colonialism, powerful cultures like Britain established control over other groups, such as the cultures of Oceania. In this connection, Irwin notes that "the academic field of intercultural communication cannot escape its links to colonialism" (1996: 25). Today, many cultural voices are still silenced or misunderstood. From a Western point of view, many parts of the world are in effect excluded from genuine intercultural interactions:

> We can travel and see them. They cannot travel and see us. They may watch our soaps; we don't see their films. We "see," by and large, only Third World disasters, hunger, and corruption. They mainly see our success stories, the political leadership, the multinationals, the American way. (Oonk, 2002: 535)

In other words, people from many cultures do not hear one another's voices, or they hear the wrong voices. The experience of people in Third World cultures cannot be limited to hunger and disasters, while the experience of people in Western cultures cannot be limited only to soap operas and business corporations. So, the field of intercultural communication still faces this specter of colonialism and has the task of showing how people should interact so that they can hear one another's true voice.

The concept of voice is central to the Theory of the Dialogical Self (Holquist, 1990). According to this theory, everything we say exists only as it relates to something said by someone else (the Other). In other words, our voice exists only as a dialogue with other voices. The word *dialogue* is made up of two concepts—"dia" (one with another) and "legein" (to talk). So, whether we support or criticize someone, we "dialogue" with another position. Our voice, while it is certainly ours, at the same time embodies someone else's voice. The Other enters into our speech not simply as an audience, but as part of our voice, part of our culture. In this sense, our interactions are always characterized by polyphony, or multivoicedness (Bakhtin, 1981). **Polyphony** refers to the human capacity for conducting a dialogue—that is, engaging one's own voice with other voices. It is impossible to understand intercultural communication without understanding its inherently polyphonic nature. Intercultural communication is polyphonic by definition because it is always a conversation between people from different cultures.

Introducing the Pendulum Principle

Based on the discussion above, we will now formulate the seventh principle underlying intercultural communication: the Pendulum Principle. As with the previous principles, we will isolate three parts that make up this principle. Each part deals with the dynamic nature of intercultural interactions. First, we will look at the contradictory nature of intercultural communication. Then we will discuss intercultural interactions in terms of praxis. Finally, we will emphasize the role of change in intercultural communication. We will discuss each part separately and then formulate the Pendulum Principle as a whole.

The Contradictory Nature of Intercultural Communication

We often think of the term *contradiction* as referring to something negative—an inconsistency. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, every meaning presupposes the existence of something contrary to it. In this way, cultural dimensions are formed; for example, individualism is contrary to, yet linked with, collectivism. In this view, our life is nothing but a **contradiction**—an interplay between opposing tendencies. This view of an interplay between unified oppositions is part of the Dialectical Theory of communication, emphasizing its contradictory and dynamic character (cf. Martin & Nakayama, 1999; Martin & Nakayama, 2004: 62–68).

The word **dialectics** means the art of discussion or debate and has its roots in ancient Greek. Such Greek philosophers as Socrates and Plato, regarding dialectics as a search for truth, showed that every issue has two opposing lines of argument. Only through discussion or debate can contradictory arguments be resolved and the truth found.

Thus, everything is driven by contradictions, and intercultural communication is no exception. Take another look at the examples of intercultural interactions discussed earlier in this chapter. You cannot help noticing the contradictory nature of these interactions. More specifically, three things must be emphasized about these interactions.

First of all, in every situation some *opposing forces* can be identified. For instance, in the example of Proposition 227, some people want English to be the only language used in U.S. schools, while other people want instruction to be provided in other languages as well.

Second, in each case oppositions are unified, forming an interactive *unity*. Naturally, both supporters and opponents of Proposition 227 would like to have their own way on the issue of bilingual education in California schools. At the same time, both groups cannot ignore being connected to each other. Thus, in every act of intercultural communication we find both the need for independence and the need for interdependence.

Third, the unified oppositions are not static; in each situation the opposing forces are engaged in *ongoing interplay*. If the opposing force is seen as a static and isolated object, we cannot say that intercultural communication really takes place in the dialectic sense of the word. Recall the examples of ethnocentric reduction and ethnocentric negation from Chapter 4; in both cases, there is no true interaction. In the first case, people from one culture treat the other culture as an object, reducing the second culture to a shadow of the first culture. In the second case, people from one culture simply ignore the other culture. It is as if people from these cultures existed in two parallel worlds that did not cross; here, we deal with dualism, not dialectics. The nature of intercultural communication is always contradictory (dialectical) in the sense that there is an ongoing interplay between opposing forces; it is through discussion, or dialogue, that cultures debate an issue and reach common ground—that is, find the truth.

So, contradictions, as the interplay between unified oppositions, are the driving force of intercultural communication. In this dynamic interplay, tensions are continually created and overcome. The dialectic of tensions presupposes both stretching out and drawing in. If a culture stretches out too far and fails to draw in (i.e., remain itself), it breaks, and tension ceases to exist. If a culture stays drawn in and refuses to stretch out, no tension arises, and therefore no interaction takes place. Tension exists only insofar as something stretches out and draws in at the same time. We can demonstrate the contradictory nature of intercultural communication by returning to the example of Proposition 227, discussed above.

In the case of Proposition 227, the people who support it and those who are against it constitute two contradictory forces. Supporters of the English-only movement argue that bilingual education (along with other bilingual policies) undermines national unity, resulting in linguistic separation within the United States. Supporters of bilingual education argue that it not only helps different groups to maintain their culture but also allows their integration into the mainstream culture of the United States, making it stronger. Thus, the voices of these two groups are clearly divergent; each one pulls out and away from the other one, trying to draw in as many votes as it can. **Divergence,** then, is the act of moving in different directions from a common point—in our case, the common point is the issue of the bilingual education measure. The arrows in Figure 4 show how these two groups take up the issue of the bilingual education measure, pulling out in different directions.

As people in each group "grab" the issue of the bilingual education measure and draw votes in, trying to remain separate, the action of people from the other group creates the opposite movement—that of pulling back. This movement can be seen as the counterpoint to the divergence of the two groups, making them move toward each other, or converge. **Convergence,** then, is the act of approaching the same point from different directions. The arrows in Figure 5 show how the two groups approach the issue of the bilingual education measure, pulling in from different directions.

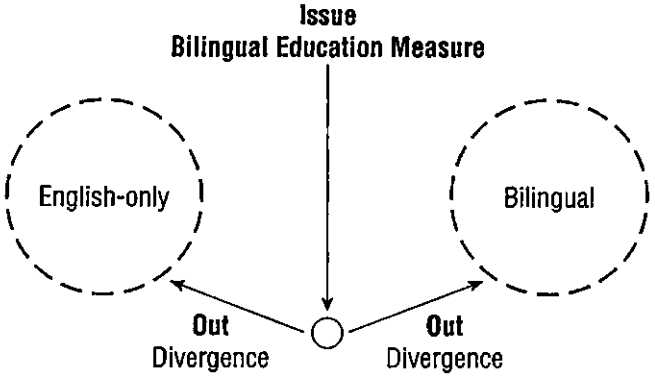

FIGURE 4

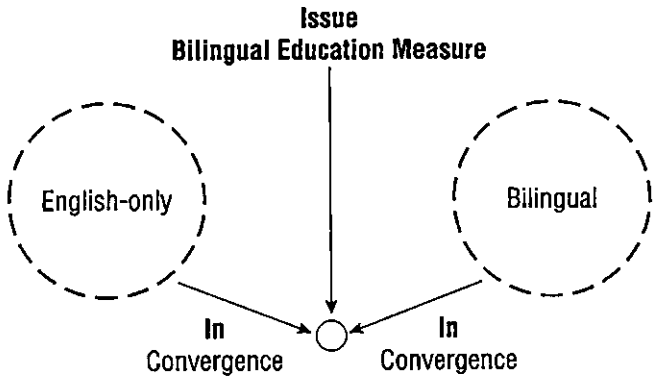

FIGURE 5

The actions of divergence and convergence, represented separately in Figure 4 and Figure 5, are shown in Figure 6 as two sides of the same process, taking place simultaneously. As you can see, the interaction between people from these two groups is one movement that *simultaneously* connects them and keeps them apart. It is but one movement of a pendulum representing an issue being discussed at the moment; in our example, the pendulum represents the issue of Bilingual Education Measure 227. Because the voice of those who support the proposition is stronger at the moment (70 percent of the vote), Figure 7 shows the pendulum of intercultural communication swinging in their direction.

To be consistent with our previous discussion and to emphasize intercultural communication as a continuum (shared space), the intercultural dynamics should be represented as shown in Figure 8. As you can see, the people who voted against the proposition now must reach out (stretch) further to take up the issue of bilingual education, which requires more effort. You might remember that many bilingual

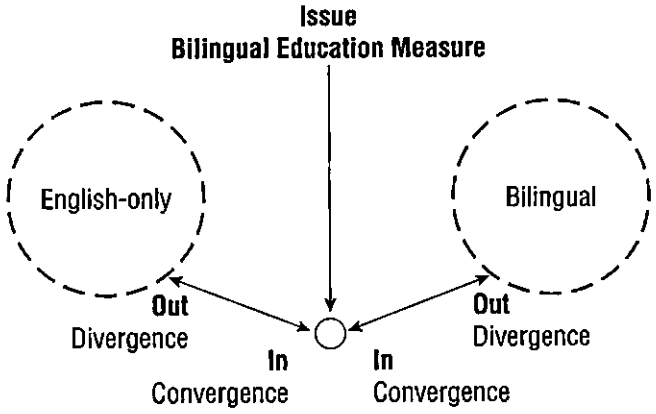

FIGURE 6

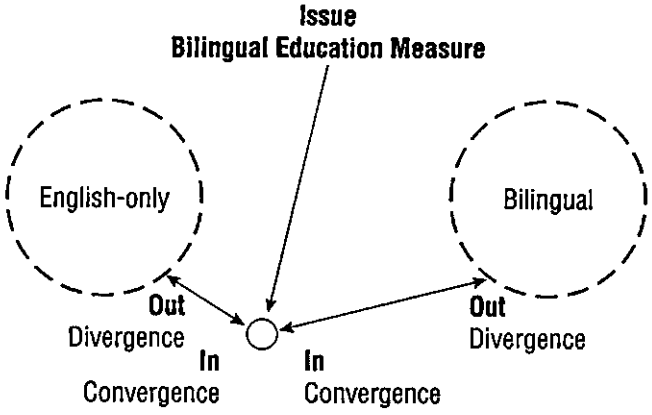

FIGURE 7

teachers said they would not comply with the English-only rule, despite the threat of lawsuits; they vowed to go to court and fight the measure. The situation is still characterized by tensions; in other words, intercultural communication continues.

Intercultural communication will continue as long as two dangers are avoided: overdivergence and overconvergence. Overdivergence means cultural isolation and no dialogue between people from different cultures. Overconvergence means complete submersion of one (weaker) culture by another (stronger) culture. In both cases, the pendulum of intercultural communication stops because there is no Other to provide a countermovement.

So, the contradictory nature of intercultural communication can be revealed using dialectics, a "sensible way to study a world composed of mutually dependent processes in constant evolution" (Ollman, 1998: 342). With the help of dialectics,

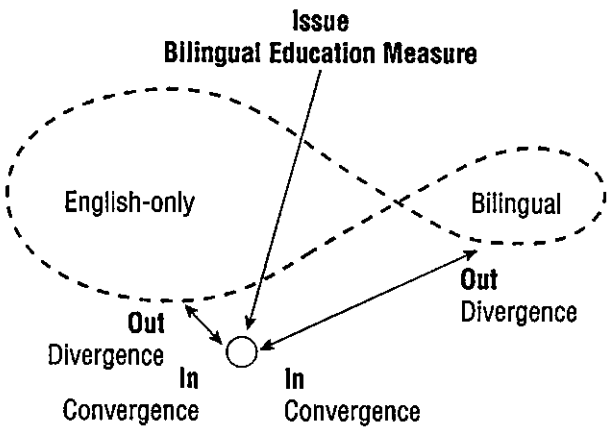

FIGURE 8

we can see that a culture maintains its identity and remains stable only through a process of interaction with other people. There is only one constant, and that is flux, visualized as a pendulum's movement. This view of reality was captured by Heraclitus of ancient Greece in the expression you find in the subtitle of this chapter. *Panta rhei* means that reality is constantly in a state of flux as the unity of opposing (creative and destructive) forces; being in reality is a condition of coming to be and ceasing to be—at the same time! Or, as is stated in an article on intercultural communication in which the identity of Jewish culture is discussed, "To be and not to be, that is the answer" (To be and not to be, 1996).

Intercultural tensions are created and overcome through concrete practices of real people in real situations. Through such practices, people from different cultures acting as opposing forces gain or lose voice, increasing or decreasing their vitality. This brings up another important aspect of the Pendulum Principle—praxis.

Intercultural Communication as Praxis

In Chapter 3, we saw that intercultural communication is performed. When people enact meaning, they must, at every moment of their interactions, decide how to deal with various tensions, such as the needs for connection and autonomy, expression and privacy, predictability and novelty (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Intercultural communication, then, must be viewed as **praxis**—concrete practices by which people choose how to resolve the tensions of the moment.

When people make choices, they establish new boundaries for intercultural interactions. At the same time, these new boundaries begin to function as normative practices, affecting people's choices. In other words, people give "communicative life to the contradictions that organize their social life, but these contradictions in turn affect their subsequent communicative actions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996: 13–14). New contradictions create new tensions that need to be resolved, so praxis is an inherent part of intercultural communication. Below is a real-life example of how intercultural praxis is manifested.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner describe a recent incident at one of Motorola's branches in East Asia. As part of its operation, the corporation had established a practice regulating its interactions with East Asian engineers, who

> were given a $2,000 housing allowance so that they could live comfortably adjacent to the plant. One day a senior engineer had to be contacted urgently at home and was found to be living in a shack. He had spent his housing allowance on putting his siblings through school. (2002: 26)

It was clear that the established boundaries had failed to be effective, creating a tense situation. In other words, the tables had been turned on the very people who had established those boundaries; as a result, the people had to react to the new situation. The corporation could have fired the engineer, of course, as he had misallocated the funds. To its credit, the corporation decided that the engineer

> had put the money to better use than he would have by isolating himself in relative luxury as the "kept man" of a foreign corporation. Was thinking of one's own family an "offence"? The rules were changed. Today you can use the allowance for your own purpose and to implement local values. (2002: 26)

This intercultural scenario can be understood, in terms of praxis, as creating a meaningful rule (money is to be used as housing allowance), which leads to new tensions (misallocation of funds), which are resolved by establishing another rule (money can be used for one's own purposes in accordance with cultural needs).

Specific forms of praxis in intercultural interactions vary from situation to situation. They range from negotiations, one of the most constructive forms of intercultural communication, to discriminatory laws and violence, as the most destructive forms. One of the most important forms of praxis is a **ritual,** "a structured sequence of actions the correct performance of which pays homage to a sacred object" (Philipsen, 1987: 250). Perhaps you think of a ritual as something once important but now reduced to simply "going through the motions"—obsolete and meaningless. Do we really pay homage to any sacred objects these days? Yes, we do, and rituals are an important part of communication today, just as they were in the past. What is held sacred changes with time, but people from every culture pay homage to its sacred objects through a structured sequence of actions. In fact, it is the repeated nature of rituals that shows their importance; rituals are so natural to our culture that we do not think much about them. (Using the terminology from Chapter 3, we can say that rituals are forms of operationalized communication.) Any actions that are repeated over and over again take on the form of cultural rituals; there are eating and drinking rituals and rituals associated with birth and death. The tea ceremony in Japan is a ritual where homage is paid to such sacred objects as purity, reverence of nature, and the uniqueness of every human encounter. Because rituals are so engrained in the fabric of one's culture, it is easy for people from another culture to fail to carry out the sequence of actions correctly; if you, as a guest taking part in the tea ceremony, make a wrong movement or eye contact, the intercultural dance falters. Shared rituals are very important for effective intercultural communication. For instance, successful intercultural mergers and acquisitions are often based on such rituals as introduction programs, training, cross-visits, retreats, celebrations, and similar activities (Larson & Lubatkin, 2001).

When people from different cultures share common rituals as a form of praxis, they decide together which practices to use to resolve tensions, establishing new boundaries and improving their interactions. For example, the issue of English-only versus bilingual education had been dealt with through a number of concrete practices, ranging from conversations at dinner tables to political campaigns. Eventually, the issue took the form of a proposition that was voted upon at the ballot box. Voting is an important ritual that allows people from two groups to resolve an issue and decrease tensions. When people go to the ballot box and cast their votes, they give voice to their support of or opposition to a certain issue. By following a structured sequence of actions, they pay homage to a sacred

object—in this case, the ideas of democracy and freedom of expression as they understand them. Voting and negotiations are perhaps two of the most effective intercultural rituals.

Thus, every form of praxis can be seen as a jointly enacted communicative choice. Through such choices, people from different cultures change the dialectical situation present at the moment, creating a new situation and therefore a new choice. In a way, praxis can be seen as the mechanism of the pendulum of intercultural communication—it keeps the pendulum swinging as long as people from different cultures act together. The pendulum of intercultural communication does not swing because of some mysterious outside force; it is set and kept in motion by the people themselves. Intercultural communication requires a constant effort. If intercultural communication works "like a clock," it is because there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes. The movement of the pendulum is not always smooth, of course, and we will discuss what makes this movement more or less smooth in the next chapters. Right now, it is important to understand that cultures can keep their identities (remain stable) only by interacting—continually creating and changing their relationships.

Intercultural Communication and Change

Change is one of the core concepts of dialectics. It is impossible to understand the true (contradictory) nature of intercultural communication without emphasizing its dynamic character. Intercultural communication exists only insofar as people from different cultures continue to interact and change, resolving their contradictions and looking for the true meaning of every communicative practice. Consider the different cultural views on the practice of drinking (Room & Makela, 2000): In "abstinent cultures" (some Islamic societies), drinking is religiously and legally forbidden; in "strained ritual drinking cultures" (Orthodox Jews), a small amount is drunk only on certain occasions; in "banalized drinking cultures" (e.g., Southern European societies), drinking is more accepted. However, none of these cultures can claim that their view on drinking is the only true one. Their cultural voice can exist only because there are other voices—contrary to it—on the same issue. People from every culture can express themselves and maintain their identity as long as they carry out an ongoing dialogue with other people, simultaneously diverging and converging. No culture owns the truth, and the search for knowledge is a joint enterprise.

So, change is vital to every culture engaged in interactions. That is why it is especially important to be able to predict change and its consequences, or—to use the metaphor from this chapter—to see which way the pendulum is swinging and what its movement may entail. In a recent study that compared perceptions of change in Eastern and Western thinking patterns, Ji et al. (2001) found that Chinese were more likely than Americans to predict change in events. Also, Chinese were found to anticipate more alteration in the direction of trends and more variation in the rate of change, and they were more likely than Americans to regard people who predict changes as wise. Not surprisingly, parallels are often drawn be-

tween dialectics and wisdom (Gollobin, 1998). Successful intercultural communication requires that people from different cultures listen to one another's voices predicting change; this way, they can make better (wiser) decisions about how to act in this or that situation.

So, intercultural communication is based on the assumption that cultures can, and do, change. Every movement of the pendulum of intercultural communication brings about change—sometimes dramatic, sometimes quite subtle. The two dangers of ethnocentrism discussed in Chapter 4 lead to breakdowns in intercultural communication precisely because they do not incorporate this assumption. On the contrary, the Other (culture) is viewed as a passive object that cannot change and must be reduced to Self or ignored. As a result, interaction either does not take place (ethnocentric negation) or is replaced by action of one culture on another, whereby the Other is reduced to Self (ethnocentric reduction). In both cases, the Other remains an outside object whose voice is not heard. In both cases, no real tension exists between Self and the Other, and no interplay of opposing tendencies takes place. Self can develop and maintain its identity only through interaction with the Other. Once the Other is ignored or reduced to Self, intercultural communication breaks down: The pendulum of intercultural communication stops. Now Self has no Other to interact with; Self has undermined its own stability by refusing to change. Therefore, the very existence of cultures depends on their ongoing interplay. Stability is the result of change, which is the only true constant—that is, the overall truth. Remember: *Panta rhei*—All is flux.

The Pendulum Principle Defined

Let's now give a more concise formulation of the Pendulum Principle, based on the above discussion of its three parts.

We noted the contradictory nature of intercultural communication. In every intercultural interaction there are opposing tendencies at work, and in each case these oppositions are unified, forming an interactive unity. Thus, the contradictory nature of intercultural communication lies in the ongoing interplay of opposing forces.

Tensions between cultures are created and resolved through concrete practices, or praxis. People always function as subjects, establishing new boundaries for intercultural interactions. At the same time, these new boundaries begin to function as normative practices, affecting people's choices. Thus, every form of praxis is a jointly enacted communicative choice. This joint effort is what keeps the pendulum of intercultural communication swinging.

We also showed that it is impossible to understand intercultural communication without emphasizing its continually changing nature. Intercultural communication continues only insofar as cultures keep interacting, and every movement of the pendulum affects and is affected by their positions in the overall continuum. Every cultural position can be seen as a "voice," or a stance from which the culture collectively speaks. Intercultural communication is polyphonic

by nature because it is always a conversation (dialogue) between people from different cultures. Thus, in the ongoing interplay of opposing tendencies, multiple voices are produced.

In a nutshell, the Pendulum Principle can be formulated as follows:

> *Intercultural communication is an ongoing and interactive process that simultaneously connects and keeps apart people from different cultures, producing multiple voices.*

It is important to emphasize that these two processes—the centrifugal force of divergence and the centripetal force of convergence—take place at the same time.

Summary

We started this chapter by looking at the tensions that continually arise between cultures. We saw that tensions exist between people from interacting cultures because their needs are different. Without differences, there would be no tensions and therefore no intercultural communication. Thus, we determined that motivation to satisfy needs is vital to the very existence of intercultural communication in general and each culture in particular.

In connection with the satisfaction of cultural needs, we looked at the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality—a measure of a culture's strength based on the importance of its language. High ethnolinguistic vitality was equated with a strong cultural voice, and low ethnolinguistic vitality with a weak cultural voice. A cultural voice was defined as a stance or position from which a culture collectively speaks. We showed how every cultural voice embodies other voices—that is, how our voice exists as part of a dialogue with other voices. Thus, our intercultural interactions are characterized by polyphony, or multivoicedness. Intercultural communication is polyphonic by definition because it is always a conversation between people from different cultures.

We then emphasized that the contradictory nature of intercultural communication lies in the ongoing interplay of opposing forces. We showed how tensions between cultures are created and resolved through concrete practices, or praxis. As a result of such practices, multiple cultural voices are produced. Thus, intercultural communication was presented as an ongoing and interactive process that simultaneously connects and keeps apart people from different cultures, producing multiple voices.

Based on these ideas, the Pendulum Principle was formulated.

In this chapter, intercultural communication was compared to the movement of a pendulum—a process encompassing difference and unity simultaneously. In this process, people must continually decide how to make sure the