

## THE INTERCULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF VALUES

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**Abstract.** This article explores the intricate process of understanding values across various cultures, focusing particularly on how language, communication, and worldviews influence these understandings. It investigates how varying cultural backgrounds affect interpretations of fundamental concepts such as respect, freedom, duty, and collectivism, often resulting in misunderstandings or miscommunication during intercultural exchanges. The paper underscores the importance of cultivating intercultural competence through cultural education, empathy, and flexibility to effectively address these challenges. Utilizing examples from both Western and Eastern cultures, as well as the cultural contexts of Uzbekistan and Russia, the study highlights the need for cultural awareness and ethical dialogue to foster mutual understanding. Additionally, the article suggests practical approaches for enhancing intercultural sensitivity in academic, professional, and social settings, thereby contributing to more inclusive and respectful global communication.

**Key words:** culture, interculture, interpretation, value, fundamental concept, fundamental beliefs, intercultural understanding, intercultural communication.

In a world that is becoming more interconnected, it is crucial to comprehend how values are perceived in different cultures. Values are fundamental beliefs or standards that influence behavior and decisions within a community. Although many values are common across cultures, their interpretation and significance can differ greatly. Such differences often result in misunderstandings or cultural conflicts, particularly in global business, diplomacy, and diverse societies. This paper examines the idea of values, the impact of culture in shaping them, and the ways these values are understood and conveyed in various cultural settings.

Principles that direct individual and group behavior are known as values. They reflect what individuals deem significant in life, such as integrity, liberty, family, respect, and diligence. Conversely, culture encompasses the common practices, beliefs, norms, and artifacts that a community employs to make sense of the world. Culture significantly shapes which values are highlighted and how they are understood.

Another challenge arises from the nature of language itself. The linguistic relativity hypothesis proposed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf suggests that language shapes thought and perception, including moral categories. This perspective indicates that certain values, particularly those rooted in indigenous languages or culturally specific metaphors, may be difficult to translate directly or may be misinterpreted when viewed through the lens of another culture. Similarly, Clifford Geertz (1973) noted that cultural symbols—including moral ideas—are

intricately tied to systems of meaning that necessitate interpretation from within the cultural framework. Stella Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasizes that variations in cultural orientations—such as high-context versus low-context communication—can lead to misunderstandings in how values are expressed. For example, the indirectness and respect seen in many Asian cultures might be interpreted as evasiveness by individuals from cultures that prioritize direct communication. Samuel P. Huntington (1996), in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*, argued that the value systems ingrained within different civilizations (such as Western, Confucian, and Islamic) can be so varied that they may result in conflict during global exchanges. Huntington posits that what one culture regards as a basic right (like freedom of speech) could be perceived as culturally foreign or even menacing in another context. Additionally, Shalom H. Schwartz (1992) proposed a cross-cultural framework for fundamental human values, pinpointing universal categories such as benevolence, tradition, and security. Nevertheless, he highlighted that different cultures emphasize these values in various ways, leading to a range of moral focuses and interpretations. Globalization further complicates this issue. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) cautions that in the era of fluid modernity, values become more unstable, contested, and mixed. As individuals migrate and cultures come into contact, new ethical challenges emerge in multicultural societies, compelling people to navigate between conflicting value systems. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, promotes the idea of engaging in dialogue between cultures and acknowledges that while differences in values are present, it is possible to achieve mutual understanding through interaction and respect. He critiques both rigid universalism and extreme relativism, suggesting a more adaptable ethical framework that embraces diversity while still allowing for moral reasoning. Ultimately, the issue of ethnocentrism—assessing other cultures based on one's own criteria—continues to obstruct the understanding of values among different societies. As Lustig and Koester (2017) point out, ethnocentrism can result in erroneous moral assessments and impede intercultural collaboration unless it is balanced by an awareness of one's own culture and skills in intercultural interactions.

Enhancing intercultural understanding requires a combination of knowledge, sensitivity, and adaptability. One essential aspect is recognizing and appreciating both the differences and similarities between cultures. Through education, individuals can gain insight into the historical, social, and philosophical roots of different value systems. For instance, understanding that collectivism is deeply rooted in many Asian and Central Asian societies helps explain the cultural importance of family loyalty and social harmony, in contrast to the individualism often emphasized in Western contexts. Courses such as cultural anthropology, world religions, and comparative ethics allow learners to explore how cultural backgrounds shape beliefs, behaviors, and moral perspectives.

Another key strategy involves developing communication skills that are effective across cultures. Intercultural communication training introduces participants to the complexities of verbal and nonverbal expression, conflict

resolution, and active listening in diverse environments. For example, while direct eye contact is considered a sign of honesty in some cultures, it may be interpreted as rude or confrontational in others. Theories by scholars like Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede—particularly their concepts of high-context and low-context communication—highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity in interactions across boundaries. Equally important are personal qualities such as empathy and open-mindedness. Empathy enables individuals to view situations from others' perspectives, while open-mindedness fosters acceptance of cultural differences. These qualities help reduce ethnocentric attitudes and support respectful dialogue. Understanding the role of rituals and communal values in indigenous cultures, for example, can promote more effective cooperation in international development and humanitarian work. Intercultural ethics encourages the appreciation of value systems within their specific cultural contexts, rather than judging them through an external lens. Finally, adaptability and flexibility are crucial for navigating cross-cultural situations. Adaptability means being able to adjust one's behavior and communication to fit the norms of another culture, while flexibility involves being mentally prepared to reconsider one's assumptions. In today's interconnected world, professionals often find themselves working in multicultural settings where these traits are indispensable. A teacher working abroad, for example, may need to change their approach to classroom management to align with local expectations. Individuals who are culturally intelligent demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to different situations while maintaining core personal values. Together, these strategies foster deeper intercultural understanding and help build more respectful and effective relationships in diverse global contexts.

In a world that is becoming more interconnected, comprehending cultural values is crucial for encouraging meaningful and respectful interactions among diverse societies. This article has explored how fundamental cultural concepts, influenced by language, history, and perspectives, affect the understanding of values like respect, freedom, and collectivism. These variations often create obstacles to intercultural communication, resulting in misunderstandings, conflicts, or stereotypes. Nevertheless, these obstacles can be overcome. By making intentional efforts in cultural education, intercultural communication training, and fostering empathy, individuals and organizations can close cultural gaps. Integrating adaptability and ethical awareness into daily actions further enhances mutual understanding and cooperation. By drawing insights from both Western and Eastern viewpoints, with a focus on the experiences of nations such as Uzbekistan and Russia, the study emphasizes the necessity of contextualizing values instead of applying universal assessments. In the end, advancing intercultural competence is essential not only for international relations, academia, and global business but also for cultivating inclusive, compassionate communities. A dedication to continuous dialogue, appreciation for cultural diversity, and receptiveness to different perspectives will remain central to achieving peaceful coexistence in a globalized world.

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