host nationals and people from other cultures. People who adopt this strategy aim to integrate into the new society. Although they take on some characteristics of the host culture, they retain elements of their original culture that they value.

Separation (segregation) refers to the acculturation strategy in which individuals strive to maintain their cultural heritage and avoid participation in the larger society of their new

Plate 8.5 The lives of early Chinese immigrants in Canada are captured in this street painting in Chinatown in Victoria, B.C. © Jane Jackson

country. They do not wish to be closely linked to the host culture (e.g. be associated with values and traditions they do not accept) and may resist or, at least, not invest in learning the dominant language of the community. Much of their time is spent interacting in their first language with people from their ethnic group.

Marginalization refers to the acculturation strategy in which people do not nurture their cultural heritage (and first language) and resist interacting with people in the larger society. Marginalized and isolated individuals reject both the new and old culture. They display little or no interest in maintaining the identity of their own cultural group and make no effort to develop a cultural identity linked to the dominant culture. This form of acculturation tends to be characterized by isolation and confusion.

Within the context of acculturation, Berry *et al.* (2011) define **adaptation** as the process of coping with the experiences and strains of acculturation. Many cross-cultural psychologists distinguish between **psychological adaptation** (feelings of personal well-being and self-esteem) and **sociocultural adaptation** (competence in dealing with life in the larger society) (Ward *et al.* 2001). **Acculturative stress** refers to 'a negative psychological reaction to the experiences of acculturation, often characterized by anxiety, depression, and a variety of psychosomatic problems' (Berry *et al.* 2011: 465).

Short-term adaptation: sojourners

Most investigations of short-term sojourners (e.g. international exchange students, expatriates) have focused on the need to quickly adjust to their new environment. Research has largely centred on practical ways to help people adjust and optimize their temporary stay abroad (e.g. learn the host language, communicate in culturally appropriate ways with host nationals, cope with culture difference). The next section focuses on the challenges that they may face before, during and after their stay abroad.

TYPES OF TRANSITION SHOCK

Transition shock is a broad construct, which refers to the state of loss, disorientation and identity confusion that can occur when we enter a new situation, job, relationship or physical location and find ourselves confronted with the strain of adjusting to the unfamiliar (e.g. novel perspectives, different roles) (J.M. Bennett 1998). Moving from secondary school to university or from one's family home to a dormitory are examples. Starting a new job or becoming single after a long-term romance has ended are other life transitions that people may experience. Events such as these can have an emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive and physiological impact. Several sub-categories of transition shock are especially relevant to our discussion of boundary crossings: culture shock, role shock, language shock and identity or self shock.

Culture shock

When sojourners cross borders, they travel with the language, values, beliefs and habits that they developed in their home culture through the process of enculturation that was described in Chapter 3. In an unfamiliar linguistic, physical and social environment, it is quite common to experience stress and confusion when confronted with new ideas and behaviours. This experience can be very unsettling for sojourners (and long-term settlers) and how they respond can have a profound impact on the quality and lasting impact of their stay abroad.

In 1950, anthropologist Cora DuBois used the term culture shock to refer to the disorientation that many anthropologists often experience when entering a new culture to do fieldwork (La Brack & Berardo 2007). A decade later, another anthropologist, Kalvero Oberg (1960), extended the term to encompass the transition of any individuals who travel outside their home environment and face challenges adjusting to a new culture. Since then, many definitions have been put forward. For Peter Adler (1975: 13), culture shock is 'a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences'.

Role shock

Role shock is characterized by lack of knowledge and confusion about the norms of behaviour in a new culture (e.g. the social 'rules' of politeness, business etiquette) (Byrnes 1966). When you enter a new, unfamiliar situation you are apt to be exposed to roles and responsibilities

that diverge from what you are used to in your home environment. For example, you may encounter different expectations for the behaviour of males and females in particular contexts. In an unfamiliar country, students may be surprised to discover that the roles of teachers and learners differ from what they have become accustomed to. In a new job in an unfamiliar country, it can be stressful to discover that the relationship between employer and employee is much more formal (or less formal) than expected.

Language shock

Boundary crossings frequently involve exposure to a language that is not one's mother tongue. **Language shock** refers to the challenge of understanding and communicating in a second language in an unfamiliar environment (Smalley 1963). Hile (1979) describes it as 'the frustration and mental anguish that results in being reduced to the level of a two-year-old in one's ability to communicate'. Not having enough language skills to perform simple daily tasks can be very frustrating and humbling. Even if you speak the same first language as host nationals, differences in accent, cultural scripts, norms of politeness, dialects, humour, vocabulary, slang and communication styles can impede communication. In the host environment, nonverbal behaviours (e.g. body language, paralanguage) can be confounding for newcomers. Language and culture shock can lead to temporary disorientation and discomfort in unfamiliar surroundings.

Identity or self shock

Crossing borders can also raise awareness of one's sense of self and even challenge self-identities that have long been taken for granted. **Identity** or **self shock** refers to 'the intrusion of inconsistent, conflicting self-images', which can involve 'loss of communication competence', 'distorted self-reflections in the responses of others' and 'the challenge of changing identity-bound behaviors' (Zaharna 1989: 501). As newcomers try to make sense of their new environment and communicate who they are, they are sometimes dismayed to discover that they are not perceived as they would like. Communicating one's preferred identities through a second language can be frustrating and easily misunderstood. With exposure to new ways of being, newcomers may also experience some confusion about who they are and how they fit into the world around them, as Zaharna (1989: 518) explains:

> For the sojourner, self-shock is the intrusion of inconsistent, conflicting self-images. At a time when we are searching for meaning "out there," our own internal axis for creating meaning is thrown off balance. Our frustration becomes not so much trying to make sense of the Other (i.e. culture shock) but rather the Self (i.e. self-shock).

This form of transition shock emerges from 'a double-bind of increased need to confirm self-identities, with diminished ability to do so' (Zaharna 1989: 516). When we realize that our usual ways of conveying our identities are misunderstood by others, we may lack the knowledge and skills to change the situation. In an alien environment, it can be very unsettling when our preferred self-labels are not understood or accepted. For example, Korean or Japanese students may be identified as Chinese when abroad and vice versa. Second language speakers who are very fluent in the host language may be dismayed to be constantly reminded that they are foreigners because of their accent or vocabulary choice.

When individuals or groups cross borders and experience culture shock, they may confront all of the dimensions mentioned: role shock, self shock and language shock as culture is intertwined with each of these elements.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE SHOCK

Causes of language and culture shock

Moving from one linguistic and cultural environment to another can cause stress, anxiety and confusion. What are the main sources of language and culture shock? Furnham and Bochner (1986), Klopf and McCroskey (2007), Nolan (1999), Oberg (1960), Ward *et al.* (2001) and many other scholars have offered a range of explanations:

Unrealistic, romantic expectations. If you have decided to move to a new environment expecting it to be perfect (e.g. an idyllic, stress-free oasis), it can be quite a shock to discover that it is not like in your dreams. Similar to home, there are bound to be elements of the new culture that are not pleasing to you. Idealistic, romantic notions of host nationals that have been formed by reading novels or watching movies are unlikely to match reality. For example, Elsa, a student sojourner, made the following comments in her diary as she travelled from Asia to England:

> During the flight, the images, or, I should say, my imagination about what England is like and how British people look like, kept lingering in my mind. In my opinion, Britain is quite a traditional, old-fashioned country. People there are all with perfect propriety. Gentlemen and ladies in nice suits and gowns are the most outstanding images that first come to my mind whenever I think of England.

A few weeks later she was much less enthusiastic when she wrote:

> I used to think that all English were polite and gentle. Some are gentlemen but a lot are not . . . From reading books, I thought that all the British people are very cultured, going to the theatre and reading literature but I was too naïve. That makes me a little bit disappointed as I expected that the whole country was very cultured . . .

Ward *et al.* (2001) observe that sojourners who hold unrealistic expectations about the host country may become disillusioned and withdraw when confronted with reality.

Inadequate preparation. If you experience language and culture shock soon after your arrival in a new country, it may come as a surprise if you have given little thought to what life will be like in the host culture. You may not have considered language- and culture-learning strategies that could help you adjust and make connections with host nationals. Without adequate preparation and limited understanding of culture shock, you may be ill-equipped psychologically to deal with the natural ups and downs of adjustment.

Abrupt change. Nowadays, with advances in transportation we can easily travel from our home environment to distant lands in a matter of hours. In our journey we may cross several time zones and arrive in a place with a very different climate as well as many unfamiliar

practices (e.g. cultural, dietary, linguistic, religious, political, social, etc.). This can be a shock to one's system, as noted by Wood and Landry (2010: 48):

> Change feels too fast. Contact with difference, the unfamiliar, the strange and the 'Other' . . . can be and usually is unsettling in spite of the occasional speck of delight and surprise. The abrupt loss of the familiar and moving from one environment where one has learnt to function easily and successfully to one where one cannot is dramatic for both [short-term and long-term sojourners].

Lack of familiarity with signs and symbols. In our home environment, we are surrounded by physical and social signs that help us to make sense of our world and enable us to function in everyday life. When we enter an unfamiliar milieu we are suddenly exposed to verbal and nonverbal codes and social behaviours (e.g. words, communication styles, gestures, customs, cultural scripts) that are foreign to us. Our inability to comprehend these signs and symbols can induce acculturative stress, as Oberg (1960: 177) explains:

> Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants,

Plate 8.6 We may experience culture shock in a new environment due to the loss of the familiar and uncertainty about local social norms and practices © Jane Jackson

how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness.

Loss. When you move to a new environment, you leave behind much of what is familiar to you. As Swallow (2010) observes, 'everything is unfamiliar, weather, landscape, language, food, dress, social roles, values, customs, and communication – basically, everything you're used to is no longer there'. Some sojourners experience intense feelings of grief and loss as they miss their first language, people, places, possessions, and other aspects (e.g. food, expressions of courtesy, sounds, smells) that are dear to them in their home environment.

Sensory overload. In unfamiliar surroundings and situations it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed and overstimulated by the multitude of new sights, sounds and smells that you

Plate 8.7
Newcomers can easily be overwhelmed by the wide variety of unfamiliar sights, scents, sounds and choices © Jane Jackson

Plate 8.8 Imagine you are to travel to a beautiful beach in the Philippines. Would you be prepared to get on board this jeepney? © David Jackson

experience. Pulled in many different directions, you may feel pressured to deal with too many things at once. According to Nancy Arthur (2004: 27–8), a cross-cultural psychologist and counsellor, '[i]n familiar cultural environments, cognitive and sensory processes normally operate through automatic and unconscious processing of information. However, in unfamiliar cultural environments, a conscious and deliberate effort must be made to process and understand the meaning of new information'. Not surprisingly, newcomers may experience sensory and cognitive overload and fatigue as they expend a considerable amount of energy continuously processing new information.

Unfamiliar 'ways of being'. In a new cultural environment, you are bound to encounter unfamiliar worldviews and ways of doing things. You may be confronted with different ideas about what is appropriate behaviour for males and females. Religious practices (e.g. interrupting work for daily prayers) may be new to you. Modes of transportation may also be very different from what you are used to.

If you opt to study abroad, you may also encounter new '**cultures of learning**', as Cortazzi and Jin (1997: 83) explain:

> a culture of learning depends on the norms, values and expectations of teachers and learners relative to classroom activity . . . It is not simply that overseas students encounter different ways of teaching and different expectations about learning; rather such encounters are juxtaposed with the cultures of learning they bring with them.

For example, you may find that you are expected to speak up in class much more than you are used to and teachers may provide less support (e.g. no powerpoint slides, lecture notes or other handouts) or vice versa (Jackson 2013). These new behaviours can be very confusing and difficult to accept at first.

Feeling trapped. People who stay abroad for less than three weeks (micro-term sojourners) and even tourists who are abroad for longer know that if they are really uncomfortable in the new environment they can seek refuge in their hotel room or hostel and will soon escape to the safety and security of home. Short-term sojourners (e.g. those who will stay several months) and certainly long-term sojourners (e.g. expatriates who live abroad for many years) face a different situation. Newcomers who study, live or work alongside host nationals need to be able to function in the host culture. As Nolan (1999: 78) explains, 'you can't turn off your new country, not even for a second. It's always there, pushing in on you in a thousand ways, all at once'. Sojourners who are unable to cope may take flight and head for home earlier than planned.

Ambiguity and uncertainty. It can be very frustrating to discover that your usual ways of accomplishing daily tasks and interacting with people do not work well in the new culture. Initially, you may be quite unsure about when and what will happen (e.g. who speaks first, what responses are deemed appropriate in a particular situation). Cultural scripts (e.g. local conventions for apologies, requests, refusals) may be mystifying. Displays of emotion, gender relations and the rules for social interactions may be quite different from what you are used to and in many situations you may not know how to respond. You may also be surprised at the ways in which people react to what you say and do. Tolerance of ambiguity refers to one's ability to cope with situations that are not clear. Individuals who have a low tolerance of ambiguity may find adjustment more difficult than those who are less stressed in situations where they do not fully understand the context. (Chapter 9 discusses the uncertainty reduction theory and the uncertainty/anxiety management theory.)

Lack of socio-emotional support. Crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries can be very stressful. If this is your first foray abroad and you are on your own, there are bound to be times when you find life difficult. When you feel blue, you are apt to miss the support of your family members and confidants who are far away. Until you make new friends and develop a support system (e.g. ties with locals and other international students), you are surrounded by strangers in a foreign environment.

No matter where you are in the world, you can suffer personal disappointments, worries and hardship (e.g. relationship breakups, the serious illness of family members or friends, financial difficulties, academic failure). Events that would be unsettling in your home environment can seem even more overwhelming in the host culture, especially if you are not physically close to your loved ones. Even minor difficulties that would easily be dealt with at home can seem insurmountable if you are more emotional and plagued with self-doubts.

Standing out. In your home environment, you can easily blend in if you are visibly similar to other members of the majority culture. If you display similar identity markers (e.g. religious clothing, tattoos), speak the same first language or dialect as the majority and use nonverbal behaviours familiar to home nationals, you can go about your business without attracting attention. If you cross borders and become a visible minority for the first time in your life, it can be quite a shock as this novice sojourner from Hong Kong discovered:

> The scene in Heathrow Airport, when I was suddenly surrounded only by foreigners (mostly 'giant' Westerners whose skin, eye and hair colours were different from mine; speaking English or other foreign languages) struck me a great deal. And due to these intrinsic differences between them and me, psychologically I felt distanced from them though all of us were now under the same roof . . . my mind was occupied by uncertainty, curiosity and my effort to force out the courage to face the new . . .

Even if you can physically blend into a new environment, you may discover that eyebrows are raised as soon as you utter a few words. Your accent, nonverbal behaviour and communication style can signal that you are a stranger. The adornments and clothing you wear (e.g. body piercings, jewellery, short skirts, head scarf) may be commonplace in your home environment but set you apart in another cultural context. Being stared at (and perhaps ridiculed) can be unnerving.

Discrimination or perceptions of discrimination. If you have grown up in an environment where you are a member of the group that has the most influence and prestige, it can be a shock to enter a world in which you are a minority member with less status and power. When intercultural interactions do not go well, you may feel that people in the host culture are treating you unfairly because of your accent, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, nationality, etc. In some situations, your instincts may be valid, whereas in others, your perception of discrimination or racism may be due to an elevated stress level and misunderstandings about linguistic and cultural norms in the host culture. For example, the annoyed look of a host national may be due to your unintentional breaking of social norms (e.g. omitting the word 'thank you') rather than prejudice. Whether real or imagined, negative encounters like this can lead to withdrawal from the host culture: 'being discriminated against can turn people inwards and cause a sense of isolation or diminished self-importance' (Wood & Landry 2010: 48).

Language shock. If you have entered a new linguistic environment and do not speak the local language or your proficiency is at the beginner's level, you can feel helpless and dependent. You may have a basic grasp of the local language but lack familiarity with **sociopragmatic norms** (e.g. cultural scripts for social situations, routinized expressions of politeness) and this can be a significant barrier to communication and hamper your adjustment. Even if you have studied the language in an academic setting for many years and attained a high score on a language proficiency test, it can be unsettling to discover that your speech (e.g. accent, style of communication) is not easily understood by locals. Your formal language lessons at school may not have equipped you for informal, social situations. Initially, you may find idiomatic expressions, humour, satire, social discourse and communication styles impenetrable. Body language and other nonverbal codes may also be difficult to decipher. Second language socialization can be challenging.

Language fatigue. Interacting with people in a second language can be very exhausting, especially if you are not used to functioning in the language on a daily basis. If your proficiency is not advanced you may find that you need to translate oral speech in your head and then respond. As the comments of this second language sojourner reveal, this can be very taxing until your profiency improves.

> I really think that my English is not okay. I need time to translate what I want to say: grammar and articles and tenses are all wrong . . . And it's so tiring to use English all day.

> I find that my English vocabulary is not enough . . . And the translation is really killing me! . . . It is getting harder and harder for me to translate and I feel tired. I just speak Cantonese by instinct . . . I think my mind will burst . . . It's really killing me. My mood is on the drop. Maybe there is a maximum capacity of learning a foreign language that is preventing my further improvement.

Miscommunication. If you enter a new environment with little or no proficiency in the host language it can be very challenging to express your needs, ideas and emotions in verbal and nonverbal ways that are meaningful to your hosts. If you arrive with an advanced level of proficiency in the host language, your hosts are apt to expect you to speak and interact in ways that are appropriate in that context. In other words, they may expect you to have much more sociopragmatic knowledge and awareness than you actually possess. A language barrier can lead to frustration and misunderstandings for both newcomers and host nationals.

Conflict in values. When you travel to a new environment you bring with you the values and worldviews that have been nurtured in your home country during the process of enculturation. In your new surroundings, you are bound to encounter people who do not necessarily share your perspective. Unless managed with skill, conflicting values and expectations can serve as a barrier to intercultural relations. (Conflicts in interpersonal relations are examined further in Chapters 9 and 10.)

Change in status or positioning. As a stranger or newcomer, you may discover that you have lost your status and positioning in the host culture. Back home, you may have been accorded respect as a top undergraduate with a high GPA but in the new environment you may find yourself in classes with many students who are more proficient in the language of instruction and have more background knowledge about the local culture. Until you find your feet, this loss in status can shake your self-confidence.

Symptoms of language and culture shock

Cross-cultural psychologists, counsellors, educators, and other scholars (e.g. Arthur 2004; Bochner 2006; Gebhard 2010; Ward *et al.* 2001; Winkelman 1994) have identified a number of cognitive, psychological (emotional) and physiological symptoms linked to language and culture shock. Their research suggests that when you enter another culture to live, work, or study, you *may* experience some of the following symptoms:

- a change in sleep patterns (e.g. experience trouble falling asleep (insomnia) or sleep much more than usual)
- frequent mood swings and heightened irritability (e.g. be easily bothered by things that would normally not trouble you)
- feeling vulnerable, powerless, lost and insecure (e.g. preoccupation with your safety, constant fears about being robbed, cheated, or exploited)
- excessive worrying about one's state of physical or mental health
- continuous concern about the purity of the water and food (e.g. you develop an obsession about cleanliness manifesting in excessive washing of hands)
- unfamiliar body aches and pains (e.g. skin rashes, hives, headaches, stomach aches, allergies) and frequent illnesses (e.g. colds, general malaise)

- loss of appetite or overeating (e.g. significant weight loss or gains)
- feeling sad and lonely even when in the company of other people
- homesickness (e.g. constant, deep longing for your family and friends back home)
- utopian, unrealistic views about your home culture and language
- fear of trying new things, meeting local people or going to unfamiliar places (e.g. continually declining invitations to go out, staying inside more than usual)
- feelings of inadequacy (e.g. loss of self-confidence due to the inability to express yourself clearly in the host language and perform basic tasks)
- increased consumption of alcohol or drugs
- frequent perceptions of being singled out, overlooked or discriminated against (e.g. not treated with the same respect as locals)
- pressing desire to interact with people just like yourself (e.g. individuals from the same linguistic and cultural background who 'really make sense' and 'understand you')
- cognitive impairment (e.g. difficulty concentrating and making decisions, inability to solve simple problems)
- frequently questioning your decision to go abroad and counting the days until you return home
- constantly comparing the new environment with your home culture, with the former cast in a negative light (e.g. constant complaints about the local weather, food, people, customs, etc.)
- hostility towards members of the host culture and frequent 'us' vs. 'them' discourse (e.g. negative stereotyping of host nationals)
- resentment and lack of desire to interact with people from the host culture
- loss of identity or confusion about who you are and how you fit into the world
- refusal to learn/use the host language and interact with host nationals.

Degree of language and culture shock

Not all boundary crossers suffer from transition shock in the same way or to the same degree. Adler (1975), Furnham and Bochner (1986), Ward *et al.* (2001) and other researchers have identified a range of factors that may account for disparate experiences.

Quality of information (degree of fact-finding, amount and calibre of information about new environment, knowledge about the process of intercultural adjustment). Individuals who enter a new environment armed with current information about the host country (e.g. language, history, climate, 'cultures of learning', politics, religious practices, customs, etc.) and the process of adjustment are better equipped to deal with culture shock than those who arrive without having done any groundwork.

Cultural similarity (the degree of similarity between one's home culture and the host culture in terms of values, beliefs, nonverbal behaviours, customs, 'cultures of learning', etc.). Cultural distance refers to 'the major differences concerning cultural values, language, and verbal and nonverbal styles between one's home country and the host society' (Ting-Toomey & Chung 2012: 299). When the cultural distance is greater, the culture shock may be more severe. For example, students from Wuhan, China may find it more challenging to adjust to Berlin than Singapore. A Brazilian may find it easier to adjust to Lisbon than Nairobi.

Linguistic similarity (the degree of similarity between one's first language and the host language). Sojourners who speak a romance language such as French may find it easier to cope in a Spanish-speaking environment than in an environment where a Semitic language (e.g. Arabic) is the dominant medium of communication. When the language or dialect is from the same family (e.g. romance languages), it is easier to pick up the rhythm of the language as well as the script (written form).

Communication style similarity (the degree of similarity between one's communication style and the common communication styles in the host culture). For example, Japanese nationals who are most familiar with an indirect style of communication are apt to find it less challenging to move to an environment where a similar style is widely used. If they transfer to Germany or another country where more direct styles of communication are favoured they may find adjustment more difficult.

Interpersonal dimensions (e.g. age, fortitude, independence, previous travel, proficiency in the host language, resourcefulness, tolerance of ambiguity). All of these traits or personal characteristics can impact on one's ability to deal with difficulties that arise. Individuals who are more resilient and tolerant of ambiguity are better positioned to cope with the strains of adjustment.

Physiological factors (mental and physical condition, medical or dietary issues, ability to tolerate changes in temperature/time zones, resilience). Individuals who are less physically robust (e.g. become ill easily, are susceptible to changes in the weather/diet) and not emotionally stable may be more affected by the adjustment process. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to cope with stress and adversity.

Socio-emotional support (friendship circles, intracultural and intercultural relationships, family support). The strength of one's bonds with other people (e.g. friends in the host culture) and the amount of socio-emotional support (warmth and nurturance) they provide can have a significant impact on how one's sojourn unfolds. Those who avoid host nationals and spend all of their time with people from their home country may benefit from the camaraderie and suffer less culture shock; however, this avoidance strategy can limit their personal development (e.g. second language/culture learning). Conversely, those who make more of an effort to develop friendships with host nationals may suffer more from culture shock due to more exposure to the host culture but, ultimately, they may benefit much more from the sojourn (e.g. become more proficient in the host language, develop a deeper understanding of the host environment, experience more personal growth) (Gareis 2012; Hendrickson *et al.* 2010; Kinginger 2009).

Degree of control (amount of control over such aspects as one's move abroad, living conditions in the new environment, sojourn duration, free time, selection of courses, etc.). Individuals who have chosen to go abroad are apt to be more motivated than those who venture abroad for the sole purpose of fulfilling a programme or job requirement. One's degree of autonomy in other aspects (e.g. housing, selection of courses/host institution/destination) can result in differences in the ways individuals view and respond to acculturative stress).

Geopolitical factors (relationship between the home country and the host nation; international, national, regional, or local tensions). If sojourning in a region that has strong, favourable

ties with one's home country, one may view the host country positively and feel secure and well received by host nationals. Conversely, if the host country has tense or hostile relations with one's home country, the sojourner may be apprehensive about entering and not be welcomed in the same way.

Agency (the capacity to make choices). Two sojourners with a similar background can be in the host environment at the same time. One may take advantage of every opportunity possible to interact with locals and practice the host language, whereas the other person may constantly pine for home and spend all of his free time on Skype complaining to friends and family back home about the weather, food, local people, etc. in his first language. While one sojourner is overwhelmed with feelings of homesickness, the other is willing to try new things, makes friends with host nationals and begins to 'fit into' the new environment. This disparate outcome evokes a well-known quote from the American author James A. Michener: 'If you reject the food, ignore the customs, fear the religion and avoid the people, you might better stay home'.

Duration and spatial factors (length of stay, location of residence, geographical locale). Sojourners who reside in an apartment with home nationals and only stay a short time in the host culture likely have less opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships with host nationals than those who stay longer and live in a homestay or dormitory with locals. The amount and quality of exposure to the host culture can impact on the degree of language and culture shock that one experiences.

Positive and negative effects of language and culture shock

Early conceptions of culture shock were largely negative. In fact, Oberg (1960: 177) referred to it as 'an occupational disease of people who have been transplanted abroad'. For many decades, 'disease'-oriented perceptions persisted and pre-sojourn orientations usually emphasized practical ways to avoid culture shock. Nowadays, however, there is growing recognition of the positive dimensions of this phenomenon and the focus has shifted to productive ways to manage the stress that naturally occurs as one enters and adjusts to a new environment. Further, more scholars are drawing attention to the potential for language and culture stress to lead to deeper levels of '**whole person development**' (e.g. emotional intelligence and resourcefulness, interpersonal communication skills, intercultural competence, independence, maturity) and **identity expansion** (e.g. a broadened, more inclusive sense of self, the development of a global outlook) (Jackson 2012; Kinginger 2009). Dealing with the challenges of transitions can result in new, deeper understandings of oneself and more motivation to persevere in the host culture.

> In the encounter with another culture the individual gains new experiential knowledge by coming to understand the roots of his or her own ethnocentricism and by gaining new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture . . . Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself.
>
> (Adler 1975: 22)

While language and culture shock can be debilitating for some, it can also lead to significant learning and personal growth, as noted more recently by Lantis and DuPlaga (2010: 60–61):

> By getting "culture shocked," you are challenging yourself, surpassing your comfort zone, and becoming much more aware of your identity and of the world around you. You are building skills, gaining confidence, and forging relationships that surpass your former boundaries. Ultimately, you are learning what it means to be a global citizen.

When newcomers immerse themselves in the host culture, they gain more access to host nationals and local practices or ways of doing things. As noted in Chapter 6, **communities of practice (CoP)** are 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger 2006). Significant contact with the local language and cultural practices can certainly be exhausting and stressful at times; however, the discomfort can also lead to more awareness and understanding of both Self and Other. For example, first-hand exposure to new communities of practice can compel individuals to reflect on and even question their behaviours, self-identities, values and beliefs. It can motivate newcomers to master the host language and enhance their intercultural competence to better 'fit into' the new environment. As sojourners become more tolerant of ambiguity and develop better intercultural communication skills, they are apt to experience more success in overcoming difficulties. Successfully dealing with language and culture shock can be a source of pride and can help sojourners become more self-confident and independent.

STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK AND ADJUSTMENT

The U-curve adjustment model

Since the term culture shock was introduced, scholars have created various models to try and depict the stages of culture shock and adjustment that sojourners may experience in a new culture. One of the earliest and most well-known models is the **U-curve adjustment model** (Lysgaard 1955), which is illustrated in Figure 8.1.

The U-shaped model includes four stages, which have been given various names by different scholars (e.g. Lysgaard 1955; Oberg 1960):

1. the honeymoon stage (initial euphoria): fascination and excitement about the new culture, curiosity about linguistic and cultural differences and an emphasis on cultural similarities;
2. culture stress and shock (crisis and frustration): confrontation with different values and behaviours, confusion and anxiety and criticism/rejection of the new language and culture;
3. adjustment (integration or recovery): the learning of new linguistic, social and cultural norms, an increase in one's level of comfort and well-being and respect for the new culture (e.g. different ways of being) and language;
4. mastery (adaptation and acceptance, biculturalism): awareness and understanding of cultural differences, an increase in autonomy and satisfaction, a dual cultural/linguistic identity.

Reentry and the W-curve adjustment model

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) maintain that returnees often experience a similar period of adjustment when they return home, so they extended the U-curve model by adding two stages:

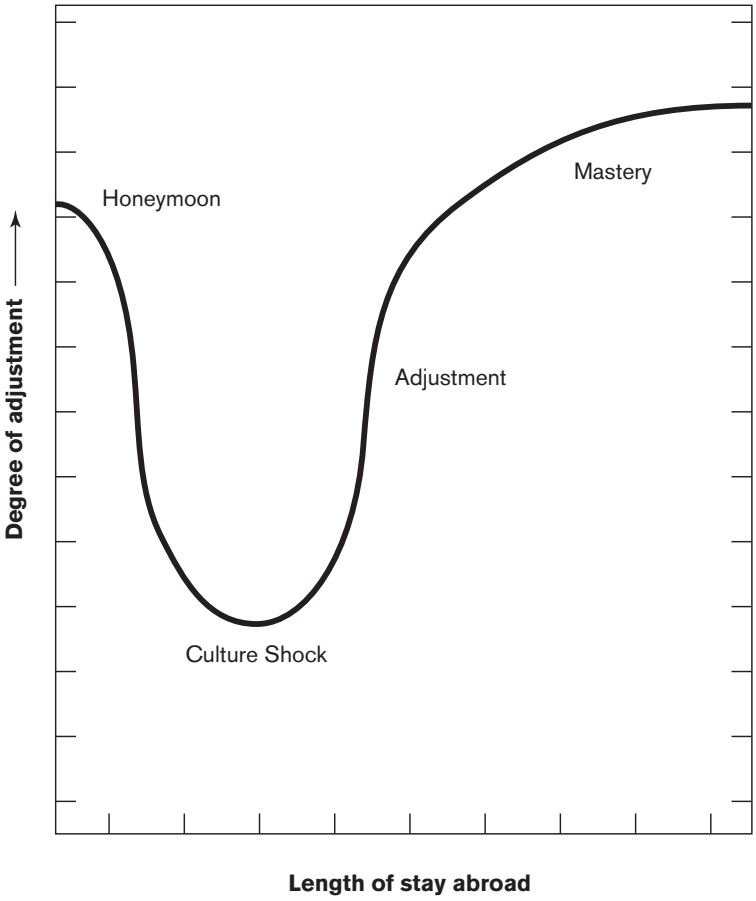

Figure 8.1 The U-curve adjustment model

reentry or reverse culture shock and **resocialization**, the process of readjusting one's attitudes and behaviours to feel at ease in one's 'home environment' after a period away (see Figure 8.2). Since then, many versions of their W-shape adjustment model have been proposed by interculturalists (e.g. Kohls 2001; Ting-Toomey & Chung 2012).

As variations of this model are still widely used today, the proposed stages are explained along with relevant 'real world' examples from student sojourners.[1]

The honeymoon phase (initial euphoria). When sojourners first arrive in the host culture, the curve model suggests that most are excited and looking forward to what lies ahead. Similar to the early stage of a romance, newcomers may initially overlook negative aspects of the host culture and take delight in discovering new sights, sounds and smells. This buoyant mood is captured in a diary entry written by a second language sojourner soon after her arrival in the host culture:

> Waking up this morning, I could hardly believe I was in England. It was all like a dream, a dream that came true finally . . . I looked around my bedroom and then viewed through the window: the air was still and quiet amidst birds' chatter, everything was clear like a framed picture, with no sign of impurities or pollution which very often surround my living place back home. The colours of my room, the neighbouring houses, the trees and the sky, were plain, fresh and lively. A sense of satisfaction ran through my heart.

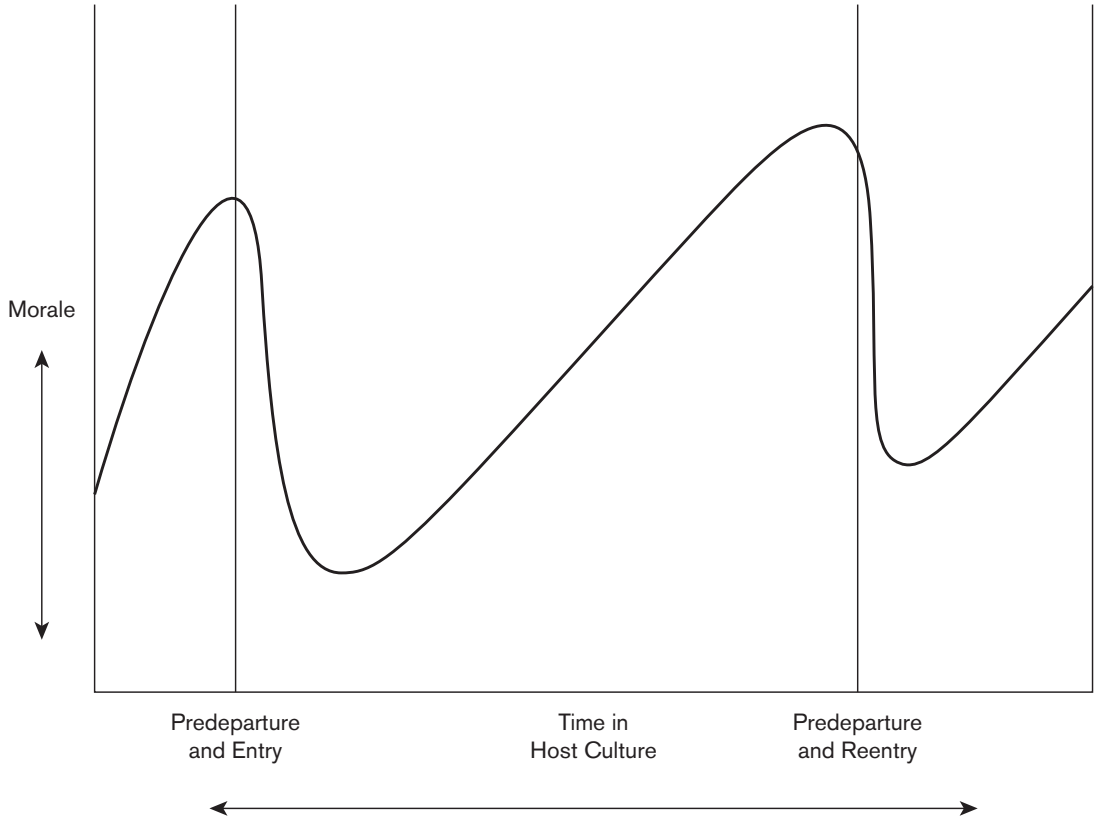

Figure 8.2 The W-curve adjustment model

Hostility phase. In the model, the second phase is sometimes referred to as 'culture shock', 'crisis stage' or 'disintegration'. After the initial euphoria fades away, sojourners may feel uncomfortable in the new environment, especially if they are a visible minority or they stand out in some way (e.g. speak with a different accent, wear different clothing, eat different food, have different values). For example, in a post-sojourn interview, an international exchange student disclosed the following:

> You feel that you are different from the people there – your skin color, your language, and your thoughts. Everyone likes to be with people who are like them. I felt isolated and a bit depressed because they were all familiar with each other and I knew nobody . . . I had difficulties with communication and felt unwelcome by locals. That was far from my expectation before going on exchange. I was desperate to go home at that time.

Newcomers may also be overwhelmed and frustrated by the psychological, cognitive, and physical demands of the new culture and the disintegration of almost everything familiar. Bombarded by stimuli that are difficult to process, excitement may be replaced by frustration and disappointment. In an irritable state, differences between the home culture and host environment are viewed as problems. For example, student sojourners may discover that their roommates have values and practices that they find difficult to accept. In this hostile phase, much of their discourse may be replete with 'us' vs. 'them' comments, with host nationals portrayed unfavourably, as in the following stereotypical comments by a disgruntled exchange student:

> I think people in North America lead a really dissolute life. They tend to treat sex casually. They also don't have any goals. They just drink, take drugs and have sex all the time. All the students have the characteristics of a typical North American. They don't know what they are doing in their life. People said foreigners are polite but I don't think so. I think they're rather rebellious and impolite.

Sojourners may also discover that their second language skills are not as well developed as they had assumed. Unexpectedly, they may experience difficulty communicating with people from the host culture, especially in informal situations where colloquialisms are frequently used: 'Although my English isn't good enough to express myself fully, it wasn't a big problem in my coursework. The language problem was more apparent when I chatted with my classmates as I didn't understand their jokes or know how to respond.' As well as being mentally and physically exhausting at times, using a second language can make it more challenging to cultivate intercultural relationships, an issue that is explored further in Chapter 9.

When classes get underway, student sojourners may come face to face with differing expectations and learning and teaching styles and long for familiar 'cultures of learning'. For example, a Chinese exchange student in the U.S. said:

> Sometimes the professor might look at you to force you to answer her questions, but when I had no idea what she was talking about I had to avoid having any eye contact with her. It was so embarrassing. Also, it was so hard for me to fit in. Students kept raising their hands! The most general arguments had been said and then I could not follow their flow so I had no choice but to stay quiet. Once the professor came to me and told me that I was too passive in class. She suggested that I ask more questions instead of answering them but it wasn't easy as I am a passive person and I just wasn't used to this fast pace.

In this stage, homesickness may set in and sojourners may question their decision to go abroad. A small number who suffer severe symptoms of language and culture shock may head home.

Humorous stage. This third phase is sometimes termed the 'reorientation and re-integration phase' or 'adjustment and recovery'. The curve model suggests that sojourners in this phase have regained their sense of humour. They have begun to realize that many of the problems that they have experienced in the new environment are due to cultural difference (including their response to it) or language problems rather than deliberate attempts by locals to annoy them. While comparisons are still made between their home and host cultures, this model suggests that the sojourners are more balanced in their views by this stage. They are more aware of linguistic or cultural differences that may have led to misunderstandings.

With a more positive mindset, they are better able to interpret subtle linguistic and cultural cues, and those who are using a second language find it easier to express themselves in the language. A female sojourner in the Netherlands remarked:

> I had difficulty communicating with locals in the beginning but after many weeks had passed, I found that they were nice people. It's just that they dared not to speak in English. Also, by then I knew more about their culture and began to like this country. True, I did experience culture shock at the beginning but I learned to overcome it.

At the host university, student sojourners may have started to form friendships with other international students and perhaps some local students as well. These interpersonal

connections help them to feel a bit more connected to the local scene. Although better able to function in the host culture, they may still experience difficult days (e.g. occasional bouts of homesickness).

The 'At home' stage. This phase is sometimes referred to as 'adaptation' or 'resolution'. The curve model suggests that sojourners in this stage feel more at home and happy in the host environment. In a more relaxed frame of mind, they demonstrate more understanding and appreciation of the host language and culture and their new way of life. A sojourner in London wrote:

> Midway through the semester, my life took a turn. By then, I'd made more friends, including some English mates, and had even begun to dream in English! I realized I'd developed a sense of belonging to Bloomsbury, my neighborhood. From the Indian restaurant to the corner shop to my residence hall, social bonds began to form. Overcoming adversities with positivity allowed me to see more and discover more, and with the positive energy this generates, others could feel this . . . Studying abroad is not easy. It is a test of the strength of your character but if you champion it and open yourself up, it can change your life completely.

When using the host language in daily life, sojourners are better able to communicate their ideas and feelings in ways that are context-appropriate as their sociopragmatic awareness has increased. They may actively participate in activities and have a circle of friends they can confide in, which boosts their self-confidence and sense of belonging.

By this time, student sojourners may have become more receptive to new 'cultures of learning' as they better understand what lies behind different practices. For example, a Chinese exchange student who spent a semester in the U.S. revealed the following in a post-sojourn interview:

> In the Human Resources Management course, I didn't like the professor in the beginning. He didn't teach much. Instead, he assigned the teaching job to groups with each group responsible for teaching one chapter. I thought, "You are the professor, why don't you teach?" Gradually, I noticed that he made additional comments to what the students taught. This helped the students to think and learn more . . . The interaction between the teacher and the students took up almost the whole class and you had to think independently. Soon everybody was in a heated discussion and the students would come up with all kinds of answers, including ones you cannot think of, and those you feel too shy to voice out. But they just did! In the beginning, you might not be willing to participate but gradually in such an environment, I became better in communication. One of the benefits is that I no longer get nervous in these situations. I became accustomed to thinking, discussing, and speaking up in a group environment. This is the greatest thing I gained. This helped me to develop one of the most important skills in the business field. In this field, you always need to communicate with others. My communication and cooperative skills are much better after this experience. In the past, I wouldn't dare to challenge others whenever I had a different point of view. I've become bolder to speak out my views and add to the points of others, although my attitude is still not very aggressive.

With enhanced self-confidence, sojourners in this stage may employ more culturally appropriate problem-solving and conflict mediation techniques. They are more adept at coping with challenges that come their way.

This model also suggests that some sojourners may feel that they have developed a bilingual and bicultural identity by this stage. **Biculturalism** is characterized by proficiency and comfort with both one's original culture and the culture of the new country or region (Berry 1997; Fantini 2012a). As noted by Kanno (2003: 3), bilingual individuals may 'incorporate these languages and cultures into their sense of who they are'. Like the following student, sojourners who develop a broadened sense of self may believe that they have been 'transformed' into a more open-minded person while abroad.

> When you go to a multicultural, multilingual country to study, you have the chance to get to know people with different nationalities who speak many languages . . . You can learn to think from different angles. After spending a year abroad, I've become much more open-minded. I embrace other cultures and languages, and no longer see the world from a single angle.
>
> (A year-long sojourner)

Reentry or Reverse culture shock. **Reentry** refers to the process of returning home after spending time abroad (Martin & Harrell 2004; Niesen 2010; Smith 2002). The **W-curve model** suggests that many returnees experience ups and downs that are similar to what they experienced abroad. **Reentry** or **reverse culture shock** may be defined as 'the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time' (Gaw 2000: 83–4).

Returnees may experience disorientation, surprise and confusion when they do not easily fit back into their home environment. This malaise may be due to a variety of reasons (e.g. a shift in perspectives, boredom with the familiar, appreciation of the host country's customs or values, idealized images of the home country formed while abroad). The shock of reentry can sometimes be more severe and painful than the initial culture shock in the host country, in part because it is not expected (LaBrack 2003; Martin & Harrell 2004; Smith 2002; Szkudlarek 2010). After all, the sojourner is returning 'home'.

In the beginning, those who more fully integrated into the host culture (e.g. made close friends with host nationals or other international students) and functioned well in the host language in their daily life may find it more difficult to readjust to their home culture and first language use in daily life. They may miss their more independent lifestyle and friends made abroad, and find it difficult to fit back into the rhythm of local life. One returnee said:

> My adjustment on reentry has been more difficult than what I experienced abroad. I'm still not fully readjusted now. The whole living schedule and sleeping times have changed. Before going on exchange I was able to sleep very little and do a lot of things during the day but now I find this living style is very tiring. I wish I was living the comfortable Norwegian lifestyle but if I do, I won't have enough time to get everything done! I don't know how to cope with that. I'm still working on this . . . still adjusting to being back.
>
> (Year-long exchange student)

While excited to share their experiences, returnees may find that their friends and family quickly tire of their international stories. Disillusioned, returnees may consider host nationals boring and provincial; they may long for the life they had during the sojourn and view it through rose-tinted glasses. They may miss not being able to converse as much in their second language as they did while abroad. Their discourse may be full of complaints about their home

culture. This time, 'them' vs. 'us' discourse may elevate all aspects in the host culture and denigrate local ways of being.

Returnees may realize they have changed but find it difficult to put into words. They may feel torn between the values and behaviours of the host country and their home environment. Some may suffer from **identity confusion**, that is, they may feel as if they are caught between two distinct worlds, the one they left behind and the one they have returned to. They may not feel that they fit into either. Like the following returnee, many feel unsettled in this stage:

> While abroad, I missed home quite a lot in the beginning but now that I'm back, I feel estranged. I feel my existence here is meaningless. In the U.S., I had a great time with my boyfriend, my roommates, and my newly met friends. Here, I feel alone. Although I'm physically back, my memories remain in L.A.

(See Chapter 6 for more discussion about identity misalignments and the state of cultural marginality or inbetweenness).

Resocialization stage. The final phase in the model is sometimes referred to as 're-integration', 'the independence stage' or 'acceptance and understanding'. In this stage, returnees are beginning to feel more at home and are better able to communicate effectively and appropriately with their family members, friends and colleagues. Similar to recovery and adjustment phases in the host country, the returnees start to readjust to the home country and reintegrate into the local way of life. The initial reentry shock has subsided and they are better able to find a sense of balance between their 'new old' home and the culture they have just left. A returnee recounted this process in an interview:

> It took me some effort to get used to the local lifestyle again as I'd become accustomed to the way of living in Korea. When I came back home I had to readjust to many things. I had such a wonderful and splendid life in Korea but when I came back, I felt . . . umm . . . It was just . . . so different! I have had to accept it and adapt. You have to try your best to adjust since there's no choice for you! And gradually you feel like you fit in. Now, I am in a better place in my head. I'm doing more things with my friends and I'm happy. I'm also keeping in touch with my friends in Seoul through Facebook.

Returnees may take pride in having developed a hybrid, multicultural identity and display more interest in both international and local happenings. The W-curve model suggests that returnees in this stage are able to identify and appreciate multiple ways in which they have changed for the better due to their international and intercultural experiences. They may make an effort to diversify their social networks to include both local and international friends, and maintain contact with friends made abroad. Feeling more stable and self-confident, they may make plans for more stays abroad, like the following year-abroad returnee:

> Before this sojourn, I never considered working overseas but after experiencing the lifestyle in the U.S., I've started to consider a career abroad. My worldview broadened and I have a more global mindset now. I can view things from a global perspective instead of just looking at them from my home city's perspective.

Criticisms of the U-and W-curve adjustment models

While the U-curve and W-curve adjustment models (or variations of them) are widely used in the preparation of sojourners, a growing number of researchers are discovering that many people experience developmental trajectories that differ from what is portrayed in these models. Berardo (2006, 2012), La Brack (2010, 2011), La Brack and Berardo (2007) and Ward *et al.* (1998, 2001) argue that the curves of adjustment models are not backed up by empirical research and cannot accurately predict 'the depth, length, or even occurrence of culture shock' (La Brack 2010: 2). Questions are also being raised about the applicability of the curved models of adjustment for all types of sojourners. La Brack (2011), for example, points out that the W-curve model 'does not fit the global nomads and third culture kids (TCKs) very well, nor does it fit "heritage-seeking" students or education abroad populations from refugee/immigrant backgrounds' (p. 2). A **heritage student** is 'a student who studies abroad in a location that is linked in some way (for example, linguistically, culturally, historically) to his/her family or cultural background' (Forum on Education Abroad 2011: 34).

In mixed-method investigations of student sojourners (summer immersion, semester- and year-long sojourners), Jackson (2008, 2010, 2012, 2013) found that some sojourners endure significant ups and downs while abroad whereas others do not. Some experience many symptoms of language and culture shock during their sojourn, while others claim their transition to the new culture was smooth and symptom free. Some suffer from identity confusion while abroad, whereas others do not. The amount and quality of contact with the host language and culture varies considerably among sojourners and this naturally impacts on their learning. Some sojourners develop close bonds with host nationals and become more fluent in the host language whereas many others cling to friends from their home country and do not enhance their linguistic or interpersonal skills. (Variations in social networks are discussed further in Chapter 9.)

The degree of reentry culture shock also varies. Some return home with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, broadened self-identities and a strong desire to use their second language in intercultural interactions. Along with a more open mindset, these returnees may feel that they have developed more cosmopolitan, multicultural identities. With heightened interest in international affairs, they may have taken steps towards a more global identity. In contrast, others are very negative about their sojourn experiences and have become even more ethnocentric and nationalistic after their stay abroad. Overwhelmed by culture difference and ill-equipped to manage language and culture shock, some return home with reinforced stereotypes of host nationals, heightened xenophobia and little interest in further developing the social dimension of their second language proficiency (Jackson 2008, 2010, 2012).

A complicated mix of individual elements (e.g. sojourn aims, adaptive stress, personality, resilience, mindset, awareness of language and culture learning strategies), level of intercultural competence and external factors (e.g. degree of host receptivity, housing arrangement, exposure to host culture) account for differences in the developmental trajectories of sojourners and significant variations in sojourn outcomes. As noted by Coleman (2009), Jackson (2012), Kinginger (2009) and other language and education abroad researchers, the experience of sojourners is much more complex and variable than what is suggested by the curves of adjustment models. More longitudinal, mixed-method research or ethnographic studies are needed that capture the 'whole person development' of sojourners before, during and after stays abroad.

Despite the limitations detailed above, variations of the U- and W-curve adjustment models remain popular in pre-sojourn orientations, sojourn support programmes and reentry debriefings as they are simple to grasp and seem plausible. In light of recent research, more

educators view these models as 'useful heuristic devices to raise issues related to cultural adjustment but no longer present them as phases that everyone will automatically experience' (Forum on Education Abroad 2009: 41). Although the curves models cannot accurately predict the developmental trajectories of sojourners, they raise awareness of the *potential* ups and downs that one might experience during acculturation and reentry.

AN INTEGRATIVE COMMUNICATION THEORY OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

In an effort to overcome the limitations of the curve models and incorporate common elements in long-term and short-term adaptation, Kim (2001, 2005, 2012) proposed the **integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation** to depict an individual's gradual adaptation to a new environment. Her model raises awareness of multiple individual and contextual elements that can influence the developmental trajectories.

To understand Kim's theory, it is essential to have a basic understanding of key terms. For Kim (2012: 233), **cross-cultural adaptation** refers to 'the phenomenon in which individuals who, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationship with the environment'. This process includes the individual and the environment as well as the process and outcomes of communication activities (e.g. intercultural interactions in the host culture). In the new environment, re-socialization activities drive acculturation, that is, 'the change in individuals whose primary learning has been in one culture and who take over traits from another culture' (Marden & Meyer 1968: 36). New cultural understandings and behaviours are not just added to one's internal framework. When new learning takes place, '**deculturation** (or unlearning) of some of the old cultural habits has to occur, at least in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old, habitual ones' (Kim 2012: 233).

In her theory, Kim (2012: 233–34) addresses the following questions: (1) 'what is the essential nature of the adaptation process individual settlers undergo over time?' and (2) 'why are some settlers more successful than others in attaining a level of psychosocial fitness in the host environment?' At the heart of her framework is the **stress-adaption-growth dynamic**, which is based on the notion that acculturative stress (e.g. language and culture shock) can gradually lead to adaptation. As newcomers grapple with challenges in the host environment, they become more aware of culture difference and more adept at coping with the strain of living in the new culture. Over time, stress-adaptation experiences bring about new understandings and behavioural changes, which enable the individual to more effectively manage challenges. Life in the new environment gradually becomes less stressful.

In Kim's model, **host communication competence** refers to 'the overall internal capacity of a stranger to decode and encode information in accordance with the host cultural communication practices' (ibid: 236). This includes **cognitive competence** ('knowledge of the host language and culture, history, social institutions, and rules of interpersonal conduct'), **affective competence** ('the emotional and motivational capacity to deal with the various challenges of living in the host environment') and **operational competence** ('the capacity to express outwardly by choosing a "right" combination of verbal and nonverbal acts in specific social transactions of the host environment') (ibid: 236).

Environmental factors also play a role in the adaptation of newcomers. Kim's theory cites three elements in particular that can impact on how a newcomer's adaptation proceeds: **host receptivity** ('the degree to which the receiving environment welcomes and accepts strangers

into its interpersonal networks and offers them various forms of informational, technical, material and emotional support'), **host conformity pressure** ('the extent to which the host environment challenges them, implicitly or explicitly, to act in accordance with the normative patterns of the host culture') and **ethnic group strength** ('the relative status or standing of a particular ethnic group in the context of the surrounding host society') (ibid: 237).

Individual differences among newcomers can also influence the adaption process, including: (1) **preparedness** ('the level of readiness to undertake the process of cross-cultural adaptation by developing host communication competence and participating in host social communication activities'), (2) **ethnic proximity/distance** ('the extent to which the ethnicity of an individual immigrant or sojourner plays a role in the cross-cultural adaptation process by serving either as a certain level of advantage or handicap', that is, whether it motivates or demotivates host nationals to welcome them into their social networks) and (3) **personality predisposition** ('three interrelated personality resources') (ibid: 237–38). With reference to the latter, Kim maintains that the following personality resources or traits facilitate adaptation: (1) **openness** ('an internal posture that is receptive to new information'), (2) **strength** ('the quality of resilience, patience, hardiness and persistence') and (3) **positivity** ('an affirmative and optimistic outlook that enables the individual to better endure stressful events with a belief in the possibilities of life in general') (ibid: 238).

Kim's theory also identifies several potential benefits of adaptive change: 'increased **functional fitness** in carrying out daily transactions' (e.g. knowing one's way around in the new environment), 'improved **psychological health** in dealing with the environment' (a high level of host communication competence to be able to overcome culture shock and engage in social communication activities that reduce one's level of stress) and the 'emergence of an **intercultural identity orientation**' ('an orientation towards self and others that is no longer rigidly defined by either the identity linked to the "home" culture or the identity of the host culture') (ibid: 238). Individuals who are genuinely open to this process of change may undergo **intercultural transformation**, that is, they may develop 'a new, alternative identity that is broader, more inclusive, more intercultural' (Kim 2001: 232–33). Thus, this model views culture shock as a potentially positive catalyst for personal growth and learning, including identity expansion.

OPTIMIZING INTERCULTURAL TRANSITIONS

If you decide to study, live or work in an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environment, there are steps you can take to ease your transition. Drawing primarily on research that has focused on short-term sojourners, this section offers suggestions to optimize your sojourn and reentry experience.

Prior to the sojourn

Research your destination.
Set realistic goals and expectations.
Take a course in intercultural communication. (Make good use of the knowledge and skills you are developing in this course!)
Practice your second language.
Attend pre-sojourn orientations, when available.
Take advantage of online materials. (Consult the list at the end of this chapter.)

In the new environment

Familiarize yourself with the local context.
Be patient! Language and culture shock are natural and adjustment takes time.
Keep in touch with family and friends back home.
Develop a routine and take care of your health.
Take part in any orientation activities arranged by the host university.
Join extracurricular activities and have fun.
Be open to new experiences. Be adventurous!
Take the initiative to develop diverse social networks (e.g. form friendships with host nationals, international students, co-nationals).
Recognize hot button issues (e.g. culture differences that annoy you).
Find a cultural mentor and seek help when needed.
Revisit and revise the goals you set prior to the sojourn.
Enhance your second language skills (e.g. take the initiative to practice the language in informal situations, pay attention to sociopragmatic dimensions).
Recognize the limitations of your linguistic and cultural knowledge.
Limit negative thoughts and refrain from making snap judgments about cultural difference.
Anticipate setbacks and persevere when you experience setbacks.
Develop the habit of self-analysis and critical reflection.
Consult recommended online resources.

Prior to returning home

Begin your reentry preparations while abroad.
Say meaningful good-byes.
Take advantage of online materials that provide advice on reentry.
Set goals for your return home.

Back on home soil

Share your international stories in small doses and demonstrate interest in others (e.g. local happenings, the experiences of your friends and family members).
Participate in reentry debriefings or courses, when available.
Be patient. Refrain from making snap judgments about your home culture (or the host culture).
Avoid 'shoeboxing' your international experience (e.g. join international/second language organizations and study abroad alumni groups, share your experiences with a wider audience, e.g. local school children).
Serve as a buddy for newcomers or volunteer to orientate students who will venture abroad.
Talk with people who understand your transition (e.g. other returning exchange students).
Stay in touch with friends abroad and continue to expand and diversify your social networks (e.g. make friends with incoming international exchange students).
Continue to practice your second language.
Critically reflect on your international/reentry experience.
Consult online resources on reentry.
Make concrete plans for further intercultural/international experience.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we reviewed several types of boundary crossers and discussed variations in long-term and short-term adaptation. The phenomenon of transition shock (e.g. culture shock, language shock, role shock, self shock) was examined and the U- and W-curve adjustment models were described and critiqued. Kim's (2001, 2005, 2012) integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation, which is intended to account for both short-term and long-term adaptation, was also discussed. This model raises awareness of the multifarious internal and external elements that can impact on an individual's acculturation and self-identities.

The chapter drew attention to the natural ups and downs of the process of adapting to an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environment. While we cannot fully eliminate transition stress when we cross borders, there are steps we can take to reduce our stress level and optimize our stay in a new environment. Returning home also requires preparation and readjustment. Crossing borders can lead to significant personal growth and the emergence of a more intercultural self *if* one is open to change. As noted by Maya Angelo, a celebrated author and civil rights activist in the U.S., 'Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.' International experience, coupled with critical reflection, can lead to more linguistic and (inter)cultural awareness, identity expansion, the acquisition of new skills and understandings and even suggest new possibilities for one's life.

discussion questions

1. Define the term acculturation and identify factors that can facilitate or hinder this process.
2. Explain what is meant by the following terms: sojourner, long-term expatriate, immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker. How might their adaptation differ? Why?
3. Define 'transition shock'. Identify three types that are especially relevant for sojourners and provide examples to illustrate each.
4. Have you ever experienced language and culture shock in a foreign land? Describe your symptoms and coping strategies. Share your experiences with your classmates.
5. Explain how anxiety and a low tolerance of ambiguity can negatively impact one's adjustment in a new environment.
6. Discuss the role that second language skills (e.g. fluency in the host language, sociopragmatic awareness) can play in the intercultural adjustment/adaptation process.
7. How have views about culture shock changed since Oberg's (1960) publication?
8. Describe the 'stress-adaptation-growth' dynamic. What factors can influence this process?
9. What factors in the host environment may impact on one's second language development, culture learning, and intercultural adjustment?
10. In small groups, discuss the following situation. Two Taiwanese sojourners of a similar age and background (e.g. same ethnic group, gender, education level, first

language, grade point average, proficiency level in French) join a six-week French immersion programme in the South of France. Neither has previous travel experience. At the end of their sojourn, one is delighted with her progress in French and feels at home in the host environment, whereas her classmate laments the fact that she did not have enough opportunity to use the language and believes that she gained little from her stay abroad. What might account for these very different outcomes?

11 Why do some sojourners develop a multicultural identity while others become more ethnocentric and nationalistic (e.g. develop stronger ties to their home country)?

12 Define what is meant by reentry or reverse culture shock. In small groups, discuss strategies to ease the transition back home. How can returnees extend their sojourn learning?

13 Imagine that you will soon join a semester-long international exchange programme in a second language context that you have never visited. What would you do to prepare? What ideas did you learn from this chapter that you think would be most helpful to you? (If you have already participated in an education abroad programme, share your insights and advice.)

further reading

Dowell, M-M. and Mirsky, K.P. (2003) *Study Abroad: How to Get the Most Out of Your Experience*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This text is designed to foster reflection on study abroad sojourns so that participants will enhance their intercultural awareness and make the most of their stay in a new culture.

Gebhard, J.G. (2010) *What Do International Students Think and Feel?: Adapting to U.S. College Life and Culture*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

This book presents personal narratives of international students who recount their adjustment to life in the U.S. and their return to their homeland.

Hansel, B. (2007) *The Exchange Student Survival Kit*, 2nd edn, Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

This practical guide aims to help student sojourners adjust to life abroad and make the most of international exchange programmes.

Kauffmann, N.L., Martin, J.N. and Weaver, H.D. with Weaver, J. (1992) *Students Abroad: Strangers at Home, Education for a Global Society*, Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

This book examines study abroad sojourns from the perspective of students, focusing on their intellectual development, growth in international/intercultural understanding and personal change.

Kohls, L.R. (2001) *Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad*, 4th edn, Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

The author offers practical strategies to facilitate respectful intercultural explorations, while adjusting to a new environment.

Lantis, J.S. and DuPlaga, J. (2010) *The Global Classroom: An Essential Guide to Study Abroad*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press.

The authors offer practical suggestions for student sojourners to help optimize their stays abroad. This book encompasses three phases: pre-sojourn preparation, sojourn and reentry.

Paige, R.M., Cohen, A.D., Kappler, B., Chi, J.C. and Lassegard, J.P. (2006) *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student's Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*, Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota.

This guide provides students with tools, creative activities and advice to prepare for and enhance their culture and language learning while studying abroad. It can also help returnees adjust to life when they return home.

Slimbach, R. (2010) *Becoming World Wise: A Guide to Global Learning*, Sterling VA: Stylus.

This book is designed to help sojourners optimize their stays abroad by cultivating mindfulness and a global perspective.

Storti, C. (2001) *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, 2nd edn, Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

This guidebook offers suggestions to facilitate adjustment to a new culture, whether for work or study. A model of culture shock is explained and examples of cross-cultural misunderstandings are provided with the aim of raising awareness of ways to enhance intercultural relations.

Storti, C. (2003) *The Art of Coming Home*, Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

This guide explores the challenges people often face when returning home after a sojourn (e.g. study abroad, work): reentry culture shock and readjustment.

VIDEO AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Culture Shock: International Students in the United States (2006) CustomFlix.

This DVD addresses cross-cultural adaptation and culture shock issues. Focusing on the arrival and initial adjustment period, international students share their views about their experiences adjusting to life in the United States.

The Global Scholar. (http://globalscholar.us/)

The 'Global Scholar Online Courses' website provides online curriculum to orient, train, and support students before, during and after they study abroad.

What's up with culture? (http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/)

In a project funded by FIPSE, the U.S. Department of Education, this online material is designed to enhance the ability of students to make successful cultural adjustments both before going overseas and upon returning home from studying abroad.

NOTE

1 This chapter draws on investigations of the international exchange experiences of university students from Hong Kong and Mainland China who took part in either a semester or year abroad international exchange programme in one of 40 countries. This research was generously supported by the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong SAR (Project No. 2110167; RGC Ref No. CUHK444709).