Multicultural Considerations
In Descriptive Phonetics
Why is it important to study multicultural and multilingual issues?

- Other languages affect the learning of English.
- Language is an expression of culture.
- Effect of culture on language not predictable.
- Clinicians can misinterpret speakers’ behaviors.
- Clinician needs to know how culturally based beliefs can conflict with clinician’s culture.
Cultural Differences

- Respect for authority
- Attitudes toward time
- Attitudes toward learning English
- Attitudes toward disabilities
- Attitudes toward gender
Nonverbal Behaviors

• Eye Contact - gaze may be considered polite and attentive or rude and aggressive
• Touching - touching may be offensive or welcome
• Proximity - body distance: friendly or unfriendly
• Approval - gestures of approval are not universal and may be misunderstood
Verbal Behaviors

• Use of Prosodic Variations - narration may involve a different register of voice, not representative of typical speech
• Talking - clinician must avoid interpreting child’s silence or lack thereof
Interaction Protocols

- Turn taking
- Accounting for shared knowledge - cultures vary on whether retelling is expected
- Conversational openers - personal questions may be rude
- Discourse rules - the rules of how to tell a story differ from culture to culture
Styles of Speech

- Dialects - variations within a language
  - regional - geographic and linguistic factors
  - standard (may not be the most frequently used)
  - nonstandard - term often given to dialects spoken by marginalized groups
  - foreign dialect
  - bidialectal: alternation between two dialects
Registers

• Formal
  – honorifics
• Informal
• Talking to children
• Talking to foreigners